

# 1 A History of Christians in Psychology

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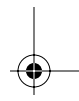
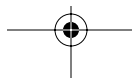
Eric L. Johnson & Stanton L. Jones

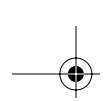


Followers of God have always been interested in his creation. After recounting the stars in the heavens, the bestowing of rain, the growth of vegetation and the feeding of wild animals, the psalmist cries out, "How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (Ps 104:24). But of all the things in creation, the greatest interest to most of us is our own nature, for we are fascinated with the wonder of ourselves. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Ps 139:13-14). As John Calvin (1559/1960) wrote, a human being is a microcosm of the universe, "a rare example of God's power, goodness, and wisdom, and contains within . . . enough miracles to occupy our minds" (p. 54). It should come as no surprise then to learn that Christian thinkers have also thought deeply about "psychology," psychology understood as the rigorous attempt to understand human character and behavior, one grounded in philosophical reflection and examination of the "data" of human experience.



Yet Christian interest in human nature has exploded in the last forty years of the twentieth century. Countless books have been written by Christians that describe and reflect on human beings: how we should be raised, the nature of our personalities, our development, our relation-

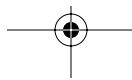


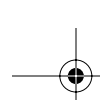


ships, our inner well-being, and on and on. However, this explosion of interest has resulted in a major controversy within the church. Why? Because over the past century a complex and rich body of knowledge and practice has arisen that attempts to understand and treat human personality and behavior in ways which are usually disconnected from Christian perspectives on life, and sometimes in ways that seem to contradict what Christians have regarded as biblically grounded truth about humanity. Disagreement is rampant about how much and in what ways the theories and findings of this secular version of psychology should influence, be absorbed into, and even transform the way Christians think about persons.

Thus we are struggling as Christians with what seems like a new problem: How do we relate or connect our cherished Christian beliefs about persons to what this secular version of psychology tells us about them? This is reminiscent of an old problem: For centuries Christians themselves have thought about human beings in different ways. Christians have disagreed, for example, on the nature of human free will—Wesleyan and Reformed Christians believe differently about God’s involvement in human actions. An even more complex problem is the focus of this book. Christians disagree about how we should understand and relate to the enormous, impressive body of knowledge and set of practices that have developed in the twentieth century known today as psychology, since it offers us a largely secular *version* of psychology. This book presents four of the most important approaches contemporary evangelicals use to relate their faith to the study and treatment of human nature (that is, psychology and counseling).

Some Christians believe there are marvelous things to learn from modern psychology, embracing psychological findings and theories with enthusiasm, while others approach secular psychology with great caution. There are even some who argue that *any* appropriation of secular psychology is heresy, that secular psychology is a poison which taints and infects all Christians who imbibe it. Think of a continuum: at one end are atheistic thinkers who believe that all religions, including Christianity, are false and that psychology is the only source of reliable knowledge about humanity; for these people “religious knowledge” means nothing and secular psychology means everything. At the other end of





this continuum are Christians who might be called “fundamentalists,” who believe Christians should only affirm what is in the Bible and reject any input from “worldly” sources, especially secular psychology; such critics go so far as to decry one-on-one counseling since it is not expressly taught in the Bible (cf. Bobgan & Bobgan, 1997). This book will examine neither of these extremes but instead will look at what lies between them—four constructive views of how Christians should understand psychology and counseling.

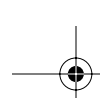
Before we learn about the four approaches themselves, let’s take some time to trace the historical and intellectual background for the present debate.

#### **Faith, Science, and Secularism**

Over the past 150 years, revolutionary shifts have occurred in the fundamental ways we conduct our intellectual lives in the West. Though there were notable exceptions, Europeans and Americans of the early 1800s broadly agreed that Christianity provided the only legitimate view of reality. Most Westerners—common folk and scholars alike—thought within the framework of a biblical worldview. They assumed that God had created the world, that human beings were specially created in his image, that human reason could apprehend ultimate truth because God had made them capable of knowing truth, that biblical morality was universally true and invariant, that the biblical virtues depicted what it meant to be fully and perfectly human, and so forth.

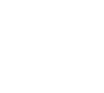
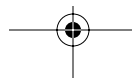
Of course, the West is still commonly considered Christian, and a majority of Europeans and Americans would still label themselves Christian if asked their religion. Two significant changes, however, have occurred. Among this group of avowed Christians there is a relatively smaller percentage who would continue to hold to the traditional beliefs of classic Christianity and consistently practice their faith (perhaps 15 to 20 percent in America, maybe 5 to 10 percent in Europe [higher in Italy and Poland, lower in France, England, and Germany]). In addition, over the last 150 years an alternative worldview has competed for cultural influence, and over the course of this century it has become the dominant paradigm for understanding ourselves in Western culture, a worldview now called *modernism*.

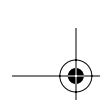




A fuller description of modernism will be given below, but for now let's focus on one feature of modernism: its secularism; that is, its tendency to empty culture of its religious significance, discourse, and symbols. Because of this feature, Christianity and modernism have struggled in the West for cultural dominance. In the main, most contemporary Westerners have been shaped by both modernism and Christianity. However, the secularism that has pervaded the significant writings and major institutions of Western culture in the twentieth century is evidence that modernism has superseded Christianity in influence. Most of the influential authors, thinkers, scientists, and celebrities of the twentieth century were not religious, or if they were, their religion was not visible. Many of the most influential shapers of modern culture openly disparaged traditional religious perspectives (e.g., Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, H. G. Wells, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Samuel Beckett, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, and Richard Rorty, to name a few). Perhaps the most powerful and tangible example of this movement is the way that European and American institutions of higher learning have so remarkably moved from Judeo-Christian to secular sensibilities over the past 150 years. Institution by institution, colleges and universities have shed their original commitments to glorifying Christ and proclaiming the Christian gospel to embrace a secularized definition of mission and identity (a process in America that has been documented by Burtchael, 1998; and Marsden, 1994). Gradually, beginning in the early twentieth century, unwritten rules developed that excluded religious views from expression in the main forms of media, education, and science in the West. As a result, religious speech was relegated to private life and to religious institutions and media—churches, sectarian colleges, and religious broadcasting. Beyond that, with few exceptions religious considerations were dropped from public discourse.

Of course, there were benefits to Western culture that resulted from these modern requirements: it made possible a common educational system; it allowed people with different faith commitments (Christian, Jewish, agnostic) to talk with, work with, and learn from each other; and it allowed people to concentrate on those beliefs that most people hold in common rather than those that divide. However, in many ways the cost of this secularization has proven very high.

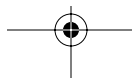


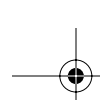


At the same time, this move away from a religious worldview to a secular one also happened to coincide with another very significant cultural development: the application of natural science methods to areas of the world to which they had not been previously applied. Intense quantification and controlled observation had proven successful in previous centuries in astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology. Now these methods began to be applied to the study of society, human consciousness and behavior, economics and business, and education with notable results. Secularism combined with the methods of the natural sciences in the study of human nature resulted in a number of sciences being newly formed or reformed in ways that excluded reference to supernatural beliefs or assumptions. This mix of secularization and the application of scientific methods to the understanding of animal and human behavior, emotion, personality, and thought shaped the modern version of psychology. And it is this combination which has led to the present debate among Christians about how the findings and theories of *secular* psychology should relate to Christian belief and practice.

### **The History of Western Psychology and Counseling Before 1879**

In thinking about how psychology and Christian faith should relate today, it is essential to recognize that the present state (one of tension and debate) is similar to and yet different from the state of psychology through much of the history of the church. According to most contemporary introductory textbooks in psychology, psychopathology, and counseling (and even some history of psychology texts), the founding of psychology is believed to have occurred in the mid to late 1800s. Nevertheless, there *was* counseling, psychological theorizing, reflection, writing, and in some cases research prior to this time, even centuries prior (Brett, 1912; Diamond, 1974; Leahey, 1997; Robinson, 1981; Watson & Evans, 1991). Unquestionably, the form of this work was different in many respects from twentieth-century psychology. Most importantly, it was far less empirically and quantitatively oriented, and much more reliant on the philosophical reflections of individuals. Still, genuine insights to psychological thinking can be found in pre-1879 texts, even if we must acknowledge that in most cases such insights were developed with less complexity than has been the case in the twentieth century.

