

The theory and practice of soul care in the thought of Eduard Thurneysen (1888–1974) and its implications for finding a faithful and hopeful methodology of Reformed evangelical soul care for ministries in the public space.

by

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and to the best of my knowledge contains no materials previously published or written by another person. It contains no material extracted in whole or part by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis. I also declare that any assistance received from others in terms of design, style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged. The thesis is less than 50,000 words in length, excluding bibliography.

Thesis Abstract

The ministry of pastoral care (or “the cure of souls”) and the theology that undergirds such practice has traditionally been located in the context of the church. Throughout the twentieth century, new approaches to pastoral care emerged that were particularly designed for the public space rather than the church. Some of these approaches, however, shifted significantly from the classical paradigm by downplaying the role of Scripture and traditional theological orthodoxies in favour of social science theories and practices. Such approaches remain influential in pastoral care practice in the public space to this day. This thesis argues that it is possible to articulate a Reformed evangelical methodology of soul care in the public space that is both faithful to Scripture and holds out hope to people in whatever non-church context they are located. A significant twentieth-century European pastoral theologian, Eduard Thurneysen, has been selected for the central case study because his own confessional and biblical stance provides a valuable lens through which to explore aspects of pastoral theology, methods of ministry and the practice of soul care. Thurneysen’s overall approach to soul care is located in his mature work, *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (1946), translated into English under the title, *A Theology of Pastoral Care* (1962), and his method is analysed and evaluated. Thurneysen located all practical ministry and soul care under a broader category of wisdom. Six features of the holistic soul care wisdom that he sought can be identified. Firstly, effective soul care is aware of the socio-cultural location of both the practitioner and the recipient of care. Thurneysen’s personal approach owes much to significant intellectual influences, the tragic circumstances in his family of origin, and his geographical location in German-speaking Switzerland during two World Wars and the intervening Great Depression. Secondly, soul care must pay careful attention to orthodox theological truths. Thurneysen’s theological beliefs concerning Christ, the Holy Scripture, the Trinity, salvation, and the church’s role in mediating and proclaiming the forgiveness of sins were central to his practice of soul care. Thirdly, soul care requires a robust anthropology that can articulate the relationship between the nature of humanity as revealed in Scripture and what can be known from a careful study of creation order, particularly through the disciplines of psychology and sociology. Fourthly, method of engagement matters in the process of soul care. Thurneysen highlighted the significance of the

formal art of conversation in his care, which he termed “the soul conversation”. Fifthly, faithful soul care depends upon the personal qualifications of the carer, including integrity in their life of faith, the ability to be self-reflective, and having a posture of open curiosity about people and the world. Finally, appropriate care requires a willingness to enter a conversation with the desire to connect with the other’s soul concerns without a preconceived outcome in mind. Thurneysen’s wisdom as expressed through his holistic approach to soul care provides a scaffold for a robust Reformed evangelical ministry framework. The biblical wisdom that underpinned his ministry principles are worth retrieving as they offer much to the development of twenty-first century soul care ministries in the public space from a theologically conservative perspective.

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In memory

Frances May Bradford

9th March 1921 – 23rd September 2021

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“His study-room, and indeed his whole outlook upon the Church and world, is like Noah’s ark into which went every kind of animal and, being saved, went out again trusting in the promise of the rainbow which joined heaven and earth. We may ask where he learned the art of dealing with people in such a way as this the chief thing of all were I not to say that his openness toward all things human has a secret correspondence to the openness with which, apart from all human voices, he seeks to hearken to the Holy Scriptures.”¹

—Karl Barth

¹ Karl Barth quoted by James D. Smart, “Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian,” *Theology Today*, 16.1 (1959): 76. The quote is from a letter written by Karl Barth in the mid-1930s, where he set down his impressions which were intended to serve as a preface to a projected English edition of Thurneysen’s essays and addresses.

Introduction

My desire in undertaking this research was to articulate a Reformed evangelical practice of soul care in the public space that is faithful to Scripture and that holds out hope to people in their context. I aimed to describe a pastoral theology that underpinned the methodological aspects of pastoral ministry and practice of care in the public space, consistent with Scripture.

As I commenced researching soul care in the public space from a Reformed evangelical perspective, it became apparent that literature and research were absent on this topic from a conservative theological perspective. The absence of literature did not mean that faithful ministry was not happening, but rather that each chaplain or team of chaplains was working their material up from scratch and borrowing eclectically from different sources and traditions. The most common sources informing these chaplaincy and pastoral care ministries were Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), different schools of psychology, education, and Christian counselling. It was inevitable that the chaplains were making choices to pursue one course of action over another based on implicit beliefs about how best to care for souls and how people change. A further challenge emerges as there are few resources to evaluate the ministry and an absence of best-practice frameworks.

The critical challenge for a soul carer working out of a Reformed evangelical theological paradigm was working across an incommensurability of paradigms that arose following a century-old division within sectors of Protestant Christianity that opened up in the early twentieth century between the fundamentalist and modernist Christians in the US and between conservative and liberal Christians in the UK. The reasons that placed the theology of chaplaincy and pastoral care ministries on one side of the divide and expository preaching and evangelistic ministries on the other side have their roots in theology, philosophy and the social sciences with differences between common-sense and romantic philosophy, notions of objective truth and subjective realities, and different views of anthropology.

The modern pastoral care movement

The twentieth-century pastoral care movement, conceived in America, melded progressive theology and the emerging psychological and social sciences. The Clinical Pastoral Education method introduced concepts and ideas as described by Anton Boisen's concept of the *Living Human Document*² and his books, *The Exploration of the Inner World*³ and *Out of the Depths: An Autobiographical Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience*,⁴ Seward Hiltner's *Functions of Pastoral Care*,⁵ Carl Roger's *Client Centred Counseling*,⁶ Paul Tillich's *Method of Correlation*,⁷ Cablesch and Jaekle's *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspectives*,⁸ and Howard Clinebell's *Basis Types Of Pastoral Care and Counseling*.⁹ Other prominent practitioners from the 1930s through to the 1950s expanding on the new clinical pastoral paradigm were Richard Cabot, Russell Dicks¹⁰ and Wayne Oates.¹¹ In the UK, Liberal Methodist minister Leslie Weatherhead¹² wrote extensively in a similar vein on psychology, religion, healing and suffering. William James' *Varieties of Religious Experiences*,¹³ Sigmund Freud,¹⁴ Carl Jung¹⁵ were influential as were Elwood Worcester and the Emmanuel Church,¹⁶ out of which CPE had grown.

² Anton Boisen coined the term Living Human Document to describe the person in the front of the pastoral carer, Glenn H. Asquith Jr., "Anton T. Boisen and the Study of 'Living Human Documents,'" *Journal of Presbyterian History* 60.3 (1982): 244–65.

³ Anton T. Boisen, *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience* (Chicago and New York: Willett, Clark and Co., 1936).

⁴ Anton T. Boisen, *Out of the Depths: An Autobiographical Study of Mental Disorder and Religious Experience* (New York: Harper, 1960).

⁵ Seward Hiltner described his ministry in terms of the Functions of Pastoral Care – healing, guiding and sustaining, in chapters 6, 7, 8, in his book *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958). Clebsch and Jaekle added reconciling (1964), Clinebell added nurturing (1966) and Lartey added liberating (2003).

⁶ Carl Rogers, *Client-centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).

⁷ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951), 8.

⁸ William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective: An Essay with Exhibits* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

⁹ Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966).

¹⁰ Richard C. Cabot and Russell L Dicks, *The Art of Ministering to the Sick* (New York: Macmillan, 1936).

¹¹ Wayne Oates, *The Bible in Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953).

¹² Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Psychology and Life* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1934).

¹³ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901–1902* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902).

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (1900)*, 4th ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915).

¹⁵ Carl Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, trans. Beatrice M. Hinkle (London: Kegan Paul Trench Trubner, 1916).

¹⁶ Katherine McCarthy, "Psychotherapy and Religion: The Emmanuel Movement," *Journal of Religion and Health* 23.2 (1984): 92.

The story of modern pastoral care in the English-speaking world could be a story of ministry moving away from the Bible toward psychotherapy through various American schools of clinical pastoral training. E. Brooks Holifield's *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* or Allison Stoke's *Ministry After Freud* traces this path, which is set into a broader context described by Phillip Rieff's *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* and G. R. Evans' *History of Pastoral Care*. Each of these books charts the trajectory of pastoral ministry from the church into the world of psychology and psycho-therapeutic interventions.

The architects of the modern American pastoral care paradigm self-consciously created a radical disruption. Rodney Hunter, a prominent academic of the American pastoral care movement, differentiates the twentieth-century movements as an academic discipline from "the broader history of pastoral care,"¹⁷ describing the new discipline as the "relatively recent clinically oriented care and counseling movement in North American Protestantism."¹⁸

The specific focus of the new discipline of pastoral theology blended liberal theology and social science, educating ministers as practitioners incorporating psychological insights and methods into ministry.¹⁹ Hunter stated that "All former theology and ministry, even the most sophisticated and profound, now seemed psychologically superficial and innocent, and needed to be brought full force into the lost innocence of the depth psychological revolution of late modern culture."²⁰

Thomas Oden confirms Hunter's emphasis while offering a stinging critique of the modern pastoral care movement and pastoral theologians, including Howard Clinebell, Seward Hiltner and Wayne Oates, demonstrating the movement's overwhelming dependence upon psychologists Freud, Jung,

¹⁷ Rodney Hunter, "Pastoral Theology: Historical Perspectives and Future Agendas," *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 16.1 (2006): 7–30.

¹⁸ Rodney Hunter, "What Is Pastoral About Pastoral Theology? Insights from Eight Years Shepherding," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 38.

¹⁹ Seward Hiltner articulated the most prominent early example of this theological perspective in his *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958).

²⁰ Hunter, "Historical Perspective".

Rogers, Sullivan, Berne and Fromm, rather than upon pastoral theologians of the past.²¹ Oden notes a few exceptions, one of whom is the English doctor, Frank Lake.²²

Confessional and evangelical responses

Oden is one of several American theologians and psychologists who wrote from a confessional evangelical stance in the latter and turn of the twentieth century. Later practitioners included Paul Pruyser (1968),²³ Jay Adams (1970),²⁴ Henri Nouwen (1972),²⁵ Gary Collins (1972),²⁶ Bruce Narramore (1979),²⁷ Eugene H Peterson (1992),²⁸ Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger (1995),²⁹ (2006)³⁰ and (2016),³¹ Andrew Lester (1995),³² and Robert Dykstra (2005).³³

Likewise, in Britain, from the mid-1970s, several ground-breaking works were published, including R.E.O. White's *A Guide to Pastoral Care* (1976),³⁴ Alistair V. Campbell's *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (1984),³⁵ Derek Tidball's *Skilful Shepherds* (1986),³⁶ Stephen Pattison's *Critique of Pastoral Care* (1988),³⁷ David Lyall's *Counselling In The Pastoral And Spiritual Context* (1994),³⁸ Andrew Purves's *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (2001)³⁹ and *Reconstructing Pastoral*

²¹ Thomas C. Oden, "Recovering Lost Identity" *Journal of Pastoral Care* 34.1 (1980), 11–12.

²² Oden, "Recovering" 10..

²³ Paul Pruyser, *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

²⁴ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

²⁵ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

²⁶ Gary R. Collins, *Effective Counseling* (Carol Stream: Creation House, 1972).

²⁷ John D. Carter and Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979).

²⁸ Eugene H. Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

²⁹ Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A new Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

³⁰ Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Pray without Ceasing: Revitalizing Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

³¹ Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable: Trauma, Gospel and Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

³² Andrew D. Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1995).

³³ Robert Dykstra, *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2005).

³⁴ R. E. O. White, *A Guide to Pastoral Care: A Practical Primer of Pastoral Theology* (Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis, 1976).

³⁵ Alistair V. Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*, New ed. (London: DL&T, 1984).

³⁶ Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

³⁷ Stephen Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM, 1988).

³⁸ David Lyall, *Counselling in the Pastoral and Spiritual Context* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994).

³⁹ Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

Theology: A Christological Foundation (2004),⁴⁰ John Swinton's, *From Bedlam to Shalom* (2000)⁴¹ and *Raging with Compassion* (2007),⁴² and Ewan Kelly's *Personhood and Presence* (2012).⁴³

There followed an increasing number of books that explore the interdisciplinary boundaries between theology and psychology and sociology, including Paul Ballard and John Pritchard's *Practical Theology in Action: Christian thinking in the Service of the Church and Society* (1996),⁴⁴ Mark McMinn and Timothy Phillips's, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology and Theology* (2001),⁴⁵ Paul H. Ballard and Steven Holmes's *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church – Using the Bible in Pastoral Practice* (2005),⁴⁶ Eric Johnson's *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (2007),⁴⁷ Richard Osmer's *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (2008),⁴⁸ Jane Leech and Michael Paterson's *Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook* (2013),⁴⁹ and Pete Ward's *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry and the Life of the Church* (2017).⁵⁰

The modern pastoral movement remained unchallenged, with few exceptions until the above titles began emerging in the 1970s in the US and the 1980s in the UK. However, the exceptions that existed were significant for several reasons. Pastoral theologian, Donald Capps, suggested that during the 1960s, there was a *European Interlude* in the history of pastoral literature. Capps wrote, "While there were few if any new American contributions during the early 1960s, the issue of the Bible's role in pastoral counselling was kept alive through translations of European Works."⁵¹ During this interlude,

⁴⁰ Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

⁴¹ John Swinton, *From Bedlam to Shalom: Towards a Practical Theology of Human Nature. Interpersonal Relationships and Mental Healthcare* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁴² John Swinton, *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁴³ Ewan Kelly, *Personhood and Presence: Self as a Resource for Spiritual and Pastoral Care* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2012).

⁴⁴ Paul Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian thinking in the Service of the Church and Society* (London: SPCK, 1996).

⁴⁵ Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology and Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001).

⁴⁶ Paul H. Ballard and Steven Holmes, eds., *The Bible in Pastoral Practice: Readings in the Place and Function of Scripture in the Church – Using the Bible in Pastoral Practice* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2005).

⁴⁷ Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007).

⁴⁸ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

⁴⁹ Jane Leech and Michael Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook* (London: SCM, 2013).

⁵⁰ Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017).

⁵¹ Donald Capps, "The Bible's Role in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Four Basic Principles," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 3.4 (1984): 5–15.

particularly in the mid-50s to the mid-60s, several European works that did not build on the modern pastoral care movement were published.

The European interlude

Donald Capps identified four different approaches to using Scripture in twentieth-century pastoral care movements from 1936, which he designated as four different pastoral care movements. He identified the early period of the modern pastoral care movement that originated around the ministry of Anton Boisen, as the *emerging consensus* period which ran from 1936 until 1960. During this time, the Bible was considered a spiritual resource, however “biblical perspective only indirectly informed care and counseling goals.”⁵²

Capps’s second movement in pastoral care was the *European interlude*, represented by a group of individual doctors and theologians, emanating from several European nations.⁵³ These practitioners came from Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Austria and England. They were initially published in Dutch, French, German and in one case English, writing from 1939 up until the early 60s, and subsequently, their works were translated into English, being published between 1954 and 1966, appearing during a lull in the publishing of American pastoral care literature.

A representative sample of these writers includes Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Tournier, Eduard Thurneysen, Viktor Frankl, Frank Lake, Heije Faber and Ebal van der Schoot. The earliest writer of this group was German theologian and dissident Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whom the Nazi regime executed in 1945. On the eve of the Second World War, Bonhoeffer wrote *Gemeinsames Leben* (1939), published in English in 1954 as *Life Together*.⁵⁴ Swiss doctor Paul Tournier wrote *Médecine de la Personne* in 1941 during the war, which was not published in English until 1965 as *The Healing*

⁵² Donald Capps, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counseling* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 18.

⁵³ Capps, *Biblical Approaches*, 28.

⁵⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer is not remembered primarily as a pastoral theologian. Both *Life Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship* contain much pastoral instruction, however during this time he wrote a book *Seelsorge* (1935–1939; GS 5, 363–415) which was not published in English until 1985: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care*, trans. Jay C. Rochelle (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

of *Persons*.⁵⁵ However, his first work to reach the English-speaking public was his *Bible et Médecine* (1951), entitled *A Doctor's Casebook: in Light of the Bible* (1954).⁵⁶ The *Casebook* outlined Tournier's approach to biblical integration. In 1959 Jewish psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, was published, an autobiographical account translated from the 1946 ...*trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen: Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager*. ("...Nevertheless Say 'Yes' to Life: A Psychologist Experiences the Concentration Camp").⁵⁷ The most theologically significant contribution to this cluster was Swiss pastoral theologian Eduard Thurneysen's *A Theology of Pastoral Care* (1962), an abridged copy of his *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (1946).⁵⁸ In the early 60s, Dutch doctors Heije Faber and Ebal van der Schoot contributed *The Art of Pastoral Conversation* (1965), translated from the 1962 Dutch edition *Het Pastorale Gesprek: een Pastoraal-psychologische Studie*.⁵⁹ Lastly, English Missionary psychiatrist Frank Lake published his *Clinical Theology: A Theological and Psychiatric Basis to Clinical Pastoral Care* in 1966.⁶⁰

The critical difference highlighted between the prevailing American practice and the writers of the European interlude lay in attitudes to Scripture and the person and work of Christ. The Europeans accepted the Scriptures as revelation from God, and faith as something God-given. Consequently, the object of faith was something external to the person and perusing faith required a response of reorientation and realignment to accord with the trinitarian God of Scripture or, in Frankl's case, God as revealed in the Old Testament. In contrast, the modern American approach appropriated God as a spiritual resource in the psychotherapeutic pastoral treatments. In broad brush strokes, the European approach focused on the otherness and transcendence of God and the soul's well-being, in contrast to

⁵⁵ Paul Tournier, *The Healing of Persons*, trans. Edwin Hudson from *Médecine de la Personne* (Paris: Delachaux, 1941) (New York: Harper and Row 1965).

⁵⁶ Paul Tournier, *A Doctor's Casebook in the Light of the Bible*, trans. Edwin Hudson from *Bible et Médecine* (Neuchâtel / Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1951) (London: SCM, 1954).

⁵⁷ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy Part One* (trans. Ilsa Lasch from ...*trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen: Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager* (Wien: Deuticke, 1946) (Boston: Beacon, 1959).

⁵⁸ Eduard Thurneysen, *A Theology of Pastoral Care*, trans. Jack A. Worthington and Thomas Wieser from *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer, 1946) (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 1962).

⁵⁹ Heije Faber and Ebal van der Schoot, *The Art of Pastoral Conversation*, trans. Abingdon Press from *Het Pastorale Gesprek: een Pastoraal-psychologische Studie* (Utrecht: Erven J. Bijleveld, 1962) (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965).

⁶⁰ Frank Lake, *Clinical Theology: A Theological and Psychiatric Basis to Clinical Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966).

the American approach, which focused on divine immanence and psychospiritual health, emphasising meaning and purpose. The relative position and weight given to Scripture concerning psychological sciences in pastoral care is at the heart of the conflict.

Pastoral theologians across the theological spectrum noted the disruption of change of direction that Capps identified with his European interlude.⁶¹ Pastoral Theologian Seward Hiltner, writing from a progressive perspective, hoped that Faber and van der Schoots's book would begin a new era in European theological scholarship.⁶² Derek Tidball, an evangelical Baptist, identified Swiss pastoral theologian Eduard Thurneysen as providing a *new* clear model of evangelical pastoral theology. However, he commented that he could have as easily selected Swiss doctor Paul Tournier or English missionary doctor Frank Lake to make the same point.⁶³ Eric Johnson, a conservative American, documenting a history of the relationship between Christianity and psychology, resonated with the idea of a European interlude as providing a Barthian soul-care alternative, most clearly exemplified by Eduard Thurneysen, which when compared to the dominance of Tillichian thought in American pastoral care literature, provided a favourable contrast.⁶⁴ However, while acknowledging Thurneysen's Barthian approach, Rodney Hunter challenged it, stating, "Our field is historically committed in its theological methodology to the centrality of human experience in all forms, religious and non-religious, not to a transcendent revelation." Despite writing from different perspectives, Capps, Tidball, Johnson and Hunter all agree that a group of European pastoral practitioners used the Bible in a distinctly different way from Paul Tillich's correlation method. Each writer offered an alternative basis of pastoral care, which influenced later schools of pastoral care in the later part of the twentieth century, to which Capps testifies.

Capps documents the emergence of his third and fourth movements from, and responding to, the European interlude. Capps's third movement was the *conservative developments* which began in the

⁶¹ Capps selects for particular consideration the 1962 English edition of Eduard Thurneysen's *A Theology of Pastoral Care* translated from the 1946 German work, and the 1965 edition translated from the 1962 Dutch edition of *The Art of Pastoral Conversation: Effective Counselling through personal Encounter* by Heije Faber and Ebal van der Schoot.

⁶² Seward Hiltner, in the Introduction of Faber and van der Schoot, *Pastoral Conversation*, 7.

⁶³ Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds*, n. 233.

⁶⁴ Eric Johnson, *Foundations*, 74–76.

early 1970s, beginning with Jay Adams's Bible-based Nouthetic counselling followed shortly after by Gary Collins's integrative counselling.⁶⁵ Capps's fourth movement, with which he identifies himself, began in the 1980s and was a *moderate resurgence* as a "fourth phase in the modern pastoral care movement's approach to the Bible," which included Capps and others working from a Barthian perspective.⁶⁶

A unique characteristic of the European interlude was Europe's relative independence from the liberal American pastoral care movement. The Europeans are distinguished from the mid-century American movement because although they addressed practical ministry in conversation with psychological insights, they did so neither rejecting Scripture, nor the atonement, nor the need for conversion to Christ. The theological background of these works, which arose from European movements, is equivalent to the broad centre of evangelicalism, or what Annette Aubert described as "mediating theologies."⁶⁷ A mediating theology retained a distinctly biblical point of view, engaging with other contemporary disciplines of literature, literary criticism, science, psychology and social science without collapsing into these other disciplines.

During the time that these pastoral theologians were formulating their ideas, Europe endured the political and existential crises of two world wars and the intervening depression. These tumultuous times lent gravity to their practice which needed to consider the role of sin and evil, concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation, as well as the balance between divine and human responsibility concerning historical circumstances of extreme economic and social unrest, and in the period that saw the capitulation of the German church to Nazism. The writers' approach to this European interlude differed significantly from the advances proposed by early twentieth-century modern American pastoral care movements that had moved from theology in the direction of psychological self-

⁶⁵ Capps, *Biblical Approaches*, 31.

⁶⁶ Capps, *Biblical Approaches*, 36.

⁶⁷ Annette Aubert provides another schema through which to evaluate this middle group. Aubert describes a group, designated mediating theologians, who lie between confessing Protestants, who held to substitutionary atonement and the sufficiency of Scripture and liberal Protestants, and who followed Schleiermacher in a subjective reading of Scripture and salvation. Mediating theologians engaged with Schleiermacher, affirming his emphasis on Christianity as a life rather than a doctrine but taking a more objective view of the atonement and sufficiency of Scripture.

realisation and self-affirmation. They drew on traditions of confessional biblical scholarship in variously the Reformed, Evangelical or Barthian schools, emphasising a need for a living, personal Christian faith while at the same time drawing deeply on the existential literature of Christians Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky and the work of Jewish philosopher Martin Buber.

Despite the proliferation of literature engaging Christian pastoral care and counselling from several perspectives, from the mid-1950s onwards, including confessional and evangelical perspectives, there are very few written from a Reformed evangelical perspective and none written with a view to pastoral or soul care ministry into the public space. The lack of any account of soul care ministries into the public space raises several questions about the relationship between Reformed evangelical theology and its practice theory. The first question to explore is why conservative evangelicals lost their curiosity and exploration of holistic soul care ministries in the service of others that were part of their history. Secondly, given the lack of pastoral and practical theology written from a Reformed evangelical perspective, one wonders how chaplains and other soul care ministers choose one course of action over another. Thirdly, related to the lack of scholarship, how indeed is soul change to be understood? Finally, given the current lack of a robust pastoral and practical Reformed evangelical theology, why there has been so little engagement with other Christians who faced similar challenges in care for members of the church and people in the wider society, and on what basis do they justify their soul care practice? It is necessary to return to the early twentieth century and a crisis that gave birth to the modern Reformed evangelical movement to untangle these queries related to lack of later engagement.

The modern Reformed evangelical movement

The modern pastoral care movement arose from one side of a division between liberal and conservative Protestantism. It is necessary to understand the thought world that gave both sides to understand the incommensurability that emerged. Reformed or conservative evangelicals are active across Protestant denominations in the Calvinist tradition. Historically, Reformed evangelicals draw on Puritan spirituality and trace their evangelical roots back to the eighteenth-century evangelical

revivals around George Whitfield (1714–1770) in Britain, while the New England awakenings centred around Johnathan Edwards (1703–1758).

In 1903, James Ormiston, the editor of the *Gospel Magazine* in the UK, explained that “It [the magazine] was to be ‘Calvinistic Evangelical and Protestant,’ expounding ‘The Doctrines of Grace’ and resisting errors such as Roman Catholicism, Anglican sacerdotalism, rationalism, and Arminianism.”⁶⁸ This statement highlights the Reformation emphasis on the doctrine of grace and demonstrates the extent to which aspects of Reformed evangelicalism are defined over and against other theologies and religious practices. Ormiston’s statement outlined the key historical touchstones for Reformed evangelical orthodoxy.⁶⁹ Reformed evangelicals wholeheartedly preached the Bible, taught the atonement and forgiveness of sins at the cross, engaged in evangelism and mission and prayer, but differed significantly from other evangelicals in their emphasis on doctrine and confessions of faith and avoidance of emotionalism.

In addition to the theological differences, the conservative evangelical differed philosophically with the modernising forces within evangelicalism. The conservatives held more closely to the inheritance of the Enlightenment—the place of reason, common sense and objective truths, while rejecting Romantic emphases of the natural person, the dynamic and evolving nature of culture, poetic notions of inspiration and subjective accounts of experience. In contrast to the conservative evangelicals, the liberal Christians actively engaged with the Romantic emphases of individual expressionism and the dynamics of lived experience. The Romantic emphasis leads naturally into an interest in psychology, the unconscious, self-understanding and the religious impulse and most things modern.

During the inter-war period, the tension between evangelical conservatives and liberals reached a breaking point. Reformed evangelicals took an increasingly theologically and culturally conservative

⁶⁸ Andrew Atherstone, “Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the Inter-War Church of England,” in David W. Bebbington and David Ceri Jones, eds., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 56; Geoffrey Treloar, *The Disruption of Evangelicalism: The Age of Torrey, Mott, McPherson and Hammond* (London: IVP, 2016), 191.

⁶⁹ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. (London: Routledge, 2003).

path, while other evangelicals engaged with the modern world and modern questions, resulting in the UK Conservative–Liberal split among evangelical mission societies and student mission groups.⁷⁰ In the US, a parallel fissure opened through the Fundamentalism–Modernism controversy, most notable within the faculty of Princeton Seminary.⁷¹ During the inter-war period, considerable conversation and interchange of ideas took place across the Atlantic between like-minded defenders of the conservative position.⁷² Both British and American conservative academics defended orthodox Protestantism and contributed to the series of booklets known as the Fundamentals.⁷³ The Fundamentals defended historic confessional faith expressed through the inspiration of the Bible and the inerrancy of Scripture, the divine nature of Jesus Christ, including his virgin birth, bodily resurrection and miracles, and affirmation that the death of the Christ effected the substitutionary atoning sacrifice for sins.⁷⁴ The central doctrine of Scripture was employed to support the other doctrines; however, therein lay a temptation – the temptation to claim more for Scripture than Scripture claimed for itself.⁷⁵

The conservative evangelicals focused their theological energy on defending the doctrine of the revelation of God through Holy Scripture to stem the tide of modernism within evangelicalism. They made the doctrine of Scripture the organising principle through which other doctrines and ministries were discussed and defined. The Reformers accepted that God had communicated through two books, the Book of Revelation (that is, the Bible) and the book of nature; however, the repeated assaults on the revelation of God led to an increased focus on special revelation, saving grace and miraculous intervention, and a corresponding devaluation and even negation of general revelation, common grace and prevenient care.

