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# Psychology, Theology & Care for the Soul (The Introduction to Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology & Theology)

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# Introduction

## PSYCHOLOGY, THEOLOGY & CARE FOR THE SOUL

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*Mark R. McMinn*

**A** CONTEMPORARY ADVERTISEMENT FOR A LUXURY CAR READS, “IT GETS INTO YOUR soul, not your pocketbook.” For a car with a \$45,000 price tag, this claim is disputable, but the advertisers persist because they understand that the soul is marketable. Contemporary book titles offer *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Penguin Soup for the Soul* and *Duck Soup for the Soul*; *The Soul of Sex*; *100 Ways to Keep Your Soul Alive*; *Acupressure for the Soul*; *Chocolate for the Woman’s Soul*; a *Flight Manual for the Soul*; and *Animal Guides for the Soul*. We have soul music, soul food and soul mates. A quick visit to Amazon.com yields thousands of book titles containing the word *soul*. There is legitimate reason to question whether today’s resurgence of soul language reflects a Christian understanding of persons. Under the grip of modernity, in the midst of our fascination with stimulus-response connections and scientific formulations of psychoanalysis, the concept of the soul was often reduced to irrelevant historical lore. But as the empiricism and rationalism of modernity fade into the pluralism of postmodernity, there is renewed interest in the soul—even though there is little agreement about what the soul is.

One could argue that modernity itself brought about this interest in the soul. After all, in modern times the study of the soul—psyche—emerged as a highly visible discipline—psychology—that continues to attract thousands of new graduate students each year. Ellen Charry, in her contribution to this volume, describes the twentieth century as the “psychological century.” And the discipline of psychology was dominated by the clinical and counseling subdisciplines where the care of the psyche is explored in great detail. How can we claim that we lost the soul in a time when psychology experienced enormous growth in interest? The answer, like the question, lies in the epistemological assumptions of modernity. In order to achieve respect as a science, the study of psychology in the past century often neglected the religious traditions that shaped the understanding of the

soul before the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> Somehow we misplaced the soul even as we developed a thriving science of the psyche. Several contributors to this book note that the notion of soul was usurped by modernity's notion of self. And in relegating the care of selves to secular scientist-practitioners, we lost some critical aspects of caring for the soul.

With the changing winds of postmodernity swirling around us, we stand at a crossroads pondering the value and limits of science, the role of theological traditions and the boundaries of spirituality. Now that we can conceive of the material world as an aggregate of subatomic particles and build microscopes powerful enough to see the building blocks of creation, how do we understand the connections that bind atoms, molecules, cells, organisms, communities, cultures and societies together? Now that we have scientifically validated ways to treat panic attacks and psychopharmacological interventions for clinical depression, how do we make sense of the soul's journey through the "valley of the shadow of death" (Ps 23:4 NASB) or the "dark night?"<sup>2</sup> After the end of a century that knew more mass destruction than any other, how is the perversion and aggression of the human soul cured?

Modernity's psychology may have something to offer Christians who are interested in caring for souls. Thoughtful Christian psychologists contributed many of the chapters in this volume. But the central premise behind this book—and behind the conference that inspired it—is that care for the soul must also draw from the rich theological and ecclesiological traditions of the past and present. Our task is to explore the intersection of theology and psychology.

### Care for the Soul or the Cure of the Soul?

This book grew out of a Wheaton Theology Conference titled "The Cure of the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Theology and Psychology." The conference, which was cosponsored by the Wheaton College departments of Bible/theology and psychology, brought together leading theologians, philosophers and psychologists who are interested in the relationship between psychology and theology.

The title of the book, *Care for the Soul*, was changed only slightly from the conference title, "The Cure of the Soul." The *u* in *cure* was replaced with an *a*. The implications of this change are bigger than one letter. A number of psychologists at the conference expressed discomfort with the grandiosity implied in "The Cure of the Soul." Surely curing the soul is not the job of psychologists. Psychologists treat the soul by easing suffering, helping people in emotional pain to reclaim meaning and purpose and encouraging people to see themselves, others and the world more

<sup>1</sup>Allen E. Bergin, "Psychotherapy and Religious Values," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 48 (1980): 95-105; Stanton L. Jones, "A Constructive Relationship for Religion with the Science and Professional of Psychology: Perhaps the Boldest Model Yet," *American Psychologist* 49 (1994): 184-99.

