

Thinking *with the* HEART

Principle,
Practice, and
Purpose for
Spiritual
Wellness

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Horace E. Allen, D.Min.



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Introduction



*I*would define this work as a handbook for those who desire to grow spiritually by shedding many of the old ways in their lives that have kept them bound to habits they find difficult to break. It lays out the principles of our condition, it shows how to resolve those debilitating issues of our hearts and shows what the maturing Christian looks like. It is the result of almost thirty years of experience as a pastor and counselor.

This book has been in the making for many years. I started it several times, but for different reasons, I never got beyond the first chapter. One reason is that each time I had to take leave from writing and return, what I had written did not seem to be moving in the direction that I felt it should be going. I knew where I wanted to go, but was not able to organize the ideas consistently. I continue to feel pressed that this book needed to be written. The more I counsel, the more I have felt the need to have this book to put into the hands of those who needed the principles to follow through with on their own. From the time I finally decided to concentrate on writing this book, it took 12 months to complete.

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In my years of counseling and helping people in their maturing process, I have tried various approaches. I have tried to baptize secular thoughts and methods into Christian principles. I have read many books with words “Christian” and “Counseling” in their titles. However, after a while, it was clear that the only difference between secular and much of Christian counseling was that in Christian counseling Scripture verses were often used. Some Christian counseling may not be Christian as well; however, the underlying methods and approaches are basically secular. Christian counseling, at best, seeks to define and redefine secular approaches to fit Christian ideas. There seems to be a failure to understand that secular approaches to counseling are based on secular theories. Failure to realize this has resulted in Christian counselors subscribing to ideas that are contrary to Biblical thoughts without realizing it. It is like building a house on a foundation that was designed for another building. The goal is to try and make it fit as neatly as possible. The focus on trying to make the old foundation fit, has prevented the architects from designing a foundation that is specific to the house they are trying to build.

The various branches of secular counseling all have clearly defined ideas or theories on which they based and carry out their principles. For example: Freud has his “Psychoanalytic Theory” on which he based his principle of psychoanalysis. Rogers has his “Self Theory” on which he based his Nondirective approach. And Skinner has his “Operant Reinforcement Theory” on which he based his behavioral approach. All of these approaches are based on a single fact and that is that man is a material being. Since man is nothing but material, there is nothing eternal about him, and therefore he is only accountable, in a limited way, to his society. So then, however we may seek to baptize these ideas into Scripture, we are building on a secular foundation that is not designed to apply Christian principles. That is the other reason I felt so compelled to complete this work.

Even as secular theorists define man simply as a functional animal and from that have developed their application, so Christian counselors must define man, from God’s perspective, as the basis for designing their biblical approaches. If an approach is going to be Christian, its theory must be Christian, not simply its applications. Now, trying to

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analyze the exact ideas from secular theories to build a Christian approach, is as I have said, trying to build a house on a foundation not designed for it. The starting place for building a theory for Christian helpers is not even at the place where man is a sinner. If the starting place is the sinfulness of man, then you could well be Freudian. That is starting at the wrong place. The place we must start is where God starts. If we begin with a clear definition of who and what man is, then the approach will fall naturally out of the theory.

The Bible states that man is an eternal being clothed in a body and has an immaterial heart which connects his immaterial soul to his material body and keeps him in contact with the physical world around him. Trying to define man without a clear definition of his heart and its influence on his every action is to fail to establish the proper basis on which to build a Biblical theory. In this work, much of the biblical references on the heart are gathered, and organized according to their references to man's faculties. They explain the nature of man as an eternal being. They show that the immaterial heart is the connection between man's immaterial soul and his material body and the physical world. They also show that man is a sinful being who is responsible for his actions, in that, God's law is written on his heart. They show that the heart is the place from which all of man's feelings, thoughts and actions are generated. The Bible makes it clear that if there is going to be any real and long lasting change in man, it must first take place in his immaterial heart.

It is from this theory that the process for the heart resolution is developed. The theory suggests the process and shows naturally what the goal of resolution should be. The process is to resolve the defective experiences of the heart and the goal is the renewing of the principles that control the mind. *If the heart is out of tune with its creator, then the goal of counseling is to point it towards God.* Hence, the goal of Christian counseling should not be to help people adjust to their situations. Rather, it should be to free them up from the debilitating conditions of their hearts that are pressing them in directions away from God and help them to return to their vertical position of pointing towards God. They need to be freed up so that they can grow spiritually and become all that God intends them to be.

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The goal for the Christian life is not necessarily ease and comfort, but godly living. The struggles we have in our relationships are the oppositions of our hearts against giving and sharing ourselves sacrificially when things are not to our liking. Much of the sadness we feel that we call depression is often the result of our unwillingness to face up to the difficult realities of life. Of course, even genuine depression is often the result of our failure to resolve certain issues. The resolution of these difficulties is not so that all of life's problems will go away, but to help us deal more effectively with the real issues of life, and not to run away from them or find artificial means of escaping them. Effective counseling, or should I say—discipline, like effective preaching or teaching that resolve heart issues must involve both emotional and intellectual aspects. It takes both to effect the heart and change its experiences. Emotional means that a person is moved to see the state of his heart and what needs to be done about it, and intellectual means that there are clear instructions that he needs to follow to make the necessary changes.

One may choose to focus on the process of heart resolution and begin to find relief from the difficulties that have held him back in his spiritual development, he will then begin to see more clearly where he should be in the estimating of himself and what his goal for spiritual maturity should look like. Often, when we strive for spiritual maturity we do not realize that it's a personality change which manifests itself in our feelings, thoughts and actions. When the issues of the heart are changing and made less oppositional to godly desires, the positive effect begins to influence the person's faculties. It is described as the putting off of the old self and the renewing of the attitude of the mind (Eph. 4:22–23). As your renewal continues, you will begin to experience the inner peace and contentment you have always sought.

PART I

The Principles of Heart Health

CHAPTER ONE

The Immaterial Heart, the Center of Man's Being



*T*he immaterial heart has more to do with man's feeling, thinking, and action than his mind does. The modern concept of the mind—as simply the *physical* organ of the brain—is that it is usually the location attributed with all of man's emotional and mental activities. To the contrary, the Bible speaks of the heart as the real *center* of one's being and the place from which all experiences and actions originate.

