
An Insider's Effort to Blow Up Psychiatry

by Jeffrey H. Boyd

I am a psychiatrist who believes that the Bible is the greatest textbook of psychiatry ever written, and that humans cannot be understood apart from the God-human relationship.¹ Since only forty-three percent of psychiatrists and psychologists

believe in God,² my colleagues are less than enthusiastic about these views. They take me as seriously as a duck-billed platypus, who is not quite sure whether to classify itself as a mammal or a duck. Yet, ironically, I am taken seriously as a psychiatrist, for I am Chairman of Psychiatry and Chairman of Ethics at Waterbury Hospital, a

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¹J. H. Boyd, *Reclaiming the Soul: The Search for Meaning in a Self-Centered Culture* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1996); "The Soul as Seen Through Evangelical Eyes, Part I: Mental Health Professionals and the Soul," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 23 (Fall 1995) 151-160; "The Soul as Seen Through Evangelical Eyes, Part II: On Use of the Term Soul," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 23 (Fall 1995) 161-70; "Losing Soul: How and Why Theologians Created the Mental Health Movement," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30 (November 1995) 472-92; "Apocalypse from Nuclear War Compared with the Expected Apocalypse of October 22, 1844," *Henceforth* (in press); *Soul Psychology: How to Understand Your Soul in Light of the Mental Health Movement* (Cheshire, CT: Soul Research Institute, 1994); *Affirming the Soul* (Cheshire, CT: Soul Research Institute, 1994); "Cold War Terror and Millerite Hope: The Apocalyptic Future is Not What It Used to Be," *Adventist Heritage* (in press); "Deliverance of the Soul," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (in press); "Book Review: Kenneth J. Collins, *Soul Care: Deliverance and Renewal Through the Christian Life*," *Calvin Theological Journal* (April 1996); "Book Review" Keith

Ward, *Defending the Soul*," *Calvin Theological Journal* (April 1996).

²Gallup Poll, *Religion in America, The Gallup Report #259*, April 1987, says ninety-four percent of Americans believe in God. References for the statement that forty-three percent of psychologists and psychiatrists believe in God: American Psychiatric Association Task Force Report 10: *Psychiatrists' Viewpoints on Religion and Their Services to Religious Institutions and the Ministry* (Washington: American Psychiatric Association, 1975); C. Ragan, H. N. Malony, and B. Bert-Hallahmi, "Psychologists and Religion: Professional Factors and Personal Belief," *Review of Religious Research* 21 (Spring 1980) 208-17. Table 2 on p. 212 shows that seventeen percent of psychologists were "orthodox" in ideology and another twenty-six percent somewhat orthodox. At the bottom of the page, the text adds together these two percentages, and arrives at forty-three percent believing in God. The article shows that psychologists are much less religious than academics in general, and than the American public.

See also D. B. Larson, et al., "Systematic Analysis of Research on Religious Variables in Four Major Psychiatric Journals 1978-1982," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 143 (1986) 329-34. On p. 329 they incorrectly quote an unpublished study of Regan, et al., in 1976 that found five percent of psychologists in the APA believe in God.

teaching hospital affiliated with Yale Medical School, have been on the faculty of the National Institutes of Health, published articles in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, in the leading psychiatry research journals, and chapters in the leading textbooks. I am even one of the authors of the diagnostic system used in psychiatry!³ During 1995 I admitted, treated, and discharged from the hospital 712 psychiatric patients, most of them psychotic, desperate, suicidal, homeless and indigent people living on the street.

For the past twenty-five years I have been pursu-

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ing a single purpose, somewhat like Captain Ahab and Moby Dick. My goal has been to understand, write about, and promote the soul. The reason I got launched onto this odyssey is that I was once an ordained Episcopal clergyman praying that God would use me for whatever purpose He wanted. During those prayers I repeatedly felt called to write about the soul, and I repeatedly told God I would not do it, because I didn't know how. That prayer experience slowly wore me down, so that my resolve to avoid this insane project crumbled like the sand castles I used to build on the beach as the tide came in. It became my "Mission: Impossible!"

From the beginning, I sensed that secular Americans and Episcopalians turn to psychotherapists for information about and treatment of the soul. Why would I say such an outlandish thing?

1. They call themselves *psychotherapists* after the Greek root ψυχή (soul);

2. They treat the natural, soulish (ψυχικός), horizontal and earthly aspects of the inner person;

3. In treating the mind, emotions, and personality they address what would have been considered traditionally to be faculties of the soul;

4. Sigmund Freud said explicitly that he was treating the soul;⁴

³I contributed to the writing of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Third Edition* (DSM-3R), as noted in the Anxiety Disorders section of the introduction.

⁴Freud wrote,

Psyche is a Greek word and translates into German

5. Karl Barth said Freud was treating the soul;⁵

6. The domain and semantic range of the words ψυχή and ψυχή in Scripture are precisely matched by the domain and therapeutic range of mental health experts in America.

However, I figured that secular mental health soul-therapists are incompetent because most have no expertise whatsoever in the major sources of information about the soul: the Bible, and two thousand years of theological anthropology. These contradictions, blatant to me from the beginning, were not easy to untangle in my mind, and led me to think I was tumbling down a rabbit hole into Alice's Wonderland.