Following the fundamentalist–modernist split, there was a focus on definitions around terms such as inerrancy, infallibility, authority and sufficiency of Scripture and adherence to propositional doctrinal

⁷⁰ Atherstone, “Inter-War,” mission societies, 63–64, student unions, 72; Treloar, *The Disruption*, 191.

⁷¹ Treloar, *The Disruption*, 191.

⁷² Atherstone, “Inter-War,” 59–61.

⁷³ Atherstone, “Inter-War,” 59.

⁷⁴ Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 26.

⁷⁵ A danger noted by T. C. Hammond.

statements. The academic Reformed evangelicals took a reactive turn in defence of Scripture and the doctrines of the Reformation. This narrowing inevitably had a narrowing effect on the scope of interest of the theologians and preachers. The movement was as clearly defined by what it opposed as by that which it defended. At the academic level, the Fundamentals series aimed to defend Scripture from the higher critical method and faith from challenges from scientific findings. They emphasised doctrine over practice, the exegesis of the eternal and timeless nature of the Word over the Word's internal interplay with specific genres, cultures and historical contexts, and emphasised the Word ministries of preaching, teaching, evangelism, and mission over more diffuse ministries of social action.

The narrowing of the scope of interest most significantly affected the study and practice of pastoral theology from a Reformed evangelical perspective, as pastoral care became redefined as care through the corporate proclamation through the preaching of the Word. Reformed theologians were not opposed to engaging with other learning but were judicious to the extent to which it was used in the service of the gospel. Conservative Reformed theologians, such as Gresham Machen (Westminster Seminary) and T.C. Hammond (Moore College), were classically educated and made extensive analytical and common-sense philosophy arguments and expressed no objection to moderate use of textual criticism and science.⁷⁶ Their academic focus was on confession, doctrine and the text of Scripture, and endeavouring to know as much about God and his Word as possible. They prioritised the revelation of God's Word while opposing natural revelation, which led to a de-emphasis of a theology of nature. Discussions of anthropology focused primarily on the movement from sin to redemption through the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Christ, and had less emphasis on sanctification and maturation, and subsequently de-emphasised the process of psychology, education and formation.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Chase Kuhn, "The ecclesiological influence of T.C. Hammond," *Churchman*, 127.4 (2013): 323. Treloar, *Disruption*, 78.

⁷⁷ Dariusz M. Bryćko, "J. Gresham Machen on Christian Scholarship," transcript of an address, <https://cct.biola.edu/j-gresham-machen-s-view-of-christian-scholarship/> Accessed 28 May 2018.

In summary, during the early twentieth century, the Reformed evangelicals focused on defending the Bible as the inspired Word of God, the centrality of substitutionary atonement for sins on the cross, and the need to proclaim the Word of Christ that the saving power of the cross might convert people. They looked back to the early church fathers, the sixteenth-century Reformation and the eighteenth-century revivals, and the establishment of foreign mission societies in the nineteenth century. Few of the Reformed academics were opposed to geological, archaeological, or astronomical advances. However, they were far more cautious with hermeneutics, limiting the textual criticism to lower criticism for the exegesis of the biblical text and in ministry, and increasing focus on evangelism at the expense of other forms of traditional evangelical social activism. It has been observed that the *Sitz im Leben*, or historical location, of the Reformed evangelicals was that of pre-critical Christendom.⁷⁸ The conservative arm of evangelicalism continued to be ill-equipped to engage the new sciences and the inward turn towards psychological insights into the human character, the dynamic of physical and mental health in character development, and the role of society and culture in faith. The lack of well-formed ministry candidates led one leader to lament, “One of our greatest weaknesses as Evangelicals seems to be the complete dearth of men with a combination of spiritual and intellectual qualifications.”⁷⁹ Such a comment may reflect an over-correction by the Reformed evangelicals that saw a significant weakness in the formation of ministry candidates, particularly in pastoral ministry and soul care matters.

The twenty-first century spiritual care movement

Lastly, it is necessary to define soul care in the public space within public institutions. Such institutions include, among others: hospitals, mental health facilities, prisons, schools, emergency services, the defence forces, sporting teams and industrial workplaces. The accepted terminology for pastoral care and soul care ministries in the public space is increasingly the broader category of spiritual care.

⁷⁸ David F. Wright, “Soundings in the Doctrine of Scripture in British Evangelicalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 (1980): 87–106 (91).

⁷⁹ Atherstone, “Inter-War,” 65.

On the surface, it would be difficult to conceive two more polar-opposite worlds than that of Reformed evangelicalism and the current spiritual care movement. The Reformed evangelicals hold a *cognitive-propositional* approach to theology, whereas the spiritual care movement is a full-blown version of the *experiential-expressive* approach to spirituality.⁸⁰ The conservative approach tends to view the soul from a cognitive, disembodied and ahistorical perspective, whereas the spiritual care approach is of the emotional, embodied and enculturated frame. The conservatives favour objective and literal truth, whereas the postmodern favour subjective and relational truths. Theologically, the conservative evangelicals reflect approaches formed in earlier centuries and depend upon philosophical patterns of these times. In contrast, the twenty-first-century spiritual care movement is a direct heir of the Romantic spirit of the modern pastoral care movement expressed in the language of post-modernity.

Spirituality “is the dynamic dimension of human life that relates to the way persons (individual and community) experience, express and/or seek meaning, purpose and transcendence, and the way they connect to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, to the significant and/or the sacred.”⁸¹

Spirituality encompasses how a person makes meaning in their life, drawing on their deep philosophy of life, and the life events that have shaped them. Spiritual care helps people access their spirituality and supports them by extending or reframing their existing beliefs to meet current and emerging situations. Spiritual interventions help people find wisdom in their situation and discover the choices available to them. Spiritual care works with the foundation of people’s existing beliefs, relationships, and future dreams and despairs, or in the language of the Bible, spiritual care provides intervention in people’s faith, hope, and loves.

Public institutions will naturally reflect current attitudes to religion and meaning. But there is no inherent incommensurability between evangelical soul care and spiritual care offered in the public setting if both are concerned with making meaning in life, connections and relationships, and future

⁸⁰ George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster, 1984).

⁸¹ M. Best, C. Leget, A. Goodhead, A. *et al.* “An EAPC White Paper on Multi-Disciplinary Education for Spiritual Care in Palliative Care,” *BMC Palliat. Care* 19.9 (2020): 2.

hopes, desires and fears. If the soul is taken to be the human being, comprising dust of the earth and animated by the breath of God, as this thesis will defend, then the soul refers to human beings in their embodied-ness and enculturation in relationships with themselves, others, God, time and place. If soul care is placed within its broadest Christian framework—the two great commandments to love God and love others—these commandments provide ample scope for ministry that is deeply rooted and consistent with a confessional Christian faith. The Reformed evangelical church traditionally had a strong calling to the world of hospitals, prisons, mental health facilities, and people who grieve and suffer, and so there is an obligation to find a way to reach into this particular sensitive-access mission field offering faithful and hopeful care of souls.

Eduard Thurneysen as a conversation partner

The body of this investigation focuses on the work of one of the contributors to the European interlude, Swiss pastoral theologian Eduard Thurneysen. Thurneysen was the pastor at the Basle Minster from 1927 to 1959. From 1930 he taught theology at the University of Basle, and from 1941 was Associate Professor of Practical Theology. Thurneysen has been selected for the central case study to provide a lens through which to explore aspects of pastoral theology, ministry methods, and soul care practice. Thurneysen's distinctive contribution to a faithful and hopeful Reformed evangelical pastoral theology was his desire to align soul care with the Word of God. In particular, he affirmed biblical teaching on the transcendence of God and the immanence of salvation in Christ and he sought to apply the doctrines of election and redemption in his practice of soul care. Significantly for this study, Thurneysen was both a careful reader of Scripture and was well informed in matters of sociology and psychology. Eduard Thurneysen's carefully formed soul theology offers a robust scaffold that can support Reformed evangelicals and help bridge the gap between their theology and a good soul care ministry.

Thurneysen was intimately acquainted with the theological and philosophical pressures of the early twentieth century, and during his theological studies, had sat under some of the most prominent liberal theologians of the time. He understood the real challenges that the modernising force posed to

orthodox Christian faith and practice and, most critically, the revelation of the Word of God.

Although holding a different and albeit a modern or romantically influenced view of Scripture, after his dramatic conversion to the Word of God, he shared with the Reformed evangelicals the absolute priority of the revelation of God, through his Word with an emphasis on confession and doctrine, and on the proclaimed Word. He would not have considered himself an evangelical; however, he shared with evangelicals the centrality of the Bible, conversion, the cross and activism through the form of the soul conversation. His theology centred on God's gift of grace to sinners, which he most commonly refers to as the offer of forgiveness of sins.

Thurneysen differed from his Dialectical contemporaries who, like the Reformed evangelicals, were content to remain with the revelation of God alone rather than to engage with the disciplines of psychology and sociology to understand better and provide soul care. Thurneysen, like the conservative evangelicals, was well aware of challenges from within Christianity and false spiritualities that threatened to erode God's Revealed Word and devoted considerable space to challenges from Catholicism, dry orthodoxy, pietism, modernist evangelicals and Anthroposophy and mysticism.

Thurneysen's work does not provide a scaffold for a soul care ministry in the public space; this is asking too much of Thurneysen, as that would lie beyond his stated aims. However, he provides a rich deposit of pastoral thought around the care of souls, and his clear account of soul care sets the direction for soul care ministries more generally, and in comments he indicates possible trajectories, providing an excellent account of his primary vehicle of soul care, the conversation.

For Thurneysen, however, soul care acumen was never simply limited to correct theology, anthropology or even his conversational methods. Without the Holy Spirit working through the carer's character, dedication to their art, their hope, and their empathy, it was not possible to provide faithful soul care then or now. A carer's best intention will rarely ever substitute for informed choices around care based on theological and anthropological knowledge, the personal and spiritual formation of the carer, the acquisition of ministry skills in a supervised environment and a clear understanding

of the carer's role and context as they move into the world of another person. Although on the surface, Christian ministry in the public space is not an ideal exemplified in Thurneysen's work, by examining the undercurrents and persisting ideas in his work, valuable theological and practical insights into this philosophy can be obtained and applied to pastoral care today. At points, a carer may find themselves in disagreement with Thurneysen, yet even this reveals the choices that a carer has committed to and makes explicit their implicit beliefs about how people change, challenging them to offer the reasons for choices to effect the change that they hoped for in the other.

Overview of chapters

Thurneysen's life, theology, anthropology, methods, character and practices provide the scaffold to organise and construct a practical theology of Reformed evangelical soul care in the public space.

The first three chapters explore foundational aspects and theoretical underpinning of the soul care encounter: enculturation, creatureliness, and embodiment of the souls. The first chapter provides an overview of Thurneysen's socio-cultural location, reviewing critical influences on his life, faith and ministry, demonstrating the enculturated nature of all souls. The second chapter explores Thurneysen's theological beliefs concerning the created soul's relationship with the Creator through grace, forgiveness, theology, the church, preaching and prayer. Theological understanding provides a stable orientation from which to approach anthropological questions concerning the nature of the soul – the subject matter of the third chapter – its theological relationship with its creator; its embodied physical, psychical and spiritual nature; its psychological and moral nature; and its relationship with more comprehensive systems. The chapter evaluates several schemata for understanding relationships between material and spiritual, mortal and redeemed aspects of the soul

In the fourth chapter, Thurneysen's method and technique of soul care work is demonstrated to be intimately linked with the human capacity for speech and articulation. This chapter explores the communicating soul, the nature of the conversation, communication and connection experienced through the expressive power of language guided by the Holy Spirit under the light of the Word of

God. The fifth chapter reviews the character formation of the soul carer, their capacity for self-reflection, other person-centeredness, and empathy. Chapters six and seven move to the practice of soul care; chapter six focuses on connecting, deep hospitality, and creating a space where the other person feels safe enough to rest and speak that which is on their soul. The seventh chapter draws the material of the previous six chapters together, reviewing it through the lens of soul care ministries in the public space.

With Thurneysen as my conversation partner, I endeavour to dive deeply into his thought, methods and practice with the hope of becoming more deeply grounded in a faithful and hopeful methodology of soul care that can cross the gap between the ecclesial context into the world of a busy public hospital.

Chapter 1: Thurneysen's Background

Introduction to Eduard Thurneysen

In the Anglophone⁸² world, Thurneysen is most commonly known as the close friend and interlocutor of Karl Barth, but, as Barth recalls, it was Thurneysen who in the summer of 1916, whispered aloud to Barth, “What we need for preaching, instruction and soul care, is a ‘wholly other’ theological foundation,” which initiated their break from liberal Protestantism.⁸³ Thurneysen made his own significant mark upon this major theological turn. He was responsible for forging a “wholly other” practical theology that emerged in the interplay between his academic pursuits as an associate professor in practical theology at Basle University and his ministry practice in a busy pastorate at Basle Cathedral. Furthermore, his practical theology was hammered out in the particularly challenging cultural context of Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. During these circumstances, Thurneysen contended that the essential content of Reformed soul care, shaped and informed by the Word of God, remained unchangeable. The changed circumstances gave rise to a new set of questions, and it was essential that pastoral theologians engaged with these issues if they were to apply unchanging truth pastorally, faithfully and effectively.

Elmer Homrighausen noted that the translation into English of Thurneysen's book represented “a challenge to much writing that, though it goes under the name of pastoral care, is pursued from a fuzzy, questionable or a heretical theological orientation.”⁸⁴ Thurneysen was the theologian that pioneered the first credible description of a Reformed or conservative system of pastoral care, so his system warrants careful attention. The significance of Thurneysen's approach has been highlighted by

⁸²James D. Smart noted that in the English-speaking world, even “where Thurneysen's name is known, he is considered merely as a shadow of Barth, little more than an echo of the great theologian. James D. Smart, “Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian,” *Theology Today* 16.1 (1959): 74.

⁸³ This was during the summer of 1916; Busch, *Barth*, 97.

⁸⁴ Elmer Homrighausen, “Pastoral Counseling as Proclamation,” *The Christian Century* (22 August 1962): 1008.

Andrew Purves, who notes that Thurneysen was “the author of arguably the most important Reformation-based pastoral theology published in the last half of the twentieth century.”⁸⁵

Thurneysen’s term for pastoral care was *Seelsorge*. The term *Sorges* has a range of meanings related to worry, care, anxiety, and concern, and when combined with *Seel* or soul, it came to mean care or concern for the soul. Thurneysen located pastoral care within the church’s discipline or “schooling” in Holy Scripture. He distinguishes care of souls in the church and that of psychological care or common sense.⁸⁶

This term *Seelsorge* is related to the individual, the person who is a living soul by virtue of God breathing life into them.⁸⁷ All people are unified beings that consist of an outer and inner reality – the physical body and the psychological soul. The unity is such that the whole person can be spoken of as a living soul.⁸⁸ It is God who animates human beings, and as such, they “live a life borrowed from God. This borrowed life is the creatureliness of [humanity].”⁸⁹ For Thurneysen, the creatureliness of the soul is not the “last word” because the “last word” belongs to the resurrection of the body and soul.⁹⁰ The resurrection of body and soul happens in response to the Word of God, which awakens the human to their *true* life.

God’s Spirit, “the miraculous finger of God,” touches him, and now he may stand up, although he is only a creature no better than some worm, and meet his Creator in the totality of his existence in body and soul to belong to him and serve him like no other creature. Therefore, the soul of man is ultimately to be understood as the mystery of his personal existence, being called before God by his Word. We can, must, and may say of ourselves, I – body and soul – am called to stand before God as his man listening to him.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 160.

⁸⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 51.

⁸⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 54.

⁸⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 55.

⁸⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 56.

⁹⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 57.

⁹¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 60.

Thurneysen also notes that the boundaries of creatureliness limit even the highest spirituality in human beings or the most profound psychic processes. Even in possessing the image of God, the creature cannot reach beyond this boundary and become one with the Creator. The creature always remains “dependent upon the Spirit and Word of God, from whom alone he received and lives his life.”⁹² For Thurneysen, it is not simply the boundary of creatureliness that separates the creature from their Creator, for “[b]etween us and God stands not only the act of creation – that act which unites us with God just as much as it withdraws us from God – but between us and God stands the dark riddle of our sin, by which we have destroyed God’s creation and with it our union with God.”⁹³

Eduard Thurneysen was a member of a generation of German-speaking theologians born “in the 1880s and reaching their mature years after the First World War,”⁹⁴ who experienced a time of great disillusionment, disruption and upheaval.⁹⁵ Douglas Cremer argues that the time of the First World War “precipitated a multitude of new trends within modern Germany, including a crisis in religious faith,” which resulted in “one of the most fundamental shifts in European culture in the last four hundred years.”⁹⁶

Thurneysen directly encountered an intellectual society influenced and shaped by the teaching and writings of Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. In his parish at Lutwil, through the experience of his parishioners, he witnessed first-hand the social and economic hardship of labouring for low wages at the local cigarette factories, intensified during the war by the enlistments to defend the borders and a slump in demand for cigarettes.⁹⁷

During these turbulent times, Thurneysen sought to recover a Reformed doctrine of soul care drawn from the Word of God while recognising the need for a new expression of such care in light of the

⁹² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 63.

⁹³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 64.

⁹⁴ Douglas J. Cremer, “Protestant Theology in Early Weimar Germany: Barth, Tillich, and Bultmann,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56.2 (1995): 289. Thurneysen and Emil Brunner both fit this category in addition to the theologians Barth, Bultmann and Tillich referenced in the article.

⁹⁵ Other significant theologians working in German, born at this time were Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976); Karl Barth (1886–1968); Paul Tillich (1886–1965); and Emil Brunner (1889–1966).

⁹⁶ Cremer, “Protestant Theology,” 290.

⁹⁷ Jordan Redding, “Addressed by the Word: The Practical, Pastoral, and Eschatological Anthropology of Eduard Thurneysen” (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2020), 41.

particular needs that the Christians of “today” were experiencing.⁹⁸ He believed that to meet those particular needs effectively, consideration needed to be given to new understandings arising within medicine and the social sciences. Thurneysen, therefore, put issues of the soul under the “light of God’s revelation, and yet at the same time, the counsellor made the fullest and most intelligent use of the insights of modern psychology and psychiatry in order to understand the people who sought his help.”⁹⁹ Thurneysen sought to engage faithfully with the philosophical and scientific theories that were recalibrating all knowledge and learning in the Western world during this period. At the same time, however, he recognised the genuine danger for orthodox theology arising from the anthropological turn to the subjective that marked these new understandings.¹⁰⁰

Family background

Eduard Thurneysen was born in Walenstadt near St. Gallen, Switzerland, on the 10th of July 1888, the younger of twin boys. His father, Friedrich Eduard Thurneysen (1856–1931) was a Reformed pastor, who had been influenced by the biblicist theology of Tobias Beck.¹⁰¹ His mother, Emma Elisabeth (Elise) Blüss (1865–1891), was from a merchant family in South Baden. At three months of age, the older, and stronger, twin died. This sadness was followed by a further tragedy when Emma Elisabeth died prematurely in childbirth in 1891, delivering another boy.¹⁰² In 1892 the grieving father returned to his hometown, Basle, and assumed a modest position as a hospital chaplain and a year later married Emilie Hindermann. This marriage was not happy,¹⁰³ with reports that Eduard’s stepmother was difficult and suffered from severe depression. Thurneysen was profoundly affected by the death of his mother and by accounts, had a complicated relationship with his stepmother. His relationship with his

⁹⁸ Karl Barth describes Thurneysen as “Brooding over the Christian of today, or better still, over the man of today, that with him and for him he may live his life.” Smart, “Pastor-Theologian,” 75.

⁹⁹ Smart, “Pastor-Theologian,” 80.

¹⁰⁰ Thurneysen himself directs his readers to Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, “But above all Karl Barth must be mentioned, in his *Church Dogmatics* III, he develops the doctrine of creation, and in this connection presents for the first time in recent years a strictly Christological doctrine of man and thereby established the necessary clarification and delimitations on all sides.” Eduard Thurneysen, *A Theology of Pastoral Care*, trans. Jack A. Worthington and Thomas Wieser from *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer A.-G., 1946) (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1962), 65.

¹⁰¹ On the occasion of Thurneysen’s eightieth birthday, he commented on the influence of his father: “Biblicism, which came from Beck, meant a lot to me, and helped arouse my interest in theology and ministry”: Bohren, *Prophetie*, 29.

¹⁰² Bohren, *Prophetie*, 29. I have not been able to ascertain whether the baby lived; I have not confirmed any later mention of Thurneysen having a brother.

¹⁰³ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 29.

father was strained, and the teenager reportedly found his father's sermons boring.¹⁰⁴ Thurneysen's wife, Marguerite, observed that these sorrowful events cast a long shadow across his life.¹⁰⁵ He was from the start a pastor who had suffered – a wounded healer¹⁰⁶ – perhaps, however, these personal difficulties were transformed into a capacity for empathy and kindness towards others.¹⁰⁷

Formative influences on Thurneysen's Christian faith and pastoral theology

Thurneysen emerged from a particular familial, cultural and historical context from which he cannot be extracted. He was a son of the manse and raised in a biblically conservative Reformed home, and late in life he reflected that his father's deep interest in the biblical scholar Tobias Beck had influenced him.¹⁰⁸ Although his home was theologically conservative, their church, the Basel Munster, had moved from a confessional church to one that embraced socialism.¹⁰⁹

In addition to his father's confessional faith, Christoph Blumhardt, housefather¹¹⁰ of the Bad Boll retreat, drew him to the study of theology, and through his experience of Blumhardt's conversations he experienced pastoral care, a crucial factor in his study and teaching of pastoral theology. He learnt something about the "power of conversation" through Blumhardt, while academically being thoroughly immersed in the liberal historical critical school throughout his theological studies.

Thurneysen studied theology under several luminaires of the time.

Thurneysen was "exposed to and influenced by a number of traditions, movements, and school of thought that enabled him to move between them in critical and fruitful dialogue without being

¹⁰⁴ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 33..

¹⁰⁵ Thurneysen married Marguerite Meyer in 1916 whose father, Paul Gottfried Meyer, was a Doctor of Letters and secondary school teacher. Eduard and Marguerite had five children. Their children were Dorothee (1917), Mathis (1919), Käthi (1921), Monica (1925) and Christine (1931); and one of Thurneysen's sons-in-law was the French Reformed systematist Georges Casalis. P. H. Brazier, *Barth and Dostoyevsky* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 92. Further biographical material, *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz HLS* <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/010875/2012-10-11/>

¹⁰⁶ The phrase wounded healer was used by Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

¹⁰⁷ Thurneysen wrote of the need for a pastor to live self-reflectively, not suppressing or repressing their own experience of sin or misery, but to face them and work through them, becoming part of a broad and comprehensive understanding of life. Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 202.

¹⁰⁸ Bohren, *Phophetie*, 29.

¹⁰⁹ Bohren, *Phophetie*, 32.

¹¹⁰ A description from Thurneysen, *Blumhardt*, 1926.

tethered to any one position.”¹¹¹ However, Thurneysen’s own testimony and scholarly enquiry suggest that there were several key people who were formative influences upon his theology and ministry. These were the German liberal theologian and philosopher, Ernst Troeltsch;¹¹² the novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky; and his close friend, theologian Karl Barth.

It was in the constant companionship of Barth during the time of the First World War and the decade following that this potent mix of influences were hammered into a pastoral theology by Thurneysen.

Christoph Blumhardt

Christoph Blumhardt was the younger of two Blumhardts, father and son, both Lutheran ministers. It was under their influence that Thurneysen’s radical biblical realignment began, including a belief in the centrality of Christ.

Thurneysen’s stepmother, Emilie, introduced the sixteen-year-old Thurneysen to the Bad Boll community¹¹³ and retreat centre. The retreat centre at Bad Boll was characteristic of European-style residential ministry centres. Some retreats were working farms, and others, like Bad Boll, were thermal spa retreats where people went for physical and spiritual healing. The elder Blumhardt (Johann Christoph) had purchased the retreat centre in 1852.¹¹⁴ Emilie (nee Hindermann) was acquainted with the younger Blumhardt as a pastor, having spent time at the retreat before her marriage.¹¹⁵ Moreover, it was Thurneysen who then, famously, introduced his friend Karl Barth to Blumhardt in 1915,¹¹⁶ “which helped to open up for Barth a fresh understanding of the Kingdom of God as the breaking into the world of God’s unutterable compassion in a victorious grace which was

¹¹¹ Jordan Redding, “Addressed by the Word: The Practical, Pastoral, and Eschatological Anthropology of Eduard Thurneysen” (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2020), 16.

¹¹² Karl Barth cites Troeltsch as a key influence on Thurneysen in a letter in 1956. Smart, “Eduard Thurneysen,” 76.

¹¹³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 122.

¹¹⁴ Dieter Ising, *Johann Christoph Blumhardt, Life and Work: A New Biography*, trans. Monty Ledford, (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 308 g

¹¹⁵ Emilie Hindermann had attended Bad Boll with her own mother who reportedly had also suffered from melancholy. Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 122.

¹¹⁶ Christian T. Collins Winn, “*Jesus Is Victor!*”: *The significance of the Blumhardts for the Theology of Karl Barth* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), 158. There were much older family connections between the Barth and Blumhardt families, and it is quite possible that Barth had visited Bad Boll much earlier. See Collins Winn, *Jesus is Victor*, 160. Barth had also been exposed to Blumhardt via Leonard Ragaz and Hermann Cutter who mediated Blumhardt’s thought in Switzerland. See Collins Winn, *Jesus is Victor*, 158.

both judgement of the world and the great supernatural, saving event of the Gospel.”¹¹⁷ The evidence suggests that Christoph Blumhardt was not only pivotal for Thurneysen’s friend, but was a towering influence over Thurneysen, as is apparent in Thurneysen’s *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge*. In this work, Blumhardt is referenced extensively and Thurneysen closes the second section of the book with a pastoral letter written by Christoph Blumhardt in 1890.¹¹⁸ Many of Thurneysen’s themes and motifs crystallised around thought he initially absorbed from the Blumhardts.¹¹⁹

Firstly, Thurneysen observed that Christoph Blumhardt had a secret centre to his theology around which he moved: God, only God, God alone! The younger Blumhardt held to this one fixed point but was prepared to be more flexible in other matters of intellectual enquiry.¹²⁰ And for Blumhardt, there was a centre within this centre – the real focus in this truly “theological” core was the resurrection, and if one had the resurrection at the centre, then all other things would fall into place. The revelation of God was revealed in resurrection.¹²¹ This central theological theme gave shape to how the Blumhardts understood ministry practice. The focus of all their ministry was dying to make Jesus live.¹²² In contrast to much Pietist understanding, the Blumhardts’ theology emphasised that true faith could only be born out of the boundless love *of* God, and not a pious love *for* God.

The Blumhardts’ view of faith was revolutionary, differing in several ways from the traditional forms of Lutheranism and Reformed faith. Moreover, whereas the German liberal theology that dominated the universities of their day emphasised biblical criticism, the search for the historical Jesus and the demythologising of the biblical texts, the Blumhardts directly apprehended the promises of God as real, asserting that the victory had been achieved in Jesus Christ, bringing about the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God.

¹¹⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910–1931* (London: SCM, 1962), 31.

¹¹⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 252. An insight made also by P. H. Brazier, *Barth*, 102.

¹¹⁹ Smart, “Pastor-theologian,” 83, 84.

¹²⁰ Thurneysen, *Blumhardt*, 15.

¹²¹ Thurneysen, *Blumhardt*, 39.

¹²² Thurneysen, *Blumhardt*, 16.

Secondly, whereas both traditional Reformed theology and liberal theology depended on doctrinal and theological formulations for their mode of expression, in contrast, the Blumhardts preached that the boundless love of God was not a thing to be believed, but a way of life to be lived out through the person of Jesus Christ, which they captured in pithy sayings. Examples of such sayings include, “You are loved,” “Jesus is Victor!” “Man is God’s!” “Hastening and Waiting,”¹²³ and the petition, “Thy Kingdom Come!” Blumhardtian theology was aphoristic, dispensing with careful statements of faith and replacing them with enigmatic sayings, truisms and catchy slogans that used everyday speech and avoided ecclesial turns of phrase.