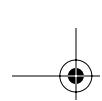




Psychology in the West was first developed with unusual sophistication by Greek philosopher-therapists like Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus. They attempted to describe human nature, including its fundamental ills and its reparation, on the basis of personal experience and rigorous reflection in light of prior thought (Nussbaum, 1994; Watson & Evans, 1991). These thinkers explored topics like the composition and “inner” structure of human beings—memory, reason, sensation, appetite, motivation, virtues and vices, and various ideals of human maturation. The Old and New Testaments themselves contain material of psychological import (and in the case of Paul, perhaps a strongly religious protopsychology; Brett, 1912). However these reflections belong under the category of “folk psychology,” since they were not developed systematically for the express aim of contributing to psychological knowledge. Nevertheless, within the classic Christian tradition, the Bible’s reflections on human nature have always been accorded a unique authority.

After the New Testament era it seems the Bible and the psychological contributions of Plato and Aristotle (and others) provided joint inspiration for and influence on the psychological theorizing of Christians for the next fourteen hundred years. With only a limited grasp of the value of actual empirical study, the major teachers and writers of the early church and medieval periods were convinced that philosophical reflection grounded in Scripture provided the surest route to knowledge. Not surprisingly then, the best psychological work by Christians was the result of personal reflection, not research. Though largely concerned with matters of faith and life, people like the desert fathers, Tertullian, Cassian, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Great wrote with sometimes penetrating insight into the nature of the soul and soul healing. However, it was Augustine, with his massive intellect, that provided the best example in the early church of psychological reflection (cf. Burnaby, 1938; Henry, 1960; Johnson, 1998; Wetzel, 1992). Steeped in the Scriptures and the thought of the earlier church fathers, Augustine’s understanding was also influenced by the philosophical tradition inspired by Plato. He worked out a system of thought fundamentally shaped by scriptural categories, but with a Platonic flavor. Nevertheless, his work on love, sin, grace, memory, mental illumination, wisdom, volition, and the experience of time provide a wealth of suggestions for psychology.





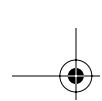
Strongly influenced by Augustine but much more systematic (and therefore more directly helpful for developing psychological theory) was Thomas Aquinas (cf. Brennan, 1937; Cantin, 1948; Cross, 1998). Significantly, this great Christian thinker devoted his life to relating faith to the thought of another brilliant but secular philosopher. Aquinas unified the best of Augustinian and Aristotelian tradition and produced an influential body of psychological thought covering the appetites, the will, habits, the virtues and vices, the emotions, memory, and the intellect.

It is worth underlining that the two greatest intellectual lights of the church's first fifteen hundred years, Augustine and Aquinas, drew heavily in their theological and psychological work on the philosophical traditions of the two greatest (and non-Christian) Greek philosophers—Plato and Aristotle. And their distinct approaches contributed to genuine differences in thought (despite their shared faith). In a very real sense, then, the work of each of these two great Christian thinkers represents an “integration” of Christian and non-Christian thought, though Aquinas was engaged in such integration much more self-consciously than Augustine, who was more explicitly working out the differences between Christian and pagan thought, between the “city of God” and the “city of humanity.”

Other Christians of the Middle Ages who wrote on psychological topics, including Bonaventure, Bernard of Clairvaux, Symeon the New Theologian, Anselm, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham, typically focused on concerns like the structure of the soul, knowledge, and spirituality and spiritual development. Through the early church and medieval periods, these and other writers also studied the improvement of the soul. Pastoral care, counseling, and spiritual direction were of primary importance. Clearly, the healing of souls (and what we now call counseling) was central to the mission of the church long before modern psychotherapy came on the scene (Jones, 1985; McNeill, 1951; Oden, 1989; Stewart, 1998).

The Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation released a new curiosity in things natural, including topics that we now consider psychology. For example, Catholics in the Counter-Reformation like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross described spiritual development with unparalleled depth. Reformers like Luther and Calvin wrote only indi-



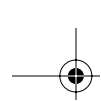


rectly on psychology, but their reflections on sin, grace, knowledge, faith, and the nature of the Christian life contributed to the further development of a Protestant folk psychology largely shaped by biblical (and Augustinian) themes. However, similar to much of the work of earlier Christians, the main focus of this quasi-psychological writing was more pastoral: the cure and upbuilding of the Christian soul. In other words, their concern was most often directed toward the shaping of moral character and the enhancement or deepening of a believer's relationship with God, sometimes directed toward what we call "therapeutic" concerns (such as the resolution of severe "melancholy," seen as a normal part of pastoral care) and not at all directed toward what we call "self-actualization" or the enhancement of human potential. In the Reformation traditions this pastoral psychology reached its zenith in the Puritan and Pietist periods, when writers like Richard Baxter, John Owen, George Herbert, William Law, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, John Newton, and (later) Archibald Alexander developed sophisticated and nuanced understandings of the soul's spiritual development in Christ, considerations that have major implications for pastoral care and Christian counseling today.

In addition, Christian philosophers after the Middle Ages continued to reason about human nature in ways that shed light on psychology, including such luminaries as René Descartes, Giovanni Vico, John Locke, Bishop George Berkeley, Thomas Reid, Bishop Joseph Butler, Gottfried Leibniz, and Blaise Pascal, some of whom are universally recognized as important figures leading up to the founding of modern psychology. In the Americas a number of Christians also contributed works in psychology (the best of which probably include Edwards, 1754/1957; 1746/1959; McCosh, 1886, 1887; Porter, 1869; though probably only Edwards has more than historical interest). Possibly the most significant Christian psychology author since the Middle Ages was Søren Kierkegaard, who considered himself a Christian psychologist and who contributed some of the most profound theoretical psychological works ever written from a Christian or non-Christian standpoint (e.g., 1844/1980a; 1848/1980b; cf. Evans, 1990). Over the course of a decade he described with brilliance (in sometimes disturbing ways) the nature of personhood, sin, anxiety, the unconscious (before Freud was even born), subjectivity, human develop-



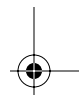
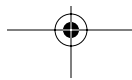


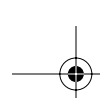


ment, and spiritual development from a thoroughgoing Christian perspective. Kierkegaard is, as well, the only Christian thinker who can be considered a “father” to a major modern approach to psychological theory and therapy—existential psychology (though Kierkegaard would almost certainly be horrified to be considered the founding father of what is among the psychological approaches considered most alien and hostile to Christian faith; see Jones & Butman, 1991).

So while a certain form of psychology and therapy originated in the late 1800s, psychology (defined broadly as a disciplined, focused inquiry into human nature) and counseling (defined as an attempt to heal the soul and advance its well-being) have been practiced by Christians for centuries. Christians contributed novel and significant psychological insights in such areas as the nature of human reason, sensation, memory, attention, the appetites, the emotions, volition, and related subjects; the unconscious; the experience of time; moral, spiritual, and character development; the role of God and grace in human development; the nature and impact of sin; techniques for overcoming sin and brokenness (the spiritual disciplines, as well as herbal remedies and common sense helps); the psychology of religion; the relation of free will and determinism; biological versus environmental origins of psychological phenomena; body-soul relations; and some of the bases for scientific research (Brett, 1953; Robinson, 1981).

However, at the same time there is no question that the degree of complexity and accuracy in our understanding of human nature and the degree of rigor used in its investigation was with a few exceptions far below that of the twentieth century. The scientific revolution in the West contributed an amazing drive toward a detailed examination of phenomena unlike anything ever seen in history. Though the classical pastoral-care tradition may rival the work done on therapy in the twentieth century in certain respects, the sheer quantity of knowledge acquired in other psychological areas over the last one hundred years far outstrips the knowledge accumulated over previous centuries. Moreover, the simple truth is that pure philosophical and theological reflection about concrete matters of human life not clearly addressed in Scripture and unchecked by empirical research inevitably yields error as well as truth. Understanding human nature would advance only as human nature





itself became the object of careful scientific investigation. We turn next to consider the Christian contribution to the scientific revolution.

### **Christian Influence on the Development of Modern Science**

Secular thinkers and Christian fundamentalists often share a core conviction that we regard as substantially flawed: that “natural knowledge” (knowledge coming from sources other than the Bible, including scientific knowledge) is the enemy of faith. Admittedly, the church has long struggled with this issue. Here, we will not take on the task of outlining a justification for Christian engagement with “natural knowledge.” We will presume the reasonableness of learning from sources other than the Scriptures.

