



THE JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL SOUL CARE

*Advancing Scholarship for the Biblical Care of Souls
within Higher Education.*

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This journal is dedicated to the generation of men and women whose commitment to the Word of God and care of souls has laid the groundwork for a resurgence of biblical soul care. *The Journal of Biblical Soul Care* is a reflection of your dedication to the sufficient Word of God and its ability to speak into the complexities of human nature and experience. The editorial team desires to promote Christian scholarship in the wake of your effective reorganization and apologetic of biblical soul care.

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EDITORIAL: INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

Greg E. Gifford¹

The landscape of biblical counseling is quite exciting! On the horizon we see a movement that is burgeoning with interest, resources, qualified practitioners and teachers, non-profits, educational institutions and churches that are perpetuating the biblical care of souls. It is a time of great excitement and great rejoicing for what the Lord has done to re-centralize his word in the care of souls. Never before has biblical counseling been able to enjoy such broad interest with so little need for an apologetic posture.² In light of this rapid growth, it seems one of the greatest needs of the biblical counseling movement in modern day is no longer an apologetic of jurisdictional boundaries, but a thoughtful and biblical preservation of the theological principles that promote its methodology.

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² Of note, the majority of Jay Adams's original work in biblical counseling was apologetic in nature as he sought to regain the jurisdiction of soul care within the realm of the Christ and the church. "Adams sought to mobilize pastors against what he perceived as a fourfold foe: their own ineptitude in and evasion of the counseling task, the secular mental health system, the liberal pastoral theologians, and the evangelical psychotherapists" (51) in David Powlison's *The Biblical Counseling Movement* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2010). His apologetic tone is seen throughout *Competent to Counsel* about which he said, "It was a war cry for people" (Ibid., 51). This war cry was that "Jesus Christ is at the center of all true Christian counseling. Any counseling which moves Christ from that position of centrality has to the extent that it has done so ceased to be Christian" Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970), 41. Furthermore, Ed Welch, in an article written to secular psychologists said: "Your theories are heavy with assumptions about who we are, why we do the things we do, and where we are going. *This is clergy turf*" (emphasis added) in "A Discussion Among Clergy: Pastoral Counseling Talks with Secular Psychology," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Winter 1995). Notably, this article was written over twenty years ago when an apologetic tone was the order of the day, however this apologetic tone has by-and-large ceased to exist.

As a movement grows, the tendency can be a weakening of its fundamental structure and mission as it assimilates new people and processes. Growth brings about inherent challenges to remain biblical and faithful, and this is also true of biblical counseling. Perhaps there is no better illustration of this than the American University. Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and the University of Chicago are all examples of institutions that began with firm biblical commitments to the Scriptures, religious involvement, orthodox theology, and yet all have consistently transitioned towards non-belief.³ This weakening can come through individuals that bring a false teaching, as seen in the hiring of John Dewey at the University of Chicago who helped ushered in an era of pragmatism. However, this weakening can also come through an emphasis on collaboration at the expense of doctrinal integrity.⁴ Really, theological weakening can come in many ways, even for biblical counseling, including an overemphasis on methodology and no theoretical or theological accountability. The editors of the *JBSC* see this and it is from this awareness that we have sought to fill the gap, so to speak.

The purpose of the *Journal of Biblical Soul Care (JBSC)* is to advance scholarship for the biblical care of souls within higher education. This effort is driven by the understanding that for biblical counseling to truly be biblical in fifty years, it will need individuals to focus on the

³ George Marsden recounts this progression in his work, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). He displays how religion was supplanted by postmodernism and naturalism: "One way to describe the current state of affairs, however, is that, in effect, the only points of view that are allowed full academic credence are those that presuppose purely naturalistic worldviews. ... Despite counter efforts to restore religious perspectives in the 1950's, naturalism and pragmatism held the field academically" (430). Also see J.A. Appleyard's "The Secularization of the Modern American University," in *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 10 (1996): 31-33. This secularization serves as a warning for those who would seek to remain biblically faithful during times of growth and expansion.

⁴ Historically, creeds and confessions have established the boundaries of fellowship and Christian collaboration. In speaking of the necessity of creeds and confessions, Samuel Miller noted, "Creeds and confessions, then, so far from having a tendency to 'alienate' and 'embitter' those Christian denominations which think nearly alike, and ought to maintain fraternal intercourse, really tend to make them acquainted with each other; to lay a foundation for regular and cordial intercourse; to beget mutual confidence; and thus to promote the harmony of the church of God" *Doctrinal Integrity* (Dallas, TX: Presbyterian Heritage, 1989), 16. Miller even argues that collaboration best comes when Christians are rallying around creeds and confessions (14), which notes the importance of collaboration based on doctrinal integrity. Conversely, collaboration for the sake of collaboration is destined to fracture.

theological and theoretical principles that undergird the methodologies of the movement. The popularity and relevancy of biblical counseling methodology has a potential to underemphasize (perhaps already has?) the foundational theology upon which those methodologies are and were built. Therefore, the *JBSC* is seeking to emphasize the advancement and preservation of those theological and theoretical principles that allow for truly biblical soul care.

Three Counseling Conversations: Upstream, Mid-Stream and Downstream

In order to advance scholarship for the biblical care of souls within higher education we recognize that there are three conversations that must be understood and articulated. Currently, there are essentially three conversations taking place in regards to biblical counseling: upstream conversations, mid-stream conversations, and downstream conversations.⁵ Upstream conversations are those that are not as focused on the “how” of the counseling process but on the “why.” These conversations do not always produce an immediate fruit but often produce long-term fruit. Examples of upstream conversations within biblical counseling can be seen in articles like, “Idols of the Heart and Vanity Fair” or “The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling.”⁶ These articles are not fundamentally methodological, even though there are great implications for methodology. The answers given by Powlison and Mack to those “why” questions have profoundly influenced the practice of biblical counseling, which are the mid-stream conversations. These articles—and others like them—serve as a great example of upstream conversations within the biblical counseling movement and their corresponding importance. It was Powlison’s article that helped to formalize

⁵ Part of this verbiage and understanding has greatly been sharpened by the insightful voice of Joe Keller of The Master’s University.

⁶ David Powlison, “Idols of the Heart and ‘Vanity Fair,’” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 13/2 (Winter 1995): 35-50 and Wayne A. Mack, “The Sufficiency of Scripture in Counseling,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 9/1 (Spring 1998): 63-84.

an understanding of human motivation in counseling as being one primarily of a worshiper.⁷ He promoted an idea in upstream conversation that has perpetuated itself some twenty plus years later.

The mid-stream conversations are those that are answering the “how to” questions. Currently, this is seen in the vast publication of mini books, books, articles, blogs, and even video/audio resources. Thankfully, there are many biblical counseling resources that are beginning to address the prior void of resources. Most of the conversations taking place within biblical counseling are an attempt—in some form or another—to answer the “how to” questions. How to help someone who is depressed, how to counsel a couple post-adultery, how to counsel the grieving mother and so forth. These are much-needed conversations notably, though, they are mid-stream conversations. There is something to celebrate in this dynamic as we see that God is equipping his people to think theologically about emotional, social, and behavioral problems and the sins that surround them. “How to” resources are necessary, and so are the conversations that steer them. But these conversations dwell between the upstream and downstream; they live between the theory and the practice.

The downstream conversations are those that break upon the jetties of where counselee and counselor meet. These conversations are not so much, “how to” but rather application of the “how to” conversation to the lives of people. This looks like the faithful pastor who is counseling the wayward husband: his conversation with the wayward husband is developed through certain understandings of “how to” but is not immediately explaining those understandings. Our counselees are rarely interested in the mid-stream or upstream conversations that steer our counsel to them. Most times there is a combination of bewilderment about God and his doings coupled with a need for someone to orient them to the living God and his doings. Regardless of the counselee’s interest, though, those counseling room conversations flow out of both the midstream and upstream

⁷ “It would be difficult to overstate the influence Powlison’s contribution has had on biblical counselors. Indeed it could be fair to say that over the past twenty years the movement has been defined by the usage of Powlison’s metaphor. The ‘idols of the heart’ metaphor has been used extensively by a number of authors” in Heath Lambert’s *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 76.

conversations. You cannot get to the downstream conversation without the upstream and midstream conversations. And if you do, your downstream practice will be sloppy and quasi-biblical.

The goal of the *Journal of Biblical Soul Care* is to contribute to the upstream conversation that will eventually benefit mid-stream and downstream conversations, practice, and biblical soul care. If you are familiar with the process of snowmelt, you recognize that the amount of snow that melts directly feeds rivers that provide valuable water runoff and essential water supply. Upstream conversations serve in a snowmelt-type capacity in that they are needed and in their absence there will be long-term methodological droughts. The current void of upstream conversations may, in fact, prove to be a long-term liability to the practice of biblical counseling if we are not intentional. If the biblical counseling movement does not focus inwardly on the ideologies and preservation of critical doctrines that undergird its methodologies, and seek to advance them, there will be a weakening of our effectiveness in the long-term. In our good desire to be relevant and helpful to our counselee, we must equally cling to the need of developing right theological frameworks from which those methods are built.

Therefore, our goal with the JBSC is to initiate conversations that will make their way downstream. The journal is written and will be written in such a way that we address those who are upstream along with upstream topics—educators, counselors, trainers, academics, executive directors, and pastors/elders. Most counsees will not be immediately helped by the *JBSC*, along with most of the mid-stream practitioners. We are not thrilled about this reality, but see this work as contributing to them in a long-term way. Despite the esoteric nature of our material, we find solace in the fact that these conversations will bless the counselee—eventually.

Admittedly, this upstream focus has inherent difficulties, some of which we acknowledge and some of which will be discerned in-process. One of the inherent difficulties of upstream conversations is that they lack immediate applicability as mentioned above, and applicability is what is so helpful about biblical counseling. There are those who ransack biblical counseling material for

‘what to do next,’ yet the *JBSC* knowingly will leave them unsatisfied in their pursuit. This is a worthwhile difficulty, we believe. The reason being is that we cannot only teach methodologies, despite the burgeoning interest for them, because those methodologies will fail once the biblical theology that undergirds them has been forgotten. Methods are *always* an outworking of theology, be that good theology or poor theology; there is no exception to this, especially in soul care.

Secondarily, the *JBSC* will also engage the ideas that are undergirding certain modern biblical counseling methodologies, a task which can communicate a critical tone or ‘unsportsmanlike’ posture. We also recognize this to be a difficulty but intend to offer critiques without becoming critical. The editors are not wanting to suggest that we are the experts. We, too, bring ourselves and our work underneath the copious evaluation of our peers based off of Scripture and biblical wisdom. There is a sense in which our critical engagement is not intended to be critical, but to be sharpening. A healthy part of the purity of doctrine and beliefs is accountability, and we hope that both our materials and the materials of others would find a godly, amiable platform for consideration, input, and critical evaluation. We believe this will prove to sharpen all of us as we grow in the ability to biblically care for souls.

Thirdly, of the many difficulties, we expect the limits of resources and authors to be one of the most challenging. Through God’s kindness many are capable of addressing midstream issues, but few desire or are qualified to speak into the upstream conversations. There are even those who express genuine disdain for the upstream conversation or those who would love to serve in those ways but find their giftedness limited to do so. In facing this last difficulty, we cannot let the absence of resources promote further lack of resources. As the biblical counseling movement grows, there will be less of a void and less of disinterestedness. Therefore, we find this to be a worthwhile challenge. If we can start a conversation that promotes scholarship that feeds upstream biblical soul care conversations, we will be greatly satisfied.

Ambiguity of the Term *Biblical Counseling*

The current climate of biblical counseling leaves the term *biblical counseling* somewhat ambiguous.⁸ There is inevitable ambiguity as to what one actually means when they use the term, especially in light of the rapid growth of the biblical counseling movement and increasing worldwide participation in biblical counseling.⁹ It is important to note that the editors affirm and employ the term *biblical counseling* in our ministry of teaching but that—like any term—we also recognize the natural limitations that this term possesses. Limitations like what exactly is the scope of the Bible in the counseling process; how is the Bible employed in the counseling process; or what is the approach one takes to the Bible when counseling from it. In a very real sense we can be a biblical counselor and integrate secular psychologies if by *biblical counselor* we mean that we incorporate the Bible into our counseling. This ambiguity necessitates greater clarity and we, the editorial team, sense that.

⁸ Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling: Personal and Emotional Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). Clinton and Hawkins employ the term *biblical counseling* but use that term to encapsulate the process of integrating biblical principles with behavioral and social sciences. They describe this in their purpose statement of their book: “The knowledge base of biblical and theological studies, combined with the behavioral and social sciences, is advanced far faster than anyone can keep up with in the twenty-first century. Therefore, we have culled from this burgeoning data the most critical and relevant facts and contextual clues that you should know for each of the forty topics that make up the content of this and all the books to follow” (8).

⁹ Since the 1990’s the term biblical counseling has morphed into a very marketable term. David Powlison notes the rapid growth of biblical counseling post-90’s saying, “But around 1990, even as the therapeutic movement among evangelicals came into full flow, nouthetic counseling institutions began to grow, and doubts about psychotherapy became increasingly evidence among conservative Protestants” (Powlison, 219). Previously, *nouthetic counseling* was the term that would be used instead of biblical counseling. Jay Adams coined the term nouthetic confrontation and all he meant by it was that, “Nouthetic confrontation consists of at least three basic elements ... teaching ... nouthetic confrontation ... [and] a beneficent motive” (44-45, 49) in *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970). However, this term was often confusing as it was a transliteration of the Greek term, *νουθετέω*. Furthermore, it did not encapsulate other aspects of the counseling process that were less confrontational. The term *Christian Counseling* has been used as an alternative to nouthetic counseling and biblical counseling as seen in the works of Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* and *A Christian Counselor’s Manual*. Yet, again, that term was incorporated by those Christians who would be counselors, with or without the sufficient word of God, still leaving a lack of clarity. David Powlison even incorporates the terms *psychology bashers* classification (and caricature) of those who espouse to the sufficiency of Scripture in the counseling process David Powlison, “Cure of Souls (And the Modern Psychotherapies),” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Spring 2007): 8.

The term *soul care* is preferable to us because we understand that soul care has been the historically dominant way in which biblical counseling has been articulated. The term *biblical counseling* is set against the backdrop of a psychologized, modern society, whereas *soul care* is set against the backdrop of biblical anthropology and the holistic ministry that comprises care of the soul throughout history. Historically, the *cure* of souls, or care of souls, has been the way in which biblical counseling has been articulated. *Cura animarum* is often the classical way of referring to modern day soul care, while *Seelsorge* would have been a Reformation-era way of referencing this same concept.¹⁰ John McNeill notes,

In the phrase “cure of souls” the word “cure” has something like the range of meaning of the Latin *cura* from which it comes. The primary sense of *cura* is “care,” and it is readily applied either to the tasks involved in the care of a person or thing, or to the mental experience of carefulness or solicitude concerning its object. Occasionally the former direction of meaning is further specialized to signify “healing,” or the means by which healing is affected. It was natural that the Latin Church should employ the expression *cura animarum* in such a way as to comprehend these variations of the meaning of *cura*, and it is in this comprehensive sense that the term “cure of souls” has come into common use in English.¹¹

Plato and Socrates are some of the first to use the term *soul care*, Socrates even seeing himself as a “healer of the soul.”¹² Notably neither of them were using this term to refer to a biblical care of the soul but both were illustrative of *soul care* as a historical term. We can also read the

¹⁰ “Pastoral theology is narrower. It refers to the theological rationales used to undergird those ministries most specifically related to the guidance or care of persons—what is often rered to in the classical literature as the cure of souls or *cura animarum*.” In Don Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1976), 15. “Early church practice of pastoral care was called *cura animarum*, the cure of *anima* which was the Latin word for the Hebrew *nephesh* and the Greek *psyche*. For Luther, *Seelsorge* was a necessary pastoral alternative to the obligatory confessional” in Anderson, Herbert. “Whatever Happened to Seelsorge?” *Word and World*, 21, no. 1 (2001): 32–41.

¹¹ John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), vii.

¹² “When we consider fighting in armor, we do so for the sake of the soul of the young men. So the teacher we seek is expert, not about fighting in armor but about *care of the soul* [italics mine].” Plato, *Ion: Hippias Minor; Laches; Protagoras* (New Haven: Yale, 1996), 52. “Socrates was, and wished to be, ἰατρός της ψυχής, a healer of the soul. These Greek syllables have been recast to form the word, ‘psychiatrist’” (McNeill, viii). Also see Socrates’ comment, “For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the great improvement of your soul” in Socrates, *Apology* (Champaign, IL: Project Gutenberg, n.d.), 19.

works of Gregory the Great in the 6th Century as he employs the term; he said, “How foolish it is for the inexperienced to assume pastoral authority when the *care of souls* is the art of arts” (emphasis added).¹³ Martin Bucer employs the term “carers of souls,” in the 16th Century when referring to pastors.¹⁴ All of these varying uses indicate, at a minimum, that the employment of the term *soul care* is not a recent phenomenon.

