

Attachment and the SNAKE in the Garden

BY JOHN ANDERSEN



“

Attachment is our social solution to our deep need for security. Our freedom comes at the price of a profound insecurity. We not only have a freedom to act as agents in the world, but we also have a freedom to shape who we shall become.

”

A distinctive emphasis of the Christian Counsellors Association is the encouragement of integration of Christian faith and professional practice. Such integration occurs on a number of levels. There is the level of implicit and explicit integration of Christian faith with the counselling process in the counselling room. There is the integration of Christian spirituality with a professional outlook in the life of the counsellor. On an intellectual level there is the critical evaluation of psychological theory in the light of theology, and there is the development of theology with reference to psychological theory. This article is an opening exploration in the last form of integration. It represents the development of some initial thoughts towards a theology of attachment.

OUTLINE OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

We have already become aware of the importance of early attachment for affective neurological development, socio-emotional development and identity formation.¹ Four distinct attachment styles in childhood have been identified: secure, insecure-ambivalent, and insecure-avoidant attachment, and insecure-disorganized.² The quality of attachment sets up distinctive developmental trajectories throughout childhood and into adult life. People develop different attachment styles on the basis of these early infant experiences, which form relational patterns that shape their subsequent intimate relationships into adult life, personality, and self-esteem.³ Three corresponding adult attachment patterns have been identified. Adults have either secure, preoccupied (which corresponds to insecure-ambivalent), or dismissive (which corresponds to insecure-avoidant) attachment styles.⁴

A secure attachment style enhances emotional self-regulation and resilience, and prosocial behaviour. It fosters a positive world-view, fosters development of a positive identity characterized by a sense of self-worth, a stable positive self-esteem, security and lovability. It fosters the development of flexible cognitive open-mindedness, openness to experience, and self-confidence to learn and explore. A person with a secure attachment style has a capacity to enter into adult intimate relationships characterized by love, trust, security and an interdependence that reflects a balance of connectedness and independent autonomy. Secure attachment fosters the development of a well-integrated self structure.⁵

In contrast, an insecure-ambivalent attachment style is characterized by a pattern of alternating angry rejection and anxious attention seeking. It is associated with approach-avoidance anxiety and a sensitivity to perceive anger and judgment in others. It leads to self-criticism, lack of self-worth, self-rejection, dismissal, self-doubt, and a disempowered helplessness. In addition, an insecure-avoidant attachment is characterized by a pattern of withdrawal and avoidance of intimacy, and maintaining interpersonal distance and self-reliance. Disorganized attachment is third form of insecure attachment, which is characterized by a chaotic alternation between insecure-ambivalent and secure-avoidant attachment strategies. It is associated with child maltreatment characterized by neglect and physical abuse.⁶

So the quality of our attachment style influences the trajectory of development we shall pursue, with respect to our openness of being to determine who we shall become. Secure attachment fosters identity formation characterized by a sense of adequacy. In contrast, insecure attachment fosters identity formation characterized by a sense of inadequacy. As we shall argue, person's sense of adequacy influences whether a person responds to dread through faith and trust in God or falls into despair.

HUMAN INSECURITY AND DREAD

Attachment is our social solution to our deep need for security. Our freedom comes at the price of a profound insecurity. We not only have a freedom to act as agents in the world, but we also have a freedom to shape who we shall become. Human freedom is based on both a free will to act, and an openness of being to become. Humans not only experience insecurity with respect to the many threats to our well-being in the world. As we shall see, our freedom to shape who we become is also a source of profound insecurity.

The Christian view of humanity as being created in the image of God has a number of distinct features. First, it emphasizes human freedom. We are creatures who move freely in the world as self-aware subjects who make decisions and act as agents in the world. Second, it emphasizes human openness of being with its potentiality to become what we are not yet. We are not prisoners of fate, nor locked into an unavoidable destiny. Rather, we face an undetermined future containing many possibilities. Human destiny is not determined by our creaturely nature as animals. Barth argued that human action has a profoundly inexplicable element; it cannot be regarded as an expression

1 Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 65-167.

