

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF ANGER CONTROL

By Dr. Yong-Tae Kim¹

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the dominant power of the contemporary society in the field of psychotherapy is the ability of observation about the psychology of humans. Almost all of the scientific data come from the observation of the external reality with minimizing the personal biases. Based on the objective data, the prescription has been made to solve the problems. This is the basic approach to the study of the psychology of humans in the field of psychotherapy. The method of study is the descriptive approach.

In the field of psychotherapy, the description of a person's psychology has a character of prescription. If someone describes a person in a particular way, the person will be defined according to that description. Then the person is already under the influence of the description. Therefore, the pure descriptive approach without the influence of the description to the person cannot be made. Prescriptive description is always related to certain criteria to control the description.

In order to control anger, the study should be made from the prescriptive approach. The descriptive approach of anger control is different from that of the prescriptive approach. The descriptive approach excludes any value judgment about human nature and attitude. Based on the ideal image of human nature, the prescriptive approach provides a method of anger control. From the Christian perspective, the ideal image should come from the Bible, which is the Word of God. The main purpose of this paper is to provide a model for controlling anger from the prescriptive approach according to the Christian worldview.

From the Christian psychotherapeutic perspective, the psychology of humans should be understood from the biblical perspective. Concerning human nature, the Bible presents that it is sinful from the moral law of God. The nature of sin in the Bible is reviewed. The point that anger comes from the sinful nature is made. A

¹Dr. Yong-Tae Kim is Assistant Professor of Christian Counseling at Torch Trinity Graduate School of Theology.

different understanding of anger gives a foundation for a different way of controlling anger. Based on this foundation, a prescriptive approach for controlling anger is suggested.

A REVIEW OF THE NATURE OF SIN

The nature of sin in the Bible is quite different from the concept of sin in this world. In order to understand the biblical view of sin, the frame of reference should be changed radically. In this world, the concept of sin is no longer useful because people do not label violent behaviors as sin. Rather they label them as crime (Menninger, 1973). The meaning of crime is quite different from that of sin in the biblical sense. Without changing the paradigm, it is very difficult to understand the nature of sin.

The Relational Context Between God and Human Being

A large body of literature explains the nature of sin in the relational context of God (Erickson, 1998; Grudem, 1994; Enns, 1989; Ryrie, 1986; Guthrie; 1981). Enns (1989) gives a definition of sin as follows: "Sin is a failure to conform to the standard of God" (p. 310). His definition is supported by the biblical passages of Romans 3:23 and 14:23 (Enns, 1989, p. 310). The biblical passage Romans 3:23 says "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (NIV). The other biblical passage Romans 14:23 speaks of the necessity of faith in God. If a human does something without faith in God, then the person commits sin against God. In order to understand the nature of sin, the relational context between God and human is very important. Ryrie (1986) also gives a definition of sin through the term of "transgression" (p. 209). The concept of transgression is supported by the biblical passages of 1 Kings 12:19; 2 Kings 3:5; Proverbs 28:21; and Isaiah 1:2 (Ryrie, 1986, p. 209). The concept of transgression is related to the rebellion against God. The biblical passage 1 Kings 12: 19 says, "So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day" (NIV). The Israelites have sinned against God through rebellious actions and attitudes.

It is clear that the nature of sin should be understood in the relational context. The nature of sin in the Bible as well as in the world

is considered in terms of the relationship. The concept of sin in the world is defined in the context of other people. If a person does an action, then the action should be judged in relationship with other people. If the action does not cause anything harmful to other people, then the person has not sinned. In the same way, the nature of sin in the Bible is understood in terms of the relationship between God and human. The terms of faith and transgression represent the relational context of God and human. It is clear that the nature of sin is relational, not individual.

