

2 CORINTHIANS 3-5 AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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The recent movie *I Can Only Imagine* is based on the true story of songwriter Bart Milliard and his abusive father, Arthur, and how God's work in both their lives inspired the best-selling Christian music single in history. Commenting on the essence of the story to *People Magazine*, Bart stated, "I got a front row seat to see this guy go from being a monster to falling desperately in love with Jesus. By the time he passed away when I was a freshman in college, not only was he my best friend, he was like the Godliest man I'd ever known. And it's literally changed the trajectory of my life."²

What happened to Arthur Milliard? What facilitated such an obvious and powerful change in his life? And how do such changes happen? Both the Scriptures and modern science attempt to answer these questions, and there are some striking similarities in the answers they give.³ However, as we shall see, the Scriptures themselves indicate that despite common ground between science and the Scriptures, God has imposed some limitations on science when it comes to understanding and bringing about human maturation. These limitations have important implications for how individuals and churches ought to think about the use and findings of the behavioral sciences with regard to maturation.⁴ This is an important issue given the

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² <https://people.com/movies/bart-millard-faith-based-movie-true-story/>, accessed June 23, 2018.

³ See, for example, Fraser Watts "Psychology and theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, edited by Peter Harrison (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), 190-206. For more detailed studies, see James G. Samra, "Being Conformed to Christ in Community"; Oxford theses: Oxford University, 2005; Bradley J. Matthews, *Mature in Christ: the contribution of Ephesians and Colossians to constructing Christian maturity in modernity*, Durham theses, Durham University, 2009.

⁴ In this essay, I will be using the term "maturation" to cover concepts often labelled "sanctification," "spiritual growth," and even "discipleship." The benefits of using the term "maturation" are that it reflects the New Testament's use of the word *τελείοις* and "maturation" is a word recognized by the behavioral sciences. The downside to using such a term is that the New Testament speaks only of maturation or spiritual growth in terms of believers becoming more like Jesus. Whereas, behavioral sciences use the term to refer to all humans and with a very different endpoint than becoming more like Jesus.

wide range of interaction that Christians have with psychology, secular counseling services, social work, and more.

For our study we will be using 2 Corinthians 3-5, which is one of the most powerful and important discussions of human maturation in the bible. Part of its value is that it places the discussion of human maturation within, among other things, the context of creation/new creation. Much has been learned in studying the interplay of science and theology with regard to creation. The fruit of such study can prove useful for studying the interplay of science and theology with regard to human maturation.⁵

This paper begins by highlighting the evidence that shows Paul's discussion of human maturation comes from a framework of creation/new creation. From there I identify three limitations from 2 Corinthians 3-5 that God places on science with regard to maturation.

2 CORINTHIANS 3-5: MATURITY AND CREATION

The exodus and creation are two major motifs Paul brings together in 2 Corinthians 3-5. The old covenant points us to the new covenant and creation points us to new creation. These two motifs are connected, but it is the motif of creation/new creation that most interests us here.

Among the references in these chapters, which place maturation in the context of creation, 2 Cor 3:18, 4:6, and 5:17 are the most explicit. A quick glance at each will reveal how Paul talks about maturation using the language of creation.

First, 2 Cor 3:18 says, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Paul's references to "image" and "the Spirit" are echoes of Genesis 1. Humans were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) and the Spirit was present, participating in forming and shaping creation (Gen 1:2).⁶ Paul goes on to tell us in 2 Cor

The term "behavioral sciences" refers generally to sciences such as psychology, cognitive science, organization theory, psychobiology, management science, operations research, social neuroscience, anthropology, organizational behavior, organization studies, sociology, social networks, applied anthropology, and behavior genetics. (This list is from the scope of *Behavioral Sciences* journal published by MDPI.)

⁵ For the past two years the Center for Pastor Theologians has been studying the relationship of theology and science in regard to the doctrine of creation. Some of the fruits of that study inform what is happening here. See the *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology*, Vol. 4.1 and 4.2 (2017). The seeds for such an opportunity can be seen in Chris Bruno's essay, "Creation and New Creation: How Should Our Understanding of the End Influence Our Understanding of the Beginning?" *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology*, Vol. 4.1 (2017): 49-64. Bruno is focused on the cosmological aspects of new creation, but helpfully highlights the way new creation and original creation elucidate one another.

