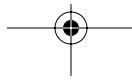


Preface

THERE ARE ONLY A FEW TOPICS ABOUT WHICH Christians have more disparate ideas and are more deeply divided than that of psychology and soul care. What is it about this area of thought and practice that makes it so contentious? Early on, this book tries to offer an explanation. But most of our time will be spent on a more constructive agenda: a proposal for a fundamental framework for Christian soul care (a broad category that includes psychotherapy, counseling and spiritual direction, and in fact encompasses the main tasks of the church). The various Christian approaches to soul care have all made important contributions to the debate. Though some criticisms of current Christian approaches to soul care will be presented, this book is clearly indebted to that work. This model is inevitably something of a response, and in turn is put forth as a proposal—to be engaged with and criticized itself. It is, therefore, also an invitation to enter into this ongoing dialogue, in order for all of the interested parties in the Christian community to make more progress in our common cause of serving Christ, one another and humanity in Christ's name.

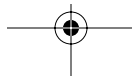
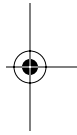
However, this book is undeniably a *Christian psychology* proposal. The project of a Christian psychology is not yet widely understood, and there will always be different notions of just what it is (as there are of modern psychology). Most of its proponents, however, I think would agree that it aims at the development of a distinctly Christian *version* of psychology: a wise science of individual human beings that includes theory building, research, teaching, training and various kinds of practice, including the care of souls. This science flows from a Christian understanding of human nature and therefore can be distinguished from alternative versions of psychology based on different worldviews.





At first glance it may appear that “Christian psychology” is a poor candidate to unify a fractious field, especially since the term means different things to different people. Some think it an oxymoron (MacArthur, 1994); others have used it to label any activity in the field of psychology or counseling done by a Christian. Nevertheless, the term has a worthy pedigree and there are good reasons to think it a fitting label for what this book is about. Let us consider some of the background to this term to gain our bearings.

Depending on how one understands it, the Christian psychology paradigm might be said to have three historical “moments.” First, psychology of some kind can be found throughout the Bible and the writings of the Christian tradition. The fact that for most of that history the term “Christian psychology” was not used does not mean it did not exist. Few of these writings are scientific in the modern sense, but they nonetheless contain many insightful Christian descriptions of human nature and the care of souls, and I will suggest that they ought to provide the foundation and heart of a contemporary Christian psychology. Second, Søren Kierkegaard identified himself as a Christian psychologist, and described what he was doing as Christian psychology, though his work was not empirical in the way modern psychology is (Evans, 1990; Kierkegaard, 1834/1946a, 1847/1938, 1849/1980). Before Freud was born, Kierkegaard put together in his many writings a profound description of human beings and their development from a thoroughly Christian standpoint. Third, a contemporary approach to psychology and counseling has begun to develop what amounts to a distinctly Christian version of psychology—including some preliminary psychological theory-building, research and models of soul care—through a reinvestment in the canonical, historical and contemporary resources of the Christian tradition, as well as through a Christian reinterpretation of the work of modern and postmodern psychology. Though the most recent, this third moment is not very well known. While few have used the label “Christian psychology,” its contributors rightly include Vitz (1994, 1988), White (1979, 1982, 1987), Van Leeuwen (1982, 1985), Evans (1977, 1989, 1990), Roberts (1987, 1993, 2000; Talbot, 1997), Watson (1993, 2004, 2005; along with Morris, Hood & Hall, 1985; Morris & Hood, 1988a; and Morris, Loy, Hamrick & Grizzle, in press), Johnson (1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2000), Crabb (1987, 1988, 1993, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2006), Crabb and Allender (1996), Allender and Longman (1990, 1993, 1995), Allender (1999, 2005), Payne (1991, 1995, 1996), Langberg (1997, 1999), Wilson (1990,





1998, 2001), and Clinton and Ohlschlager (2002) (and undoubtedly others). For a summary of the third moment's history, the reader is directed to the introductory chapter of *Christianity and Psychology: Four Views* (Johnson & Jones, 2000).

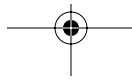
In light of these three moments, and in spite of the misgivings that attend its use, the term “Christian psychology” is considered by the author to be the best label in this era for the kind of work grouped together above and found in this book.