My first approach was to turn to the tradition of Carl Jung for guidance. After a year at the Carl Jung Institute in Zurich, I discovered that my analyst was a firm opponent of Christianity. She said that Jesus was neurotic. In order to become more of a whole person, Jesus would have needed to embrace His shadow—i.e., to become a little bit evil, to embrace Satan to some extent, give into an occasional temptation. The anti-Christian views of the faculty there, and their love affair with the so-called "shadow," even to the point of saying that God also has a shadow,⁶ offended

as soul [German: *Seele*]. Treatment of the psyche means therefore treatment of the soul [*Seelenbehandlung*]. One could also understand it to mean treatment of sickness when it occurs in the life of the soul [*Seelenlebens*]. This, however, is not the only meaning of these words. Treatment of the psyche means more than this. It means treatment arising from the soul [*Seele*], treatment of disturbances of the soul [*seelischer*] or body, with methods which first and immediately concern the soul [*Seelische*] of people. ("*Psychische Behandlung* [*Seelenbehandlung*]," in *Die Gesundheit*, ed. R. Kossman and J. Weiss [Stuttgart, Berlin, and Leipzig: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1905] 1.368-84)

Freud said to Marie Bonaparte, "The great question...which I have not been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is What does a woman want?" (E. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* [3 vols.; New York: Basic Books, 1960] 2.421). See also J. H. Boyd, *Soul Psychology*, 336-37, n. 77; B. Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York: Random House, 1984); and id., "Reflections: Freud and the Soul," *New Yorker* (1 March 1982) 52-93.

⁵K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, Pt. 4, Sec. 54 (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960) 135-36.

⁶The Jungian view that there is a shadow side to the Collective Unconscious (i.e. "God") contradicts 1 John 1:5, "In Him there is no darkness at all." A Jungian view of "god" is evident in George Lucas's film trilogy *Star Wars*. Ultimate reality is (1) impersonal, so that it is called the "force," and (2) has a "dark side" embodied by the evil Emperor and Darth Vader.

me mightily. After a year I left the Jung Institute, convinced that God may not have a shadow, but the Almighty surely must be a madman to have assigned me this task.

Little did I know how liberal Christians would subsequently fall in love with Carl Jung. For example, by far the most popular and widely-read biblical exegete in Germany today is Eugen Drewermann, a psychologist-theologian who interprets the symbols of the Bible along the lines of Jungian psychoanalysis, as if the biblical stories consist of dream images in a patient in psychoanalysis.⁷ One of Drewermann's most popular books of biblical interpretation is *Discovering the God-Child Within*.⁸ Even the Vatican has endorsed psychological interpretation of Scripture, probably in response to the overwhelming popularity of Drewermann with lay people in Germany.⁹

Little did I know how much the approach of Carl Jung would subsequently become the predominant view of the soul in secular America. In 1992 Thomas Moore published *Care of the Soul*, which rocketed to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list, and stayed there a record number of years.¹⁰ As a follower

⁷Eugen Drewermann is a Catholic theologian-psychologist-philosopher banned from teaching in Roman Catholic institutions. His critics say that he is not interested in the meaning of the biblical texts in the original, ancient culture. For example, some say that Drewermann's book, *Discovering the God-Child Within*, simply uses the biblical texts as a springboard to get to the archetypal meaning which he thinks lies beneath the text, but which ends up sounding strikingly similar to the psychology of Carl Jung. His critics also say that his message is too soothing. Many Germans find Drewermann's interpretation of biblical texts refreshing, making the texts alive and thought-provoking while traditional biblical criticism leaves them dry and tasteless. Like many Jungians, and post-modern scholars, Drewermann is in favor of each individual developing his or her own self. This places him in a position of opposition to authority of all kinds, which is why the Archbishop banned Drewermann from teaching in Catholic seminaries. It is no surprise, therefore, that Drewermann is very interested in existentialism and liberation theology. Schleiermacher is one of Drewermann's sources, for Drewermann is a romantic theologian, close to Eliad. See B. Lang, "A New Voice in Psychological Exegesis: Eugen Drewermann," a paper read at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, November 20, 1995.

⁸E. Drewermann, *Discovering the God-Child Within* (New York: Crossroads, 1994).

⁹Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993) section I.D.3, "Psychological and Psychoanalytical Approaches in the 1993 Pontifical Biblical Commission"; see also J. A. Fitzmyer, *Scripture, The Soul of Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1994) 51-52.

¹⁰T. Moore, *Care of the Soul* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992);

of Carl Jung and James Hillman, Moore promotes the Greek gods such as Aphrodite, and seeks to enrich our soul by drenching his readers with non-Christian mythology. Moore, Hillman, and Jung explicitly promote polytheism.¹¹

Even today, I remain a skeptic about Carl Jung and the Jungian approach to the soul. Why? In the first place, because the ultimate goal and purpose of Jungian treatment is individuation and personal growth.

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I think the ultimate goal of life is different: serving and loving God, sometimes to the point of becoming less of a person, denying myself, and taking up my cross to follow Jesus (Matthew 10:38, 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23, 14:27). In the second place, I found that when I was interested in the so-called Collective Unconscious, I threw open the floodgates to a great sea of imagery, symbols, myths, and fairy tales, to Greek and Hindu gods. In short, I became deluged in an ocean of "spirituality," which ended up being more compatible with Hinduism and Buddhism than with the Bible. And in the third place, those who know the Jungian

and *Soul Mates* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994). The publishing industry has learned from Moore that Americans want books about the soul and has provided about thirty books a year since 1993, most of them from a New Age perspective. The few that are theologically sophisticated can be counted on the fingers of one hand, such as K. J. Collins, *Soul Care: Deliverance and Renewal Through the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Victor, 1995); and R. C. Sproul, *Soul's Quest for God* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1993).