A view of sin gives a clue to consider the nature of sin as a relational term. Erikson (1998) says, "The essence of sin is simply failure to let God be God" (p. 598). He further says that "choosing any finite object over God is wrong, no matter how selfless such an act might be." If humans do not put God in the proper place, then they commit sin because of the displacement of God. Therefore, the nature of sin should be understood in terms of the relationship with God. The relational context is the basic and primary modality that should be considered in understanding the nature of sin. Many scholars consider the relational context between God and humans as a dimension. Smedes (1993) specifies several different dimensions of shame. Spiritual dimension is one of them. The relational context between God and humans is called the spiritual dimension. When people think of many dimensions of individual action, the spiritual dimension is one of them. In this sense, the relational context of God and humans is one of many other dimensions. If the spiritual dimension is considered as a dimension, people assume that many other dimensions are equally important. This thought is very relativistic and value-free. The Bible is the special revelation of God to human beings. The biblical nature of sin in the relational context cannot be considered as a dimension in comparison with other dimensions. The relational context of God and human should be considered as the basic modality of understanding the nature of sin.

The Biblical Law as the Standard of God

The nature of sin should be understood in terms of God's law. In other words, sin is defined in the nature of God-centeredness. Erikson (1998) says "a common element running through all of these varied ways of characterizing sin is the idea that the sinner has failed to

fulfill God's law" (p. 595). The law of God is the absolute standard to judge the nature of human sin. For example, the habit of eating in the passage of Romans 14:23 is not wrong in this world because the habit is not harmful to other people. The standard of sin in the world is related to the standard of human law, which is very behavioristic. Even though a person has hatred toward other people in his/her mind, the person has not sinned as long as the person has not acted against them behaviorally. But the person already committed sin against them according to the standard of God's law because the hatred itself is judged as sin in the Bible. God is the supreme authority to judge what is sin and what is not sin.

From the perspective of God-centeredness, the Bible is the final authority to be used to judge what sin is. The Bible is the special revelation from God to human society. The Bible was inspired by God through human writers. The Bible is the Word of God. According to the passage of John 1:1, the Word is the same as God, saying "The Word was with God. The Word was God" (NIV). The biblical principles should be used as the primary standard to define the nature of sin. The biblical principles are always moralistic to human beings. God's standard is the moral law for human beings.

Sin as Act, Attitude, and Nature

Grudem (1994) defines sin as follows: "Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature" (p. 490). According to the definition, the concept of sin is not just an act but also attitude and nature. In terms of act, the following wrong behaviors are clearly understood as sins: adultery, lying, violence, cheating, etc. These behaviors are also considered as sins in the world without applying the standard of God. These sins are called crime instead of sin (Menninger, 1973, pp. 50-73).

Another area of sin is attitude, which is not considered as sin in the world. Paul's idea of sin in the Bible clearly shows sin as attitude in Romans 1: 29-31. In this passage, all of the terms, "arrogant," "envy," "insolent," "faithless," "heartless," "ruthless," are denominators of the sinful attitude of human beings. In the explanation of the nature of sin, Guthrie (1981) introduces the idea of Paul as follows: "He was also concerned to demonstrate that no essential difference existed between

the wide range of sins stretching from extreme criminal acts like murder to attitudes of mind like jealousy or hatred” (p. 203).

One of the important areas of sin is nature. The concept of nature is understood in a totally different way in the world. It is understood as a natural entity which cannot be considered as having any moral goodness or badness. In the field of psychotherapy, many scholars have a neutral position and set aside value judgment in studying and in dealing with human nature. But it is clear in the Bible that human nature is sinful. In Romans 5:8, the passage clearly states the concept of nature as follows: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (NIV). Erickson (1998) also mentions the idea of sinful nature, saying “We are not simply sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners” (p. 596). From God’s perspective, human beings have the nature of sinfulness.

OBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY OF ANGER

In the field of psychotherapy, scholars study human beings from the neutral perspective. They never question why human beings should behave this way or that way from the moral standpoint of view. Browning (1987) says concerning this issue that “the modern psychologies primarily offer modern culture theories of the ‘nonmoral good’ which tell us what human beings naturally and regularly want and need” (p. preface xi). What a person wants and needs is just natural and neutral to access without questioning whether it is good or bad. Human psychology is an object to study scientifically and objectively.

