

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to compare and contrast what selected theologians and psychologists have written about the nature of human needs in order to discover the extent to which the two accounts can be synthesized. This will involve three convergence/divergence studies: six theologians (Part 1); eight psychologists representing two basic models of personality theory (Part 2); and the theological and psychological accounts of human needs that emerge from the first two studies (Part 3). The concluding chapter will also consider the metaphysical and moral assumptions held by the eight psychologists; psychological accounts of theism and theological accounts of nontheism; the role of human needs in the justification of religious belief; the problem of self-interest and self-love; and a contrast between immanent and transcendent solutions to human needs. The comparison and contrast of the theological and psychological models regarding human needs will also touch on cognate areas like the question of goodness in human nature, the source of morality, the purpose of life, and the quest for meaning in view of the reality of death.

Parts 1 and 2 will extract material related to human needs from the writings of the theologians and psychologists and will focus on primary rather than secondary literature. The critiques of the theologians and psychologists in Chapters 2 and 6 are the author's own. It will be evident from these critiques and especially in the concluding chapter that the presuppositions of the author affirm the world view of Christian theism.

The term "religious belief" is principally applicable to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the psychological accounts are essentially limited to modern Western civilization.

As used in this study, the term "need" refers to physiological, psychological, or spiritual requirements for the welfare of a human being. These requirements are regarded as constitutional to human nature and are not the same as physical, emotional, or spiritual desires, however intense, which are experientially developed. This study does not treat needs as rights; nor does it suppose that constitutional requirements for personal welfare are legitimate of fulfillment at all times. In view of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships as well as the complexity of moral, cultural, and social responsibilities, the presence of a need does not constitute obligatory satisfaction. In addition, this study recognizes that paradigmatic differences lead to disagreements as to the nature of the deepest human needs. Those with a presuppositional stance that deny the existence of a reality beyond the space-time continuum of the cosmos will perceive the most profound human needs as being psychological in nature, while those whose world view acknowledges the existence of a transcendent reality are more likely to perceive the deepest human needs as being spiritual.