More often than not, when the Bible speaks of the heart it is not referring to a physical or material organ, but to the immaterial or *nonphysical* center from which all of our conscious and unconscious actions actually originate. The immaterial heart is the center of our physical and spiritual being, the center of our souls. It is from the heart that all of our faculties get their “marching orders,” or energies.

Since the heart of man is the center of his soul, his very being, all that comes from the heart affects every aspect of his person. The immaterial heart is the wellspring of life that must be guarded, for it can be corrupted by what a person sees, hears, and speaks.¹ Of course, if a person's heart is corrupted by evil, it means that his feelings, thoughts, and actions will be affected as well. However, if

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the heart is guarded from corruption, then the person's attitude and dispositions will manifest the purity of his heart.

According to Jesus, it is more important to guard what goes in and out of your heart than what goes into your stomach.² Food may hurt the body only. For instance fatty foods may clog up the arteries of the physical heart, but this situation is not as serious as those things which come *out of* a person's heart. The things that proceed from the heart, according to the Bible, are the most serious because they are the things that *defile* the man—the whole man.

It is very important to preserve the heart from exposure to evil, for the heart is also the center of control for the higher principles within man, a fact which separates him from the beasts. The heart is the center of man's moral life and it is through the heart that man is brought into right relationship with his Creator, God. So then, the entire personality of man is under the control of his heart.

The immaterial heart, not the brain, being the center of man's self, carries out many activities within the person of which he is often completely unaware. In other words, the conscious mind is often not aware of the thinking that is going on even within itself. How can this be?

Quite often when a person actually becomes conscious of a thought or an idea, the heart has already processed it, the emotion has experienced it, and the person may even have acted upon it already.

This "delayed cognition" is common among all of us, whether or not we are aware of it. However, it is manifested more in those with greater dysfunctions or addictions. For example, Carl was working on bringing his pornographic addiction under control when he went into a store to make a purchase. While standing at the checkout counter, he saw some pornographic magazines. He became nervous, agitated, and his palms started sweating. Finally, he was able to get out of the store and into his car. It took a few seconds of trying to calm down before he actually recognized a conscious thought.

While in the store Carl's addiction, which is stored in his immaterial heart (Freud would say it was in his *unconscious mind*), was triggered by the stimulus—the magazine. His emotions processed

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the experience and had he not escaped quickly, he might even have purchased a magazine without *consciously* thinking about it.

What is considered to be “personality” is nothing more than the bent of a person's heart, demonstrated by his desires or his will. It is really the direction in which the heart flows that identifies who and what a person really is. The essence of what we call *personality* is aptly described by the following: “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”³

So, one may say that he did not mean to say something that came out in a sudden burst of temper or anger, yet it flows out of the heart, whether or not he is conscious of anger having been in his own heart. Since it is *in the heart* that good and bad are stored and from which all the issues of life flow, we must assume that what is usually called “mental health” is really “heart health,” and “mind psychology” is really “heart psychology.”

Here, it is the condition of the heart of which we speak and not so much the condition of the mind. The mind, the ability to think, is just one function of the heart. The heart itself governs the personality. *Heart psychology* suggests that it is not the activities of the brain which govern the spiritual and moral side of man, but the activity and contents of the immaterial heart.

The history of modern psychology has created much difficulty for the Christian community in our times. As the church acknowledged that there were many in its ranks that were living unfulfilled lives and displaying many of the dysfunctions that appear in the world today, it slowly gravitated toward psychology. I say *slowly*, because at first the church was very reluctant to do so.

Just twenty-five years ago, when I started counseling Christians in a private practice in Long Island, New York, many churches were quite reluctant to participate. As pastors and elders were forced to face reality, the church was faced with the question: “How much of psychology is Christian?” So, to make secular psychology more “Christian,” we began sifting through modern psychological principles, taking some, and *baptizing them* into Scripture, or aligning them with scriptural ideas.

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Each Christian writer seeking to define Christian counseling declared that his approach was Christian, yet seemingly failed to comprehend that the struggle to find an appropriate model involves a conflict not with the mere external principles of counseling (whether you use scripture verses or the principles of Scripture) but with a far more serious problem. That problem is the fact that modern psychology has no soul.

It should be pointed out and clearly understood that no modern theory of the self holds that there is any psychic agent that regulates man's actions. The self—be it conceived as an object or as a process—or both, is not a homunculus (a little man within the breasts) or an inner mannequin, or soul. Rather, the word *self* refers to psychological processes that are assumed to be governed by the principle of causality.⁴

This is the guiding principle of modern, secular psychology and, to a great extent, that is what Christian psychologists have adopted—with a unique scriptural flavor. Why is this a grave concern?

Not realizing the true nature of the conflict, the foundational beliefs of secular psychology that the mind is an end in itself and that there is no soul, we early pioneers of Christian counseling focused on developing “principles” that reflect, for the most part, secular psychology, albeit dressed in Christian attire. That is, we also developed approaches that focused on the client's mind, which sometimes changed his behavior, but left no lasting change on the personality.

The purpose of *heart psychology* is to cut a fresh pathway for Christian thinking in the field of counseling. I do not deny that mind psychotherapy (modern psychology) has set forth a great deal of truth that has been relevant to both Christians and non-Christians alike. I think what we shall discover in heart psychology is that *mind psychology* is limited in its scope for helping the whole man. Mind psychology seems to minimize the fact that man is more a spiritual being than he is a material being.

Theories that focus on the mind as the center of man's personality limit holistic change and growth. It will be seen in this approach to helping others with serious life problems that heart psychology aims at restoring man to as close a wholeness as he was created to have.

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This is only possible when the immaterial heart, the center of the soul, is retuned, or made right with its Creator.

When the condition of the heart is right, then the man is right. This means that the more man is in tune with the will of his Creator, the more *vertical* become his thinking, feelings, and will. As all becomes right with God, all is becoming right with man, even though a person's outer world may remain the same.

