

# *CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY:*

AN INTRODUCTION & BIBLICAL ANALYSIS

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## **Introduction**

Christian Psychology (CP) is a unique form of psychology which seeks to develop a distinctly Christian model for understanding the human condition. CP represents one of several ways that Christians have attempted to think about the connection between Christianity and psychology.<sup>1</sup> Today, CP does not describe an established Christian system of psychological understanding so much as it represents a loose movement of psychologists, counselors, theologians, and Christian philosophers who seek to develop such a psychology. When Christian psychologists refer to the development of a uniquely Christian psychology, they mean a comprehensive understanding of the nature of human beings from a Christian viewpoint. Robert C. Roberts explains:

*The discipline I am calling Christian psychology is the conceptual and clinical exploration of our [Christian] tradition for its psychological resources. It is properly called psychology because it is a set of concepts by which the nature and well-being of the psyche are understood, by which healthy and unhealthy traits, behaviors, desires and emotions are identified and to some extent explained. It is a set of practices for making the transition from unhealthy to healthy traits, behaviors, desires and emotions. That is essentially what a psychology (and its allied psychotherapy) is.<sup>2</sup>*

As a movement, CP seeks to understand both the nature of human beings (psychology) and appropriate practices to address life problems (psychotherapy).

## Background

Christian psychology is a relatively new movement, but its followers rightly point out that a uniquely “Christian” understanding of persons began with the writing of the Bible itself and was later developed by various authors throughout church history.<sup>3</sup> This observation is important for understanding CP since its authors often refer to Christian writers in church history as “psychologists.”<sup>4</sup> Utilizing the term “psychologist” to describe ancient Christian authors may seem odd to modern readers who think of a psychologist as a modern day professional in the mental health care field. But Christian psychologists use the term “psychology” in a broad, general sense, referencing any study, insight, or reflections regarding the human condition. Eric Johnson writes, “So if we define psychology broadly as a rigorous inquiry into human nature and how to treat its problems and advance well-being, Christians have been thinking and practicing psychology for centuries.”<sup>5</sup> Hence, the followers of CP identify many authors throughout Christian history who wrote about the human condition and contribute to a Christian understanding of psychology.

Johnson traces the emergence of the modern Christian psychology movement initially to the writings of Christian philosophers Soren Kierkegaard, and later to C. Stephen Evans.<sup>6</sup> Kierkegaard referred to some of his writings as “psychology.” Evans, inspired in part by philosophers like Kierkegaard, challenged Christians in the area of psychology to “develop their own theories, research and practice that flow from Christian beliefs about human beings—while continuing to participate actively in the broader field.”<sup>7</sup>

Several contemporary authors identify themselves as Christian psychologists or participate in the broader movement. Writers who promote CP or write from this viewpoint include Dan Allender, Neil Anderson, Larry Crabb, Eric L. Johnson, Diane Langberg, Tremper Longman III, Gary Moon, Leanne Payne, Robert C. Roberts, Siang-Yang Tan, and P.J. Watson.<sup>8</sup> In 2004, the Society for Christian Psychology was founded to promote “the development of a distinctly Christian psychology (including theory, research, and practice) that is based on a Christian understanding of human nature.”<sup>9</sup> The society publishes a journal, *Christian Psychology*, to promote articles written from a CP perspective.

## Approach

Advocates of Christian psychology endeavor to accomplish two main goals through the CP movement. First, the central goal is to produce or “retrieve” a Christian psychology. Utilizing Scripture and works from Christian writers of the past, psychologically-informed Christians seek to glean principles for understanding human nature and then systematize these findings into a comprehensive system of psychology. Roberts and Watson write:

*Much of the foundational work in Christian psychology will therefore require a careful rereading of Scripture, in the light of some of the great Christian psychologists of the subsequent past (Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, Kierkegaard), by people who are familiar with contemporary psychology and can therefore sniff out a biblical psychology that effectively speaks to current circumstances.<sup>10</sup>*