⁶ Cf. Ps. 104:30, cited by Kenneth Matthew, who argues that Genesis 1:2 is referring to the Holy Spirit (*Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996], 135). Note that when the coming of the Spirit is described in Joel 2/ Acts 2 it is associated with "creational" language. There will be wonders in the heavens, signs on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke, the sun turns to darkness, and the moon turns to blood.

4:4 that Jesus is the image of God, so that the process of human maturation is the process of being transformed into the image of Jesus or conformed to Jesus.⁷ This happens by means of the Spirit, who enables us to experience God's glory now in part and be transformed in ever increasing glory.⁸

Second, in 2 Cor 4:6 Paul quotes Gen 1:3 and applies it to the beginning of the process of transformation: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." Just as God spoke the world into existence and took the existing material of Gen 1:1-2 and began to bring life and order to it, so at conversion God takes an existing human life and begins to bring eternal life and order to it. Arthur Milliard's process of transformation began when God spoke light into his darkness at the moment of conversion. So it is with every believer.

Third, in 2 Cor 5:17 Paul says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" This statement places the anthropological transformation of humans within the larger scope of the cosmological transformation/renewal/recreation of all things.⁹

In addition to the three explicit references to maturation in the context of creation mentioned above, the whole of 2 Corinthians 3-5 is taken up with creation themes and ideas, including: Satan blinding humans as he did in deceiving Adam and Eve in the Garden (2 Cor. 4:4; cf. Genesis 3), the seen (creation) and the unseen (2 Cor 4:18), being found clothed and not naked (2 Cor 5:3; cf. Gen 2:25; 3:7-11, 21), and the themes of death and life that are present throughout the whole of chapters 3-5.

By drawing so many parallels between human maturation and creation, Paul has opened the door for us to be able to think about the interplay of science and theology in the area of maturation, using lessons from the interplay of science and theology in the area of creation. Just as God has placed limitations on science's ability both to fully understand creation and to actually create, so this passage suggests three limitations God has placed on the behavioral sciences both with regard to fully understanding maturation and in actually bringing it about.

⁷ For more on this, see J. G. Samra, *Being Conformed to Christ in Community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2006).

⁸ All the means of transformation come about through experiencing God's presence. Prayer, worship, preaching, spiritual gifts, reading Scripture, sacraments, serving others, etc., are all means of experiencing God's presence, and it is God's presence that brings about the transformation of humans. This is Paul's point when he mentions the example of Moses being in God's presence in Exodus 32-34 alluded to in 2 Cor 3:7-13. Likewise, 1 John 3:2 tells us that what will ultimately transform us to be like Jesus is seeing him as he is. In 1 Peter 2:2-3 the pure spiritual milk that causes us to grow in our salvation is our experiences of God himself. The final culmination of this happens at the consummation of all things in Revelation 22:4 where, "the 'name' on believers refers to the character of God, which they reflect" because they see his face (Greg Beale, *Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999)).

⁹ Ryan Jackson helpfully reminds us that the anthropological nature of Paul's new creation language cannot be separated from its cosmological dimension (*New Creation in Paul's Letters* [Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010]).

LIMITATION 1: DISCOVERING THE HIDDEN ROLE
OF GOD IN REBIRTH AND MATURATION

In a previous study of Heb 11:3 and the doctrine of creation, I argued that according to Heb 11:3 God purposefully used invisible words to create the visible world so that the source of creation would be hidden from science and accessible only through faith.¹⁰ The same idea is present here. In 2 Corinthians 3-5, a key concept is living by faith, not by sight (5:7). The antithesis between faith and sight is important for Paul to establish because part of what gave rise to the need for the letter of 2 Corinthians were conflicts with those who “take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart” (5:12).

Paul may not look like a “super-apostle” if one takes into account his suffering, the way he changed his plans, his lack of rhetorical skills and abilities, and the fact that he has not been visibly vindicated by God the way Moses’ was authenticated with his shining face. But that is because God, especially in regard to transformation and maturity, has hidden the process from those who do not have faith. Outwardly Christians are wasting away, but inwardly we are being renewed day-by-day. Our faces do not glow with the physical, tangible glory of having been in God’s presence, but seen with the eyes of faith, we are displaying the glory of Jesus more and more as we become like him.