The world is not going to be *right*, or perfect and complete, until Christ comes and renews it by restoring it to its original perfection. When King Solomon was in right relationship with God, his prayer for himself and his people was that their hearts would be fully committed to the Lord, to live by His decrees and to obey His commands.⁵

However, when his foreign wives led him astray and he began seeking after idols, the Bible says that his heart was no longer fully devoted to the Lord his God.⁶ The idea of *fully committed*, or fully devoted, can be translated, *perfect, full, or whole*. *The farther away man is from his Creator, the more he is "bent out of shape" and the more distorted and muddled are his emotions, thoughts, purposes, and actions.*

Definition of the Immaterial Heart

In modern English usage, the word *mind* is the closest to the spiritual concept represented by the word *heart*. However, the concept of mind is quite limited in terms of the much wider concept indicated in usage of the biblical term heart. Why is this?

The thinking of the Old Testament writers was more subjective, and not objective in scientific ways. These writers were not in the habit of simplifying their ideas. So, when they spoke of the heart, it was the whole man, with all its attributes—physical, intellectual, and psychological—of which they thought and spoke. In their thinking, the heart was simply the governing center of all that man is.⁷

In our Scientific Age, the concept of the immaterial heart is considered to be a metaphor; that is, a figure of speech. Many therefore believe that the frequent use of the word *heart* in the Bible is simply implied speech for something else, namely *the mind*. If the idea of the heart is an implied figure of speech, then the idea of the soul is

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also an implied figure of speech. However, if the soul is a spiritual reality, then the heart must be seen as a spiritual reality as well. The difficulty we face here is due to the fact that not even the Christian world is aware that modern science, and particularly mind psychology, has in essence removed the concept of soul from man.

Since man “has no soul” in this view of reality, this doctrine assumes that the biblical word *heart* can be only a metaphor. However, we shall see later that when man is given back his soul, it will not be difficult to understand that the center of that soul is the heart, from which all the activity of his faculties flow. A careful look at the many usages of the word *heart* in both Old and New Testaments will present us with a true picture of man having a center that exceeds his physical brain.

In the Old Testament, there are several words used to describe the heart. I will give the English transliteration for each of the Hebrew words. The most frequent of these words is “leb.” In a very limited sense, “leb” (heart) is used for the physical organ. As the physical heart, it is the seat of human strength and of physical life, as when the Psalmist prayed, “My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes” (Psalm 38:10).

However, *leb* (heart) is more often used to describe the psychological functions of man. It is used most frequently to describe the immaterial center of man’s spiritual, intellectual, and inner nature. It is considered to carry the richest meanings of the biblical terms for all of man’s inner or immaterial nature.⁸

Indeed, the various aspect of man’s psychic life are defined by *leb* (the heart). It sometimes refers to the personality, as in, “I will send the full force of my of my plagues against you (קַיִן, *thine heart*) and against your officials and your people” (Exodus 9:14). “Against you” (thine heart) speaks of Pharaoh, the man; all that he is as a result of what is in his heart. It is used for the emotional state, as when Joseph’s brothers discovered that the money they were supposed to have used to pay for their grain in Egypt was still in their sacks. “Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling . . .” (Genesis 42:28).

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Leb often refers to either the inner nature in general or to one of the three traditional personality functions of man: emotion, thought, and will. Psalm 84:2 says, "My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

Leb, in reference to the heart, is also used intellectually, as the place of reflection, as when Pharaoh refused to consider the many miracles Moses showed him. Pharaoh "turned and went into his palace and would not take even this to heart" (Exodus 7: 23).

Leb, therefore, defines just about every aspect of man's psychic life. It is the immortal center of man's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual being. In short, leb speaks of the person in totality. It is a comprehensive term for man's personality as a whole, for his inner life, and for his character. It is the conscious and deliberate spiritual activity of the self-contained human ego.⁹

Another Old Testament word for heart, which reflects even more the psychological makeup of man, is "lebab." This word is used in almost the same sense as "leb," in referring to the interior of man, except that the ideas of conscience and emotion are more clearly brought out. When one acts without malice or forethought and does something that injures another, he is said to act in the integrity of his heart (lebab). This carries the idea of a clear conscience, as in the case of Abimelech, king of Gerar. When he found out that Abraham and Sarah were not only brother and sister but also wife and husband, Abimelech expressed his own personal innocence, "Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister,' and didn't she also say, 'He is my brother?' I have done this with a clear conscience (KJV, "integrity of heart") and clean hands" (Genesis 20:5).

Lebab is also used in regard to the inner or spiritual quality of one's life, as in, "the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart'" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Still another Old Testament word for heart that has psychological implications, is "nephag." This word means *root*, the outcome of something hidden within, or *to bring out*. It is the place out from which expectations or issues emerge. The heart (nephag) then is that

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innermost place from which desires come—as in the case when an employee sets his heart on receiving his pay at the appointed time set by his employer.¹⁰

Nephag is the place of desire, as in 2 Samuel 3:21, where Abner promised to assemble all of Israel so that King David would rule over all that his heart desired. It is also the place of insincerity, where someone says one thing with his lips but has something else in his heart.¹¹ *Nephag* (heart) is like the root of a tree, which sends forth its substance to its trunk, to its branches, to its leaves, and finally to its fruit. It is in just such a way that the heart of a person sends forth its influence to the emotions, mind, and personality. The immaterial heart is the psychic influencer of *all* of a person's faculties.

Because the mind has replaced the heart as the center of psychological makeup, many Old Testament terms that were originally used to describe the activities of the heart are now being ascribed to the mind. The following are some examples: When we moderns speak of something entering our *mind*, the Bible writers say that it comes into his *heart* (2 Kings 12:4). When we speak of bearing a thought in mind, the Bible says, they lay it to heart (Isaiah 42:25). When we say that we recall a thing to mind, they speak of bringing it back to heart (Deuteronomy 4:39).