As with biblical counseling, there are many who would be agreeable to the term *soul care* but would find much disagreement in terms of the nature of that care.¹⁵ However, the term *biblical soul care* adds a level of clarity that is warranted and quite helpful. What *biblical soul care* does accomplish is to (1) focus the care of a person primarily on their soul (i.e., not their body or environment), and (2) lend itself towards a biblical framing of that care. These two tasks alone are counter-cultural in a naturalistic society that seeks to find solutions apart from God in entirely empirical capacities. Biblical soul care reminds us of the importance of the soul and the nature of the task as being solely within the jurisdiction of God and his word.¹⁶ Jesus reminds us of this important emphasis on the soul when he said, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul” (Mark 8:36-37). Thus the historical employment of the term and the soul-ward orientation of the term seem to be fitting for the purposes of this journal.

¹³ Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s University Press, 2007), 29.

¹⁴ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2009), 98.

¹⁵ For instance, Betsy Barber and Chris Baker of Talbot said “In short, to imitate Christ by the power of the Spirit is soul care. Since the goal of a Christocentric soul care is to have Christ formed in us (Gal. 4:19), *the care of souls must involve whatever aids our progress in sanctification* (i.e., the process of becoming holy and wholly like Jesus)” in “Soul Care and Spiritual Formation: An Old Call in Need of New Voices,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2014): 273. This statement lends itself to a panoply of bad methodologies that are problematic if we are to be consistent with that way of viewing soul care. Again, Eric Johnson says of soul care that it is “a broad category that includes psychotherapy, counseling and spiritual direction, and in fact encompasses the main tasks of the church” in *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 9. Again, there are hints of ambiguity even with the term *soul care*.

¹⁶ “The language of soul has not been in vogue in pastoral theology, partly out of fear of returning to old body/soul dualisms and partly because the psychological paradigm has dominated definitions of the human. As a result, modern pastoral care has attended more carefully to the human story than to the presence of God in human life. The recovery of soul is therefore prerequisite to rediscovering Seelsorge for our time” in Herbert Anderson’s, “Whatever Happened to Seelsorge?” *Word and World*, 21, no. 1 (2001): 34.

Distinctives of the JBSC

Finally, for the sake of the reader, we thought it would be most helpful to formally articulate the commitments of the *JBSC*. The *JBSC* is a conversation that will be steered by The Master's University—at least in its beginnings. Master's is unique in that we have a unified faculty, staff and administration that not only assents to the Scriptures for soul care, but holds the sufficiency of Scripture as *a conviction*. This unified posture and our organization as an institution of higher education has allowed us to corporately build the *JBSC*. Consequently, we have the like-mindedness and platform upon which to start a conversation. That is what we are doing. If we simply start the conversation and nothing more, then we will give thanks to God for kindly allowing us to do so.

Finally, by way of clarity, the commitments of the editorial board are as follows:

- *God-ward Soul Care*: God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Source of the biblical care of souls. To help others in the task of soul care is to help them understand themselves in light of God, and then to be transformed into his likeness as worshipping image-bearers (2 Cor. 3:18). We are committed to a care of souls that is based off of God and the revelation he provides in Scripture.
- *Biblical Epistemology*: This epistemology is one that sees the Scripture as authoritative for life and godliness over experience, senses, or sciences. Furthermore, it is one that is informed through a historical, literal and grammatical hermeneutic of Scripture. We believe that when one espouses to the authority of Scripture and proper hermeneutics, it results in an understanding of the Scripture's sufficiency for and in the care of souls (2 Pet. 1:3-4).
- *Biblical Anthropology*: In spite of a predominant naturalistic understanding of man, we are committed to a biblical anthropology. This anthropology informs us that man is both material and immaterial, possesses a soul, and lives out the overflow of his inner man, most commonly referred to as his heart (Prov. 4:23). Furthermore, man is an

active participant in life despite the circumstances or environments in which he finds himself.

- *Biblical Soteriology*: We are committed to faith in Jesus as being the basis for all true and lasting change, and that this gospel-oriented view of change must be seen in light of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 15:5; Eph. 2:8-9). Therefore, to omit the centrality of repentance from sin and faith in Jesus in the care of souls is to truncate that care. Moreover, to neglect growth in sanctification through the power of the Holy Spirit is to omit the fundamental nature of change within soul care (Gal. 5:21-25).

We recognize that there will be those that contribute articles to the JBSC that do not run in our circles or camp where we camp. However, as the editorial team, we are unified and convicted of the above truths in the care of souls, contributing to what we believe to be the biblical care of souls. Those that contribute will be aware of our positions, while given opportunity to express theirs.

Overview of the Current Issue

This first issue has taken a strong Protestant Reformation focus. We have John Street who has proposed that Luther contributed to the idea of the sufficiency of Scripture through Luther's advancement of *sola Scriptura*. Dale Johnson offers the insights of the Reformers understanding of soul care jurisdiction to provide a warning to the nature and relationship of the government to the care of souls. Stuart Scott has proposed that the Protestant Reformers were not only effective preachers, but loving shepherds who engaged in the care of souls. In our "Reviews," Joe Keller has offered a critical review of Sinclair Ferguson's *Devoted to God: Blueprints for Sanctification*. Furthermore, we have left the "Response" section blank by way of invitation. We hope these articles will generate congenial conversations that sharpen the work of soul care and the responses to this issue will be found in the "Response" section going forward, while soul care resources will be reviewed in our "Review" section.

Ultimately, our prayer is that God may see fit to use the *JBSC* for the preservation of biblical soul care within the jurisdiction of his church, his revealed word, and pastoral authority for the good of the body of Christ and the evangelization of the lost. And in so doing, may all of these resound in glory to God through Jesus Christ, his son!

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

—Ephesians 3:20-21

ARTICLES

LUTHER'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOLA SCRIPTURA AND BIBLICAL SUFFICIENCY

John D. Street¹

The sixteenth century Protestant Reformation was a clarion call for Christians to return to the authority and superiority of the Scriptures for all of Christian faith and practice. Centuries before, John Hus (c. 1369-1415) and John Wycliffe (c. 1320-1384), devout men of faith in Jesus Christ, made valiant attempts to expose the overreaching authority and abuses of Roman Catholicism. But it was Martin Luther, while professor of moral theology at the University of Wittenberg, who formally inaugurated the ecclesiastical divorce from the Roman Catholic Church by nailing “The Ninety-Five Theses”, or “Disputation on the Power of Indulgences” (*Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*) on the door of All Saints’ Church (*Schloßkirche*) in Wittenberg, Germany. Soon after, Luther mailed “The Ninety-Five Theses” to Albert of Brandenburg, the Archbishop of Mainz on October 31, 1517, officially launching the Protestant Reformation.

The genesis of this monumental change began in the thinking of Martin Luther (1483-1586), many years before his publication of “The Ninety-Five Theses.” A dedicated Roman Catholic monk, his studies of the Scriptures, in particular the Epistles of Paul to the Romans, Galatians, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, led him to the theological conviction of salvation by grace alone (*sola*

¹ John D. Street is the Chair of the Biblical Counseling Graduate Program at The Master’s University and Seminary in Santa Clarita, California. This paper was read at the 500th Reformation Conference in Wittenburg, Germany.

gratia), through faith alone (sola fide). Luther himself attributes this theological awakening to his own personal conversion as he reflected upon Paul's statements in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11.

Day and night I tried to meditate upon the significance of these words: "The righteousness of God is revealed in it, as it is written: The righteous shall live by faith." Then, finally God had mercy on me, and I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that gift of God by which a righteous man lives, namely, faith, and that this sentence – The righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel – is passive, indicating that the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The righteous shall live by faith." Now I felt as though I had been reborn altogether and had entered Paradise.²

His transformation did not end there. Once this change had occurred in his thinking, his view of the superiority of Scriptures began to change as well. He was now convinced of the scriptural teaching of salvation as being the active work of God alone, without the additional efforts of man as required by Rome. The Word of God alone stood as supreme in its authority and not the word of the church. Luther continues,

In the same moment, the face of the whole of Scripture became apparent to me. My mind ran through the Scriptures, as far as I was able to recollect them, seeking analogies in other phrases, such as the work of God, by which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.³

Once the transforming power of the gospel occurred in the life of Luther it awakened in him the undeniable truth that Scriptural supremacy (the wisdom of God) reigns over human reasoning, especially in ecclesiastical pronouncements. It is my thesis that Luther's reliance upon careful

² U. Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel* (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1951), pp. 36-37. Accounts of Martin Luther's salvific transformation also appear in various Table Talks as well as in the Preface to an edition of his Latin writings.

³ Ibid.

biblical study of the original text of Scripture fueled the Reformation and demonstrated Luther's commitment to *sola scriptura*. As this reformation took root in Luther's thinking, it may be said that grace alone (*sola gratia*) enabled his faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ alone (*sola Christus*) as understood in Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) to the glory of God alone (*solus Deo gloria*). There was a theological progression to the five "Sola's" of the Reformation that all stemmed from Luther's biblical study of the original text.

Roman Catholicism rejects these sola's because its theological legacy is Thomist. The writings of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), especially his *Summa Theologica*, was highly influential during the time of Luther and continues to be the leading Roman Catholic philosophy and theology today. Essentially, it is a view of man that believes that depravity has sickened man's ability to respond to God, but it has not deadened it. Free will has not been destroyed by original sin and the freedom that a person has is unviolated or unimpaired by God's grace.⁴ Therefore, both man and God are active in salvation and the payment of sin (e.g. through indulgences, participating in the mass, and the endless confessionals, etc.). Using Aristotelian reasoning, man can reason himself to God through nature, making the work of God and the Word of God a part of, but not exclusive for salvation. Reliance upon man's observational skills, abilities, and conclusions has always been an essential aspect of Rome's theology. Therefore, for the true Roman Catholic, divine revelation in nature is just as authoritative as divine revelation in Scripture since he functions with two co-authoritative sources: the Bible and man's careful reasoning. It was not difficult for the Roman Catholic of Luther's day to accept papal pronouncements as having the same level of authenticity as the Holy Bible. Catholic theology maintained that free will was maintained by man after the fall and originated from his being made in God's image.

⁴ Often referred to as Molinism as it was first developed by Luis de Molina (1535-1600) in order to counter the teachings of the Reformers. Often seen among Roman Catholics as distinct from Thomist theology, which starts with a loose form of efficacious grace. Molinism starts with a clarifying statement of unobstructed free will. However, both depend to a high degree on man's rationality and free course of the will to determine truth.

Martin Luther's pronouncement that salvation is entirely the work of God's grace alone was a rejection of human merit, free will, capability in regeneration, and papal authority. Luther argued that man is not sickened by his depravity, rather he is deadened by it (Romans 3:10-18). He has no free will because he is in bondage to his sinful nature. This was a radical awakening that Martin Luther and another reformer, John Calvin, shared.⁵ The sinfulness of man had brought absolute corruption. Since man was dead in his trespasses and sins, unable to save himself, salvation required the efficacious work of grace by God to awaken his soul to the gospel. Salvation was wholly a work of God because of the defilement of man's total depravity corrupting the entire human nature. As Luther grew in his theological understanding, he seriously questioned the entire Catholic sacramental system as indicated in his numerous tracts and sermons during the years of 1519 and 1520.⁶ If our Lord was the sole author and finisher of our salvation, what is the purpose of the mass and the Eucharist as practiced by Roman Catholicism? "All the accepted good works in the former Catholic system, such as pilgrimages, fastings, and special masses were thus rendered superfluous and even positively sinful."⁷ Luther understood that if Scripture was to have the rightful place of authority in the Christian life, then not only would orthodoxy need to change but orthopraxy as well.

How did Martin Luther approach the text of Scripture in order to understand it? What hermeneutical methodology enabled him to make his conclusions? If the Bible was to be his sole standard for faith and practice, it is critical to understand the answers to these questions. Listen to the insight of Dr. E.G. Schwiebert, after spending years of his life studying Martin Luther and his approach to interpreting the Scriptures.

⁵ T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography*, (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1975), 112-114.

⁶ E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1950), p. 445.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 453.

The text was expounded largely on the basis of the grammatical historical method, while the interpretation became almost entirely spiritual. Allegory left the Luther classroom, even though it remained with him for a while in the pulpit.⁸

When it came to soteriology Luther had left behind the Roman Catholic practice of allegorizing of the text, but it still took him a while to remove it from his preaching. Yet, it is important to note that the amazing insights he had into the canon of scripture was built upon a grammatical-historical method. He relied upon a careful study of the historical and grammatical context to properly uncover the author's original meaning, unlike the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy that depreciated the authority of the Word of God by making papal pronouncements equal in authority with the Scripture. Luther's study method represented a radical departure from the typical Roman Catholic priest, for whom the Catholic catechisms and commentaries were the chief interpretive tools to understand the Bible, not the Bible itself. The Roman Catholic's compromised view of Thomist theology elevated man-made commentaries to the same level of Scriptural authority, precluding the need to study Scripture for what it says and relying instead on books published by well-educated priests and scholars to teach theology. Biblical truth was sidelined in favor of human speculation. This is one of the reasons the Catholic hierarchy fought so fiercely to keep the Scriptures out of the hands of the common man, even subjecting many to inquisition and death if they translated the Scriptures into the tongue of the average man. If the local priest kept the Scriptures to himself, then he could control the meaning in the thinking of his parishioners. William Tyndale's (1494-1536) martyrdom is one result of these Catholic fears for he resolved to, "make the boy that drives the plough in England know more of Scripture than the Pope does."⁹ From Luther's perspective, Thomist theology had undermined the authority of Scripture and replaced it with ecclesiastic tradition.

⁸ Ibid., 285.

⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, 3rd Ed. (Revell Publishing, New Jersey, 1963), 223.

Reliance upon careful biblical study of the original text of Scripture fueled the Reformation and demonstrated Luther's commitment to *sola scriptura*. Protestant reformers were not fearful of the average citizen possessing a copy of the Bible; they encouraged it. This motivated Luther's ministry of preaching and counseling. He wrote, "The entire Bible has two principal thoughts. The first: Human nature is in its entirety damned and ruined by sin, nor can it come out of this calamity and death by its own powers and efforts; the second: God alone is just and out of mercy destroys sin and justifies."¹⁰ Bible translation into the language of the common man grew rapidly throughout this time. By God's providence, it was enabled by Johannes Gutenberg's (1393-1468) invention of the printing press in 1440. And though the screw press was a very helpful tool in the Reformation's rapid growth throughout Europe, it would be naive to believe that the Reformation would never had happened without it. Such views, common in secular literature, do not take into account the fervent resolve of reformers like Luther and his sustained desire to see the truths of Scripture expounded and disseminated throughout the world. Hand-copied or mechanically printed, it mattered not to the reformers, such was the depth of the conviction to see the Word of God and its message of the gospel to be propagated among the populace.

Furthermore, the way in which a man treated the Scriptures revealed to Luther the very character of the man. If he treated the Word carelessly, then he treated Christ carelessly.

The Holy Scripture is God's Word, written and, so to speak, lettered and put into the form of letters, just as Christ, the eternal Word of God, is clothed in humanity. And men regard and treat the written Word of God in this world just as they do Christ. It is a worm and no book compared with other books; for the honor people accord other writings of men by studying, reading, pondering, keeping, and using them they do not accord Scripture. If it is treated well, it lies there in neglect. Others tear it to pieces, scourge and crucify it, and subject it to all manner of torture until they stretch it sufficiently to apply to their heresy, meaning, and whim... It is a good

¹⁰ Martin Luther, "Table Talk," Weimar edition 5, (Berlin: Andesite Press, 2015), 68.

sign, therefore, if a man has the precious gift of loving and liking Scripture, of gladly reading it, of highly esteeming and treasuring it.¹¹

Scripture was held in the highest regard in Luther's eyes as it was in the eyes of other reformers who joined him. It was not only a text to be studied, but to be revered, loved, cherished, and honored as authoritative above all other human works, because it was the inspired Word of God.

During the persecutory reign of Queen Mary I of England ("Bloody Mary") and her attempts at restoring Roman Catholicism, many Protestant Christians escaped England for the safety of Geneva, Switzerland, the home of the reformer John Calvin. It was during this time that the Oxford scholar William Whittingham, continuing with the same zeal as the other Reformers, made a complete revision of the English Bible and produced the widely accepted *Geneva Bible* (1560). It was "the Bible of Shakespeare, the Bible of the Puritans, and the Bible of the Pilgrim Fathers."¹² Eventually, the reformers' dedication to *sola scriptura* influenced parishioners to the point of instigating enormous social pressure on the Catholic leadership of their day. The resulting influence throughout Europe and England forced Roman Catholic leadership to reluctantly produce various translations of the Bible into the language of the common man, even though many of these were of poor quality because of their forced adherence to the *Latin Vulgate*.

Martin Luther's sustained commitment to the Scripture can also be seen in his dedication to translating the Bible into the German language. The Luther Bible was a translation from Hebrew and ancient Koiné Greek texts. Luther's dedication to this project brought about the New Testament in German, published in 1522. Later, he completed the Old Testament and Apocrypha, and the entire Bible was published by 1534 into German. Luther's commitment to the Scriptures was remarkable, considering the unusual attention Roman Catholic clerics gave to Vatican pronouncements over against a careful study of God's Word. For him, the true teaching of

¹¹ Ibid., 71-72.

¹² David Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Zondervan Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990), 195.