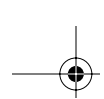
Many secularists, however, claim that a clear lesson is learned from the historical relationship of science and religion. For many, the Galileo affair sums it all up: Religion has always stood for dogmatic certainty and superstition in the service of authoritarian control, while science has been on a noble quest for truth.<sup>1</sup> The two forces—superstitious religion and scientific rationality—have been locked in conflict since the emergence of modern science. By outlining how this conviction is mistaken, we hope to lay a better foundation for understanding how Christians can approach the scientific discipline of psychology.

Today, many people accept the “warfare” model of the relationship between science and religion. Several writers stand out in the last 150 years as proponents of this metaphor. Thomas H. Huxley, the popularizer of Darwin’s thought (who was called “Darwin’s bulldog,” in his day), worked tirelessly to wrest control of nineteenth-century English universities away from the Church of England. He did so by painting Christianity as the enemy of the pursuit of knowledge. In one of his more flamboyant moments he wrote, “Extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science, as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules;

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<sup>1</sup>During the later years of the Inquisition, Galileo was threatened with imprisonment and excommunication by authorities in the Catholic Church if he did not retract his endorsement of a heliocentric planetary system, which was believed to contradict the teachings of the Bible and the authoritative views of ancient writers that the earth was at the center and was immovable. He did in fact recant in 1633 (Shea, 1986).





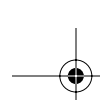
and history records that whenever science and orthodoxy have been fairly exposed, the latter have been forced to retire from the lists, bleeding and crushed; scotched if not slain" (Huxley, 1893, p. 52).

John W. Draper, a chemist and physiologist, wrote the highly influential *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (1874, which is still in print today). It was essentially a diatribe against Roman Catholicism. Draper claimed that since its earliest years, the Roman Church had displayed "a bitter and mortal animosity" (p. 335) toward science that resulted in the brutal persecution of scientists and other nonconformists. He described the Church's hands as "steeped in blood" (p. 364). His revisionist history concluded that "Religion must relinquish that imperious, that domineering position which she has so long maintained against Science. There must be absolute freedom for thought. The ecclesiastic must learn to keep himself within the domain he has chosen, and cease to tyrannize over the philosopher [i.e., scientist], who, conscious of his own strength and the purity of his motives, will bear such interference no longer" (p. 367).

There is one small problem with such characterizations of the relationship between science and religion (particularly Christianity): they are tragic distortions of the truth. A summary of the many ways in which the "warfare" characterization is a distortion is beyond the scope of this introduction. All we can do here is highlight some crucial observations from recent scholarship. For more complete discussion, see the work of John H. Brooke (1991; see also Russell, 1985).

First, defining and distinguishing either religion or science is a challenge, especially when we are looking back in history through twenty-first-century eyes. Definitions of *science* and *religion* are profoundly complicated; both are dynamic and multifaceted human activities. The boundaries of each are both blurred and moveable. The term *science* was historically much broader than its use today. It was only since the mid-nineteenth century that science has become formally professionalized. Prior to this new era, scientists referred to themselves as "natural philosophers" and concerned themselves with many matters beyond what we would today regard as the narrowly scientific. Isaac Newton, perhaps the greatest scientific mind in history, seamlessly moved between interests in what we recognize as physics and chemistry, and interests in alchemy,

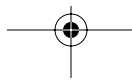


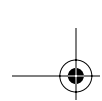


biblical prophecy, and theology. "Newton himself remarked that it was part of the business of natural philosophy to discuss such questions as the attributes of God and His relationship to the physical world" (Brooke, 1991, p. 7). Neither science nor religion is a static "thing." "Because both are rooted in human concerns and human endeavor, it would be a profound mistake to treat them as if they were entities in themselves—as if they could be completely abstracted from their social contexts in which those concerns and endeavors took their distinctive forms" (Brooke, 1991, p. 8). Each is connected to the other as well as to politics (disciplinary and societal), culture, art, and daily life.

Second, religion has played complex roles in the rise of modern science. On balance, Christianity did much more to facilitate the development of science than to impede it. Brooke (1991) argued that Christianity has served or facilitated science in a number of ways, including the following three:

- It provided beliefs essential to the development of science that were not present or important in other religions. For example, Christianity suggested that we can expect uniformity in nature since one God created and sustained the entire cosmos, that the sovereign Creator decreed that the material cosmos would behave according to "laws," that human reason could understand the cosmos since our reason parallels that of its Creator, and that the created order is a suitable object of study since it is a created entity and not a part of God himself.
- Christianity provided personal motives for scientists, which include improving the world to bring glory to God and relieve suffering (note that the strength of the prescribed motive to alleviate suffering varies markedly among different religious systems), being able to more fervently praise God by the activities of the mind (thus Kepler spoke of the scientist "thinking God's thoughts after Him;" Brooke, 1991, p. 22), and the possibility of science serving the causes of natural theology and apologetics (respectively, the tasks of proving God's existence and attributes from study of the natural world, and the defense of faith against attacks by nonbelievers).
- Christianity "could reinforce prescriptions for an appropriate scientific method. Each science in its infancy has had to establish the assumptions and procedures by which it could claim to extend our knowledge of



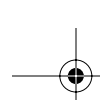


nature" (Brooke, 1991, p. 25). This foundation required justification *before* there was a substantial body of empirical product from the new science, and so justifications external to scientific inquiry itself had to be utilized. For example, "references to the freedom of the divine will were often used in the seventeenth century to justify attacks on rationalist theories of nature, whose authors presumed to know how God *must* have shaped the world" (Brooke, 1991, p. 26) and thus justifying observation and experimentation.

A third observation that has been made from history is that the best way to frame the evolving relationship of science and religion is not as one of "eternal conflict" but instead as a process of "gradual differentiation and divergence." There are three broad views of the proper relationship of science and religion: (1) never ending conflict (Draper and White), (2) complementarity or independence in which each asks different questions about reality in incommensurable ways (and hence really have little or nothing to do with each other), and (3) mutual interaction and constructive influence wherein certain types of religious belief may be more supportive of and conducive to science than others and where science and religion can work to mutual advantage. Brooke (1991) argues that a careful examination of the rich historical record reveals a complex interaction that belies quick summarization. If any broad generalization has gained acceptance, it is that religion and science have been undergoing a process of "gradual differentiation and divergence" (Rudwick, cited in Lindberg & Numbers, 1986, p. 9). If true, it would seem that the conflict hypothesis (view 1) is wrong historically. On the contrary, Christianity has been generally a positive influence on the development of science (view 3), but it would appear that that influence is steadily weakening as science becomes more and more independent of religion (view 2).

The fact that there is some general validity to this description does not necessarily mean that this is how it *ought* to be. Perhaps religious faith and scientific thought are at their best when they are connected and interrelated; the explosion of interest in the last decade in the relationship of science and religion may attest to this. If so, this may lend support to the current of Christian thought (traceable to Augustine) which has insisted that all of life is religious at core and therefore all human activity,





including human knowing (as in the sciences), is fundamentally of a religious nature and necessarily involves faith. Such an approach sees humans as intrinsically religious beings (a function of being made in God's image), so that even atheists are seen as acting within the context of their "ultimate concerns," values, beliefs, and motives, which are functionally equivalent to explicitly religious (or we might say cultic) values, beliefs, and motives. This approach isn't surprised when explicit religion is seen as a constructive force in human life, believing that humans were made for true religion. This in turn would suggest that religion plays an essential role in the science of psychology (and the practice of psychotherapy; cf. Johnson & Sandage, 1999).

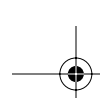
But even if we don't subscribe to a more Augustinian view of the relation of faith and understanding given the history of the relationship of science and religion, we can still argue that religion may have a useful role to play internally to less mature sciences, a characterization which certainly fits psychology. Further, there may be special characteristics of the scientific study of human beings which suggest that a more sustained relationship with religion is advisable or permissible—humanity is, after all, a special concern of religion. The profoundly complex subject matter of the human sciences may serve as a justification for a sustained dialogue with religion on the strengths and weaknesses of the assumptions scientists bring to the study of persons.

Finally, an observation of the relationship of science and religion: Conflict between science and religion, when it has occurred, has largely been a function of factors that have been peripheral to rather than at the heart of both scientific inquiry and the core of religious doctrine.