We speak of forgetting something, the Bible's author's speak of something departing from the heart (Deuteronomy. 4:9). When we speak of *saying something to oneself*, which means to think about something, they speak of saying it in their heart (Genesis 27:41). When we speak of paying attention to or concentrating on something, the Bible speaks of taking something to heart (Deuteronomy. 32:46)¹²

From what is seen so far, it is safe to say that in the Old Testament the heart is associated with man's inner psychic life in all aspects that we would today consider to be psychological. The heart is related to man's emotional being, his mental processes, and it determines his will or personality.

In turning to the New Testament, we also find that the idea of psychology is related to man's heart more than to his mind. In the New Testament, the word for heart is the Greek word, "kardia," which stands for man's entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and

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the emotional elements. It combines all the meanings of the various Old Testament words for *heart*.¹³

Paul did not frequently use this word *kardia* (heart). However, when he did use *kardia*, it was never to refer to the physical organ, nor in a figurative sense. Heart (*kardia*) is, by Paul's definition, the inner life of man, as when a person's beauty is "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price" (1 Peter 3:4, KJV).

Kardia is frequently used to describe the personality or character, as in the "secret of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (1 Corinthians 14:25). In several passages, this word is the seat of emotional states, as expressed when Paul says, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" (Romans 9:2). It is used for intellectual activities, as when Paul says that people's "thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21). Finally, *kardia* is used to indicate volition, as in the statement, "Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath" (Romans 2:5).¹⁴

As seen in both Old and New Testaments, the word heart is not simply to be used as a figure of speech, suggesting something else, but it is intended to describe the center of man's immaterial being, his psychological life. The various terms used to describe heart show man for who and what he is—on a level that cannot simply be examined under a microscope or defined by his outward behavior.

The heart, with its latent desires, is thus recognized as a governing organ of one's behavior, so that to do a thing from one's heart is to act spontaneously or on one's own initiative, of oneself. Hence it is through the natural force of the heart that a man decides upon a particular course of action against another. Such choice of direction may be regarded as due either to the spontaneous action within the heart or to the influencing of the heart by external forces.

When one follows the natural flow of his own heart, against good advice, this is regarded as a mark of stubbornness. In such a case, we speak of the heart as being heavy, hard, or strong.¹⁵

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There is one aspect of the immaterial heart that the Bible student will not disagree on, and that is that it is a place where God communicates His divine Presence. It is on the heart of man that the requirements of God's law are written, so that conscience becomes instinctual in man. "They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them" (Romans 2:15). And yet when asked to define the heart, people nowadays may not be sure what, in all actuality, it is. Of late, there are many authors writing about the heart. However, there is still no clear definition as to what it is or where it is located!

Scripture instructs us to, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). J. D. Douglas suggests that the first great Commandment probably means, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart; that is, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."¹⁶ That would mean that the heart is the seat from which God operates through His laws—creating love in man, which works itself out through the faculties of the emotion, the mind, and human desire.

Therefore, that which is in a person's heart expresses itself in the person's action, thinking, and will. This idea is expressed in Joshua 22:5, "But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul."

Due to the transgression of humanity's first parents, the present psychological condition of the human heart is a fallen state. Since we inherited the broken nature of their sinful souls, every person born since the fall, except Jesus Christ, has inherited the first couple's moral depravity and defiled heart. Like them, every inclination of the thoughts of our hearts is evil continually—except when our hearts are renewed by the power of God (Genesis 6:5).

The following moral conditions are descriptive of man's heart: It spews out all kinds of evil (Mark 7:21). It is deceitful and incurably wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). It is darkened by sin (Romans 1:21). Its

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desires are shameful (Romans 1:24). It is stubborn and unrepentant (Romans 2:5). It is hardened by sin (Ephesians 4:18). It is far away from God (Mark 7:6).

Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse states that the heart is like a meadow that is green and fair, with wild flowers that you may think to be beautiful. But a shepherd knows that some fields have to be withheld from the sheep as pasture because of parasites in the soil that may not hurt the flowers, but which will destroy the flock. Even so, a person may appear outwardly like the green meadow to the onlooker, but God says the soil of your heart is, by nature, filled with all the parasites of unrighteousness that kill any godward growth and must be dealt with only by redemption.¹⁷

The unredeemed heart, which is not directed godward because its psychic life is influenced by sin, is filled with self-interest, anxiety, frustration, fear, and many other disturbing psychological conditions. The work of resolution must begin with a renewed heart that will result in a new spirit (Ezekiel 18:31), or a healthy psychological condition. For this reason, God chose to start the work of renewal in the heart.

It is within the psychic heart that God by His Word generates faith (Romans 10:6–10), brings conviction of sin (Acts 2:37), works purification (Acts 15:9), and then places his Holy Spirit within us so that we become children of God (Galatians 4:6).

The renewal of the heart through justification does not mean that we experience immediate psychic health. It does not mean that from the moment of conversion you will be perfect in all your relationships and that you will no longer be bothered by some of the things that used to upset you and cause you emotional pain.

Justification simply means that we are placed in right relationship with God and that we can now have fellowship with God, our Father. There is yet the matter of our sanctification, or daily growth, which requires that the heart must continue to be renewed in practical ways, so that our actions reflect more of what our position is, in Christ. In this respect, counseling is often helpful and sometimes needful in helping a person who wants to resolve issues that are hindering his spiritual growth or psychic wellness.

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Heart therapy can facilitate resolution of these troubling matters—whether the concerns are relational difficulties, personal adjustments, help in clarifying belief systems, or dealing with experiences that are robbing you of the peace of God that wants to rule your heart (Colossians 3:15). This approach can help resolve difficult heart issues so that there can be wholehearted obedience to correct, biblical teachings (Romans 6:17).

Heart therapy can help resolve questionable behavior so that you can experience a *cleansing* of the heart so that close communion with God will be possible (Hebrews 10:22). Heart therapy can help resolve difficult moral conflicts so that Jesus Christ would feel completely at home in your heart (Ephesians 3:17).

The following example will illustrate what is possible with heart therapy. Before Donald's heart was renewed, his life was marked by self-destructive behavior. He took illegal drugs, involved himself in pornography and participated in free sex. After he became a believer in Jesus Christ, his life was changed and his desire was no longer towards these self-defeating practices. Donald's interest was to please God with his life. The desire to please God is evidence of a renewed heart.