Scripture had been neglected and often replaced with Roman Catholic doctrine. Getting the Word of God into the hands of the German populace was a major priority. There is no question that Luther was undeterred in his resolve to ensure that the average man had access to the Holy Scriptures because he was truly committed to its superiority and sufficiency.

Four Historical Observations

Sufficiency Illustrates Biblical Superiority

I would like to make four historical observations in this paper. *First, Martin Luther's resolve to return to the biblical teaching on salvation demonstrates his reliance on biblical superiority over fabricated religion and self-dependence.* It is obvious that this was the beginning spark of the Protestant Reformation. Salvation through faith alone, by grace alone, trusting Christ atoning sacrifice alone, is the very essence of the gospel (Ephesians 2:1-10). The theological culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was hostile to this gospel and those who preached it. Preaching the Gospel Luther preached required two things: a peculiar disregard for the preservation of one's life during this time, and an uncommon trust in the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture. This same gospel had been systematically dismantled and obscured by centuries of Catholic teaching throughout Europe and it took an uncompromising trust in the superiority of God's Word to uncover the true biblical gospel. As Luther himself wrote, "People are not to believe me, the church, the fathers, the apostle, or even an angel from heaven if we teach anything contrary to the Word of God. But the Word of the Lord should stand forever."¹³ Such was his high regard for Holy Scriptures.

If Martin Luther's reverence for the Word of God was so exalted, what would he think of a Christian's reliance upon anything other than this Holy Word to address the deep matters of the soul? What would he think of psychology? What would he think of Christians who advocated

¹³ Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 40:132, quoted in *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, vol. 3 (St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1479.

secular psychological theories in an attempt to cure the turmoil of the soul? I believe it is safe to say he would not think highly of anything conceived by man as having any authority in resolving deep matters of the soul. Luther was clear on this:

We do not condemn the doctrines of men just because they are the doctrines of men, for we would gladly put up with them. But we condemn them because they are contrary to the gospel and the Scriptures. While the Scriptures liberate consciences and forbid that they be taken captive by the doctrines of men, the doctrines of men captivate the conscience anyhow. This conflict between the Scriptures and the doctrines of men we cannot reconcile. Therefore because these two forms of doctrine contradict one another we allow even young children to judge here whether we are to give up the Scriptures, in which the one Word of God is taught from the beginning of the world, or whether we are to give up the doctrines of men, which were newly devised yesterday and which change daily?¹⁴

It is as if Luther could see on the horizon the beginnings of a major philosophical shift in Europe away from the trustworthiness of Scripture to a dependence upon human reasoning. In less than one hundred years after Luther wrote these words, the Enlightenment (*die Aufklärung*) jettisoned any reliance upon the supernatural or divine revelation, and replaced it with a trust in the empirical observations and conclusions of man. Secular German philosophers would arise and reject the Scriptures, men such as Christian Wolff, Moses Mendelssohn, G.E. Lessing, and Immanuel Kant. The principles of human reason would govern what is considered to be true, not the Bible. Psychology became the natural birth-child of the Enlightenment as man's attempt to explain disorders of the soul without God. In what way did Luther himself see the Scriptures in light of the ever-increasing advances of the arts and sciences? Listen to his words:

The Holy Scriptures surpass in efficaciousness all the arts and all the sciences of the philosophers and jurists; these, though good and necessary to life here below, are

¹⁴ Martin Luther, "We Do Not Make God's Word True or Untrue No. 3229b – Between June 9 and 12, 1532," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 54, *Table Talk* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 152-153.

vain and of no effect as to what concerns life eternal. The Bible should be regarded with wholly different eyes from those with which we view other productions. He who wholly renounces himself, and relies not on mere human reason, will make good progress in the Scriptures; but the world comprehends them not, from ignorance of that mortification which is the gift of God's Word. Can he who understands not God's Word, understand God's works?¹⁵

Because he thus believed in the surpassing greatness of God's Word, Luther often spoke of the infinite ability of the Word of God to provide life-changing answers, exceeding human expectations. He also once wrote, "The authority of the word of God goes beyond the capacity of our mind."¹⁶ Human reason could never surpass, let alone approximate, the depth of God's Word.

¹⁵ Martin Luther and William Hazlitt. n.d. "The Table-talk of Martin Luther." (Grand Rapids, MI: Generic NL Freebook Publisher, n.d. eBook Collection, EBSCOhost, accessed December 13, 2016), 3.

¹⁶ Martin Luther and John. Dillenberger, "Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings." The Anchor library of religion. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961), 270.

Roman Catholic Theology Allied with Enlightenment Psychology

In contrast, most Catholic theologians had no problem accepting and even adopting psychological principles from the Enlightenment era. Thomist theology was based upon Aristotelian concepts that gave human reason and observations co-authoritative acceptance with biblical truth. *This brings us to a second observation in this paper, that the core of Roman Catholic theology was man-centered, which made it a natural ally to the early man-centered psychology of the Age of Reason.* Of course, Roman Catholics could not accept every aspect of this enlightened Age of Reason; they condemned many attempts to discount theological conclusions made by science. But significant accommodations were made, especially in the discipline of psychology. This can especially be seen as a result of the openness to psychotherapy in the Vatican II conclusions. But seventeenth-century Roman Catholic clergy had considerable difficulty straddling the ever-widening gap between the Bible and Enlightenment-inspired observations of the soul made by early psychologists. Eventually they advocated a Neo-Scholastic accommodation between faith and science by claiming, “any concept of the human being that ignored the soul and its rational, immortal core, was missing the most essential things.”¹⁷ Catholics could see the encroachment science-inspired skeptics were making on ministry to the soul and they chose to find common ground in empirical observation rather than assert the sole authority of Scripture. Later, in the nineteenth century, “Freud threw down the gauntlet to people of faith by calling attention to pathological aspects of religious belief- and viewing religion itself as a form of psychopathology.”¹⁸ Anyone who believed in a religion or a god, by Freud’s definition, possessed a neurosis. The Bible was not completely thrown out by Roman Catholics, but through Freud’s subtle influence scripture was even more diminished in its authority to speak to difficult problems of the soul. Integrationist Eric L. Johnson admits, “Catholics

¹⁷ <http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/Psychology-and-Catholicism.php>, "Psychology and Catholicism: Contested Boundaries" by Robert Kugelmann (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁸ Ibid.

may have been 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.”¹⁹ There is little doubt that the theological drift of Catholic theology was recognized by Luther as a coming storm for Christians. This is why he elevated the authority and reliability of the Bible over human reason. Roman Catholic historians Henryk Misiak and Virginia Staudt have written,

Since Catholic psychologists are not only psychologists but also Catholics, they will always endeavor to integrate psychology, philosophy, and theology...; but this endeavor does not preclude their participation in science even if this science assumes physicalistic methodology or is cultivated by people who do not share or care about Catholic philosophy or theology.²⁰

Catholic compromise can also be seen in the year of 1892 when Monsignor Edward A. Pace was one of the first five psychologists to be elected to the American Psychological Association (APA), assuming a leadership role.

Luther’s sense was to divorce Christianity from this dangerous and destructive drift through a return to the authority of Scripture and its high view of God’s redemption. His stand at Wittenberg anticipated such a substantial drift by Roman Catholicism. He questioned the very core of Catholic man-centered epistemology and its elevation of man’s reason, laboring to return theology to its original purpose of being God-centered and purposefully God-focused. Psychology will always be man-centered and purposefully man-focused, but the Christian church does not have to be. What would Luther think about the wedding of human psychology with Biblical doctrine? In his *Table Talk* discourses he asserts, “Whatever does not come from Scripture is certainly of the devil himself. All that God has done, particularly all that pertains to our salvation, is clearly put

¹⁹ “Psychology & Christianity: Five Views,” edited by Eric L. Johnson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic), 28.

²⁰ Misiak, Henryk & Staudt, Virginia M., “Catholics in Psychology” (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 14.

down and noted in Scripture so that no one may excuse himself.”²¹ Later he proclaimed, “One should have a pure faith, one that believes nothing that is not grounded in Scripture. All that we are to believe, aye, more than enough, is in Scripture.”²² And still later he presses his point, “I shall and must be convinced by Scripture, not by the unreliable life and teachings of men, no matter how holy they may be.”²³ There is no doubt that Luther held the Bible in the highest esteem. There was nothing that man could produce, no empirical conclusions man could make that could shake his confidence in the reliability and superiority of God’s Word. Psychology was the product of human reasoning and philosophy. It pretended to be a science, but was a soft science, at best, where science attempted to rely on causation, causes that are directly related to effect. Psychology was built upon covariation, causes that seem to be related to effect. That is why it is a soft science that has more to do with a world-and-life-view than it does with hard science.

Luther also believed that if human observations and conclusions made in hard science disagreed with the Bible, then the Bible is to be believed and not changed to fit the science. To the Enlightened man or woman that thought was intellectual suicide, but for Luther it was the natural conclusion of his redeemed eyes of faith as he viewed creation. For example, Bible scholars before Luther were fond of allegorizing accounts of the creation events in Genesis 1-3 to agree with their own observations of reality. This is something Luther despised. Concerning them he wrote, “With respect, therefore, to this opinion of Augustine, we conclude, that Moses spoke properly and plainly, and neither allegorically nor figuratively: that is, he means, that the world, with all creatures, was created in six days, as he himself expresses it.”²⁴ Luther took the account of creation, as revealed in the Hebrew text of Genesis, as being an actual account or literal account of God having created the universe in six, twenty-four hour days. To view it any other way was to him, a

²¹ Martin Luther, Martin, “Table Talk,” Weimar edition 5, (Berlin: Andesite Press, 2015), 84.

²² Ibid., 85.

²³ Ibid., 91.

²⁴ Martin Luther, “The Creation: A Commentary On the First Five Chapters of the Book of Genesis,” Trans. by Henry Cole (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1898), 25.

distortion of the plain text, and an unnecessary accommodation to subjective empiricism. Not only would Luther have strongly objected to the theory-laden notions of psychology, but he would have also denied the assertions of nineteenth century naturalist, Charles Darwin. Luther himself was not opposed to science, especially hard science. But he did understand its limitations and weaknesses and he implicitly trusted the Word of God over supposed scientific claims. Catholic scholars, on the other hand, were at the mercy of the Age of Reason. If science denied a text of Scripture, especially as it relates to the psychology of the soul or the creation of man, then Roman Catholic theology would change its understanding and teaching of Scripture. Their chief tool of change was the hermeneutical spiritualizing or allegorizing a text. Once this tool is used, Scripture can be made to mean almost anything. It is no longer the authority, but man's ever-changing opinion becomes the final authority.

Reading meaning into the Scripture makes man the final authority. Science then becomes a religion that forces you to constantly shape the meaning of the text to agree with it. Luther believed this to be not only wrong, but alarming and dangerous with the result of ruining people. Martin Luther explained this problem when he wrote, "All manner of religion, where people serve God without His Word and command, is simply idolatry, and the more holy and spiritual such a religion seems, the more hurtful and venomous it is; for it leads people away from the faith of Christ, and makes them rely and depend upon their own strength, works, and righteousness."²⁵

Sufficient to Address the Substantive Needs of the Sinful Soul

For Luther the real power of the truth of Scripture was found in its capacity to speak to the major problems of man. *The third major observation is that Luther's view of the supremacy of Scripture is best seen in his belief that it was sufficient to address the substantive needs of the sinful soul.* Luther saw the Word of God as an all-sufficient resource in counseling the soul of a troubled man. This is the place he sent the person plagued with mental instability and emotional vulnerability. These are his words,

²⁵ Martin Luther, "Table Talk," trans. William Hazlitt (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2004), 94.

“My counsel is, that we draw water from the true source and fountain, that is, that we diligently search the Scriptures. He who wholly possesses the text of the Bible, is a consummate divine. One single verse, one sentence of the text, is of far more instruction than a whole host of glosses and commentaries, which are neither strongly penetrating nor armor of proof.”²⁶ What about the person who is undergoing a tremendous trial or difficult temptation? Luther proceeds to admonish such a counselee, “Such a person [one facing temptation] must by no means rely on himself, nor must he be guided by his own feelings. Rather, he must lay hold of the words offered to him in God’s name, cling to them, place his trust in them, and direct all the thoughts and feelings of his heart to them.”²⁷ To Luther, God’s Word was not just a superior source, it was a sufficient source for help. A person with emotional or deep turmoil of soul could find lasting answers in this Truth. Perhaps Luther’s devotion to the stability of Scripture comes from his own personal experience with his former mystical beliefs as a Catholic which led him into many dark and depressant valleys. Whatever his prior experience, now that he was a born-again Christian, he understood how the Word was a substantive and reliable agent of change.

How would Luther conceive of the modern concept of “mental illness?” It was not a common label until the middle of the nineteenth century and the terminology was believed to have originated with Sigmund Freud. In reality, it is a misleading term since it is impossible for the mind to get ill. The mind is not an organic entity; the brain is. The brain can get ill, and the mind can be affected in its ability to function in a proper way. Sometimes the brain can experience a severe trauma, an aneurism, a stroke or a chemical imbalance. Any of these can affect the ability of the mind to process information. But when there is no identifiable epidemiology, no presence of a disease or pathogen, and the brain is free of any abnormalities, yet the person still suffers from severe distress, it is not a physiological problem that needs addressing; it is a spiritual (mental)

²⁶ Martin Luther and William Hazlitt, “The Table-talk of Martin Luther,” (Grand Rapids, MI: Generic NL Freebook Publisher), 3, accessed December 8, 2016 eBook Collection (EBSCOhost).

²⁷ Martin Luther, “Luther’s Works,” Volume 42: Devotional Writings (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 183.

problem that must be addressed. In his correspondence Luther recognized this to be true in the life of a female believer. He remarked, “Her illness is, as you see, rather of the mind than of the body. I am comforting her as much as I can, with my knowledge. In a word, her disease is not for the apothecaries (as they call them), nor is it to be treated with the salves of Hippocrates, but by constantly applying plasters of Scripture and the Word of God.”²⁸ Apothecaries were drug providers, people who prepared and sold medicines. Luther recognized that there were some problems that presented themselves as physical diseases when they were actually spiritual problems. The answer to a spiritual problem was not medications or salves, but a healthy application of Scripture. Medications applied to spiritual problems only alleviate symptoms and never cure the problem. In fact, many psychotropic medications today improve symptoms, and the patients think they are better, but the problem reappears once the medication wears off. Even in the sixteenth century Luther understood that there are many problems people face of a spiritual nature, even though they may manifest physiological symptoms, which can only be cured on a deep heart level through the proper use and application of the Scriptures. Luther did not forbid medication when it was warranted, but he also saw a general misuse of medication in attempting to resolve a serious spiritual issue as clerical malpractice. Good medical treatment for a physical malady was viewed by Luther as a legitimate practice for the Christian, but there were many troubles that found their source not in the body but in the heart of man.

If Scripture was the sufficient remedy for maladies of the soul, then it was also the chief means of diagnosis for Luther. What was the essential source of these soul-problems? The simple answer is found in Scripture and it is a worship problem of man’s heart. *The fourth historical observation is that Martin Luther realized that Scripture exposed man’s heart to be essentially idolatrous.* The nature of a man’s heart is rooted in a depraved tendency to worship anything but the God of Heaven. It passionately desires and longs to finding meaning, happiness, and pleasure in the things

²⁸ Martin Luther, “Luther’s Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters,” vol. 1, (Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 402-2.

of this world. Luther described it this way, “Human nature is idolatrous and superstitious; it flees from the true God, the true worship and fear of God, and promotes confidence in its own brand of worship and in its own works. Priests become rich from traffic in these and get to be great lords. Just so there also was no end and no limit to extravagant gifts and grants under the papacy.”²⁹ During Luther’s ministry he observed men placing their confidence in the papacy or their own self-reliant abilities, to such an extent that he made this observation, “Idolatry is far more fervent than true piety.”³⁰ Men’s hearts cling to the things of this world in zealous worship, denying the true worship of God as revealed in Scripture; consequently they suffer from overwhelming fear, anxiety, guilt, sinful anger, and depression. The idolatrous ruling desires of a man’s heart robs him of the true joy and contentment that comes from worshipping the God he was created to worship in the Bible. There is no doubt that the human heart is a factory of idols. Luther remarks, “It is very easy to fall into idolatry, for all of us are idolaters by nature. Since idolatry is born in us, it pleases us very much.”³¹ From within the very nature of man comes passionate desires that rule the heart and steal away life itself. It is pleasure that rules the heart and cause fights and quarrels (James 4:1-3). It is disappointed pleasures that can cause depression. It is the absence of pleasure and loss of safety that brings out overwhelming fears. Everything goes back to what a man naturally worships.

A worshiper of the God of the Bible is willing to sacrifice the temporary pleasures of life and endure the wrath of others for the eternal reward of heaven. Luther loved the Epistle to the Hebrews, and found that Hebrews 11:27 helped him fight off anxiety and give him great comfort at the Diet of Worms (1521), presided over by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles the Fifth. Speaking of Moses as he left Egypt it says, “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.” Luther knew, like Moses, the probable wrath of the king, but his heart worshipped the God of heaven. He feared the displeasure of heaven more than he

²⁹ Martin Luther, “Table Talk,” Weimar edition 5, (Berlin: Andesite Press, 2015), 678.

³⁰ Ibid., 679.