¹¹E. Yoffe, "How the Soul is Sold: James Hillman Developed a Psychoanalytic Theory Few Could Understand, Until His Protégé Thomas Moore Translated It for the Masses," *New York Times Magazine* (April 23, 1995) 44-49. This article is very helpful in putting Moore's teaching in perspective. He is a polytheist, believing more in the Greek gods than in the God of the Bible. In general, both Moore and Hillman come out of the tradition of Carl Jung, and leaders in the Jungian tradition say Jung was a Gnostic, with the same complaints against the Bible as the Gnostics of the first and second century.

Jungian psychology is the dominant viewpoint in the Psychology and the Bible Group, which is the only study group in the Society of Biblical Literature devoted to exegesis of biblical anthropology. At the November, 1994, annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Chicago there was an entire symposium on Carl Jung as a Gnostic. The overall tone was one of approval.

tradition better than I, such as my friend Dr. Murray Stein, director of the Carl Jung Institute in Chicago, say that the tradition is Gnostic through-and-through.¹² Stein likes Gnosticism. I don't.

Having grown disillusioned with the Carl Jung Institute, and believing that God must be stark-raving mad to ask me to understand the soul, I decided to go to medical school, for, I reasoned, psychiatrists must surely know about and treat the soul, which in Greek is *psyche*. That is the beginning of the dark ages of my career, when God went into eclipse, and I decided I wanted to be "a real doctor," and "a real psychiatrist." I attempted to get inside the profession, understand it as an insider, and make a success out of my medical career. That meant I tried to hide the lamp of my faith under a basket (Matthew 5:15). My efforts to be taken seriously as a psychiatrist were successful on the outside, but unsuccessful on the inside, for I felt despair, meaninglessness, and purposelessness in my soul. Did you know that Sigmund Freud wrote, "Only religion can answer the question of the purpose of life. One can hardly go wrong in concluding that the idea of life having a purpose stands or falls with the religious system"?¹³

Jonah didn't like his assignment either. He took the next boat in the opposite direction, was swallowed by a great fish, and ended up in Nineveh anyway. My great fish was a couple of personal catastrophes: my son and wife died. Seeking to understand this despair in my soul, I did what we psychiatrists traditionally have done, I entered into Freudian psychoanalysis. My analyst, Dr. Ernst Prelinger, said to me, "I think that you may not have a neurotic problem but a religious problem. The reason you are in such agony is that you feel called by God."

What has been eating at my bones for a quarter of a century is the conviction that somehow the secular mental health movement and Christianity are in com-

petition, attempting to do the same thing, one from a secular and the other from a biblical platform. I have been struggling to find some way to put that conviction into words in such a way that someone other than myself can understand what I am talking about.

If it were true that the secular mental health movement is somehow a kind of secular religion, worshipping the "self" as Paul Vitz has said,¹⁴ then it would appear that the psychotherapy approach is winning

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the horse race with Christianity.¹⁵ In secular magazines and television, it is the secular psychotherapists, not the clergy, who are viewed as the experts on human nature. In *Self Magazine*, *Redbook*, *Cosmopolitan*, *McCalls*, *Shape*, and dozens of other magazines sold at the checkout counter of grocery stores, so-called "experts" tell Americans how to relate to their spouse, children, and parents, how to have more fun in bed, what depression and anxiety mean, how to master "stress." They seek to give advice and guidance on virtually every important aspect of human life, without ever mentioning God.

I view secular psychotherapists as the mouthpiece and vanguard of the secularization of American society, particularly with respect to promoting a secular self-concept. Counselors are well-paid, commanding between one and two percent of the American gross national product.¹⁶ Secular psychological treatment is

¹⁴P. C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

¹⁵In his famous book, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), P. Rieff argued that secular psychotherapy is replacing Christianity as the organizing principle of American society. He implied that this is a disaster. In order to exist, a culture needs central symbols that inspire individuals to curtail their self-interest, and to make sacrifices for the common good. In the past, when Christianity was more central to America, people sought to follow Christ's lifestyle. But today, when psychotherapy is the central way of understanding the soul in America, everyone is out for his or her own self-interest, and there is rampant narcissism. American society is unraveling because the goals of "growth" and "self-fulfillment" do not motivate people to make sacrifices for the common good.

¹⁶Mental health and chemical dependency treatment represent about 15% of the health care dollar (about 8 or 9% for mental health and the other 6 or 7% for chemical dependen-

¹²R. A. Segal, ed., *Jung: Gnostic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); M. Stein, "The Gnostic Critique, Past and Present," in *The Allure of Gnosticism*, ed. R. A. Segal, J. Singer, and M. Stein (Chicago: Open Court, 1995); D. Miller, ed., *Jung and the Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Continuum, 1995); W. G. Rollins, *Jung and the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1983); R. Noll, *The Jung Cult: Origins of a Charismatic Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); M. Stein, *Jung's Treatment of Christianity: The Psychotherapy of a Religious Tradition* (Wilmette, IL: Chiron, 1985); C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1933); and id., *On the Nature of the Psyche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

¹³S. Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1986) 21.76.

approximately a one-hundred-billion-dollar-per-year industry in the United States.¹⁷ Some Christians say they cannot afford to give five dollars a week to their church because they are giving a tithe to their psychotherapist.

In every city in which I have studied the Yellow Pages, I find there are as many listings for secular psychotherapists as for churches and synagogues of all denominations combined.¹⁸ Furthermore, they have a

cy). About 14% of the American Gross Domestic Product goes toward health care, i.e., about \$526 billion per year health care costs as of the mid-1990s. Multiply the two numbers (15% x 14%) and you get 2.1%. The percentage of the Gross Domestic Product devoted to health care has been rising rapidly: until the last year or two it was rising at one percent per year. See B. H. McFarland, "Cost-Effectiveness Considerations for Managed Care Systems: Treating Depression in Primary Care," *American Journal of Medicine* 97 (suppl. 6A) (December 19, 1994) 6A-48S; see also K. L. Minaker, "The Changing Face of Healthcare for the Elderly," presented at the Conference on Geriatric Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Sept. 29, 1995.