However, after some years of striving to walk the new life by faith, Don realized that he was still stumbling over some personal issues in his life and could not, by himself, let go of them. Sometimes when he failed, he found it hard to accept God's forgiveness. He knew he was saved, and sometimes he truly felt that God loved him and had forgiven him of his mistakes, but at other times he was not quite sure. Those times of guilt were powerful in his life and he was quite harsh with himself.

For Donald, heart therapy helped resolve the past experiences which were hindering him. Part of his difficulty was separating the harsh and unforgiving attitude of his earthly father from his now kind and loving heavenly father, God. Say what you may, it is not easy to separate the ideal of God, the heavenly Father, from our earthly father, or the significant caregiver in our life. Our ability to live by faith is linked to the experience stored in our hearts. Sure, we need to get beyond comparing God, the divine Heavenly Father, with our earthly, human father; however, moving beyond that comparison is

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part of the sanctification process for many people. And for many, unless or until they get counseling, they never get beyond it, and so fail to enter into the blessedness of their salvation. Other issues that Donald had to learn to resolve were to understand how to deal with past, destructive elements that are stored in the memory banks of his past experience.

The Heart, the Center of the Soul

Regarding the biblical significance of the heart as the center of the self, and particularly with reference to Christian counseling, I was surprised to find that there was hardly any real examination of the subject to be found. The heart as a *spiritual reality* was not treated with any seriousness by counselors of any kind. Whenever it was mentioned, the concept of the heart was quickly passed over as a figure of speech.

Of the few references that I found, Larry Crabb, Jr., in his book *Effective Biblical Counseling* gives a cursory treatment of the subject. In the chapter "Personality Structure," in one subheading, he states, "The Greek word 'kardia' is used in so many different ways that it is difficult to assign to it one central meaning. Literally, of course, it refers to the chief organ of physical life. Scripture teaches that 'the life of the flesh is in the blood' (Leviticus 17: 11) and that the heart fulfills the function of keeping the body supplied with a life-giving supply of blood."

Then, Crabb concludes his discussion with a quote from W.E. Vine: "By an easy transition, the word came to stand for man's entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and emotional elements. In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life."¹⁸ With that one sweep of the brush, the author puts the idea to rest, as nothing more than a metaphor!

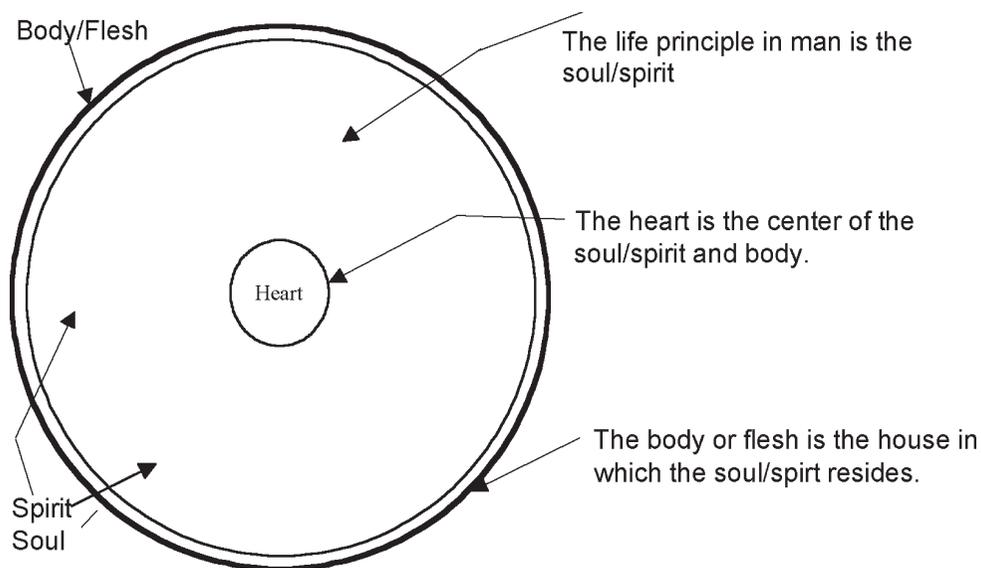
It seems unlikely to me that we can deal with Christian counseling, or write about the soul at all, and not deal with the heart of man. For indeed, if the soul is a spiritual reality, then the immaterial heart must also be a spiritual reality. The immaterial heart is more to the soul than the material heart is to the physical part of man. The immaterial heart is by no means simply a figurative expression for the

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hidden springs of the personal life but is a spiritual reality of man's whole being. It is the *center* of the human soul.

The living person consists of body or flesh and soul/spirit (as in Fig I-1.) In the account of creation in Genesis 2:7, God formed man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life, after which he became a distinctly unique being with a living soul. The clay became flesh after the breath of God was introduced into it as the life, or living principle. That life principle became the soul, or the spirit, of the living being.

It is the life principle, the soul/spirit, that enables all the functions of the human body—feeling, thinking, and will to operate. It is that life principle, which lives on throughout eternity, which may be saved or lost. The soul is the man himself, that in which his identity and personality reside. Higher than the soul there is not anything in man. Therefore, the word *soul* is so often used as a synonym for self. Every soul is every man; my soul is I . . . his soul is he. Soul defines us. It is the soul that sins (Leviticus 4:2).¹⁹ What shall a man give in exchange for his soul (Mark 8:37)?



**The Heart, the Center of the Soul
(Fig I-1)**

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Richard Wolman, in *Thinking With Your Soul*, states that the soul may be defined as the initial actuality of a natural body — endowed with the capacity of life. Soul is the essence of a thing, in the sense of its definitive meaning, its capacity for life. If the eye were an independent organ, sight would be its soul, for it is in terms of sight that the essence (function, purpose for being) of the eye must be defined.”²⁰

In the Old Testament there are three words which denote breath-soul (spirit-soul). The first is “neshamah,” which represents breath-soul as the principle of physical life, or, as we would say, the *actual* breath; in the case of the son of the widow of Zarephath, his sickness was so severe that there, “was no neshmamah left in him” (1 Kings 17:17). The second word is “nephesh,” which may be classified as a principle of life.