2 Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics and Change* (New York: Guilford, 2010), 19-22.

3 Lisa J. Berlin, Jude Cassidy, and Karen Appleyard, "The Influence of Early Attachments on Other Relationships," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 333-47, Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics, and Change* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), 116-40.

4 Kim Bartholomew and Leonard M. Horowitz, "Attachment Styles among Young Adults: A Test of a Four Category Model," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61 (1991): 226-44, Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*, 38-39.

5 John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 2 Separation, Anger and Anxiety*

(London: Random House, 1973/1998), 366-410. Mikulincer and Shaver reviewed over sixty studies that suggested that secure attachments was related to high self-esteem and self-worth, while insecure anxious and insecure avoidant attachment styles were related to low self-esteem and lack of self-worth. Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*, 153-58.

6 Carlson, "A Prospective Longitudinal Study of Attachment Disorganization/Disorientation," Mikulincer and Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood*, 135-283. Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver, *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics and Change* (New York: Guilford, 2010), 188-283.

of nature, but transcends and interacts with nature.⁷ Third, it emphasizes human capacity for self-transcendence. God the Creator created humans as flesh and spirit and placed the us in a frontier position between nature and the transcendent, with an orientation of yearning towards the transcendent. This yearning towards the transcendent lies at the heart of human spirituality. Our self-determining freedom, along with our capacity for self-transcendence results in a self-aware need for purpose and meaning along with a vulnerability to anxiety or dread in the face of the prospect of futility or meaninglessness.⁸

According to Kierkegaard, dread is associated with openness of being to possibility where, "dread is freedom's reality as possibility for possibility."⁹ The object of dread is the possibility of what might be.¹⁰ It is the inevitable consequence of our existence as autopoietic beings, who are inherently capable of change and growth. Who we might become is not predetermined nor defined. Rather, we are presented with a range of open possibilities. This openness of being with its potentiality provides an important basis for human ontological freedom to direct who we shall become, leading to a self-directed formation of ourselves as persons. Along with that freedom comes a weighty responsibility for making responsible choices with respect to that freedom and the requirement of realizing our potential or fulfilling our destiny. This awareness of the twin possibilities of realizing our potential or falling into futility or meaninglessness evokes a deep anxiety or insecurity.

This open ended freedom, however, is not the existential freedom of limitless possibilities. Rather it is a creaturely freedom within limits set by our creaturely nature and the existences of our specific situation.¹¹ It is essentially a relational freedom to exist in relationship with God. Human freedom reflects the quality of this human-divine relationship of personal encounter that God has created us for and summoned us into. Human freedom is limited to influencing the quality of our relation to God; we do not possess the freedom to not be in relation to God.¹² The implication of this is that the social context for the fullest realization of human freedom is a secure relationship with God. Breakdown of our relationship with God inevitably undermines human freedom. This means that freedom and dependence are not opposed to each other, but rather creaturely dependence upon God supports

human freedom.¹³ It also means that the security we need is not found within ourselves, but through secure attachments not only with God but also with other people.

THE SNAKE'S ATTACK ON GOD'S PROHIBITION IN EDEN

An application of attachment theory into theology is based on the recognition that God also is a significant attachment figure. God is one that we turn to for comfort in distress, and one who provides a place of security and safety. Furthermore, the different types of relationship that people form with God tend to fall into the three patterns of adult attachment. What alerted me to this possibility was the recognition that in his dialogue with the couple in Genesis 3:1-6, the primary focus of the snake's attack was the security of Adam and Eve's attachment with God.

There is no indication of insecure attachment in the case of Adam and Eve. All the indicators in Genesis 2 and 3 are that they enjoyed a relationship with God characterized by a secure attachment. God involved Adam in his creative work in requesting him to name the animals. God was consistent in his care for Adam in providing a garden to cultivate and enjoy and a appropriate partner. Adam's initial delight in his woman and their relationship characterized by unashamed nakedness with one another reflects their secure attachment as a couple. So we can conclude that the transgression in Eden occurred within a prior context of secure attachment.