³¹ Ibid., 678.

feared the displeasure of man. When men worship the God of the Bible, all of life comes into proper perspective. Listen to Luther's own counsel concerning fear written to a Mrs. Elizabeth Agricola on June 10, 1527:

You must not be so fearful and downhearted. Remember that Christ is near and bears your ills, for he has not forsaken you, as your flesh and blood make you imagine. Only call upon him earnestly and sincerely and you will be certain that he hears you, for you know that it is his way to help, strengthen, and comfort all who ask him. So be of good cheer, and remember that he has suffered far more for you than you can ever suffer for his sake or your own.³²

In conclusion, there are four historical observations concerning Luther's contribution to sola scriptura and biblical sufficiency that are important to remember: First, Martin Luther's resolve to return to the biblical teaching on salvation demonstrates his reliance on biblical superiority over fabricated religion and self-dependence. Second, the core of Roman Catholic theology was man-centered, which made it a natural ally to the early man-centered psychology of the Age of Reason. Third, Luther's view of the supremacy of Scripture is best seen in his belief that it was sufficient to address the substantive needs of the sinful soul. Fourth, Martin Luther realized that Scripture exposed man's heart to be essentially idolatrous.

soli Deo gloria

³² Martin Luther, "Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel," From a letter to Mrs. Elizabeth Agricola on June 10, 1527 (Literary Licensing, LLC, June 5, 2011), 82.

A CASE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN SOUL CARE

FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

T. Dale Johnson¹

Current Problems Divorced

Religious liberty is under great strain in modern America. Questions regarding the definition of marriage threaten to compromise, for example, the religious convictions of Jack Phillips, the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop, in Lakewood, Colorado. He was directed to change his store policies immediately and to force his staff to attend training sessions that encouraged greater sensitivity to sexual preferences. Commenting on the situation, conservator writer Todd Starnes said, “Think of [the training] as reverse conversion therapy (or straight man’s rehab) so that the state can mandate diversity through conformity.”² Christian bakers, florists, and photographers are under siege. And the problem is not limited to pressures that homosexual activists place on believers who provide personal services. Even large businesses like Hobby Lobby, are pressured to yield on issues of Christian conscience, such as when life begins, the value of that life, and whether a business should be forced to go against its owners’ deeply-held religious beliefs by adhering to the contraceptive mandate contained in the President Obama’s Affordable Care Act. Sadly, these are not isolated incidents. They are representative of a plethora of cases where freedom of religion has been

¹ Dale Johnson is professor of biblical counseling and chair of the biblical counseling program at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, TX.

² Todd Starnes, “Baker Forced to Make Gay Wedding Cakes, Undergo Sensitivity Training, after Losing Lawsuit,” *Foxnews.com*, accessed October 16, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/06/03/baker-forced-to-make-gay-wedding-cakes-undergo-sensitivity-training-after.html>.

challenged. If cake shops, florists, photographers, and Hobby Lobby are expected to compromise, we are naïve to think that the church will remain exempt.

Inconspicuous to many, religious freedom in the area of counseling has not yet become the primary focal point of social activists intent on eliminating traditional Christian values from American life. However, it deserves to be brought into the discussion. Recent court opinions and legislation regarding the definition of marriage and that definition's affinity toward homosexual orientation poses a threat to any who would counsel a contrary position. In light of a 2015 opinion by the United States Supreme Court, same-sex couples have the freedom to marry in each of the 50 states. Further, the overall positive sentiment toward same-sex unions and same-sex attraction has increased as evidenced by the new restrictions on conversion therapy.³ If states are able to limit counseling practices that attempt to address deeply moral, religious, and spiritual issues such as sexual orientation, then the state is demarcating the boundaries of religious freedom.

The state's attempt to legislate a moral position in relation to sexual orientation is certainly one concern, but there also seems to be another issue at stake, especially for Christian counselors. As the state claims jurisdiction in the arena of religiously derived moral convictions, many are voluntarily submitting to the state's counterfeit authority of professional counseling licensure. This is not to say that the state does not have authority at all, but the state is exceeding its jurisdictional responsibility regarding the care of men's souls. We often think of breaches in religious liberty as the fault of the state as it extends its influence into the jurisdiction of the church. While the state is

³ This article is not a polemic for or against different types of conversion therapy. The author is simply using this issue as representative of threats to religious liberty in counseling. Conversion therapy, and there are multiple approaches, is representative of varied therapies that attempt Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (sometimes known as SOCE). The states of California and New Jersey have said that a counselor may not participate in any method of SOCE for those who are under 18 years of age, even if the child and/or the parents desire to pursue a change in sexual orientation. This author would argue that conversion therapy, or reparative therapy as it is sometimes called, is an unbiblical approach to SOCE. Conversion therapy is built upon a faulty categorization assuming that same-sex attraction or orientation is a mental disorder according to the DSM III. It is believed that the issue of sexual orientation is representative of a moral and spiritual issue in which the state is legislating judgment that can be binding to Christians holding professional state licensure.

most certainly encroaching upon the religious liberties of evangelicals in this country, believers appear to be joining in allegiance with the state to accomplish a task given by God to the jurisdiction of the church. According to a biblical understanding of jurisdiction, the problem then is two-fold: First, the state is meddling in matters not intended by God. Second, a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) is submitting to an erroneous authority in matters of soul care.

The regulation placed upon LPCs during recent years in California and New Jersey regarding Conversion Therapy demonstrates the amalgamation of responsibility and authority between church and state. Therapeutic measures derived from Christian convictions in relation to sexual orientation would be restricted for those who practice licensed professional counseling.

When faced with an issue like sexual orientation, the modern mind tends to neglect the Christian thought of the past, believing that novel understandings and new methods must meet any contemporary crisis. Modern thinkers are enthralled with these types of ideological cliffs and situational canyons which appear as new horizons. Human experiences, however, tend to supersede culture and ideas. In fact, the similarities of human experience, no matter modernity's progress, are quite common considering the span of history. The avant-garde produces a cerebral, yet neglectful, response to contemporary intellectual dilemmas. Never has this been more true than with modern theoretical and practical approaches to the care of souls.

Some may question the value of history for such a practical discipline as soul care. The church, however, has always been about the business of helping hurting people. Many who have gone before have identified common patterns and vices of humanity. What remedies did they suggest? What doctrines guided their practice in the care of souls? Asking these questions of our predecessors reveals the relevance of church history to ministry today. Most counseling today, even that provided by professing Christians, has been separated from the rich Christian tradition of soul care.

Thomas Oden and Andrew Purves have documented the divorce of soul care from its classical history.⁴ Charles Kemp and J. T. McNeil, respected historians of pastoral theology in their time, noted the same shift in the focus of pastoral theology and soul care, but seem to categorize the shift as a new epoch in pastoral theology; an epoch that transitioned with the philosophies of the times and the desire to be progressive, even relevant, as its impetus. The neglect does not seem to be an intentional movement away from classical soul care, but more of a preferential mutation toward an alternate explanation of man etched out by scientific naturalism.

Thomas Oden identified the modern neglect of what he called classical pastoral care, and recommended a project of rediscovery.

A major effort is needed today to rediscover and remine [sic] the classical models of Christian pastoral care and to make available again the key texts of that classical tradition following about fifty years of neglect, the depths of which are arguably unprecedented in any previous Christian century. A whole generation of pastoral scholars will be needed to recover textually and rediscover practically the classics of pastoral care, texts which reach out for the contemporary working pastor in the counseling task.⁵

In the pages that follow the reader will encounter an attempt to answer Oden's call to rediscover classical texts and practices which act as a guide and caution to navigate the craggy dilemmas of modern human experience. The article is an effort to wed the thinking of Calvin, Hubmaier, and Kuyper from Christian history in order to revive the doctrine of jurisdiction and its implications for religious liberty in counseling and soul care. When considered within proper parameters, the doctrine is a standard by which to value the role of the modern church as the legitimate institution designed by God for the care of souls and as a caution to maintain religious liberty the church has enjoyed for centuries in the west. Once the threats to liberty and orthodoxy

⁴Thomas Oden, *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984); Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classic Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁵Oden, *Care of Souls*.

have been examined, the benefit and necessity for unlicensed counseling within the local church will be evident in order to maintain proper ecclesiastical authority, doctrinal purity, and religious liberty. If care is not taken, this freedom we assume to possess will soon degenerate into a tyranny which is foreign to the Church of Christ and may hinder her progress.

Doctrine of Jurisdiction

Historians of the western church will recognize the phrases *sphere sovereignty* or *jurisdiction doctrine*. Arguing similar distinctions in separate eras, the terms were used to delineate properly the roles and responsibilities of the God-ordained institutions of family, church, and government. Each institution was designed by God to be progressively revealed in the created order, for His gospel mission to be realized, for man's obedience, and for the benefit of society. The institutions have all been granted roles, responsibilities, and authority to perform their specific task within His created order.⁶

We must be careful in our use of history because it proves to be a deviant authority, but an efficacious light. Every era of human history has its blind spots, points at which thinkers address the problems before them limited by their own finiteness. The benefit of history may be a pattern to emulate or an error to avoid, but it aids to illuminate shadows in the present. History used as a supreme authority is dangerous because there is rarely a one to one correlation of past and present dilemmas. But, history discloses common problems from the past and often provides alternate ways to consider issues that are veiled by modern contexts. As we consider the development of this doctrine, we must remember that each figure writes within a particular context. This will aid our use of their thoughts as guiding and not binding since we also see through a glass darkly.

⁶ Due to the parameters of this article, the church and government are in focus, but not topics relating specifically to the family.

John Calvin

A doctrine of jurisdiction was promoted by magisterial reformers, but their version seemed to lack proper distinction.⁷ The church and the state naturally influence one another in the created order of society, but the reformers seemed to push that influence beyond God's intention. The magisterial reformers believed the state should look to the church to propose and define the categories for proper justice. Therefore, the state was to enact, through physical punishment, the responsibility of the church to maintain purity of souls. The state was sanctioned to use the physical sword to punish those who caused a doctrinal or spiritual affront to the church. The role of the government based on Romans 13:1-5, is to uphold justice in order to maintain peace within society. The government was created by God to be proactive in protecting those who are just, and on the other hand, responsible to bring evil doers to justice.

As one of those magisterial reformers, Calvin addressed the jurisdiction of the church in what he called, "ecclesiastical jurisdiction."⁸ Calvin acknowledged a distinction in jurisdiction between the magistracy and the church. Calvin writes to note the misuses of the papacy in their practices of excommunication and their failure to distinguish between civil and ecclesiastical power. "Spiritual power," in Calvin's writings was intentionally distinguished from the power given by God to the sword of the state. He feared that the magistrate had taken authority given to the church and cautioned against the government as a pseudo-ecclesiastical authority. Quoting 2 Corinthians 10:4-6, Calvin argued that pastors possessed a proper spiritual power for the purpose of admonishing, teaching, correcting, and its most severe form, excommunication to ensure the purity of the individual soul and the church of Christ as a whole.⁹

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody: Hendrickson Publications, 2008), 799-804.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 799.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 804.

This did not mean that the state was without authority; on the contrary, he espoused the government as a gift of God. Calvin's sum of the church fathers was that they sought, "to prevent irreligious princes from impeding the church in the discharge of her duty, by their tyrannical caprice."¹⁰ In purer times, the church bishops remained within their jurisdictional responsibilities for correction and left the magistrates to perform their duties before God. The curse of sin's effects upon history is that the pendulum of roles and responsibility between church and state has often swung too much to one side or the other. In an attempt to maintain proper balance Calvin stated, "We must always hold by this principle, that magistrates were appointed by God for the protection of religion, as well as of the peace and decency of society, in exactly the same manner that the earth is appointed to produce food."¹¹

Calvin attempted to navigate the "impious contradiction of the word of God," by which the papacy, in conjunction with the magistracy exercised improper authority.¹² He attributed the necessity of reform to the "iniquitous traditions" built by the lack of distinction between church and government. Calvin argued that a spiritual government was necessary and "altogether distinct from civil government," and primarily for the purpose of preserving "spiritual polity."¹³ Spiritual power was to be kept entirely distinct from the power of the sword of the magistrate. In summary of his view of the doctrine of jurisdiction, Calvin stated that, "neither does the church assume anything to herself which is proper to the magistrate, nor is the magistrate competent to what is done by the church."¹⁴ His application of the doctrine, however, may be in question, especially if one were to ask Servetus.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid., 809.

¹¹ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Volume XXI: The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker), 53.

¹² Calvin, *Institutes*, 809.

¹³ Ibid., 800.

¹⁴ Ibid., 802.

¹⁵ Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language, 4th Ed.*, revised by R. L. Hatchett (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 270-271.

Balthasar Hubmaier

Calvin was not the only one concerned with the improper wedding of church and state. The Anabaptists were alarmed with the symbiotic relationship between the magistrate and bishop, because there was little concept of the separation of church and state since the debated conversion of Constantine.¹⁶ It was not unusual for those with Anabaptist beliefs regarding religious liberty to refer to the Catholic Church, the church Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin were trying to reform, as the “Babylonian Harlot” and to the Pope as the “Antichrist.”¹⁷ Anabaptists believed that the primitive church of the apostles had lost its purity, due in no small measure to the *Corpus Christianum* of Constantinianism, and that the church had ceased to be the church.¹⁸

On the one hand the faithful Anabaptists wrote treatises to declare themselves as pacifist, akin to the Mennonites of today.¹⁹ The typical Anabaptist belief was that the government was ordained by God as a necessary evil in this sin-cursed world. Balthasar Hubmaier, was a different brand of Anabaptist. Rather, he believed that the government was an institution ordained by God regardless of the sin-cursed world. Trained under Johann Eck, Hubmaier was a genuine theologian who consciously objected to his previous education to embrace ideas of the reformation. He, however, believed that the reformation of Luther and Zwingli did not press far enough to address issues that had corrupted the papal church.

Baptism and worship involving images were among his disputes, but chief was Hubmaier’s belief that the relationship with the state, that the Reformers encouraged, was damning to the church. Pipkin and Yoder described Hubmaier’s work, *On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them*, as

¹⁶ Mabry. *Balthasar Hubmaier’s Doctrine of the Church*, 182.

¹⁷ n10 in Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 241.

¹⁸ Ibid., 241.

¹⁹ See Michael Sattler’s, *Schleitheim Confession*.

setting the, “foundation and safeguards of the principle of religious liberty.”²⁰ In *On the Sword*, Hubmaier would add to this strong view on religious liberty a proper biblical perspective regarding church and state, written in 1527 while in Nikolsburg.²¹

Hubmaier courageously took neither the typical Anabaptist pacifist position nor the stance of the Reformers because his study of Scripture led him to a different viewpoint regarding the relationship of church and state. The state, Hubmaier believed, was ordained by God to wield the temporal sword in order to protect those who were pious from wickedness and evil.²² Since the government was ordained by God, Hubmaier said, “The magistrate does not hate any enemy when he punishes; his sword is a good rod and scourge of God. In short, the Scriptures, fairly interpreted throughout, do not condemn magistracy, but sustain it.”²³ This was part of his argument against the Anabaptist position of pacifism.

The state, however, does not contain jurisdiction over the human soul and cannot force a man into faith, nor kill him for heresy. The church has been granted a means by which to maintain purity within—the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The Scripture commanded, in Hubmaier’s convictions, what he called fraternal admonition and the church ban under the jurisdiction of the assembled body that were to be exercised against any so-called brethren who professed Christ, but did not live as a disciple.

The command of the church ban in Scripture proved to be one of Hubmaier’s chief arguments against the magisterial reformers’ perspective of church and state. “Now if there are two swords,” Hubmaier said, “of which one belongs to the soul, the other to the body, you must let them both remain in their worthiness, dear brothers.”²⁴ He continued on, primarily utilizing Ephesians 6, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, Romans 13 and portions of Matthew to demonstrate that there are two types

²⁰ Pipkin and Yoder, *Balthasar Hubmaier*, 58.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 492-523; Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier*, 247-283.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Hubmaier, “On the Sword,” in Vedder, 165.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 265.

of swords in the Scripture—the church is responsible for one and the state for the other. After a brief explanation of Ephesians 6, Hubmaier explained the distinction of these two swords, in the tenth passage of *On the Sword*:

Note here, dear friends, if your mind were fair, then you would speak as follows: There are two kinds of swords in the Scripture. There is a spiritual one as Christ also used against Satan, Matt. 4:1-11. And that is the Word of God. Indeed, Paul speaks here to the Ephesians and the Corinthians about this sword concerning which Christ also says, ‘I have not come to bring peace but the sword,’ Matt. 10:34. In addition to that there is also an external for the terror of the evil persons here on earth. That is given to the government in order to maintain a common territorial peace with it. It is also called a spiritual sword, when one uses it according to the will of God. These two swords are not in opposition to each other.²⁵

The infringement upon religious liberty was immense, due to the magistrate’s attempts to use both swords to maintain the enmeshment of church and state. From Humbaier’s viewpoint, this wedding of church and state was detrimental to the church as a denial of the Scripture’s sufficiency, and a breach of the state into religious affairs. The same can be said today regarding the struggle between church and state for the responsibility and authority to care for the souls of men.