Toward a “Worldview” for Christian Soul Care

By any reckoning, a Christian psychology that aims at being counted scientific is in its infancy (if not still in gestation). Where is work most needed? One worthwhile candidate would be a description of what a Christian worldview for soul care might consist of—what we might call a Christian *edification framework*. The term *edification* has metaphorical origins: its Old English root means “temple” or “house” (from which we derive *edifice*). It is also used in the English Bible to translate the Greek word *oikodomē* (Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 14:3; Eph 4:29), which denotes spiritual strengthening or “building up” (Arndt & Gingrich, 1957). Soul care has as its aim the construction or the upbuilding of the soul. In this sense all religions and forms of psychotherapy aim at some kind of edification. As a result, the term *edification framework* (E.F.) will be used to refer to the “set of a therapist’s articulable cognitive-axiological-volitional structures relevant to improving the state of a person’s well-being” (Johnson & Sandage, 1999, p. 2). It is made up of a few components, including a narrative structure within which to make sense of the stories of clients, as well as many beliefs about human nature: its composition, important features, soul-problems and their causes, and solutions for those problems. A subset of these beliefs are normative and include assumptions regarding values, goods, virtues, desirable goals and morality, as well as the overarching goal toward which humans are to aspire, the human *telos*. This book provides a description of some of the main features of these foundations for a Christian understanding of soul care.

Core Distinctives of This Soul-Care Model

A few novel aspects of the model presented in this book should probably be explained.





It is doxological. Christianity is a God-centered system of life and thought. God is the Lord of creation and the Lord of the covenant (Frame, 1987, 2002; Horton, 2002), so Christians owe him absolute fealty, loyalty and love. For those set free by his grace, he is easy to love, because of his great beauty.

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD. (Ps 27:4)

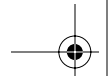
From a Christian standpoint, “beauty is a category indispensable to Christian thought; all that theology saw of the triune life of God, the gratuity of creation, the incarnation of the Word, and the salvation of the world makes room for—indeed depends upon—a thought, and a narrative, of the beautiful” (Hart, 2003, p. 16). Christians throughout the ages have recognized that God is intrinsically beautiful, as well as the source of all created beauty. Jonathan Edwards, for example (1765/1960), described God as “infinitely the most beautiful and excellent” being (p. 14), “the foundation and fountain of all being and beauty” (p. 15).

A more common word for beauty, in Christian parlance, is glory. The Greek word for glory (*doxa*) signifies brightness, splendor or radiance (Arndt & Gingrich, 1957, p. 202), and the glory of God has been defined as the outflowing or radiance of his beauty, that is, the manifestation of his glorious attributes—his holiness, righteousness and love (Balthasar, 1982-1991; Barth, 1957; Bavinck, 2004; Edwards, 1765/1998; Muller, 2003). From the standpoint of Christianity, God’s greatest beauty may be the infinite love the triune God shares among Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Because God created all things for his glory (Is 43:7; Rom 11:36; Eph 1; Rev 4:8-11), it might be expected that the well-being of his image-bearers would be coordinated to their celebration and expression of and participation in that glory. In a virtuous human being, “God’s glory is revealed as something communicable and intrinsically delightful, as including the creature in its ends, and as completely worthy of love” (Hart, 2003, p. 17). What is the fitting human response to God’s glory or beauty? Worship and love and emulation. The soul that sees something of God’s infinite beauty cannot help but utter praise, feel drawn toward that beauty, desire to participate in it and resemble it, and seek to live to exalt it.

As a result, a Christian soul-care model ought to be *doxological* (Yates,



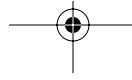


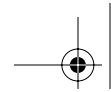
1997), that is, it ought to aim to interpret and conduct everything in order to best foster the human appropriation and manifestation of the glory of God. It ought to act so as to draw others into an increasingly closer orbit around God, a greater love of God and others (in imitation of the Trinity), and a greater likeness to God. Needless to say, this is a radically different framework for soul care than that which governs modern psychotherapy and counseling.