When specific historical cases that supposedly stand as prototypes of the science-religion conflict are carefully examined, they no longer can serve as simple "conflict stories." Sometimes, historians have actually fabricated conflicts where there were none; for example, it is often stated that Luther and Calvin condemned Copernican cosmology (the idea that the earth moves around the sun), but this appears to be completely untrue (Daub, 1978).

There have been many instances of actual conflict, but between whom was the conflict, and why? "Conflicts allegedly between science and religion may turn out to be between rival scientific interests, or conversely



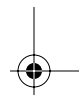
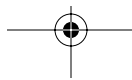


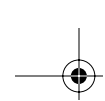
between rival theological factions. Issues of political power, social prestige, and intellectual authority have repeatedly been at stake" (Brooke, 1991, p. 5). The best contemporary understandings of the Galileo incident illustrate this point. Far from being a simple tale of the Catholic Church seeking to suppress scientific progress while defending simplistic biblical interpretation, it appears instead that Galileo fell afoul of a complex tangle of ecclesiastical, political, personal, social, and theological forces (described beautifully in a dramatic screenplay; Goodwin, 1998).

"Conflict historians" often harshly judge the actions or pronouncements of church representatives without proper distinction between those actions and judgments that flowed from grounded theological dogma, for instance, in creeds (this occurred rarely) and when the church officials were simply reflecting the common pagan knowledge of the day. For example, anti-Copernican sentiments have been attributed to Calvin, apparently grounded on Calvin's remark in one sermon that the idea of the earth in motion was offensive to common sense and experience. But Calvin made no sustained argument against Copernicanism based on theological premises (Daub, 1978). We must distinguish, in other words, between a religious figure saying, "This new scientific hypothesis is a heresy!" and the same figure saying, "This new scientific hypothesis is ridiculous; everyone knows that can not be true!" Calvin's statement appears to be the latter, not the former.

In conclusion, Christians should strongly contest the idea that religion and science, and particularly Christianity and science, can be shown from history to be mortal enemies and incompatible entities. History suggests instead that it is possible for Christian faith to facilitate the progress of science and for science to coexist peacefully with Christianity. We can even claim on good historical evidence that Christianity facilitated the development of modern science. Many core Christian beliefs (e.g., that the world has an independent existence from the divine, is orderly and rule-governed, and that humanity was created capable of knowing and exercising dominion over the world) form the ideal foundation for scientific thought.

We turn next to an examination of the movement of psychology and counseling from its pastoral and philosophical contexts into the modern, more empirically based form in which we find it in America today.





### **Christianity and the Origins of Modern American Psychology**

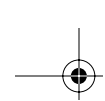
So, contrary to the allegations of some secularists, Christians and their beliefs actually provided a strong justification for modern science's *empirical* approach to the natural world, which strives for an accurate and detailed understanding based on actual research. And this Christian-inspired impetus for empirical validity eventually influenced the study of human nature. As the standard histories of modern psychology have well documented (Boring, 1950; Brett, 1953; Hearnshaw, 1987; Hothersall, 1984; Leahey, 1997), the success of natural science methods in astronomy, physics, chemistry, and especially biology led gradually in the 1800s to their application to the study of human phenomena.

Yet it would be going too far to say that Christianity had a direct role in fostering empirical psychology. For one thing, as noted above, the essentially Christian psychological work of the early church, medieval, and early modern periods had been based largely on various combinations of reason, speculation, and human tradition accumulated over previous centuries. While Christianity inspired the rise of the natural sciences, the human sciences (being more abstract) arose somewhat later, at a time when Western culture happened to be moving away from Christianity. Moreover, it must be conceded that the application of natural science methods to human beings was facilitated by a shift in viewpoint regarding human beings: they had to be construed as a type of "thing," an "object of study," to which such methods could be rightly applied. It seems likely that the erosion of Christian belief in the West (particularly its high view of human nature) and the ascendancy of Darwinian and other materialistic views of persons contributed to this shift in views of human beings. It should be added, however, that in hindsight Christianity per se is not inconsistent with empirical study of the human being; Aquinas, for example, was convinced that humans were animals. Nevertheless, it is clear that Darwinism and the growing success of natural science methods together made it easier to treat human beings as empirical objects of study.

Beginning in the early to mid 1800s, European studies on the nervous system and sensory experience by diverse people like Müller (a devout Catholic), Helmholtz (a materialist), and Fechner (a pantheist) demonstrated that human experience could be objectively studied and mea-







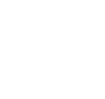
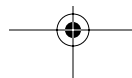
sured, and that lawful relationships between stimuli in the world and our experience of it could be discerned. This proved that natural science methods could be used on that which hitherto was thought beyond their reach: inner human experience. In 1879 Wilhelm Wundt, the great German founder of modern psychology, was the first to develop a laboratory for the specific purpose of studying immediate human experience, commonly understood as the birth of modern psychology.

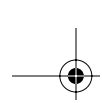
Once this empirical drive touched psychology, a profusion of articles and books began pouring from the major universities in Europe and America that documented, through research, the structures and processes of the mind, emotions, and behavior. Our understanding of mind and behavior has increased a thousandfold over the 120 years since then, due to the raising of the standards of scholarship about human beings and the new requirement of empirical validity that revolutionized the field of psychology.<sup>2</sup>

Early on, some Christians were interested and in some cases participated in these developments. Some of the phrenologists, for example, were Christians who sought to understand the relation of the brain to the personality (Vande Kemp, 1998). And the devout scholar-president of

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<sup>2</sup>The value of applying natural-science methods (observation and quantification) to the social or human sciences is beyond dispute given the enormous body of research it has yielded. However, critics have rightly recognized the limitations of using methods derived from the study of the natural world (physics, chemistry, biology) to study human beings, given that some of the features of human nature are not found in the natural world (e.g., the experience of self-awareness, freedom, morality, and values) (Dilthey, 1989; Giorgi, 1970; Harré, Clarke, & De Carlo, 1985; Maslow, 1968). Though things like morality and values can be observed and measured (e.g., Kohlberg), critics have argued that natural-science methods inevitably lead to a truncated body of psychological research since they cannot “pick up” that which is most distinctive about human beings (reality from the “inside”). As a result, they have advocated using alternative methods to augment natural science research (e.g., phenomenological study, participant observation, discourse analysis, narrative psychology) that attempt to take into account the perspective and self-understanding of the person(s) being studied. Though these methods are becoming more widely used (e.g., feminist and postmodern researchers are particularly open to them), mainstream psychology continues to use natural sciences approaches in most of its research. Christians, of course, have a stake in such issues since we assume that adult humans are persons: self-aware, responsible, relatively free and moral beings, and therefore, not mere mechanisms or computing organisms (Farnsworth, 1985; Van Leeuwen, 1982, 1985).



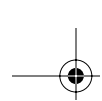


Princeton James McCosh (1886) published a work on cognition that was, though still heavily influenced by philosophy, perhaps the first work of psychology in America that took seriously the role of physiology in the mind (Roback, 1952). Shortly after that, the Protestant liberal theologian-turned-psychologist G. T. Ladd (1887; also the second president of the American Psychological Association [APA], before William James!) wrote the most important work on physiological psychology written in English for the next twenty years.

Christian openness to the latest research at this time was likely due to the influence of Common Sense Realism on the preeminent evangelical scholars and administrators of the 1800s (Marsden, 1994; Spilka, 1987). This philosophy, broadly accepted as the Christian approach to learning of its day (originated by the eighteenth-century Christian philosopher Thomas Reid), provided justification for a confidence in the abilities of normal humans to know truths regarding the natural order. These abilities, it was believed, were universally bestowed by the Creator on all normal persons; hence these thinkers saw science as an ally to theology by providing evidence of God's design (Spilka, 1987). So this philosophy encouraged Christians to trust the research and theorizing of intellectuals, whether Christian or not. Unfortunately, Common Sense Realism did not predispose them to think critically regarding the influence of non-Christian assumptions on science. Consequently, such Christians tended to readily accept the latest findings of non-Christians without a full and proper appreciation of the extent to which nonreligious and antireligious biases were built into the very fabric of the work (Marsden, 1994).