Browning (1987) proposes two different approaches in studying psychology (p. preface xi). One approach sees “psychology as a relatively objective and scientific discipline dedicated to the development of a body of knowledge about the patterns in human symbolic and behavioral activity” (Browning, 1987, p. preface xi). This is the model of a non-Christian view of study in the field of psychotherapy. It is a belief that human psychology exists beyond the question of morality. The other approach sees “psychology as a practical discipline based on a critical ethic and a critical theory of society” (Browning, 1987, p. preface xi). The later model of psychology is in agreement with the Christian view. Human sin is not

just limited to human action but also enlarged to human nature and attitude as already mentioned in the previous section.

Anger as a psychology of human mind has been studied scientifically as an object. From the model of objective science, anger has been studied. Along the line, the treatment of anger has been suggested to the psychotherapists. From the moral perspective, the treatment of anger has some problems which will be pointed out in this section. For this purpose, the review of anger treatment will be made. Secondly, a critical review of the anger treatment will be made from the moral standpoint.

A Brief Review of the Study of Anger

The origin of anger has three different positions (Augsburger, 1985; Kim, 1993). The first position comes from the psychoanalytic tradition, which is based on Freudian thoughts. The tradition holds the hydraulic notion, which is related to the idea of energy conservation. Anger originated from the physical body because of the stimuli from the environment. Anger is an entity which can be stored in the body. It should be expressed because it is stored. If not, it is very dangerous because it will explode later. The explosion is related to aggressive behaviors which are considered as death instinct. Anger comes from the innate instinctual drive which is an issue of survival because of the hostile environment. Anger plays a role of adjustment and survival. In order to adjust to the hostile world, anger is stored in some parts of the physical body. Anger piles up when a person tries to adjust to the environment more and more. The anger should be controlled in a way by letting off steam. But it can never be controlled totally because it is a part of biological instinct (Averill, 1983).

The second position comes from the tradition of cognitive behavioral theory. This tradition holds that anger originates from psychological frustration. Anger comes from the interaction between the factors of cognition and of emotion. Anger as an emotional response comes from the frustration of cognitive expectation. Cognitive expectation is the primary source which generates anger. Especially, the social learning tradition emphasizes the role of important people because anger has been learned through those people's behaviors. Experiences with such people make emotional arousal lead to the behaviors of aggression. The role of anger is related to protection from

frustration. If a person has an unrealistic expectation about something, it causes tension in the mind. The tension is related to the feelings of anxiety, fear, and confusion. Anger plays a role of not confronting the gloomy emotions. Anger also plays a role of socialization. According to the social learning theory, anger is learned through the behaviors of the important people. Anger is one of the functions in interaction with other people. Through learning the behaviors of anger, a person tries to adjust to society without creating any tension.

The third position comes from the tradition of phenomenological theories. This tradition emphasizes the importance of an individual's reaction to the world from the perspective of the person's perceptions (Augsburger, 1985, p. 484). The person's subjective reality is crucial for the understanding of anger. In this tradition, anger is understood as a perceived or felt emotion to the world. For example, if someone perceives power as a source of self-assertion, then the person can have aggression because of this perception (Augsburger, 1985, p. 484). Perception is related to the person's existence in this world. Anger plays the role of energizing a person to feel that he or she is alive because anger is one of the live emotions. On the other hand, anger plays the role of destructive behavior which leads to aggression toward other people. The role of anger depends on the perception of the person.

A group of scholars are in agreement that anger is an emotion of the human mind in response to stress (Feindler and Ecton, 1986, p. 2; Maiuro, Cahn, Vitaliano, Wager, and Zegree, 1988, p. 17; Carter and Minirth, 1993, p. 8). Anger as an emotion has three different components as follows: physiological state, which is related to bodily arousal; cognitive state, which comes from the internal demands in the relationship with the environment; and the existential state, which is related to the drive in the person to feel existence in the world (Augsburger, 1985, p. 484). From this brief review, it is clear that anger is related to the following factors: the physical aspect, the cognitive aspect, and the perception aspect. Anger also has several different functions in the world. In the study of anger, many other factors should be considered to understand and control the emotion of anger. The relational context is one of the important factors to be understood.

