

## Modernism

We must remember where soul care falls in the grand scheme of Christianity. Soul care is a *derivative* practice. To understand what happens after the Puritans, we need to step back and look at wider culture.

Charles Darwin publishes *The Descent of Man* in 1871. This book was by no means the first challenge to the Truth in the history of mankind, but it did do something new – it provided a materialistic understanding of the world. Darwin provided an origin story that seized upon something that seemed to be independently verifiable by human observation – science. Darwin’s scientific observations were thus pitted against what was easily reclassified as private human experience – faith. Darwin isn’t the only fountainhead here, but he joins a rising tide of scientism.

## Liberal Theology

The reaction to the rise of modern science in the church is mixed. Two primary camps emerge. The “Modernists” are those who modify the Christian message in the face of scientific observation, seeing historical Christianity as laden with artifacts of the past. The “Fundamentalists” are those who refused to jettison the “fundamentals” of the historic Christian faith, believing that any science which contradicted the message of the Scriptures was pseudo-science at best.

### *Modernist Example: Harry Emerson Fosdick*

One of the leading lights of the modernist movements is Harry Emerson Fosdick. Fosdick is pastor of Riverside Church in NYC. In 1922, Fosdick preaches a message to his congregation entitled “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” which is then printed for widespread circulation throughout the Church. This message highlights the theological differences between the modernists and the fundamentalists:

It is interesting to note where the Fundamentalists are driving in their stakes to mark out the deadline of doctrine around the church, across which no one is to pass except on terms of agreement. They insist that we must all believe in the historicity of certain special miracles, preeminently the virgin birth of our Lord; that we must believe in a special theory of inspiration—that the original documents of the scripture, which of course we no longer possess, were inerrantly dictated to men a good deal as a man might dictate to a stenographer; that we must believe in a special theory of the atonement—that the blood of our Lord, shed in a substitutionary death, placates an alienated Deity and makes possible welcome for the returning sinner...

- Harry Emerson Fosdick, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?”

Fosdick here takes aim at the virgin birth (which is a-scientific), the inspiration of the Scriptures (which he prefers to see as a record of man’s thoughts about God), and the atonement, which he would elsewhere call “a theological disgrace.”

Fosdick and other modernists weren't trying to destroy Christianity by doing so. They were trying to save it from irrelevancy.

### Fundamentalist Theology

The Fundamentalists were not ignorant to the danger produced by Modernism. The single most enduring work from this era of Christian history is a slender volume produced by a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. J Gresham Machen is awesome enough that I named my second-born kid after him.

But, in 1923, 1 year after Fosdick's sermon, he publishes a little book entitled *Christianity and Liberalism*.

[D]espite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions. But in showing that the liberal attempt at rescuing Christianity is false we are not showing that there is no way of rescuing Christianity at all; on the contrary, it may appear incidentally, even in the present little book, that it is not the Christianity of the New Testament which is in conflict with science, but the supposed Christianity of the modern liberal Church, and that real city of God, and that city alone, has defenses which are capable of warding off the assaults of modern unbelief.

Machen's thesis is that Christianity and liberalism are two separate things. Liberalism is not Christianity. It is an entirely different religion that uses some of the same terms as Christianity.

So what does this have to do with soul care?

### Liberal Soul Care

Charles Darwin's theories were not limited to just science, but they have a significant impact on the way in which human beings sought to address their own troubles. Darwin rooted the origin of the species in pure biology. There was no external, divine spark to bring man into being. This has a *significant* impact on soul care. If man's origin story is purely biological, then the solution to man's troubles are also biological.

A new type of man called a "psychologist" arose. In 1874, Wilhelm Wundt published *Principles of Physiological Psychiatry* and set up the first psychologist lab. Wundt is a forgotten name to many, but his approach to psychology was inherently biological because man was at his core a biological creature. The solution did not lie in the heart, but rather in understanding the way that the biological factors drove human trouble. Crack open the pages of Wundt's work and you see detailed descriptions of nerves and cells and cranial structures.

Sigmund Freud, down the road in Austria, was also developing an approach to counseling that likewise saw human trouble as primarily being biological in nature. Freud's training was as a neurologist, and he retained a neurological approach throughout his entire career. Freud

understood psychoanalysis to be actually correcting neurological defects. The system of psychoanalysis worked because it corrected biological issues within the human person.