At the same time that the methods of the natural sciences were being so powerfully extended to psychological phenomena, a major intellectual-cultural movement was beginning to take root in American soil: secular modernism. Descended from the Enlightenment exaltation of reason and rejection of tradition, and newly empowered by the quest for objective, scientific knowledge, twentieth-century modernism seems to have been characterized by the following features: (1) a repudiation of tradition, dogma, and revelation, which are assumed to be impediments to the attainment of true knowledge, and a corollary reliance on human reason and scientific research to provide truth





about reality; (2) a pervasive secularism which rejects claims about the supernatural and generally excludes religious discourse from the public square; (3) an ethic rooted in an individualism in which the highest value is the pursuit of one's own happiness, so long as it does not infringe on the pursuits of other individuals; (4) an optimistic belief in the improvability of humankind; (5) the goal of a universal understanding of things that all intelligent parties can agree to; and (6) a tendency to analyze (break down into fundamental elements), categorize, and specialize, resulting in the distinguishing and separation of each discipline from all other disciplines (MacIntyre, 1990; Pippin, 1991; Rosenau, 1992; Ward, 1996). This last feature resulted in theology and philosophy being demoted from their standing as premier, overarching disciplines, at first placing them alongside other disciplines of higher learning but increasingly leading to the rejection of any claims of something real beyond the senses.

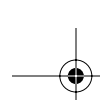
By the turn of the century many American intellectuals were becoming disenchanted with traditional Christianity and the supernaturalism it represented (Hitchcock, 1982; Marsden, 1994; Turner, 1985). Gradually the notion that we could make metaphysical claims about the nature of things beyond what sense experience or research could ascertain was rejected. (This is the essence of positivism, a philosophical approach that has pervaded modernism.) Recognizing the significance of evolutionary theory and encouraged by its optimism, which easily combined with the optimism of the scientific and industrial revolutions, these intellectuals were eager to develop and advance an alternative framework to that offered by the Judeo-Christian religions for making sense of life and offering solutions to life's problems. And if science was going to be instrumental in providing better solutions than those offered by the traditional religions, the actual scientific study of human nature would have to be pivotal.

In this milieu, psychology came to be seen by many of its participants, and increasingly by the culture at large, as providing an authoritative replacement for the pronouncements of the Bible, the pope, and church tradition (cf. Watson, 1925).<sup>3</sup> Gradually, the "new psychology," the study

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<sup>3</sup>A striking similarity of many of the leaders of modern psychology was the common familial heritage in Christian or Jewish faith and their subsequent rejection of at





of human nature based on natural science methods alone, began to develop a substantial and respectable body of research and theory, and came to be recognized as the only psychology to be taken seriously. All the while, psychology's participation in and contribution to the West's movement away from Christianity remained largely tacit and therefore largely unnoticed. No doubt this motive was an ambiguous influence and is difficult to interpret, but it is easy to document the pervasive positivism and naturalism (and increasing intolerance of metaphysical commitments of any kind, e.g., reference to a "will") that came to dominate the institutions and journals of early modern psychology.<sup>4</sup>

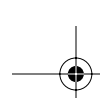
The only place where religion was allowed in psychology was as an object of study—the psychology of religion. Oriented by modernist assumptions, a number of psychologists living in a culture still largely religious were led to study religion supposedly without assuming any stance toward the phenomenon itself. Religion was merely a fascinating, perplexing human phenomenon to be explained. As a result many studies of religious behavior and phenomena were published around the turn of the century (e.g., Coe, 1900; Leuba, 1912; Pratt, 1907; Starbuck, 1899), the most important being *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James (1903). James, the father of American psychology, was an unusual hybrid: not an orthodox Christian, he was nevertheless somewhat scandalously open to "the supernatural" (Allen, 1967). Regardless, as a good modernist he insisted that religious experience be studied "objectively"—that is, without assuming its reality. Aside from a few such notable exceptions, among intellectuals the tide was turning against belief in anything metaphysical or supernatural. As a result, as the first generation of American psychologists died out, few of the next generation were drawn to study religious experi-

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least the orthodox versions of that faith. This can be seen in the lives of G. Stanley Hall, John Dewey, William James, Joseph Jastrow, James Rowland Angell, James Mark Baldwin, J. B. Watson, William McDougall, B. F. Skinner, Carl Rogers, and Abraham Maslow, as well as Europeans like Freud, Jung, and Piaget.

<sup>4</sup>The topic of the human will is illuminating, for it was a major controversy around the turn of the century because of a clash between religious (or metaphysical) and "agnostic" worldviews (e.g., see James, 1890). But it is clear which worldview won out; by 1930 there was virtually no reference to the human will in mainstream psychological literature, a neglect that has continued to the present, though over the past fifteen years *action* has again become a focus of some research..





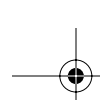
ence, and the field virtually died out for nearly a half century.

Simultaneous with these developments was a veritable revolution in the treatment of the soul: psychoanalysis. Whereas pastors, priests, spiritual directors, and rabbis had cared for the souls of Christians and Jews for centuries, this controversial new approach to the soul offered a disturbing but profound analysis of what was wrong with humans and how to help. Besides its intellectual complexity, sophistication, and alluring examination of the mysterious unconscious realm, this approach distinguished itself from pastoral care with its alleged empirical basis and by its lack of reference to supernatural causes or cures. Though increasingly criticized in coming decades, psychoanalysis was originally viewed by modernists as consistent with natural scientific methods and so was seen as largely compatible with the secular clinical psychology that was just getting started in America (in the work of people like Witmer, 1907; Beers, 1908; Munsterberg, 1909; and Prince, 1908, 1913). All of this was also occurring during the time when the modern American university was coming into its own and developing its own curriculum. Given the educational, social, and intellectual forces working at the time, the "new psychology," a modern, secular form of psychology and psychotherapy based ideally on empirical research alone, became institutionalized within the major academic settings of the day and accepted as the only legitimate versions of psychology and treatment for the soul (Danziger, 1979).

### **Christians and the New Psychology of the Twentieth Century**

The "new" or *modern* psychology, then, was birthed through the union of a legitimate quest for empirically validated truth with a modernist worldview that separated psychology from theology and philosophy. This modern psychology strove to have all its assertions based on empirical research alone (Toulmin & Leary, 1985). As in many disciplines, Christians in psychology had to come to terms with this new, social-intellectual context. At first it took time for the new psychology to become widely recognized as a distinct discipline. However, psychology gradually became a part of the core curriculum in the social sciences at all major colleges and universities. Christian colleges participated in this change and typically began to offer courses in psychology in the 1920s and 1930s.





For the most part it appears that Christians offered few alternatives to these larger trends. Perhaps due to Common Sense Realism, Christians involved in psychology apparently shared some of the assumptions of modernism and practiced psychology according to the new rules. Probably the most distinct group of Christians in early modern psychology in America were Catholic. The earliest notable Catholic in the field was Edward Pace, a founding member of the APA, who began teaching psychology courses at the Catholic University of America in 1891, after having studied with Wundt (Misiak & Staudt, 1954; Roback, 1952). Catholics were apparently the first identifiable Christians who sought to provide texts that *supplemented* the literature of empirically based psychology with religiously grounded discussions on the person or soul (e.g., Brennan, 1937; Maher, 1918; Moore, 1924, 1939), though some Catholic voices rose in protest to the new psychology (Misiak & Staudt, 1954, pp. 4-7).

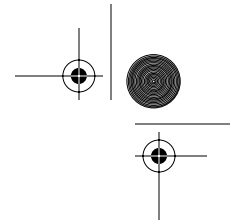
This supplemental activism was likely due in part to the Thomistic revival that began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and continued throughout the first half of the twentieth. The fact that Thomas Aquinas's corpus is psychologically rich, explicitly open to empirical research (à la Aristotle) and yet requires the use of philosophy (or reason) to deal with human nature in all its fullness led Catholics to augment the field of empirical psychology with additional philosophical considerations regarding topics like the will and soul-body relations.<sup>5</sup>

Protestants also gave some attention to psychology. But compared with conservatives (or fundamentalists), liberal Protestants (or modernists) appear to have been much more open to reflecting on the relation of psychology and the faith. G. T. Ladd (1915, 1918) may have been the first theological liberal to develop a body of work that explored religion in light of

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<sup>5</sup>The Catholics Misiak and Staudt (1954) defend this approach, agreeing with modern disciplinary divisions and seeing psychology, philosophy, and theology as methodologically distinct, though forming a hierarchy of knowledge. On that basis they argue against a specifically Catholic (and by implication, Christian) psychology: "When psychologists confine themselves to the study of human behavior, as it can be experimentally studied, they are merely restricting their field of inquiry; they are not necessarily denying the existence of the soul" (p. 13). However, they also state that Catholics "will always endeavor to integrate psychology, philosophy, and theology" (p. 14). But since the three disciplines all seek the truth from different vantage points (theology through revelation, philosophy through reason, and psychology through observation), there will be no genuine contradiction between them.