This task of retrieval is two-tiered. It requires the comprehensive study of the Bible as a primary source for “true” psychology, but also requires the careful reading of major theological and

philosophical works of church history. While no comprehensive, systematic Christian psychology work has yet been produced, the authors previously mentioned have all offered contributions toward this goal.<sup>11</sup>

Second, Christian psychologists strive to develop empirical research pursuits that derive from a distinctly Christian worldview. Christian psychologists acknowledge the impossibility of truly objective, value-free research.<sup>12</sup> In order to compete with secular studies that are laden with secular worldview assumptions, Christian psychologists endeavor to develop their own body of psychological research from a Christian point of view. P.J. Watson and R.J. Morris are representative of Christian psychologists who have led and published research efforts of this nature.<sup>13</sup>

### **Uniqueness from Integration**

Integration refers to a related but different system for understanding the relationship between Christianity and psychology. In the integrationist model, biblical theology and some principles from secular psychology are integrated together.<sup>14</sup> At first glance, Christian psychology does not seem to be distinct from integration, but there are three key differences. First, Christian psychologists seek to form their system of Christian psychology primarily from the Bible and works from church history, with only minimal reference to systems of modern, secular psychology.<sup>15</sup> Roberts explains:

*Christian psychology starts with the ideas and practices already established by centuries of Christian tradition, and it develops psychological concepts and practices from these with a minimum of reference to or influence from the psychologies of the twentieth century.*<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, Christian integrationists seek to examine and extract psychological and psychotherapeutic principles and insights from many sources, including the modern psychologies.<sup>17</sup> This does not mean that Christian psychologists are against or do not practice integration. However, Christian psychologists note that integration is very difficult and seem to be more sensitive to the need to establish a uniquely Christian psychology first before pursuing additional insight from non-Christian systems.<sup>18</sup>

Second, Christian psychologists are more sensitive to the anti-Christian worldviews and methodologies of modern psychological research and thus are less likely to utilize this research compared to integrationists. Christian psychologists prefer to do their own research based on a distinctly Christian psychology and methodology, while integrationists believe that much of secular psychology can be “redeemed” for Christian counseling purposes.<sup>19</sup>

Third, Christian psychology differs from integration in respect to the goal of the system. While Christian psychology strives to develop a singular, unified system of psychology, integrationists question the possibility of this goal. Stanton Jones notes:

*...integrationists understand that our commitment to a biblical view of persons provide a presumptive framework, not a fully constructed system of psychology. The key difference [between integration and Christian psychology] is how much we claim we can construct of a complete psychology from the Scriptures and Christian tradition and resources.<sup>20</sup>*

Furthermore, some integrationists conclude that extracting one unified system of psychology from the entirety of the works of church history seems impossible, a conclusion that, ironically, even some Christian psychologists seem to acknowledge.<sup>21</sup>

With these differences in mind, a basic conclusion can be drawn that all Christian psychologists are, to some degree, those who practice a form of integration, but as systems of counseling, integration and Christian psychology are distinct.<sup>22</sup> Christian psychology differs from classic integration by drawing distinctions in regard to goal of the system, the manner of integration, and the use of secular psychological research.

#### Integration and Christian Psychology Comparison Chart

	Integration	Christian Psychology
Goal	Combine biblical truth with psychological findings to create systems for understanding and helping people	Form a uniquely Christian psychology (view of human nature) based upon the Bible and works from Christian authors in church history
Integration of secular psychology	Needed because Scriptures only form general framework. One, unique Christian psychology not possible	Needed but a solid, uniquely Christian psychology must be established first
Secular psychology research	Findings must be compatible with Scripture and may need to be “redeemed” or reinterpreted for Christian purposes	Prefer a Christian science of psychology by doing own research utilizing uniquely Christian approaches and methodologies