Thirdly, whereas traditional theology took a long view of history, and liberal theology documented progressive improvement in human society, the Blumhardts had a revivalist confidence in a present inbreaking of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, through the revelation of God through Scripture. God’s power was real – he resurrected the dead, released captives¹²⁴ and transformed spiritually dead lives. Both Blumhardts distanced themselves from existing theological currents and sought to communicate their new understanding “in the language of their time.”¹²⁵ They believed that the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God, God’s eternity, was not a theology of “last things” but was a present reality; it simply needed to be taken hold of and lived out.

Fourthly, the Blumhardts were anti-establishment and over time had disassociated from the Lutheran Church. They believed that the institutional church associated with Christendom had lost its way: “In Christendom, Christ is dead,” and “Christianity as a folk-religion is headed for ruin.”¹²⁶ Furthermore, he asserted that “You are God’s you need only self-knowledge that God can show you; you don’t need religion.”¹²⁷ Christoph Blumhardt offered a Romanticised version of living faith without reference to, or constraint from, the institutional church.

¹²³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 164.

¹²⁴ Johann Christoph Blumhardt, the elder, came to national attention in the 1840s when a woman after two years of struggle was purportedly released from a demonic possession, and at the same time her sister exclaimed, “Jesus is the Victor!”

¹²⁵ Thurneysen *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 163, 164.

¹²⁶ Vernard Eller, *Thy Kingdom Come: A Blumhardt Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 66.

¹²⁷ Eller, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 71.

Fifthly, Blumhardtian beliefs were strongly infused with supernatural realities. “This is a victory in which humanity is called to participate as those who struggle for righteousness and love, even in the face of overwhelming odds, devastation and demonic powers. Thus, human freedom is in response to the free love of God that has conquered and is conquering in the midst of this world.”¹²⁸ They held that Christ breaks into this world to bring to nought the powers and principalities that hold us in bondage and decay.

A further impression was made concerning the elder Blumhardt’s commitment to the healing of the whole person, and the interplay between sickness and unforgiven sin, seeing a human being “in body and soul in the totality of [their] alienation from God.”¹²⁹ When Blumhardt Sr spoke of the forgiveness of sins as the true salvation, it was “a salvation which is not only spiritual but also reaches into the sphere of physical life.”¹³⁰

These perspectives shaped Thurneysen. Like Blumhardt, he lived within the orbit of God. His theology shared Blumhardt’s immediacy, dynamism, use of accessible language, radical Christology and pneumatology and reality of resurrection, as well as a living relationship with Christ, the defeat of evil and demonic forces, and the rejection of all anthropocentric Pietist faith. Moreover, Christoph Blumhardt’s conversational manner kindled Thurneysen’s interest in personal conversations, and he shared the Blumhardts’ deep empathetic social concern for people.¹³¹ Thurneysen likened the enigmatic Blumhardts to ascetic desert fathers, who moved to the beat of a different drum. Their legacy was not theological treatises, but aphoristic sayings. For Thurneysen, this approach provided the essence and template for true soul care.

Despite these influences, it would be a mistake to identify Thurneysen too closely with the Blumhardts. Although Thurneysen honoured Blumhardt by the book *Christoph Blumhardt*, published in 1926, Thurneysen also distanced himself from certain of his perspectives. In particular, in contrast

¹²⁸ Collins Winn, quoting Blumhardt, *Jesus is Victor*, 63.

¹²⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 84.

¹³⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 89.

¹³¹ Smart, “Pastor-Theologian,” 85.

to Blumhardt, Thurneysen granted much greater significance to the role of doctrine and to the place of the church as the essential location and vessel which contained the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and ministry of soul care. Thurneysen remained within the church and imported Blumhardt's radical Christology and pneumatology and reality of resurrection back into the institutional church.

Ernst Troeltsch

Thurneysen was subject to another significant form of radical teaching via the liberal theologian, Ernst Troeltsch. Like the Blumhardts, Troeltsch also predicted that a time of cultural reckoning was at hand, but for him the crisis would be the collapse of Christianised Europe rather than the in-breaking of God. In the late nineteenth century Troeltsch famously declared, "Gentlemen, everything is tottering," and like Nietzsche, he perceived that cultural and religious Christianity was collapsing around them and that culture more generally was entering a crisis.¹³² Troeltsch was a systematic theologian and philosopher of religion who, using the breadth of his interests, desired to synthesise opposites.¹³³ He sought to unify theology and philosophy by moving from the study of dogma to the study of religion as culture. Within the study of religious culture, he described subjective psychological religious belief as "religion as a phenomenon of consciousness" or conversely, "that mental phenomenon which we call religion." For Troeltsch, Christian communities entailed supernaturalism¹³⁴ but they could not be separated from their material history and social engagement. He studied the sociological phenomena of religion and developed a typology for "religious associations – the church, the sect, and the mystical type"¹³⁵ and documented the social, cultural and philosophical dynamics of groups which in turn provided a context through which social ethics were interpreted.¹³⁶

¹³² Bohren, *Prophetie*, 47.

¹³³ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 46.

¹³⁴ Herman Bavinck, *The Philosophy of Revelation: The Stone Lectures for 1908–1909*, Princeton Theological Seminary (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 21.

¹³⁵ Adams, James Luther, "Ernst Troeltsch as Analyst of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 1.1 (1961): 104.

¹³⁶ Adams, "Troeltsch," 105.

Troeltsch gave shape to Thurneysen's ability to engage in intellectual discussion. Troeltsch was an inexorable questioner,¹³⁷ a skill that Thurneysen acquired and turned towards his own apologetic purpose. From him he learnt to defend a position by means of critical analysis while still maintaining empathy for another's point of view.¹³⁸ Exposed to conflicting apocalyptic views presented by both Blumhardt and Troeltsch, Thurneysen nevertheless understood that some tipping point in world history had been reached and that society and culture was changing rapidly, and consequently there would be the need for a new approach to Christianity in the twentieth century.

Troeltsch's concern for theologians to ground themselves in a realistic understanding of the complexities of the world,¹³⁹ and the particularities of each individual circumstance, became important for Thurneysen's later soul care practice. Thurneysen was attracted to Troeltsch's view that human existence was contingent, being shaped by a "complex web of interacting forces" within nature and human experience.¹⁴⁰ He found such an understanding to be balanced and comprehensive.¹⁴¹ From Troeltsch, Thurneysen learnt that people could not be abstracted from their context, and that religious communities functioned as bodies with personalities or souls, which can be seen in his incisive analysis of different religious and spiritual communities discussed in *A Theology of Pastoral Care*. Thurneysen however, differed sharply with Troeltsch on the matter of the connection between religion and the revelation of Jesus Christ. Thurneysen agreed that religion was a cultural institution, but that this cultural institution represented by pious words was no substitute for the divine revelation present in the Word of God.¹⁴²

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Blumhardt and Troeltsch's theology focused on society and systems and the need for revolutionary change, but neither emphasised the noetic effect of personal sin, nor the human capacity for evil.

¹³⁷ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 47.

¹³⁸ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 47.

¹³⁹ Mark David Chapman, *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology: Religion and Cultural Synthesis in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 139.

¹⁴⁰ Ernst Troeltsch, "Historiography" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol. 6.*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 718.

¹⁴¹ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 46.

¹⁴² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 219.

Blumhardt had emphasised Christ's victory over "world forces" and Troeltsch had highlighted the pathologies of civilisations. Thus both in their own way had rejected Hegel's *zeitgeist*, or concept of the spirit of the age, but both had also critically underestimated the sickness that still lay at the heart of society. What Thurneysen found in Dostoevsky's novels was both Blumhardt's emphasis on the need for resurrection and Troeltsch's certainty that civilisation is crumbling, but combined with an additional factor that helped explain the failure of cultural Christianity and the failure of society – the true nature of humanity that acknowledged darkness in the human heart.

Thurneysen recognised in Dostoevsky a Blumhardtian theme, that of God *being* God, and man being man. Although other elements and critiques within Dostoevsky's work also resonated with Thurneysen. In particular, he was drawn to themes that spoke of the delusion of Western civilisation and the Church. His works exposed the futility of man's existence if there were no God: "Man, without God is man without a future and without meaning in any of the external or internal events of his life, but also a man who by his very nature must break out in some way or other in revolt against such an existence."¹⁴³ By Dostoevsky's reckoning, the progress of Western civilisation was in essence an attempt to build a tower of Babel to subdue heaven with the glory of cultural achievement. The church was no better. It had effectively attempted to silence anyone who cries out to God. Dostoevsky saw that this would not do.

At the time Thurneysen discovered Dostoevsky, the Russian novelist's writing was enjoying a revival among the intellectual classes, and his influence can also be seen in the work of Thurneysen's contemporaries, such as the philosopher Martin Heidegger and theologian Paul Tillich. Both were wrestling with what might be termed the question mark over man's existence.¹⁴⁴ Thurneysen was drawn to Dostoevsky's realism and dark commentary on life, as well as his strong polemic against the Roman church and Christendom in general, which resonated with Blumhardt's ambivalence toward

¹⁴³ Smart, "Pastor-Theologian," 81–82.

¹⁴⁴ The great German-speaking writers such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Franz Kafka, Sigmund Freud, Robert Musil, Stefan Zweig, Heinrich Heine, Thomas Mann, Herman Hesse and others, had all responded to Dostoevsky at the time of the publication of the "Epistle to Romans." The widespread Piper edition of Dostoevsky's Collected Writings appeared from 1909–1919. Katja Tolstaja, "Kaleidoscope: The Early Dialectical Theology and Dostoevsky," *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 21.1 (2005): 117.

the National Church.¹⁴⁵ Through the novels Thurneysen absorbed aspects of Dostoevsky's Russian Orthodox faith and dependence upon the Eastern Patristics. Perhaps it was the theme of resurrection that most positively engaged Thurneysen. As has been claimed, the "absolutely final word of his novels is 'resurrection,'" owing to Dostoevsky's attempt "to discover in all men and all things the traces of the original creation and the secret tendency toward resurrection that is within them."¹⁴⁶

Dostoevsky, therefore, was a formative influence upon Thurneysen.¹⁴⁷ Such was his fascination with Dostoevsky that he did not see him primarily as a novelist, or psychologist, or sociologist, but as a theologian, albeit a theologian who did not quote the Scriptures, chapter and verse. Dostoevsky cut through the veneer of the civilisation that he inhabited and held a mirror up, exposing its contradictions. He disturbed his readers with the truth of the depths of the human soul and its concealing illusions. Dostoevsky probed ruthlessly into the problem of man, and he discovered rebellion against the limitations of humanity, the infinite pretensions of the human self, and the determination of man to be God.¹⁴⁸ This recognition of a tendency to hubris in the human condition deeply impacted Thurneysen and his approach to pastoral care.

In 1921, Thurneysen wrote a powerful apologetic short work on Dostoevsky. This book was read widely and introduced many people to a distinctive approach to the theological task, known as Dialectical theology, providing something of a worked example of its main features. It was considered the most effective Christian apologetic since Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799).¹⁴⁹ Throughout his career Thurneysen stressed the importance of witness to cultural truth found in literature and novels.¹⁵⁰ This witness to cultural truth remained a feature of his exploration of soul care and in his own ministry practice, nevertheless it was a perspective not adequately accounted for in his theological system. Thurneysen's *Dostoevsky* has made a marked contribution to Dostoevsky scholarship, although more recently, his dialectical reading of Dostoevsky

¹⁴⁵ Eduard Thurneysen, *Dostoyevsky*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 10.

¹⁴⁶ Thurneysen, *Dostoyevsky*, 10.

¹⁴⁷ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 103.

¹⁴⁸ Smart, "Pastor-Theologian," 81.

¹⁴⁹ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 102.

¹⁵⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 203.

has been challenged and is considered a somewhat selective reading tailored to his apologetic purposes.¹⁵¹

Karl Barth

The particularly formative bond between Thurneysen and Barth was grounded in early family connections. The Thurneysen and Barth families were closely associated,¹⁵² and the connection between the two men was even more consolidated by their fathers' shared calling as Swiss Reformed ministers and members of the same ministers' fraternal in Basle. The two young theologians re-connected in 1906 and again in 1908 where they overlapped for a term at Marburg.¹⁵³ However, it was not until they were neighbours, Thurneysen in Leutwil and Barth at Safenwil that a deep friendship formed.¹⁵⁴ In these rural parishes the young pastors were confronted with the social challenges of economic hardship and political turmoil created by the upheaval of the first World War and the competing modernising forces of capitalism, industrialisation, urbanisation, nationalism and socialism.¹⁵⁵ Thurneysen and Barth walked the three-hour distance between their villages every few days and corresponded by letter in between. A vigorous and lifelong friendship developed against this tumultuous background where together they began to study the "strange new world of the Bible" beginning with Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Later Thurneysen wrote to Barth, "What kind of earthquake region is this into which we have stumbled quite unconsciously in the very moment that we decided to read the New Testament a little different and more exactly than our teachers.... we could no longer be deaf to Blumhardt and could no longer share the faith of Schleiermacher."¹⁵⁶ They understood for the first time the desperate state of humanity, the need for forgiveness of sins and a salvation that lay beyond humanity, and the rediscovery of God's grace through his Word. The study

¹⁵¹ Russian Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin describes "the main characters of Dostoevsky as having very different and often conflicting points of view" creating a "unique world of poetics" which he likens to a polyphony. This means that the characters are to be seen as autonomous subjects within the universe of the novel, not manipulated or influenced by an omniscient narrator. The characters are in perpetual dialogue, which causes a polyphony of voices. Katja Tolstaja likens the worlds of Dostoevsky and Dialectical theology as two kaleidoscopes that coincide at times. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 27.

¹⁵² Thurneysen's father was best man for Karl Barth's father's wedding in 1884. Busch, *Karl Barth*, 5, 50.

¹⁵³ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 37, 50.

¹⁵⁴ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 73.

¹⁵⁵ Redding, "Addressed by the Word," 40.

¹⁵⁶ George Hunsinger, ed., *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 166.

of Romans crystallised the influence of the Blumhardts' emphasis of Christ's victory and the coming of the Kingdom of God, and Dostoevsky's understanding of the indelible stain of sin on the human character. With this understanding, they, with others, developed the style of theology that became known as Dialectical theology.

During the First World War and the decade following, the two men shared a close friendship and collaborated on sermons and writing together, each sharing drafts and the other commenting upon them, with the comments often being subsequently incorporated into later versions of these texts. During this time, they produced a jointly authored collection of sermons, Barth published his first commentary of Romans, and Thurneysen his book on Dostoevsky. Of the two friends, Thurneysen was less variable and more open and outgoing in personality, introducing Barth to many people he would work with in the future.¹⁵⁷ Barth referred to Thurneysen as "my more open half" and Thurneysen's biographer, Rudolf Bohren, makes an interesting observation, that "Eduard Thurneysen came to know himself as a twin, a second, weaker, but surviving" kind of theological twin to Barth.¹⁵⁸ Barth ascribed Thurneysen's nature as Johannine but noted that despite this, his "No" could be as strong as anyone else's, including that of Barth's more Pauline nature.¹⁵⁹

During these years of close collaboration, mutual influence continued. Thurneysen contributed to the Romans work, and Barth posed salient questions as to the nature of the practice of soul care.

Thurneysen's later work reveals a dependence upon Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Given that the *Dogmatics* is arguably the most significant systematic theology of the twentieth century, that is not surprising. What is noteworthy, however, is Saulytis's argument that Thurneysen had the more considerable "influence on the formation of the ecclesial and pastoral dimensions of Barth's theology,

¹⁵⁷ Busch, *Karl Barth*, 74, 75.

¹⁵⁸ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 29.

¹⁵⁹ Brazier, *Barth*, 81; Smart, "Pastor-Theologian," 76.

not vice-versa.”¹⁶⁰ Despite these marked connections between the two, they also possessed a freedom to differ on significant points.¹⁶¹

Neither Thurneysen nor Barth can be extracted from the backdrop against which they developed their theology. Responses to the rise of Social Nationalism,¹⁶² and critiques of the prevailing Continental philosophy and the related German liberal theology, threads through their work. They engaged in ongoing conversations with a range of contemporary thinkers such as Paul Tillich, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, Rudolph Bultmann and Emil Brunner. Thurneysen’s theological thought employs constructs, terms and phrases not previously used in theological discourse. He introduced terms such as dialectical, paradox, negation, Heidegger’s notion of being and time, crisis, absolute, boundary, infinite qualitative difference and the impossible possibility. Such phrases were derived from broad and interdisciplinary engagements and from other sources such as the idealism of Kant and Hegel, from Romanticism, phenomenology, and Kierkegaard’s existentialism.

Conclusion

Through the Blumhardts, Thurneysen encountered people who took Scripture seriously and placed it at the centre of their lives and adjusted everything else around the crux of all reality – God, who was victorious in the resurrected Christ. This had a significant influence upon his spiritual formation.

From Christoph Blumhardt, he also learnt the power of a soul conversation for mediating the love of God and the restoration of personhood to a person in need. From Troeltsch, Thurneysen grasped that civilisation was tottering and social and religious institutions were cultural entities that needed to be understood in their own terms, and the skill of rejecting an expressed idea, a belief or a practice, while accepting the person. From the novelist Dostoyevsky, he understood that it was not just society and civilisation that was tottering and inherently unstable, but also the human heart was profoundly flawed

¹⁶⁰ Saulytis, “Twentieth Century Trends,” 7. Quoting Woodward and Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader*, 4.

¹⁶¹ Two such points to be addressed later were Thurneysen’s greater dependence upon Emil Brunner’s work and Barth’s more expansive definition of pastoral care.

¹⁶² A further consideration when reading Thurneysen was well expressed by Joachim Scharfenberg, who observed that Thurneysen needs to be understood within the context of his times and his “legitimate concerns which had – above all in the Nazi period – a significance for German practical theology that cannot be overestimated.” Joachim Scharfenberg, *Pastoral Care as Dialogue*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), xi.

and mired in sin, and it would take nothing less than resurrection to restore human beings, and no amount of effort towards moral behaviour, confession of sins, psychoanalysis or attainment of mystical spirituality could free the human soul from its corruption. Furthermore, his exploration of Paul's epistle to the Romans with his friend Karl Barth revealed the necessity for the forgiveness of sins and new life found only in Jesus Christ. These understandings gave shape to Thurneysen's approach to the nature of what he believed to be genuine soul care.

Thurneysen, like all people, cannot be separated from the times and context in which he was formed; his life, theology, methods and practices all bear the imprint of sociocultural context. These formative circumstances shaped and framed his theory and practice but did not limit them, because this would be to discount the transformative power of the Word of God, to which we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Thurneysen's Theology of Soul Care

In order to correctly apprehend the conclusions Thurneysen reaches in his work, it is vital that his theological context and the distinctive way in which it was formed is properly understood.

Thurneysen's theology had a level of historical continuity and discontinuity with the Reformed tradition. In essence, Thurneysen believed that his pastoral theology was an exercise in retrieval rather than an innovation. He did not consider that he was developing a radical new pastoral theology, such as the American, Seward Hiltner, did,¹ but rather was "concerned with clarifying what are the theological basis, nature, practice and implementation of pastoral care."² Thurneysen viewed his approach as a return to the Reformers, because they gave "a firm footing in this matter, a ground on which [soul] care in the church of Jesus Christ can stand and must stand if it is to proceed properly."³ It was Dialectical theology, however, that first put Thurneysen on the path to soul care and it is this theology that provides the organising principles for his pastoral theology.

Dialectical theology

Dialectical theology was a radical re-discovery of Scripture in the Reformed tradition. The Dialectical theology tradition is most notably associated with the work of Karl Barth. As already indicated, however, Barth and Thurneysen worked in close collaboration, with Thurneysen both contributing to this tradition as well as drawing upon it. Paul's letter to the Romans provided the Christological starting point for Dialectical theology.⁴

Dialectical theology refers to a school of thought known variously as 1) *crisis theology*, a theology that developed as a response to the theological crisis and bankruptcy of German Liberal theology; 2) *neo-orthodox*, recognising its shared tradition with Reformed orthodoxy; 3) *Barthian*, in recognition that Barth became the central figure of this inter-war theological movement; and 4) *Dialectical*

¹ Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958).

² Giedrius Saulytis, "Twentieth Century Trends in Pastoral Theology and how they Relate to Pastoral Experience in Post-Soviet Lithuania" (PhD Thesis, Brunel University, 2010), 54.

³ Eduard Thurneysen, *A Theology of Care*, trans. Jack A. Worthington and Thomas Wieser from *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer A.-G., 1946) (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 1962), 51.

⁴ Discussions of Dialectical theology in this paper are from a Barthian perspective, as referenced by Thurneysen.

theology, which describes the paradoxical nature of God's "No" and "Yes" towards humanity in Christ.

Dialectical theology is grounded upon the revealed Word of God but is distinct from other theological traditions that granted primacy to Scripture and acknowledged Protestant Reformation roots, such as seventeenth-century scholasticism, and twentieth-century fundamentalism.

In common with the Reformers, Dialectical theology emphasises the transcendence of God, expressed as the qualitative distinction of the *otherness* of God,⁵ the chasm that separates God from all humanity.⁶ It affirms the victory and reign of Christ and the truth that apart from God's revelation through Jesus Christ in Scripture nothing at all can be known of God.⁷ This knowledge can only be received as a gift by faith. Dialectical theology also affirms Reformation doctrines of *sola Christus*, *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *sola Dei Gloria*.

Furthermore, Dialectical theology followed the Reformation teaching on the noetic effects of sin and held that all speculations about humanity are in error, as the human condition can only be understood rightly in relationship to the revelation of God. The central tenets of Dialectical theology stood in stark contradistinction with the principles of natural theology or natural philosophy.⁸ These theologies and philosophies had as their starting point humans thinking about God, be that proofs or deistic propositions for God, whereby conclusions were drawn from observations in the natural world or deduced philosophically. Dialectical theology, on the other hand, began with the Word, the revelation from God, in which could be found a true picture of the nature of humanity, both in its fallen and redeemed state.⁹ Such a theology of the Word emphasises a Word that comes down, and could not depend upon any proof, insight or theory gained from below. Dialectical theologians differed from the Reformers in disallowing any concept of Calvin's *sensus divinitatus*, a relatively neutral term that acknowledged humanity's innate spirituality and religiousness that drew people to worship, and to

⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 56.

⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 63, 64.

⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 121.

⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 192–95.

⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 11–14.

seek meaning from beyond themselves, most clearly seen in the almost universal nature and variety of religions.¹⁰

For the Reformers, *sensus divinitatus* was not a knowledge claim about God apart from Christ, but a statement about the nature of being human – it was a “*both/and*” statement rather than an “*either/or*” statement. The Reformers agreed with the early Church Fathers that God has revealed himself in two books, Scripture and Nature, that is, through what God has said and through what he has made. An example of the *both/and* nature of Reformed soul care was that for the Reformers, such care also included acts of hospitality and charity beyond their congregations. The Reformers also offered care to those not part of their local communities. Some examples of the outworking of their broader understanding can be seen in Martin Bucer’s ministry to French refugees fleeing religious persecution,¹¹ Martin Luther’s letter of general advice for life,¹² or in Calvin’s approach to pastoral care which included caring for victims in the plague camp and writing on administrative matters broadly connected to living as a Christian.¹³ Calvin also spoke of the *duplex cognitio Dei* – a twofold knowledge of God – knowledge of God the Creator and knowledge of God the Redeemer. Barth, however, in his critique of natural theology and philosophy moved in a different direction to the Reformers.¹⁴

The times between the two World Wars did not readily lend themselves to notions of *both/and* within theologically conservative circles because such positions appeared too close to the prevailing anthropocentric Protestant liberalism. Barth drew inspiration from Kierkegaard’s distinctions¹⁵ of

¹⁰ Calvin’s theological anthropology affirms two ways in which humans could know God, or two modes of human receptibility. The first corresponded to general revelation or those things that can be known of God from creation, the *sensus divinitatus* (sense of divinity) which speaks of an inherent capacity for religiousness or spirituality common to all people. For this mode, to be human is to possess a faculty for spirituality. The second mode of knowledge of God is received by faith in the revelation of the Word of God. In a prelapsarian state the *sensus divinitatus* would have provided a true knowledge of the Triune God, but in a postlapsarian world it provided a mis-aligned spiritual sense.

¹¹ Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. Peter Beale (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009); William J. Nottingham, “Martin Bucer and the Rise of Christian Left,” *Encounter* 59.1–2 (1998): 235.

¹² Martin Luther, *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel* (Canada: Regent College Publishing, 2003).

¹³ Scott M. Mantesh, *Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536–1609* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 284–89.

¹⁴ Karl Barth, refuting Brunner on *duplex cognitio Dei*, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, *Natural Theology: Comprising “Nature and Grace” by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply “No!” by Dr. Karl Barth.*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), 105.

¹⁵ Barth’s dialectical thinking is indebted to Kierkegaard for such concepts as “indirect communication” and “the paradox.” See Thomas F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910–1931* (London: SCM, 1962), 83; Paul Tillich, “What is Wrong with ‘Dialectic’ Theology?” *The Journal of Religion* 15,.2 (1935): 132.

either/or and *reason/faith*, giving rise to the term *dialectical* to describe God's "No" and "Yes" towards humanity in Christ. The somewhat paradoxical nature of God's relationship with humanity could be expressed variously through contrasts such as, "visibility – invisibility; knowability – unknowability; negative – positive; veiling – unveiling; revelation – hiddenness; and paradoxical-ness – logicity."¹⁶

A further differentiation from the Reformers can be seen in the doctrine of Scripture that characterised Dialectical theology. This theology affirmed *sola scriptura*, while differentiating between the Word of God and Holy Scripture. Within Dialectical theology, the Scripture only *becomes* the Word of God at the event of preaching when the words of Scripture are carried forward by the Holy Spirit. In Thurneysen's words, "the Word of God in Holy Scripture is only alive if is added the work of the Holy Spirit."¹⁷ Dialectical theology also had a distinctive understanding of the atonement. More emphasis was granted to the forgiveness of sins than to the act of repentance. A *Christus Victor* approach achieved through resurrection was a more dominant theme than the model of substitutionary atonement achieved at the cross, a viewpoint less aligned with the Reformers and leaning in the direction of the Blumhardts who had popularised the *Christus Victor* motif.

In the same way that theology cannot rely upon any sense of *divinitatus*, Dialectical theology affirms that there can be no overlap or correlation between the study of historical events in the world, that cannot reveal God, and God's divinity, for only the revelation of God can reveal his divinity.

Thurneysen maintained that the status of humanity, as the image of God, cannot be understood in "physical, biological, historical or psychological terms."¹⁸ He continues to explain that humanity is to be understood as an *archestatus* which predates "all natural or historical reality," and is a reality only by virtue of humanity's status before God.¹⁹ Barth made a similar point in relation to history.

Historical enquiry, including the historical-critical method that endeavoured to find the historical Jesus behind the New Testament documents, could provide no true knowledge of God. Barth juxtaposed human reason with God's revelation, proposing that the only nexus that exists between the world of

¹⁶ P. H. Brazier, *Barth and Dostoyevsky* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 25.

¹⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 105.

¹⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 58.

¹⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 58.

human history and the eternal world is the Word, Jesus Christ. For Barth, the activity of human reason included all historical, scientific, cultural, moral, psychological, or social accounts of events belonging to empirical or provable domains in the immanent time-space realm. The *Historie* of the created world was open to rational human investigation, but the salvation history reality of *Geschichte* remained an unprovable account of revelatory events that break into the time-space continuum from the outside. Thus, Dialectical theology placed the cosmic events of the gospel beyond the historical realm of time and into the eternal realm of the absolute transcendence and wholly otherness of God.