The parallel between 2 Cor. 4:6 and Heb 11:3 is instructive. Because God chose to create new life in each Christian in the same way that he chose to create this world, namely by speaking invisible words, the one who is creating new life in us will never be able to be detected using the findings of behavioral sciences anymore than the physical or life sciences can detect God as creator of the universe.¹¹

Therefore, when Paul says in Philippians 2:12, “Therefore my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence but much more in my absence—continue to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” there is some aspect in which behavioral sciences are able to observe and describe these human efforts. Arthur Milliard’s willingness to engage in a Christian community, read the bible, and apologize to his son for his abusive behavior can all be catalogued and observed by the scientific community. Positive outcomes to such activities can be noted and repeated

¹⁰ Jim Samra, “Faith as an Epistemology: Hebrews 11:3 and the origins of life,” *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* Vol. 4.1, (2017): 3-14.

¹¹ This appears to be Jesus’ point in John 3:8 when he speaks about the Spirit’s role in new birth: “The wind blows where ever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” Craig Keener comments on this passage, “One would expect a comparison strictly between the Spirit and the wind, but the comparison is technically between the wind and those born from the Spirit. In this context, however, the application is apropos: those born of the Spirit replicate the Spirit’s character (3:6), making their origin and destiny as mysterious to outsiders as their Lord from above, whose identity confounded the ‘world’” (*The Gospel of John, Volume One* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003], 555).

by non-Christians who join a community, read religious or philosophical texts, and deal with issues related to forgiveness.¹²

However, when Paul goes on in Philipians 2:13 to say “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose,” that aspect of human maturation will be hidden from science. Not everyone who goes to church becomes mature; not everyone who reads the bible becomes more like Jesus; and not everyone who deals with their past actually accepts and lives in light of the forgiveness freely given by God. It is only to the extent that God is at work in and through participation in the believing community, in his word, and in forgiveness that maturation and transformation happens. But his activity will be hidden from science because science operates by sight, not by faith.¹³

More than that, Paul tells us that the transformation of humans is hidden from those in science because of the activity of Satan, who is actively blinding the minds of unbelievers from seeing the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4).¹⁴ If nonbelievers were able to see God at work in the transformation of believers and were able to observe how we now reflect the glory of Jesus, they would accept Jesus as Lord and be saved. If so, everyone who saw the movie “I Can Only Imagine” would be led to believe in Jesus.¹⁵ But Satan is actively working to keep this from happening, in the same way that Satan deceived Adam and Eve with regard to God’s love and power in the Garden of Eden.

From this point, we can perhaps extrapolate further to say that not only is Satan blinding the minds of non-believers with regard to God’s activity in the process of transformation, Satan is blinding people to his own activity as well. In the garden Satan came as a serpent, not in his created form, in order to contribute to the deception. In the same sense, for example, Satan’s work in and through the agency of demonic activity in stunting and preventing

¹² On the area of forgiveness in psychology and the relevant sources, see *Forgiveness in Context*, edited by Fraser Watts and Liz Gulliford (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2003), chapters 6–7.

¹³ Abraham Kuyper says it this way: “This means that science fails as soon as it attempts to penetrate from the observable to the spiritual background of reality, and for the acquired data proceeds to attempt to build an entire construct. It puts forth with great fanfare, what appears in God’s light to be foolishness, that is, in conflict with essentiality and reality” (*Wisdom and Wonder: Common Grace in Science and Art*, edited by Jordan Ballor and Stephen Grabill, translated by Nelson Kloosterman [Grand Rapids: Christian’s Library, 2011], 91).

¹⁴ Some early commentators understood “the god of this age” to be a reference to God, but most today take it as a reference to Satan. In that it is a reference to Satan, it is probably not a reference to Satan’s personal activity but to the fact that “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). The systems of this world, including the behavioral sciences, reflect the influence and control of Satan so that they cannot point to God apart from faith.