## **Biblical Analysis**

### **Strengths of Christian Psychology**

Christian psychology rightly observes that true “psychology” is not so much the professional, modern, scientific discipline that is thought of today but simply refers to the study of human beings. This perspective may help people to recognize how the Scriptures speak insightfully and powerfully regarding human nature, though it does not sound like a modern-day psychology textbook. Since Christians believe the Bible is the authoritative Word of God and is the sole, God-breathed source of truth (2 Tim. 3:16-17), it would be backward to expect the Scriptures to conform to modern psychological terminology and categories anyway. Furthermore, with this more general definition of “psychology” in mind, rich resources of insight regarding human nature may be re-discovered in works like those of the English Puritans, who wrote deeply and biblically about the human condition.<sup>23</sup>

Christian psychology has also shed light on the all-too ignored problem of presuppositions in psychological systems. As a discipline, psychology has been around for 2500 years and yet no agreement regarding the nature of human psyche well-being has been achieved. Why is this? Roberts and Watson insightfully note that the concept of well-being cannot “be settled to everyone’s satisfaction independently of metaphysical, moral and religious commitments... [nor] by purely empirical methods of research.”<sup>24</sup> Christian psychologists have been more careful than other Christian thinkers regarding worldview commitments and their impact on psychological conclusions. They endeavor to form a psychological system that is presuppositionally Christian, and recognize that this system will reflect a true picture of humanity because it is distinctly Christian. In addition, the worldview awareness of Christian psychologists often allows them to detect unbiblical commitments in psychological systems that integrationists sometimes fail to see.

Finally, Christian psychology is to be commended for its desire to be a distinctly Christian witness in a secular psychological environment. C. Stephen Evans’ challenge for Christians to develop a uniquely Christian approach to psychology “while continuing to participate actively in the broader field” means that unbelievers may be influenced by Christian psychologists with the gospel of Christ and biblical truth (Matt. 28:19-20).<sup>25</sup>

### **Weaknesses of Christian Psychology**

While Christian psychology has much to commend, it also suffers from several weaknesses. First, CP is built upon a faulty view of the Scriptures. Though Christian psychology rightly notes the need for proper presuppositions, it stumbles out of the gate in the area of bibliology. Christian psychologists affirm a form of the authority, necessity, sufficiency, and primacy of the Scriptures, yet they define these qualities of Scripture in such a way as to actually undermine them.<sup>26</sup> For example, Johnson affirms that, “the Bible has ultimate authority over all of psychology and soul care,” but later admits that “the Bible’s authority also varies depending on the subject matter. Scripture’s authority increases in proportion to the extent that Scripture explicitly addresses a particular topic.”<sup>27</sup> This is a significant assertion.<sup>28</sup> While it is true that the Bible addresses some topics in more detail than others, the Bible always carries with it final, ultimate authority in all of the matters it addresses. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy affirms:

*Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.*<sup>29</sup>

Scripture does not teach a sliding-scale of authority which varies depending upon the amount of information revealed on any given topic. Rather, the Bible is equally authoritative in all the matters it addresses. Grudem writes, "all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."<sup>30</sup>

Christian psychologists affirm a form of the sufficiency of Scripture, but explain this doctrine in such a way as to actually view the Scriptures as insufficient for soul care.<sup>31</sup> They hold to the primacy of Scripture, but deny it in many of their works by reading into Scripture certain psychological terms, concepts and theories. For example, Siang-Yang Tan and Larry Crabb both affirm that man has certain psychological "needs" for security (love) and significance (meaning/ impact), but these conclusions arise from the influence of Maslow and needs psychology, rather than the Bible.<sup>32</sup> Though the stated goal of CP is to construct a true "psychology" from the text of Scripture, Christian psychologists often read their own psychology into the biblical text. In his otherwise helpful article describing Pauline psychotherapy, Roberts cannot help but use terms and concepts from twentieth century psychology: "dysfunctional personality," "self-transformative action," "therapeutic action," "actualizing the new personality," "dissociation."<sup>33</sup> Even the term "Pauline therapy" seems oddly modern when seeking to do biblical exposition regarding the sanctification model revealed in the Pauline epistles. While Roberts may simply be employing these terms in order to better communicate to a psychologically-informed audience, these terms are not neutral, and are being imposed upon, rather than derived from the biblical text.