A Critique of the Study of Anger

The nature of sin is related to the relational context of God and humans, and the standard of God. Sin is related to the nature, act, and attitude of the psychology of human beings. The concept of anger is defined as a neutral term of emotion. The definition of anger is just like a description of things in the physical world. A description of the physical world does not have any influence on the things in the physical world. In order to study things in the physical world, a description without any bias is very necessary. But in the study of anger, the description of anger directly influences the human mind. With the definition, humans think cognitively. Even though the definition of anger is described as an emotion, the term comes from the cognitive world. It means that the term of emotion is already colored by cognitive function. The description of the emotion of human psychology cannot be purely emotional. It is mixed with the cognitive function of human psychology.

The origin of anger shows that anger is basically an entity or an attitude. The biological and cognitive view of anger is related to the concept of entity of anger. The view of social learning is related to the concept of attitude of anger. The entity view of anger holds the position that anger is a function of individual psychology. Within the individual psychology, anger is produced and plays a certain role of protection and care. The attitude view holds the position that anger is a function of social psychology. From the social context, anger is produced and plays a certain role of adjustment and socialization to the environment.

The study of anger is limited to the context of human psychology—i.e., either individual or social. The context of God and human has nothing to do with the study of anger in the scientific study. The study of anger lacks the understanding of how the standard of God plays a role in this study. In order to understand the function of anger, it is very important for us to consider the context. The role of anger will vary according to the context. If the function of anger is considered from the context of both God and human, not merely from human context, then there are many different views about the function of anger. The study of anger in the world has failed to understand the prescriptive knowledge of anger treatment. But the work of anger treatment has always been done in the context of the prescriptive world. In order to do something prescriptive, one must study underlying

beliefs and assumptions. Without recognizing them, the work of anger control can be misled.

A PRESCRIPTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF ANGER CONTROL

In this section, there will be a discussion to prove how anger is related to the sinful nature of human beings. In terms of three different aspects of anger, the integration will be discussed. After proving the sinfulness of anger, there will be a new understanding of anger and its control.

An Integration Between Anger and Sin

From the aspect of action in controlling anger, it is very clear that anger is related to sin from the moral point of view. Menninger (1973) proposes that anger is related to many other sinful behaviors. He says, "Anger, leading to hurtful words or acts, can be a personal, individual transgression which has to be controlled in its outward expression before it dictates destructive behavior" (p. 143). Anger is related to many destructive behaviors, such as giving hurt, hitting others, killing others, and other kinds of behaviors. These behaviors are definitely sinful, without question. These behaviors are defined as criminal behaviors even in the world, without assuming the moral principles of the Bible.

Graham, Hudley, and Williams (1992) found that anger is related to the violent behaviors of aggression toward peer group through the study of African-American and Latino young adolescents. In this study, anger is related to the hostility which is directly related to aggressive behaviors. Those behaviors are antisocial behaviors which are crimes in society. Maiuro, Cahn, Vitaliano, Wagner, and Egree (1988) also found that anger is related to other emotions of depression, hostility, and rage. The emotions of depression are highly related to domestic violence. They found out that depressed people feel frustration severely and do violent actions toward other people.

From various research literature, it is very clear from the moral point of view that anger is related to destructive behaviors which are sins. This is the reason why many psychotherapists and researchers are interested in controlling anger. In order to control the sin behavior,

psychotherapists are interested in reducing the level of anger which will lead to violent behaviors. Their concern is not to transform sinful nature to good nature, but to change behavioral patterns of violence. From the behavioral aspect of anger, both Christians and non-Christians agree with each other that violent behaviors are sins.

From the aspect of the attitude of anger, it is also clear that anger is related to sinfulness. There are several evidences that anger is related to the attitude of hostility. In the study of Graham, Hudley, and Williams, anger is related to the attitude of hostility. The attitude of hostility is definitely a sinful attitude from the moral standpoint of view. The Bible exhorts Christians to have a loving attitude toward others. A hostile attitude is the opposite attitude to that of being loving and warm.

Anger also produces other sinful attitudes, such as being cynical, manipulative, cold, harmful, and so on. All of these attitudes are clearly sinful from the moral perspective even though they are not related directly to crimes. These attitudes are not desirable in relationships with other people in the world. Humans in the world agree that those attitudes are not desirable but do not agree that these behaviors are sinful because they do not have the absolute criteria of God's standards. From the biblical point of view, these attitudes are clearly sinful because they are contrary to the attitude of love and cooperation.