The way that secure attachment functions as an important protective factor against dread provides an explanatory analysis why the target of the snake's deception was Adam and Eve's security and confidence in God. The snake attacked their attachment. When that was undermined, falling into despair and committing sin became a contingency.

The dialogue in Genesis 3:1-5 was between the snake and the couple. This interpretation is based on a close reading of the Hebrew text. There are several clues in the text that suggest that Adam was a silent participant in the dialogue. The most obvious clue is that the snake addressed Eve with a plural 'you', not a single 'you'. The snake stated, "You [pl] certainly will not die" and that "you [pl] eat from it" and "your [pl] eyes will be opened", and "you [pl] will have become". This distinction between second person singular and plural pronouns does not occur in English. The usage of a plural "you" indicates that the snake was addressing both Eve and Adam with her.

That the snake addressed Eve specifically does not exclude the presence of Adam. The ostensive reference directed to the woman non-verbally was itself communication that conveyed an expectation that the woman rather than the man be the one to

7 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2: The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. H. Knight, et al. (London: T & T Clark, 1951/2004), 94, 110.

8 Reinhold Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man: Vol. 1 Human Nature*, London: Nisbet & Co. 1943, 175-76.

9 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, PA: Princeton University Press, 1957), 38.

10 Ibid., 40.

11 Barth maintained that human freedom is delimited by the determination of the Word of God, by our creatureliness, and by the existence of the other. Barth, *C.D. III/2*, 246-48.

12 The importance of this relational context for humanity is reflected in Barth's conception of the image of God as an *analogia relationis of existence in personal encounter with God*. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/1: The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey, and H. Knight (London: T & T Clark, 1951/2004), 193-98.

13 Schleiermacher emphasized that freedom and dependence correspond to each other. Frederick Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1928), 16. He concluded that the essence of piety was "the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God." Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 12.

respond. Typically, a speaker addressing a couple has a choice between making an ostensive reference to one or the other partner, or non-specifically to the couple and then waiting for the couple to decide which person will respond as the spokesperson. In this case the narrator informs the reader that the snake made an ostensive reference addressing the woman.

The second clue was Eve's action in taking the fruit and giving it to the man with her. They both ate the fruit. Then both their eyes were opened. This sequence suggests a simultaneous action, rather than a sequential action that she ate, then her eyes were opened, and then she went and gave to her man. The simultaneous nature of their action as a couple in eating is consistent with the implication that the man was party to the conversation with the snake, even though he was not an active respondent. There is a third structural clue. There is a balance between the first scene and the last scene in this story. In the first scene the snake addresses the woman with the man the silent partner. In the last scene God addresses the man with the woman the silent partner.

The snake opened the dialogue by asking whether it was so that God had forbidden them to eat from any of the trees in the garden. The woman corrected it by specifying that only one tree was forbidden. She stated that God commanded that they should not eat nor touch the fruit of that tree lest they die. A lot has been made of the woman's elaboration of the original prohibition that not only should they not eat it, but they should not even touch it. The snake's comments conveyed a subtle invitation to redefine their relation to God's commandments by entering into an evaluation of God's word rather than simply heeding and obeying it.¹⁴ This was a subtle invitation to shift the position the couple took in relation to God's Word, and by implication to God himself. This perspective reflects modern evangelical theology's emphasis on the Word itself, whereas the thrust of the snake's implications regarded casting doubt on God's motives and by implication the legitimacy of the prohibition itself. On the one hand, this elaboration has been generally interpreted negatively as disparaging the Word by misquoting it.¹⁵ The dispute I have with this type of viewpoint is that it comes close to maintaining an almost magical view of God's Word, that keeping it requires accurately restating it verbatim. This is not the case. Keeping God's Word is concerned with obeying the illocutionary force of the meaning, regardless of whether it is restated verbatim

or is paraphrased. The emphasis on the Word rather than God reflects a subsequent shift, where Law has become impersonal and stands on its own as a legal system. In Eden, the prohibition was a personal one, rather than a legal one. On the other hand, other interpreters have argued that it reflected the couple's decision not even to touch the tree out of respect for God's prohibition.¹⁶ The refusal to touch certainly created a clearer boundary, since touching necessarily must precede eating.¹⁷ The relational perspective is that the woman has placed herself under the prohibition alongside her man and was committed to keeping it diligently. For her, the fruit was not even to be touched.