¹⁷The American Gross Domestic Product in 1993 was \$6,343.8 billion. The health care industry consumes 14% of that, and mental health and substance abuse 15% of that (see previous note). Multiplying those three numbers, the result is \$133.2 billion. This has risen from an estimated \$129 billion in 1988 (D. A. Wasylenki, "The Cost of Schizophrenia," *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 39 [9 suppl. 2] [November 1994] S65-9). These numbers, however, are notoriously variable, depending on which numbers you use for which purpose. For example, if one counts only mental health and not chemical dependency, the percentage of the healthcare dollar drops to 8 or 9%, and, if the healthcare budget is taken to be \$526 billion per year, the resulting cost of mental health care would be \$47 billion per year (see Minaker, "The Changing Face"). Since substance abuse (i.e., chemical dependency) treatment is usually included with mental health by economists, it would seem safe to estimate that the costs are approximately twice \$47 billion. Thus \$100 billion per year is as safe a number as one will find, recognizing that any number has a large variance. Health care economics comes straight out of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Capitation is rapidly taking over the American medical system, which may reduce the amount of money that is spent on mental health services in the future.

¹⁸In the city of New Haven, CT, the Yellow Pages of 1994-95 show that there are 60 percent more listings for psychotherapists than for churches and synagogues. In other words, if you add together all the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish denominations, there are 340 churches and synagogues listed. There are 555 listings for mental health experts offering psychotherapy: 192 for marriage and family therapists, 48 for social workers, 132 for psychologists, 69 for psychotherapists, and 114 for psychiatrists. These figures do not include an additional seven listings under the heading of Child Guidance, thirty under Drug Abuse and Addiction, and forty-one under Alcoholism.

In every city the author has studied, the Yellow Pages indicate that psychotherapists outnumber churches and

lot of influence. The size and influence of the secular mental health movement is doubling every ten years or so, spreading more rapidly than red fire ants. Even at some evangelical seminaries counseling has become a more popular subject than theology.¹⁹

Jeremiah asked, "Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable?" (Jeremiah 15:18 NIV). While I am no Jeremiah, I have tried to discover why I feel so agonized, why my sleep is tortured, why my bones feel as if they were cracking.

The answer I come up with is that secular psychotherapists routinely treat the soul.²⁰ As absurd as that statement may sound, I believe it is true.

Psychotherapists today avoid using the word "soul." If you asked them about it, they would reply

*We carry within us
God's breath and image.*

that the soul is something obscure and religious, which they have not seen recently, any more than they have seen a UFO. Yet I claim that secular psychotherapists have more names for the soul than Eskimos have names for snow. To name but a few: mind, heart, psyche, inner self, subjectivity, human nature, me, I, you, myself, yourself, cognitions, biopsychosocial model, self, whole person, consciousness, personality, psychic energy, libido, subjective experience, identity, essence, feelings, emotions, thoughts, being, inner being, who I am, who you are.

What I can't figure out is why the pulpits of America are not ringing out with the message that appears so obvious, namely, that this is absurd. Were fifty thousand clergy each to preach a sermon saying that psychotherapists treat the soul, but are incompetent because they fail to appreciate most of what constitutes the soul, America would change profoundly within a year. But I have never heard a single sermon

synagogues. For example, in the city of Syracuse, New York, there are 433 listings for churches and synagogues, but 448 listings for mental health professionals offering psychotherapy (NYNEX Yellow Pages, Syracuse Metropolitan Area, May 1994-April 1995).

¹⁹D. F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); and conversation with W. B. Hunter at the Institute of Biblical Research annual dinner in Philadelphia, November 17, 1995.

²⁰Boyd, *Reclaiming the Soul*; and id., "The Soul as Seen Through Evangelical Eyes, Parts I and II."

on the subject.

A truck bomb would not work. Nor can I, a single man, bring about the needed change in psychiatry. But the clergy have it easily within their reach to destroy this secular self-concept which plagues America, and bring lay people back to a biblical self-concept.

Why do I say that the secular self-concept is absurd? Because the secular view of human nature is only a small piece of the pie. We carry within us God's breath and image. We rebel against our Creator and assert our alleged independence, a sin which is encouraged by the vast majority of secular therapists. The God-human relationship is central to a biblical self-concept, and that relationship can only be restored if we accept Jesus' substitutionary suffering. Our soul must be nourished by repentance, prayer, Scripture, and worship. But most important, we somehow survive death, and we will face a Judge.

My experience is that when lay people hear about the soul, their first thought is that human life does not end at a funeral, that they will face a Judge. It is that issue which, more than any, is missing from the secular self-concept. This is the cornerstone, or capstone, upon which either a secular or an evangelical self-concept is built. It is a time-honored wisdom in the evangelical world that emphasis upon our judgment by Christ, with an implied risk of hell, is central to keeping us aware that we are accountable.²¹ As Paul said, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:19 NIV). I agree with Kenneth Collins's book on the soul, that Christ came to earth precisely to deliver us from our bondage to ourselves.²² This is not a message I have ever heard from a psychotherapist.