Much research in this field reveals that anger is related to other sinful natures, such as aggression and depression. Feindler and Ecton (1986) explain that anger is related to aggression by the attribution process, which is primarily a function of cognition. Kim, Park, and Kang (1995) presented the three different cognitive functions which are related to anger. One of the cognitive functions is extreme thoughts which are not realistic in this world. For example, those extreme thoughts are as follows: "I am always the winner." "I never fail in my life." "I am the top person in the world." These extreme thoughts are very unrealistic. As a person, he/she cannot be idealistic. Only God is perfect. The extreme thoughts are related to the thought of displacement of God, which is another sin from the biblical point of view. Humans want to occupy the place of God. Erickson (1988) says that "the essence of sin is simply failure to let God be God" (p. 598). Humans try to challenge God through extreme thoughts. They never

allow God to be God in their lives especially in times of anger. This is a clear evidence that anger is related to the sinful nature of human beings.

Secondly, the cognitive function is related to the thought of dichotomy. For example, those thoughts of dichotomy are as follows: “I am right. You are wrong.” “I am superior. You are inferior.” “I am better. You are worse.” In the dichotomy sense, anger is related to the attitude of selfishness. These thoughts have nothing to do with sin from the objective scientific point of view. From the moral standpoint of view, the relational context of God and humans should be considered to determine whether the nature is sinful or not. There is a view of sin in relation to self-centeredness in the Bible. Erikson (1998) says that “sin is essentially selfishness—the choice of self as the supreme end which constitutes the antithesis of supreme love to God” (p. 597). The messages from anger come from the selfish nature, not from the altruistic nature.

Thirdly, anger is related to shouldistic thought in the human level and not in God’s level. These thoughts are as follows: “I should be accepted by others.” “I should have good feelings.” “I should be a good person.” In the Bible, God already presents the ideal image of human beings. The Bible also teaches that humans cannot live up to the level of God’s ideal image. Humans fail many times in various cases and situations because humans are sinners. Even though humans have their own should-image, they cannot maintain this image regardless of their situations and times. In other words, humans are challenged to this impossible mission for their lives because they do not rely on God’s truth. This is the failure to agree that they let God be God in their lives. Their should-image is their idol instead of accepting God. They are sinners because they fail to accept God as God.

Anger is related to cognitive distortion, which is called irrational belief in cognitive psychotherapy. Cognitive distortion is not desirable because it creates violence and other miserable feelings. Through changing irrational belief, cognitive psychotherapists want to change people’s minds. Even though they agree that cognitive distortion is not desirable, they fail to explain why humans have cognitive distortion. From the objective scientific point of view, the reasons cannot be explained because the scope of the worldview is limited to human society. From the standpoint of God’s perspective, it is very easy to understand the phenomena. Cognitive distortion comes from the sinfulness of human beings.

Anger is related to other sinful natures, such as fear, depression, anxiety and other emotions. Kim (1993) proposes a connection between anger and fear and anxiety. He explains that cognitive distortion produces fear and anxiety which will lead to anger. Carter and Minirth (1993) also propose that anger is related to pain and confused feelings. When humans face difficult situations, they try to avoid the situation. When they find out that the avoidance is impossible, then anger will arise in their mind. These studies show that anger is intrinsically sinful nature because anger grows out of fear, anxiety, and pain. Anger comes from the sinful nature of human beings.

In all of the three different aspects, anger is related to sinfulness of the human mind. Anger comes from the sinful nature of human beings. If the basic assumption of the sinfulness of anger is accepted, the anger control should not pay attention to the action dimension only in order to block the violent behaviors. From the moral point of view, anger should be understood differently from that of objective scientific view.

A Different Approach to Anger Control

From the moral standpoint of view, the concept of anger can be differently defined. Collins (1988) presents two different kinds of anger: “divine anger” (p. 121) and “sinful anger” (p. 122). The definition of divine anger is “vigorous, intense, controlled, and consistent with God’s love and mercy” (Collins, 1988, p. 121). In the Bible, there is a number of passages regarding divine anger, both in the Old Testament and New Testament. In the Old Testament, God showed His wrath toward the sinful Israelites. In the New Testament, Jesus showed His anger toward the Pharisees and moneychangers in the temple. Divine anger has nothing to do with sin because it comes from God’s love and mercy. God is always “wise, sovereign, powerful, perfect, and all-knowing, he never misinterprets a situation, never feels threatened, never loses his control, and is always angered by sin and injustice” (Collins, 1988, p. 121). Divine anger always opposes injustice and sin.