<sup>2</sup>John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

accurately. In short, psychologists care for the soul. The cure of the soul, most Christian psychologists would suggest, is God's work and is beyond the scope of mainstream psychological interventions.

The book title *Care for the Soul*, which is more comfortable for the psychologist contributors, may raise offsetting tensions among many theologians. Yes, evangelical Christian theology is about caring for the soul, but it is more interested in exploring the cure of the soul through the confession of sin and through the redemption found in Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> A throng of psychologists has emerged to care for the soul, but the message of evangelical Christian theology offers a cure for the broken soul.

So even the title of this book reflects some of the implicit tensions found at the intersection of theology and psychology. These tensions are not new—many scholars have explored them over the past several decades.<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, many of these same scholars are willing to stand at these crossroads and carefully evaluate the soul, helping to forge a Christian psychology that considers the rich traditions and doctrines of the past as well as the dynamic intellectual climate of the present.

Whether the goal is to care for the soul or to cure it, we must first vigorously consider the soul. In chapter four Jeffrey Boyd articulates this need in his passionate call for us to return to a theological understanding of the soul. Considering the soul is the shared task of psychology and theology, and it is the focus of this book.

### Standing Together, but Not Too Close

If the task of considering the soul is shared, the approach to the task is not. Contributors to this volume have diverse backgrounds, perspectives, areas of scholarly interest and academic preparation. Indeed, one of the great values of this book is its multidisciplinary focus. Chapters have been contributed by philosophers, theologians, Bible scholars, clinical psychologists, developmental and social psychologists and biblical counselors. During the days of the conference and as we were compiling the pages of this book, we all stood together to look at the soul. And then we returned to our own professional worlds, having been privileged to hear and learn from one another.

One challenge of interdisciplinary work is learning when to emphasize our areas of commonality and when to emphasize our distinct and sometimes disparate perspectives. In *The Prophet* Kahlil Gibran advises two lovers to "stand together yet not too near together." A book such as *Care for the Soul* requires Christian psychologists, theologians and biblical counselors to stand together; each contributor has important perspectives to offer as we look at the soul. Yet each discipline has dis-

<sup>3</sup>Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, eds., *More Than One Way? Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology As Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977); Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1970).

tinct methods and bodies of knowledge that should not be quieted by the other disciplines.

Psychologists and counselors who are interested in the soul need theologians. Ellen Charry makes this point well in her chapter: psychology's contemporary view of persons is often missing a theologically responsible anthropology. Dennis Okholm in his chapter on anger and Robert Roberts in his chapter on Pauline psychotherapy illustrate the resources theologians and philosophers can offer contemporary mental health practitioners. And as Richard Schultz points out in his chapter, Christian mental health professionals often need the help of Bible scholars to properly handle Scripture.

As uncommon as it is to bring psychologists and theologians together for a book such as this, it is even less common to bring together biblical counselors and Christian psychologists. Since the publication of the seminal works of Jay Adams<sup>5</sup> on the one hand, and Gary Collins,<sup>6</sup> John Carter and Bruce Narramore<sup>7</sup> on the other, biblical counseling has stood apart from Christian psychology. Each approach has its own training institutions and regimens, leaders in the two fields have often been critical of one another (fairly and unfairly), and each group has sometimes resorted to hyperbole when describing the other. Some biblical counselors have misrepresented Christian psychologists by asserting that they uncritically accept the worldview assumptions implicit in contemporary psychological theories. Some Christian psychologists have misrepresented biblical counselors by accusing them of holding a simplistic view of sin.