This forthright new approach to theology did not go unchallenged, either from liberal or conservative positions. The liberal theologian Adolf von Harnack challenged the Dialectical position. He raised questions such as: Did they believe that Scripture could be understood without any critical historical knowledge? What is the relationship between religious experience and radical faith? If God and the world are so radically dissociated, then how are people to be nurtured in the faith? Is there any analogy between the love of God and the love of one's neighbour? Was everything in the philosophical tradition worthless? What of Philippians 4:8 – was not God knowable through the apprehension of the true, the good and the beautiful?²⁰

Challenges also emerged from the conservative Reformed Calvinist school. For example, Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987) believed that Dialectical theology was overly reactive against the pervasive immanence of God represented in the liberal theology of his day. He claimed that Dialectical theology was not a radical return to Scripture, but a version of modernism clothed in orthodox language that on the surface appeared to have similarities with a Reformed point of view. For Van Til, within the Dialectical system God's transcendence had been exalted beyond the temporal world, history had been rendered worthless, and the difference between sinful human beings and God had been collapsed in their understanding of God's self-revelation in Christ.²¹

Notwithstanding their differences, Dialectical theology shared several presuppositions with the thought of Van Til. Both believed that the starting point for true knowledge was the self-revelation or

²⁰Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealist Logic of Modern Theology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 475.

²¹ Cornelius Van Til, "The Karl Barth Theology Or The New Transcendentalism," *Christianity Today* 1.10 (1931): 13

self-attestation of Christ, particularly in relation to gaining an accurate interpretation of human experience.²² For Barth, this was expressed as a concern about over-dependence on philosophy when engaged in the construction of a doctrinal system.²³

For the most part, these challenges were shrugged off by the Dialectical theologians. They believed that they were charting a way between liberalism and fundamentalism that was truly aligned with the Word of God. However, several criticisms were posed by theologians contemporary with Thurneysen that have a bearing on the description and execution of his pastoral theology. One challenge emerged from Rudolf Bultmann, who believed that it was impossible to engage in theological discourse unaided by philosophical reason. Another challenge emerged from another Dialectical theologian, Emil Brunner, who insisted that a second task of theology was to provide a thorough description of theological anthropology in order to establish a point of contact for the Word of God. A third challenge was associated with theologian Paul Tillich, who was much less sceptical regarding the possibility of connections between the created order and divine truths. Tillich was prepared to affirm that it was possible to describe signs in this world that correlated with theological realities.

The role of philosophy in Dialectical theology

Thurneysen and Barth had sought to create a theological system that removed any step that was dependent upon philosophical theology. Their goal was to rest all theology solely on the dynamic Word of God, a Word that addressed and challenged all other foolish and vain philosophies and perennial “myths.” In their new account of theology, the Dialectical thinkers reacted against the anthropocentrism which began to flourish during the Enlightenment, which then grew in influence through the Romantic, pragmatic and existential philosophies that emerged, and the theologies that followed in the wake of this anthropocentric philosophical turn. Bultmann rightly challenged Barth’s claim that he was doing theology without philosophy. For Bultmann, it was not possible to do theology without critical knowledge or an understanding of philosophy, whether that was done

²²J. V. Fesko, *Reforming Apologetics: Retrieving the Classic Reformed Approach to Defending Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 106, 109.

²³ Fesko, *Apologetics*, 107.

implicitly or explicitly, or done well or poorly.²⁴ He maintained that Barth's thought, like all human intellectual enquiry, depended upon philosophical systems and assumptions which provide containers for thought and ideas that allow communication between people. In responding to Bultmann, Barth conceded that theology could not be purged of philosophy. He maintained his conviction, however, that theological discussion should not be dependent upon a single philosophical system or account of reality.²⁵ Barth was prepared to engage with different philosophies and converse with a variety of intellectual positions as long as he could retain the freedom for theology to work from revelation as the sole source of its criterion.

The role of points-of-contact in Dialectical theology

Brunner, who identified as a Christian apologist, was posing a different set of questions to Barth when he sought to pursue what he described as the *other task of theology*. Although alert to the danger of collapsing theology into anthropology, he believed that there were matters of genuine importance in relation to the human condition before God that required careful consideration. He was interested in questions such as the relationship between Christian faith and religious experience, the process of sanctification, and what could be known of a point of contact for evangelism. Undergirding these questions was a key concern that related to the care of souls. Brunner was seeking to know on what basis, in ministry, does a preacher or a pastor choose one action over another.

Barth and Thurneysen perceived this enquiry from Brunner to be a belief in a form of *analogia entis*, rather than the Dialectical *analogia fide*. For them, any form of *analogia entis*²⁶ was construed as a weak form of *theologia naturalis*.²⁷ Emil Brunner countered with the claim that a "false enthusiasm for the honour of God" had led some theologians to demolish the "bridge which God had left sinful humanity towards faith."²⁸ He believed that he stood in the tradition of the New Testament and the Reformation when he argued that, "The rejection of a *theologia naturalis* from the outset and in every

²⁴ Dorrien, *Kantian Reason*, 482.

²⁵ Dorrien, *Kantian Reason*, 482.

²⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 80.

²⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 120.

²⁸ Brunner, "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie" in *Ein offenes Wort* 1:190. Quoted by Alister E. McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 71.

sense of the term is neither Pauline nor faithful to the Reformation.”²⁹ In responding to the idea of a point of contact, Thurneysen reiterates, “Since [human beings] understand the word sin and all it stands for in its utmost and illusionless seriousness, all exits close on them, and there is left only the awful night of an inescapable, eternal separation from God. There is no bridge, no “faculty,” no “point of contact” within us that would lead from us to God!”³⁰ Thurneysen insisted that “the only ‘valid point of contact’ for connection or contact was the Word of God, received by *analogia fide*, which both judges and possesses alone the power graciously to include even the most opposed human standpoints.”³¹ In effect they were denying any role for a point-of-contact methodology in Christian apologetics and ministry.³²

The role of non-theological anthropology

Barth’s suspicions surrounding Brunner’s theological anthropology and the notion of a *sensus divinitatus* reflected a deeper concern. He was convinced of the bankruptcy of all *non-theological* anthropology, that is, *any* and *all* theology not derived through a Christological lens. Thurneysen’s own work reflects Barth’s language around this topic. Although Calvin’s theology granted a place to general revelation in nature, Barth believed that the human propensity was to exaggerate and overstate what can be known of God through *sensus divinitatus*.³³ To his way of thinking, there were only two anthropologies; one was Christological, the *true* and *theological* anthropology found only in the biblical accounts of humanity. All others were *non-theological* anthropologies.³⁴ Furthermore, within non-theological anthropologies were two types: 1) those which attempt to construct a reality around creatureliness in a form that excluded the Creator, resulting in myths and vain philosophies, and 2) anthropologies of the exact sciences that do not venture a religious opinion.

For Thurneysen and Barth, *non-theological* anthropologies oppose the Creator, construing a false account of reality about creatureliness that gave no account of the triune Creator. Such myths and philosophies include any spiritual accounts that attempted to provide meanings or explanations of

²⁹ Brunner, “Theologie,” quoted by McGrath, *Brunner*, 71.

³⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 82.

³¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 120.

³² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 187.

³³ Karl Barth, *Natural Theology*, 94–109.

³⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III.2 The Doctrine of Creation* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 20.

reality without consideration of the God revealed in Scripture. These included Freud's account of the unconscious realm,³⁵ Paley's clockwork universe, Darwin's theory of evolution,³⁶ Romantic impulses that gave rise to poetic inspiration from within,³⁷ materialism and naturalism,³⁸ Hegelian syntheses, or Feuerbach and Freud's belief that God was no more than a human projection. The typical error in these theories was located in their foundation. As Barth explained, "whether teaching of this kind includes or excludes the idea of God, and in whatever form it may include it, is unessential," because its origins are anthropological.³⁹ Likewise, Thurneysen makes a sharp distinction between biblical-theological anthropology and natural and profane anthropologies.⁴⁰

Following the same train of logic, Barth objected to any complete accounts of human-constructed reality. Even so-called Christian systems were rejected, such as a Christian philosophy or ethic. For Barth, there was no more a place for a Christian philosophy as there was for a Christian mathematics. He believed that there was no separate spiritual account of reality apart from reality as it is. Something was either found to be reasonable or unreasonable according to the Word of God. Thurneysen agreed. He held that it was senseless to pursue a *Christian* psychology just as one should not create a *Christian* zoology or physics. There was simply a Christian use of psychology,⁴¹ where practitioners bring their faith to bear on their secular training, for which Thurneysen cited Paul Tournier as a well-known example.⁴²

The second and less controversial type of *non-theological* anthropologies were those of the exact sciences. In this case, scientists are working with an accumulation of "objective" data across time concerning the physical, biological, psychological and sociological sciences. Even when these sciences claim to have an "authoritative doctrine of exact science in the period concerned, a sense of relativity will always be maintained."⁴³ Furthermore, "to the extent to which science is exact, it will

³⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 216.

³⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 170, 303.

³⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 103. Discussing the romanticism of Adam Müller, "For him, man possesses it as a sign of divinity granted him by nature."

³⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 86.

³⁹ Barth, *CD III.2*, 19.

⁴⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 62.

⁴¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 209.

⁴² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 240.

⁴³ Barth, *CD III.2*, 20.

refrain from consolidating its formulae and hypotheses as axioms and treating them as revealed dogmas.⁴⁴ For Barth, this second type of non-theological anthropology was not the enemy of Christian confession as in itself it did not prejudice in any way the hearing or non-hearing of the Word of God.⁴⁵

The role of correlation in Dialectical theology

Paul Tillich's method of correlation affirmed that symbols in the world corresponded to aspects of the Word of God. For example, love for neighbour has symbolic elements that correlate both to a theology of God's love, and also with concepts such as the transcendentals: the good, the true and the beautiful. His approach has similarities to Plato's concept of the shadow in the cave that corresponded to realities in the divine world. For Tillich, the symbols located in the world posed questions that had answers in the eternal realm. Thus, Tillich identified a correlation between a certain kind of philosophical question and corresponding theological answers.⁴⁶

For the Dialectical theologians, however, Tillich's method of correlation that used symbols arising from the anthropological to inform some aspect of the divine was an exercise of natural theology. Thurneysen did not deny the possibility of correlation and he himself refers to the spiritual correlation that can occur between sickness and sin. It is only Scripture, however, that can truly make sense of these correlations and reveal the links.⁴⁷ For Barth and Thurneysen, such correlation can only speak of human perceptions and *cannot* open any way back into the divine nature.

Thurneysen and the Dialectical theologians

Thurneysen, together with Barth, categorically rejected theological dependence upon any one philosophical system. He also rejected the notion of any point of contact between God and man except the address that comes by the Word of God. Thurneysen also minimised all non-theological anthropology, except that which had a clear scientific basis, and he did not believe that there was any

⁴⁴ Barth, *CD III.2*, 20.

⁴⁵ Barth, *CD III.2*, 21.

⁴⁶ John P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (Germany: De Gruyter, 2011), 166.

⁴⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 224.

method of correlation along the lines of Tillich that could aid soul care. Thurneysen, however, as will become apparent, was prepared to make extensive use of psychological and psychoanalytic systems.

Given that Thurneysen rejected the idea of *all* natural theologies, including Brunner's point of contact and Tillich's method of correlation, what did he understand to be the basis for the material aspects of his ministry of soul care, and on what basis did he choose one action over another? In matters central to his doctrinal beliefs, Thurneysen's theology remained Barthian. In matters concerning the practice of the care of souls he clearly shows dependence upon the work of Brunner⁴⁸ and was willing to refer his readers to Brunner's books on theological anthropology.⁴⁹

Because of Thurneysen's strong identification with a Reformed approach to pastoral theology, some consideration will now be given to its distinctive features.

Reformed and Puritan pastoral theology

What features of the pastoral theology of the Reformers and Puritans were significant to Thurneysen? He drew attention to two principal characteristics: Firstly, the early Reformers and Puritans considered pastoral effectiveness essentially to be a divine work. For example, Luther "emphasised that God and only God builds his community,"⁵⁰ and that it "was the Holy Spirit alone makes true preachers."⁵¹ Thurneysen saw in Luther that all soul care must utterly depend upon God, and it is God alone that bears the message to another's soul.

Secondly, central to Thurneysen's pastoral theology were the correlated doctrines of sin and grace alone. These doctrines are reflected in the living relationship between sinner and Saviour. The doctrine of grace negates any attempt to synthesise grace with nature, law and works, which to Thurneysen, "cannot be grace at all." This correlates with a further Reformation building block in Thurneysen's pastoral theology, held by Luther and Calvin, namely the doctrine of election, and the sovereign work

⁴⁸ It was Thurneysen's overlap with Brunner that gives his works an "evangelical" flavour, as Brunner was deeply involved with an evangelical revivalist movement, The Oxford Group.

⁴⁹ This paper will return again to expand upon applications of Brunner's mediating theology in chapter five in a survey of Thurneysen's operational theology and practice.

⁵⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 35.

⁵¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 36.

of the Holy Spirit in applying the Word of God to the soul of the elect.⁵² Luther and Calvin were convinced by Scripture that the power over life and death and the forgiveness of sins was found only in Jesus Christ.⁵³ In the words of Thurneysen, “Luther and Calvin removed the redemption of man’s soul entirely from man and his inner possibilities, occurrences, and experiences, and transferred it to the Word of God and to that alone.”⁵⁴ Both these theologians retained the confession of sins in their practice of soul care⁵⁵ and emphasised the practice of prayer.⁵⁶

Thurneysen also observed that for the Reformers, a robust Scriptural pastoral theology had a wide range of application. The discipline of pastoral care not only occurred by means of the community gathered around the Word and the sacraments,⁵⁷ but also through the visitation of homes by pastors and the elders.⁵⁸ Luther, Calvin and Bucer were known to initiate private, brotherly conversations of consolation.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Thurneysen believed that during the seventeenth century the Reformed faith did not always manage to forge the appropriate connections between doctrine and practice. At times and in certain locations, church life, faith and practice became dry and formalised. Even such a core Protestant message that justification is by grace alone through faith alone could be assented to, yet fail to appropriately enliven the Christian community. The dynamism of the early Reformation had been lost. In its place had grown an over-dependence upon the sermon and formal acts of clerical pastoral care expressed through receiving confession before the Lord’s Supper. There was a related aversion to all acts of spontaneous and non-customary pastoral care.⁶⁰ Pastoral care in this system “was primarily associated with membership and the conferring of baptism.”⁶¹ As a consequence of this dependence upon the external formalities of the Reformed faith, a vacuum of authentic spirituality developed, giving rise to pietist beliefs. Pietists appropriated an opposite extreme by privileging individual soul

⁵² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 35, 186, 188–89, 335.

⁵³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 152.

⁵⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 83.

⁵⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 152.

⁵⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 193.

⁵⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 32.

⁵⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 16.

⁵⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 101.

⁶⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 20.

⁶¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 21.

care over activities in the communal church setting, such as the sermon, baptism and the sacraments. Thurneysen attempted to return to what he believed was authentic doctrine and practice found in the sixteenth-century Reformers, particularly in the writings of Martin Luther.⁶² These writers had grasped the true significance of the tasks in which they were engaged: “The *soul* that is to be spoken to, called upon, comforted, admonished, and preserved is destined for eternal life and it is a soul which one can lose, and which nevertheless must not be lost.”⁶³ Thurneysen believed that the drama of these ultimate questions regarding the destiny of the soul is not only played out before humanity but before the face and throne of God.⁶⁴

Eduard Thurneysen’s theology of the care of souls, therefore, was deeply indebted to the Reformers and others of similar theological persuasion.

Outline of Thurneysen’s distinctive Dialectical pastoral theology

Thurneysen intended that his key work of pastoral theology be read through the lens of Dialectical theology as outlined above. As Thurneysen explained, “My book presents in applicable form the theory and practice of [soul] care and at the same time an introduction to the theology of Karl Barth which stands so strongly at the centre of our thinking.” Thurneysen’s book, *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge*, (The Doctrine of Soul Care) was written during the Second World War at a time when both Thurneysen and Barth were on the faculty at Basle University.⁶⁵ The work might be more accurately conceived as a *Church* pastoral theology, as its scope of interest aligns with Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* and is explicitly related to matters within church communities.⁶⁶

The central element of Thurneysen’s theology was that he worked from Scripture and from a theological perspective that can only be apprehended by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, thereby

⁶² Eduard Thurneysen, “Rechtfertigung und Seelsorge,” *Zwischen den Zeiten* 6.1 (1928): 82. Thurneysen and other dialectical theologians had a strong sense that they were bringing about a much-needed reformation in the tradition of Martin Luther. The similarities are closer in the dynamic and disruptive nature of the reversal and proposition of reforms, than close adherence to Martin Luther’s theological project.

⁶³ Thurneysen, “Rechtfertigung,” 82.

⁶⁴ Thurneysen, “Rechtfertigung,” 82.

⁶⁵ Thurneysen refers his readers to Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* (CD) and the structure of his book follows the same layout and sections denoted by (§§) as used in Barth’s CD. Brazier, *Barth and Dostoyevsky*, 100. Indeed, it seems that Thurneysen’s book was conceived as a modest companion work focusing on matters of soul care to accompany Barth’s extensive CD.

⁶⁶ Kendig Brubaker Cully, “A Theology of Pastoral Care,” *Anglican Theological Review* 44.4 (1962): 444–45.

creating somewhat of a closed system. Like a locked room puzzle, all the keys to soul care exist only on the inside; they must proceed from the Word of God and lead back to the Word of God, and not rely upon worldly or extraneous intrusions. However, the alleged unvoiced contradictions in his approach have led some to observe that his pastoral theology seems static and wooden, lacking the open relational dynamism with the world around which pastoral practice indicates.⁶⁷ A sustained criticism levelled at Thurneysen's pastoral theology is that it depended upon a circular argument,⁶⁸ a criticism also levelled at Jay Adams's Nouthetic pastoral counselling, which, like Thurneysen's, was built upon a Reformed system.⁶⁹

The closed-loop nature of Thurneysen's soul care system within the church setting could be represented by a triangle (see Figure 1). The Word of God stands at the apex and one side represents the coming down of the preached Word to a congregation. The other side represents the congregant's response to the Word of God through prayer and the sacraments. The horizontal line signifies genuine soul care where the congregant and minister speak the Word to each other and pray together, not spiritually dependent upon anything originating in natural human endeavour, but depending alone on the application of the Holy Spirit through the revelation of the Word. In Thurneysen's understanding, the pastor's role necessarily included horizontal soul-to-soul conversations. Such face-to-face conversations lessen the distance between preacher and hearer⁷⁰ and place both as persons before the Word. However, not all soul conversation includes the pastor, as it was also a way for congregants to edify and build one another up in the Word. For Thurneysen, soul care does not replace either the sermon, the sacraments, the reading of Scripture or prayer, but accompanies them.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Rudolf Bohren, *Prophetie und Seelsorge: Eduard Thurneysen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986); Peter B. Ives, "A Problem-Solving Approach to Pastoral Care with Emphasis on the Social Context of Christian Ministry" (PhD Thesis, Edinburgh University 1978), 283, 284.

⁶⁸ The thought movement in "Justification and Soul Care" appears to take place in a circle, Bohren, *Prophetie*, 218.

⁶⁹ Jay Adams was at Westminster Theological Seminary and was in the school of Cornelius Van Til, but his biblical method of pastoral counselling was substantially inspired by Eduard Thurneysen, with a singularly scripturally focused pastoral care.

⁷⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 15.

⁷¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 15.

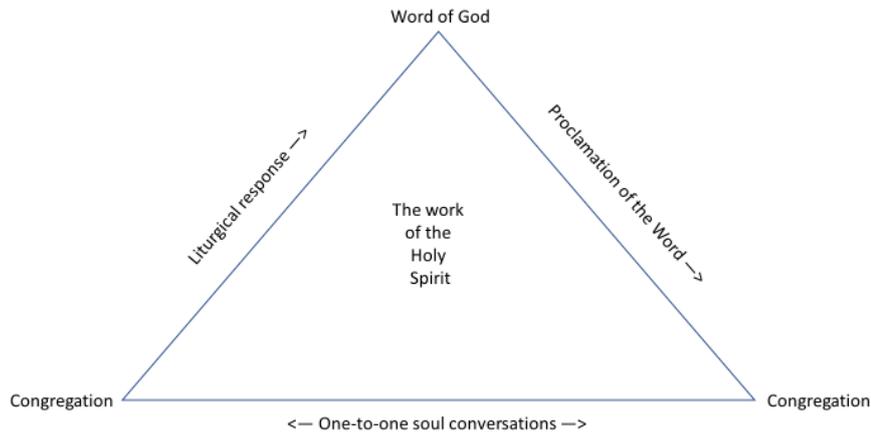


Figure 1: Diagram: representing Thurneysen's soul care Dynamic as a Triangle

With Barth, Thurneysen held that the “wholly other” broke in “perpendicularly from above,” and that there was an “infinite qualitative distinction” between God and man. It was only by the means of this inbreaking from above that people became animated by the Holy Spirit. Thurneysen’s position here is a deliberate countering of a pietist approach to soul care⁷² where the basic intention was for the soul carer to be the means of influence upon another.⁷³ To counteract the tendency of the soul carer to seek to influence another individual, Thurneysen strove to remove as far as possible any human influence in the pastoral encounter. To this end, Bohren asked, had not Thurneysen “encircled himself in a circle, in a kind of Biblicism of his father?”⁷⁴ Furthermore Bohren notes, “was not Thurneysen, subsequently imprisoned in his well-built castle?”⁷⁵ The metaphor of the castle was drawn from two sources. First, from correspondence between Thurneysen and Barth. Second, from the definition of “closing the circle,” a phrase from a talk he gave where he asserted that by using Scripture one could remove any dependence upon natural theology, with natural theology understood as using human reasoning as a link or step towards knowing God.⁷⁶ Thurneysen has placed his entire discussion of soul care within the relational context between sinner and Saviour, at the cost of any discussion of another significant relational setting – that between Creator and creature.⁷⁷ He acknowledged that sin is not *defined* in a

⁷² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 24.

⁷³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 24.

⁷⁴ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 124.

⁷⁵ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 124.

⁷⁶ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 124.

⁷⁷ Homrighausen, “Pastoral counseling,” 1009.

vacuum, as sin was an engagement with the created world.⁷⁸ However, only in Jesus Christ is there victory over sin, and with a view to ensuring that this truth would not be compromised, he endeavoured to construct a *water-tight* system of soul care that ceded no ground to human effort.

To facilitate this end, Thurneysen made use of arguments dependent upon geometrical structures. In doing so he believed that he could build his dialectical framework to “wall out” natural theology. For Thurneysen, as with Barth, Christ provided the mathematical point⁷⁹ where God touches the tangential existence of the world or history. He claimed that the Bible has “only *one* theological interest, namely, that in God: that only *one* way appears, that from above downwards; that only *one* message can be heard, namely that of an immediate forgiveness of sins both in prospect and retrospect.”⁸⁰ As Barth explained, the “‘wholly other’ breaking in upon us ‘perpendicularly from above,’ the not less famous ‘infinite qualitative distinction’ between God and man, the vacuum, the mathematical point, and the tangent in which alone they must meet.... There was also the bold assurance that there is in the Bible only *one* theological interest, namely, that in God: that only *one* way appears, that from above downwards; that only *one* message can be heard, namely that of an immediate forgiveness of sins both in prospect and retrospect.” Further to this, Barth explained, “we did almost nothing but clear away. Everything that smacked of mysticism or morality, of pietism and romanticism, or even idealism...”⁸¹ was cast aside to ensure that this Christological priority and necessity would not be forfeited.

Thurneysen orientated and mapped his theological pastoral landscape with precision. He took his bearings from Scripture, and his alignment from a gyroscopic view of Scripture that moved between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of reality and visible and invisible worlds. There was again a certain geometrical aspect to his approach. For Thurneysen, it was God alone who stood in the centre of all reality and people needed to return, recognise, and take their place at the periphery, that is, an appropriately humble position that acknowledged their true metaphysical standing. This perspective arose from Thurneysen’s understanding that there was a deep propensity within the human psyche to replace God’s centrality with their own response to His grace. Thurneysen worked with a sharp border

⁷⁸ Thurneysen, “Rechtfertigung,” 75.

⁷⁹ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John N. Thomas, Thomas Weiser (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 42.

⁸⁰ Barth, *Humanity of God*, 43.

⁸¹ Barth, *Humanity of God*, 43.

that delimited anything of natural origin. This corresponded with a clear boundary around Scripture, “the fenced area of the canon.”⁸² To protect the fenced area of the Word of God from contamination by natural theology, the tangential nature of the world was touched only by the proclamation of the Word. The single perpendicular line from this point coming down from the Word of God to the world was a message of election and reconciliation.⁸³ However, in this sealed system, that emphasised the axis of the Saviour-sinner relationship between God and humanity, there was little room left for a consideration of a different axis that could be seen from a different viewpoint – that of the relationship between Creator and creature. Several challenges emerged from Thurneysen’s geometrical model that each highlight the lack of consideration given to the humanity and the God-given creatureliness of the sinner. To assist in the exploration of these challenges, we turn to the work of Blaise Pascal.

Pascal’s spirits of geometry and finesse

Two centuries prior to Thurneysen’s analysis, philosopher and mathematician, Blaise Pascal, cautioned against the use of geometrical solutions to solve philosophical and theological problems. He offered a different quality, that of *finesse*, to provide a way to move from geometrical theology to a theology of practice.

Thurneysen’s geometrical explanation of pastoral theology functions in a manner similar to an osmotic membrane or a hydraulic model with valves that facilitate the inbreaking of God. There is a downward flow of forgiveness of sin, but the “valve” prevents retrograde flow towards God. For Thurneysen, a similar incommensurability existed between revelation and creation – to the extent that the co-mingling of the two is excluded – except in the event of the proclamation of the Word. Thus, this system de-emphasised God’s work through his creation which is relegated to an ancillary role in the

⁸² Quoting Thurneysen, Bohren, *Prophetie*, 122.

⁸³ A perceptive critique of Karl Barth made by Colin Gunton applies to Thurneysen at this point too. “One of Gunton’s worries was that Barth restricted the range of what Christian doctrine might achieve in interpreting the world, in part because his doctrine of God, oriented as it is to election and reconciliation, does not press him outwards into engagement with the creaturely world. There is a real difference here: where Barth was intensely (to some, compulsively) focused, Gunton, especially in his later works, was an associative thinker more concerned to trace the ramifications of the gospel for the material and cultural world. He did so as a corollary and application of a tenuously held set of doctrinal convictions, at the heart lay Trinitarian and especially pneumatological teaching developed partly in critical conversation with what he saw as Barth’s unfinished and not wholly successful attempts to extricate Reformed theology from the deficiencies of the Augustinian heritage.” John Webster, “Gunton and Barth,” in *Theology of Colin Gunton*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 19.

divine economy. At this point Thurneysen shares similarities with both Wittgenstein and Blaise Pascal who also consider science and religion as two entirely different planes of human discourse, and any movement between them requires a set of unarticulated rules, at some points even un-articulable.

Wittgenstein, in his description of language games, stresses the intuitive understanding necessary to follow such rules or directions.⁸⁴ However, Thurneysen differs from Pascal and the later Wittgenstein as he considered the practice of doctrine more of a mathematical science, whereas Pascal and Wittgenstein considered it an art.

Pascal had described two types of mindsets or ways of approaching the world: *esprit de geometrie* and *esprit de finesse*, literally the spirit of geometry and the spirit of finesse.⁸⁵ One way of approaching an understanding of a matter is a mathematical approach that works with facts and data (dogmatic rationalism), whereas the other is a more intuitive approach that is responding to events as they happen (things grasped at a glance).⁸⁶ As described by Pascal, “the mathematical principles are tangible but far away from ordinary experience... to deduce them it is necessary to turn away from the world.”

Furthermore, “geometry does not give insight into the fine structure of things.”⁸⁷ The historian Jacques Barzun describes the risks associated with Pascal’s geometrical bent. In particular, potential dangers were apparent in the trend towards the analysis of smaller and smaller units, and the tendency for increased specialisation with ideas being reduced to angles and straight lines.

For Pascal, the *esprit de finesse* was different. It occurs when common experience gives rise to intuitive principles, things that are simply felt and known, “things so delicate and numerous that one needs a delicate and clear sensitivity in order to sense them and be able to judge them.”⁸⁸ Barzun refers to this as intuitive understanding,

... which seizes upon the character of the whole by inspection... The understanding derived from experience is direct, because it lacks definitions, principles, and numbers, this understanding is not

⁸⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953).