Humans also want to have divine anger against sin and injustice because they are created in the image of God. But humans cannot have pure divine anger. Even though they intend to manifest divine anger, they are not capable because they “misinterpret

circumstances, make mistakes in judgment, react quickly when we feel threatened or hurt, and sometimes respond with vengeance and vindictiveness” (Collins, 1988, p. 121). The fall of Adam and Eve influenced all parts and areas of human beings. Even though humans want to know the truth, they cannot know the truth without the help of the Holy Spirit. Enns (1989) referring to total depravity says “the corruption of sin extends to all men and to all parts of all men so that there is nothing within the natural man that can give him merit in God’s sight” (p. 311). He further says, “Total depravity does not mean that everyone is as thoroughly depraved in his actions as he could possibly be, nor that everyone will indulge in every form of sin, nor that a person cannot appreciate and even do acts of goodness” (p. 311).

Even though humans are corrupted, they still want to manifest divine anger. Without the help of God, they cannot have divine anger. When parents get angry with their children, they try to manifest divine anger but fail to continue with it. The parents’ anger against their children’s sin and injustice is a specific form of divine anger. Oates (1973) says that “anger is related to specific, realistic injustices. Anger can be defined as a realistic response to a specific injustice” (p. 212). In this sense, parents have divine anger only in the level of motivation or intention. It is very hard for the parents to maintain divine anger while expressing their anger to watch their children. Even though they fail to maintain divine anger, they still can have divine anger. This is a base for changing the term divine anger. At the human level, it is preferable to use the term “righteous anger” in the discussion of anger. In the motivational or intentional level, the righteous anger has nothing to do with sin. With the help of the Holy Spirit, humans can maintain the righteous anger without committing sin.

There is another kind of anger which is called natural anger. Collins (1988) says, “Sinful anger can be expressed in a variety of ways including vengeance, verbal abuse, dishonest sharing, and even a refusal to admit that one is angry” (p. 122). The term “sinful anger” has the same meaning as the term natural anger, which means sin. Natural anger is always mixed with righteous anger. For example, once parents get angry with their children, they easily develop natural anger. Even though they started with the motivation of righteous anger, they cannot avoid natural anger in their mind. In order to control the anger, the target should be natural anger, not righteous anger, because natural anger is always related to the sinful nature of human beings. But

righteous anger should be considered in controlling anger because it is related to good motivation. For the purpose of controlling anger, good things should be kept through affirmation. But bad things should be decreased through negation.

There are several differences in controlling anger between the natural science perspective and the moral perspective. The two approaches are different in purpose, scope, and way of controlling anger. The first difference is related to the purpose for controlling the anger. The final purpose of controlling anger from the natural science perspective is to reduce the destructive behavior of violence. In other words, the professionals in this model are interested in the behavioral aspect of anger. In this model, the concept of sin is limited to violent behaviors. In order to reduce violent behaviors, thoughts and emotions are considered in terms of treatment. From the psychoanalytic perspective, anger control is related to expression of the emotion rather than explosion. If the emotion of anger is expressed appropriately, then violent behaviors will not happen. From the cognitive behavioral model, to change irrational beliefs or to show a good model is the most important task because anger is related to cognitive distortion and is a bad modeling. From the existential and phenomenological tradition, reframing is the most important task because anger comes from the perception of the angry person. All of the techniques of expression, changing cognitive distortion, and affirmation are targeting to reduce the level of violence. Once the level of destructive behaviors is reduced and allowable in the society, then anger control is successful.