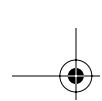


the new psychology, but his work appears to have had little influence. Within a few decades mainline Protestants (most notably Boisen [1936, 1955]) began to explore the value of depth psychologies for the church. At the same time they also felt called to undermine the pervasive naturalism out of which modern psychology originated, eventually forming a large literature (e.g., Clinebell, 1966; Hiltner, 1943, 1958; Oates, 1962; Thornton, 1964). The Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) movement that was inspired by this work has trained thousands of mainline ministers in pastoral care from mid-century to the present. Generally speaking, however, liberal Protestants who had been shaped by and supportive of some of the themes of modernism in practice seemed to view the relation of faith and psychology as largely one-directional. They saw modern psychology as aiding in a reconstruction of the faith along the lines suggested by modern values (greater individualism, softened personal morality, reason/science more authoritative than biblical revelation)<sup>6</sup> (cf. Oden, 1984). This general orientation has continued to the present (e.g., Browning, 1966, 1987; Capps, 1990; Howe, 1995), with greater sophistication and more willingness to critique mainstream psychology (e.g., Browning, 1987) but still with a greater openness to contemporary values and thought and a greater skepticism toward the Bible than seems compatible with historic Christianity.

During the first half of this century, there is not much evidence of conservative Christians thinking distinctively about psychology. Fundamentalists by and large were not interested in cultural issues, higher learning, and scholarship (Noll, 1994). A few Christians criticized the new psychology for its materialism and agnosticism (e.g., Wickham, 1928). And a few isolated works can be found that take the new psychology seriously but argue for a Christian perspective (e.g., Murray, 1938; Norlie, 1924). But for the most part conservatives were moving away from intellectual engagement with the wider culture, which they saw as spiritually blind. In addition, fundamentalists tended to be practice-oriented if not anti-intellectual, more interested in soul-winning

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<sup>6</sup>Interestingly, the founding members of the editorial board of the journal that originated out of this movement, *Pastoral Psychology*, included Hiltner and Oates as well as Rollo May and Carl R. Rogers, neither of whom could be considered orthodox Christians at the time, suggesting a kind of breadth unusual for a journal for pastors (editors are listed in Vande Kemp, 1984).



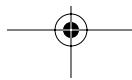
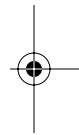
and missions than in claiming culture for Christ. They were for the most part separationists, desiring to avoid contamination by the world (including the world of ungodly thinking, e.g., at the universities). For most fundamentalists, learning the Bible is the primary goal of higher education (rather than learning about things like psychology). As a result, these Christians turned away from the more established colleges that had been Christian, but by the 1920s and 1930s were becoming more modernist in orientation, and began to form their own postsecondary educational institutions: Bible colleges.

Another factor that helps explain the lack of fundamentalist interest in psychology and counseling is that the movement had little interest in inner matters of the soul and its well-being. Though there are exceptions (e.g., in some of the movement's hymns), the bulk of fundamentalist publishing and church life focused more on cognitive (belief) matters and evangelism. The state of one's soul (so important to the Puritans) was largely overlooked. As a result, for decades pastoral care was left to more liberal Christians.

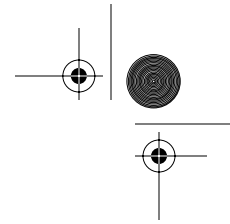
It really wasn't until after World War II that conservative Protestants began to move out of their cultural ghettos and think more seriously about how their faith bears on the sciences and arts. A group of fundamentalists began to grope for a more activist role in culture and higher learning, calling themselves evangelicals (Carpenter, 1997). And it was only in the 1950s that we find evangelicals beginning to engage psychology in any concerted way.

### Early Evangelical Activity in Psychology

Hardly a revolutionary thinker, Hildreth Cross, head of the psychology department at Taylor University, in 1952 published *An Introduction to Psychology: An Evangelical Approach*, presenting psychology positively but "screened through the Word of God" (preface). Though simplistic by most standards, it nonetheless provided a text combining information from modern psychology with Christian interpretation and evaluation. Critical of evolution, it included many citations from the Bible and an affirmation of supernatural reality in human life while presenting somewhat superficially some of the main topics covered in any introduction to psychology: the nervous system, sensation, learning, motivation, matu-







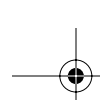
ration, and individual differences. The book concluded with a study of the “dynamic Christian personality,” in which the influence of redemption on the human personality is described with explicit dependence on theology and Scripture.

A group of conservative Christians, practicing psychologists mostly from a Reformed theological persuasion, got together in 1954 and 1955 for conferences that explored the relation of psychology, psychiatry, and religion. In 1956 they formed the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), continuing to hold conferences (which are still held annually) that explored how a person’s faith relates to psychology, with most of the interest directed toward counseling. The identity of CAPS has broadened substantially beyond its original roots in the Reformed community.

Also in 1954, Clyde Narramore began a radio program called “Psychology for Living” that eventually played on over two hundred Christian stations nationally. In 1960 he published an influential book outlining a Christian approach to therapy that incorporated a high view of Scripture along with a Christianized form of the person-centered counseling of Carl Rogers. Even more explicit in his appreciation for a model of therapy that originated outside Christianity, Tweedie (1961) wrote a book critiquing but largely supportive of the view of persons and therapy found in the work of Viktor Frankl. Both of these books argue that psychotherapy has something to offer Christians and can be critically received in light of a Christian worldview.

Also around this time the works of Paul Tournier (1963, 1965) were being translated into English. Tournier was a physician-psychotherapist from Switzerland who was schooled in the Freudian and Jungian traditions and had converted to Christianity in midlife. The writings of this wise, seasoned Christian therapist proved to be eye-opening for many evangelicals hungry for literature that helped to sort out the deep goings-on in the soul from a Christian perspective (e.g., Collins, 1980).

Eventually, a number of evangelicals began to sense the need for advanced training in psychology shaped by a Christian worldview. Fuller Theological Seminary was the first evangelical school to begin a doctoral program in clinical psychology (1964), and Rosemead School of Psychology followed within a few years (1970) with impetus from Clyde Narramore and under the leadership of Bruce Narramore, his nephew.



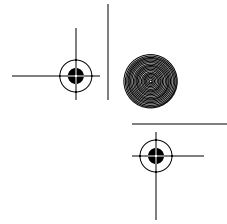
Rosemead also initiated the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* in 1973, providing the first academic forum for evangelicals in psychology. In some ways the 1970s were a turning point for evangelicals in psychology. Increasingly, books were being written by evangelicals that dealt with psychological topics or counseling, applying insights and techniques derived from modern psychology to such topics as child-rearing, marriage, self-esteem, and personal and spiritual growth (e.g., Collins, 1972, 1976; Dobson, 1974; LaHaye, 1971; Narramore, 1978; Schuller, 1978; Wagner, 1975; Wright, 1974).

### **The Biblical Counseling Model**

Yet the decade began with a dark cloud over this whole endeavor. Jay Adams, professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, published the widely read *Competent to Counsel* (1970) in which he severely criticized psychiatry and psychotherapy, suggesting that they provided approaches to counseling that were radically secular and fundamentally opposed to Christianity. Adams therefore urged Christians to repudiate such humanistic methods. In his own model, "nouthetic counseling" (Greek *noutheteō*, "to admonish"), he taught that genuine Christian counseling is based solely on the Bible and focused on sin (the cause of most psychological problems). He also believed that pastors should be the primary counselors in the Christian community. Adams founded the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in 1968 and the *Journal of Pastoral Practice* in 1977, to help the church meet counseling needs biblically.