It is semiodiscursive. Another way to think about glory is meaning. God's glory consists of the infinite weight of his greatness and goodness; it is all the meaning that he possesses—his meaning-fullness. Semiotics is the discipline that deals with the representation of meaning. The most basic type of representation is the sign. As Augustine (trans. 1997) noted, a sign is anything that refers to something else. Signs are “pointers” that represent or “stand for” other things. While almost anything can be a sign of something else, soul care is interested in the referential function of various aspects of human life: language, emotions, mental images, actions and other people, and texts in general, including narratives.

Like a painting that inevitably “points” to the one who painted it, God created a world that signifies him. It all bears his imprint, but some creatures represent God more clearly than others. Humans, for example, are made in the “image” of God, indicating a relatively high degree of semiotic correspondence. As image-bearers, humans are supposed to resemble God; the greater the likeness, the better. God created signs of himself, for the purpose of manifesting something of his glory, over time, in the creation. The soul care model of this book is aimed at helping humans become better signs of God.

Words are also signs of meaning, so linguistics is considered by some to be a branch of semiotics. A language is the most complex and powerful formal sign-system we know of, so it can communicate meaning with great sophistication (compared to facial expressions, for example). However, a language in the abstract is inert; it only “enters into the world” *in use*. *Discourse* is the actual use of a language by an author (a speaker or writer) to communicate meaning. “God is a communicating Being” (Edwards, 1994, p. 410), so it is no surprise that discourse figures prominently in God's agenda to communicate his glory through his image-bearers. To start with the creation, we learn from the Bible that the created order is a function of God's speech, and so we can infer it is endowed with meaning, which science uncovers or explicates: everything created is constituted by the word of God. Second, consider how foundational





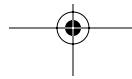
language is to human development, making possible the realization of reason, complex emotions, social relations, moral responsibility, even spirituality. Unless raised up within a discursive community and educated within its forms of speech, it appears that humans cannot attain to any form of human maturity. Third, God revealed himself and his plan of salvation in the inspired and explicit discourse of the Bible.

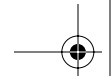
In very different ways, discourse, then, is constitutive of created, human and Christian reality, and Christian soul care is interested in the reconstitution of all three. However, we are also concerned with discourse in this book for two other, practical reasons: first, because, the formulation of Christian psychological theory and practice is directly concerned with texts—the Bible and relevant Christian literature, and the massive body of discourse known as modern psychology; and second, because the care of souls is fundamentally discursive; it inevitably involves conversation (Martin, 1994)—even behavior therapy requires speech explaining the use of various techniques.

So Christian soul care is semiodiscursive: it concerns itself with meaning—ultimately with glory—expressed in signs, utterances or texts. As a result, this model is unavoidably hermeneutic, that is, it involves the interpretation of discourse (including the “texts” of others and the events of their lives).

It is dialogical/trialogical. But discourse has a deeper goal: interpersonal relationship. Discourse is communication, and communication is for the purpose of communion. Through discourse, humans engage in dialogue, in order to relate to, inform, influence, and enjoy one another. According to Bakhtin (1981, 1986), however, dialogue is more than humans talking together—it is foundational to human nature. Humans are “co-beings” (Holquist, 1990). The self is necessarily related to the other; it cannot develop or exist alone—even the hermit was formed by dialogue and carries on a dialogue with himself. The social space each individual inhabits has already long been inhabited by others, and they have spoken and are in some sense still speaking (through written texts, as well as in the continual, ongoing transmission of discourse everyday). Out of the discourse of others, new human discourse arises. The utterances of one initiate responses in the other, which in turn prompt further utterances from others, and so goes the dialogue in which human life consists.

Adult dialogue in particular can be edifying. When two persons meet together, each may know things the other does not and each may see things about the other that the other does not. So if they love each other, dialogue



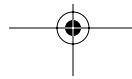


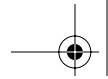
between them inevitably leads to the enrichment and building up of each other. Human dialogue is supposed to be a concrete model of divine communion. The triune God eternally exists in a dialogue of interpersonal love and mutual glorification (Jn 17:3, 21). Dialogue is fundamental to the life of persons, and humans image the Trinity in loving, reciprocal, upbuilding conversation. Moreover, human image-bearing is especially realized in dialogue with the living God, who is speaking to us one way or another through Scripture (most clearly), through the creation and through our dialogue with others.