What is essentially the central goal of psychotherapy? It is to promote autonomy, to maximize the potential and growth of the individual, to encourage the hidden aspirations of the person. That is why therapists ask, "How do you feel about that?" and never ask, "How does God feel about that?" The purpose of most therapy is to restore the fragmented self, and some of the most influential psychiatrists (such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Rollo May) have

²¹In his 1995 address as president of the Society of Biblical Literature, Leander Keck said that the key to understanding NT ethics is to see that a carrot-and-stick approach is used to keep us honest and moral. Unlike Aristotle, who said that ethical behavior is its own reward, the NT approach is to motivate ethical behavior by saying (1) you have been given much, and (2) you will be judged, and Christ may come tomorrow like a thief (L. E. Keck, SBL Presidential address, "Rethinking New Testament Ethics," Philadelphia, November 18, 1995; reprinted: *Rethinking 'New Testament Ethics,'* *JBL* 115 [1996] 3-16).

promoted the "self" as that which they are trying to heal. Dr. Heinz Kohut, heir to the Freudian estate, for example, calls his form of therapy "Self Psychology."²³ American consumers have understood the central purpose of psychotherapy,²⁴ for what they say after consuming some of this "treatment" is, "I have learned to take better care of myself."

Therapists ask, "How do you feel about that?" and never ask, "How does God feel about that?"

What is this "self" (as in the word "myself")? It is the secular name of the soul. Although the word "soul" is largely missing from our vocabulary, the word "self" has replaced it. Whereas "self" is a self-centered word, "soul" is a God-centered word. So "self" is not a good replacement for "soul."

The problem with such an approach to psychiatry is that it contradicts key elements of Christian theology.²⁵

1. Humans cannot be understood aside from the God-human relationship. The God-human relationship is the fundamental reality around which everything else about human nature must be understood.

2. This is an abusive relationship, and, among abusive relationships it is an unusual one because the abused partner (God) is the more powerful of the two.

3. The estrangement and injustice caused by this abuse has been overcome by God's initiative in sending Jesus as an atoning sacrifice, to reconcile humans and God, and re-establish an affectionate and interactive closeness between humans and God. Humans could not solve their own problem. Deliverance was needed.

4. The human heart—which is our core—is orient-

²²Collins, *Soul Care*.

²³H. Kohut, *How Does Analysis Cure?* ed. A. Goldberg and P. Stepansky (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1990); Kohut, *Self Psychology and the Humanities*, ed. C. B. Strozier (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985); E. S. Wolf, *Treating the Self: Elements of Clinical Self Psychology* (New York: Guilford, 1988).

²⁴"Mental Health: Does Therapy Help?" *Consumer Reports* (November 1995) 734-39 (no author is listed).

²⁵Most of my ideas come directly from G. R. Lewis and B. A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987-94).

ed either for God or against God. Some people have a "pure heart," meaning that they have been forgiven because of Jesus' substitution in death (Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 1:22). Others have a "hard heart," meaning that they refuse to believe in Jesus, and therefore they continue to have a heart of stone vis à vis God (Matt. 19:8; Mark 6:52, 8:17, 10:5; Rom. 9:18, 11:7; Eph. 4:18; Heb. 3:8, 3:15, 4:7).

5. Among those who have been reconciled with God, there is a process of growth and blossoming that comes from walking in the faith. In other words, Christianity is a form of psychotherapy. We change. The technical name for this growth is "sanctification" (John 17:17-19; Acts 20:32, 26:18; Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:11, 7:14; 1 Thess. 4:3, 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 9:13, 10:29; 1 Pet. 1:2).²⁶

Comparing these points with the gospel according to the secular mental health movement, there are striking contrasts. I view the psychotherapy emphasis on the "self" as encouraging patients to be more successful in pursuing their self-centered goals, i.e., it promotes the old Adam approach according to which we live in bondage to the flesh. I see it as a simple question: Who is the captain of my ship? Me or Christ? The concept of Saint Paul and John Calvin that we should despair of our own self-sufficiency is not one which is pouring out of the pulpit of secular psychotherapy.

When I first began to speak my mind as a psychiatrist, to admit that I was a double agent, a "sleeper" spy whom God had planted, I was naive. I thought that secular psychotherapists and clergy would be fascinated with my ideas about the soul. I was rudely awakened on both counts.

I have given Grand Rounds in Psychiatry discussing my view of the soul as that which psychiatrists treat. And I have lectured at Yale Medical School on the subject.²⁷ The audience's reaction is fascinating. The Christians and observant Jews are inspired by my talk, and they also begin to come out of the closet. Statistics indicate that about one-third of psychotherapists are followers of Christ, but my experience indicates that they bite their tongues until after they hear me speak. They are fascinated by my ideas, and feel their own inner struggle validated. The remainder of the audience, whom I have reluctantly come to think of as "pagans," are silent. They do not attack me. But,

²⁶J. H. Boyd, *The New Testament View of Human Nature: The "Heart" of the Gospel* (unpublished manuscript).

²⁷Boyd, "Where is the Soul in the Midst of All This Medical Technology?" presented at the Yale Program for the Humanities in Medicine, Yale Medical School, New Haven, CT, 13 April 1995.

overall, the response of the mental health movement to my ideas has been muted. For example, when I submitted an article to the *Journal of Clinical Social Work*, one of the reviewers who rejected my article wrote, "There is no reason to think of the Bible as a more important source of information than any other book." Although my articles on secular subjects had been published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, my article saying that psychiatrists treat the soul was rejected without comment. Clergy and Bible scholars astonished me by also reacting negatively to my ideas. My neighbor, Brevard Childs, for example, had me over for tea and politely explained to me that the word

*The human heart is oriented
either for God or against God.*

"soul" is a Hellenistic word that should not be used because it implies a self-concept which is incompatible with the Bible. He teaches Old Testament at Yale. And my old mentor, Krister Stendahl, former dean of Harvard Divinity School, and author of the *School of Saint Matthew*,²⁸ likewise took an anti-soul stance in our initial conversations.²⁹ In trying to understand this hostile response, I came to understand that there had been a debate about dualism³⁰ earlier in the century, and that the word "soul" had even been dropped from most Bible verses. Not counting the Apocrypha, the word is found in the KJV 533 times. It is found less often in twentieth-century translations: NIV, 136 times; NRSV, 180 times; and the Living Bible, 88 times. Stendahl said to me, "The word 'soul' was a prominent part of the Bible throughout history until suddenly in the twentieth century when the word disappeared from the Bible almost entirely."³¹ Krister Sten-

²⁸K. Stendahl, *The School of Saint Matthew* (Ramsey, NJ: Sigler, 1991).