The dispute between the biblical counselors and the Christian psychologists has often been confusing to Christians who are trying to make sense of their Christian mental health alternatives. And the unfortunate combative rhetoric between biblical counselors and Christian psychologists has been worsened by extremist Christian authors—most of whom are not themselves biblical counselors—who have added fuel to the fire by attacking Christian psychologists, collectively and personally, in their best-selling books. One author bemoans “Christians who turn from God and His word to psychotherapies for help with depression forsake ‘the fountain of living waters’ to drink from the polluted and unsatisfying and even harmful ‘broken cisterns, that can hold no water’ (Jer 13).”<sup>8</sup>

In response to a series of these vitriolic antipsychology books written in the

<sup>5</sup>Adams, *Competent to Counsel*. See also Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1973).

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Gary R. Collins, *How to Be a People Helper* (Santa Ana, Calif.: Vision House, 1976); and his *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1980).

<sup>7</sup>John Carter and Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1979).

<sup>8</sup>Dave Hunt, *Beyond Seduction* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1987).

1970s and 1980s, a well-known Christian psychologist with theological training wrote the book *Can You Trust Psychology?* In it he gave cautious affirmation to some aspects of psychology, and he did so in a balanced and fair manner.<sup>9</sup> For a time it seemed possible that the battles might cease, or at least abate. Then in 1993 a pastor and biblical counselor answered with his book *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*.<sup>10</sup> It was more balanced than some of the earlier antipsychology books, but its publication made it clear that resolution had not been reached. Given this heritage of disagreement and conflict, it is a monumental step forward to have both groups represented among the contributors to this volume.

Evangelical theologian Millard Erickson suggests that “our approach to the problems of society will . . . be governed by our view of sin.”<sup>11</sup> Christian psychologists and biblical counselors have disagreed about the role of sin in human problems. Biblical counselors have emphasized the devastating effects of sin that turns us away from a loving God and draws us instead toward idols of the heart. To care for the soul, then, we must confront the idols that impede us from experiencing God's rich grace and blessing. Christian psychologists have tended to emphasize faulty learning patterns, unhealthy relationships during formative years and incorrect thinking as the source of problems. They have valued many contributions of modernity's psychology while attempting to integrate psychology and theology. Of course this dichotomy is not as simple as it seems. Both groups see sin as a problem, and both look at faulty learning patterns, unhealthy relationships and incorrect thinking. The difference is primarily one of epistemological priorities. Biblical counselors place relatively more emphasis on special revelation and therefore on sin, and Christian psychologists typically spend more time and energy studying general revelation.

Both the biblical counselors and the Christian psychologists have legitimate points. Some of the discoveries of psychology are very useful for relieving human suffering. Stanton Jones uses treatment for childhood autism as an example in chapter two. Biblical counselors are correct in identifying sin as the fundamental human problem—this is emphasized in several chapters of this book. As Philip Monroe, a graduate of the biblical counseling program at Westminster Theological Seminary and of the doctoral psychology program at Wheaton College, points out in his chapter, Christian psychologists have sometimes failed to look carefully at the effects of sin in and around the lives of those they serve.

As tempting as it is for us to avoid conflict by announcing, “We're both saying the same thing, just with different words,” biblical counselors and Christian psy-

<sup>9</sup>Gary R. Collins, *Can You Trust Psychology?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

<sup>10</sup>Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1993).

<sup>11</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1985), p. 563.

chologists are not saying the same things. Certainly there are points of agreement, but there are crucial differences as well. Our premise in organizing the conference and editing this volume is that both biblical counselors and Christian psychologists have something to offer in discussions of the soul.

### Standing at the Intersection

The book begins as the conference began, by looking at the different perspectives presented by a biblical counselor and a Christian psychologist. The first chapter, authored by David Powlison, calls into question the core assumptions of contemporary psychotherapists, including many Christian psychotherapists. Care for the soul, Powlison concludes, should lie primarily within the domain of the church. As a faculty member at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) and editor of the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Dr. Powlison devotes his full-time attention to the task of equipping the church to care for the soul.

Stanton L. Jones, author of chapter two, recognizes the danger of uncritically accepting contemporary psychotherapy. He articulates an “apologetic apologia” for the thoughtful integration of psychology and theology. Jones suggests that there is a strategic place for well-trained Christian psychologists in today’s mental health care environment. As founder of the doctoral program in clinical psychology (and currently provost) at Wheaton College, Dr. Jones has invested many years in establishing a training environment for the type of thoughtful integration he describes.