Solid exegesis and interpretation of the biblical text is absolutely necessary for Christian psychologists to achieve their goal of developing a truly Christian psychology. But a proper handling of the text of Scripture is actually a weakness of the movement. For example, Diane Langberg's interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28 regarding the image of God as voice, relationship, and power is novel, and not based on solid exegesis of the passage.<sup>34</sup> Roberts and Watson's explanation of the Sermon on the Mount amounts to a surface-level inspection of "healthy traits" for "well-being," rather than a serious exposition of the text.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Crabb struggles with proper exposition of three key passages which form the basis of his book, *The Pressure's Off*.<sup>36</sup>

Not only do Christian psychologists struggle in areas regarding the Bible, the movement provokes concern in regard to the ecumenical emphasis it articulates. The stated goal of CP is to form or "recover" a unique, truly Christian psychology by studying the Scriptures and works from Christians in church history. Yet at the same time, CP strives to be ecumenical, diverse and pluralistic in all of its endeavors. The amplification of the mission statement of the Society for Christian Psychology states:

*A Christian vision of human nature is shaped primarily by the Christian Scriptures, as well as Christianity's intellectual and ecclesial traditions. However, a Christian psychology will also be critically informed by other*

*relevant sources of psychological truth, particularly its own reflection, research, and practice, but also the psychological work of other traditions (e.g., secular psychology), philosophy, human experience, and the other human sciences. While God's understanding of human nature is the goal of a Christian psychology, given human finitude and the existence of distinct Christian traditions, the Society welcomes those working from any perspective within the historic Christian Church.*<sup>37</sup>

The ecumenism of the movement is further seen through the diverse background of the Society's executive and references boards as well as the diversity of both the authors and theological systems represented in the society's journal, *Christian Psychology*. For example, two editions of the journal featured a focus on Catholic Psychology and Eastern Orthodox Psychology.<sup>38</sup> While diversity can provide wonderful opportunities of mutual learning, understanding and communication, it seems that CP's commitment to this level of ecumenism will render its initial goal of developing a singular Christian psychology unlikely. There are vast differences between a Protestant and Catholic understanding of salvation alone, with dozens of other significant theological differences which render any sort of compatibility impossible.<sup>39</sup> Integrationists have challenged Christian psychologists regarding the possibility of achieving such a unique, singular Christian psychology,<sup>40</sup> and even Eric Johnson himself seems to concede that the whole CP project is destined to fail as the "inevitable and happy result of human finitude."<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Christian psychology suffers from weaknesses in actual counseling practice. The most telling aspect of any system of soul-care is ultimately how one goes about helping people with counseling problems. CP desires to develop a unique Christian psychology (understanding of people) and psychotherapy (how to help people) while "continuing to participate actively in the broader field."<sup>42</sup> Since the "broader field" of psychology and professional mental health is largely secular, Christian psychologists often maintain licensure, accreditation, and memberships in professional societies that require certain secular commitments. In counseling practice, these secular commitments often mean there is a reluctance to be overtly Christian in counseling through prayer, through utilizing the Scriptures or through presenting the gospel to clients who may not be saved. Worse still, secular commitments of this nature may render these biblically mandated pursuits "unethical" in one's professional context.

Diane Langberg provides a clear example of Christian psychology at work in an actual counseling situation.<sup>43</sup> She rightly notes that the mental health professional ought to "bear in their person a representation of the character of Christ and that character must shape the therapist, the client and the relationship between them."<sup>44</sup> However, her overall approach to counseling is surprisingly secular. Like the levels-of-explanation, transformational, and integrationist approaches, CP avoids anchoring its counseling in the Bible.<sup>45</sup> At best, the Bible has an accessory role, rather than a foundational, functional control over the counseling process.<sup>46</sup> While the Scriptures are clear that a relationship with God through the Person of Christ is a person's source of hope, strength, encouragement and stability in the day of trouble, Langberg notes that the client's relationship with God needs to be explored to "see whether or not that can contribute to his stability at this time."<sup>47</sup> The gospel message of Jesus Christ is noticeably absent throughout the entire case. Without Christ as the hope for the counselee, encouragement will primarily be found through the relationship with the therapist. In another work, Langberg describes the role of the therapist as bringing about "redemptive" healing as she "incarnates" Christ.<sup>48</sup> This latter term goes beyond simply being "Christlike" to actually assuming something