²⁹Stendahl subsequently admitted that I was correct that the word "soul" is needed if we are to deal with the mental health movement. He helped me write my book, *Affirming the Soul*. Stendahl reviewed the entire manuscript, wrote the preface, and is extensively interviewed throughout the book for his ideas about the biblical soul.

³⁰This debate is best summarized in J. W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989). A summary can also be found in my book, *Reclaiming the Soul*, or in my article, "One's Self-Concept and Biblical Theology," *JETS* (forthcoming).

³¹Boyd, *Affirming the Soul*, 24.

dahl once wrote this:

The question about immortality of the soul is interesting for someone who is primarily a biblical scholar because he specializes in sixty-six so-called books that do not know of the immortality of the soul.... The whole world that comes to us through the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, is not interested in the immortality of the soul. And if you think it is, it is because you have read this into the material.³²

My experience is that I cannot state my case against psychiatry without using the word "soul," but the problem is that the mere use of that word leads many theologians and most liberal clergy promptly to reject everything I have to say, because they take the word "soul" to mean a Platonic dualism which has been officially rejected by Bible scholars. This is a major obstacle that lies in the center of my path. Given that I understood my initial "Mission: Impossible!" assignment to be about the soul, I am reluctant to abandon that word. It is an evocative and rich term which means more to lay people than to clergy. I am now experimenting with various ways around that roadblock. For example, my next book will feature the word "heart" as the centerpiece of my message.

Although my ideas about the soul have received a cool reception from both psychiatrists and liberal theologians, I find that lay people are fascinated. After my work was reviewed in the *New York Times*,³³ many lay people phoned me for psychiatric help. They tell me that they cannot trust other therapists, and that they avoid telling other psychiatrists about their faith because they don't want to throw their pearls before pigs (Matt. 7:6).

Lay people, who are fascinated to hear any information about their souls, are so enthusiastic and encouraging that they keep me going in what is otherwise a difficult task. In my television and radio presentations of these ideas, I find that many lay people say that a light bulb has gone on in their heads vis à vis their understanding of who they are. Their self-concept changes from one defined primarily by the mental health movement to one defined primarily by the Bible.

I have discovered something that I wish were not true. I went around to the major book publishers at the latest convention of the Society of Biblical Litera-

ture, seeking books on biblical anthropology. The sales people at their respective publisher's stands told me that neither Zondervan nor InterVarsity nor Word Publishing, neither Augsburg Fortress nor Scholars Press, publish a single book on theological or biblical anthropology!³⁴ Baker Book House publishes one book on biblical plants, but zero books on biblical anthropology.³⁵ Shirley Decker-Luke of Hendrickson Publishers tells me that she is often asked for books on anthropology, and is sad that there is nothing in print.³⁶ Most of the classic works³⁷ in theological anthropology are out of print. One must turn to relevant chapters of systematic theology books to find anthropology. The bottom line is this: in the debate about human nature, mental health experts have a rich vocabulary while theologians are almost mute. There are between one thousand and ten thousand books a year published on the secular view of human nature.

I am an anti-psychiatry psychiatrist. What I am opposed to is not psychiatry *per se*, but the naturalistic assumptions underlying most of the secular mental

³⁴Information obtained November 21, 1995 from salespersons of Zondervan, InterVarsity, Word, Augsburg Fortress, and Scholars Press at the book exhibits of the annual meeting of the AAR/SBL. Needless to say, some works of systematic theology include sections on theological anthropology, such as Vol. 2 of Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 17-250. Westminster/John Knox publishes a single book on the subject: B. H. Childs and D. W. Waanders, eds., *The Treasure of Earthen Vessels: Exploration in Theological Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994). Eerdmans publishes two books (but only two) on theological anthropology: P. K. Jewett and M. Shuster, *Who We Are* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); and A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

³⁵The Baker Book salesperson at the 1995 AAR/SBL convention told me that they publish no books on biblical anthropology. What they do publish is this: F. N. Hepper, *Baker Encyclopedia of Bible Plants: Flowers and Trees, Fruits and Vegetables, Ecology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

³⁶Conversation with Shirley Decker-Luke, November 21, 1995, at the book exhibit of the AAR/SBL convention in Philadelphia.

³⁷R. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); S. B. Babage, *Man in Nature and Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); E. Cherbonier, *Hardness of Heart* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1956); M. Cosgrove, *The Essence of Human Nature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977); G. David, *The Eclipse and Rediscovery of the Person* (Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, 1976); C. S. Evans, *Preserving the Person: A Look at Human Sciences* (InterVarsity, 1977); Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*; E. Sauer, *The King of the Earth: The Nobility of Man According to the Bible and Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962); C. E. Koop and F. Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983); F. Schaeffer, *Back to Freedom and Dignity* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973).

³²K. Stendahl, "Immortality is Too Much and Too Little," in *Meanings: The Bible as Document and Guide* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1984) 193-202.