The scholarly interchange evident throughout these first two chapters provides important context for the remainder of the book for at least three reasons. First, both Powlison and Jones find reason to be concerned about the mainstream contemporary practice of psychology. Collectively these chapters call us to critically evaluate the role of psychology in the care of souls. The integration movement, with its commendable purpose of blending responsible psychology with sound Christian theology, has sometimes led people to false and harmful conclusions about human experience, human relationships, and God. Too often Christian psychologists are guilty of pasting a spiritual veneer on a secular view of persons. Ellen Charry describes it this way: “Even if some therapists are beginning to recognize that some clients bring spiritual resources with them that can be called upon in the therapeutic process, it still sees these as additional resources of support for a basically secular self.”<sup>12</sup> Most of the contributors agree that the current practice of Christian psychology is not what it can and should be.

Second, both Powlison and Jones address theological systems in their analyses, reminding us that understanding souls was the work of spiritual and theological leaders long before the advent of contemporary psychology. Any psychology that is perceived to categorically replace earlier forms of soul care should be viewed sus-

<sup>12</sup>Ellen T. Charry, “Theology After Psychology,” in this volume, pp. 126-27.

piciously by people who are committed to exploring the intersection of theology and psychology. Effective soul care needs sound Christian theology.

Third, the areas of disagreement between Powlison and Jones illustrate the diversity of the opinions expressed throughout this volume. Particularly intriguing is their discussion of the church as the source of soul care. Should Christians turn primarily (or even exclusively) to the church for help with the struggles and challenges of life, or is there a proper place for Christian members of the helping professions to complement the work of the church? The tension of differing viewpoints is not unique to the chapters authored by Powlison and Jones. Areas of disagreement will be seen throughout this volume. Note the similarities and differences between L. Gregory Jones’s and Myrla Seibold’s views of forgiveness, and between Brett Webb-Mitchell’s and Cynthia Neal Kimball’s views of developmental psychology in church life. We have not attempted to avoid controversy by compiling a volume with like-minded contributors; we have not even selected a collection of essays with which we as editors completely agree. Rather, we trust the process of scholarly disagreement as something that can be used to strengthen the body of Jesus Christ—the church—and help it to grow.

### Standing Boldly

The authors of chapters three to five call Christians to assert themselves in reclaiming the right to soul care. Guiding people to greater emotional health and maturity is a theological and religious task as well as a psychological task. This can be argued historically, philosophically, pragmatically and ecclesiologically.

From a historical perspective, soul care was once primarily the domain of the church and clergy, but it was wrestled away during modern times, and it has largely been relegated to a secular profession where religious values are often ignored<sup>13</sup> or even criticized.<sup>14</sup> Though postmodernism has softened psychology’s blows against religion,<sup>15</sup> a therapeutic culture has emerged in which individuals consider themselves “free of the obligations of truth and the claims of ethical ideals.” “In a therapeutic culture,” Lundin writes, “there is no room for a Christian conception of truth and the ethical life.”<sup>16</sup> This book helps put our therapeutic culture in a broader historical context and thereby causes us to consider ways of reclaiming the care of souls as a theological endeavor.

<sup>13</sup>Bergin, “Psychotherapy and Religious Values”; but for some recent changes in this regard, see P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1997); also see Edward P. Shafranske, ed., *Religion and the Clinical Practice of Psychology* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1996).

<sup>14</sup>Albert Ellis, *The Case Against Religion: A Psychotherapist’s View* (New York: Institute for Rational Living, 1983).

<sup>15</sup>Jones, “Constructive Relationship.”

<sup>16</sup>Roger Lundin, *The Culture of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 6.

Philosophically, it is necessary to understand the theological and religious dimensions of soul care in order to embed the work of psychotherapists and counselors in a context of meaning. Browning argues that although many psychotherapists do not recognize that their work has a moral framework, psychotherapy always involves a moral framework.<sup>17</sup> To whatever extent mainstream psychology has failed to articulate its moral context, it has made itself irrelevant and formless. Grappling with the interface of theology and psychology gives us opportunity to consider the metaphysical dimensions of soul care.