⁸⁵ Pascal’s concepts of *esprit de geometrie* and *esprit de finesse*, from his unfinished work *Pensées* quoted in Graeme Hunter, *Pascal the Philosopher: An Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 171.

⁸⁶ Hunter, *Pascal*, 171.

⁸⁷ Hunter, *Pascal*, 184.

⁸⁸ Hunter, *Pascal*, 185.

readily conveyed to someone else; it can only be suggested in words that offer analogies – by imagery. Hence no universal agreement is possible on these objects and their significance.⁸⁹

Indeed, Pascal had anticipated the limits of geometry when working with matters of faith. Finesse apprehends aspects of faith and the believing life that cannot be analysed, taken apart, reordered, and restructured. Barzun notes that though it could be argued that works of literature and art works are divided into sections and parts, in reality each part has no independent existence apart from consideration within the whole.⁹⁰

Although a thorough consideration of Thurneysen's practice of soul care is a topic of a later chapter, the dynamism of his approach has already been noted. Something of conundrum arises therefore, when one sets Thurneysen's almost static mathematical theology alongside his dynamic and responsive practice of soul care. Is there an inherent contradiction or, at least, tension between seemingly different methodological approaches to the theoretical and practical arenas? Modern pastoral theologians described such a discrepancy in Tillichian terms as a variance between a person's institutional theology (formal) and operational (practical) theology.⁹¹ Perhaps the two ways of approaching the world suggested by Blaise Pascal can assist at this point. Similarly, advances in neuroscience and the study of the difference between the left and right hemispheres of the human brain might also help make sense of these distinctives.⁹²

For Pascal, though he distinguished between distinct mindsets in approaching the world, it was not the case that these were qualities where one had one or the other, as he believed some people possess neither and others, (for example, someone like Thurneysen), possessed both. However, Pascal believed that, like oil and water, geometry and finesse could not be mixed, even if in some sense they could be combined.⁹³ When they are combined in a person, that person moves back and forth between

⁸⁹ Barzun, *Culture*, 11, 12.

⁹⁰ Barzun, *Culture*, 12.

⁹¹ Pastoral theology as operational theology as described by Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), 20.

⁹² Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, new exp. ed. (London: Yale, 2019).

⁹³ McGilchrist explains, "Essentially it is the right hemisphere tends to ground experience, the left hemisphere then work on it to clarify, 'unpack,' and generally render the implicit explicit; and the right hemisphere finally reintegrates what the left hemisphere has produced with its own understanding, the explicit once more receding, to produce a now, new enriched whole. Note that the two ways of attending are both necessary, and strictly speaking, incompatible, at least at the same level and at the same time." *The Master*, xxiv.

abstract and general to the concrete and the individual.⁹⁴ This practice does, however, highlight the problem of incommensurability. As Aristotle observed, when using geometrical language not all values are commensurable or can be rationalised into a single currency or compared by a common denominator.⁹⁵ Thurneysen recognised the tension and the incommensurability between theology and practice, but externalised the tension by situating it between theology proper and non-theological disciplines such as psychology.

Further potential difficulties with the Dialectical theology undergirding Thurneysen's approach to soul care should be noted. Constructing a theology in terms of geometrical co-ordinates has the potential to abstract the Word from the people that it enlivens. For those like Thurneysen who were so concerned that they were aligned with the Word, this approach might result in a loss, as suggested by Bohren, of the dynamism of the living Word of God applied through the work of the Holy Spirit. A second danger lay in reducing the area of orthodoxy to a single line, that of election and reconciliation in Christ.

What of the entirety of the full counsel of God? Why not a myriad of lines – lines of concern, splendour, truth and wisdom, that also pass through the triune centre of God?⁹⁶ By granting such significance to the election/redemption line, and de-emphasising the relationship between the Creator and his creation, Thurneysen risks making the part the whole.

Conclusion

What then might be said in summary concerning the theology undergirding Thurneysen's approach to the ministry of soul care? Working from an *either/or* position, he sought to quarantine his pastoral theology from all that did not derive from divine revelation so that there could be no dependence upon natural phenomena, cultural artefacts or religious practice. His desire was that his whole approach might bear witness to the Word of God. Such a perspective was indebted to theologians and pastoral practitioners associated with Reformation thought, as well as the thoroughly non-anthropological

⁹⁴ Cf. McGilchrist's discussion in *The Master* on the connective and inhibitory functions between the left and right hemispheres of the brain: 46, 91.

⁹⁵ After the Pythagoreans, Aristotle referred to *values* as "incommensurable" (*asummetros*, by then the established word in Euclidean mathematics for "irrational" or "incommensurable" magnitudes) if they lacked a common unit by which they could be measured. He suggested that some values were "so different" that they might not be measurable by a single unit of value, such as that given by money (Aristotle 1133b, 15–25). "Incommensurability (and Incomparability)" in *International Encyclopedia of Ethics* (Blackwell 2009).

⁹⁶ Webster, "Gunton and Barth," 17–31, 19.

theological emphases of Dialectical theology. Thurneysen's formal theology bound him to a mathematical representation of a system or idea, but his methods and practices (discussed in later chapters) transcended his geometrical boundaries moving intuitively with an *esprit de finesse* mindset. Before examining his methods and practices, however, we turn to consider another foundation undergirding them, namely his theological anthropology.

Chapter 3: Thurneysen's Theological Anthropology

In this chapter, we now turn from Thurneysen's theological account of soul care to his anthropological perspective. The first part of this chapter explores his concept and uses of the term "soul." The second part reviews non-theological religious anthropologies, and then anthropologies aligned with occultic spiritualities. The third part of the chapter examines the ways in which Thurneysen utilises and integrates material from non-theological anthropological sources and outlines the possibilities and limits of information gained from such sources. What did Thurneysen understand by the concept of the "soul", both literally and metaphorically? A convincing and robust account of soul care rests on clarity around the concept of the soul and this accounts for why he had such difficulty integrating this theological understanding with his instincts on how pastoral care should be practised. Furthermore, what implication does Thurneysen's anthropological understanding have for utilising knowledge pertaining to human persons that is derived from non-theological sources?

The Nature of the soul

Thurneysen explored the concept of soul from four overlapping but distinct vantage points – theological, anthropological, psychological and sociological. His primary category in discussing the soul is theological and is grounded in the human soul's relationship with Christ. Secondly, he understands the soul as part of created body-soul union. Thirdly, he views the soul from a psychological perspective, as the seat of the personality or ego and volitional will. Fourthly, he uses the terms body and soul metaphorically to describe the physical community and "personality" or volition of human systems, i.e. social, cultural, and religious systems.

Nature and grace

Thurneysen's first differentiation is theological. The theological distinction views the creaturely aspect of the soul in relationship with the Creator. There are two types of living souls – those who are living spiritually and those whose life is viewed only from a psychical perspective.¹ The former refers to

¹ Eduard Thurneysen, *A Theology of Care*, trans. Jack A. Worthington and Thomas Wieser from *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer A.-G., 1946) (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1962), 60.

those who have been spiritually awakened by the Holy Spirit and received forgiveness of sins and the restoration of the image in Christ within them.² The latter are those who remain in their created psychological state and are not yet awakened by the Holy Spirit, and therefore do not know the forgiveness of their sin and still bear the shattered image of God.

In Thurneysen's thought, an even more significant difference than that between body and soul is the distinction between nature and grace, and it is this distinction that determines whether a soul is spiritually alive or otherwise. As Thurneysen explains, within the natural realm, "Even the highest spirituality in man is not so high and his deepest psychic process not so deep as to reach beyond this boundary, so that man would cease to be a creature and become one with his Creator." And conversely, grace transcends creaturely boundaries and an "even more severe boundary, our fall from God... the dark riddle of our *sin*."³ A natural anthropology can observe the natural biological and psychological form of humanity, but not its theological substance. Science can observe aspects of human functioning such as motivation and drive, intellect and emotion, even divine and demonic realms. These forms of functioning exist and can act upon the inner realm but are observable only within the created outer realm.⁴ Furthermore, these forces provide no access into the nature and action of the triune Creator. Metaphysical language might be employed to speak of notions such as spirit, transcendence, the divine, the demonic, or concepts such as holy, ultimate things, the ground of being or a greater power, yet "[n]atural knowledge of human nature lacks the light to shed new understanding on man. It seeks to understand and interpret him from inside himself."⁵ For Thurneysen, albeit that such powers have some insight, this does not imply *true* knowledge is possessed by such transcendentals.

Once again this speaks of the inherent limitations of the created or immanent realm. The spirit cannot be accurately conceived from either a physical or psychical perspective; it can only appear in anthropological discourse as a boundary concept,⁶ taking a thought or concept to the edge of what can

² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 64.

³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 63.

⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 61.

⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 62.

⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 209.

be empirically known, but no further. There are, however, psychophysical facts that suggest that perhaps something else is happening beyond the material realm, that point to a mystery beyond.⁷ Thurneysen provides an illustration of this concept in his work on Dostoyevsky, where he intimates that realities lie beyond the immanent frame in the same way that the lines in a painting direct to a vanishing point that lies beyond the frame of the picture.⁸ This concept could indicate a farther horizon of significance, to employ a concept described by philosopher Charles Taylor.⁹ What is clear, however, is that Thurneysen did not believe an awareness of supra-material realities equated to a soul imbued with true spiritual life, something that was only granted through the work of the Holy Spirit.

We now turn to the second lens through which Thurneysen views the soul, that of the body-soul relationship and its connection with the Holy Spirit.

Body, soul and (Holy) Spirit¹⁰

Thurneysen's anthropology of the soul addresses the phenomenology of the body-soul relationship through the lenses of dualism and monism.¹¹ Although aware of the philosophical debate between monism and dualism, this debate does not frame his anthropology, and he neither addresses the debate directly nor aligns with one position or the other, as his account contains elements from both sides of the argument.

For Thurneysen, the soul and body exist as a created psycho-physical unity. Each concept has a differentiated function, and both body and soul can be viewed through a scientific lens of biological and psychological domains, or through a philosophical lens from materialistic or idealistic standpoints.¹² For Thurneysen, these different perspectives are all valid enquiries into the created nature of humanity. He further believed that humanity had a "double aspect," most clearly understood as body and soul, whereby the person was a citizen of two worlds, one that was the outer, physical and

⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 209.

⁸ Eduard Thurneysen, *Dostoyevsky*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 10. Jordan Redding, "Living God, Renew and Transform Us: Awakening to God's Reality in Conversation with Eduard Thurneysen," *Reformed World* 10 (2019).

⁹ Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 37.

¹⁰ This title was taken from Marc Cortez, "Body, Soul, and (Holy) Spirit: Karl Barth's Theological Framework for Understanding Human Ontology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10.3 (2008).

¹¹ J. W. Cooper. "The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism," *SBJT* 13.2 (2009): 32–50.

¹² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 54.

visible world, and the other, inner, psychical and invisible. He located the soul within the inner dimension, and it was the soul that facilitated connection with other souls and spiritual entities.¹³

Furthermore, the soul or inner reality cannot exist separate from the outer physical reality, as it depends upon embodiment to communicate with God, others, its surroundings and even within the self.

For Thurneysen, therefore, a person is a body-soul entity and the life of the soul does not exist separate from an intricate interplay within an embodied person. Like Blumhardt and C. J. Jung, Thurneysen acknowledges close connections between body and soul, such as the interplay between physical health and sickness and sin and healing.¹⁴ However, despite Thurneysen's clear affirmation of the unity of personhood, he still retains an element of Cartesian duality between body and soul and holds views of personhood which privilege speech and cognitive knowing.¹⁵ Although he was writing at a time when many philosophers followed Schopenhauer,¹⁶ who had proposed an alternative model of embodied cognition (which was further extended by Nietzsche and Freud¹⁷), Thurneysen does not fully develop the implications of embodiment even when echoing Blumhardt and Jung.

From a monistic point of view, Thurneysen maintains the unity and indivisibility of a human person's body and soul. He wanted to present an integrated doctrine of soul care that has on view the person as body and soul. However, in his account, the relationship between body and soul is contained within a more significant relationship – that of the Creator to a person in the entirety of their body and soul, which thus binds them together in creaturely unity.¹⁸ All people – body and soul – live on borrowed time from God; whoever has become a living soul, or being, is created from dust and animated by the inbreathing of God.¹⁹ Each human, therefore, comprises an outer physical body, and an inner

¹³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 54–55.

¹⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 76, 85, 221–252.

¹⁵ Jordan Redding, "Addressed by the Word: The Practical, Pastoral, and Eschatological Anthropology of Eduard Thurneysen" (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2020), 280.

¹⁶ Daniel A. Schmicking, "Schopenhauer on Unconscious Intelligence and Embodied Cognition," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24.1 (2007): 89, 90.

¹⁷ Wittgenstein was also influenced by Schopenhauer in this regard. More recent scholars including Paula Gooder, *Body: Biblical Spirituality for the Whole Person* (London: SPCK, 2016), 31, and Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1974), 10.

¹⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 56.

¹⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 54.

emotional and psychical aspect called a soul. Together the body and soul form an integrated and united human entity,²⁰ which Barth termed, an ensouled body or an embodied soul.²¹

For Thurneysen, to speak of humanity only in terms of the body and soul raises the quandary of how to reconcile notions of unity and diversity, and monism and dualism. However, if we review Thurneysen's views of body and soul together under the rubric of Spirit, his understanding becomes clearer. The soul could be viewed as holding a place for the Spirit.²² It is "soul" that is designated the creaturely point of contact in persons, where people respond to the call of God enlivened by the Holy Spirit.²³ When the soul responds to the call of God's Spirit, body and soul together are drawn into unity and oneness, both together in Christ. Conversely, without the presence of God's Spirit there is fragmenting, division and duality, and ultimate unity is not possible because humanity as the "whole life in all its parts, in body and soul, inside and outside, is in the grip of sin and death."²⁴

Yet as Thurneysen speaks of the unity of human persons, he also speaks of a spiritual duality.²⁵ In this duality, the body's desires and the will of the soul are placed in opposition to each other, particularly in terms of the warring between "flesh and spirit, soul and body, certainly including his mental and emotional life."²⁶ This duality between the spiritual and mental realities raises questions as to how these two realities meet, and how one is transformed into the other. Thurneysen is raising the issue of how the psychic aspect of the soul is a citizen of an invisible realm and is acted upon by spiritual forces outside itself, including forces within the created realm such as demonic and angelic beings or the spirit of the age, or through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

²⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 55, 61.

²¹ Barth, *CD III.2*, 336.

²² Wolf Krötke, *Man as Soul of His Body: Notes on the Anthropological foundations of Pastoral Care in Karl Barth's theology* trans. John P. Burges (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 97.

²³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 60.

²⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 154.

²⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 55, 61, 62, 81, 89. Thurneysen also holds to a duality of body and soul at the point of death, when he explains that the creatureliness of the body and soul does not deny the immortality of the soul even when the body has decayed, but there is a recognition that the "immortality of the soul remains far below the eternity of God." Eternal life conceived of the soul united with a resurrected imperishable body, and without this, Thurneysen observed, even if the soul were imperishable, without resurrection "such immortality cannot help but be uncanny and evil." Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 61.

²⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 81, 89.

For Thurneysen, therefore, the soul as body, soul and spirit is a complex interplay between physical and psychical realities and the various visible and invisible domains that are the subject of the study of medicine and psychiatry.

The soul as the “seat” of personhood

The third aspect of the soul is psychological, which Thurneysen viewed as the seat of personhood and personality which also possesses a moral aspect. If the body-soul unity best describes the physical and mental person, for Thurneysen, within this unity of body and soul there is a psychological hierarchy, or a divisibility, in calling. The soul possesses the faculty within the living being that has the capacity and facility to apprehend the Word of God. It is the soul that responds spiritually under the direction of the Holy Spirit,²⁷ or conversely, falls under the spell of other spiritual forces and entities. Thurneysen, therefore, usually designated the inner part of humanity as the seat of personhood, the place which orientates the spiritual alignment for the person, either responding to profane spirituality or to the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.²⁸

Soul care for Thurneysen was an activity of “translation,” which spoke into this spiritual reality, taking the Word from above and sharing it with fallen humanity below, in language that the recipients could understand. As such, soul care could be viewed as a ministry that “stands in the gap,” as a kind of selective membrane between two poles, the transcendence and otherness of God on the one hand, and the creatureliness of persons on the other. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger notes that Thurneysen’s work may be best understood as a polemic to maintain the “indissoluble differentiation” between the discipline of theology and non-theological anthropologies, but at the same time he failed to adequately account for the “inseparable unity”²⁹ that may also occur with spiritual and psychical healing working together. Along similar lines, Thurneysen’s notion that sees the role of the soul carer as translator does not accurately portray the extent to which the Spirit works through the humanity and physicality of the body and soul of the soul carer; the Word of God is not devoid of the person through whom the Spirit

²⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 50, 60.

²⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 59.

²⁹ Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 82, 83.

works. Even the words of translators are enculturated in real time and space and embodied in the tones and accent of human voices choosing one word over another.

Despite the limitations of psychological enquiry,³⁰ social science disciplines can point in the direction of underlying theological truths. For example, the social sciences bear witness to the internal rift that runs through all people. That perspective, however, is a “mere shadow, a reflection of this fundamental sin in the nature of man,” as the inner brokenness of people “is not the sin itself, or is sin only to the extent that it is its concrete expression.”³¹ Thurneysen can draw these connections because his theological anthropology affirms the essential unity of the elements of human personhood.

Although he holds to the “ancient biblical view of a trichotomy into spirit, soul and body (1 Thes 5:23; 1 Cor 2:14ff),”³² the clearly material component in this designation (the body) cannot be separated from those that might be recognised as being non-material (the spirit and soul). In fact, Thurneysen affirms a strongly theological dimension at play within this unified anthropological understanding, even to the point of identifying the human spirit with divine Spirit: “Spirit would then denote the Spirit of God, including the breath or Word by which man’s nature comes to life in body and soul and is preserved into life.”³³ Thus, the life-giving Spirit enters people materially and comes to be realised within the creation.³⁴ This standpoint can be contrasted with what Thurneysen terms “profane anthropology,” which dichotomises body and soul, and affirms only physical and psychical elements in human personhood.³⁵

From the foregoing discussion it is apparent that the “soul” is a central concept within Thurneysen’s theological anthropology. He uses the term interchangeably with “psyche” or “inner life” to describe the centre of one’s being, or in psychological terms the “ego,” or to use the language of the personalist philosophers, the centre of “personhood.” However, without the concept of “spirit,” something of profound significance is lacking from the personality. For it is only by the Spirit of God that the

³⁰ To be discussed further below.

³¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 230.

³² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 60.

³³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 60.

³⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 209.

³⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 208.

person, or the “I” that is a *body* and *soul* can stand before God.³⁶ There is a qualitative difference, therefore, between psychical personhood and *holy* spiritual personhood. One derives from a creaturely perspective of the temporal world, of flesh and soul that can die. But the other arises from the perspective of the Word and forgiveness in Christ and eternal life.³⁷

Ultimately, Thurneysen’s approach to personality and psychology was two-sphere thinking, as Thomas Oden put it,³⁸ which placed a wedge between worldly/psychical/physical concerns and spiritual concerns. Yet, writing two decades before Oden, Thurneysen was a pioneer in seeking to include extensive discussions of psychology in a serious theological text and his acknowledgement of this creaturely dimension opened an avenue for the inclusion of psychological and sociological knowledge within soul care.

It is this two-sphere approach, distinguishing between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world thinking that occupies the next section of this chapter. We consider how Thurneysen seeks to map and negotiate the connections and boundaries between these two spheres.

Negotiating the borderland between world and the Word

In Thurneysen’s thought, there was a communal aspect to the souls, where the soul existed with a web of relationship, with themselves, each other, with cultural forces and spiritual entities where individuals and communities exist under the power of cultural and spiritual realities into which their bodies and souls connect. This introduces Thurneysen’s fourth application of the terms of body and soul – their application to groups of people. In Scripture the church is described as a “body,” or in secular parlance, terms such as “religious bodies” and “body politic” are employed. From this perspective, Thurneysen is engaging with sociological terminology and culture, in addition to psychological and spiritual dimensions, moving from the individual person to their location within interconnected webs of relationships and engagement with non-theological anthropologies. Visible

³⁶ Also referred to as “true life” from God’s Spirit, which touches him, and he stands up. Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 60.

³⁷ At times the words “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably in Scripture. Thurneysen endeavoured to be consistent by using body, soul and spirit to differentiate the concepts. Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 60, 61.

³⁸ Thomas Oden, *Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 74. Quoted by van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology*, 77.

communal bodies have inner “communal souls” which connect with spiritual forces external to themselves, and link them with other groups and ideologies. Such examples give rise to a pattern of two-sphere thinking in the metaphorical realm whereby anthropological systems can be said to have “souls” and allegiance to non-theological spiritual realms and entities. This thought is found extensively in the New Testament which describes only two spiritual realms, the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of darkness, variously described as spirit or flesh, Word or the world, and divine or demonic realms. Correspondingly, allegiance to and reliance upon these systems can open the soul carer to these spiritual entities intertwining physical and material with psychical or immaterial elements of life.

Summary of Thurneysen’s understanding of the soul

In Thurneysen’s system, the soul comprises a theological or vertical aspect that runs between the created soul and the Creator, that is expressed through nature and grace. Secondly, there is an anthropological aspect to the soul evidenced in the phenomenological realm expressed through physical and psychical realities. A third element captures the aspect of personality and morality, and fourthly, there is a communal aspect to the soul and allegiances to different principalities and powers.

Soul care is a ministry that works on the innermost part of the human being, concerned primarily with the *vertical* axis that runs between the inbreaking of God’s glorious eternal grace and the messiness of humanity’s sin, of which the full distorting horror has been revealed only in part. In contrast, psychological and social sciences work on the *horizontal* axis, in the things which can be observed empirically and relate to the inner nature of human beings, but which still may have some correlation to an inner religious or spiritual state. The sciences may identify evidence of symptoms of soul sickness, but judgments on the spiritual state of a person and the ultimate causes of the sickness lie beyond the remit of the psychological sciences.³⁹ In Thurneysen’s words, “The physician and the pastor have not only a different vocabulary, but a different subject,” and these subjects “each belong to its own order: the neurosis to the immanent and natural, sin to the transcendent.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 210.

⁴⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 226.

Thurneysen was working from Wisdom categories located in the Old Testament, particularly Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.⁴¹ In Ecclesiastes, we see the limits of life – that is, when it has been separated from God, the source of all meaning and true alignment. And after the teacher, Qoheleth, has assessed this form of life, the best that can be said is that there are observable patterns within creation and some activities are more fitting and enjoyable in the various seasons and vicissitudes of life. In general, wisdom is better than folly, food is better than hunger, comfort better than pain, wealth better than poverty, and company better than loneliness. However, none of these relative variables are able to address the existential fears posed by fate, death, or how you will be remembered.

Only God can bridge the gap between the transcendent and immanent and provide a deeper sense of meaning for life. As Qoheleth states, “the fear of God is the beginning of understanding.” Yet within the sphere of creation, of “life under the sun,” there is knowledge that can be gained that enables people to navigate this life more appropriately. The practice of soul care, therefore, is located at the intersectional boundary between the doctrine of God and the empirically observed creation. It is a ministry that necessarily requires the soul carer to have both a Christ-centred faith and theological knowledge *and* a good understanding of the time-bound empirical findings of the psychological sciences.⁴²

It could be conjectured that Thurneysen is exercising biblical wisdom as he works with both the immanent frame and the transcendent frame. Thurneysen skilfully moves the conversation across the gap between Ecclesiastes’ life “under the sun,” to life lived “*with* the Son” – a realm known only by revelation. Spirit empowered wisdom allows the shift between the immanent or horizontal frame of creation that opens towards the revealed transcendent or vertical frame.⁴³

In Thurneysen’s thinking, the single point of intersection between the different realms – the vertical with horizontal, the eternal with the temporal, revelation with empirical findings, Creator with creation – is the Word of God. From his perspective, soul carers need to understand the nature of this

⁴¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 124.

⁴² Paul Fredi de Quervain, “Die Krise der Seelsorge und die Kritik der Psychoanalyse bei Eduard Thurneysen” (“The Crisis of Pastoral Care and the Critique of Psychoanalysis in Eduard Thurneysen”), in *Psychoanalyse und dialektische Theologie: Zum Freud-Verständnis bei K. Barth, E. Thurneysen und P. Ricoeur* (Bern: Hans Huber, 1978), 42.

⁴³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 62.

intersection and apply that knowledge. They must recognise the “single point” mentioned above that functions somewhat metaphorically as a mechanical lock or valve, that prevents retrograde flow, in order to minister at the cross-roads *between* Trinitarian spirituality and the mortal, psychosomatic dimensions of life.

Thurneysen’s work, therefore, is an attempt to define the nature of the borders between Word and world. Although the downward movement of Christ to broken humanity is of primary significance in the work of pastoring souls,⁴⁴ he also used an image of a parallel common border shared between soul care and the scientific discipline of psychology.⁴⁵ Determining or isolating the boundary or borders between life *with* the Son, and life *under* the sun is, therefore, a critical step for Thurneysen’s pastoral theology, and we now turn to consider in more detail his understanding of the place of psychology and other social science enquiry in the practice of soul care.

Mapping the space between soul care, psychology and other social sciences

Thurneysen recognised the significance of both theology and practice in the discipline of soul care, and as discussed in chapter two, he was endeavouring to formulate a “geometrical” model to explain the practice of soul care. However, he was unable to fully reconcile the way in which a theological anthropology related to non-theological anthropologies. He did believe that both a theological and scientific understanding of humanity was important in the practice of soul care, but he also found it difficult to resolve the exact nature of the relationship between the two.

For Thurneysen, like Barth, science cannot discover what humans are in themselves; the discipline describes the outer realities of life (physical and psychical) and not the inner ones.⁴⁶ Their positions bore some parallels, as both were prepared to accept descriptions of observable phenomena from human enquiry, in situations where “scientific anthropology gives us precise information and relevant data.” Barth, however, rejected explanations related to physical, psychological and sociological fields that he believed overstepped their legitimate realm of enquiry, such as proposing explanations of the

⁴⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 159.

⁴⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 212.

⁴⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 141.

meaning of reality.⁴⁷ Scientific enquiries observe the limits and possibilities of humanity, and “under what conditions he can exist as the being he is.” Describing an *is*, however, cannot explain *the ought* or *the why*, because it has no access to the questions or answers grounded in theological and philosophical foundations and explanations of ultimate reality.⁴⁸

Writing in the 1940s, Thurneysen produced a very early account of the way in which psychology may be used together with Reformed theology of a Dialectical persuasion, two decades before his concerns were taken up and extended, either within a Dialectic context or conservative Reformed or evangelical contexts.⁴⁹ He provides, therefore, an early historic account of the relationship between theology and early twentieth century psychological movements, and a proposal that attempts to walk the fine line between scientific and non-theological anthropologies, and non-scientific theological anthropologies.

Thurneysen’s caution regarding the relationship between psychology and theology should not be mistaken for a lack of interest on his part in relation to psychology and psychoanalysis. In contrast to many Dialectical theologians and pastors, who kept their distance from the new disciplines of psychology and psychotherapy, Thurneysen was well read in psychological literature as well as psychoanalysis.⁵⁰ It is precisely this interest that alerted him to the danger of theology being collapsed into psychology – that in matters of soul care, the horizontal could potentially consume the vertical.⁵¹ With this awareness, Thurneysen attempted to put theology in dialogue with psychology and then set this exploration within the broader discussion of the relationship between the doctrine of creation and the natural sciences.

Thurneysen operated with a nuanced non-reductionistic understanding of psychology that acknowledged that scientific wisdom offered new insights for ministry and could be incorporated into his understanding of horizontal and vertical levels of reality, but preserved the essential asymmetry in

⁴⁷Barth, *CD III.2*, 20, 23.

⁴⁸ Barth *CD III.2*, 22, 26.

⁴⁹ For a thorough *summary* of different schemas, see Eric Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care*. Most early developments came from medical practitioners and psychologists, such as Paul Tournier and Frank Lake. Some examples of theological accounts are Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 1970; Don Browning, *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 1973; Thomas Oden, *Agenda for Theology*, 1980; and Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 1995.