³³S. Pearsall, "The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey H. Boyd: Psychiatrist and Explorer of the Soul," *New York Times* (12 March 1995) Connecticut section, CN 3.

health movement, i.e., the assumption that humans can be understood without ever mentioning or thinking about God.

I continue to make my living as a psychiatrist. I do so for two reasons. First, because patients with chronic mental illness are the lepers of America. They often live in the homeless shelter, or are too paranoid even for that, and live in a cardboard box in the back alley of the city, pelted from above by sleet, snow, and hostile messages from Mars. Most of them have biological or genetic diseases. I feel Christ calling me to serve, not to walk away from, this constituency (Matt 25:40). The second reason I continue my work is because my more "normal" patients tell me that they need me, that I cannot abandon them, because an outspoken Christian is needed somewhere in the ranks of secular psychiatry.

Mostly I enjoy my work. But I have some internal conflicts. For example, when I spoke about the soul at one Episcopal church, a woman came up afterwards and said, "This is not good, that you are anti-psychiatry and yet you are Chairman of Psychiatry at Waterbury Hospital. I don't like it. It would be like a Ford dealer saying, 'Fords are not very good!'"

That made me feel guilty. But within five seconds, I recovered and continued my outrageous behavior. From an ideological viewpoint, I am not a good Chairman of Psychiatry, in the sense that I do not spend my time advancing and promoting the narrow interests of the psychiatry guild. The reason that I am a good chairman, and the reason that I have been elected chairman at all, is because other psychiatrists trust me, because I speak the truth plainly. Furthermore, my quixotic efforts to tilt against windmills are aimed at psychiatry in general, not aimed at any specific psychiatrist. Those who know me find me respectful of persons.

Let me end this article by telling you the stories of two patients, whose lives illustrate the profound discrepancy between the mental health view of the "self," and the Christian view of the "soul."³⁸

Case #1: Steve

Steve is a forty-five-year-old single man who has lived with his parents his whole life. His friends told him that it was time for him to grow up and leave home, that a forty-five-year-old man could not live with abusive parents and be psychologically healthy. Steve was unable to consider leaving home. Instead he felt neurotic, accepted his family's definition of him as

"weak," and underwent years of psychotherapy to try to "fix" what was wrong with him. His mother was a paranoid schizophrenic who was often tense about whether the food was poisoned or whether there would soon be an invasion from Jupiter. Steve's father was an angry man, always critical, never pleased. The father had regularly beaten Steve when Steve was an infant. Both parents expressed deep-felt contempt for Steve and for each other.

The bottom line is this: in the debate about human nature, mental health experts have a rich vocabulary while theologians are almost mute.

Over the years Steve had adopted ways of dealing with his parents by hiding his true feelings, sometimes even from himself. Although the parents thought Steve was "weak," he was actually the glue that held the family together, and his affection was essential for the parents' survival. His friends counseled Steve that he should be furious with his parents, but he was unable to feel anger at them. He felt pity, not hatred. His friends told him he needed to make something out of his life, not watch it go down the toilet.

After spending years in psychotherapy with other doctors, Steve came to me for help. After so much exposure to psychotherapists, Steve hoped to get a Ph.D. in psychology and become a therapist himself. He flagellated himself for being too "weak" to be able to leave home and pursue such a career. I listened to him complain about how meek and timid he was, and how neurotic he felt. His friends agreed with these indictments against him.

One day it dawned on me what to say. I told him that he should consider his priorities. He had made it clear to me that his first priority in life was to take care of his crazy parents, who could not survive without him. This was such a high priority for him that he was willing to make any sacrifice to accomplish it. All other priorities would have to play second fiddle. He should stop torturing himself about wanting to get a Ph.D. in psychology, I said, because that was not something he would be able to do without leaving home.

Steve replied that when he got to heaven he knew for sure that Jesus would meet him at the gate and say, "Well done, good and trusted servant, you have

³⁸Both stories are found in Boyd, *Reclaiming the Soul*, xvi-xix, and 113-15. Quoted with permission.

served me by taking care of these incapable parents who were assigned to you." It was at that point that I finally realized what Steve's life was all about. His remark astonished him as much as it astonished me.

From that day, Steve's spirit lifted. What had been a humiliating albatross—namely, his inability to leave home—became a source of pride. He felt he was doing God's work. His self-sacrifice and martyrdom were seen as positive rather than neurotic. His unappreciative parents could not actually survive without Steve. Were he to leave home, his parents would probably split up, and his mother would probably become a homeless schizophrenic. He really did feel a religious calling.

I told Steve that I admired him, and that I would gladly trade places with him any day. Although I struggle to serve God, I do not live with a conviction that Jesus will welcome me at the Pearly Gates as a good and trusted servant. I would trade all my accomplishments in life to have what he has: an unshakable conviction that he is doing what he is called to do.

When I lectured about this at an Episcopal church, a woman in the congregation was horrified that I had encouraged what she called "enabling behavior" on Steve's part. She thought I was incompetent as a psychiatrist. It was "unhealthy," she said, for Steve to stay at home and support his crazy parents.

I replied that Steve's life had blossomed ever since he realized that this was his calling as a Christian. He had more self-esteem, enjoyed more hobbies and outside interests, was more able to talk with friends, and no longer felt himself to be weird. Thus, by any method of measuring outcome, his life had improved because I approved of his religious calling.