Nephesh was used when Elijah complained to God that he was the only one left of the prophets, “and they seek my life, to take it away” (1 Kings 19:10). It contains a psychological emphasis, as when Joseph’s brothers were being tested and they did not know what was happening to them. They remembered their unkindness against their brother, Joseph, and said to each other, “We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life (soul), but we would not listen” (Genesis 42: 21).

Nephesh was also used in the sense of personalities, as in Genesis 12:5 (KJV): “And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls (people) that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan.”

The New Testament word for *breath of life*, soul, is “psyche.” For man, it indicates the being, the self, as in the scripture, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35). Notice that it is here used for the person’s self, or being. The disciples were not to be afraid of those who were able to kill *only* their bodies but were not able to take from them their true existence, their eternal life. Rather they were to fear Him who is able to destroy the physical part of man—the body—and the immaterial part of his being, the soul (Matthew 10:28).

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The concept of *the soul as the self* is more clearly defined in Luke 9:24–25: “For whoever wants to save his life (soul) will lose it, but whoever loses his life (soul) for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? The losing of the soul is the losing of oneself. In Revelation 6:9, the souls of those under the altar who were slain, were calling out to God, asking how long it would be before He judged the inhabitants of the earth. And in Revelation Chapter 20, verse 4, the souls of those who were beheaded were said to be reigning with Christ. These disembodied persons, souls, were conscious and quite active.

The being, man, therefore, consists of an eternal life principle, housed in mortal flesh. Charles Hodge points out that both the Hebrew and Greek words for soul mean *breath, life*, which is the living principle—that in which the whole life of the being, the person, resides. The meaning, he says, is the same for spirit or breath. Soul or spirit (soul/spirit), then, is the life principle not only in man, but also in the brute creation as well. If the same life principle in man is also in beast, what then is the difference between man and beast?

Whereas the life principle, soul/spirit, in brute beasts is irrational and mortal, in man it is rational and immortal. Solomon in his backslidden condition asked the question, “Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21). As much as Scripture is silent on the life principle in beasts, there are clear teachings that the soul/spirit in man continues to live but in different places. Concerning those who are saved “as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6 & 8). Jesus tells us in his parable in Luke 16:19–31 what happens to the soul/spirit of both the righteous and the unrighteous. The soul/spirit of the righteous (Lazarus in this case) is carried into the presence of God as expressed by the simile “angels carried him to Abraham’s side” (verse 22). And concerning the soul/spirit of the unrighteous, “The rich man also died and was buried. In hell (hades) where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away and, with Lazarus by his side” (verse 22a, 23).

The Immaterial Heart, the Center of Man's Being

The soul in man is the created spirit of higher order (than that of the brute beast), which has not only the attributes of sensibility, memory, and instinct, but also the higher powers which pertain to our intellectual, moral, and religious life. It is not one substance in man that is the subject of sensations, and another substance which has intuitions of necessary truth and is endowed with conscience and with the knowledge of God. All manner of consciousness belong to one and the same immaterial, rational substance: the soul.²¹

This twofold view of man as body and soul/spirit is different from the threefold view of body, soul, and spirit. In regards to some passages that seem to favor the threefold view, we have the following responses. Concerning Paul's statement, "May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23), Marvin Vincent's response is, that it is useless to attempt to draw from these words a technical, psychological statement of a threefold division of the human personality. If Paul recognized any such technical division, it was more probably twofold, the body or material part and the immaterial part with its higher and lower sides. He makes references to Romans 6:6–7:5,23.²²

Hodge's response is that Paul simply had a round about way of speaking, as when, in Luke 1:46–47, Mary says, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant." *Soul* and *spirit* in this passage do not mean different things.²³

Because many of the qualities listed for the heart are interchangeable with the soul or life, there is the tendency to assume that the heart and the soul are one. However, since man shares the life principle of soul/spirit with brute beasts, what is it that makes man rational and eternal and the beast irrational and mortal? The one thing that a man has that a beast does not have is an immaterial heart. According to J. D. Douglas in *The New Bible Dictionary*, "It is the heart which makes a man, or a beast, what he is, and governs all his actions."²⁴ The heart is the place from which conscience and guilt arise, since it is on the heart of man that the laws of God are written (Romans 2:15). It is the heart of man that enables him to decide on the appropriateness of a situation (Proverbs 16:23). You may train an animal to react to a

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certain situation. However, when the situation changes, the animal becomes confused. Man is able to have one thing in mind and do something completely different. “For he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. ‘Eat and drink,’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you” (Proverbs 23:7).

To help understand this concept, we need to consider the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, which Daniel interpreted for him, about the tree that would be cut down, leaving the stump to spring up at a later date. The interpretation was that God was going to debase Nebuchadnezzar by changing his heart from that of a man to that of a beast. The king, the dream said, would be driven from men and would live in the field like an animal (Daniel 4:13–16). But since an animal does not have a heart, it simply means that God was going to remove from his heart the consciousness of the higher life principles that only humans can comprehend. For a period of time, Nebuchadnezzar would be in the field living like a beast, and there would be none of God’s natural principles to guide him, until the day when God was ready to restore him.