⁵⁰ It was not until the 1950s that there was much interest shown in psychology from a conservative theological perspective in America and the UK and this can be largely attributed to the influence of the European interlude.

⁵¹ Paul Fredi de Quervain, “Die Krise,” 43.

the relationship between God and human beings. However, because that vertical dimension was the more significant, the Word of God ever remained the central feature of authentic soul care and the touchstone for evaluating social scientific understandings that ventured towards the transcendental realm.

Once again, Thurneysen's perspective here follows Barth's suggestion of the possibility of a relationship between a Christological doctrine of creation and "science – which really is science – and not secretly a pagan gnosis, or religion."⁵² The borders between these "two realms are complex realms," dependent upon the actual definitions in play when speaking both of creation and of science. For Barth, there remains the expansive possibility of "free scope for natural science beyond what theology describes as the work of the Creator and, theology can and must move freely where science ... has its appointed limit."⁵³ Thurneysen would concur.

What, then, does psychology and other social sciences bring to bear upon the task of soul care? Quoting Carl Jung, Thurneysen noted with approval that Jung "places psychology explicitly in the natural realm of phenomenology" and restricts himself to observation of phenomena,⁵⁴ calling psychology "a pure enquiry into fact without philosophical interpretation."⁵⁵ Despite affirming this approach, Thurneysen did note that when writing personally, Jung did make metaphysical observations about spirituality, about which he warned his readers to guard against.⁵⁶ Further to this endorsement of the value of a phenomenological approach, Thurneysen's account of the relationship between theology and psychology shares a principle with the Acts 10 account of an interaction between Peter and Cornelius and the apostle Paul's teaching on food offered to idols. These accounts speak of a new covenant transformation of earlier Jewish food laws, whereby states of purity no longer depend upon the type of food nor its religious preparation, but rather the use to which it is put. In like

⁵² Quote by Katherine Sonderegger, "Karl Barth on Human Dignity in a Natural World," Address delivered at The Henry Center, 6 August 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9TBm8OSGmY>.

⁵³ Quote by Sonderegger, "Human Dignity."

⁵⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 208.

⁵⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 218.

⁵⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 219.

manner, Thurneysen maintains that in disciplines such as psychology, communication theory and other social sciences, the issue is not the disciplines themselves, but rather the service to which they are put.

Thurneysen's soul care and non-theological religious anthropologies

Thurneysen also offered critique of various forms of soul care found within different denominations and spiritual traditions. He applied the same criteria that he had applied in his critique of psychology. He maintained that there was *no* practice of soul care that could replace the Word of God in traversing the gap between the otherness of God and the fallen state of humanity. Thurneysen was anxious to clarify the difference between true soul care and all other pretenders, and to ensure there was a separation between all true soul care and all other non-theological anthropologies. He furnished an extensive array of examples. These non-theological religious anthropologies that were masquerading as soul care included Catholicism, pietism, dry orthodoxy, romanticism, and all forms of psychologised, philosophical and esoteric spiritualities. And with the rise of privatised and individualised practices of pastoral counselling, psychology and spiritual guidance being offered by different individuals, such as Rudolf Steiner and Muller, Thurneysen reiterated that true soul care, rooted in the word of God, was a churchly activity and belonged as a ministry of the body of Christ.

Non-theological religious anthropologies, as listed above, often had the appearance of authentic spirituality. Thurneysen acknowledged that they promoted a variety of apparently pious practices, including confession of sin to other people, the cultivation of a feeling of absolute dependence, the fanning of a divine spark, mortifying the flesh, becoming one with nature, finding a higher spiritual plane, or discovering the truth within. He knew that these practices were unable to heal the breach between God and the human person.⁵⁷ For Thurneysen, true soul care guided a person to this breach where they could become aware of their true status before God, acknowledge their sins, and find forgiveness in Christ.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 74.

⁵⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 67.

Other spiritual systems failed to deliver this understanding. Thurneysen rejected the semi-Pelagianism he perceived to be present in Catholicism and Pietism.⁵⁹ He also found lacking any viewpoint that suggested that the soul is merely sleeping, to be awakened by the soul carer. Forms of this perspective were endemic, found in Catholicism and in the new esoteric spiritualities of the early twentieth century.⁶⁰ Thurneysen's Dialectical theology, standing in the Reformed tradition, affirmed that the soul was not simply imprisoned in a body or in a deep sleep – it was dead.⁶¹ And only the Word of God could resurrect dead embodied souls. Thurneysen's quarrel with Pietism was a matter of emphasis. He believed that many Pietists had come to genuine faith in Christ, but too often that faith had given way to an emphasis on human works rather than ongoing gratitude for grace through the Word.⁶²

Mythological and occultic anthropologies and spirituality

Psychological and scientific anthropologies were not the only ideologies through which people attempted to reconcile the spiritual and the scientific. Anthroposophy was another prominent example at the time Thurneysen was writing. Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy had grown out of an amalgam of influences: Theosophy, esoteric explorations, European spiritualist traditions (as varied as the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg to radical pietist inwardness), mysticism, and Oriental religious influences. Anthroposophy exemplified a number of movements described by Thurneysen as substitute religions or crypto-religions.⁶³

For Thurneysen, a key problem with Anthroposophy was the view, held explicitly and implicitly, that the divine part of the soul resides within the body-soul unity. Such a perspective was an expression of an over-realised immanence. For Thurneysen, even if the "divine" part of the soul is awakened, this cannot help breach the Creator-creature distinction.⁶⁴ He held that Anthroposophy failed to give due weight to sin as an offence against God, and the human need of God's forgiveness cannot be left

⁵⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 75.

⁶⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 81.

⁶¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 80.

⁶² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 68–76.

⁶³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 170. To which Thurneysen added Christian Science.

⁶⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 89.

simply as a neutral oversight.⁶⁵ Without the forgiveness of sins, the individual remains in captivity to Satan and his spirits, and without the peace that is established in God's reign by means of such forgiveness. In the same way that neutrality is ruled out for individuals, crypto-religions are also unable to remain neutral.

Thurneysen observed that the world is "haunted," and there is no lack of magical projections into the world "that amount to a *daemonlogia naturalis*."⁶⁶ In engaging in soul care, Thurneysen noted that the soul carer encounters forms of superstition, magic and spiritualism. These false spiritualities also appear in more sophisticated disguises as demonstrated by various theories of the supernatural, "but also of Anthroposophy and parapsychology as attempts at a science of the occult."⁶⁷ For these reasons a soul carer should have an awareness of the shadowy world and actual power of the darkness, while remaining firmly anchored to Christ and secure in their forgiveness of sins, knowing that it is only the light of Christ that can overcome and dispel this darkness.

Thurneysen cautioned that there were dimensions within the created order that present danger to both inner and outer realities of life,⁶⁸ what he termed as the whole intermediary world of spirits and demons.⁶⁹ The pastoral challenge posed by Anthroposophy and similar movements was the way in which these systems manipulated people's natural religious capacity with a promise of spiritual mastery through pseudo-science. This practice exposed how thin the boundary is between an instinctual spirituality and people's vulnerability to being exploited by cultish practices, offering only counterfeit avenues to spiritual wholeness, instead of forgiveness of sin and new life in Christ and restoring a person's image in God. Those who would care for souls, therefore, must be attuned to the dangers of false spiritualities and ensure that the Word of God is determinative in their theory and practice.

Notwithstanding the abuse of people's psychological and spiritual need exhibited by Anthroposophy and other occult practices, there is a crucial need for a soul carer to be able to discern the different spiritual needs of the soul and in which facet of the soul the need, distress or issue lies. Is the distress

⁶⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 170.

⁶⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 317.

⁶⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 317.

⁶⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, occultic practices 317–333; magic arts 88, 269, 322, 323.

⁶⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 317, 323.

related to the soul's creatureliness, or their physical, mental, or psychical health or distress? Is the distress in their personhood, a moral dilemma, or an issue related to a larger spiritual system in which they are enveloped?

Patterns of engagement with non-theological anthropologies

The difficulties that Thurneysen faced in the early twentieth century in attempting to articulate the relationship between the practice of soul care and the disciplines of psychology and psychoanalysis have now multiplied. With new scientific specialities such as cognitive science, which incorporates knowledge from multiple disciplines including linguistics, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, philosophy, anthropology, and psychology, anyone seeking to engage in theologically informed soul care is left in an ever more complicated situation as they seek to appropriately and faithfully make sense of these interacting realms. Nevertheless, there is a need for the soul carer to have in mind several patterns or frameworks to help scaffold them through a soul care encounter.

Several models have been proposed for how Christians might negotiate to move between theological and scientific anthropological perspectives in recent times. Eric Johnson has outlined five dominant methods of engagement between theology and psychology.⁷⁰ Johnson's five views are *A levels-of-explanation view, integration, Christian psychology, transformational psychology* and *biblical counselling*. Each of these has been developed by Christian psychologists in professional practice. To this list could also be added several other implicit and explicit approaches developed with a greater emphasis on theological or philosophical frameworks: *psychologisation of faith*, a *strata-of-reality* model,⁷¹ the *Chalcedonian pattern*,⁷² and *Protestant spiritual direction* or guidance.⁷³ How might Thurneysen's approach be analysed concerning these paradigms? There is value in weighing

⁷⁰ Eric Johnson has suggested five dominant methods described in Eric Johnson, ed., *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009).

⁷¹ Alister McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Nature Reality and Theory*, 3 vols. (London: T. & T. Clark, 2001–2003), based on the philosophy of Roy Bhaskar. Ram Roy Bhaskar (1944–2014) was a British philosopher who worked at the intersection between philosophy and the social sciences. His first book on "transcendental realism" was *A Realist Theory of Science* (1975).

⁷² Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counselling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

⁷³ As exemplified much later by Susan S. Phillips, *Candlelight: Illuminating the Art of Spiritual Direction* (New York: Morehouse, 2008).

Thurneysen's engagement pattern against other patterns and models to better understand Thurneysen's implicit framework between theology and other disciplines.

The pattern that would substantially meet his objective of prioritising the Word of God while engaging fruitfully with the psychological sciences is the Chalcedonian pattern, as described by van Deusen Hunsinger.⁷⁴ The Chalcedonian pattern would express Thurneysen's shared commitment to Barthian theological concepts and psychological insights from a Jungian perspective. This pattern would then serve to provide orientating touchstones which guide the soul carer through their pastoral engagement while navigating the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the encounter. If such an approach is applied to Thurneysen's thought, it is possible to hold in tension the two concepts he was keeping disparate and solve the dilemma of how theology and psychology might work together. The Chalcedonian Definition was developed to provide a framework to hold concepts of Christ's divine and human natures together while maintaining the indissoluble differentiation, inseparable unity and indestructible order of the two natures.⁷⁵ As the Chalcedonian pattern is a template rather than a directive, this provides a scriptural orientation to a situation, allowing the soul carer to work with different horizons of significance simultaneously. Furthermore, as a pattern, it can be reused and reapplied to new situations, including new developments in psychology, neuroscience or sociology, providing ongoing conceptual insight when working with different anthropologies – theological, non-theological, religious and spiritual.

Applying the Chalcedonian pattern to the arenas of theology and practice identified by Thurneysen as crucial to the discipline of soul care allows them to be reconciled to avoid the pitfalls of other methodologies of understanding and in a manner which is not contextually dependent. This resolution allows his thought to be directly applied in a modern context of spiritual care and contributes to the overall body of knowledge of a doctrine of spiritual care. The Chalcedonian pattern enables the development of a *true* theological anthropology in conversation with non-theological anthropologies while maintaining the indissoluble differentiation between theology and the humanities, the

⁷⁴ van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology*, 61–104.

⁷⁵ van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology*, 64.

inseparable unity of the person, and the indestructible metaphysical distinction between Creator and creatures.

The second approach that addresses Thurneysen's concerns is that of the strata-of-reality model. Theologian Alistair McGrath has proposed a modified version of Roy Bhaskar's levels-of-reality approach, an account that he terms "strata-of-reality."⁷⁶ Bhaskar's philosophical model allows for greater complexity, including metaphysical realities which can accommodate a spirit world.⁷⁷ Within Bhaskar's critical realist epistemology, the social location of knowledge affects how we know things. For Bhaskar, ontology determines epistemology because how things are determines how we know them, the extent to which they are known, and the type of knowledge required.⁷⁸ Bhaskar's dependence upon sociocultural and locational factors bear some similarities to the thought of Ernst Troeltsch, which may have contributed to Thurneysen's intuitive sensitivity to cultural movements and location. Bhaskar's conceptualisation presents stratified levels of explanation that allows for multiple overlapping dimensions of reality, which can, in turn, accommodate levels of reality that intersect with each other rather than collapsing into one another.⁷⁹ His system retains the integrity of each level of reality, acknowledging that they cannot readily, if at all, be reconfigured and expressed in terms of another strata of reality.

The advantage of the McGrath-Bhaskar schema, strata-of-reality, is its accommodation of a range of created realities. Thurneysen was very aware of the breadth and complexity of the physical world and human culture. For example, his interest in literature took him well beyond scientific systems. This interest is apparent in his awareness of spiritual realism in the writings of Swiss author Jeremias Gotthelf, where there are allusions to spiritual qualities between people, nature and relationships. The world that Gotthelf created resonated with Calvin's notion of *sensus divinitatus*, that even fallen

⁷⁶ Alistair McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: Quest for God in Science and Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 214–15.

⁷⁷ Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (London: Verso, 1975). Johnson, *Foundations*, 332, relies upon Bhaskar to make a similar point.

⁷⁸ McGrath, *Universe*, 214–15.

⁷⁹ van Deusen Hunsinger makes a similar point reasoning from Michael Polanyi's stratified hierarchy, acknowledged both differences and the interconnectedness between different strata. Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, "An Interdisciplinary Map for Christian Counselors: Theology and Psychology in Pastoral Counseling," in Mark R. McMinn & Timothy R. Phillips, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Theology and Psychology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 225–27.

humans have precognition and sensitivity to a world shot through with divine qualities. For Calvin, “God’s glory shines through in beauty, splendour and order.”⁸⁰ The universe displays divine wisdom and artistry, which can be seen in astronomy, medicine and natural science, which allows the scientist to gaze into divine wisdom.⁸¹ Thurneysen’s view of the created world included the possibility for archetypes, spirits of the age, psychic and spiritual phenomena,⁸² and the occult realm.⁸³ Indeed, he includes a chapter about exorcism in his book on pastoral care.

Nevertheless, the complexity of Thurneysen’s approach requires a system that can accommodate more than physical and metaphysical realities. Therefore, even a model such as strata-of-reality cannot adequately describe his viewpoint. This inadequacy is because, for him, the transcendent Word of God remains a boundary concept. This concept stands above and beyond created realities, and therefore cannot be subsumed within some strata-of-reality conceptualisation, which is a further strength for prioritising the Chalcedon pattern. Similarly, Alistair McGrath asserts that Bhaskar does not adequately account for the Creator-creature distinction and the otherness of God, as Bhaskar proposes that all reality, not just creation, can be encapsulated within a single unified whole.⁸⁴ McGrath’s comments are substantially in line with the understanding of reality that Thurneysen was proposing in the 1940s. More positively, Bhaskar’s model provides ample room for a Christological reading of reality that does not need to be understood or explained regarding any other layer of reality.⁸⁵

A third and less complex model is that of the level-of-explanations model. This model approaches the task from a different angle and posits different spheres of enquiry, such as biological, psychological, sociological and socio-cultural, which each have their methodologies and knowledge base. These disciplines can only provide accounts of material and interpersonal phenomena, with more metaphysical matters belonging to the theological domain. Kevin Vanhoozer has used such an approach, particularly in adopting language theory concerning hermeneutics.⁸⁶ The strength of this

⁸⁰ Edward Adam, “Calvin’s View of Natural Knowledge of God,” *IJST* 3.3 (2001): 286.

⁸¹ Adam, “Natural Knowledge of God,” 286.

⁸² Examples include accumulated human history as described by Hegel’s world spirit or *Zeitgeist*, cultural and national identities embodied within language and religious myth, Jung’s archetypes, Emmanuel Swedenborg’s spiritualism and the Romantic spirit.

⁸³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 317.

⁸⁴ McGrath, *Scientific Theology*, 3:xvi, xv.

⁸⁵ McGrath, *Universe*, 216.

⁸⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics,” *JETS* 48.1 (2005): 96.

model is the acknowledged limits of each level of explanation, and thus there is no attempt to impinge methodologies from other domains upon the spiritual dimension. Thurneysen held a complex and sophisticated view of created reality that acknowledged a spiritual dimension but would not have drawn as such sharp a methodological division as found with the level-of-explanations model, seeing all creation in a dialogical relationship with other parts.

Other models that seek to offer a template for working between the sciences and theology include the integration model, which involves “the discipline and profession of psychology with a commitment to having one’s Christian convictions shape every aspect of one’s work.”⁸⁷ Another group of Christian psychologists look to psychological writing and insights from Scripture and the Christian tradition, an approach exemplified by Thomas Oden⁸⁸ and Andrew Purves⁸⁹ both of whom have written extensively on psychology drawn from earlier Christian traditions. The transformational model has a different emphasis and focuses mainly on Christian counselling that endeavours to find the “breach” (see chapter 4), seeking to move the other person towards a faith encounter with a foundational emphasis on the psychologist’s faith. Lastly, there is the biblical counselling model, in contrast to these previously listed models, the biblical counselling approach endeavours to use the Bible as the critical authority and tool in the counselling context and therefore tends to distance itself from the use of psychology.⁹⁰

Thurneysen, writing in 1946, incorporated several aspects found in these models: working from Christian convictions, engaging with psychological insights from theologians of the past, emphasising the need for carers to work from the wisdom of Scripture, and prioritising theology over psychology. In his view, theology functions at the vertical dimension of sin and grace, with no ultimate overlap with psychological findings that function on the horizontal plane.⁹¹ However, within carefully defined limits, he does grant a place for psychology, and it is valued as an auxiliary discipline in the practice

⁸⁷ Johnson, *Five Views*, 125.

⁸⁸ Thomas Oden, *Care of the Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

⁸⁹ Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

⁹⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 204. Psychological and psychiatric literature needs to be consulted in soul care.

⁹¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 226.

of soul care.⁹² Only the Chalcedon pattern and strata-of-reality model adequately capture the breadth of his approach.

Conclusion

Thurneysen's theological anthropology offers a sophisticated and nuanced view of facets of the soul from many perspectives. The soul is created and distinct from the Creator. The creaturely soul is a psychical-physical unity that exists in material and spiritual realms. The soul is the seat of the personality and has a moral dimension, and lastly, the soul is connected into a web of material and spiritual entities.

When a person feels spiritual distress within their soul, they will seek to alleviate this distress. Forms of alleviation could be through religious practices, health and wellness programs, medication, exploring spiritualities and even the occult. The critical point to take from this chapter is that the soul carer must choose a course of action or soul care intervention. The carer should know why they have chosen it and what change they hope to effect by the course of action under their God. The knowledge component consists of both theology and anthropology and understanding the patterns and the way that the two realms fit together under God.

The following chapters move from Thurneysen's theology and anthropology to his methods and practice.

⁹² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 202, 206.

Chapter 4: Thurneysen's Method and Techniques of his Practical Theology

In this chapter we move away from Thurneysen's theoretical perspectives to his methodological practice, to a demonstration of his pastoral finesse when caring for souls. The centrepiece of Thurneysen's soul care practice is the soul conversation. If theology provided the "why" of soul care, this particular form of conversation provided the "how" of soul care. This chapter explores the articulation of the soul, which for Thurneysen was speech expressed in conversation, whereby speech was the primary vehicle of communication between Creator and creature, and between souls.

Thurneysen's emphasis on the place of conversation in soul care was not new, as conversation had been central to Reformed denominations in the form of interviews for baptism, marriage and confession, and in the intense soul-searching conversations in the Pietist tradition. He was seeking to describe a practice more tailored to people's needs and more focused on God's gift of salvation. For Thurneysen, the power of conversation was that it was speech that could act as a vehicle for the revelation of God.

Despite Thurneysen's rejection of any association with Tillich's anthropological starting point and *method of correlation*, his understanding of theological anthropology did not mean that the Word of God was not the only starting point when engaging in a pastoral encounter. He was willing to begin with the topic that a person presented from their life situation, and as he listened and understood what he was being told from a philosophical and psychological viewpoint, he would provide a theological response formed from the Word of God which correlated with the life event shared.¹ Such an approach is not dissimilar to that of Karl Barth, who also noted that "The problems that lead [a person] to seek pastoral care are understandably problems about [their] interpersonal and mortal being. As such, they are necessarily problems of [their] own being of the individual 'subject'."² Similarly, just as Bultmann had challenged Barth that it is not possible to do theology without dependence upon philosophical

¹ Eduard Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 140–41.

² Wolf Krötke, *Man as Soul of His Body: Notes on the Anthropological Foundations of Pastoral Care in Karl Barth's Theology*, trans. John P. Burges (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 93.

models and arguments, either implicitly or explicitly, so too, soul care inherently functions within the context of psychological and communication theory.

The substance of a soul conversation

For Thurneysen, speech, and the interchange of conversation, were the primary conduits through which souls communicated. He understood speech to be the defining characteristic of the *image* of God. “[T]he mystery of speech is identical to the mystery of personality [and] with the image of God in Man,” he wrote. He acknowledged that speech is God’s chosen way to communicate with humanity. It is by speech that “life becomes human,” and speech “breaks our isolation because its power of communication brings us into fellowship with our neighbour.”³ The speech of soul care, however, is something beyond joint fellowship between neighbours. It is also more than natural human articulateness, something that Thurneysen believed often became captive to something beyond itself, an alien spirit and word.⁴ In a conversation, God is at work in both the speaker and hearer, such that the Word of God itself is spoken: “God lays claim to the human speech as an instrument, to pronounce his Word, ... it is the conversation which God conducts into which he draws men.” Such conversation is not disengaged from the biblical testimony. A principle of the soul conversation is that it draws from the vast breadth of Holy Scripture. The soul conversation, therefore, should be understood as a practice closely aligned with the Word of God.

Like Barth, Thurneysen was careful to affirm a thoroughly theocentric approach to how a person encounters the Word of God. The speech that truly enlivens a human being, that allows a person to become a *living* soul, is that which is “strictly bound to the Word of God in Holy Scripture.”⁵ It is not simply the capacity for speech that allows a human response to divine communication. We are utterly dependent upon God to grant even the ability to hear, for “it is not in our power to encounter, to hear, and understand God by our own eloquence; he grants us this privilege according to his good

³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 103

⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 107.

⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 105.

pleasure.”⁶ Just as the speaking for God is not just *any* speech, likewise, the hearing of God is not merely *any* hearing of speech but has a particular focus upon the very Word of God itself.

Thurneysen prioritised speech in soul care because of his belief that speech has unique access to the soul. For Thurneysen, it is as if speech functions metaphorically as a *solvent*, which both frees and activates the soul’s most profound utterances. It is through speech that the content of the soul is accessed. Images, dreams, visions and such like are included in the workings of the soul, but until they are given words they remain “singular and diffuse,” inaccessible to the self, or other.⁷ Thurneysen maintained that the priority given to speech as the means to access the soul is not only in matters of response to the revelation of God. There are other spiritual levels of reality – psychic powers and other depths of the soul – and it is the act of speech which brings this spiritual level, or dimension of reality, to the awareness of the conscious mind. For Thurneysen, speech forms the communicative nexus between the divine and human realms, and conscious and unconscious dimensions of a person. Thurneysen quotes Adam Müller approvingly, “speech is the divine seal which alone makes serious and genuine all the singular and diffuse thoughts of the individual.”⁸ Thurneysen values the plain meaning of speech, rather than “something contrived, a kind of cipher or code,” because it is through speech that people become truly human.⁹ However, for Thurneysen, language and conversation are mere speech unless the conversation is vivified by the Holy Spirit. As Thurneysen explains, “We shall do everything to transfer his concerns from the human and psychological realm into the quite different realm disclosed by the Word of God.”¹⁰

Thurneysen’s high view of the creative and regenerative power of speech has similarities to the speech act theory pioneered in the 1950s and 60s by J. L. Austin (1911–1960) and John Searle (b. 1931–). This theory claims that speech does not just describe reality, but speaks reality into being. Such a perspective was held by many to be even more true in relation to the Spirit-inspired Word of God. For example, Reformed theologian Kevin Vanhoozer applied speech act theory in the sphere of theological

⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 110.

⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 102.

⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 102.

⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 103.

¹⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 92.

discourse and proposed that the trinitarian theology of Holy Scripture was a divine communicative act. In language that echoes and extends Barth, he claimed “that Scripture *is* the Word of God... and that Scripture may *become* the Word of God.”¹¹ For Vanhoozer, and Thurneysen before him, it is speech that allows engagement and response to the utterances of the Word of God. But those utterances were encapsulated within a particular form and context. Vanhoozer uses the term “drama” to describe the locus for engagement with speech that is the revelation of the Word of God.¹² For Thurneysen, however, it is the soul conversation that provides the locus for the revelation of the word of God, where the conversation provides the form or container for the substance of the Word of God.

The form of a soul conversation

For Thurneysen, the *substance* and teleological purpose of soul care are accomplished via the *form* of a conversation. “This form is not accidental, but constitutes the very nature of the means.” In such thinking, there is a bi-conditional element that binds soul care necessarily to the soul conversation. The *form* of the art of conversation has a long history. It goes back to Grecian times (e.g. the symposium of Plato), and came to prominence again in the Renaissance. Many significant intellectual ideas within philosophy were worked out in conversation (e.g. Kant, Hume), in contexts such as French salons and English coffee houses. Furthermore, the form of the conversation was a natural part of Christian retreat centres from the late nineteenth century, and it was in this context where Thurneysen himself first encountered the art of conversation (Christoph Blumhardt’s “Bad Bull”).

But for Thurneysen, more significant exempla were at play. By selecting the *form* of soul conversation, Thurneysen drew upon the biblical witness to conversations and the expressive importance of speech and the “art” of conversation as exemplified by Jesus in the Gospels, of which the conversation with Nicodemus is a salient example. As an “art,” conversation is more than simply two people speaking to each other. Rather, it is a co-operative sharing and exploration of thought, enabling two souls to move into sympathetic rhythm with each other. From Thurneysen’s perspective,

¹¹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 156 (emphasis original).

¹² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 35.

the term “conversation” aligns neatly with the meaning of the Latin word from which it derives, *conversari*. The meaning of that word – “living among,” “intimacy,” “familiarity,”¹³ – captures the connection that he envisioned to be central to the soul conversation. Furthermore, there was a communal dimension to this form of conversation. It is the co-operative sharing and exploring of ideas, emotions and thoughts, requiring the help of other people, which leads to realisations that otherwise would not be available.

Thurneysen’s insights into the importance and significance of conversation in the practice of soul care are supported by understandings from contemporary psychological science. From a cognitive scientific perspective, conversation has the potential to be a powerful means of decentring oneself and becoming open to another person and new insights. Healthy conversation involves an exchange of power by means of reciprocal communication, leading to a form of participatory knowing. Such an exchange could be described as a demonstrable expression of agape love.¹⁴ As an art, the spirit of conversation can be seen to involve sharing and collaboration such that the conversation builds on another person’s observation, rather than seeking to overturn it. This aligns with Thurneysen’s perspective that, by its very nature, conversation is not supposed to be contentious because such conflict would inhibit the desired outcome of a shared project.¹⁵

What then, is the precise nature of the soul conversation in Thurneysen’s thought? He believed it to be a very particular kind of conversation, where both participants connect, and are willing to engage with a range of thoughts and ideas, while bringing those thoughts and ideas into conversation with the Word of God. Such a conversation is to be distinguished from encounters where one or other party is evasive, disinterested, oppositional or merely passive. Even the presence of spiritual or biblical content does not guarantee a true soul conversation. Thus, on the one hand, an attempt at evangelism or proselytisation which did not “connect” could not be considered a soul conversation. On the other hand, however, a true soul conversation might begin with discussion about quite ordinary matters and

¹³ Wesley Cecil, “The Humane Arts: Conversation,” *The Humane Arts Series*, <https://www.wescecil.com/the-uses-of-philosophy-for-living-1>.