Steve's transformation represents a Copernican revolution. He finally realized that his whole life made sense only if he assumed that God was the center of value. His self-esteem was not based on being autonomous and independent of God, as his friends and psychotherapists had urged. There was no need for him to "grow up." Steve still lives at home. He no longer feels neurotic. He has discarded the idea of getting a Ph.D. in psychology. He has also come to believe that one of his biggest problems in life has been the mental health movement. Not only have secular psychologists failed to realize what lay at his heart—namely, his faith—but his friends have also been infected by psychological ways of thinking about what is "healthy" and what is "unhealthy." Even clergy who are his friends have regarded him as neurotic. They, too, have assumed that psychological growth and taking good care of oneself are more important than seeking a religiously inspired calling.

The criticism leveled against me by the Christian lay person, indicting me for "enabling" Steve to "enable" his parents, is a vivid illustration of how the [liberal] Christian church has sold its soul to the devil. I find it remarkable when Christian compassion toward ailing parents is condemned by a Christian as "enabling." Until recently the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," was widely cherished in the Christian church. Today many Chris-

*His whole life made sense
only if he assumed that God was
the center of value.*

tians, inspired by the mental health movement, are endorsing a very different kind of commandment: "Do not honor your father, nor your mother, if it limits self-fulfillment." At this rate, I expect to hear a sermon that mercy and forgiveness are "unhealthy" and constitute "enabling behavior."³⁹

There is an epilogue to Steve's story. After he stopped seeing me, after he had accepted the idea that God meant for him to take care of his dysfunctional parents, God announced a change in the plan. Steve's grandmother died, leaving her house to Steve's parents, who did not want it. They gave it to Steve, who moved there, and Steve is now owner of that house. He continues to see his parents daily and nurture them. They continue to think he is incapable of doing anything. God has provided the solution to Steve's problem which I was unable to provide. Steve tells me he is happier than he ever hoped to be, for he has his cake and can eat it also—meaning that he decided to obey God's calling instead of taking care of himself as the highest priority in life, and God intervened to take care of Steve.

If there were no God, self-sacrifice would not make sense. But since God exists, there is a kind of trade-off: Steve takes care of God's agenda, God takes care of Steve. It is like a really good marriage: each partner takes care of the other one's needs, not in the expectation of a pay-back, but out of mutual respect and affection.

Case #2: Leslie Dickerson

Leslie Dickerson had a devastating childhood. She

³⁹*Ibid.*

felt unloved and unlovable as far back as she could remember. Emptiness, inner deadness, lack of self-worth, and painful rejection—these were the feelings she experienced in her soul, at the deepest level. She suffered rejection by her parents as well, and their rejection was the picture of them that she carried within her soul. As she grew up, she began to attempt suicide and to abuse alcohol and drugs. She was torn by rage, depression, and anxiety.

Eventually Leslie fell into the mental health treatment system, and she failed to improve with every known treatment: long-term intensive psychotherapy, family therapy, every known medication, and electric shock treatment. She suffered from the most untreatable of psychiatric conditions, borderline personality disorder. For a decade she was in and out of psychiatric hospitals. One time she spent three years continuously in a state mental hospital, misdiagnosed as schizophrenic. Her therapists all gave up on her as untreatable.

One day she gave birth to a daughter, and suddenly knew that she had a choice of either changing her life or losing the baby—if she didn't reorder her life, the state social workers would intervene. The dilemma motivated her to search more desperately than ever for a solution to her problems. Finally, she turned to Jesus Christ for the first time in her life, and prayed for forgiveness. For the first time ever, she felt accepted, she felt lovable, and peace such as she had never before experienced flooded her heart.

From that day forward, Leslie never again attempted suicide. As she took root in this new soil, a profound psychological reorganization occurred. It was based on the experience of feeling forgiven and accepted at her core. As bad as she thought she was, it had all been overcome at Calvary. Her badness, she said, had been washed away by the Blood of the Lamb.

Leslie has now been happy and free of psychiatrists for ten years. She works as a transcriptionist and is devoted to her two children and to her church. Her favorite name for God is "The Great Psychiatrist." She has positive memories of the psychiatrists that used to try to help her, but she claims they did not have the medicine she needed. Before her conversion she had been haunted by an occasional auditory hallucination,

and a paranoid dread of closed doors. Since her conversion she has been free of these psychotic symptoms, without any medication.

Leslie speaks of inviting Jesus into her heart. For more than an hour every morning, before her children wake up, she sits alone in a room and talks with Jesus, whom she calls her best friend. The conversation, she says, goes both ways. She prays about something, and a specific Bible verse then occurs to her. Reading this verse, she interprets it to be Jesus' reply to her prayer.

I asked Leslie how she can tell that a certain idea is what Jesus wants her to do, rather than her own thought. She said there are three criteria:

1. The idea is consistent with what the Bible says.
2. The idea fits her life circumstances.

3. Peace and tranquility come into her life after the decision is made.

After she met Jesus, she discovered that her parents were quite different than she had thought they were. She now sees that they were the best parents they were capable of being. She has reestablished a loving relationship with both of them. In retrospect, she has discovered that her misperception of her mother as a malignant person was based on the experience of being sickly as an infant, so that the infant-mother relationship had gotten off on the wrong track. Although for many years she experienced her mother as "a bad mother," the fact is that she had a decent mother who tried the best she could to care for an infant that could not be comforted.

Leslie speaks of taking Jesus into her heart, so that He dwells inside her. Jesus brought Leslie such a feeling of being accepted that she finally relaxed. Seeking a new relationship with her mother, she discovered that her mother had more to offer than she had ever imagined, and this led to a healing of their relationship. Jesus, she claims, also healed her self-esteem. "I used to be a mouse," she says. "Now I roar like a lion."

In all my years as a psychiatrist, I have met only one person who ever truly recovered from borderline personality disorder. Her name is Leslie Dickerson.⁴⁰

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

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