of a parallel role with Christ in the “redemptive” healing process.<sup>49</sup> She writes, “The work of Jesus in this world resulted in redemption. His work in and through you [the therapist] in this world will also result in redemption.”<sup>50</sup>

## **Conclusion**

While Christian Psychology commendably sets out to rediscover a truly Christian view of persons and rightly sounds the alert regarding the unbiblical worldview assumptions of secular counseling systems, it seems that their efforts to develop such a system are not being realized. In counseling theory, CP is plagued by a commitment to ecumenism and struggles to accurately interpret and apply the biblical text. In counseling practice, CP looks surprisingly secular, where Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ do not functionally inform and drive the counseling process. If a solid biblical and theological foundation could be established based upon an affirmation of Scripture’s sufficiency and authority for counseling, coupled with a more careful exegesis of the text applied to both counseling theory and practice, perhaps the vision of Christian Psychology could be achieved.



1 Other ways include the Levels-of-Explanation approach, Integration, Transformational Psychology, and  
 Biblical Counseling. See Eric Johnson, ed., *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views*. 2nd ed. (Downers Grove:  
 IVP Academic, 2010).

2 Robert C. Roberts, “Outline of Pauline Psychotherapy” in *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of*  
*Psychology and Theology*, Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips, eds. (Downers Grove: IVP  
 Academic, 2001), 135.

3 Eric L. Johnson, “A Brief History of Christians in Psychology” in *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views*, Eric L.  
 Johnson, Ed. (IVP Academic, 2010), 10-11.

4 For example, Johnson considers Augustine the “first great Christian ‘psychologist,’” Ibid., 12.  
 5 Ibid., 14.

6 Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic,  
 2007), 10; Johnson, *Five Views*, 36.

7 Johnson, *Five Views*, 36;

8 Johnson, *Foundations*; Dan Allender, *The Healing Path* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2000); Dan Allender  
 and Tremper Longman III, *The Cry of the Soul* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1994); Neil Anderson, *The*  
*Bondage Breaker* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1990); Larry Crabb, *Inside Out* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987);  
 Larry Crabb, *The Pressure’s Off* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2002); Diane Langberg, *Counseling Survivors of*  
*Sexual Abuse* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1997); Diane Langberg, “A Christian Psychology Approach” in  
*Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*, Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sisemore, eds. (Downers Grove:  
 IVP Academic, 2012); Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls* (Downers  
 Grove: IVP, 2004); Leanne Payne, *The Healing Presence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Robert C. Roberts,  
*Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Robert C.  
 Roberts, “Outline of Pauline Psychotherapy” in *Care for the Soul*, Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R.  
 Phillips, eds. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001); Robert C. Roberts and P.J. Watson, “A Christian  
 Psychology View” in *Christianity and Psychology: Five Views*, Eric L. Johnson, ed., 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP  
 Academic, 2010); Siang-Yang Tan, *Counseling & Psychotherapy* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011).

9 Society for Christian Psychology, “About the Society” [online]; accessed 12 October 2016; available at  
<http://www.christianpsych.org/>.

10 Roberts & Watson, *Five Views*, 155.

11 As one example, see C.S. Evans, *Soren Kierkegaard’s Christian Psychology* (Grand Rapids:  
 Zondervan, 1990). As the title implies, Evans develops Kierkegaard’s psychology of human beings through a  
 careful study of his works.