Pragmatically, it is fascinating to observe that although psychologists are less religious than the general public, the majority of people seeking psychological help still prefer that their religious values be considered.<sup>18</sup> Those seeking care for their souls typically recognize a spiritual dimension to their lives. Tragically, it is often the professional care provider who fails to understand the importance of spiritual factors.

Ecclesiological, the church needs models of human development, mental health and intervention that share a common foundation of faith. We cannot assume that a model developed in a particular context will necessarily translate to a church setting. For these reasons and more, it is fitting and timely for Christians to boldly assert the relevance of theology and religion in soul care.<sup>19</sup>

In chapter three Brett Webb-Mitchell critiques the church's uncritical acceptance of cognitive development theories, making his argument on pragmatic and ecclesiological grounds. He calls instead for a spiritually informed metaphor of pilgrimage. In chapter four Jeffrey Boyd notes that we rarely even talk about the soul any more, at least not in ways that promote an accurate understanding of God and ourselves. Boyd offers a historical and philosophical analysis of Christians' acquiescence to the secular mental health industry. In chapter five Ellen Charry argues that theological anthropologists have lost their voice amid the overwhelming presence of contemporary secular psychology. We have become selves instead of souls, as Boyd also suggests. Charry calls theologians to step up to the task of contributing to the care for and cure of souls. Together, these three chapters provide important arguments for being theologically grounded as we consider contemporary understandings of mental health.

### Standing on the Promises

If modernity wrestled soul care away from the church because of wide-scale epistemological changes—people were looking to science rather than to ecclesiastical authority for truth—postmodernity has ushered in suspicion of all epistemologies. This has caused a sort of pluralistic rootlessness in which various truth claims are

<sup>17</sup>Donald S. Browning, *Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976).

<sup>18</sup>See Stephen Quackenbos, Gayle Privette and Bonnel Klentz. "Psychotherapy: Sacred or Secular?" *Journal of Counseling and Development* 63 (1985): 290-93; also see Richards and Bergin, *Spiritual Strategy*.

<sup>19</sup>Jones, "Constructive Relationship."

accepted so long as they are not imposed on other people. The good news for Christians who are interested in soul care is that postmodernism has made religion a legitimate factor for psychotherapists to consider, thus opening the door for religious forms of psychotherapy. As a result, we have seen a proliferation of Christian inpatient and outpatient mental health facilities and church-based counseling centers. Also, the postmodern "hermeneutic of suspicion" provides opportunity for Christian scholars to recognize that even perfect truth must be interpreted by fallen humans. (Michael Mangis describes this in chapter eight, and David Williams alludes to it in chapter sixteen.)

The bad news for Christians is that truth claims from Christian scripture and church tradition are often viewed as old-fashioned and irrelevant. Many post-moderns fail to realize that we all have truth claims—even the claim that there is no absolute truth is a truth claim. Thus a significant challenge for Christians interested in soul care is to respond prudently to the opportunities and correctives provided by postmodern views of the person while clinging tenaciously to the truth claims of the Christian faith and the rich heritage of church history.

Chapters six to ten provide resources for people who are serious about building a psychology upon firmly established theological truth claims. Robert Roberts uses the apostle Paul's New Testament writings as a basis for soul care. Dennis Okholm and Michael Mangis explore the works of the desert fathers and the ascetic theologians and relate their findings to the contemporary assumptions and practices of psychotherapists. A careful look back at church history causes us to question some of the assumptions of modern psychology and the newer-is-better mindset that makes us prone to accept uncritically the contemporary claims of secular psychologists.

Philip Monroe draws upon Puritan theology to articulate the relevance of personal sin as a cause of psychological discomfort. Hamartiology (the theology of sin) is a central theme throughout this volume—it is addressed by Powlison, Stanton Jones, Charry, Gregory Jones, Moroney and others. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger sets forth a theoretical framework in which the norms and values of Christian theology and contemporary psychology may be clearly distinguished yet serve the needs of the person seeking help. She conceives of the relationship between these diverse disciplines by following the logic of the relationship between the two natures of Jesus Christ as determined at the Council of Chalcedon.