Abraham Kuyper

As a reformer in the Netherlands, Kuyper was known as a neo-calvinist who engaged the culture and government during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Kuyper attempted to establish a clear picture of God’s graces as they affected both the church and the secularist. His writings on common grace and wisdom are among his most well-known. He is also known for his views on the doctrine of jurisdiction, although Kuyper does not refer to it by that name. Rather, he uses the term sphere sovereignty. Kuyper attempted to articulate that there is only one supreme sovereign in the universe, but this sovereign had delegated smaller spheres of sovereignty. Each sphere has its own domain which is to be subject to the proper delegated authority that in turn is answerable to the

²⁵ Hubmaier, “On the Sword,” in Pipkin and Yoder, *Balthasar Hubmaier*, 509-510.

Sovereign. He said that, “this exalted Sovereign delegated and does delegate His authority to human beings; so that on earth one does not meet God Himself in things visible, but that sovereign authority is always exercised through an office held by men.”²⁶

The danger consistently present in a world ransacked by sin is that “one sphere may encroach upon the neighboring sphere; thus causing a wheel to jerk and to break cog upon cog, and interfering with the progress of the whole.” That has certainly been true throughout history, the ebb and flow of power struggle between religious and secular authority. Kuyper categorizes this dispute in terms of *Deus Christus* or *Divus Augustus*. Is Christ the true sovereign deity or Augustus, as a deified human, sovereign over the affairs of men? Kuyper said the category to which one gives the upper hand, “will determine the fate of the world.” If improper sovereignty is given to the government then there is truly no place for God, because He could never be acknowledged as the true sovereign. Kuyper said,

As long as a crown adorned her brow, the church was the “do-nothing queen,” “princess without influence,” and the mighty state, no matter how much it appeared to be her servant was in truth her master. But even though this is how the church lost her freedom, even though the state itself subsequently took the crown, the church’s freedom is still her inalienable right.²⁷

However, if God is acknowledged as the true sovereign, then there is a proper role and responsibility for church and government to work in tandem for the benefit of society and the glory of God. As God has delegated the church and government as good institutions, we must trust his delegation and seek to enact the roles and responsibilities that He prescribed.

Kuyper was cautious of the growing influence of the government because of the impact it had upon the church. He believed science was used as a means to squelch the proper sovereign sphere of the church, as far as science was built upon the growing foundation of naturalism. That limitation of science did not bode well for the church who believed in supernatural realities. If the

²⁶ Kuyper, *Rooted and Grounded*, 27.

²⁷ Kuyper, *Rooted and Grounded*, 27.

realities of the world were minimized to naturalism, then the church was not recognized as a proper authority. This transition was obvious particularly with a shift in anthropology. If man is simply a naturalistic being, then he should be under the control of the societal sovereign. However, if man is a supernatural being, then the church also has a proper place in governing his soul. Kuyper stated it simply by saying that, “This depends upon whether one sees man as a self-developing product of nature or as a sinner worthy of condemnation.”²⁸ If man is a sinner, then the church is the organism that has been granted sovereignty in this sphere for nurture, growth, and correction. The church should flourish in this role and responsibility before the sovereign God. According to Kuyper,

The church stands above humanity, for the church gives birth to humanity. ‘She is a mother’—to use Calvin’s beautiful expression—‘whose womb not only carried us, whose breast not only nursed us, but whose tender care leads us to the goal of faith. . . Those to whom he is a Father, the Church must also be Mother, and apart from her motherly care no one grows to maturity.’²⁹

As disciples of Christ we agree with Kuyper in proclaiming that “there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human life of which Christ, who is Sovereign of all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”³⁰ This statement presses the reader in two directions. First, Christ is sovereign over all, which means that the world’s ruling authorities are subservient and answerable to him. Second, Christ as supreme authority has provided us with proper roles and responsibilities of the minor sovereigns he will hold accountable to their duties. For believers this does not demand that we dismiss the government as a proper authority, like many Anabaptists did, but there should also be caution not to overemphasize its role as did the papacy or some of the magisterial reformers.

As the doctrine of jurisdiction is considered historically, one must determine whether or not it represents a biblically accurate teaching. If the answer is no, then we are left to decipher levels of authority, roles and responsibility, good and evil on our own. If, however, these institutions are

²⁸ Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” 24.

²⁹ Kuyper, *Rooted and Grounded*, 15.

³⁰ Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” 26.

ordained by God and roles and responsibilities are identified in Scripture, then our duty is to apply them to the current context.

Inherent Threats

The government has not been granted the responsibility to care for the souls of men. Neither has the state been given the authority to correct those with soulish maladies. Through scientific fervor the state has attempted to deluge dominion delegated to the church and the church has obliged by relegation of the duty. As the state protrudes into the jurisdiction of the church, it begins to operate in a pseudo-ecclesiastical nature, dutifully branding problems of human nature and devising solutions accordingly. The attempts at appellation affect the function of the state. If the church yields to the anti-jurisdictional activity of the state, then orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the church will tend toward compromise.

Threat to Religious Liberty

Recent controversy regarding conversion therapy and the governmental restrictions placed upon Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) exemplifies a challenge to liberty of conscience. After contemplating the doctrine of jurisdiction from history there are some interesting parallels which could be applied as a warning against the demands of state statutes upon LPC's, since the statutes are binding for those even with specific religious convictions.

California became the first state to enact a legal ban upon conversion therapy.³¹ This section of the article is not an argument for or against the philosophical basis or the various techniques of conversion therapy. In fact, I hold the position that conversion or reparative therapies are non-biblical approaches to true healing. In reality, reparative or conversion therapies have become collateral damage in an effort to eradicate a religious polemic in relation to sexual orientation.

³¹ State of California: Senate Bill No. 1172, Chapter 835. Approved by Governor September 30, 2012.

Nevertheless, the topic has been chosen as a simple demonstration of the confusion of jurisdictions clearly placed upon church and state in the Scripture. As any state or federal government encroaches upon the task expressly given to the church, namely care of souls and standards of morality, in the form of regulations or statutes, the church becomes limited in its freedom to embark upon her God given tasks. The state of California has chosen to ban Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE) in Senate Bill 1172.

Existing law provides for licensing and regulation of various professions in the healing arts, including physicians and surgeons, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, educational psychologists, clinical social workers, and licensed professional counselors.

This bill would prohibit a mental health provider, as defined, from engaging in Sexual Orientation Change Efforts, as defined, with a patient under 18 years of age. The bill would provide that any Sexual Orientation Change Efforts attempted on a patient under 18 years of age by a mental health provider shall be considered unprofessional conduct and shall subject the provider to discipline by the provider's licensing entity.³²

As the legislation continues it states that, lesbian, gay or bisexual orientation is, "not a disease, disorder, illness, deficiency, or shortcoming."³³ SB1172 Sexual Orientation Change Therapy Fact Sheet presented by California Senator Ted W. Lieu he explains the reason for such a law:

The focus of SB 1172 is to limit deceptive "therapies" that are harmful to minors by mental-health providers. Sexual orientation change therapies, like reparative therapy conversion therapy or reorientation therapy, are the types of sham therapies that California law does not protect against for minors. SB 1172 seeks to provide protections for LGBT youth by preventing these types of therapies that are potentially dangerous as well as making adults aware of the potential harms associated with sexual orientation change therapies.³⁴

³² State of California, *Senate Bill No. 1172*, Chapter 835 (September 30, 2012).

³³ *Ibid.*, Section 1 (a).

³⁴ Legal Info, April 30, 2012, accessed August 2, 2017, http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_1151-1200/sb_1172_cfa_20120507_165926_sen_comm.html.

The state is attempting, to some degree, to legislate morality and in so doing has entered into the jurisdiction of the church. There are many among the ranks of evangelicals who have submitted to the state within this specific arena. Christians who hold a license to practice mental health care are bound by the legislation of the state, rather than the convictions of the church. The mental health provider's attempt to use Sexual Orientation Change Efforts in the manner defined above is seen as a breach in their professional conduct and codes of ethics.

In a study of case law discussed in *Pickup v. Brown* referring to the issue of Sexual Orientation Change Efforts, one will find certain caveats pertaining to the specific legislation.

Importantly, SB 1172 does *not* do any of the following:

- Prevent mental health providers from communicating with the public about SEXUAL ORIENTATION CHANGE EFFORTS.
- Prevent mental health providers from administering SEXUAL ORIENTATION CHANGE EFFORTS to any person who is 18 years of age or older.
- Prevent unlicensed providers, such as religious leaders, from administering SEXUAL ORIENTATION CHANGE EFFORTS to children or adults.
- Prevent minors from seeking SEXUAL ORIENTATION CHANGE EFFORTS from mental health providers in other states.³⁵

The law is binding upon those who have obtained a license within the particular state. The law does not, however, apply to those individuals who are practicing as non-licensed, religious providers. Although of pragmatic value in this particular case, the method of biblical counseling would allow one to practice according to biblical convictions related to sexual orientation under the authority of the local church, without fear or necessity of breaking the law or an agreed upon code of ethics included in state licensure.

³⁵ *Pickup v. Brown*. See <https://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2013/08/29/12-17681.pdf> This specific resource has multiple case references regarding Sexual Orientation Change Efforts in its summary of the case and procedural history involved in this lawsuit. The specific information referenced herein came from the discussion of *Pickup v. Brown*.

The position of the State of California, however, must alert Christians to the breach of religious liberty within Christian counseling.³⁶ Hubmaier's concerns regarding religious freedom echoes to believers in this generation. The task of soul care is the responsibility of the church and not the state. The church has the authority, from God, and the power of His Word, to wield the sword of the Spirit to fight against the wiles of the souls of men and not the state's sword. The current precedent would inevitably lead to several potential problems, similar to the issues of Hubmaier's day. First, the government's control in the arena of soul care will challenge the church to compromise orthodox beliefs, founded in Scripture alone, in order to defer to the state's opinion or mandate in such matters. Second, the church will be subservient to society's value system in regard to parameters which are deemed normal for humanity, rather than being able to simply rely upon the Scripture as the standard of morality and spiritual wisdom. Third, the church will be challenged to compromise orthodoxy for the sake of alternate or limited praxis, since the parameters of practice in this case would be set by the values of government adopted from society, rather than the conviction of Scripture. Finally, as in the days of the Reformation, the church will be tempted to cooperate with the government in order to use the authority aimed at forced compliance in spiritual teaching.³⁷ Hubmaier, along with other Anabaptists, were concerned about this relationship because it led to corruption within the church and compromise regarding Scripture:

For the Anabaptist, the most damaging element in the fall of the church was its alliance with the state. When church and state were joined, the church ceased to be the church. Anabaptists, in their attempt at restitution of the apostolic church, did not deny the right of the state to exist. Although ordained by God, the state was not the ultimate authority in all things—it was both temporal and limited. They did deny it any jurisdiction in religious affairs. Therefore, their attitude toward the state was not

³⁶ On October 15, 2012, legislation was introduced to the State of New Jersey that is nearly identical to California's regulation. See http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2012/Bills/A3500/3371_I1.HTM, accessed March 29, 2014.

³⁷ The magisterial reformers believed the state was to force compliance of belief and those who did not believe as the state directed were given insidious treatment or even martyred. Hubmaier, Sattler, Servetus and others are examples of this kind of treatment. In contrast to Hubmaier, the Reformers conveyed a contrary teaching of Scripture regarding church discipline and church ban.

wholly negative. It was their customary reliance upon biblical authority which saved them from this.³⁸

For similar reasons, Christians today should demonstrate caution when submitting to the authority of the state to accomplish a task that God has given to His church. The symbiotic relationship between church and state concerned the Anabaptists and should cause concern among church leaders in modern times. As Hubmaier says of his day, “negligent bishops are to blame that there are divisions. ‘For while people were sleeping the enemy came. (Matt. 13:25)’” Church leaders and theological educators are as much to blame for this enmeshment as anyone.

Threat to Authority

State licensure poses a threat to proper authority that dismisses biblical views of jurisdiction. According to Samuel Gladding, the government’s special interest in counseling began with the advent of World War II.³⁹ After several decades of education and organizational development, states began to require licensure and Virginia was the first state to do so in 1976. The intent was to be restrictive upon the state board of examiners for psychologists. As states followed Virginia in licensure requirements, standards of education were required with programs such as the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).⁴⁰ As education became standardized, certain types of counseling became specialized, leading to what Gladding called a diversification of counseling. Specialized counseling required specialized education, which required a specialized license for state regulation. The government was responsible for this standardization as it began to regulate a practice for which the church had been primarily responsible. As the government authoritatively regulates in relation to human nature, the origin or causality of human abnormality, and offers therapeutic solutions, the answerable party shifts from the church to the state. Thus, as the state declares the acceptable attitudes, actions, behaviors, sexual orientation, and

³⁸ Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 257-258.

³⁹ Samuel Gladding, *Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

other issues of moral significance, it places itself in a position of authority. As a result, biblical convictions are portrayed as the new immorality and the church's role and responsibility are unduly encroached upon.

There are two warnings that emerge from a concern about state regulations in counseling; one is convictional and the other pragmatic. First, if we accept the jurisdictional categories then state regulations raise caution for those with Christian convictions. Jay Adams has argued this case rather prophetically:

[W]hat you are trying to do is train people to attempt the work of the church without ordination, outside the church. That is distorting God's order of things. Counseling [Soul Care] may not be set up as a life-calling on a free-lance basis; all such counseling ought to be done as a function of the church, utilizing its authority and resources.⁴¹

In Adams' view, those providing counsel were to act under, "Christ's divinely instituted order, the church."⁴² He presented a conviction and practice consistent with the classical tradition. Those who do soul care outside of the church may have the necessary gifts, but they neglect the resources of the body of Christ and act in an unauthorized way by submitting to a contrary authority.⁴³

However, if one does not share in convictions regarding the doctrine of jurisdiction, then a more pragmatic approach may suffice. Regardless of what one may believe relative to the degree in which one may integrate psychological theory with theological doctrine is irrelevant at this point. For example, state licensed practitioners who hold Christian convictions regarding homosexuality will be held to the state's standard regardless of religious sentiments or persuasion. If the state regulates a Licensed Professional Counselor from utilizing core Christian convictions, he is then bound under the authority of the state and not the church. The threat of government authority in matters of soul care will continue to grow, in part, because the government will not cease with

⁴¹ Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 276. Jurisdictional blending has led to compromised orthodoxy throughout Church history. It should be expected that history could predict the direction of this breach of religious liberty will lead to a similar compromise.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 279.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 278.

sexuality as the only moral subject it will regulate. The Christian will find the implementation of biblical morals increasingly difficult as the state drifts further toward philosophical secularism.

Many have utilized the story of Daniel to grant permission for licensure under state regulation. The problem is that the two are very different in scope. Daniel did not volunteer himself to the service of the king, he was a captive, made a eunuch and forced to serve in the king's court. Even then, Daniel chose civil disobedience for matters that were contrary to the king's demands. Licensure is the voluntary pursuit of submission to the state's demand and restrictions for soul care. Daniel did not want to defile himself in submitting to the king's demands for food or drink. Later in his life, he did not bow to the demands of the king not to pray, but rather obeyed the Sovereign over all. Daniel seems to be doing the opposite in comparison to Christians with modern counseling licensure. Whereas Daniel appealed to the ultimate Authority in spite of the earthly king, Christian LPCs are voluntarily submitting to an authority that proposes regulations in direct opposition to God's moral standards.

Threat to orthodoxy

Even if, as Christians, we disagree on the levels of integration between psychology and biblical theology, the integration of church and state should be a concern. Therefore, the pursuit of state licensure is unnecessary in order to practice one's counseling convictions. Licensure is a means for the state to regulate counseling practices. While individual states may not intend to hinder church-based licensed counselors, the secondary effect from regulatory measures is that the state becomes the authority for the Christian counselor. Religious liberty is forfeited for the sake of practicing as a licensed practitioner. Epistemologically, the state regulations become the pinnacle documents of authority rather than Scripture. Matters of morality and conduct are guided by codes of ethics and state's statutes. The church's jurisdictional responsibility in soul care is, therefore, limited by the state's oversight for those who voluntarily submit to their regulations

One explanation for allegiance to the state and the voluntary binding of religious conscience for licensed counselors is the prospect of social capital. Simon the Magician, Balaam, Annanias and Saphira are representative of the men and women who were tempted to use the name of the Lord in this way. While these situations display the same basic concepts, the illustration is altered slightly. The dilemma challenges Christians to consider their allegiance to the moral standards of Christ not in their decision to participate in civil disobedience as a licensed counselor, but at the point of deciding whether to pursue the state regulated license altogether.

The dilemma for the licensed Christian counselor is that although he appreciates the privilege, prestige, and professional connections provided through the regulatory license of the state, he voluntarily submits to any regulations that infringe upon religious conscience or orthodox beliefs. As the culture shifts its center toward a modernistic quasi-religious individualism, the state is not as conducive to evangelical or broader religious memes of the past. The question of social capital will become real in the days that follow as the state rules the arena of soul care and mental health in competing philosophical approaches relative to the church. If evangelicals simply want the state to allow the freedom to counsel without regulation, then there is no necessity for state licensure.