¹⁴ I’m indebted to John Verveke, Episode 12 of the Meaning Crisis for the description of a conversation as an Act of agape love (15 min mark) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvx4_0NAfaY

¹⁵ Cecil, “The Humane Arts: Conversation.”

deepen into more significant matters over time.¹⁶ If conversation is to be understood in this way, there is more on view than simply words or speech, but deep levels of embodied communication and connection. Such communication and connection involves, but is not limited to, speaking and hearing alone, but it is a whole body experience that involves all senses and gives rise to perceptions and intuitions drawn from what is seen and felt in the form of gestures, breath, falling into step together, mirroring, modulation and tone of voice, and the ability to listen and hear both that which is said and that which is left unsaid.

The art of conversation

In developing his art of soul conversations, Thurneysen drew heavily on his early mentor, Christoph Blumhardt, and his first-hand experiences of the art of conversation at Bad Boll.¹⁷ Due to the influence upon Thurneysen of Blumhardt's approach to conversation, it is important to grasp the essence of Blumhardt's mastery over the art of conversation and persuasion if we are to gain a thorough grasp of Thurneysen's outlook.

For Thurneysen, one of the secrets to the skilfulness of Blumhardt's conversation style was his ability to observe group interactions and identify the salient components of the communication process. Conversations often began with discussions around contemporary events and experiences: social and political questions, dialogue concerning nature, history, the suffering of humanity, or simply personal experiences.¹⁸ Blumhardt treated all conversational participants and their queries "utterly seriously," using a Socratic style of questioning. "[H]e then led the conversation in quite unsought ways, masterfully and open-mindedly, *sub specie aeternitatis*," as Thurneysen explained. For Blumhardt, the phrase from Spinoza "under the universal and eternal truths" always meant, "under the Word of God", in other words, *sub specie verbum divini*.¹⁹

Blumhardt's method placed all questions that arose in the context of conversation in dialogue with fundamental theological truths: the gracious reign of Jesus Christ and the love of God. Such an

¹⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 109.

¹⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 122.

¹⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 123.

¹⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 123.

approach had a liberating effect on the visitors to Bad Boll. “Human life, the life of the time in which we lived was unfolded, yet it was basked in a light which had fallen on it through Blumhardt’s direction of the conversation.”²⁰ What he said in conversation was not vastly different to the themes communicated in his preaching, but the effect was more forceful than preaching alone.²¹ From Blumhardt, Thurneysen learnt that soul conversations were an invaluable resource within the Christian community for confirming the good news and disentangling thorny pastoral issues under the “light of his perception of Christ and his word.”²² In a conversation, the matters of concern become a little bit different when spoken out loud. A good conversationalist helps the other figure out what they mean, by helping them explore, reflect and enquire.²³ He was genuinely interested not only in other people, but also in a wide array of intellectual standpoints. In seeking after knowledge from different religious, philosophical and moral points of view, “he possesses the rare talent of learning from others, indeed of learning from each what is worth learning and of letting this new knowledge come alive in himself.”²⁴ Thurneysen, like Blumhardt, possessed a Socratic quality to his scholarship and conversation.

In a soul conversation, both participants are *present* to each other, exhibit openness, curiosity and genuine love for the other person. These preconditions for a soul conversation, found both in Blumhardt and Thurneysen’s approach, bear a striking resemblance to key values underpinning the *Client-Centred Therapy* developed in the 1940s by Carl Rogers’²⁵ – that is, unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence.²⁶ However, Rogers’ method focused on emotional content and minimised the use of questions, whereas Blumhardt and Thurneysen’s method, while sensitive to emotional content, operated at a more cognitive level, relying upon a Socratic questioning style that employed open-ended questions to tease out thoughts. Yet both approaches depended upon deep acceptance of the humanity of the other and a genuine interest in them and their world.

²⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 123.

²¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 123.

²² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 123.

²³ Cecil, “The Humane Arts: Conversation.”

²⁴ Smart, “Pastor-Theologian,” 76.

²⁵ The psychology of Carl Rogers together with the theology of Paul Tillich formed the basis of most modern American pastoral care. E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-realization* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 288.

²⁶ Carl Rogers, *Client-Centred Therapy* (London: Constable and Company, 1951).

As noted above, the distinctive nature of Thurneysen's soul conversation was maintained by distinguishing soul conversations proper from common everyday speech and conversation. For Thurneysen, there was something explicit and definite about soul conversations, in particular their relationship to the Word of God. Although these conversations happen to be clothed in common everyday speech, they are in fact of a different substance to normal conversational parlance.²⁷ A soul conversation may begin within a typical conversation, yet it stands apart once the conversation shifts metaphysically and qualitatively from the horizontal human plane to the Godward vertical dimension as it moves across what Thurneysen termed the *breach*. However, not every conversation between spiritually inclined individuals can be termed soul care. This is not inherently a problem, as there is a place for common speech.²⁸ But within Thurneysen's methodology and practice, it is this focus upon the centrality of God's word in the conversation which distinguishes it from a philosophically "romantic" type conversation, where one person bares their soul to another, but the content is not discussed in the light of the Word, and Scripture is not brought to bear on the conversation.²⁹ In Thurneysen's understanding, a soul conversation included the Bible being opened, read and interpreted, followed by prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God.³⁰ Despite these foci within soul conversations, Thurneysen never intended that they should replace preaching and other activities of the congregational gatherings. He did not believe that all spiritual discourse (such as teaching, praise or evangelism) could be dissolved into soul conversations.

The breach in a conversation

What did Thurneysen mean in his use of the term *bruch*, translated "the breach," within a conversation? The breach, which can also be translated "the break," is the moment when ordinary conversation moves over into the form of a soul conversation. In Thurneysen's thought, the breach cannot be manufactured or engineered as it can only be brought about by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Yet, humanly speaking, Bohren explains that the breach is the point at which the soul carer transitions from seeing as the philosopher does to seeing as the theologian does, moving from one

²⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 112–13.

²⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 101–14.

²⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 109.

³⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 109.

horizon to another without blurring them together.³¹ Bohren's horizon metaphor could be understood as a concept somewhat commensurate with Charles Taylor's notion of "horizons of significance,"³² against which identity is defined. For both Bohren and Taylor, the defining feature of a horizon is that it is a given, or a fixed reference point that stands outside and beyond the immediate situation. For Thurneysen, the break comes when the conversation moves from the horizon of the situation in the world and places the situation under the horizon of significance of sin, the cross and eternity.³³ It would seem that if the soul carer is mindful of the possibility of the breach occurring, they can facilitate elements of the conversation that predispose the other to hearing the Word of God. If the soul carer brings the new point of view into the conversation, a turning point necessarily arises. This new horizon can be introduced even in chance meetings between believers, providing opportunities to intentionally advance each other's spiritual lives. This can occur because of Thurneysen's assumption that God is already present in both participants in the form of the Holy Spirit.³⁴ Nevertheless, the conversation cannot become truly spiritual on purely human grounds, as ultimately the hearing of the Word of God is something that lies completely under God's sovereign influence.

The most controversial element of Thurneysen's method of soul care, and the aspect which attracted the most criticism of his book, was his insistence on the priority of the Word of God in the soul conversation. Thurneysen's frequent reference to Scripture was assumed to be overtly evangelistic or aiming to admonish or correct in a punitive fashion. It is important to consider, therefore, how exactly Thurneysen intended Scripture to be used in soul care, and how his approach compares to the way others used Scripture in pastoral care.

The use of Scripture in soul care

Stephen Pattison has noted that there was a strange silence and absence of the Bible across much pastoral care theory and practice from the 1950s through the 1980s.³⁵ When the Bible was considered within a pastoral care framework, it was approached in a variety of ways. Although Thurneysen wrote

³¹ Rudolf Bohren, *Prophetie und Seelsorge: Eduard Thurneysen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 226.

³² Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 31–43.

³³ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 226.

³⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 101–14.

³⁵ Stephen Pattison, *Critique of Pastoral Care* (London: SCM, 1988), 106.

earlier, Pattison's taxonomy provides a helpful analysis of how pastoral care approaches make use of Scripture and provides a tool for evaluating Thurneysen's method.

Pattison identifies a number of different ways pastoral theologians approached the Bible: *biblicist*, *tokenist*, *imagist*, *informative* and *thematic*. The *biblicist* method, exemplified by Jay E. Adams, claimed all pastoral care must be founded on the presupposition that all Scripture is authoritative and sufficient for the pastoral task. All pastoral work must be grounded upon Scriptural counsel.³⁶ In addition, Adams rejected insights from secular psychology as they arise from ungodly people who have no interest in helping wayward suffering sinners to repent.³⁷ At the opposite end of Pattison's spectrum is *tokenism*, where Scripture gives a Christian flavour to otherwise secular theories of counselling, exemplified in the writing of American pastoral theologian Howard Clinebell.³⁸

In between biblicism and tokenism are a range of theologians who engaged thoughtfully with both Scripture and psychology. Those of the *imagist/suggestive* style, exemplified by Alistair Campbell, utilised images and allusions from Scripture in a fragmentary way to introduce a biblical perspective or metaphors such as the shepherd, the wounded healer or various wisdom sayings. From Pattison's point of view, the degree of true biblical influence in this approach was dependent upon the way these images were actually employed and their connection to the larger biblical story.³⁹ A further approach is that of Donald Capps. Pattison terms this the *informative* approach, which was drawn from different forms and genres of biblical literature, for example making use of the book of Proverbs and other wisdom literature, psalms of lament, and the parables of Jesus. Capps suggested that Scripture provides comfort, diagnosis and instruction by means of its different literary styles.⁴⁰ The final approach described by Pattison was the *thematic* approach, exemplified by William Oglesby. This method made use of a salvation history model, noting the movement of the overall biblical narrative through creation, fall, redemption and restoration. Within this perspective, historic understandings of the nature of God and humanity would be employed in the pastoral context. God is creator, redeemer

³⁶ Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), following a Van Tillian approach.

³⁷ Pattison, *Critique*, 116.

³⁸ Pattison, *Critique*, 120–21.

³⁹ Pattison, *Critique*, 122.

⁴⁰ Pattison, *Critique*, 123–26.

and sustainer, and human beings are to be viewed as creatures, sinners and potentially new creations as a “consequence of response to grace by faith.”⁴¹

How might Thurneysen’s approach to Scripture be assessed in the light of Pattison’s taxonomy?

Thurneysen would have been cautious about any use of Scripture that was *tokenistic*. He warned against any use of the Bible that was merely a form of spiritual therapy, which to his mind had more in common with pagan medicine men than authentic soul care.⁴² But he would also have been cautious of a strictly *biblicist* approach. Thurneysen resisted any use of Scripture that he perceived to be heavy handed, arguing, “this kind of preaching and pastoral care is actually characterized by an often very massive imposition of the law and judgment preceding and accompanying the promise of grace”⁴³ whereby people are “exposed to terror and insecurity, supposedly to make them all the more willing to grasp forgiveness.”⁴⁴ Thurneysen was critical of soul encounters that ambushed people with a “supposedly straightforward and radically delivered ‘message,’” as these encounters risk the use of manipulation.⁴⁵

Thurneysen’s own practice would be best described as containing elements of the *imagist*, *informative* and *thematic* approaches. In order to move the conversation to a new horizon of significance, Thurneysen readily draws on scriptural images and allusion, linking ordinary conversation with the things of God. As he explains, “Holy Scripture itself practices conversing about this and that, about things of a thousand kinds. We think of the Wisdom literature, in particular, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.” Furthermore, the soul carer is informed and thematically shaped and formed by their reading of Scripture, whereby “biblical Wisdom literature broadens thought and speech, so they become spiritual in all their dimensions.”⁴⁶ Thurneysen also refers pastors to the narrative sections of the Bible for an understanding of human nature,⁴⁷ and the broad sweep strongly informs his theology of salvation history. This history contains a double infinity, the evil infinity of sin and the victorious

⁴¹ Pattison, *Critique*, 126–29.

⁴² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 241.

⁴³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 172.

⁴⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 172.

⁴⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 139.

⁴⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 124.

⁴⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 205.

infinity of grace,⁴⁸ which for Thurneysen, focused his desire to communicate the victory of Christ over all things and the message of forgiveness of sins.

Evaluation of Thurneysen's soul conversation

In Thurneysen's words, "pastoral conversation is concerned with the raising and answering of such questions... Life so to speak burst open in these conversations – life in all its dimensions, yet life in confrontation with the proclaimed Word."⁴⁹ What made a soul care conversation pastoral for Thurneysen was not necessarily the amount of biblical content, but whether or not the recipient of care was confronted with the questions that the Word of God puts before them, or brought them to engage with a new horizon of significance.⁵⁰

Thurneysen's translator, Elmer Homrighausen, noted that while "Thurneysen is one of the few pastor-theologians of our time who have made a case for pastoral theology as understood from the radical Protestant point of view: on the sole basis of the Word, the Grace and the Spirit of God," he rightly concluded that Thurneysen has defined soul care too narrowly.⁵¹ Homrighausen's critique focused on the activity of soul care having been tied too closely to the ecclesial activities of preaching, sacraments and liturgy; and restricted too tightly to matters of repentance and confession.⁵² Homrighausen also suggested that Thurneysen's scriptural perspective limits soul care to that which can be understood from within a confessional point of view, leaving it open to the challenge of being too isolationist: "fields of psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry may consider Thurneysen's pastoral care dangerously isolated from the life of the world."⁵³ Both sympathetic⁵⁴ and less sympathetic⁵⁵ reviewers have made similar observations. Two key criticisms are, firstly, that the work is written from an unapologetic confessional basis, and secondly, that Thurneysen has overly conflated the task of soul

⁴⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 205.

⁴⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 119.

⁵⁰ Donald Capps, *Biblical Approaches to Pastoral Counselling* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 29.

⁵¹ Elmer Homrighausen, "Pastoral Counseling as Proclamation," *The Christian Century* 22 (1962): 1009.

⁵² Homrighausen, "Pastoral Counseling," 1009.

⁵³ Homrighausen "Pastoral Counseling," 1008.

⁵⁴ Homrighausen, "Pastoral Counseling"; James D. Smart, "Eduard Thurneysen: Pastor-Theologian," *Theology Today* 16.1 (1959); Russell J. Becker, "Book Review," *Religious Education* 59.3 (1964): 262–64.

⁵⁵ Seward Hiltner, "Book Review," *Pastoral Psychology* 13.121 (1962): 57–58; Edward Heerema, "Book Review," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 25.1 (1962): 66–70; John W. Stettner, "Book Review," *Journal of Religion and Health* 2.1 (1962): 84–85.

care with the task of preaching. As Homrighausen states, there is no room within Thurneysen's approach for a conception of soul care that included general helping acts.⁵⁶

What might be said in relation to these criticisms? Thurneysen provided a clear outline to his thinking regarding soul conversations, and his desire to defend soul care as a homiletic activity is apparent. For Thurneysen, the interactive soul conversation necessarily retains the activity of proclamation as a central element of the ministry. To reiterate this point he gave the example of an unchurched person approaching a pastor seeking what Thurneysen termed secular pastoral care or psychotherapy. In such a case, he did not consider it soul care, as the understanding of spiritual matters shared no common ground with the Word of God.⁵⁷ However, comments on the nature of soul care by fellow Dialectic theologians Bonhoeffer and Barth challenged Thurneysen's narrow frame and framed the relationship between the tasks of proclamation and soul care with more latitude.

Bonhoeffer suggested that there was a time and place for adopting what he called a *penultimate attitude* of soul care. This attitude in a pastoral encounter might involve silence or offering comfort. In such a situation, the carer deliberately exercises restraint, for example in a context where one shares in the helplessness that a bereaved person feels, exercising restraint when one has Scripture's word of *ultimate* hope at hand. Bonhoeffer is suggesting that by remaining deliberately quiet – offering penultimate care – the pastoral carer might “perhaps point more genuinely to the ultimate, which God will speak in His time (though indeed even then through a human mouth)?”⁵⁸ Bonhoeffer's perspective manages to retain the centrality of the Word of God in pastoral encounters while acknowledging that other practices have their place and can be the most appropriate course of action in particular circumstances. Barth, in a brief section about pastoral care in the *Church Dogmatics*,⁵⁹ also outlines an alternative to Thurneysen's pastoral homiletics. Barth did not locate soul care within the discipline of homiletics (preaching), but rather grouped it more generally with the Christian community's roles of “provisional representation,” what might be termed a *place-holder* in space and time.⁶⁰ This

⁵⁶ Homrighausen, “Pastoral Counseling,” 1009.

⁵⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 83, 84.

⁵⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: SCM, 1971), 103–4.

⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *CD IV/1–CD IV/3*.

⁶⁰ Wolf Krötke, *Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologians for a Post-Christian World*, trans. John P. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 89.

placeholder signals and witnesses to the Word of God in action in a variety of ways such as in prayer, in models of exemplary faith, in material and personal service, and in prophetic action and fellowship. These are the actions of the community of faith as they live as the people of God, and the needs of the situation will direct the nature of the appropriate ministry and response needed.⁶¹ Bonhoeffer and Barth are therefore responding to human nature and the circumstances of life in a fallen world with a clear sense that proclamation is not the only necessary task for the faithful. They have recognised the complex nature of human relationships and the full-orbed missional nature of the Christian life. In an integrated approach, proclamation of the Word is accompanied by speech and action that are refracted through the Word and reflect the Word through witness and signposts to the Word. Bonhoeffer and Barth's broader category for soul care can encompass soul care ministries that may offer wordless comfort to those in deep distress, or ministries to people who themselves have no verbal capacity, or ministries to people across cultural and linguistic divides. Indeed, Barth spoke of such soul conversations as "signaling" and "witnessing" to a greater reality.⁶² This broad category can accommodate a range of Christian activity, from hospitality to evangelism, even when Thurneysen's strict criteria for a soul conversation has not been met.

The more comprehensive approaches of Bonhoeffer and Barth, therefore, highlight inherent tensions and inconsistencies within Thurneysen's view, and both offer a helpful critique in the face of the realities of life and have greater utility in both ecclesial and public space contexts. John Swinton's work with people with mental health and disability sectors demonstrates the importance of other forms of connection through non-linguistic communication and community participation. Swinton offered friendship with God as an alternative and more embracing model of soul care, while not denying the centrality of conversation within friendship.⁶³ Swinton modelled friendship on the friendship offered by Jesus, a "deeply intimate, yet totally open and inclusive relationship" and through this friendship, Jesus shared his Father. Swinton emphasises caring relationships, mutual dependency and community, which can be offered to all people, including those with intellectual disabilities, dementia, mental

⁶¹ Barth lists signalling and witnessing in contrast to a list of speech-acts including praise, preaching, teaching, evangelism, foreign missions and theology. Krötke, *Karl Barth*, 89.

⁶² Krötke, *Karl Barth*, 89.

⁶³ John Swinton, *From Bedlam to Shalom: Towards a Practical Theology of Human Nature. Interpersonal Relationships and Mental Healthcare* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2000), 77.

health challenges, the seriously ill, and the dying. The befriended souls are connected with Christ through the Holy Spirit. The offer of life is made directly through Christ, to their spirit. In this, Swinton affirms that a person's humanity is not defined by their response to God, but by his gracious movement towards them. Such friendship offered through Christ in prayer and in the strength of Christ is much more than signposting or even penultimate care; it is soul care.⁶⁴

Thurneysen himself was an advocate of Christians having good everyday conversations and being friendly and hospitable and involved in their communities. This was activity commensurate with living lives aligned with the Word of God. He would not, however, consider these activities to be soul care. Thurneysen stood self-consciously within the Reformed tradition, placing soul care within the area of church discipline. It was a ministry of speech, but a ministry understood more broadly in terms of the nature and scope of conversation topics. Whereas the Reformed tradition limited soul care to specific topics, as fitting for a minister's vocation, Thurneysen proposed to widen the scope of pastoral discourse to include any topics related to the Christian's life; notwithstanding, Thurneysen's overemphasis on speech and cognition is inherent within the prominence he grants to individual conversations.⁶⁵ In placing soul care as conversation, thus placing soul care ministries so decidedly within the cognitive realm, Thurneysen, as with the Reformed evangelicals, makes ministry contingent on aiming for the breach through forms of proclamation, teaching, evangelism or engaging in scriptural conversations. However, at this point Thurneysen's care of souls is limited to some aspects of the soul while neglecting others. The soul conversation engages the created soul and the soul as personhood, but overlooks the physical and psychological aspects of the soul, particularly in cases of illness, disability and incapacity. Furthermore, the one-to-one conversation de-emphasised the riches of a community aspect of soul care through thick, in contrast to thin or superficial, accounts of friendship.

⁶⁴ Swinton, *Bedlam*, 31.

⁶⁵ Jordan Redding placed John Swinton in conversation with Thurneysen. Redding, "Addressed by the Word: The Practical, Pastoral, and Eschatological Anthropology of Eduard Thurneysen" (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2020), 216–45.

Conclusion

We have seen that the soul conversation is the central element in Thurneysen's pastoral practice. He granted it such significance because he believed speech to be the defining characteristic of the image of God in the soul. Speech is the substance of soul care, which is contained and shaped by the form of the conversation. When practising the art of conversation, the soul carer attends to the other's soul, seeking to identify the break or the fracture that shifts the horizon of even ordinary conversation into a new dimension, where the topics under discussion are placed under the light of the Word of God.

Thurneysen highlights the hearing and speaking aspects of conversations, but gives little consideration to the less articulated aspects of communication and connection that provide the context for a soul conversation and facilitate safety in this setting. It is to these personal qualities and attributes of the soul carer that we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The Personal Attributes of the Pastoral Carer

This chapter considers Thurneysen's perspectives on the personal qualities of the carer of souls. He readily acknowledged that this topic was worthy of a separate chapter in its own right, but as his book stands, such personal qualities are addressed in a more abridged form, with further discussion scattered throughout other chapters.¹ Thurneysen's description of the personal attributes of a soul carer have ongoing relevance and speak in contemporary pastoral care contexts.

For Thurneysen, soul care was a demanding discipline. This pastoral art combined wisdom and eschatological hope, requiring the practitioner to have an understanding of human functioning in the light of eternity.² In Thurneysen's view, mere sympathy and the zealous desire to help were insufficient to respond to such a challenge. Knowledge in certain critical areas was essential. In the earlier chapters we have noted his insistence that pastoral carers have a sound grasp of Christological theology, a well-grounded theological anthropology, and an appropriate theory of method. But something else also mattered to him.

The qualities of wisdom

What also mattered was that the practitioner of soul care must exercise the craft wisely. For Thurneysen, wisdom combined knowledge with certain skills and attributes which are necessary to work meaningfully with the complex nature of the process of soul care. He understood the challenge that each instance of soul care presents: "Figuratively speaking, we may feel that in such a conversation we are sent on a patrol far into the unknown, even into enemy territory, far away from the familiar home base."³ When a soul carer engages in a conversation, their wisdom is expressed through an internalised version of theology and beliefs interacting appropriately with the context in which the recipient is located in the world.

¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 130.

² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 202.

³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 124.

Wisdom denotes the gift of true understanding; it teaches us to see the other correctly, to penetrate his situation, and enables us immediately to accept the neighbour's predicament in all its dimensions and to make it our own concern. It is the gift of proving "what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). Each act of pastoral care must flow out of such "wisdom." Thurneysen is at pains to stress that the soul care wisdom which he speaks of is "effected by the Spirit of God," and "not simply with some kind of psychological or moral counsel – as surely as this is included – but we are concerned with the communication of forgiveness, and this is greater and different."⁴ Wisdom denotes the gift of right spiritual weighting in a situation; wisdom is practical knowledge of life leading to correct decisions from case to case.

Yet, even when effected by the Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the soul carer depends upon the degree to which events are reflected upon, integrated within, and differentiated from various fields of explicit and tacit knowledge, as described by Michael Polanyi.⁵ As Polanyi explained: "the aim of a skilful performance is achieved by the observance of a set of rules which are not known as such to the person following them."⁶ For Polanyi, it was not that there were no rules, but simply that the person performing the task did not need to be aware of the rules, and the rules do not determine the practice. Rather, the rules describe the practice: "Rules of art can be useful, but they do not determine the practice of an art; they are maxims which can serve as a guide to the art only if they can be integrated into the practical knowledge of the art. They cannot replace this knowledge."⁷ The necessary wisdom that Thurneysen was seeking for soul care was an attribute analogous to Polanyi's tacit knowledge.

As has been noted earlier, a strength of Thurneysen's approach to soul care were his solid biblical and theological convictions. Those convictions are not removed from pastoral practice, but give shape to it. As we have also seen, for Thurneysen, this theological understanding does not preclude an appropriate integration of knowledge from extra-biblical sources. Forrester has noted that Thurneysen's theologically based discipline of soul care was permitted to seek help and borrow

⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 195.

⁵ Tacit knowledge described by Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

⁶ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 49.

⁷ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 50.

insights from secular disciplines as appropriate.⁸ Yet the theology of nature that undergirded such assistance was not as well articulated as his robust theology of redemption. Using Polanyi's language once more, his theology of nature functioned in a more tacit manner. A well-articulated theology of nature can sit comfortably within a Reformed framework. Calvin spoke of a two-fold knowledge of God (*duplex cognitio Dei*) – the knowledge of God the Creator (*cognitio creatoris*) and the knowledge of God the Redeemer (*cognitio redemptoris*). Within Calvin's schema, *cognitio redemptoris* presupposes *cognitio creatoris*, and aspects of knowledge of God are received through both revelation and reason. However, in keeping with his fellow Dialectical theologian, Karl Barth, Thurneysen's desire to highlight the redemptive aspect of God's relationship with the creation resulted in a level of marginalisation of knowledge sourced from outside Scripture. There is something of a disconnect between his strong theological claims and his own practice of intuitive wisdom, drawn from data that he received from comprehensive engagement with life and reading of the "book of nature."

Pastoral wisdom gleaned from life and nature

What, then, were the specific qualities that Thurneysen deemed essential to a worthy and wise soul carer? As noted previously, Thurneysen held a rich multifaceted view of the soul, which held it in relationship with its creator and redeemer; in relationship with itself as an embodied soul and an ensouled body, and in relationship with other souls and communities, times and locations. The soul carer likewise is in a web of relationships with God, themselves, and others, and with communities in various times and locations, and it is a personal pastoral wisdom that equips a soul carer to move across these various facets of life and soul.

Thurneysen identified five features that contribute to a person who exhibits personal pastoral wisdom. Firstly, the knowledge that flows from one's own experience – self-knowledge and reflection on these experiences. This wisdom is hard-won, gained through facing difficulties and working through them rather than hiding from them, from being willing to reflect on personal experiences of misery and sin rather than repressing or suppressing these unpleasant or traumatic events. Such reflection benefits the

⁸ Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 2000), 39.

self and helps build an empathetic capacity to walk alongside others who suffer.⁹ Bohren, a psychiatrist, noticed a poignancy when in conversation with Eduard Thurneysen, where his solidarity with the sufferer touched on a fundamentally different experience than that of the typical psychiatrist's treatment of a suffering patient.¹⁰ The psychiatrist observed and treated the mental process whereas the life of the soul carer connected with the life of the other's soul.

Secondly, authentic soul care requires the carer to be an active member of the community, interested in others and engaged in ordinary life and conversation. The soul carer cannot be a loner.¹¹

Thurneysen appears to have had a special capacity to draw alongside others and connect in a deep and meaningful way and similarly the soul carer needed the ability to hospitably make room for others through attention and time. Bohren observed in relationship with Thurneysen, that no amount of study of psychology or soul care can replace what is missed if one neglects the cultivation of friendship during his theological study. But the student who practices "in good friendship" will most likely become a good pastor. The connections between existence, experience and doctrine cannot be demonstrated; this is the mystery implicit in theology,¹² but a pastor is "known by their fruit," and it was Thurneysen's charismatic gift of hearing that made his friendship so valuable.¹³

Thirdly, those who offer pastoral care need to be curious about accounts of human life that are found in literature, drama, poetry, biographies and films, not only those that issue from pious contexts, but also those from secular sources.¹⁴ For Thurneysen, the soul carer can afford to be curious and open to others in person and in literature because they have experienced the openness of God towards themselves: "openness before one another and for one another has its roots in the wholly new openness before God and for God and it is solely possible [for a soul carer] in repentance and

⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 202–3; Rudolf Bohren, *Prophetie und Seelsorge: Eduard Thurneysen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 101.