12 Roberts & Watson, *Five Views*, 154-5.

13 For example, see P.J. Watson, R.J. Morris, and R.W. Hood Jr., “Sin and self-functioning, Part 1: Grace, guilt  
 and psychological adjustment,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 16 (1988): 254-69; P.J. Watson, R.J. Morris,  
 and R.W. Hood Jr., “Sin and self-functioning, Part 2: Grace, guilt and psychological adjustment,” *Journal of*  
*Psychology and Theology* 16 (1988): 270-81; P.J. Watson, Ronald J. Morris, Taylor Loy, Michael B. Hamrick,  
 “Beliefs about Sin: Adaptive Implications in Relationships with Religious Orientation, Self-Esteem, and  
 Measures of the Narcissistic, Depressed, and Anxious Self,” *Edification: Journal of the Society for Christian*  
*Psychology* 1 (2007): 57-67.

14 For an overview of integration, see Stanton L. Jones, “An Integration View” in *Christianity and*  
*Psychology: Five Views*, Eric L. Johnson, ed., 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 101-28.

15 Roberts notes, “Christian psychology stresses the antecedent presence of psychologies in the Christian  
 tradition prior to the twentieth century, and thus does not identify psychology with the scientific and  
 professional psychology of the twentieth century.” Robert C. Roberts, “A Christian Psychology Response to  
 Integration” in *Christianity & Psychology: Five Views*, Eric L. Johnson, ed., 2nd ed (Downers Grove: IVP  
 Academic, 2010), 136.

16 Roberts, “Outline,” *Care for the Soul*, 135. Though some Christian Psychologists are more open to learning  
 from the modern psychologies. For example, Tan includes a whole section on modern psychologies in his  
 work *Counseling & Psychotherapy* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011); and the Society of Christian  
 Psychology purposes to “read, learn from, and interact with the psychological knowledge of other  
 communities (obviously the modern),” Society for Christian Psychology, “About the Society” [online];  
 accessed 12 October 2016; available at <http://www.christianpsych.org/>. These examples illustrate that  
 there is a spectrum of diversity amongst Christian psychologists.

17 Two examples that demonstrate this practice are, Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, *Modern*  
*Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1991) and Mark R.  
 McMinn and Clark D. Campbell, *Integrative Psychotherapy: Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach* (Downers  
 Grove: IVP Academic, 2007).

18 Roberts notes, “Christian psychology insists on the priority of a deep knowledge of the psychology that is  
distinctive of Christianity as a prerequisite to the integration of modern professional and scientific  
psychologies into Christian thought and practice.” Roberts, *Five Views*, 136.

19 Ibid., 134.

20 Stanton L. Jones, “An Integration Response to Christian Psychology” in *Christianity and Psychology: Five Views*,  
Eric L. Johnson, ed., 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 185.

21 Responding in part to integrationist Stanton Jones’ critique of CP along these lines, Christian psychologist  
Eric Johnson writes, “Finally, it must be conceded that this book has so far been somewhat misleading. It  
would be terribly naïve to assume that there will ever be only one Christian psychology in this age. Many  
difference interpretive approaches to the Bible have arisen within the Christian community—consider the  
diverse subgroups within the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communion (regional, ideological and  
institutional), as well as the slightly more obvious subtraditions that make up the Protestant communion—  
and it would be unworthy of a Christian psychology to downplay these differences. Rather than this being  
an argument against a Christian psychology (Jones, 1986), these differences will contribute to its richness  
and fruitfulness.” Johnson, *Foundations*, 218.

22 As will be demonstrated later in this essay, Christian psychology looks similar to integration in actual  
counseling practice.

23 For an introduction to the Puritans in regard to soul-care, see Timothy Keller, “Puritan Resources for  
Biblical Counseling,” *Journal of Pastoral Practice* IX/3 (1998): 11-44; Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory: The  
Practical Works of Richard Baxter Volume I* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000); J.I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness:  
The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990).

24 Roberts and Watson, *Five Views*, 150. For an explanation of the fallacy of empiricism as a reliable  
epistemological system and the importance of presuppositions for interpretation, see John Frame, *The  
Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1987), 123-6, 140-1.