An appeal to Kuyper may help give understanding relative to the digression that occurs when believers submit to improper authority. He explained the mistake Christians make when we compromise our philosophical tenets with the philosophies of the world:

With a kind of color blindness they oppose our sacred things, and they are being entirely upright when they confess not to see what you see, and therefore to judge that you are mistaken about what you think you see. Reconciliation that would lead to agreement is completely inconceivable at this point. We are facing a gaping crevasse that cannot be bridged. As long as Christianity refuses to accept this duality with full conviction with all its consequences, it will be repeatedly punished with the invasion of her own territory by unbelieving science, with the falsification of its theology, with the undermining of its confession, and with the weakening of its faith. . . So we must view it, then, as a fortunate consequence of the operation of common grace that unbelieving science increasingly shakes off every remnant of the Christian tradition,

breaking more and more publicly with the categories that have been handed down. With escalating determination, unbelieving science substitutes a completely atheistic worldview for ours, and makes our continued lodging in her tents increasingly impossible. This, after all, is how it will increasingly press Christians to take a stand within their own territory.⁴⁴

What we are now witnessing within state regulations, as demonstrated by the wholesale acceptance of sexually deviant behavior as a moral norm, are parameters intentionally built to exclude Christian convictions. If Kuyper is correct, then that will only increase into other areas of morality that are inconsistent with biblical standards, but in promotion of the naturalistic scientism of the state. The threat to orthodoxy is real because the state will demand compliance. The social sciences promoted by the state are never detached from their primary principles, which are more evidently non-Christian. The temptation increasingly will be to compromise biblical convictions for prestige, position, and monetary gain.

Conclusion

The Scriptures testify that the church has been endowed with the responsibility to care for souls. Since God bestowed that responsibility upon the church he has also given the necessary authority to alleviate vexations of the soul. As Hubmaier suggested, the sword of the Spirit is the tool properly allocated to the jurisdictional function of the church, in order to care and provide rest for the souls of men. If we believe this doctrine of jurisdiction to be biblically accurate, no matter the faulty application of the doctrine in history, then we are under obligation to practice that which we believe to be a scriptural doctrine in our own time.

Concern for an improper blending of church and state provides a relevant warning for churches and counselors in modernity. As religious liberty is abated by the infringement of the state upon the church, the mission of the church suffers and the Word of God is compromised. This fact has been demonstrated in Israel's cyclical history of wicked rulers, the rise of Constantine's *Corpus*

⁴⁴ Kuyper, *Wisdom and Wonder*, 103.

Christianum, the corruption that resulted with the papacy, the magisterial reformers, and even in Colonial America. As the state moves to gain the ground of soul care, in the name of citizen protection, believers must not retreat in submission to the authority of the state in such matters. The historical pattern associated with servants who have professed allegiance to Christ, but who have confused authorities and submitted themselves to the regulatory arm of the state, presents a bleak picture for sustained biblical orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Obtaining a license to counsel compromises Christian orthodoxy by choosing a practice that grants the state jurisdictional rights to care for souls. Biblical counselors should remain steadfast as unlicensed under the authority of the church, trusting in the God who designed such care so that religious liberty and Christian convictions are to be sustained. May the mantra that guided Hubmaier direct the affections and trust that each biblical counselor places in the Scripture, "Truth is Unkillable."

MORE THAN PREACHERS: THE SOLAS AND SOUL-CARE OF THE REFORMERS

Stuart W. Scott¹

In the 1500's and 1600's, the *Solas* that emerged from the Reformation were paramount to the proclamation of the true Christ of Scripture and biblical faith, to Europe and even the Americas.² They also were critical to lodging a public and much-needed blow to the abuses and totalitarian control of the Catholic Church leadership. But ultimately, they were orchestrated by God most basically for the glory of God and the salvation of man, and more immediately for shepherding of God's people.

When we think of the protestant reformers, we often think of them as studious scholars and bold preachers heralding the truths of what became known later as the five Solas: "Sola Scriptura," (Scripture Alone) "Sola Gratia," (Salvation by Grace Alone), "Sola Fide," (by faith alone), "Solus Christus," (in Christ Alone), and "Soli Deo Gloria" (for the Glory of God Alone). And, praise to our God, they were! But the reformer's ministry was more than just a public message of setting straight the doctrine of salvation and church leaders. It was vitally connected to the shepherding of their own people. They were more than preachers and so should every pastor today be.

The Reformer's Context

Prior to the reformation, leaders in the Catholic Church were more concerned with power and money than with the care of souls and applying doctrine of the Scriptures where the people lived.³ This

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² Adapted from a seminar given at The Reformation Conference in Wittenberg, Germany (May 2017) for the European Bible Training Center (EBTC).

³ From *The Story of Christianity Vol. 2*, by Justo L. Gonzales, we learn on pages 7-8: *As the fifteenth century came to a close, it was clear that the church was in need of profound reformation, and that many longed for it. The decline and corruption of the papacy was well known ...conciliarism had failed miserably the task of bringing about the needed reform. One of the reasons for such failure was that several of the bishops sitting in the councils were themselves among those who profited from the existing corruption. Thus, while the hopeful conciliarist reformers issued anathemas and decrees against*

was the context of changing and confusing times, and difficulty on many fronts. Europe was in the throes of religious, political, intellectual, moral, and economic upheaval, while also dealing with the massive death toll of the Bubonic Plague. All these issues precipitated great necessity for the personal and private soul-care of God's people, towards the glory of God in their living.

This much-needed soul-care was of great concern to the reformers. This is true, because they were much more than the theologians, the speakers, and the writers we often view them as today. They were Pastors—true shepherds to the sheep under their care.

A Passion to Pastor

Dr. Ray Van Neste, Professor at Union University, wrote in his article, *The Care of Souls: The Heart of the Reformation*:

Too often people think of the Reformation in terms of an abstract theological debate. While intensely theological, the Reformation was not merely about ideas; it was about correctly understanding the gospel for the good of the people and the salvation of souls. ... The Reformation was a diverse movement, but at its center was a pulsing, yearning concern for the well-being of souls. Its leaders were pastors at pains to lead their flock...⁴

Though we have this great quote, the fact that Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Martin Bucer were all first and foremost pastors is rarely written and spoken of formally today. Neither is the fact they were *very* involved in the care of souls through the private ministry of the Word to the lives of their people. These oversights, unfortunately, have not benefitted our view of the nature and function of the pastor's role today.

absenteeism, pluralism, simony—the practice of buying and selling ecclesiastical positions—many who sat on the councils were guilty of such practices and were not ready to give them up. Such corrupt leadership set the tone for most of the lesser clergy and the monastics. Gonzales' book also provides for this written on November 20 1500 by Isabella, Queen of Castile: The dissolution is such, that the souls entrusted to the clergy receive great damage, for we are told that the majority of the clergy are living in open concubinage...they despise our justice and arm themselves against it (Harper Collins Publishers, 10 east 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022)

⁴ Ray Van Neste, "The Care of Souls," *Themelios* 39.1 (2014):53-63.

The truth is, the reformers clearly followed in the footsteps of Jesus, the apostles, and the early church leaders in regard to soul-care. Jesus is called the wonderful counselor, and refers to himself as the good shepherd of the sheep (Jn 10:14; 1 Pt. 5:4). He is one who sympathizes with our weaknesses, and in Him we can find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:16). Jesus modeled care for the souls of people as the Father's much-needed public preacher, but also engaged in private ministry to individuals (i.e., Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the rich young ruler, Mary Magdalene, Peter, etc.).⁵ He walked with his disciples in a personal, life-mentoring way and commissioned them to do the same (Matt. 28:18-20). He came to us saying, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). This is a description of Jesus' very personal, two-fold ministry—both public and private.

The Apostles practiced the same type of ministry as their Lord. Paul preached publicly, and also ministered house-to-house (Acts 20:19). He exhorted the Ephesian Elders to pay careful attention to themselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers (Acts 20:28). He reminded them, "for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears." (Acts 20:31). He rehearsed with the Thessalonians,

We [Paul, Silvanus and Timothy] were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 [explanation from vs.1]

Peter, commissioned as a shepherd of the sheep by Christ himself, warns those pastoring the exiles of the dispersion to be true and humble shepherds of God's people (1 Peter 1: 1; 5:1-3). But this mindset did not end with the apostles. In the journal article, *An Ancient Pastoral Theology*, Garrick Bailey writes, "From the earliest writings of the Apostolic Fathers to John Chrysostom (aka, "Golden Mouth"), to Augustine of Hippo, ministers will find endless instruction and encouragement for the individual

⁵ Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21), the woman at the well (Jn 4:1-42), the rich young ruler (Mt 19:16-22) Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:11-18), Peter (Mt 16:13-20; Jn 21:15-23).

caring of souls—what the Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nazianzus, called the “art of arts and science of sciences.”⁶

The Soul-Care of the Reformers

Clearly the passion of the reformers to truly pastor God’s people grew out of their knowledge of the ministry of Christ and His shepherds that had gone before them. Let us look at some of the reformers we have mentioned and their documented commitment to soul-care.

MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546)

Obviously, Luther’s was a faithful student and bold preacher of the Word. But, Luther was not inclined to sterile study, nor the preaching of the fine points of Theology, apart from the care of souls.

Herbert Mayer, professor of Biblical and Historical Theology wrote,

Luther believed impersonal preaching did little good. ... At one point in his life, Luther went so far as to suggest that sincere Christians should meet together in homes ... His theology of the Word led him to be a forerunner of the present-day small group movements within the church.⁷

Luther, then, firmly advocated for both the public and private ministry of the word by pastors. Henrik Ivarsson, in his article, *Principles of Pastoral Care according to Luther*, quotes the reformer on the roles of the pastor:

...he baptizes, preaches the Gospel, administers Communion, comforts and strengthens weak and afflicted consciences, rebukes the evil doers with excommunication, practices works of love and mercy and bears the cross.⁸

⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *In Defense of His Flight to Pontus*, 2.16.

⁷ Herbert Mayer, *Pastoral Care: Its Roots and Renewal*, 107.

⁸ Henrik Ivarsson, “The Principles of Pastoral Care According to Martin Luther,” *Pastoral Psychology*, p.19.

Ivarsson further explains by revealing the terminology that Luther used when speaking of the private care of the soul: “*die Seelen weiden*,” meaning “to tend souls”. Luther described this tending of the soul as “advising the conscience with Christian conversation and mutual comforting by the pastor.”⁹

The reformer consistently coupled the idea of “*seelsorge*” (the care of souls) with other essential duties of a pastor. This is further evidenced in his ministry, in that he spoke on various struggles that his members dealt with, wrote a guide for teaching children, counseled hundreds in his letters and instituted table talks (originally for his own family but later ministered to many others); all while receiving personal death threats (for his beliefs).¹⁰

Luther also said of pastors,

Men who hold the office of the ministry should have the heart of a mother toward the church, for if they have no such heart, they soon become lazy and disgusted, and suffering, in particular, will find them unwilling. ... Unless your heart toward the sheep is like that of a mother toward her children – a mother, who walks through fire to save her children—you will not be fit to be a preacher. Labor, work, unthankfulness, hatred, envy, and all kinds of sufferings will meet you in this office. If then, the mother heart, the great love, is not there to drive the preachers, the sheep will be poorly served.¹¹

Luther’s ministry was very similar to that of Huldrych Zwingli.

⁹ Ibid. p.19.

¹⁰ Cf. Theodore Tappert’s *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1960). At the Gospel Coalition website (http://thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/articel/a_lesson_from_peter_the_barber/)

One can find that *he wrote lengthy letters to help people through various circumstances. He wrote one letter to his barber—“Peter”—who had mentioned to Luther that he was struggling in his prayers.*

¹¹ Edwald Plass (ed). *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian*. 932.

HULDRYCH (ULRICH) ZWINGLI
(1484-1531)

God in His good providence, raised up other godly pastors who were part of the reformation and while caring for souls. Huldrych (Ulrich) Zwingli was one of them. Zwingli was born in Zurich, Switzerland and was a parish priest at Great Minster Church in Zurich, beginning in 1519. He was also a patriot who served as a chaplain for Zurich troops. Eventually, Zwingli died in battle.

We see in his life not only a high commitment to the Scriptures, but also to the members of the body of Christ. In a letter, he wrote in 1516 he said, “led by the Word and Spirit of God, I saw the need to set aside all these [human teachings] and to learn the doctrine of God direct from his own Word.”¹² But also, as a pastor, he preached in the language of the people. He wanted his people to know what the Scriptures taught. Zwingli eventually only practiced ecclesiastically what was evidenced in the Scriptures. Under his ministry, the Mass was completely gone in his church by 1525. All his parishioners partook of communion; not only the Priest. Images and the veneration of Mary also were totally eliminated from his church. All of these changes signified Zwingli’s commitment to the Scriptures, and its application to life and ministry for God’s glory and the good of His people.

Zwingli evidenced his Scriptural care for his flock in that he loved them to point of personal risk. He was bold, speaking directly against the use of mercenaries, the abuses of the church and the sale of indulgences. He went so far as to expose himself to the Bubonic Plague. Putting himself in danger, he remained with the sick in order to minister to them. Over 2,000 died in Zurich (which only had a population of 7,000), so there were many he pastored who were affected by it. Zwingli himself contracted the plague and almost died. Following the example of Christ, he was willing to give up his life for the well-being of the sheep.¹³

In summation, Zwingly embodied a pastor who was committed to the Scriptures, committed to the church, and committed to the care of souls. He, like Luther, believed in the authority of Scripture for faith *and* practice, which in turn fueled his personal care of the flock.

¹² Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 117.

¹³ Christian Catherwood, *Five Leading Reformers*, 74. Timothy George also discusses this in his book, *Theology of the Reformers*, 118-123.

HEINRICH BULLINGER
(1504-1575)

Heinrich Bullinger was a pastor and reformer who followed Zwingli in Zurich.¹⁴ Bullinger was a prolific writer, and preached over 7,750 messages while in Zurich. But he also was a pastor, fully committed to the care of souls.

Bullinger was known for being hospitable; opening his house to widows, orphans, and other persecuted brothers and sisters. He contributed much of what he had to help those in need; whether it be food, money or possessions. Bullinger's care and ministry to specific needs was further evidenced in that his first book was written on the subject of comforting the sick and dying—no doubt a result of the plague and his own experience with it.¹⁵ Unfortunately, Bullinger also became very ill during the plague, and his wife and several daughters died with it. Bullinger was another reformer and a pastor who embodied the *seelsorge* Luther spoke of.

MARTIN BUCER
(1491-1551)

The Reformer, Martin Bucer, also regularly engaged in the care of souls. He heralded the truths of the reformation in Strasbourg, Germany. He had a strong pastoral influence on the more well-known reformer John Calvin; having spent 3 years with him in Strasbourg. In 1538, Martin Bucer wrote the book, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, on how hurting and wounded Christians are to be helped.¹⁶ He used four texts, Matthew 18:15-17, 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 12:20-21 and Galatians 6:1-2. In writing about what we can draw from these passages he stated, “The first is that the wounded sheep are to be given treatment by all Christians, but particularly by the carers [pastors] of souls”¹⁷

¹⁴ www.ligonier.org/blog/reformation-and-men-behind-it (blogs by Steve Lawson).

¹⁵ *The Decades of Henry Bullinger* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1852).

¹⁶ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, xxxii. He writes, “those who are ordained to the pastoral office in the church are to be the principal physicians of souls and guardians...” p.121

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 98

In his works, Bucer stressed the need for pastors to return to the early church's care for its people.¹⁸ One example is the title, "How the Healthy and Strong Sheep are to be Guarded and Fed."¹⁹ Furthermore, Bucer wrote, "The doctrine of Christ must be proclaimed not only in the pulpit, but also in the home and to each one individually."²⁰ He expounds on this in detail with this paragraph:

This is why Christian doctrine and admonition must not be confined to the assembly and the pulpit; because there are very many people who will take what they are taught and admonished in the public gathering as being of only general application, and consider it to apply more to others than to themselves. Therefore, it is essential that people should also be instructed, taught and led on in Christ individually in their homes. And those who wish to hinder all ministers of Christ everywhere from dispensing and proclaiming Christ's doctrine not only in public and general sermons but also from house to house, to each one individually, are opposing the Holy Spirit and fighting against the reformation of the church.²¹

JOHN CALVIN
(1509-1564)

John Calvin, in Geneva, was quite in step with the other reforming pastors. His ministry to God's people was passionate, public, and private. He seemed to prefer the term "shepherd" for the office of pastor. It has been said of him, "Though he may be first thought of as a theologian, he was even more a pastor of souls."²² Timothy George, a dean and professor of church history and doctrine at Beeson Divinity School has written, "Calvin preached justification by faith, as all the reformers did. More than some, perhaps, he preached sanctification by faith. The lives of those who believed the Word of God would be transformed by that Word. Holiness was the fruit of faith. To believe the Word was to live by the Word..."²³ This conviction would necessitate Calvin's involvement in the lives of his parishioners. Though Calvin is well known for his firm beliefs on the doctrine of Scripture, few people are aware of his extensive private ministry of the Word.

¹⁸ Ibid, xix.

¹⁹ Ibid, 173-182.

²⁰ Ibid, 181.

²¹ Ibid., 181-82.

²² J.D. Benoit, *John Calvin, Contemporary Prophet*, 51.

²³ Timothy George, *Reading the Scripture with the Reformers*, 244.