¹⁵ *New York Post* and *Hollywood Reporter* critic Frank Scheck’s cynical comments exemplifies how some saw not only the movie, but even the idea that a person might be transformed in this way. He writes, “It seems that Arthur has found God, thanks to a terminal cancer diagnosis. The movie treats this like a major life turnaround, but am I the only one who thinks deathbed religious conversions don’t count? Like someone once said, there are no atheists in foxholes” (“I Can Only Imagine”: Film Review,” <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/i-can-imagine-1095152>, accessed July 4, 2018).

maturation is also hidden. Arthur Milliard was not on course to mature out of his abusive anger on his own, and it may have been because anger was a satanic stronghold he was powerless to overcome. My guess is that even after he became a Christian he needed God to continue to work in him to enable him to not give way to anger lest Satan continue to get a foothold in his life (Eph 4:26-27). The implication is that behavioral sciences are not equipped to diagnose and deal with demonic activity in the process of helping humans grow and develop.¹⁶

In summary, the first limitation of the behavioral sciences when it comes to maturation is their inability to recognize the presence and role of God (and other invisible spiritual forces).

LIMITATION 2: RECOGNIZING THE NEWNESS OF THE NEW CREATION IN REBIRTH AND MATURATION

A corollary to the idea that the behavioral sciences cannot recognize the presence of God in the process of maturation is that the behavioral sciences are less adept at recognizing the newness of what God is doing during the process of maturation.

To return to the idea of creation, one of the great contributions of science to the study of creation is describing the mechanisms by which things evolve and change. However, science struggles with explaining the “newness” of what God did in creating humanity in his image.¹⁷

Likewise, to take an example from the behavioral science of sociology, there have been helpful observations in describing how the church has evolved and changed over time, but the social sciences have been less adept in describing how it is that the church, as a sociological entity, came to be

¹⁶ For an example, see Leonard Seltzer, “Enough about ‘Inner Demons’ Already,” *Psychology Today*, 2015, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolution-the-self/201506/enough-about-inner-demons-already>, accessed July 2018. In regard to sociology, Richard Fenn acknowledges that “angels and demons have long qualified for inclusion in the Sacred, but they tend to escape direct sociological observation” (“Sociology and Religion” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, edited by Philip Clayton [Oxford: University Press, 2006], 254).

¹⁷ *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology Vols. 5.1 and 5.2* (2018) focus on the issue of the historical Adam. The implication of Genesis 1:26-27 is that even within the original creation itself, God did something new in creating Adam and Eve in his own image. But science struggles with accepting that something new happened in the creation of man. Even Christians who espouse an idea of the image of God as “referring to the gradual evolutionary process, stretching back over millions of years, whereby the distinctively human neuronal capacities have emerged that enable moral sensibilities and religious practices” still acknowledge that “the account that evolutionary anthropology and psychology describe for us is necessary but certainly not sufficient to do full justice to the theological notion of humankind being made in the image of God” (Denis Alexander, *Genes, Determinism, and God* [Cambridge: University Press, 2017], 282-283, *emphasis added*). In other words, God has still done something new in conferring upon humans status as God’s representatives. No other creature is given this status, and science cannot see that.

in the first place, and social sciences are blind to how the risen Jesus was at work in creating and building his church.¹⁸

But what Paul is describing in 2 Corinthians 3-5 is something that is categorically “new.” The passage begins with a discussion of the new covenant (3:6) and ends with a discussion of the new creation (5:17). While there are strong connections to what came before (old covenant, first creation), Paul’s emphasis is on the fact that God is doing something new. The transitory old covenant brought death and condemnation, the eternal new covenant brings life and righteousness. The first creation has been subjected to death and decay. The new creation is eternal.

More specifically for human maturation, “if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). While this passage is about more than just the transformation of believers, it includes certainly that.¹⁹ And the emphasis is on the newness of what has come. Both the Old Testament background of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and Paul’s own context, focus on the newness of what God is doing.²⁰

When it comes to human maturation and development, being recreated or renewed in the image of Jesus is akin to *creatio ex nihilo*. God is making something new.²¹ In Colossians 3, Paul says, “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” The terms “old self” and “new self” are not psychological terms, they are historical terms meaning that our “old self” represents who we used to be in Adam before we were placed into Christ and our “new self” is who we are now in Christ, a completely new creation.²² The emphasis is on the contrast between the old and new selves. To further emphasize the “newness” of what is happening, Paul says that the new self is being “renewed” into the image of its Creator.

The newness of what God is doing in the process of maturation has implications for our use of the behavioral sciences in understanding maturation. In the same way that sciences dealing with creation struggle to recognize the newness of Adam and Eve in the larger picture of creation, so the behavioral sciences struggle with understanding the newness of

¹⁸ See for example, Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton: University Press, 1996).