Christian soul care, according to this model, promotes relational communion through dialogue. God is a dialogue partner in the Christian healing of the soul, and we are always situated in the midst of a history and matrix of human conversations, one of which is that between counselor and counselee. Understood rightly—by faith—Christian soul care is always a *trialogue*, involving counselor, counselee and the omnipresent God (Kellemen, 2005b; Sphar & Smith, 2003).

It is canonical. This model is also biblical. The Bible is the Text of texts, the Discourse of discourses. Because it is God's inspired word in human language, it offers Christians God's semiodiscursive key to interpreting the universe, particularly the meaningfulness of human life, and through it the triune God meets with and dialogues with his people. Since the early centuries of the church, the Bible has been referred to as *canon*. The term *canon* comes from the Greek word *kanōn*, meaning rule, measure or standard (Packer, 1988). So the term identifies the Bible as the authoritative rule for the Christian life. "The canon is the norm for Christian language, thought, and action" (Vanhoozer, 2005, p. 217). As a result, it serves as the foundational "rule" or "guide" for Christian soul care, revealing to us how human life can best promote the glory of God. Given the Bible's status, Christian soul care should have as its primary aim the training and edification of its counselees in "canonical competence" (Vanhoozer, 2000), a way of seeing and living, shaped by the Bible.

This is especially important in the twenty-first century, since for the past 125 years the field of psychology and soul care has been almost entirely composed of texts generated out of a secular framework. This requires of Christians the development of a canonically based hermeneutics of such texts, so that they can be interpreted Christianly. The canon of Scripture provides the "spectacles" (Calvin, 1559/1960) by which we read and make sense of those texts, as well as human nature in general.





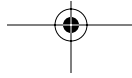
It is psychological. But in what way can the model above be legitimately considered *psychological*? This whole book is an attempt to answer that question, but a succinct response is to point out that the primary object of our interest here is not mathematics, chemistry, or society, not God, and not even the Bible, but the nature of individual human beings and their psychopathology and recovery, and the name for the science of those concerns is currently *psychology*, the study of the soul. Christian soul-care providers study the Bible not for its own sake but for the light it sheds on the nature of human beings and their well-being and improvement. A comprehensive Christian version of psychology should be rigorously empirical, experiential, philosophical and biblical, and it will have to deal with a vast range of topics, like brain-soul relations, genetics, beliefs, memory, rationality, emotion, motivation, social relations, virtues, developmental processes, the image of God, human agency, sin, personality, narrative and the effects of redemption, because these sorts of things constitute and shape human beings.

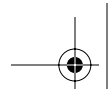
Some will resist calling the above discipline psychology. It could be called anthropology (as in the fields of philosophy and theology). But according to the majority of scholars currently working on the study of individual humans, their problems and their remediation, *psychology* is the designated term. So we will call this model psychology; it is just an example of *Christian* psychology.

The Nature of Human Nature

Perhaps a book with the above subject matter should somewhere have a thorough discussion regarding the ontology of human beings that underlies it. The reader will find some consideration of such matters within (especially in part two). However, less time will be spent on such matters than may be desirable. This is at least in part due to some skepticism on my part regarding our ability to resolve some of the conundrums regarding human nature. I suppose I am something of a “New Mysterian” (see McGinn, 2000)—one who questions whether humans have the cognitive capacity to be able to explain satisfactorily the relationship between the brain and the soul (though perhaps all I am questioning is whether *I* shall ever be able to understand it!). But I acknowledge that something needs to be said, before we embark.

The Bible and “common sense” have convinced me that the felt dichotomy between body and soul (including brain and mind)—universally common to human experience—is a fundamental distinction (Johnson, 1998a). Further-



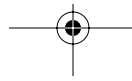
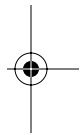


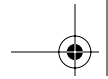
more, there seems to me no way to make sense of this dichotomy, particularly the existence of the soul in the intermediate state (after death, but before the resurrection of the body), without a notion that the soul is some kind of immaterial substance. However, on the basis of a great deal of brain research, it would appear that God has established that in this age (in contrast to the intermediate state), the soul is thoroughly brain-dependent, by which I mean that everything the soul experiences (perceives, thinks, feels) and does has a physiological basis or correlate.