Calvin practiced particular (private) instruction as well as the public proclamation we know him for. He was in the habit of praying for, offering spiritual counsel, and also consolation and correction to the flock through home visitation.²⁴ He made regular visits to prepare certain members for the taking of communion. He wrote letters of comfort when there was a death in the family. He, like Zwingli, did not fail to visit those infected with the Plague. In addition to these forms of private ministry, he would address sensitive issues that arose in the church, like when some of the refugee families were causing trouble in the congregation or when he wrote an extensive letter to a father who was overcome with grief over the death of the man's son.²⁵

Calvin was intentional and careful in his private ministry of the Word. One of Calvin's friends said of him,

No words of mine can declare the fidelity and prudence with which he gave counsel, the kindness with which he received all who came to him, the clearness and promptitude with which he replied to those who asked his opinion on the most important questions, and the ability with which he disentangled the difficulties and problems which were laid before him. Nor can I express the gentleness with which he could comfort the afflicted, and raise the fallen and distressed."²⁶

Calvin also preached in his Sermon #37 on 1 Timothy,

We who have charge to teach the people must not only see what is profitable for them all in general, but we must also deal with everyone according to his age ...And therefore, if we want to do our duty toward God, and to those who are committed to our charge, it is not enough for us to offer them the doctrine generally, but when we see any of them go astray, we must labor to bring him to the right way. When we see another in grief and sorrow, we must go about to

²⁴ Cited in an essay by J.D. Benoit, "Pastoral Care of the Prophet." Concerning Calvin, he writes, "there was within him a humanity, a strength of sympathy, a warmth of soul, a paroral concern which opened hearts to him." P.67

²⁵ Timothy George, *Reading the Scripture with the Reformers*, 245. Cited in the essay by Robert Godfrey, "The Counselor to the Afflicted," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine and Doxology*, 88. Calvin writes, "When I first received intelligence of the death...of your son Louis, I was so utterly overpowered that for many days I was fit for nothing but to grieve; and albeit I was somehow upheld before the Lord by those aids wherewith he sustains our souls in affliction among men, however, I was almost a nonentity."

²⁶ Ray Van Neste, "The Care of Souls," *Themelios*, 180-81.

comfort him. When we see anyone who is dull of the spirit, we must prick him and spur him, as his nature will bear.²⁷

Calvin's life and words call us to sincere soul-care in and out of the pulpit. As we have seen, he is far from alone in that call.

THEODORE BEZA
(1519-1605)

Theodore Beza followed John Calvin in Geneva. Beza said regarding pastoral ministry:

It is not only necessary that (a Pastor) have general knowledge of his flock, but he must also know and call each of his sheep by name, both in public and in their homes, both night and day. Pastors must run after lost sheep, bandaging up the one with a broken leg, strengthening the one that is sick... In sum, the pastor must consider his sheep more dear to him than his own life, following the example of the Good Shepherd.²⁸

Throughout the Reformation, there developed in Geneva, an ongoing practice of the care of souls. The ordinances of the Church prescribed that each minister accompanied by an elder should regularly call in the homes of his parish. In 1550, an order was issued that the ministers should visit each home, routinely, at least once a year. Beza commented on the effect of the order by saying, "It is hard to believe how fruitful it proved to be."²⁹ There were also regular visitations in the hospitals and prisons, and to the sick or dying at home.³⁰

Clearly, the pastors of the Reformation provided soul-care for their flocks. This means that when individuals were experiencing trouble or sin in their lives, they were counseled by their shepherd. Parishioners were experiencing the ministry of the Word to their lives in a way that the Roman Catholic Church had failed. But unfortunately, for many, *seelsorge* (the care of souls) waned post the reformation.

²⁷ John Calvin, Sermon series on 1 Timothy (Ray Van Neste and Brian Denker edited and updated the 1579 English edition of Calvin's Sermons on 1 Timothy. Michael Dudit and Brian Denker made these messages available on Amazon, New Edition of Calvin's Sermons on 1 Timothy, on Kindle).

²⁸ Theodore Beza, *The Life of John Calvin*, 35.

²⁹ Beza, 136.

³⁰ Wilhelm Pauck, *The Ministry in the Time of the Continental Reformation*, 136.

Soul-Care After the Reformation

In spite of the strong convictions of the pastoring reformers, soul-care did not receive the same notoriety as the sola doctrines and leadership reform after the Reformation. By the time of Luther's death even the German Reformation proper had lost a significant portion of its earlier vitality. By the end of the sixteenth century, Lutheran churches had become more traditional and experienced a resurgence of clerical authority, a more stoic approach to doctrine, and a muddying of Luther's clear gospel. While Luther's dynamic understanding of forgiveness has continued to be a reforming power for the Christian church in the following centuries, the reformer's clear focus on the importance of the pastor's private ministry did not continue to proliferate in the same way.³¹

No doubt, as a result of waning soul-care, Pietism sprang up in Germany. When formalism and sterile doctrine arises, and soul-care wanes, it will spawn an increase in mysticism (separating "the Spirit's" (pseudo) communication from His Word), as well as valuing experience over doctrine. Thus the Pietistic movement under the Lutheran theologian Philipp Spener in the late sixteen and early seventeen hundreds actually worked against an already declining private ministry of the Word. The Reformation historian, Dr. John Armstrong, outlines this problem following the Reformation:

It [Pietism] arose in a context where official religious faith dominated the day and very few took personal interest in developing the kind of faith and practical holiness that led to obedience to the law of Christ. Simply put, the strongly scholastic Lutheran dogma of the time, which separated justification too radically from sanctification, had produced a "dead orthodoxy."³² [examination mine]

On the other hand, the effects of the Reformation, including a strengthening private pastoral ministry continued throughout the 1600's in England. George Herbert's (Anglican priest, 1593-1633) work, *Country Parson*, had an ongoing effect throughout the 17th century. He wrote, "In a disordered world, the pastor's place was every place within the parish."³³ Church historians, Clebsch and Jaskle write, "Pastoral care during this era therefore focuses on sustaining human souls through the

³¹ Herbert Mayer, *Pastoral Care*, 111

³² John Armstrong, *Reformation and Revival Journal*, Vol 10, #1, Winter 2001, p15.

³³ Ray Van Neste, "The Care of Souls," *Themelios*. 22.

perplexities, difficulties, and pitfalls of their earthly pilgrimage and, in a subordinate way, on guiding believers into paths of personal morality.”³⁴ The puritans of that time and place also had strong convictions on soul-care. A Puritan, Richard Baxter (1615-1691), mentions in his work, *The Reformed Pastor*, that he visited members of his church two days each week.³⁵ He also wrote, “...some who come constantly to private meetings are grossly ignorant; whereas, in one hour’s familiar instruction of them in private, they seem to understand more, and better entertain it than they did in all their lives before.”³⁶ Baxter also wrote, “I have found by experience, that some ignorant persons, who have been so long unprofitable hearers, have got more knowledge and remorse in half an hours’ close discourse, than they did from ten years’ public preaching.”³⁷

The great preacher, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), after his conversion at Yale University, was a pastor whose preaching and writing led to the great American awakening in the seventeen hundreds (1703-1758). Edwards Father, Timothy, was also a pastor and great preacher, who is said to have followed the reformers in the care of souls, in that he did quite a bit of counseling with his parishioners. However, his son Jonathan, admittedly did not.³⁸

So, even though Jonathan Edwards was used greatly by God in ways, stood firm on the doctrines of grace, and has given so much to the church, the reformers would surmise that he was not a shepherd, *per se*, in the full sense of the word. From Michael McClymond and Gerald McDermott’s book,

³⁴ William Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, 28.

³⁵ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*. P. 43. Also, Paul Lim writes in *Christianity Today*, “As a pastor, Baxter believed that conversion could happen at any age, and that the most effective way of finding out whether a person needed to be converted was *not* by public preaching but by private conversation. He would spend an hour with each family, using the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments to instruct each person and gauge his or her spiritual condition. Every Monday and Thursday Baxter would start at one end of town, his assistant would start at the other, and together they managed to interview 15 or 16 families a week—a total of 800 families (the whole parish) each year.” (an article entitled, “A Pen in God’s Hand,” *Christianity Today*, July/August 2017.). It is helpful to know that Baxter entitled his book, *The Reformed Pastor* not due to reformed doctrine *per se*, but due to a revival (a personal reformation) needed for the Pastor and his duties.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 212.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 186.

³⁸ Michael J. McClymond, Gerald R. McDermott, *The Theology of Johnathan Edwards*, 464.

The Theology of Jonathan Edwards, we learn of Samuel Hopkin's testimony on the subject. Hopkins was Edward's protégé and first biographer.

He wrote that Edwards did not take up the usual ministerial practice of visiting his people from house to house. Hopkins explained that 'he supposed that ministers should, with respect to this, consult their own talents and circumstances, and visit more or less according to the degree in which they could hope thereby to promote the great ends of the ministry. He knew that some ministers were talented in visiting, and he was not. Besides, he was in a large parish so, 'it would have taken up a great part of my time,' which he thought could be put to better use in his study...Some have said that they reflect on the puritan ideal as the pastor in prayer and study procuring food (i.e., spiritual sustenance") for his flock...Others have suggested that this abandonment of pastoral custom typified an un-pastoral aloofness that contributed to the failure of his Northampton pastorate.'³⁹

Though it is painful to realize, Edwards did not follow Christ and the Apostle's two-fold model of a shepherd (public and private ministry of the Word). The reformation pastors spoke with such passion on this subject, they no doubt would have insisted that the personal ministry of the Word was a skill that Jonathan Edwards would need to learn, and suffer if need be, if he was to truly shepherd his flock. And they might add that there are few pastors who can say they feel themselves "talented" for *all* parts of the ministry, in that it all comes naturally. It is selflessness and a sincere, Christlike love for God's people that produces the pastor's motivation to shepherd in hard ways. This is what imitating Jesus' shepherding is about.

Unfortunately, Edward's widespread ministry and notoriety, coupled with his singular pastoral focus, may have had a part in proliferating in the Americas the acceptance of the same kind of pastoral imbalance as that of the Early Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, is this not the same imbalance that would later be a catalyst for the largely unattested removal or neglect of soul care with so many churches in the 1800's (Europe) and 1900's (America)? This happened through the psychology movement. Could it be that what Freud set out to do in creating a 'secular clergy' was actually possible (on a large scale), at least in part as a result of the "preaching-only" pastor mentality?⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid, 465

⁴⁰ Freud wrote, "I want to entrust [analysis] to a profession that doesn't yet exist, a profession of secular ministers of souls, who don't have to be physicians and must not be priests." From Freud's article, "The Question of 'Lay' Analysis." (1926), and quoted in Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul*, p.35.

Where We Are Today

Despite the past 40-year pushback against secular and secularly trained “soul-care” by proponents of the biblical counseling movement, there is still an acceptable trend of pastors who do not engage in the private ministry of the Word (counseling) with troubled souls. Churches tend to not demand more from seminary graduates than their MDiv degree. These graduates often have no intern experience, character assessment or ministry experience with people. Seminaries have rightly stressed the all-important doctrines, the critical preaching of the Word, evangelism, and missions. But only a few do enough to prepare the pastor for personal involvement and real soul-care using the Scriptures.⁴¹ This is evidenced by the reality that only a token course or two are required in their curriculum on caring individually for the sheep, counseling, and the more pastoral duties of involved oversight. In the majority of seminaries, a psychologist or psychiatrist is brought in to teach the counseling course. They do not equip the pastor on how to privately minister the Word (God’s gospel, person, and truths for healing, renewal and change) for the glory of God. They are instructed to simply refer their sheep outside the church to those who have been trained under secular constructs and have engaged in very little or no formal theological studies. Unfortunately, seminary curriculums are not always guided by the priorities of the Scriptures, nor the needs of the Church. Dr. John Frame, well-known theologian and professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, has this to say about this problem:

The agenda of evangelical seminaries are set primarily by scholars. Professors decide how students will spend their time; they determine the students’ priorities; they set the pace. And guess what. Scholars’ agenda seldom match the needs of the church.⁴²

Also giving evidence to the work that still must be done to change a singular pastoral perspective is the apparent disinterest in soul care on the part of church leadership. When preaching conferences are held, the attendance by pastors around the world can be staggering. When biblical counseling

⁴¹ These seminaries tend to be church-based ones. Dr. John Frame writes about this in his book, *The Academic Captivity of Theology*.

⁴² Dr. Richard Pratt writes this in the forward for John Frame’s book, *The Academic Captivity of Theology*. xi-xii.

conferences are held to help equip shepherds and others within the church to counsel their flocks from the Scriptures, the attendance is drastically lower. The following do not serve to lessen the problem either:

- Most non-organic problems are now called disorders and the church has bought into the enemy's lie that God, His Word and the local church cannot help such issues.
- Many pastors still believe there is a call to preach (as a pastor) but not to counsel (carry out intensive discipleship), wrongly assessing that there is a gift of counseling that they do not have.
- Other pastors or aspiring pastors seem to simply translate (in their mind) the word 'pastor' to mean 'preacher.' At least this is how they functionally operate. It is almost as if they see only one imperative in the Scriptures for Pastors (to "preach the Word"), lacking attention to other clear imperatives for the Shepherd.
- Churches sometimes actually discourage their pastors from the private ministry of the Word and individual involvement, preferring them to just study, preach, speak elsewhere and write rather than do counseling.⁴³
- Some pastors avoid getting involved with people and their problems because it is hard and messy work that could lead to legal problems (not knowing how to handle them or the safeguards). Indeed, counseling some individuals at times can be like trying to fold a fitted-sheet, without the desired "guiding four-corners." These situations require extra preparation.
- Some believe Ephesians 4:11-12 refers to two types of church leaders; the pastor and the teacher, rather than one pastor-teacher. The Granville-Sharp rule of hermeneutics eliminates this distinction, combining the two functions as one in the same.
- Many pastors still believe that when they refer their members to a Christian counselor, the counselor is engaging the church member in biblical truth with specific application of the Word.

⁴³ Even the well-known Charles Haddon Spurgeon, often referred to as 'the last of the Puritans,' set within his busy weekly schedule to counsel his people on Tuesday afternoons and visit with his people on Saturday afternoons. *C.H. Spurgeon, The Full Harvest, Autobiography: Vol 2, p. 323.* You can view his schedule at <http://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/blog-entries/how-spurgeon-scheduled-his-week>

In the overwhelming majority of cases, this is not so. In addition, they are likely being exposed and challenged with unbiblical interpretations, concepts and/or solutions.⁴⁴

In Conclusion

Exploring the words and lives of the Reformers, it is clear we must guard against viewing the Protestant Reformation as merely a theological debate or an academic study. No doubt, to maintain biblical balance, seminaries must, first of all, continue to call and train pastors to handle and preach the Word faithfully (2 Timothy 2:15; 4:1-2). But, as we have seen, the Reformation flowed from a soul-care dearth produced by Roman Catholicism. And it reestablished Christlike care and protection to the body of Christ. It was accompanied by a passion to bring the Solas down to where the people lived and to care for souls. It was carried out by men who understood their roles as shepherd, and who did not forsake any of it, even in such times as the Reformation and the Bubonic Plague.

Now, we must ask ourselves if in the much-needed fight for the Gospel, the authority of Scripture, and faithful interpretation, have seminaries and pastors lost something else that is extremely important to God?—the care of His people through the private ministry of His Word. Have we, for the sake of the fight reduced the role of shepherd to preacher? If so, are we not in essence out on the proverbial limb sawing ourselves off from the heart of God’s plan for shepherds? Are some who cry, “Solas Scriptura” still in danger of creating their own standard of shepherding?

Both public and private ministry are mandated for the shepherd, and both mandates will bring upon them an awesome accounting by God, who says about Shepherds in Hebrews 13:17, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, *for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account..*” (italics mine). In 1 Peter 5:1-4, we read,

⁴⁴ This is a common testimony we hear from those we counsel in *The Association of Certified Counselors* (ACBC). Couselees explain how the Christian counselor they previously counseled with did not pray, use Scripture, or talk about the Gospel or the importance of the Word of God and the local church. The pastor needs to realize that if the counselor is licensed by the State, they are not to engage in spiritual dialogue with the counselee due to accountability with the State. A helpful book showing the practical differences in how a hurting individual is helped from four different Christian approaches and one biblical counseling approach: *Christianity and Counseling: Five Approaches*, IVP. Another book revealing biblical ways to help deeply troubled individuals is, *Counseling the Hard Cases*.