The snake mounted its argument on a relational, not a technical legal basis. This becomes clear in the snake's next bold statement that God had been deceptive. In fact they would not die. The actual outcome of eating the fruit was that they would possess a knowledge of good and evil and thus become like God. What the snake was inferring was that God was being deceptive, because God was wanting to keep an additional knowledge from them. God was neither sincere nor truthful in making the prohibition. God was acting out of a hidden agenda. Furthermore, it implied that the couple was ignorant and that God was playing them for fools. The validity of a command rested on the authority and the sincerity of the person issuing the command. God's authority to issue commands was not challenged, but God's sincerity in issuing the prohibition was.

I am going to provide some theoretical background as to why this is a telling point. John Searle's speech act theory maintains that people do not merely speak propositions, but they utilize statements to do quite different things. People Searle concluded that there are five types of speech acts: (1) assertives that state propositions to tell people about things, (2) directives that try to get other people to do things, (3) commissives where people commit themselves to specific courses of action, (4) expressives where people express their opinions, feelings and attitudes, and (5) declarations that change relationships and social structures.¹⁸ This means we no longer regard the proposition as the basic unit of language, but one among a number of different speech acts.

Speech acts have distinctive criteria for validity. Searle maintained that a speech act must satisfy three conditions to be valid: the preparatory condition, the sincerity condition, and the essential

14 Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol 1 - Genesis to Deuteronomy. McLean, VA: MacDonald, 1985, 22-3. T. W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis I - XXV: A Devotional Commentary* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1913), 49. Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Creation and Fall*. Translated by Douglas Steven Bax. Edited by John W. DeGruchy, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1937/1997, 109-10.

15 This view has been widely held: Luther, Martin *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1 - 5*, Translated by Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *Luther's Works*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia 1958, 155; Thomas, *Genesis I - XXV*, 48-49; von Rad, Gerhard, *A Commentary*. 2 ed. London: SCM, 1966, 88; Aalders, G. C. *Genesis Volume 1*, trans. William Heynen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 100; McKeown, James. *Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008, 35; Karl. *Genesis 1 - 11: A Commentary*. Translated by John J. Scullion. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1984, 239-40; Davis, John D. *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Bookhouse, 1975, 88.

16 Henry, *Commentary*, 22-23, Matthew Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible: Volume 1 Genesis to Job*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1700/1985, 9; Driver, S. R. *The Book of Genesis*. 5th ed. London: Methuen, 1906.45. Tribble related her action to the elaboration of the rabbis in the Mishnah aimed at 'building a fence around the Torah' to ensure obedience to it. Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. London: SCM, 1978, 110. Calvin regarded this elaboration as expressing, "her pious disposition by anxiously observing the precept of God." John Calvin, *A Commentary on Genesis*. Translated by John King. London: Banner or Truth, 1578/1965, 149.

17 Cassuto arrived at a similar conclusion. He noted that this verb 'touch' has a graver connotation than merely touching, such as 'touching' a woman in the sense of sexual relations. So he suggests this verb is functioning synonymously with "you shall not eat". Cassuto, Umberto. *From Adam to Noah: Genesis I - VI.8*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961, 145.