Nonetheless, positively, I also want to assert that both soul and brain are characterized by semiodiscursiveness, that is, somehow brain and soul are both a function of the speech of God. The creating-sustaining God holds all things together—material and immaterial—by the word of his power (Heb 1:3; see also Jn 1:3; Col 1:15). (As the reader will discover in part two, I believe that adult humans are actually constituted by four “orders of divine discourse.”) Consequently, my position bears some similarity to that of Bishop George Berkeley and Jonathan Edwards, both of whom seemed to believe that everything in the creation was a function of the *ideas* of God.

In addition, the soul, though in some respects simple (e.g., it cannot be cut into parts), also appears to develop throughout life into a (metaphorically) “larger” and more complex dynamic structure—evidenced over the life span by an increasing number of memories and skills, greater knowledge-base, more complex reasoning processes, emotions and traits, a strengthening of virtues and so on, that altogether constitute an individual human being. In fact, as the structures of the soul develop, increasingly complex levels of organization appear to emerge, which can in turn influence lower levels, including brain-states, so that adult experience is qualitatively of a different order in certain key respects than childhood experience (most importantly, ethical and spiritual experience). Yet, somehow, all of the above complexity is still dependent in this life upon the maturation and experientially driven organization of the brain. Exactly how information in the brain is correlated to information in the soul and vice versa, and how it is passed from one to the other, no one today knows. Though it may be beyond our capacities to understand, we ought to work toward understanding the relationship between body and soul as well as possible.

As if this is not complicated enough, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate efficient cause of all this, an activity we call providence, and furthermore, he could





intervene in these systems whenever he wants. But most of the time, he seems to be content to work with the created structures as they are, gradually transforming them by the facilitation of incremental Godward human activity (Phil 2:12-13). Consequently, the Holy Spirit is ultimately responsible for all human goodness in body and soul. Beyond these rather sketchy positions (and the elaborations in the book), I currently hesitate to go.

Outline of the Book

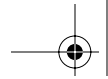
The book is divided into four parts and eighteen chapters. Part one examines the intellectual background to the current state of affairs in Christian soul care. In chapter one the Bible's claims to be God's teachings given to address the needs of the soul are presented, and it is concluded that the Bible is the primary soul care text for the Christian community.

The Christian tradition's use of the Bible is examined in the following chapter, from the early church fathers to the modern era, to show the reliance on the Bible that characterized historic Christian soul care, and also that the discomfort with the Bible demonstrated in the modern pastoral care movement—at its zenith in the mid-twentieth century—was fundamentally due to the influence of the modernist worldview and so was a radical departure from the Christian tradition. However, it is admitted that the modern pastoral care movement was attempting to respond to the increasingly impressive achievements of modern psychology, which were creating an epistemological and soul-care crisis for the contemporary church that has still not yet been adequately addressed.

In chapter three we examine the two major evangelical approaches to counseling that arose in the last half of the twentieth century. We might say they responded to that crisis in opposite ways: the integration movement sought to incorporate the discoveries of modern psychology in its soul care, while screening it with an evangelical theology (in contrast to the liberal theology that undergirded modern pastoral care), whereas the biblical counseling movement essentially rejected modern psychology and relied instead solely on the Bible for its soul-care resources. It is argued that both approaches have strengths the other lacks.

Part two attempts to develop a method for proceeding. There are two sets of texts that are important to the project of a Christian psychology in our day: the Bible and classics of the Christian tradition (based largely on the Bible)



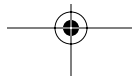


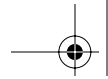
and those of modern psychology. The problem, of course, is that most of the contending parties assume that these two sets of texts are in certain respects incompatible. Chapter four defends some radical and contestable disciplinary claims: the study of the Bible must be understood again as a metadiscipline that addresses all of human life, in one way or another, and psychology must be less restrained by the methods and assumptions of naturalism and positivism than modern psychology conceives of it, and defined as simply the study of the nature of individual human beings—and open to any legitimate method of inquiry into its object. Such changes would free Christian psychology to use Scripture to aid in the study of its focus (admittedly a scandalous position from the standpoint of modern psychology). Rather than beginning with a dichotomy between psychology and theology or the Bible, in the approach taken in this book the real dichotomy facing the contemporary Christian soul-care provider is that between the modern and Christian *communities*. Having different worldviews (and disciplinary matrices and edification frameworks), both communities should view the task, sources and methods of psychology and soul care substantially differently from each other.