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the suffering of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed; shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Regardless of how one views the adequacy of the biblical counseling movement initially, it can surely be said that what Martin Luther was to the Reformation (In the 1500's), Jay Adams was to the church (in the latter 1900's); calling it back to Christlike, biblical soul-care." Kudos for men like him and those who, all along, have faithfully modeled Christ in their shepherding, with both public and private ministry to souls. As a result of God's work through many faithful men, there does seem to be a shifting of the tide. And there is hope for the misguided preacher to become a complete pastor. Following Christ's encouragement in Revelation 2 will revolutionize the ministry of the preaching only pastor. In verse two, Jesus says to the Church of Ephesus, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first." But for some there must be a new beginning rather than a return. Such was the case with Richard Baxter when he wrote,

I do now, in behalf of Christ, and for the sake of his Church, and the immortal souls of men, beseech all the faithful ministers of Christ, that they will presently and effectually fall upon this work. Combine for the unanimous performance of it, that it may more easily procure the submission of your people. I must confess, I find, by some experience, that this is the work that, through the grace of God, which worketh by means, must reform indeed; that must expel our common prevailing ignorance; that must bow the stubborn hearts of sinners; that must answer their vain objections, and take off their prejudices; that must reconcile their hearts to faithful ministers, and help on the success of our public preaching; and make true godliness a commoner thing than it has hitherto been. I find that we never took the best course for demolishing the kingdom of darkness, till now. I wonder at myself, how I was so long kept off from so clear and excellent a duty. But the case was with me, as I suppose it is with others. I was long convinced of it, but my apprehension of the duty too small, and so I was long hindered from the performance of it. I imagined the people would scorn it, and none but a few, who had least need, would submit to it, and I thought my strength would never go through with it, having so great burdens on me before; and thus I long delayed it, which I beseech the Lord of mercy to forgive. Whereas upon trial, I find the difficulties almost nothing (save only through my extraordinary bodily weakness) to that which I imagined; and I find the benefits and comforts of the work to be such, that I would not wish I had forborne it, for all the riches in the world...And I find more outward signs of success with most that do come, than from all my public preaching to them. If you say, It is not so in most places, I answer, I wish that the blame of this may not lie much with

ourselves. If however, some refuse your help, that will not excuse you for not affording it to them that would accept of it.⁴⁵

Perhaps a first step in applying Christ's three-fold remedy in Revelation Chapter Two is to address one's view of the sufficiency of the Scriptures for soul-care (the work of the Holy Spirit *through* the Truth concerning God, man, salvation, life, and change, *within* the context of the body of Christ). A second step might be to deal with where one is at in regard to loving God's people like Christ. A pastor cannot really be loving Jesus (the Head of the Church) as he should without sacrificially loving and caring for the Church (the Body of Jesus) the way He did. A third step may be to gain the training you lack to sufficiently minister the Scriptures with wisdom to specific needs. Remember, there is no "call to preach," but there is a call to the office of Pastor/teacher. And such are commanded to make disciples, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded, and to equip others for the work of the ministry (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-13). And the only way to grow one's skill in the personal aspects of discipleship is to exercise it in ministry, John Frame warns,

If you try to minister to people without a solid knowledge of God's Word and an ability to apply it to human needs, you are worse than a physician who treats people in medical ignorance; even worse for the consequences can be eternal.⁴⁶

We are in great debt to the Reformation pastors for their example of holding to the teaching of the Scriptures. They encourage us to follow Christ in the major aspects of pastoring. One thing is sure. They were more than preachers. After reviewing of the great Reformation giants, whether one needs encouragement or a change of heart going forward, this final quote by Dr. Ray Van Neste can help any minister solidify a righteous and dependent determination regarding soul care.

Young Theologs, if your main activity is discussing theology but it does not result in a deep love and concern for people, you are no heir of the Reformation, regardless of your theological

⁴⁵ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 42-43. In the booklet, *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (edited version by Timothy K. Beougher), Beougher points out that Baxter was a near invalid, dealing with sickness most of his life. From the age of 21 on he was "seldom an hour free from pain." p.9.

⁴⁶ John Frame, *The Academic Captivity of Theology*, p.93.

positions. Pastors and those who desire to be pastors, if your idea of pastoral ministry is limited to the pulpit, then you are no heir of the Reformation regardless of the length or theological weight of your sermons. The Reformers, mirroring Christ and the apostles, were deeply involved in the lives of their people, aware that they would be called to account for the oversight of their souls (Heb 13:17). A passion for souls requires the knowledge of specific souls and involvement in the messiness of their everyday lives.”⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Ray Van Neste, “The Care of Souls,” *Themelios*, p.63.

REVIEWS

A REVIEW OF SINCLAIR FERGUSON'S DEVOTED TO GOD: A BLUEPRINT FOR SANCTIFICATION

Joe Keller¹

Devoted to God by Sinclair Ferguson articulates an interrelated theology of the doctrine of sanctification. Ferguson identifies each individual biblical component of sanctification and like a crafted Russian Doll displays how they all fit together theologically. In a similar fashion to his *The Christian Life*,² he walks his reader through the progressive journey of sanctification while displaying exegetical insights and pathways for progress. This enriching and empowering look at sanctification is dynamically Christ-focused. The reader quickly begins to see Ferguson's foundation of this blueprint for sanctification is the person and work of Jesus Christ and how the believer's identification in His death and resurrection compels both being and becoming holy in this life and life eternal. Ferguson explains,

Each passage has its own context, emphasis, and level of exposition. But the underlying patterns of indicative and imperative, objective and subjective, negative and positive. They all have their foundation in that undergirding reality of union with Christ. (111)

Some authors become staples for students of the bible. Finding any opportunity to sit under their insightful teaching brings paradigms and phrases that help promote personal and spiritual development. For this reviewer, Sinclair Ferguson is certainly one of those authors. Ferguson is not an easy read, but it is accessible for everyday readers. *Devoted to God* provides for us a theology of the process of sanctification that harmonizes ten key passages to draw the reader through the progression of the Christian life.

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² Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* (Edinburg: Banner of Truth Trust, 2013).

Christians have been called to holiness, and the first biblical passage selected by Ferguson establishes the foundation of sanctification our justification and call to holiness in I Peter 1:1-25 (1-29). Ferguson presents to the reader his foundational premise: the Christian's holiness expresses God's image as humanity was created to reflect (Genesis 1:26-28; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:9-10). Sanctification is not separate from the believer's justification, but represents God's glory through the individual and corporate expressions of holiness. Ferguson does a remarkable job unpacking the work of sanctification as a distinctively Trinitarian activity:

God the Holy Trinity is devoted to it, God the Holy Father has commanded us to pursue it; Christ the Holy Son has died to effect it; The Holy Spirit works in us to bring forth the fruit of it; Heaven itself is a world that is full of it (29).

When God then commands holiness, the imperative works deep into the fabric of what it means to be redeemed humanity. Holiness as the fruit of sanctification, is not some spiritually healthy optional activity for the Christian, but is obedience to a command given by the justifying triune God. Ferguson presents that the beauty of holiness is derived from the design of how humanity was created to thrive and live. Ferguson highlights the foundational indicative and imperative connection how sanctification is understood and pursued. The believer is irresistibly attracted to the beauty of holiness, but holiness will always be an offensive repellant to those who live in rebellion against it (21-21). This foundational understanding of both the universal and personal struggle of humanity sets the accurate context to pursue holiness and the rich promises for its reward.

Ferguson presents a strong case to the importance of the physical body in the process of sanctification through his exposition of Romans 12:1-2 (31-53). In fact, Ferguson echoes of Jay Adams' earliest works as it related to the expression of sin and holiness in the physical body. Ferguson explains,

It is in our bodies that sin, and sinful tendencies, addictions, and habits have exercised their spirituality destructive influence on us. The effect of sin is felt in physiological ways, and manifests itself in what we do with our bodies—with our eyes, hands, ears, lips, feet and every other part us. They are instruments of either sin or holiness. Through them we express what is in our heart. By them the core of our thinking feeling, desiring, and willing comes to expression. (41)

Ferguson does not disconnect his understanding of the body from Romans 1-11's spiritual indicatives relating to our justification. The reader should slowly navigate through these pages that develop the implications of sanctification on biblical counseling and discipleship. Ferguson strives to give thoughtful appeal to explain the embodied soul, but does not read like a biological determinist. He is arguing that the spiritual work of justification is realized in the expression of holiness through the whole person. However, the role and responsibility of the biological implications of spiritual development needs to be unpacked further.

The comprehensive nature of the believer's union with Christ is clearly and compellingly drawn out of Galatians 2:20 (55-69). Ferguson uses what he calls the "prepositions of grace" as he unfolds the rich and wondrous reality of the Christians place "in Christ." The individual's identity "in Christ" provides the foundation of the believer's justification and the only pathway of progressive sanctification. Ferguson's compelling exegetical argument from the passage gives both help and hope to the reader. The implications of Galatians 2:20 are expounded further through Ferguson's explanation of Romans 6:1-14 (71-91). Union with Christ specifies that the life we live is within the power of His resurrection and not within the power of death. Ferguson downplays the modes of baptism to emphasize the function of baptism toward the believer's visible union and identity with Christ. Baptism is the recognition that the believer has died to and been delivered from the dominion of sin and redeemed into the kingdom of God. The believer's expressions of holiness are the direct implications of that reality. Ferguson recognizes that positional holiness is true for every believer, the renewed mind to both understand and live out this reality is the pathway to true change and sanctification. Ferguson summarizes

Now we are in Christ, 'set free from sin.' But it may take us some time to realize that we are new men and women in Christ. And lifelong vigilance is now our calling, for the old way of thinking can linger long; the power of temptation has not been destroyed. We need to keep coming back to the teaching of the New Testament, and remind ourselves of the lives in terms of Paul's exhortation not to let sin reign. (91)

Several works that unpack these realities that give hope to counselees, but I would recommend that chapters 3 and 4 could be given as a helpful homework assignment to advance a counselee's understanding

of the realities and implications of what it means to be and live “in Christ”. Just as biblical counselors seek to help those under their care to know and live “in Christ,” Ferguson rightly identifies that this is the foundation in the blueprint for sanctification. Dealing with the seemingly captivating implications of sin in the life of the believer can be disorientating at best. Ferguson helps the reader gain both understanding and practical encouragement to help the Christian understand that the internal conflict of the heart is encapsulated within a greater conflict. The conflict of the Christian life is found between the incompatibility of the realm of the spirit and the realm of the flesh. The resurrected life in Christ compels the Christian to live under the reign of the Spirit in a world dominated by the flesh. Ferguson unpacks Galatians 5:16-17 (93-109) to examine the composite conflict between these two epochs exposing the battle ground for the believer. The reader begins to fit together the gospel logic to build out progressive sanctification. Ferguson explains:

Addictions to the flesh has its manifestations in all specific additions of life, to alcohol, drugs, sport, money, sex, work, and a myriad of other forms of bondage. But believers have made the decision to reject it all. “Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” that was a once for all actions when we came to Christ. But now its consequences have to be lived out on a daily basis. The future is a series of small decisions to live the new life and not to fall back into the old. Living in the Spirit therefore means a daily commitment to please Christ and not to please self. (103)

The Christian whose identity is with Christ, does not need to live under the reign of sin, but can walk in a manner worthy of the calling in Christ Jesus. The believer is not overwhelmed by submission to the world. Rather, those who identify themselves with Christ and baptized into His resurrection power are no longer are dominated by sin. Understanding this reality does not eliminate the conflict, but rather accurately identifies it.

The biblical counseling movement has looked to help people rightly understand the origin and context of their problems and to give them hope in the Gospel for change. It is impossible to solve problems on a false premise. As Ferguson rightly identifies, the accurate identification of the foundational issues relating to the struggles of the Christian life does not immediately eliminate the struggles, but it does give comprehensive hope and a pathway for change.

Ferguson is a master theologian, and the reader benefits from his gifted ability to bring together exegetical insights to illuminate spiritual realities, while compelling the reader to practically live them out in the everyday dynamics of the Christian life. Union with Christ should cause the believer to disrobe actions and attitudes that are not consistent with their identity in Christ. Colossians 3 is considered an essential passage in the practice of biblical counseling. Ferguson's exposition of Colossians 3:1-17 (111-138) gives both the indicative and imperatives of everyday life "in Christ" which sets a "new rhythm" of the Christian life within the public, private, every day and church contexts. It is an important passage to expound on the discussion of sanctification. While this text is critical to sanctification, Ferguson's material is lacking with regard to the interdependent role of the church that promotes sanctification in the life of the believer. There are no real insights on the connected role of interpersonal mutual sanctification in passages such as I Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:1-16; Hebrews 10:18-25; Romans 12:3-21. Ferguson does highlight the high call to the "one anothers" in Scripture and the priority and place of the believer's role in the local church:

There is no intimacy in the world deeper or closer than this: there is only one Christ and he dwells in each believer. We cannot get closer to each other than this! Here, then, is the often undetected secret of a fellowship that is growing in grace: The Christ who is all to each one is also the Lord of glory who indwells every one If we really thought this way about our fellow believers and saw them as people whom the Lord Jesus dwells, would we not treat each other differently? (127)

However, I would appeal to have him further develop an appendix to discuss the practical dynamic of how the people of God minister to one another as a component of progressive sanctification.

Ferguson gives a compelling call to personal mortification as the active call to combat sin out of the realities of their union with Christ. Understanding the position and power of our union and identity in Christ leads to the new life in Him, awaiting for the future fulfillment of the promises in Christ. This mindset revealed in Romans 8:13 (139-160) gives the Christian supernatural capacity put to death the deeds of the flesh. Mortification of sin is both the responsibility of the believer, and the requisite to living a life of holiness. Ferguson demonstrates that this is not behavioral modification that relies upon sheer willpower and self-control. Rather this gospel logic relies upon the work of the Holy Spirit to deal with

the issues of the heart. Ferguson rightly identifies that true change and mortification of sin does not happen at the external behavioral level, but at the intentional motives and desires of the heart. The development of that commitment is expressed through the valuable role of confessing our sin to one another and asking for help.

If we are able to share our failure our sense of guilt and bondage with a fellow Christian whom we can trust absolutely, and to whom we can open our heart, then we break the power of the blackmail the truth is our in the presence of God, we are able to pray together honestly, forgiveness once again flows into our hearts. Yes, there may be shame, and sorrow, and tears, but there is also pardon, forgiveness, and new beginning, and the blessing of stronger bonds of fellowship. (160)

Ferguson does not simply examine the New Testament for the imperatives related to sanctification. He also addresses a historical challenge to the role of the Law of God in the life of the Christian. He builds a strong exegetical case out of Matthew 5:17-20 (161-188) for the role of the law being a reflection of the design of humanity as God's image bearers. Humanity broken by sin could not keep the law: only perfect humanity divinely expressed in the person and work of Jesus Christ could fulfill the whole law. Therefore, we now receive the Law from the One who has fulfilled the law, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, our hearts are transformed to be able to obey and express the design and order of the law. Ferguson is exhorting the New Testament believer not to neglect the impact of the historical redemptive implications of the role and responsibility of the Law. By carefully understanding the complete revelation of God, the believer sees obedience to the law as freeing, and complete expression of humanity.

The Law that had formerly been a burden they felt unable to carry now seems transformed. Instead of feeling it pressing down heavily on their shoulders as they tried their best to keep it, the burden has been lifted almost as though the law itself is carrying them, and not the other way around. What has become their burden has become their pleasure. (182)

This chapter is theologically stimulating and practically encouraging. It is one of the most clear and concise explanations of the role of the law in the life of the believer that this reviewer has read. The counselor is enriched to have these theological underpinnings while caring for those in need. The

counselor can help them see not just the law, but the whole of scripture as our freeing implement toward life-giving obedience and not legalistic oppression.

The Christian life has a long range perspective, for this life and for life eternal. There is a direct relationship to our union with Christ and the perseverance required for the cumulative effect of progressive sanctification. In Hebrews 12:1-14 (189-212) Ferguson presents Jesus as both the founder of our faith and the object of our faith. The perseverance of the believer to pursue holiness is accomplished in both remembering who we are in Christ and in placing our hope in the promises of Christ. As before, Ferguson further encouraged the believer to strive and pursue holiness and urge others to do the same (212). This responsibility is an important reality to the ongoing interpersonal ministry of giving hope to those who are hopeless and weary in doing good. The ultimate goal of sanctification is not personal self-fulfillment, but to ultimately realize the complete expression of our union with Christ in the final resurrection of the dead. In a beautiful crescendo, Ferguson binds together this gospel logic to its ultimate fulfillment in Romans 8:29 (213-235). The completion of sanctification will occur when sinful humanity is entirely renewed to perfectly reflect the glory of God. The progress of sanctification in this life is but foreshadow of the glory that is to come in the resurrection. This look into Romans leaves the reader longing both to express these realities today and to yearn for the ultimate day when all things will be made complete and the race will be finished.

The rich exposition of these nine texts is complemented by countless references to puritan authors, hymns and cross-references. The Banner of Truth Trust's commitment to include references at the bottom of the page and not at the end of the book provide additional enrichment for the reader. This gives the reader the opportunity to seamlessly follow the supportive logic of the material without losing ground of the argument in hunting for references. Five appendices referenced in the flow of the chapters are short yet provide incredibly helpful insights on topics such as the role of the trinity in the Christian life (237-240), an explanation and implications that Christians have "died to sin" in Romans chapter 6 (241-256) and an argument to honor the commandment for Sabbath Rest (261-270).

Ferguson is masterful in uniting themes and connecting truths together in categories that both illuminate the components and the sum of the whole of sanctification. This work is an essential reading for any Christian who desires to understand the “gospel logic” of progressive sanctification in the Christian life. It stands as an important work for the discipline of biblical counseling by giving a theological construct to frame the work of sanctification in the life of the believer. It takes the foundational doctrine of being “In Christ” and expositionally works out the biblical rhetoric. The biblical counselor is provided with the indicative framework to appeal to the imperative commands necessary for those dealing with the hardships of life. Ferguson’s text is an excellent resource for a theological concepts for biblical counseling and theological education. It is not an easy read (277 pages) but well worth the time and investment. I would highly recommend reading this book.

RESPONSES