18 John R. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 39-110.

condition. For example, in order to give a valid order, the preparatory condition that the speaker should be in a position of authority over the hearer needs to be satisfied. The sincerity condition is that the speaker genuinely wants the ordered act done. The essential condition has to do with the fact that the utterance aims to get the hearer to do it. The preparatory condition for assertions that the speaker has some basis for supposing the asserted proposition is true. The sincerity condition is that the speaker must believe the proposition to be true. The essential condition has to do with the fact that the utterance is an attempt to inform and convince the hearer of its truth.¹⁹

The snake was asserting that God's assertion that they would die if they ate the fruit, failed to satisfy the sincerity condition. This invalidated God's assertion. The warning that they would die provided the rationale for the prohibition. It implied that God

This turned out to be the decisive moment. Eve had a choice to either believe the truth of what the snake was asserting here or to reject it. She believed the snake. The snake implied that she was ignorant, and she lacked a knowledge that the snake possessed and that God was deliberately withholding from them. The consequence of her belief was that her eyes were 'opened' to God's deceptiveness. This would have been a humiliating moment. It would have cast into question the nature of God's relationship with them. Was God reliable? Was God truthful? Could God be trusted?

Then she considered the fruit, desired it and the street-wise wisdom it would provide, and she and Adam with her ate. This was not an act of disbelief in God's Word as much as an act of distrust in the Speaker of that Word. They no longer trusted God. Their naive security was replaced by a distressing insecurity in



was concerned for their welfare. Because the assertion provided the rationale for the prohibition, by implication it also called the validity of the prohibition into question. Going beyond that, it also called the relationship with God itself into question, because the relationship was based on the mutual understanding that God loved and cared for them; that they had a relationship of special intimacy and trust.

God. And disobedience was the outcome. The irony was, that eating the fruit did not have the result they expected. They did not gain the kind of wisdom they were anticipating. They discovered they had been "sold a bum steer", and their eyes were opened to the snake's deception. They discovered that they had been deluded. But it was too late.

One implication we can draw from this discourse is that a secure attachment in God characterized by obedience and trust functions as a protective factor that prevents a person from sin. In contrast, undermining this secure attachment in God makes a person vulnerable to sinful disobedience. A further implication

¹⁹ John R. Searle, "What Is a Speech Act?" pp. 39-53 in *Philosophy of Language*, edited by John R. Searle. London: Oxford University Press, 1971, 53.

of this is that a restored secure attachment in God provides an essential relational foundation for the pursuit of righteousness and godliness that is a distinguishing feature of the Christian life.

RESPONSES TO DREAD

At this point attachment theory provides a valuable elaboration to Kierkegaard's analysis of dread. He maintained that a person responds to dread either by faith or by falling into despair. On the one hand, a secure attachment in one's relationship to God provides the basis for a stance of faith and self-contentment and a response of courage and constructive self-development in the face of dread. This response is based on a self-concept in terms of belonging, self-worth, self-efficacy that is consistent with a secure attachment style.

On the other hand, the response of despair is a consistent expression of an insecure attachment style in respect to dread. Kierkegaard suggested that there are three forms by which despair is expressed. First, the sin of despairing over one's sin. Despair over one's own sinfulness adds a second layer to despair, in that it actually is a despair over the possibility of repentance and grace. This despair leads to the second form - despair over forgiveness. These two forms of despair correspond to preoccupied attachment. Finally, (3) there is the form of despair that abandons Christianity altogether, declaring it to be a falsehood. This conforms to dismissive attachment.²⁰

Barth also identified three alternative ways of responding when faced with dread in frontier situations between being-as-lack and being as realizable potential. They are either: faith expressed in trust and unconditional surrender, or defiance expressed in either conditional surrender or rejection or denial, or resignation, a passive non responsiveness of boredom or apathy, ennui, indifference.²¹ The latter two options are expressions of despair.

These alternatives characterize the choices that the couple faced in the garden. What was required was a complete trust and contentment in the rightness of who God had created them to be.²² This is profound, because acceptance of whom God has created the person to be begins with acceptance of oneself as good and created by God, rather than judging oneself against alternative possibilities of being. To accept oneself as created by God is to abide by God's judicial judgment regarding the rightness of the way God has created oneself. This was the option of faith expressed in trust and unconditional surrender.