25 C. Stephen Evans, as quoted by Johnson, *5 Views*. 36.

26 Johnson, *Foundations*, 167-95.

27 Ibid., 171-2. Johnson rightly notes that the Bible contains less *content* that directly applies to subjects like  
mathematics or the natural sciences versus subjects like the nature of God and the polity of the church  
(173). However, he errors in concluding that this makes the Bible less *authoritative* regarding subjects where  
it reveals less content. The Bible is always and finally authoritative, even when it reveals less content or  
seems less relevant on any given subject. This is the testimony of Scripture itself and the historic position of  
Protestant Christianity. Grudem writes, “. . .the Bible does not support any restriction on the kinds of  
subjects to which it speaks with absolute authority and truth” (94). See Grudem, 93-5; John Armstrong,  
“The Authority of Scripture” in *Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible*, Don Kistler, ed. (Morgan,  
PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), 96-150, esp. 139-40; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R,  
2010), 145-82, 216. Frame notes, “. . .Scripture’s authoritative content is not religious as opposed to secular,  
not about ‘matters of salvation’ in contrast with other matters unrelated to salvation. Rather, Scripture  
addresses all of human life, as only God himself has a right to do. It applies to all situations of our  
experience” (216).

28 John Frame writes, “Theologians who try to play down the importance of God’s authority—whether to  
avoid ‘patriarchalism,’ to promote freedom of human thought and choice, to allow great latitude to science  
and philosophy, or whatever—have lost something that is central to biblical revelation. *Everything* in  
Scripture comes to us as authoritative communication” (emphasis original), *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg:  
P&R, 2002), 92.

29 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, as cited in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids:  
Zondervan, 1994), 1204. The Statement later denies that infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual,  
religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science” (Article XII).

30 Grudem, 73.

31 A full explanation and critique of the “insufficiency” view as held by Christian psychologists and  
integrationists is beyond the scope of this essay, but may be found in two works by Heath Lambert: *A  
Theology of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 35-59; and “Introduction: The Sufficiency  
of Scripture, the Biblical Counseling Movement, and the Purpose of this Book” in *Counseling the Hard Cases*,  
Heath Lambert and Stuart Scott, eds (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 1-24.

32 Tan, *Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 329; Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977),  
61-71. In Crabb’s understanding, the gospel message is “psychologized” such these psychological “needs”  
are met through the gospel. For a critique of this therapeutic version of the gospel, see David Powlison,  
“The Therapeutic Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25/3 (2007): 2-7.

33 Roberts, *Outline*, 135-51. Ironically, Roberts states at the beginning of his article that Christian psychologists strive to develop their psychology “with a minimum of reference to or influence from the psychologies of the twentieth century” (135). It is also confusing that Christian psychologists state that it is “people who are familiar with contemporary psychology” who are required to do the work of “extracting” psychology from the Bible and other Christian works. Roberts & Watson, *Five Views*, 155. If the goal is to form a biblical psychology, why is familiarity in contemporary psychology needed? Wouldn’t this task be better pursued by theologically informed and biblically trained pastors with experience in wise pastoral care?

34 Langberg’s 3 fold view of the image is a key premise to her approach for understanding and ministering to those who have experienced the trauma of sexual abuse. *Counseling Survivors*, 45-51. However, only one aspect (relationship) of her three is supported by commentaries and theological works. Compare her conclusions with standard theologies and works: Grudem, 442-450; Lambert, *Theology*, 184-91; Anthony Hoekema, *Created In God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 517-536; Jay Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 118-120; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, New Com. Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 202-210.

35 Roberts & Watson, *Five Views*, 158-64. Powlison has likewise critiqued the exposition of Roberts and Watson in *Five Views*, 196-8. Roberts’ handling of the Pauline vocabulary for “psychotherapy” (sanctification) in his article “Outlines of Pauline Psychotherapy” represents a much stronger interpretation of the biblical text (*Care for the Soul*, 137-44). For comparison purposes, contrast the explanation of Roberts and Watson regarding the Sermon on the Mount with a standard evangelical commentary, such as D.A. Carson, “Matthew” in *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); or John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1985).