The purpose for controlling anger from the Christian perspective is to meet God's moral standards. The purpose of controlling anger is related to restoring the image of God in the humans. In order to restore the image of God, humans should follow Jesus Christ. In the biblical passage of Ephesians 5:1, the Bible says, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (NIV). About the imitating work of Christians, Stanton and Butman (1991) say, "We are to be continually striving to actualize the image we have been entrusted with in an ever more conspicuous and pure fashion, to work diligently and deliberately to image our Maker" (p. 405). In order to imitate Jesus Christ, all of the aspects of anger should be considered in controlling. Through

controlling the anger, humans can improve their natural qualities based on the standard of Jesus' personality.

The second difference is related to the perception of anger control. Scholars who hold the position of the natural science approach neutralize the emotion of anger. The emotion of anger itself is always valid because there is no value judgment about anger. The emotion itself is natural and neutral. Most of the professionals try to affirm that it is not wrong to be angry because it is not bad. They encourage the angry person to realize the emotion without value judgment. Even though there is much research literature related to the study of the nature of emotion, the focus is on violent behaviors. Graham, Hudley, and Williams (1992), in their study, are interested in the nature of emotion which is related to aggressive behaviors. Zwemer and Deffenbacher (1984) studied the relationship between the nature of anger and the presence of destructive behaviors. These studies show an implication that the emotion of anger itself was not their major concern. The emotion of anger is not directly related to the control of anger.

The prescriptive approach is directly concerned with the emotion of anger. The two different understandings are necessary in order to relate to the issue of emotion. The first issue is that the emotion comes from the sinful nature. Whenever a person gets angry, he/she should acknowledge that he/she is a sinner. It is a confirmation of his/her sinful nature through the emotion of anger. The second issue is that a person commits sins against other human beings and God. Whenever a person gets angry, the person should acknowledge that he/she is committing sins because the emotion of anger is an expression of a concrete sin. The two different issues help the person to realize the need to have deep recognition about him/herself. Through the emotion of anger, the person realizes that he is a sinner and commit sins. The person needs to confess his sins before God and others. The emotion of anger is a sign to confess and to be forgiven by others and God.

Based on the differences of the two approaches, the prescriptive approach can present a different way of controlling anger. After confession of sins, there is another procedure to control anger. In the aspect of the nature of anger, acceptance is necessary that humans are sinners whenever they see natural anger in their mind. When humans accept themselves as sinners, they also accept God as God. This notion is related to the view of sin as the displacement of God. Erikson (1998) says, "In a real sense our doctrine of sin will reflect our

doctrine of God. Our understanding of humanity also bears on our understanding of sin. If intended to reflect the nature of God, a human is to be judged not by comparison with other humans, but by conformity to the divine standard” (p. 581). From the cognitive aspect of sinful nature, the distortions will take place because of our sinful nature. When humans give up their thought to be like God, then they can accept their sinfulness. It means that they can honor God in the appropriate way. Humans can accept God as their Lord by accepting themselves as sinners.

In the aspect of the attitude of anger, humans should have the attitude of sympathy toward others and the attitude to mourn for themselves. Whenever the sinful attitude is found by humans themselves, then they need to mourn for their sins because Jesus Christ displayed this attitude to the sinful nature. The biblical passage of Matthew 5:4 says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (NIV). Whenever humans get angry, they need to cry for themselves because their sinful nature comes upon them. They need to sympathize with others. In a more advanced level, they can show empathy toward others, not just having the same mind with them but also trying to solve their problems. Jesus Christ already showed an empathic or sympathetic attitude toward sinners. Whenever humans discover the sinful nature of others, they should have the attitude of empathy or sympathy.

Regarding the aspect of behavior of anger, violent behaviors should be restrained. Violent behaviors are not allowed in the Bible as well as in the society. Humans should be responsible for their behaviors. Once they behave in a violent way, they have to pay for that in many ways. From a psychological point of view, they should feel guilty for their violent behaviors. They have to confess their sins of behaviors and to seek forgiveness in many different ways. If they really cannot control their violent behaviors, they must find out different ways to prevent these behaviors. Sublimation could be a way to control their behaviors. Once humans cannot control their violent behaviors, they need to do something else instead of hitting or assaulting others. There are many ways to sublimate violent behaviors, such as singing, working, shouting in a remote place, watching something, playing, and so on.