### Looking Both Ways

When we stand at the crossroads, as we did for the several days of the Wheaton Theology Conference and for the many months required to compile this volume, it is important to look both directions. We should ask both how theology can help psychology reclaim the soul and how psychology can contribute to theology and the Christian life. The final two sections of this volume address these questions.

First, theology has much to offer Christian psychology. L. Gregory Jones pro-

vides an illustration of this in his chapter on forgiveness. Psychologists have recently become interested in forgiveness and a recent Templeton Foundation grant program for the study of forgiveness promises to propel psychological understandings of forgiveness even farther, but Christian communities have been practicing and discussing forgiveness for many centuries. Can we really disconnect the act of forgiveness from Christian communities and theology without losing its essence? Forgiveness is more than a therapeutic technique.<sup>20</sup> Chapters twelve and thirteen on the importance of sound hermeneutics offer theological resources for psychology. In chapter twelve Richard Schultz critiques the hermeneutics often used by Christian therapists when approaching the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and offers suggestions for sound interpretation of that literature. In chapter thirteen Bryan Maier and Philip Monroe team up to articulate the importance of sound biblical hermeneutics for the Christian counselor.

If we are looking both ways, we must also recognize psychology's potential contribution to theology and Christian living. The final four chapters of this volume address this need. Myrla Seibold offers psychological observations about the forgiveness process—observations that will be controversial but that may provide a corrective to perspectives that Christian communities sometimes advocate when they interpret and apply forgiveness. Stephen Moroney provides social-psychological evidence of our tendency to overvalue our own perspectives and opinions, then offers biblical argument for accurate perceptions of self and others. Moroney's chapter would make excellent required reading for students who are taking an introductory course on hermeneutics. Next, David Williams demonstrates the importance of perception research for understanding the philosophy of knowledge and its theological implications. Finally, Cynthia Neal Kimball presents a developmental analysis of family brokenness, offering insights from developmental psychology regarding the role of Christian community in promoting family health.

### The Road Ahead

In the twenty-fifth-anniversary issue of the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Tisdale, Thelander and Pike observe that "we have the opportunity to begin a new era in integration."<sup>21</sup> If we are to most effectively minister to souls, this new era should not be characterized by psychologists and theologians huddling in their respective professional circles. We need creative and productive dialogue. We need to explore the intersection of psychology and theology. This book is intended to be one step in that direction.

Like the scholarship presented in this book, the study of the relationship between

<sup>20</sup>Katheryn Rhoads Meek and Mark R. McMinn, "Forgiveness: More Than a Therapeutic Technique," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 16 (1997): 51-61.

<sup>21</sup>Theresa C. Tisdale, Scott E. Thelander and Patricia L. Pike, "We Press On Toward the Goal: Introduction to the 25th Anniversary Issue, Part 1," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 25 (1997): 3.

psychology and theology should be multifaceted, employing various foci and methods of inquiry. It calls for at least four strategies involving psychological methods, theological systems and Christian spirituality.<sup>22</sup> They are interdisciplinary dialogue, intradisciplinary application, faith-praxis integration, and personal formation.

Interdisciplinary dialogue allows the Christian helper to place the work of counseling or psychotherapy within a well-articulated moral framework informed by theology, history, culture and faith. It calls for a critical appraisal of metaphysical and epistemological assumptions. For example, many secular doctoral training programs in psychology continue to rely almost exclusively on modernist, scientific ways of knowing. The designers of these programs seem to be unaware that the scholarship that contributes to an understanding of contemporary psychology goes back far beyond modernity and provides a foothold from which we must sometimes question the truth claims of science.

A well-known researcher recently wrote an article in a mainstream psychology journal titled "In the Final Analysis, It's the Data That Count."<sup>23</sup> The author appears to mean that the quantitative data of science will set us free from the uncertainties of our intellectual pondering. The presuppositions behind such a title are simply not consistent with the more inclusive scholarship found among other academic disciplines, such as theology. Effective soul care requires interdisciplinary dialogue that allows for theological as well as scientific ways of knowing. Interdisciplinary integration is bidirectional. Psychology can be helpful to theology, as van Deusen Hunsinger, Williams and others discuss. And the contributions of social science are not limited to clinical or counseling psychology. This volume, for example, includes contributions from people who are interested in clinical, social, perceptual and developmental psychologies.