36 In his book, *The Pressure’s Off*, Crabb confuses justification with sanctification in his interpretation of two key passages: Romans 7:6 and Hebrews 7:18-19 (27). In a third text, Galatians 4:3-9, he confuses the “Galatian heresy of the Judaizers” with what he calls the “law of linearity” (35-36). He again confuses justification with sanctification in application of this text to what he calls “modern Judaizers” (55-7). Most troubling is the fact that Crabb claims the Holy Spirit spoke audibly to him and led him to these passages and conclusions (67-68).

37 Society for Christian Psychology, “Amplification of the Mission Statement,” [online]; accessed 12 October 2016; available at <http://www.christianpsych.org/>. The statement of faith of the society consists of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

38 The journal was previously titled, *Edification*. See *Edification* 3.1 (2009) and *Edification* 6.2 (2012). In another edition (*Christian Psychology* 7.1 (2013)), Brent D. Slife, board of reference member for the Society of Christian Psychology, co-authored an article on Theistic psychology with Mormon psychologist Jeffrey Reber. While Mormon doctrine is inconsistent with the doctrinal statement of the Society, this level of cooperation between two scholars representing vastly different theological systems raises additional concerns regarding the ecumenism of Christian Psychology as a movement. If the goal of CP is a uniquely “biblical” psychology based upon historic Christianity, efforts of this nature are confusing and illustrate that the actual developmental work of the movement is often pointed in the wrong direction.

39 For comparison of the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification in comparison to the Protestant (biblical) view, see Grudem, 727-9 and James G. McCarthy, *The Gospel According to Rome* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1995), 21-124.

40 Jones, *Five Views*, 184-7.

41 Johnson, *Foundations*, 218-9. Johnson’s admission is exceedingly confusing and ultimately, telling. In the end, he seems to be more committed to diversity and dialogue for its own sake rather than to serious biblical and theological scholarship of soul-care material from Scripture in order to construct a truly Christian psychology.

42 Johnson, *Five Views*, 36.

43 Langberg, *Five Approaches*, 110-31. The case presented in this work is hypothetical, but still help for demonstrating how various Christian approaches to counseling flesh out in actual counseling practice.

44 *Ibid.*, 111.

45 Lambert, *Theology*, 57. Langberg notes that later on in the counseling process, the use of the Scriptures will be introduced (125, 127), but not initially. Furthermore, her limited “use” of the Scriptures in counseling as revealed in her book, *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse*, reveals a commitment to the therapeutic gospel. Biblical redemption is re-defined as emotional acceptance and unconditional love (58, 128). Her re-telling of Isaiah 53 re-casts sin against God as psychological “hurt,” comes dangerously close to making God the Father the abusing father of Christ, turns Jesus into a victim of abuse, and makes the “gospel” primarily about Jesus being abused so that He can identify with the abuse of others (150-153). While Jesus does identify with people in their suffering (Heb. 4:15, Phil. 3:10), it is clear that the “abuse” of Christ mentioned

- in Isaiah 53 is because of “our transgressions” and “our iniquities” as He accomplishes redemption, not because He was a victim of senseless abuse. For a more biblical approach for counseling abuse survivors which exemplifies a proper handling of the Scriptures, see Laura Hendrickson, “‘Mariana’ and Surviving Sexual Abuse” in *Counseling the Hard Cases*, Heath Lambert and Stuart Scott, eds. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012), 25-56.
- 46 In the same work, this case is handled from a biblical counseling viewpoint where the Bible does have such a functional control. See Stuart Scott, “A Biblical Counseling Approach” in *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*, Stephen P. Greggo and Timothy A. Sisemore, eds. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 157-83.
- 47 Langberg, *Five Approaches*, 122. Contrast Langberg’s perspective with Psalm 18:2, “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Or with Jesus, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).
- 48 Langberg, *Counseling Survivors*, 55, 57, 105, 150, 158.
- 49 Ibid., 79, 108, 123, 128, 134, 137, 158.
- 50 Ibid., 134.