There is not a wholesale adaptation of this mindset into the church of Jesus Christ, even within the liberal churches. What you do have, however, is the creation of a new category – the psychologist, or the counselor. This individual is an expert in the human person and his troubles. However, this expertise does not begin with the fear of the Lord (as the beginning of wisdom), but rather is built primarily upon the observation of the human person. And that observation will naturally leave significant gaps. The minister is now pitted against another “professional.”

There are many different versions of counseling that arise throughout the decades following Wundt and Freud. However, what all share in common is that help for mankind’s troubles are now seen as being not matters of casuistry – cases of conscience – but rather existing within the plane of the human world without God. There are two major changes that take place here:

- 1) The *location* of counseling shifts from the church to the society. It’s now the domain of a counselors and not the pastor, as the pastor is the expert in *religion* and the counselor is the expert in *human troubles and its cures*.
- 2) The *content* of counseling shifts as the primary focus is entirely horizontal – the relationship between man and himself/his surroundings. All of the major psychological systems are fed primarily by non-Christians, most who deny the existence of an eternal soul. Even if those systems could be purged of their conflicts with Christianity, you still have the trouble where a system is not designed to transform the heart. This is a far step from Puritan casuistry.

The liberal church cast off its own theological heritage and in doing so, was left adopting whatever trends were *en vogue* within the larger culture. When you change Christianity, whatever has come before is of little value.

See Oden’s chart below.

The church forgot her theological heritage, and in doing so forgot 1800 years of pastoral wisdom.

### **Integrationism**

The Fundamentalist/Modernist controversies consume the energy of the conservative church. Major works are coming out: *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (BB Warfield), *Christianity and Liberalism* (Machen), etc. What fades from view is soul care. The Fundamentalists won the battle for biblical Christianity to survive. But they lost quite a few things. They lost most of their institutions. They lost many people. And they lost a focus on soul care.

By the 1960s, the conservative church began turning its attention to soul care. There are two basic approaches to this – integrationism and nouthetic counseling. Make no mistake – both of these are approaches to soul care pioneered by the conservative church. Everyone has the same

aim – glorifying Jesus Christ, seeking to care well for God’s people, etc. We are on the same team.

### *Understanding Integrationism*

Integrationism is built on the foundation of conservative, orthodox doctrine. However, it embraces the same overall orientation towards psychology as that employed by the liberal church. In other words, it is *not* an attempt to reclaim the historical approach to counseling that we have surveyed thus far. It *is* an attempt to create a system where modern psychological theory and conservative Christian theology are united with each other.

Our goal is to be thoroughly biblical caregivers. If that goal is to be attained, we must always keep the Word of God as the sole norm or authority in matters of faith and practice. That is the message of the Reformers. The Word must guide us in judging all claims of truth and ideas of men...But with the Word of God central in our thinking, we can appropriately incorporate truth from all potential sources in the day-to-day demands of ministry. This is the meaning of Sola Scriptura.

- Harry Shields and Gary Bredfeldt, *Caring for Souls: Counseling Under the Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody, 2001), 52.

If this position sounds like quite Reformed epistemology, it’s because it is. Embedded within Christianity is the understanding that human beings are meant to know more than what God has revealed in Scripture.

There is general agreement between biblical counseling and integrationism regarding how Scripture is the ultimate authority and psychology is a servant discipline.

However, a significant difference occurs when theology and psychological counseling are subdivided as disciplines:

Theology represents the distillation of God’s revelation of Himself to humanity in a linguistic, conceptual, and cultural medium people can understand. This revelation focuses primarily on human nature and human destiny in God’s program.

Psychology is primarily concerned with the mechanisms by which people function and the methods to assess and influence that functioning.

- John D. Carter and Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology*, Rosemead Psychology Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 49. (Formatting slightly edited for clarity)

Integrationism understands theology and psychology to be offering commentary on the human person, but in two very different ways. The Scriptures are understood as being a broad

commentary on the nature of humanity, dealing primarily life in God’s economy. It addresses broad concepts such as creation, fall, redemption, restoration. Psychology, on the other hand, focuses far more on the mechanisms by which people function. In other words, theology is a study of water, while psychology is the study of a hydroelectric dam. One looks at functionality, the other looks more broadly at environment.