Whereas interdisciplinary dialogue requires the tough-minded work of weaving together truths from various disciplines, intradisciplinary application calls us to apply these truths within the work of a single profession. The best scholars, those who are most capable of erudite interdisciplinary dialogue, are not always the best practitioners. Imagine sitting with a sobbing person who tells you, "All my life I've been a good person, but people criticize and reject me anyway." Knowing about the Pelagian or antinomian heresies may provide important grounding for you as a Christian who is interested in soul care, but it will not guarantee that you will respond effectively. It might not be helpful to refer to Augustine's *Confessions* or Calvin's *Institutes* and to discuss total depravity at a moment such as this. So what words would you select? How would those words be received by the distraught

<sup>22</sup>Steve Bouma-Prediger, "The Task of Integration: A Modest Proposal," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 18 (1990): 21-31; Everett L. Worthington Jr., "A Blueprint for Intradisciplinary Integration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 22 (1994): 79-86.

<sup>23</sup>Peter E. Nathan, "In the Final Analysis, It's the Data That Count," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 4 (1997): 281-84.

person? These are the questions of intradisciplinary application.

Gary Collins wrote in the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* of that publication's treatment of integration: "I suspect that relatively few pastors or full time professional care givers find the articles to be of practical help in their counseling work. It would be helpful to see more of an applied perspective in this publication. . . . How do we do integration? What skills and methods are involved?"<sup>24</sup> A decade later Worthington noted that Collins's call for practical integration methods had not produced much change.<sup>25</sup> Creating these practical methods is appropriate work for those who are interested in care for the soul.

Intradisciplinary application brings the best of psychology and theology into the clinical practice of soul care (however that might be defined). Charry makes this point eloquently and directly: "We theologians have abandoned the practitioners, and we should be ashamed. Perhaps it is not too late to begin repairing the damage."<sup>26</sup> Those who are interested in intradisciplinary application will find a number of these chapters, written by both psychologists and theologians, fascinating. Seibold's and Gregory Jones's chapters on forgiveness will make clinicians think carefully about their application of forgiveness principles in clinical work. Contributions from Neal, Stanton Jones, and Powlison will cause us to contemplate the most effective context for therapeutic interventions. Mangis and Moroney call us to critically evaluate the role of self-deception—something that happens in virtually every counseling session. In many of the chapters the authors implore therapists to consider the implications of personal sin in understanding themselves and those with whom they work.

Yet another type of dialogue between psychology and theology, what Bouma-Prediger labels *faith-praxis integration*, addresses the need for Christian action.<sup>27</sup> Long ago Aristotle described *praxis* as action based on an ideal of what is right. Just as Christians value orthodoxy, true teaching, so we should also value orthopraxy, true and faithful action. Writing to Jewish Christians, James poses daunting questions about faith-praxis integration:

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (Jas 2:14-17)

The task of soul care calls us to pursue the integration of faith and praxis—psychology that is delivered with a passion for Christian ministry in a world that is plagued by inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunity.

<sup>24</sup>Gary R. Collins, "Moving Through the Jungle: A Decade of Integration," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 11 (1983): 2-7.

<sup>25</sup>Worthington, "Blueprint for Intradisciplinary Integration."

<sup>26</sup>Ellen T. Charry, "Theology after Psychology," this volume, p. 134.

<sup>27</sup>Bouma-Prediger, "Task of Integration."

Henri Nouwen writes:

The danger is that instead of becoming free to let the spirit grow, future ministers may entangle themselves in the complications of their own assumed competence and use their specialization as an excuse to avoid the much more difficult task of being compassionate. The task of Christian leaders is to bring out the best in all people and to lead them forward to a more human community; the danger is that their skillful diagnostic eye will become more an eye for distant and detailed analysis than the eye of a compassionate partner. . . . More training and structure are as necessary as more bread for the hungry. But just as bread given without love can bring war instead of peace, professionalism without compassion will turn forgiveness into a gimmick.<sup>28</sup>

Thus faith-praxis integration requires a thoughtful balancing of scholarship and action. Compassion that is uninformed by thoughtful scholarship can lead to uninformed or even harmful human interventions, especially in postmodern times, when any therapist's truth claim is considered to be personally valid merely because it is a truth claim. Scholarship that is uninformed by compassion can be irrelevantly or recklessly applied when we are dealing with hurting people. Integrating scholarship with human compassion is one challenge of soul care facing Christian communities in the coming millennium.