The most powerful principle that is written on man’s heart is the image of God Himself (Genesis 1:26–27). The image of God reflected in man has placed an infinite qualitative difference between man and the brute. The image of God in man refers to his spiritual qualities, man’s mental and moral attributes as a rational, self-conscious, self-determining creature, capable of obedience to moral laws intended by God for fellowship with Himself. It is all this that makes it possible for man to have dominion over the animal world.²⁵

All that is to be known of God and of His creation is communicated to man in the transcribing of his image as divine law on man’s heart, which is the center of man’s soul. Fox and Sheldrake assert that in our Christian liturgies the heart is placed at the center of the deepest thoughts. In the Anglican prayer book, the “Collect for Purity” starts, “Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” And in the Magnificat, it says, “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” The heart is the psychic center and center of the deepest thought.²⁶

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Fox and Sheldrake believe that the starting point for any reflection on the nature of life is death, comparing the dead body of a person with the living state that preceded it. The amount of matter in the dead body is the same as in the living body; the form of the body is the same and the chemicals in it are the same, at least immediately after death. But *something* has changed. The most obvious conclusion is that something has left the body: and since there's little or no change in the weight, that which has left is essentially immaterial.²⁷

Paul Irion in his work, *The Funeral: Vestige or Value*, obviously had the same concept when he wrote that, when the soul is seen as the true spiritual essence of man, it is quite understandable that the purpose of life should be the cultivation of the soul and at the same time the suppression of all that is associated with the body.²⁸ I may expand that conclusion by saying that any counseling which deals with man simply from the standpoint of adjusting to his present condition and situation, is treating him like a beast, a dumb animal, and not a living being who is an eternal soul.

Often when people seek counseling, it is because of their dysfunctional lifestyle and immoral living, which is causing them serious mental difficulties. There are those therapists who do not believe that it is their responsibility to confront counselees on their evil behavioral patterns. Many therapists feel that their task is to help clarify the confusion that people are experiencing so that they can live their lives as they please. What great fallacy!

How can any human being with an eternal soul, whose center is an immaterial heart on which is written the eternal law of God, ever be so *adjusted* as to be comfortable living immorally and perversely? A man may deaden his conscience, but he may not live comfortably in his evil condition. He will ever be like the restless waves on a wind driven ocean—casting up muck and mire.

The Absence of Soul/Spirit from Mind Psychology

As should now be clear, heart psychology is based on the fact that man has an immaterial heart on which are written God's divine

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principles, which he may not escape, and that the heart is the center of the eternal soul. *Soul* in the Greek is the word “psuche,” which is the word “psyche” in psychology. The meaning of *psyche* has to do with the invisible, immaterial part of man, which is the soul, or breath—the principle of life in the body. It is the quickening life principle that causes conscious life and living.

The original meaning of the word *psyche* is much wider than its limited usage in modern psychology. Actually, the word *psychology*, according to its root word, “psyche,” should mean the study of the soul, or the study of the immaterial life force in man. At least, if we want psychology to stand for mind, then it should be the study of the mind, as meaning the life force that provides consciousness and awareness.

A look at the influence of Greek thought on psychology will help us understand what is called modern psychology. There were two lines of thought in ancient Greek psychology, both focusing on the importance of the soul or the *psyche*. That does not mean that either agrees totally with the Christian concept of the soul. The purpose for referring to these principles is simply to show that at least the early Greeks knew that there was more to man than the material.

The first of these psychological ideas was Stoicism. Stoicism regarded the soul as the finest differentiation in man; the *divine fire* which has one ultimate principle of the universe. Stoicism believed that the divine breath passed into the interior of the human body, filling all its spaces and acquiring its shape, so that it could appear in vision and even be possessed of certain tangibility. It believed that the controlling principle of the soul was seated in the heart and possessed the independent power of freedom.

In this view, the soul, separated from the body in death, is immortal in its own right. The soul, then, we define to be sprung from the breath of God, immortal, possessing body, having form, simple in its substance, intelligent in its own nature, developing its powers in various ways, free in its determinations, subject to growth by opportunity—in its faculties, mutable, rational, supreme, endued with an instinct of presentment, evolved out of one (original).²⁹

The other Greek psychological thought is Platonism, which sees the soul as immaterial, that is, without beginning or end. It believed

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that the soul is preexistent, that it existed before it was incorporated in its body. Its concept is summed up as follows; "The soul is threefold, having an intellectual part, which is called rational, and is the inner man ruling this visible man . . . ; the spirited part, allied to animal nature, is a near neighbor of frenzy; the third, that of desire, has more forms than Proteus."³⁰

As seen in either of these early Greek schools of thought, psychology is tied into the fact of the soul. Even though the Christian understanding of the soul might differ, particularly with the Platonic idea of the preexistence of the soul, it is, however, a clear fact that there was a belief in the relationship of mortal man to a divine being, God, through the soul. Modern psychology, however, has largely discarded the concept of the soul, to its own hurt.

Modern psychology seems to have fallen under the influence of the philosopher Descartes, who withdrew the soul from man and animal and stated that all of nature is *a machine*, turning the body into mere mechanism. In Descartes' view, the soul is no longer the life force in man, but is confined in a small area in the brain that is responsible for man being rational. Descartes, however, had absolutely no idea how that little soul in that small area of the brain interacted with the machinery of the body.³¹

It is because of this kind of influence that psychology sought to reject the idea of a soul, or any other psychic agent, such as a mind, or an ego, or a will, or a self in the sense of an immaterial life force. These philosophers did not think that the rise of science would allow for consideration of any internal force that would regulate the action of man.³² As a result, modern psychology became simply the science for studying behavior,³³ that which could be seen and manipulated, rather than the quickening of life—forces that make man alive.

The psychology of self that was developed, starting with one William James and made popular by Carl Rogers (with his famous "non-directive" or "client-centered" therapy) is not the self as represented by the soul. In their view, the self is simply the feelings and attitudes that a person has about himself and a group of external processes that the individual develops for his own personal adjustment. To them, there is no divine, inner control or principle; these processes of the

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self are basically causal in nature.³⁴ There is no room in “self-theory” or, in particular, Rogers’ client-centered or nondirective therapy, to deal with the moral, ethical, or spiritual aspects of man as the image-bearer of God. The self they speak of is based solely on a humanistic approach to man that denies any suggestion that there is a Creator. A brief look at some of the models of mind psychology will reveal their complete denial of an immaterial soul in man.

The Freudian Psychoanalytic model, which is based on the three internal systems (id, ego, and superego), seems to come closest to the concept of heart psychology. The “id,” in particular, seems to suggest that man is basically selfish and is controlled by instinctual drive and function, which is based on what is called the “pleasure principle.”