His numerous books (e.g., 1973, 1977, 1979) and their aggressive style stimulated some and enraged others. They mobilized still others to counsel in strict accordance with Scripture, devoid of the influence of secular thought (at least ostensibly). This latter group also criticized the efforts of Christian counselors who they felt were synthesizing Christianity with secular thought (Bobgan & Bobgan, 1979, 1987; Ganz, 1993; MacArthur, 1991; MacArthur & Mack, 1994). Supportive organizations developed, like the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors and the International Association of Biblical Counselors, and a number of seminaries began offering counseling programs that centered on the use of the Bible in counseling theory and practice (e.g., The Master's College and Seminary). Eventually the movement made more clear its central focus by changing





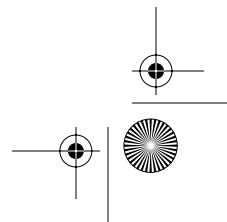
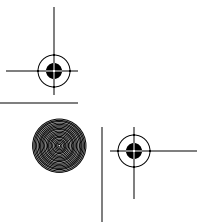
the name of the approach from “nouthetic” to simply “biblical” counseling (indicated by the name change of the *Journal of Pastoral Practice* to *Journal of Biblical Counseling* in 1993 and books like MacArthur & Mack, 1994). The movement is by no means monolithic; differences of approach and substance are obvious from a casual reading of these authors.

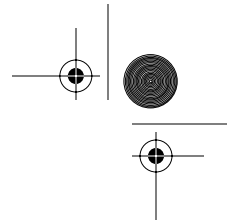
Nevertheless many Christian psychologists, counselors, and therapists continued to find this initiative unpersuasive. For one thing, many of them were doing their counseling outside the church, often working with individuals with little or no religious faith and on problems that seemed to receive scant treatment in the Scriptures; they found the challenge to use the Bible *alone* unhelpful. For another, most of these Christians had enough exposure to modern psychology to conclude that it had some value. Christian psychology teachers and researchers in particular saw in modern psychology much validity in its attempts to describe human nature. Therefore they found the biblical counseling critique overly biased or simplistic. This led some Christians to label the biblical counseling movement “antipsychology” (e.g., Beck & Banks, 1992). Moreover, some have seen firsthand that Bible-believing churches have not always cared well for the souls of its people (something also acknowledged by those in the nouthetic movement). They were appreciative of the help being offered by modern therapy.

Two other evangelical approaches were articulated during the 1970s. One was developed by Christian psychological professionals who sensed some truth in the critiques of the biblical counseling movement. They too were concerned with the naturalism and secular humanism that shaped the psychological and counseling literature, and knew Christianity (and its theology) had something unique to contribute to psychology and counseling, but they believed that modern psychology also had real value and that therefore the fields of theology and psychology needed to be related. The second group, composed largely of researchers and professors, were more uniformly appreciative of modern psychology as it is. We'll begin with this latter approach.

### **The Levels-of-Explanation Model**

The “levels-of-explanation” approach underscores the distinction between the domains (or “levels”) of psychology and theology (Jeeves, 1976;





Mackay, 1979; Myers, 1978). Influenced by the physicist Richard Bube (1971), they maintain that all levels of reality are important (the physical, chemical, biological, psychological, social, and theological), that each dimension or level of reality is uniquely accessible to study by the unique methods used in each discipline and that the boundaries of each should not be blurred. To confuse these levels of reality results in a misunderstanding of reality and a confusion of things quite different. Furthermore, the understanding of each of the different levels is assumed to offer a distinct perspective that is essentially independent of the understandings of other levels. Hence, this approach is often called perspectivalism (Evans, 1977). Theology and psychology, in particular, use different methods of investigation, have different objects of study and answer different questions. Confusing them would distort both (though its proponents encourage interdisciplinary dialogue "after hours" in order to get the fullest picture of human nature possible). They are also less concerned with the effects of secular modernism on psychology, for they believe strongly that science properly conducted goes a long way toward eliminating such bias. To bring theological matters into the science of psychology would only undermine the objectivity and integrity of the scientific method.

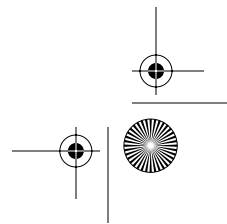
Significantly, most of the proponents of this approach have been academics, Christians teaching at both Christian and non-Christian colleges and universities. Some of them have done research on subjects like the human brain, where it is hard to conceive of a distinctly Christian approach that would make any difference. On the contrary, there has been concern in this group that true science will be impeded by the intrusion of faith beliefs from *any* quarter that cannot be empirically documented. Science can only proceed on the basis of an objective study of reality that is accessible to direct observation which can be replicated by any interested investigators.<sup>7</sup>

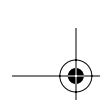
### **The Integration Model**

The other approach alluded to above, more common among those

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<sup>7</sup>Recently Jeeves (1997) has published his latest thoughts, *Human Nature at the Millennium*, continuing to use this approach. Also of interest, Hunsberger (1995) has written a book in pastoral care that essentially assumes a levels-of-explanation position.

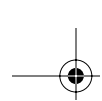




involved in applied psychology, sought to underscore what the domains of psychology and theology hold in common. In different ways, both disciplines cover the nature of human beings, how humans develop, what has gone wrong with humans and how humans can overcome what has gone wrong. So some of these authors attempted to study the overlap between the domains, while others more ambitiously attempted to *integrate* the two where possible (Carter & Narramore, 1979; Collins, 1977, 1981; Crabb, 1975, 1977). In the latter approach, the goal of the Christian psychologist is "to combine the special revelation of God's word with the general revelation studied by the psychological sciences and professions" (Narramore, 1973, p. 17), or to place psychology on a different foundation, one that is "consistent with and built upon the Bible" in order to develop a "biblically based psychology" (Collins, 1973, p. 26). As a result, contrary to the levels-of-explanation approach, the integration approach tends to be more willing to criticize psychology in its modern form and to ask whether its findings are genuinely compatible with Scripture.

In the context of both these kinds of intellectual support, Christians began flocking to psychology, with most going to secular graduate programs but many attending Christian institutions (including newer programs at the Psychological Studies Institute, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Wheaton College, George Fox College, Geneva College, and many others). By the 1980s Christian books in psychology were all the rage. Christian publishers were putting out ever more books dealing with psychological topics, especially "recovery" issues. Christian radio programs by evangelical psychologists like James Dobson, and Frank Minirth and Paul Meier were becoming popular and influential. In addition, Christian counseling and treatment centers quickly spread across America during this time. The CAPS organization also grew in numbers (from over one thousand in 1980 to about two thousand today) and in 1982 began producing its own scholarly publication, the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* (a prior version called the *CAPS Bulletin* began in 1975). However, while CAPS membership originally was largely composed of evangelicals, some of the issues that the CAPS leadership wrestled with in the 1980s (e.g., homosexuality and male references to God) led a group of Christian counselors to start an organization that focused exclusively on counseling, and





that was theologically more conservative—the American Association of Christian Counselors. Membership in this group has exploded to its present size of more than twenty-five thousand.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Christian Psychology Model**

The most recent evangelical approach to relating one's faith to psychology was foreshadowed by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (1985), an academic social psychologist who offered strong criticism of mainstream psychology from a Christian standpoint, arguing for a psychology of human nature derived from a Christian view of the person rather than simply taking modern psychology "as it is." With a very different agenda but the same willingness to approach psychology Christianly, Catholic psychologist Paul Vitz (1987) did a thorough study of the letters and essays of Sigmund Freud, only to radically reinterpret Freud's story in light of Christian assumptions.<sup>9</sup> However, philosopher C. Stephen Evans (1989) was the first to argue for the development of a psychology substantively reshaped according to Christian character, beliefs, and goals (p. 132). Pointing to the recent renewal of Christian philosophy, he suggested that the field of psychology could be similarly transformed.<sup>10</sup>

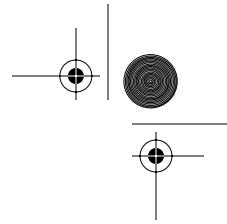
Within the Christian counseling arena, Larry Crabb has seemed to be moving away from the integration approach found in his earlier work to embrace more fully the themes of a Christian theology of sanctification in his writing about psychological and spiritual growth (1987, 1993, 1999). In the same vein Crabb's former colleague Dan Allender has worked together with Old Testament theologian Tremper Longman III (1990, 1994, 1998) to produce three popular books that have explored psycho-

<sup>8</sup>CAPS has remained essentially an evangelical organization, but with a tolerance for some theological diversity.

<sup>9</sup>Vitz (1977) had earlier subjected some major modern personality theories to a radical Christian critique. However, contrary to authors of the biblical counseling movement, Vitz's work has always demonstrated a willingness to work within the larger discipline of psychology and psychotherapy.