¹⁹ On the connection between 2 Cor 3:18 and 2 Cor 5:17, see Scott Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), 429-436.

²⁰ See Mark Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah’s Servants* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007); Moyer Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters and Thoughts* (Cambridge: University Press, 2002); Ryan Jackson, *New Creation in Paul’s Letters*.

²¹ It is important to note that the new thing that is happening is not metaphorically new only, but real: a genuine substantive transformation is taking place in and through the gift of the Spirit. For one discussion of how this happens, see Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); cf. Max Turner, “Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Formation in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22, no. 2 (2013): 187-205.

²² Richard Melick, Jr., *Colossians*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1991).

what God is doing in transforming us into the image of Christ. For Arthur Milliard—as well as for us—whatever happened in his life, whether good or bad, according to the behavioral sciences, is often inextricably tied to his past—back to his family of origin or related to the personality traits he has displayed in the past.

But the Bible speaks of Christians putting off the old self and putting on the new self. There is, of course, an imperatival aspect to this idea such that we are commanded to act in accordance with our new nature (cf. Eph. 4:22-23), but the command comes out of the indicative truth that we have a new self. God can and does set people free from slavery to sin. He can and does give people spiritual gifts they didn't possess before they were Christians. God can and often does genuinely step in and make changes to personalities. The behavioral sciences are ill-equipped to take into account the creation of new natures.

So while behavioral science can be useful in describing the ways in which we continue to reflect Adam and the old self, they are less helpful in recognizing that along with such inherited allegiances there can, should, and will be signs of new creation. Bart Milliard testifies to the “newness” in his father. He says that his dad went from being a monster to the godliest person he knew.

LIMITATION 3: BRINGING ABOUT REBIRTH AND MATURATION

Finally, the third limitation of the behavioral sciences relates to the inability of the behavioral sciences to bring about human maturation. We have already shown that behavioral science cannot recognize God's role in maturation and cannot adequately describe the newness present in the process of transformation. Now we are asking the question, to what extent does behavioral science participate in the transformation process? In other words, to what extent are psychological strategies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy able to contribute to the process of human maturation?

Second Corinthians 3:7-18 contains a detailed discussion of the Mosaic law and its relation to the new covenant. One of Paul's points in 2 Corinthians 3 is that while the Mosaic law is from God and is therefore glorious, in comparison to what happens in the new covenant, the law has no glory because it only brings condemnation and not life. In other words, what Moses experienced in God's presence—life and transformation—could not be achieved by those who only read the Mosaic law. To this day their minds remain dull and their hearts hard when the law is read because it cannot bring about rebirth or maturation (2 Cor 3:14-15).

What Paul says specifically about the Mosaic law in 2 Corinthians 3, he says more generally in Colossians 2:6-23 about human wisdom and rules, what he terms “hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than

Christ” (2:8).²³ While there is great debate as to what Paul is referring to here, he goes on in Colossians 2:20-23 to describe more fully that these “elemental spiritual forces” belong to this world and consist of rules such as “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” Paul says that these rules have to do with things that are destined to perish and “are based on merely human commands and teachings.” They have the “appearance of wisdom” but lack any real value in restraining our sensual desires.

Read alongside 2 Corinthians 3, Paul is saying that the wisdom of this world, including our understanding of how the world works and the findings of behavioral sciences, have no power to bring about true transformation. It cannot be that it is just the Mosaic law that is powerless to facilitate maturation. Everything, other than the Spirit himself, lacks the power to bring about transformation into the image of Christ, including the behavioral sciences.²⁴ While the Spirit may in some cases use the wisdom of behavioral sciences as part of the transformation process, it is the Spirit who does the transforming.

In this way the findings and strategies of behavioral sciences for modifying behavior are just that: findings and strategies for modifying behavior. Apart from the Spirit, they are not able to bring about true transformation or maturity.

Yet, we should not conclude from this that the behavioral sciences are useless. Their usefulness is like that of other sciences. They are well suited for describing what is wrong and recommending strategies for being “successful” in this world and its systems.

Take for example the physical sciences and engineering. These sciences are useful in designing a building that will withstand the normal forces of nature. Consider the medical sciences. They are quite useful for providing strategies for avoiding diseases and providing guidelines to being restored to health after contracting a disease.