Some psychologists have even suggested that the Freudian system of psychology is essentially negative because it views man as selfish, predatory, and irrational. This idea is sometimes confused with the biblical doctrine of man as a fallen creature, a sinner, who is more predisposed to practice evil than good. However, on closer examination Freudian psychology is not consistent with Scripture. The “id” in Freudian psychology does not equate to the soul of man, the immaterial life principle, or the heart, which is the center of the soul. The *id* is strictly a biological process, a physical craving.

In Freudian thought, man is dominated by instinctual biological drives, as well as unconscious desires and motives. The id, like the other two systems, ego and superego, derive their energy from the food a person eats. According to Freud, eating is responsible for the various functions of the body, such as circulation, respiration, muscular exercise, perceiving, thinking, and remembering. What Freud considers to be psychic energy, thinking, has no more force behind it than what comes from the food one consumes.³⁵

While on the surface, Freudian psychology may seem to be consistent with biblical truth, the fact is that its principle is far from Christian in nature. In this view, man is no more than a machine that is driven by purely biological drives. There is no life force that exists after his eyes are closed in death.

The behaviorist approach to man is different from heart psychology, in that the behaviorist sees man as being neutral in his

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nature, waiting to be influenced by whatever he comes into contact with. Man, therefore, is neither bad nor good by nature, but can be good or evil, rational or irrational, depending on how his past has conditioned him.³⁶ This model teaches that the nature and direction of man's behavior is determined largely, if not entirely, by forces beyond his control. The idea of man's freedom of choice is largely an illusion. The hope of man, therefore, rests in science creating a better future world.³⁷ This approach denies the fact of a life principle, the soul, and divine influence within the heart of man.

The Humanistic approach to man opposes the Bible in saying that man is basically good by nature. If there is evil in man's nature, it reasons, it is because society has frustrated him. Under normal conditions man's propensities are in the direction of cooperative, friendly, and constructive behavior. Coleman quotes the humanist Carl Rogers, saying, "One of the most revolutionary concepts to grow out of our clinical experiences is the growing recognition that the innermost core of man's nature, the deepest layers of his personality, the base of his 'animal nature' is positive in nature—is basically socialized, forward-moving, rational, and realistic."³⁸ Of course, the humanist goal is to create a good society that, they believe, would produce a good person.

All these models suggest one basic conclusion: they do not agree with the Bible, or with the basic, original concept of psychology, that the immaterial soul of man exists and its condition is essential to human health. Even Freud, who believed that man is basically evil, said that this fact was because of biological drives and not because of his sinful, immaterial heart, which the Bible says is "deceitful above all things and incurably wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). *None of the models see the condition of man as sinful and in need of eternal help, since none consider that there is anything eternal about man. Rather, they believe that man's future rests in man's ability to improve his world so that he will live up to his ultimate potential. The problem with all of this is that the more technologically efficient man becomes, the more material advancement he achieves, the more destructive he gets, the more neurotic he becomes, and the more uncertain his life seems.*

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Man is responsible to his Creator, to whom he must eventually answer. But the Creator is not expecting man to pull *himself* up by his own boot straps through technology or any human advancement or achievement. Rather, the Creator has provided the remedy to restore man to the high standard of rightness with Himself. Mind psychology says in essence that such an assessment of man is not valid science. It seeks to develop its own method of defining human personality. It believes that man can be known simply by studying him in his environment.

The assumption of mind psychology is that man is a whole person in his natural environment; therefore his true behavior will evolve only in that setting. It insists that a view of man in his natural habitat will provide the knowledge needed to understand the true nature of man.³⁹ This, of course, is based on the idea that man is evolving, that it is his environment which makes him truly man. If only it were so!

Heart psychology begins with the Bible's description of man as having been made in the image of God. Mankind was made upright before it went in search of foolish pleasure.⁴⁰ Subsequently, men fell from their original state of moral and spiritual uprightness and into their present state of depravity as a result of seeking after their own self-centered schemes. So, contrary to all the science that states that man is being ennobled, rising from the swamp as an amoeba (a one-cell animal found in stagnant water), the Bible states that man was demoted for his transgression. His demotion was not from a human being, a soul, to a brute or to some lower species, but from his place of perfection and righteousness. Since then, God has been seeking to reconcile man with Himself, so that man can once again have fellowship with God, not so that he can become more human. So then, what man is in need of is heart restoration and reconciliation to his created position—and not *ennobling* to some abstract place of perfection where he has never been.

Summary

In this chapter, I have defined *heart psychology* as the immaterial heart, the center of man's self, from which all of man's desires, attitudes, and dispositions proceed. A careful study of the word heart

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as it is used in Scripture shows that the heart is not merely a figure of speech but, for the most part, is used as a factual reference to the center of one's personality. In both the Old and New Testaments the heart is seen as the seat of all spiritual, intellectual, and emotional functioning.

The heart is also the center of man's mental, moral, and rational ability. In short, one's personality, which represents who and what a person is, comes from the heart. For a man to be right with God, his heart must be changed, and if he will experience true emotional and mental wellness, it is the heart that must be sanctified.

The heart is the center of the soul/spirit, which is the life principle in man. The soul is eternal, which makes man an eternal being housed in a body of flesh, which is temporal. Man in his true nature has a higher place in the universe than simply to exist like the beasts. He was made in the likeness and image of his Creator and therefore must answer to Him. It is often a sinful and evil lifestyle that causes dysfunction and confusion in the lives of many people. Many live as though they were beasts without morals or reasoning, then wonder why their lives are so messed up.

Mind psychology may only attempt to clarify such misery but can never bring such individuals to wellness, because it is devoid of a soul. The very root of the word "psychology" is from the Greek word "psyche," which is the incorporeal soul of man, yet, strangely, modern mind psychology denies the existence of such an element in man by defining psychology strictly as the study of man's *behavior*. Because mind psychology has no understanding of the existence and importance of soul, it may not help those whose soul depends on regeneration for restoration. *Heart psychology* places the soul back in man, and makes him responsible to his Creator for the laws He has written on his heart. Thus, as we shall see further, the concept of heart psychology provides a fresh and more effective approach to Christian counseling.