There have been studies done to record how what degree self-professed integrationists use Scripture within their counseling.

Integrationist Use of Various Biblical Content	% Affirming
Implicitly teach biblical concepts <sup>1</sup>	71
Explicitly teach biblical concepts <sup>2</sup>	42
Use the text of Scripture in counseling <sup>3</sup>	13
Use the text of Scripture in “critical incidents” <sup>4</sup>	3
Use the memorization of Scripture to affect change <sup>5</sup>	2.1

Observations

1. Integrationists see Scripture as authoritative regarding everything it speaks to.
2. Integrationists take very seriously the importance of studying human beings for common grace insights into the human person.
3. Integrationists understand Scripture as speaking to a much narrower slice of human experience than did church leaders from previous eras (Puritans, Reformers, Church Fathers), focused primarily on redemption.
4. Integrationists see psychological techniques as more practically helpful than the Scriptures in effecting transformation in counseling.

Biblical Counseling

Biblical counseling offers a different conclusion:

The inspired and inerrant Scriptures, rightly interpreted and carefully applied, offer us God’s comprehensive wisdom. We learn to understand who God is, who we are, the problems we face, how people change, and God’s provision for that change in the Gospel (John 8:31-32; 10:10; 17:17). **No other source of knowledge thoroughly equips us to counsel in ways that transform the human heart** (Psalm 19:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). Other systems of counseling aim for other goals and assume a different dynamic of change. The wisdom given by God in His Word is distinctive and robust. He comprehensively addresses the sin and suffering of all people in all situations.

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When we say that Scripture is comprehensive in wisdom, we mean that the Bible makes sense of all things, not that it contains all the information people could ever know about all topics. God’s common grace brings many good things to human life. However, common grace cannot save us from our struggles with sin or from the troubles that beset us. **Common grace cannot sanctify or cure the soul of all that ails the human condition.** We affirm that numerous sources (such as scientific research, organized observations about human behavior, those we counsel, reflection on our own life experience, literature, film, and history) can contribute to our knowledge of people, and many sources can contribute some relief for the troubles of life. However, none can constitute a comprehensive system of counseling principles and practices.

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APPENDIX 1: SOURCES FOR PASTORAL CARE WORKS<sup>6</sup>

19 <sup>th</sup> C. Pastoral Works	Shedd (Pres)	Fairbairn (Scot Pr)	Hoppin (Cong)	Bridges (Ang)	Koestlin (Luth)	Gladden (Cong)	Kidder (Meth)	Total
Cyprian	-	1	1	6	2	-	1	11
Tertullian	2	1	2	1	1	-	-	7
Chrysostom	1	2	6	13	6	3	2	33
Augustine	9	1	1	37	2	2	1	53
Gregory	-	-	1	6	2	1	-	10
Luther	6	1	4	22	11	5	1	50
Calvin	8	1	1	25	3	2	1	41
Baxter	8	7	2	37	3	3	1	61
Herbert	1	1	4	19	1	4	1	31
Taylor	2	1	3	7	2	2	-	17
Totals	37	16	25	173	33	22	8	314

20 <sup>th</sup> C. Pastoral Works	Hiltner	Clinebell	Oates	Wise	Tourneur	Stollberg	Nuttin	Total
Cyprian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tertullian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chrysostom	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Augustine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gregory	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luther	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Calvin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Baxter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Herbert	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taylor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

20 <sup>th</sup> C. Pastoral Works	Hiltner	Clinebell	Oates	Wise	Tourneur	Stollberg	Nuttin	Total
Freud	8	8	9	1	9	5	69	109
Jung	10	6	1	0	13	3	12	45
Rogers	19	18	4	6	0	26	28	101
Fromm	8	6	0	9	0	1	3	27
Sullivan	5	4	5	5	0	1	2	22
Berne	0	19	6	0	0	1	0	26

<sup>6</sup> All charts reproduced from Thomas Oden's *Care of Souls in the Classical Tradition*, pg 29-31

Totals	50	61	25	21	22	37	114	330
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