In the same way, behavioral sciences are well-suited for prescribing strategies for dealing with the kind of anger or anxiety that may prevent someone from enjoying healthy relationships with others at school. They can help discover best practices for how work teams can best function to accomplish a worldly goal. They can provide explanations at one level for why church staff interactions are dysfunctional and provide strategies to decrease the amount of dysfunction.²⁵

²³ The elemental forces of this world are connected to the Mosaic law in Galatians 4:3-4, 9-10.

²⁴ Bonhoeffer refers to psychotherapy as ‘secular ascetism,’ which seems akin to what Paul is talking about in Colossians 2. The benefits of psychotherapy for Bonhoeffer are limited to observing, evaluating, and analyzing (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care*, translated by Jay C. Rochelle [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985], 37-38, 81).

²⁵ L. Gregory Jones says it this way, “The gospel does not provide a full account of human psychology, and people need to attend to the complexities of the human psyche and human life. For example, at its best therapy can help people understand the ways in which human lives are enmeshed in complex intrapersonal, interpersonal, and more broadly political relations. Further, it can help people discern and disentangle those issues—particularly

What they cannot do, however, is actually bring about transformation into the image of Christ. They cannot create a new person, or cause someone to manifest the fruits of the Spirit. They cannot cause an angry person to become a person full of gentleness and self-control. They cannot do what the Spirit did in transforming Arthur Milliard from who he was to who he became.²⁶

Consider another analogy, this time using Peter's language in 1 Peter 2:2 where he says, "Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." The means of growing in salvation—of being transformed as "living stones" into the image of Jesus the Living Stone—comes from pure spiritual milk of God's presence.²⁷ Cribs, clothing, pacifiers, sunscreen, strollers, vaccinations, and more are all useful aspects of helping a baby survive in this world. But none of them causes actual growth and development. Babies grow by drinking milk.²⁸

CONCLUSION

The use of behavioral sciences in relation to Christianity is widespread, both within the church and in studying and analyzing the church from the outside. As the use and sophistication of behavioral sciences continues to grow, there is an increasing danger that the findings and pronouncements of the behavioral sciences will continue to confuse and disorient Christians in the same way that findings and pronouncements of the physical and life sciences confuse and disorient Christians.

Into this situation, God speaks the words of 2 Corinthians 3-5, which remind us that when it comes to human maturation there are limitations to what behavioral sciences can observe and achieve. Despite the important role of behavioral sciences in describing some of the effects of human

in relation to the many horrifying tragedies that happen to specific people" (*Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 42).

²⁶ During a personal conversation with Michael Reiffer, a Christian social worker and counselor from Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services, he suggested that the contrast between the values of the law and grace with regard to the issue of pornography can be seen in the success rate of two resources he recommends. On one hand, Arterburn and Stoeker's book, *Every Man's Battle*, is a more law-based approach, which does show some success in restraining the use of pornography, but doesn't result in true transformation (see *Every Man's Battle* [Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2000]). On the other hand, Heath Lambert's *Finally Free* is much better at allowing the Spirit to actually bring about maturation and transformation for the person struggling with pornography through the grace of Jesus (see *Finally Free* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003]).

²⁷ While some think the milk is the "word" from 1 Peter 1:25, it is more likely a reference to God himself since the object of what is "tasted" in 2:3 is God himself.

²⁸ To this point we should add that when a Christian psychologist, for example, uses her spiritual gift of encouragement (or teaching, etc.) in a counseling session with a believer, she is manifesting the Spirit (1 Cor 12:7). This manifestation of the Spirit can and does contribute to the process of transformation and spiritual growth. But the point is that this is happening through her spiritual gift and not as a result of the secular counseling material she may be employing in the session. The same is true when the counselor uses Scripture, prayer and other means of facilitating people's experience of God.

maturation and prescribing behaviors, systems, and strategies for surviving in the world in which we live, behavioral sciences are unable to recognize the role of God in maturation; they cannot see that something new is being created through faith in Jesus; and they are incapable in and of themselves to bring about the true transformation that happens as the Spirit conforms us to the image of Christ.

But as Christians we can rejoice that—regardless of the limitations of the behavioral sciences—the “God, who said, ‘let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.” As a result, “the new creation has come: the old is gone and the new is here” because “we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 4:6, 5:17, 3:18).