Regarding righteous anger, affirmation is useful for controlling anger. At the motivational level, righteous anger is related to sin and

injustice. The motivation of righteous anger should be approved or affirmed by others even when the person may have the mode of sinful anger. Through affirmation, the person can be encouraged to behave more positively, to imitate Jesus Christ, and actualize the image of God with the help of the Holy Spirit. In the method of affirmation, positive feedback and reframing can be useful for developing righteous anger. Affirmation can be used for controlling natural anger. To make growth of righteous anger will lead humans to reduce the level of natural anger.

CONCLUSION

The anger treatment from the prescriptive perspective is different from that of natural science or the descriptive perspective. From the Christian perspective, anger is an expression of the sinful nature, as well as commitment of sins. In order to control anger, Christians should pay attention to the emotion of anger itself. It means that the nature of the human being is of primary concern for controlling anger. A deep understanding of just how sinful humans are is necessary whenever ones get angry. This is a psychological understanding of sin from the biblical perspective. The deep understanding leads one to confess his/her sins before God and to seek forgiveness from other people and one's self.

In controlling anger, Jesus displays the perfect model through the biblical examples. The way to control anger can be drawn from the attitude and behaviors of Jesus Christ toward sinners. Jesus accepted sinners. In the same way, humans need to accept themselves as sinners whenever they get angry. If they accept themselves as sinners, then they can give God His proper place. Acceptance of themselves as sinners means that humans can accept God for who He is. After accepting themselves as sinners, they need to console themselves. This is a process of mourning and loving oneself for who one is. Christians should avoid the attitude of judgment whenever they are angry because judgment belongs to God, not humans. Rather than having the attitude of judgment, they need to have a loving and warm attitude for themselves.

REFERENCES

- Augsburger, David W. (1985). Anger and Aggression In *Clinical Handbook of Pastoral Psychotherapy* Edited by Robert J. Wicks, Richard D. Parsons, and Donald Capps. New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press.
- Averill, James R. (1983). *Studies on Anger and Aggression*. American Psychologist, November.
- Browning, Don S. (1987). *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies: A Critical Conversation in the Theology of Culture*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Carter, Les and Minirth, Frank (1993). *The Anger Workbook: A 13-Step Interactive Plan To Help You*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- Collins, Gary (1988). *Christian Psychotherapy: A Comprehensive Guide, Revised Edition*. Dallas and London: Word Publishing.
- Enns, Paul (1989). *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Erikson, Millard J. (1998). *Christian Theology: Second Edition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.
- Feindler, Eva L. and Ecton, Randolph B. (1986). *Adolescent Anger Control: Cognitive Behavioral Techniques*. New York: Pergamon.
- Graham, Sandra, & Hudley, Cynthia, and Williams, Estella (1992). *Attributional and Emotional Determinants of Aggression Among African-American and Latin Young Adolescents*. *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 731-740.
- Grudem, Wayne (1994). *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Guthrie, Donald (1981). *New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Jones, Stanton L. and Butman, Richard E. (1991). *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity press.
- Kim, Kay Hyun (1993). *Program for Anger Control*. Youth Criminal Research, Vol. II, No. 11.
- Kim, Yong Tae, Park, Han Sam, and Kang, Shin Duck (1995). *A Training Program of Adolescents in Anger Control*. Seoul: Korea Youth Counseling Institute.

CHRISTIAN VIEW OF ANGER CONTROL-133

- Maiuro, Roland D., Cahn, Timothy S., Vitaliano, Peter P., Wagner, Barbara C., and Zegree, Joan B. (1988). Anger, Hostility, and Depression in Domestically Violent Versus Generally Assaultive Men and Nonviolent Control Subjects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 56, No.1, 17-23.
- Menninger, Karl (1973). *Whatever Became of Sin?* New York: Hawthorn Books.
- Oates, Wayne (1973). *The Psychology of Religion*. Waco: Word Books.
- Ryrie, Charles C. (1986). *Basic Theology*. Wheaton: Victor Books.
- Smedes, Lewis B. (1993). *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve*. New York: Zondervan Publishing Company.
- Zwemer, Weare A. and Deffenbacher, Jerry L. (1984). Irrational Beliefs, Anger, and Anxiety. *Journal of Psychotherapy Psychology*. Vol. 1, No. 3, 391-393.