Many of the chapters in this volume are action oriented. For example, Seibold's chapter on forgiveness has implications for faith-praxis integration. She suggests that the people who are most likely to be hurt are the powerless members of society, and that the standard Christian views on forgiveness are often determined by people in positions of relative power. In her chapter on family brokenness, Kimball challenges some long-standing teachings regarding the proper use of power by Christian parents.

Finally, personal formation emphasizes the helper's character formation and therefore the helper's capacity to participate in meaningful and healing interpersonal relationships. Sol Garfield, a leading psychotherapy researcher, has recently argued that the therapist is a neglected variable in psychotherapy research.<sup>29</sup> According to Garfield and others writing in the same journal issue, the personal qualities of the therapist affect the outcome of therapy. It is reasonable to assume that the personal qualities of Christian ministers affect their capacity for soul care. People who help others with spiritual formation have been shaping the character of Christian ministers for many centuries. Their collective wisdom can contribute much to the personal and professional development of Christian psychologists.

When Christian spirituality is carefully bounded by responsible theology, people experience grace that goes beyond the intellect. This experiential integration is an essential part of Christian soul care. A Christian helper who ministers to a agitated client who is in a manic state, all the time remaining calm and continually relying

<sup>28</sup>Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Ministry and Spirituality* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. 135.

<sup>29</sup>Sol L. Garfield, "The Therapist as a Neglected Variable in Psychotherapy Research," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 4 (1997): 40-43.

on God, is exploring the intersection of practical theology and psychology.

In the opening line of his best-selling book *The Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster observes, "Superficiality is the curse of our age."<sup>30</sup> It can be argued that superficiality is also becoming the curse of contemporary mental health care. With the advent of ubiquitous biological interventions, managed health care and now a new list of empirically validated treatment procedures advocated by the American Psychological Association, professional psychology has moved toward shorter, technique-based interventions and away from more relational approaches to healing. People who believe that relationship with Christ is the very center of Christian experience also recognize that this salvific relationship changes everything—including relationships with people we serve. If good soul care is simply a matter of dispensing the proper treatments at the proper time, then there is little need for personal formation. If, on the other hand, good soul care requires the helper's spiritual vitality, self-awareness and relational sensitivity, then personal formation has everything to do with Christian soul care.

This is not a simple matter. Spiritual strategies in psychotherapy are so easily turned into techniques, and a passion to know God is exchanged for a quest to know oneself. Van Deusen Hunsinger writes:

Empirical studies have been published that show a positive correlation between the use of prayer and physical and emotional healing. Some people consider such studies to be a good apologetic for prayer, and some have been convinced enough by the studies to engage in daily prayer for the sake of its practical benefits. But the real focus and purpose of prayer as the means of intimate communion with God has been lost. Everything has been turned upside down. Instead of God being at the center of our lives, our emotional or mental health occupies the center.<sup>31</sup>

Personal formation requires more than learning spiritual techniques. It is a humble journey with God at the center. In his chapter exploring contemplative theology and psychoanalytic psychology, Mangis presents a compelling argument that the personal formation of the helper is an essential component of effective soul care. Character matters when we are selecting and training people who will be involved in caring for souls.

This volume explores the intersection of psychology and theology, an intersection that is not simple. It is an intersection affected by rich theological and ecclesiological traditions, by the ravages and wonders of modernity's psychology, and by the character qualities of today's ministers and communities of faith. We trust that this book will foster dialogue among the pastors, theologians, psychologists, biblical counselors, educators and students who are involved in caring for souls.

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<sup>30</sup>Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, "An Interdisciplinary Map for Christian Counselors: Theology & Psychology in Pastoral Counseling," this volume, p. 230.