The alternative was to heed the snake's suggestion to take the path of open defiance. They not only rejected the prohibition, in seeking to transcend themselves and become like God, they also rejected the status God has assigned to them. The couple chose this option. In doing so, they rejected their God-given human

freedom to live in relationship with God within the limits of creaturely existence God had set. They also rejected contentment to exist as creatures under the determination of the Word of God, for a spuriously unlimited 'freedom' to pursue the undetermined possibilities inherent in their openness of being. What they did not realize was their determination to become what-they-were-not, was in effect to fall into a despair to not-being-who-one-is. The third option, that of a quiet passive apathetic despair was not offered to them, nor did they take it.

Barth's analysis suggests that the way a person will choose to respond in the face of dread is influenced by the quality of that person's attachment to God. A secure attachment pattern in relationship with God will be expressed through a mature spirituality characterized by a confidence in being beloved and accepted by God through Jesus Christ. The Gospel presents us with God's invitation to enter into a secure attachment with our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. Its core message is that God loves us. It emphasizes forgiveness, that God completely accepts us unconditionally, that God our Father will unfailingly provide for us. God is available as a secure base for us to turn to. Christ summons us into a secure attachment relationship with our heavenly Father.

Unfortunately, this is not always the message that the church has preached. Instead, it has summoned unbelievers into an insecure preoccupied attachment with God. It has done this by fostering a pervasive sense of guilt in the Catholic tradition. This emphasis on guilt has fostered a sense of unworthiness and a reliance upon the priest to provide relief from guilt through the sacrament of confession. This doctrinal emphasis entrenched a deep insecurity with respect to God. In a similar fashion, the Protestant preaching of the Cross too often has proclaimed the peril of endless torment through hell-fire at the hands of a merciless holy judge. God is depicted as a holy perfectionistic wrathful judge who cannot be appeased. It deliberately fostered a corresponding fear of judgment and condemnation for one's many sins. This results in heightened dread and anxiety that the person is all too aware of. It is not good evangelism. We should be not surprised that people have declined such an invitation, preferring to deny and reject God all together. The response of an unbelieving indifferent agnosticism reflects the choice for an insecure avoidant or dismissive attachment. This results in a disavowed dread and anxiety.

In addition to being poor evangelism, any teaching that fosters an insecure attachment with God through an emphasis on guilt and judgment fails in its intent to develop righteousness. As the story of Eden illustrates, insecurity in our relationship with God increases our exposure to dread, and our vulnerability to meeting our need for security through sinful means. What really fosters a motivation to pursue godliness is a deep sense of being loved and accepted by God. A secure attachment with God releases a drive towards growth, maturity, uprightness out of a positive sense of worth and uprightness. This means that pursuit of holiness is fostered by creating security in relation to God, rather

²⁰ Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, 240-57.

²¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*, 116-17.

²² Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/1*, 260.

than fostering an anxious insecurity.

Accordingly, a secure attachment with God is an important protective factor against the dread and despair that lead to sin. Secure attachment with God not only provides relational security, but psychosocial security in our adequacy as persons in relationship with God. Confident trust in and surrender to God as the righteous response to dread presupposes a secure attachment with God. This is why their attachment was targeted by the snake in its deception.

When facing the insecurity of dread, we can respond by claiming our security in our attachment to God who becomes our secure base and our adequacy of being as one created in the image of God. This security finds its expression in faith, hope and love. This is where we find our courage to be. This alternative releases the energy of vitality and creativity that gives rise to righteous human existence. The other alternative is we fall into dread and despair, insecurity and shame. The outcome is inevitably an entrenched sinfulness.

There is an obvious clinical application from this argument. If we want our Christian clients to develop a real resilience and orientation towards spiritual maturity and godliness, then we need to help them become more securely attached to God, and fully assured of God's grace, love and acceptance. Where Christian clients indicate that they have an insecure attachment with God that is guilt-ridden, or anxious about their acceptability, or fearful of judgment and condemnation of sin, then this needs to be challenged. Not only is such a relationship detrimental from a psychological health and well-being perspective, but it is detrimental spiritually. It is simply is not the relationship that God wants to have with his people.

 **John Andersen.** John is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary in theology and marriage and family therapy, and a former head of the counselling school at Tabor College Victoria. He is presently in private practice as a psychologist, and serves as Victorian President of CCAA in his spare time.