<sup>10</sup>Alvin Plantinga is one of many contemporary Christian philosophers to advocate for a specifically Christian philosophy. See his "Advice for Christian Philosophers" (1984), *The Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship* (1990), and *Warranted Christian Belief* (2000).





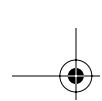
logical topics with an unusually strong theological underpinning. Crabb and Allender typify those who strive to have a Christian theological framework that more radically sets the agenda of their understanding of psychology and counseling without entirely repudiating a psychological focus (cf. also Langberg, 1997; Payne, 1995, 1996; White, 1982, 1987).

So this book provides an opportunity to explore four major positions evangelicals have taken regarding the relation of psychology and the Christian faith. Admittedly, there are many Christians in psychology who do not neatly fit into one of these categories. Nevertheless, these four approaches seem to represent the most distinctive, clearly articulated evangelical approaches to date.

One more thing should be said before concluding this historical section. A significant shift in the stance of American secular psychology toward religion occurred in the 1990s: religion has again become respectable. For example, increasingly, psychologies of religion are being published again, and topics like forgiveness, prayer, and religious values in counseling are being researched and reported in mainstream journals. Perhaps most significantly the American Psychological Association itself has recently published two books that vigorously make the case for dealing with religious issues in therapy (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Shafranske, 1996; notably, a number of evangelicals contributed chapters to the Shafranske book). What all this portends for the future of evangelicals in psychology is hard to say. At the very least, it suggests that in the twenty-first century it may be more acceptable to acknowledge one's own religious beliefs and perspective in psychological discourse than it was throughout most of the twentieth century (at least as long as these beliefs do not too seriously offend the postmodern sensibilities that have contributed to this new openness).

### **For the Student: Issues That Distinguish Christian Approaches to Psychology**

There are at least three main issues that distinguish the approaches toward psychology and counseling represented in this book. Look for evidence of these topics as you read the chapters and responses. Perhaps the main issue concerns the possible *sources* of psychological knowledge: empirical research, Scripture and theology, philosophy, and history. Modern psychol-



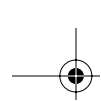
ogy self-consciously moved away from reliance on nonempirical sources (philosophy, theology, and Scripture) and redefined itself by restricting itself to the actual study of human beings (and animals). So while reading the following chapters, consider the extent that empirical research shapes the thinking of the author. How seriously does the author take psychological research, and does it inform his conclusions about things? What is the author's understanding of the role of the Bible and theology within psychology and counseling? All evangelicals affirm the value of the Bible for Christian belief and practice. However, differences exist in terms of (1) whether the Bible is relevant to the theory and practice of psychology and counseling and (2) if so, the extent to which the Bible's teachings should be allowed to shape psychological theories, research, and counseling practice. So ask yourself what role the Bible and theology actually play in the author's understanding of psychology and counseling. A similar but less prominent issue for evangelicals involves the explicit use of philosophical or historical reasoning in psychology. Is this even appropriate for a science like psychology, and if so, how much?

A second distinguishing theme is the degree to which the contributors are critical, even suspicious, of non-Christian psychologists and their work. Some Christians are very concerned about the influence of non-Christian thinking on Christians and work hard at uncovering the underlying secular biases they discern in the non-Christian texts they read. Other Christians are more trusting of non-Christian authors, emphasizing that truth can be discovered by anyone (particularly if the research is done with proper controls), so they reserve their Christian critique for explicit, antireligious statements. See if such differences in a "hermeneutics of trust and of suspicion" distinguish the contributors.

Third, does Christianity provide a distinctive view of human nature that should bear on psychological theory-building, research, and counseling practice? The goal of modern science has been to construct a universal understanding of things (like human nature) that can be agreed to by all interested parties willing to do the research and replicate studies. However, Christian phenomena like the image of God, sin, and the role of Holy Spirit in spiritual development cannot be studied by neutral observation; it requires faith to "see it." Consider how the contributors differ on whether there should be a distinctive Christian approach to psychology and coun-







seling or whether Christians should work together with non-Christians.

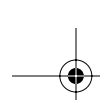
One other point to keep in mind: As you read, notice *where* the disagreements between the contributors occur. Most Christian psychologists and counselors don't dispute the more basic observations of psychology (e.g., brain structure, visual perception, or animal learning; we might say, the first half of an introduction to psychology course) (Larzelere, 1980). Most of the disagreement concerns the more complex aspects of human nature: motivation, personality, psychopathology, psychotherapy, and social relations (the last half of the course). Why is that? How does this fact bear on the debate?

#### **Introduction of the Authors**

David G. Myers, psychology professor at Hope College, is the representative of the levels-of-explanation approach. Early in his career Dr. Myers won the Gordon Allport Prize for his studies of group influence. His scientific research has appeared in two dozen periodicals, from *Science* and the *American Scientist* to the *American Psychologist* and *Psychological Science*. Myers also has digested psychological research for the lay public through many articles and eleven books, the most recent of which is *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* (2000). Among students of psychology Dr. Myers is best known for his introductory psychology and social psychology texts, both of which are the best-selling texts in their fields. However, Myers has also given much thought to the relation between faith and psychology, writing *The Human Puzzle: Psychological Research and Christian Belief* (1978) where he developed the levels-of-explanation approach with reference to psychology. He later collaborated with Malcolm Jeeves on *Psychology Through the Eyes of Faith* (1987), published by the Coalition of Christian Colleges and Universities in their series of Christian supplemental texts for various college disciplines. He has also written other articles further developing this approach to psychology (1987, 1991, 1996).

For the integration position, Gary Collins was recruited. Since 1969 Dr. Collins has written over forty books exploring psychology from an integrationist standpoint. He was a contributor to the first issue of the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (1973), and two of the most important books explaining the integration model were penned by him: *Rebuilding*





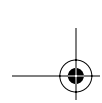
*the Foundations: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity* (1977) and *Psychology and Theology: Prospects for Integration* (1981). He has edited a major series on counseling topics from a Christian standpoint, a thirty-volume set entitled *Resources for Christian Counseling*. He was, until recently, the executive director of the American Association of Christian Counselors, the largest group of evangelical counselors in the world.

Robert C. Roberts, distinguished professor of ethics at Baylor University, is the exponent of the Christian psychology approach. Previously he taught for sixteen years at Wheaton College in Illinois, where he was a member of both the philosophy and psychology departments. Dr. Roberts has written or edited seven books and over thirty-five articles in philosophy and Christian psychology journals, becoming recognized as an authority on the virtues and vices, and on Søren Kierkegaard. In 1993 he wrote *Taking the Word to Heart: Self and Other in an Age of Therapies*, which constructively engaged a number of secular therapies and offered some correctives from a decidedly Christian perspective. In 1994 he was awarded a Pew grant to work on topics like the personality, emotions, and virtues from a Christian standpoint and has since been writing a major work on the emotions that is just now nearing completion. More recently he edited (with Mark R. Talbot) *Limning the Psyche: Explorations in Christian Psychology* (1997) in which he also contributed three chapters, one of which outlines the major themes of what a distinctively Christian psychology would look like.

Finally, the biblical counseling approach has David Powlison for its spokesperson. Dr. Powlison has been the editor of the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* since 1992. Besides contributing many articles to that journal, he has also written chapters for a number of books, making advances in the theory of biblical counseling and enriching its critique of secular psychology and Christian counseling. He has also written *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (1995), which attempts to expound a biblical approach to spiritual warfare while raising questions about the ways some Christians have dealt with the topic in our day. Powlison has taught biblical counseling at Westminster Theological Seminary for nearly twenty years and has counseled at the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation even longer. He also serves as a board member of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors.

These, then, are the contributors. We hope you enjoy their conversation.

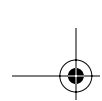




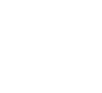
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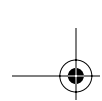
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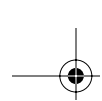
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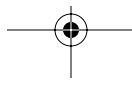


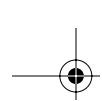
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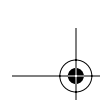
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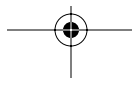


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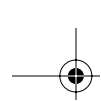




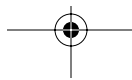
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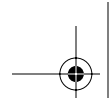






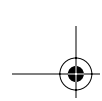
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