A major issue facing the project of a Christian psychology is figuring out how to properly interpret the most relevant texts. As established in chapter one, the foremost text for the Christian is the Bible. In chapter five, some of the features of Scripture, identified in the Reformation and post-Reformation eras, are examined for their relevance to the contemporary debate in the Christian counseling community regarding the role of the Bible. The Bible's authority and necessity in soul care, sufficiency in matters of salvation, and primacy in reference to other soul-care texts will be affirmed.

Given the primacy of Scripture, the next two chapters address some of the hermeneutics of reading: first, how to read the Bible with a view to the science of psychology and to contemporary soul care concerns (chap. 6), and second, how to read modern psychology texts Christianly and then how to translate them, where necessary, into Christian discourse (chap. 7). Part two ends with a short postscript exploring how a Christian psychology might arise and fit into the contemporary psychology scene.

Part three makes an ambitious attempt to describe a *semiodiscursive* model of created reality, as the expression of the Word of God and composed of signs and texts. For all its complexity, it is believed that such a model offers a promising way to understand human beings and their development, soul-problems





and soul-healing *holistically*, and that will allow us to avoid the faulty dualisms that have haunted other Christian approaches to these matters. In chapter eight, the triune God's agenda of self-glorification is described as a communicative endeavor: God spoke into existence everything in the universe (sin excepted) and still maintains it by the word of his power. Upon close examination, the creation, then, would seem to be characterized by semiodiscursiveness: it is all a function of and signifies the Word of God.

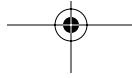
The semiodiscursiveness that constitutes human life is examined in more detail in chapter nine, beginning with its simplest elements (words, emotions, images and actions) and culminating with its narrative contexts, the largest of which is the momentous drama of history that God is ultimately authoring, but within which normal adults are free, responsible actors and coauthors.

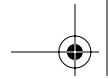
The next two chapters outline a multidimensional, holistic and hierarchical model of human nature. It will be suggested there that human beings are composed of four orders or levels of semiodiscursive meaning: biological, psychosocial, ethical and spiritual. It is believed that the structural dynamics of normal adults can be understood in terms of all four orders, and that the orders themselves are interrelated and interdependent.

The hierarchical relation of the four orders to each other is addressed in chapter eleven. The lower orders provide the grounding for the higher orders, which emerge out of the lower. However, the higher have greater significance in the eyes of God, since their meaningfulness is more explicitly related to him and his glory. There it will be suggested that Christian soul-care providers should work at the highest levels possible, but at the lowest levels necessary.

Part four is the real heart of the book, the most practical section in this theoretical work on Christian soul-care practice. Chapter twelve explains the foundational involvement of the Trinity in Christian soul care through the child of God's relation with the Father, union with the Son and indwelling by the Holy Spirit.

The following four chapters address aspects of the interior nature of Christian soul care. First, the encouragement of the Bible and the Christian tradition to "journey inward" is examined. This move of inwardness has three aspects, discussed in the next three chapters. The first involves the illumination of the current state of one's soul through self-examination. The next chapter concerns the recognition and dismantling of previously existing barriers that inhibit self-examination and the internalization of the signs of God. Human





psychopathology is interpreted as a function of problems within the four, semiodiscursive orders: physiological deficits, psychosocial damage, ethical wrong-doing and sin. The third, discussed in chapter sixteen, entails the promotion of the internalization of the expressions of God in Scripture and the gospel, through the form of Christlike humans, submission to God's will and dipolar self-regulation skills.

In chapter seventeen we consider the immanent goal of Christian inwardness: the outward manifestation of Christlikeness in one's life, actions and relationships. Through the dialectical processes of inwardness and outwardness, the believer develops into the form of Christ, becoming more and more a living sign of God's glory. The final chapter addresses the major modalities that are available to Christian soul care that together provide a comprehensive set of means for delivering the word and form of God for the purpose of Christiformity: biomedical, cognitive-behavioral, relational, family-systems and group, symbolic/narrative, psychodynamic, experiential and character therapies, as well as spiritual direction. Let us begin.