¹⁰ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 209.

¹¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 203; Bohren, *Prophetie*, 101.

¹² Bohren, *Prophetie*, 40.

¹³ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 209.

¹⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 203; Bohren, *Prophetie*, 99f.

confession.”¹⁵ This character trait resonated closely with what from a psychological perspective is also referred to as openness.¹⁶

Fourthly, the carer of souls should consult professional psychological and psychiatric literature, and it was more important to do that than to engage with texts written at a more popular level.¹⁷ Furthermore, Thurneysen suggested consulting several schools of thought rather than aligning with one. He favoured reading the work of psychologists and psychiatrists who were Christian rather than theologians who sought to integrate their theology with psychology. To his mind, medical and psychological writers had a particular expertise gained from their area of enquiry that helped the pastoral theologian form their own conclusions in the light of the Word.¹⁸

Fifthly, Thurneysen maintained that the soul carer was to minister out of a deep understanding of Scripture. He believed that education “in the broadest sense of all humanity” culminated in reading. Reading mattered to him – he believed in reading certain writers but especially reading the Scriptures, because reading was the nursery-school of soul care. The hearing of sermons could further deepen spiritual understanding, but that did not detract from the value of reading.¹⁹ And for him, the ultimate authority if one wanted to understand humanity and its predicament was Holy Scripture itself. Only in the light of the Word does a pastor “achieve a real and correct understanding of man and an inner encounter with him that reaches farther and plunges deeper than any merely psychological consideration.”²⁰ Those involved in soul care, therefore, must be people of the Word.

This dependence upon Scripture does lead to questions as to Thurneysen’s approach to the reading and apprehension of Scripture. How might a carer of souls faithfully and fruitfully draw their wisdom of ministry from Scripture? Or more simply, what is the appropriate model of engagement with Scripture?

¹⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 292.

¹⁶ As described by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa, “Reinterpreting the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator from the Perspective of the Five-Factor Model of Personality,” *Journal of Personality* 57.1 (1989): 17–40.

¹⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 203.

¹⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 204.

¹⁹ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 100

²⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 205.

Horizons of hope

Pastoral wisdom is accumulated out of the store of past experiences and events expressed in the present, but critically for Thurneysen, true soul care “proceeds only when it stands in the horizon of hope.”²¹ Thurneysen’s theology of soul care endeavoured to faithfully present the revelation of God, in such a way that its hope is experienced through the grace of God and acceptance of Christ’s forgiveness of sins. In both aims the soul carer’s understanding and interpretation of Scripture in the pastoral context was crucial. For Thurneysen, “the word hope must be understood here as it is understood in Holy Scripture: hope in the consummation of all things, in the actual, victorious end of the battle in the coming of the Kingdom on the day of Jesus Christ.”²² From this perspective, Thurneysen was very much the heir of Christoph Blumhardt’s eschatological tension of “hastening and waiting,” with all current events viewed through the lens of the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God. However, Blumhardt’s theology of the Kingdom of God had been developed into two strands: one strand (in which Thurneysen stood) was developed in Dialectic theology as the inbreaking of the Kingdom from above; the other more political strand was found in a radical relevant focused theology of hope, a practice that was bringing the Kingdom of God into the present, most clearly articulated in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann.²³ Both were theologies of hope, but Thurneysen held closely to the Kingdom of God and eschatological hope as having past, present and future dimensions rather than a practice of bringing in the Kingdom of God.

To this end he envisaged soul care as a seed of hope that proceeds from a down payment already made by Christ’s death and resurrection and moves towards the future, exhibiting patience, confidence and comfort which are fruit borne of hope that comes from the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Such hope enables the soul carer to persevere through times of scarcity and abundance and accompany others who must also do the same. Soul care practised within the horizon of hope focuses on life lived realistically now and lived towards a future already secured in Christ.²⁵ Thurneysen implicitly distinguishes two types of

²¹ Redding, “Thurneysen,” 257, quoting Thurneysen, *Seelsorge Im Vollzug* (Zürich: EVZ-Verlag, 1968), 61.

²² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 328.

²³ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM, 1965).

²⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 328.

²⁵ Redding, “Thurneysen,” 256

hope, that of eschatological hope secured in Christ and the consummation of all things, and a psychological hope that depended upon this theological hope. His psychological application of hope can be observed in the comforting assurance of events and people moving forward into a future already held in God's hands.²⁶

Prayer as the seedbed of hope

An attitude of prayer is perhaps the most tangible and indispensable seed of hope exhibited by the carer, as the hopes and desires expressed in prayer always move toward the future. Thurneysen maintained that prayer in soul care has three parts. Firstly, "it is a prayer for myself as pastor, for purification and illumination of my spirit, a prayer that I may become the true instrument of the Spirit of God."²⁷ It "is secondly a prayer for my neighbour; it is intercession."²⁸ The third form is prayer with the other.²⁹

Thurneysen describes a richness in interceding whereby the hospitality of listening to a soul with one's own soul is so close to prayer that it becomes prayer. He draws upon Philippians 1:3-6: "Whenever I think of you, I offer to God my prayer and thanksgiving for you."³⁰ He describes a "full listening... without a single word passing our lips." This act of hospitality accepts the speaker as they are and draws them into a kind of solidarity – neighbourly love – that proceeds from the Word of God and leads back to the Word of God.³¹ Not only does the soul carer pray in their soul, but they also pray with the other, leading them to an encounter with God in prayer: "prayer is therefore always a step that leads beyond all boundaries into the realm of eternity. For it is actually talking with God, really being heard by God and listening to God. Hence prayer is the final destination of every way, the deliverance from every distress, the fulfillment of every petition."³² From a human perspective, the carer

²⁶ Discussion of Thurneysen's extensive use of hands of God. Bohren *Prophetie*, 212–20.

²⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 195.

²⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 195.

²⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 195.

³⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 128, 197.

³¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 128.

³² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 197.

introduces the other to the Father in prayer, and depends upon the awakening of the Holy Spirit, in the name of Christ Jesus.³³

The soul carer is also an agent of hope, even when humanly speaking there is no hope left. The faith of the soul carer foresees hope and a possible future, through forgiveness and “the power of a love that bears all things, suffers all things, believes all things.”³⁴ For Thurneysen, neither prayer nor hope are practices applied simply to therapeutic ends for the other, rather these arise from the faith of the carer and are anchored deeply within the soul of the carer. These hopes and prayers are presenting the other with a glimpse of the eternal horizon of significance from which the soul carer ministers. Thurneysen believed, therefore, these qualities of wisdom, hope and prayer needed to be cultivated. A person was not born with the qualities that were determinative in the provision of authentic soul care, but under God’s guidance, these features can be nurtured. The most critical aspect of this cultivation is the dual process of reflective time spent both in the revealed Word and also the real-life situations of other people.

³³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 197.

³⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 232.

Chapter 6: The Practice of Thurneysen's Soul Care

Themes of hospitality are present through much of Thurneysen's life and work; most formatively, the hospitality he experienced from Christoph Blumhardt at Bad Boll, which mirrored God's generosity to lost humanity through the Word of salvation. In turn, Thurneysen extended rich hospitality when hosting another person in conversation through his open and safe friendship of souls.

The biblical concept of hospitality is perhaps the theme that best encompasses Thurneysen's principles, person and practice in relation to soul care.¹ Thurneysen viewed the soul conversation as the form of his theology of soul care; his practice, however, revealed a much more capacious element somewhat closer to John Swinton's practice of friendship. Bohren commended Eduard Thurneysen, the friend, as a guide for a new Practical Theology.² Thurneysen's biographer identified his ability to be a true friend as the defining feature of his soul care practice, however, his friendship was moulded by his reading of Scripture, shaped by Christ's commandment to love God and one's neighbours.

Thurneysen endeavoured to consistently remain faithful to Scripture and hold out hope to whomever God placed before him. Friendship might be a fitting description for Thurneysen's soul care, but his preferred term for the other was neighbour, which brings its own richness and nuance. A neighbour is not chosen but is the person whom God has placed in proximal closeness to the carer. Care of the neighbour in Christ shatters isolation, redeeming people from their loneliness,³ offering solidarity that reaches into solitude.⁴ Neighbourly love makes room for another. It listens and accepts them in their situation.⁵ Henri Nouwen closely resonated with Thurneysen when he describes a movement that converts hostility to hospitality. This movement:

...requires the creation of a friendly empty space where we can reach out to our fellow human beings and invite them to a new relationship. This conversion is an inner event that cannot be manipulated but must develop from within. For just as we cannot force a plant to grow but can take away the weeds and

¹ Thurneysen's ministry is closely aligned to hospitality as described in two more recent publications: Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010) and Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

² Rudolf Bohren, *Prophetie und Seelsorge: Eduard Thurneysen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 257.

³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 110.

⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 337.

⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 132–36.

the stones which prevent its development, so we cannot force anyone to such a personal and intimate change of heart, but we can offer the space where such change takes place.⁶

Like Nouwen, Thurneysen understood intuitively the importance of not forcing the hospitable space of soul care on another but creating space for souls through friendly and kind invitation. For Thurneysen, creating space for one's neighbour never seeks to take advantage of the other,⁷ nor to ambush, nor manipulate, always seeking to maintain an I-Thou relationship and never an I-It.⁸

This chapter provides evidence of the outworking of Thurneysen's principles and practices. As previously discussed, if his theological understanding was taken in isolation, one would be left with geometric formulae functioning to prevent retrograde flow from all non-anthropological theologies back into his theology. However, when his friendship and hospitality qualities are examined, his pastoral wisdom appears to depend far more, to use Pascal's terms, upon finesse than geometry. Thurneysen's pastoral wisdom combined a faithful reading of Scripture expressed through faith in Christ, an incisive assessment of social, psychological and religious movements, and a self-reflective attitude to life. His life was rooted and grounded in the Word, and by extension, his pastoral practice was expressed as various fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23–24; Rom 5:3–5; 2 Cor 6:5–7; Col 3:12–14; 2 Pet 1:5–9; 1 Cor 13; 1 Tim 3:1–3). That spiritual fruit was manifested as forms of spontaneous and creative soul hospitality extended within carefully disciplined boundaries.

The formation of Thurneysen's practice

Thurneysen's mature soul care practice was relaxed and spontaneous, but this was the result of growing in wisdom over the years through disciplined study and practice. His 1928 essay, "Soul Care and Justification," gives an insight into his earlier thinking where he described the vast field of human need as a marshland. In such a context, the soul carer can become lost, and Thurneysen indicated that the only way forward was to drain the marshland in order to see things with Christ.⁹ Over time, Thurneysen continued to grow in his understanding and practice, with his mature thought expressed in

⁶ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image, 1975), 76–77.

⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 138.

⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 138.

⁹ Eduard Thurneysen, "Rechtfertigung und Seelsorge," in *Seelsorge: Texte zum gewandelten Verständnis und zur Praxis der Seelsorge in der Neuzeit* (Chr. Kaiser, 1978), 77.

his book *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge (A Theology of Soul Care)*, published in 1946, when he was 58 years of age which revealed his developed thought as he entered into the vast marchland, meeting people in their human need.

As previously noted, while Dialectical theology had clarified the practical nature of preaching the Word, the nature and place of pastoral conversation was less clear. In the pre-existing pastoral context, informed by a more liberal form of theology, a soul conversation had been about religious and moral enlightenment. However, for the Dialectical theologians, it could no longer be so, based as it was on such an anthropological footing.¹⁰ Therefore, Dialectical theology, with its affirmation of the priority and centrality of the Word, struggled to locate a starting point for soul care. For some theologians, this level of uncertainty about the relationship between soul care and the Word became an excuse not to consider the psychological dimensions of faith, such as fear and anxiety. For Thurneysen, however, this ambiguity encouraged him to explore shared boundaries across disciplines.¹¹ However, it was not the case that while there was ambiguity entering a soul encounter, everything was in doubt. For Thurneysen, pastoral wisdom underpinned soul care, a practice that entailed wide-reaching understandings, including the study of theology and anthropology, reading and reflection upon people and society, the soul, its relationship with its Creator, body, personality, other souls, and culture.

In chapter three, we noted the challenge for Thurneysen and other Dialectical theologians, as to how they might appropriately move their Christological and Word of God understanding into pastoral settings. It was no easy task, and Thurneysen was not alone in finding that the practice of soul care did not come naturally or even easily to them, even though they had the Word of life as the key instrument of pastoral ministry. Bonhoeffer similarly recorded, “What are those agonising hours or minutes, when the other or I try to make a pastoral conversation, and how stuttering and lame is it going forward then... I sometimes want to console myself with it, that I think all this kind of pastoral care is also something that did not exist before and is quite unchristian, but maybe it’s really the end of our Christianity that we’re failing here. We’ve learned to preach again, at least a tiny bit, but soul

¹⁰ Paul Fredi de Quervain, “Die Krise der Seelsorge und die Kritik der Psychoanalyse bei Eduard Thurneysen” (“The Crisis of Pastoral Care and the Critique of Psychoanalysis in Eduard Thurneysen”), in *Psychoanalyse und dialektische Theologie: Zum Freud-Verständnis bei K. Barth, E. Thurneysen und P. Ricoeur* (Bern: Hans Huber, 1978), 33.

¹¹ Quervain, “Die Krise,” 33.

care?”¹² For Barth, the main concern was the relationship between a soul conversation and the Word of God. Barth openly admitted that many conversations have no connection to the Word, and it seemed impossible to think about how they might be linked.

Thurneysen readily conceded to feeling apprehensive before a soul conversation because the soul carer never quite knows what they will encounter or if they have the right wisdom to be helpful.¹³ He always maintained that soul care was complex, and the outcomes were unknown and unpredictable. For Thurneysen, this was inherent in the nature of such conversations; they were complicated and full of unknowns because they involve engagement with another soul, someone who might have different perceptions of reality. There is an untold number of explicit and implicit storylines flowing through the event from the perspective of both the carer and the other. Yet it appeared that something of his own theoretical understanding was manifest in what he did. His practice was much more than a generous impulse, or mere sympathy and the desire to help. For Thurneysen, soul care may have seemed natural or effortless, but like all arts, it emerged from a disciplined, examined life and doctrine, combined with the creative art of the conversation.

Thurneysen was unique in the circle of Dialectical theologians in attempting to set out a practical theology to bridge the genuine problem experienced in seeking to move from a theology from above into the everyday lives of people’s concerns. He held that the practical discipline of soul care must always begin with theology proper, and from there, work outwards. Nevertheless, this working outward was not a one-dimensional use of applied theology, but a process that opened new avenues to learn and gain insight into the inner world of human persons. As already noted, Thurneysen was a keen student of psychological portraits in literature and read widely in the psychological sciences. He believed that the sophisticated anthropology he had formed could be incorporated into ministry without throwing the soul carer off the path of their concern that their pastoral engagement should be a genuine soul conversation where God was encountered. His approach to soul care was sophisticated,

¹² Quervain, “Die Krise,” 33. One of Barth’s most gifted pupils, Bonhoeffer, also had the same experience as a young vicar in a working-class district in Berlin in 1932. Quoted from E. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Munich, 1967), 274.

¹³ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 199.

involving multiple facets or aspects, which enabled him to make a distinctive contribution to twentieth-century Reformed pastoral theology.

Aspects of soul care

Acceptance of neighbour and their situation

Thurneysen's hospitality can be best illustrated by many references to how one should act toward "the neighbour." In the neighbour or "the other", we see God's image, a person made for a relationship with God and fellowship with other people.¹⁴ We also see in another a person for whom Christ died.¹⁵ For Thurneysen, we meet our neighbour in soul conversation, "when we totally accept him in his own situation," and introduce the light and strength of that other perspective from which we come.¹⁶ Such conversations are only possible if the soul carer can avoid social and cultural judgments relating to class, ethnicity, colour or social connections, and see a person as a living soul before God.¹⁷ Such hospitality has some correspondence to the attributes in Carl Rogers's Client-Centred Therapy, referred to as acceptance or unconditional positive regard of the other.¹⁸ Hospitality requires making time and space for the other person, with an ability to listen "to see others correctly," discern what is troubling them and make it our concern.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Thurneysen was also sensitive to the risk that a carer might create a dependency and counselled that one should remain differentiated from others, keeping in mind the other's dignity, like one created by, and bearing, the image of God.²⁰

Attention and listening

In a soul conversation, the carer extends their undivided attention in the act of mental, emotional and spiritual hospitality. This act includes listening in the usual sense, that is, hearing what is being communicated. But in the context of a soul conversation, such listening is happening at the same time as another form of listening – the soul carer is also in their spirit listening with God's heart and ears to

¹⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 103.

¹⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 189.

¹⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 132.

¹⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 136.

¹⁸ Carl Rogers, *Client-centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951).

¹⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 195.

²⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 340–41.

attempt to really perceive the depth of the concerns being shared. Thus the soul carer is listening to the other while remaining attentive to the Word of God.²¹ This process of holding the problems of the other before God has similarities to the role of empathic understanding in Carl Rogers's thought.²² For both practitioners there was a concern to avoid the type of sympathy that is meeting some need within the carer. As Thurneysen put it, "the counselor must be extremely alert not to seek something for himself, or else the Word of God is suppressed and overthrown, and pastoral care becomes an empty process and a sham."²³ At this point, Thurneysen is drawing attention to the risk that soul care, when not properly practised, can lead to levels of enmeshment and can cancel out the benefits of care that could be offered.

A further aspect of listening within Thurneysen's practice is that of hearing confessions. In these cases, Thurneysen counselled modesty and restraint on the part of the pastoral carer, so that the carer is aware of the "danger that lies in trying to capture and visualise all the details of our neighbour's sinful imprisonment,"²⁴ thus avoiding unnecessary shame for the neighbour and leaving space for them to unburden themselves before the Lord. He draws attention to the danger of voyeurism in hearing the sins of another and the imperative to act with the utmost purity toward the neighbour.²⁵

Sincerity and congruence

Hospitality is a radical expression of the love of neighbour, stranger, and even one's enemy; it is not a form of entertainment. Paul Tournier spoke of the need to minister out of one's own person, not from some role-like persona or hypocritical mask,²⁶ and this is an apt description of a central feature of Thurneysen's practise of soul care. A soul carer is a person who lives sincerely in faith and repentance with God and others. To do so does not mean that the soul carer will not experience real struggles and distress, even to the point of disintegration, but the way to face them is by receiving soul care and friendship in turn from others.

²¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 127.

²² Rogers, *Client-centered Therapy*, 1951.

²³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 342.

²⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 308.

²⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 342.

²⁶ Paul Tournier, *The Meaning of Persons*, trans. Edwin Hudson from *La Personage et la Personne* (Norwich: SCM, 1957).

Another key theme running through Thurneysen's work is that of sincerity and the rejection of contrivances. By "contrivances" he was referring to features such as false piety, artificial optimism, strenuous effort, theatrical tactics, insincerity or defensiveness, each of which had the cumulative effect of impairing the communication of soul care and distorting the message of the forgiveness of sins.²⁷ This emphasis resonates with the state of congruence as described by Rogers. For Rogers, it was vital that the carer's outer *persona* and the inner *person* were in general agreement if authentic care was to be offered. For Thurneysen, likewise the orientation of the inner soul and the outward ministry role should be integrated in the sole carer, and such integrity is expressed through a life and ministry fundamentally aligned with the core beliefs of Scripture.²⁸

Prayer and hope

Features of soul care such as acceptance, attending, and sincerity all convey "presence" to another person, expressing the carer's will to be present to others in the current place and time. As well as being present with the other, hospitality and friendship are future-orientated and, as such, are practices of hope. They begin in the present but anticipate the future; they express and invite the other into a future reality. The element of hope can be seen in the open-ended nature of hospitality or an offer of friendship. As discussed in chapter five, a critical aspect of the soul care practitioner is their prayerful attitude to their ministry. The practice of prayer is perhaps the most future-orientated and therefore hopeful soul care practice of all, an activity that links the present to eternity.

For Thurneysen, as significant as the practice of listening was, the indispensable practice of soul care was prayer. No matter how effective listening is, it can never "replace the decisive act of prayer."²⁹ Prayer is of such importance that it could almost be equated with pastoral care: "The practice of pastoral care and prayer are actually one and the same. Pastoral care is prayer."³⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, pastoral practices include prayer for the carer themselves, the other person being cared for, and when fitting, praying with the other. Prayer in this context is not a therapeutic

²⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 138, 165, 340.

²⁸ Described formally by Carl Rogers for counselling settings.

²⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 190.

³⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 190.

practice, but a radical practice of hospitality whereby the horizons of the present have been opened out and are inviting the inbreaking work of the Heavenly Father. Thurneysen noted that wisdom was required as to whether or not this third act of common or shared prayer was appropriate. For God to be at work in this context was a work of his own free grace. In a sense, it is an act of daring on the pastoral carer's part even to take initiative in the process of prayer. In Thurneysen's words, "The circumstances will decide from case to case whether I may and ought to pray with another person."³¹ Thus the one seeking to assist another needs to be wisely attuned to what might be taking place for the one in receipt of care and the working of the Holy Spirit in the soul care process.

As already mentioned in chapter four, Thurneysen's description of a true soul conversation was a pastoral engagement that reaches the boundary point between the natural and spiritual realms, which he referred to as the breach. A soul conversation that includes prayer is a conversation that has shifted from the horizontal plane of human concerns to the vertical dimension of the inbreaking of the Word. For Thurneysen, this was a divine work, but he maintained that this moment must not be forced or in any way be manipulated or coerced by the soul carer. To do so would categorically exclude such conversation from being a true soul conversation.³² However, if this moment of the breach did not occur, and the engagement remained at the level of what Thurneysen called a profane or ordinary conversation, that was simply a conversation, but not soul care. There is a complexity, therefore, in the place of prayer in soul care practice. The practitioner must be alert to overreach and taking an initiative that only belongs to God, yet prayer might be the very means to shift ordinary conversation beyond the breach into a truly divine-inspired soul conversation.

The context of soul care

Thurneysen envisaged the practice of soul care as occurring in two distinct spheres. The first sphere was within the ministry of the church. The second sphere was the missional context beyond the church. It is important to recognise and acknowledge these different spheres, as every specific ministry context carries with it its own implicit terms of engagement. Michael Paterson draws attention to the

³¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 198.

³² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 268.

need for a pastor or minister to be aware of the context in which they are ministering and the distinctive roles that bear upon these contexts. Effective and faithful pastoral practice requires an awareness of the role from which the pastor is operating: a specific representative role, or as a private individual, or some other implicit or explicit role. Problems arise when this role awareness is lacking. Paterson has identified the sorts of understanding that is necessary: the need to be clear about power dynamics, the difference between professional roles and personal individual roles, and the rules and permissions that are appropriate in various contexts.³³ There is an awareness of these contextual and role issues within Thurneysen's work. Thurneysen wrote as a pastor, and most of his ministry issued from his role as a pastor to people in their shared context of a church community. Within this context, his ministry took the form of an informal contract which entailed rights, duties and responsibilities between people.³⁴ Thurneysen was also alert to the significance of the carer's competence in performing their role in each context and whether they were aware of the limits and boundaries of their role and expertise.³⁵ We turn now to consider some features of the essential ministry contexts within Thurneysen's purview, within the church and outside the church in the missional setting.

Soul care as a church ministry

From the outset, Thurneysen's theology and practice of soul care were grounded in an ecclesial context, that is, the ministry conducted in a church. For Thurneysen, "soul care" takes place in this setting – within the fellowship between the minister and congregant or congregant to the fellow congregant, and the soul care that passes between them. This makes perfect sense in the light of Thurneysen's own ministry circumstances. The book he wrote about soul care was for the church and was intended for an audience of ministers who were themselves in training for the ministry or interested laypeople. Thurneysen's ministry experience grounded him in the realities of human life and the difficulties of the pastoral task. This ecclesial context is significant when one considers applying

³³ Michael Paterson, from a lecture for *Transforming Practices*, a 4-day masterclass in pastoral supervision, Sydney, Australia, 2019.

³⁴ D. Carr, "Rights, Duties and Responsibilities," in *The SAGE Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Democracy*, ed. J. Arthur, I. Davies, & C. Hahn (2008), 20.

³⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 226.

Thurneysen's hospitality of soul care in different settings and to the extent to which an ecclesial role translates into other settings.

In Thurneysen's account of soul care, he describes a ministry in which the practitioner is usually, although not always, a member of the clergy. He drew attention to specific responsibilities that need to be borne in mind when the soul carer also holds a ministry role. As Thurneysen explained it, in the pastoral context, both he and the one receiving care are functioning within roles – he has a role as the pastor, and the congregant's role is that of a parishioner. However, both the pastor and the parishioners are individual souls. For the sole carer, the outer ministry *role* encompasses their inner *soul*.

A further consideration is the power dynamics between the pastor and the other person. As Paterson has noted, it is important to weigh the power imbalance between the pastor and another person and consider the interactions between them.³⁶

Soul care as mission

Thurneysen categorises non-sacramental ministries where Christians might offer pastoral care beyond the church, as the church's mission. These ministries flow out from the church into the world, including home and foreign missions and social services.³⁷ For Thurneysen, these secondary ministries are signs that point to “preaching, baptism, and communion extending the proclamation into those parts of the world which are still untouched by the life of the church.”³⁸ As such, they have the “character of proclamation” if the “connection with preaching and thus their character as signs within the community is clearly recognised and preserved.”³⁹ Thurneysen categorised prison visiting and similar ministries within the church's mission, but he was always wary of the secularisation of mission endeavours, particularly in the social services.⁴⁰ With a particular interest in features that provided a

³⁶ The soul, role, context model is derived from Pastoral Supervisor Michael Paterson, described in a lecture for *Transforming Practices*, a 4-day masterclass in pastoral supervision, Sydney, Australia, 2019.

³⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 14.

³⁸ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 14.

³⁹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 14.

⁴⁰ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 14, 189.

way forward for sensitive access ministries in the public space, we turn to his understanding of some typical soul care practices that are relevant to such contexts.

Thurneysen, who had ministered with the parachurch organisation the YMCA during his early ministry, and had overseen parachurch organisations, was attentive to two opposite risks. The first was the possibility of secularising pressures in social ministries. He was mindful of the trend to provide psycho-social support rather than true soul care. Just as Thurneysen feared the secularising forces exerting undue influence on Christian ministries, he was not naïve about the possible risk of members of religious organisations violating models of hospitality and overstepping “boundary lines” in the secular space, and remained careful to distinguish his soul conversation from the overreach of some mission campaigns and intentional evangelism. His expressed concerns that an evangelist’s desire to proclaim may not respect the intimate nature of a soul conversation. Moreover, it was possible within evangelistic practice to employ overtly or covertly manipulative or coercive tactics to ambush the recipient with the supposedly straightforward and radically delivered “message.”⁴¹

In the area of the overreach of religious groups, he was also concerned about some common practices within Pietism. The process of evangelism in Pietist circles sometimes involved exposing people to terror and insecurity through the imposition of law and judgement, in the belief that this will make people more willing to grasp forgiveness.⁴² The consequence of this method is to make acceptance of the forgiveness of sin conditional on a “work” of repentance, whereas repentance as a change of mind or direction “grow[s] out of gratitude as the fruit of grace.”⁴³ A third concern, arising from his contact with the evangelistic Oxford Group, was the imposition on the new convert of a set of laws, such as the “four absolutes” or some form of forced confession of sin.⁴⁴ These cautions regarding evangelistic practice did not mean that Thurneysen believed the work of soul care should only be available to believers. He maintained that a ministry of God’s common grace was extended to “believers and unbelievers, to the righteous and unrighteous and the entire human nature still unredeemed.”⁴⁵ He

⁴¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 138.

⁴² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 171–72.

⁴³ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 172.

⁴⁴ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 309.

⁴⁵ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 225.

wrote of his own conversations and engagements with non-believers and provided advice on navigating the complexities of such situations. Soul carers are not to overwhelm people by answering questions that are not being asked. They should not communicate “God’s word all too directly in a situation in which it would only be misunderstood, exposed to a shrug or derision.” In Thurneysen’s words, we will “neither preach nor remain silent; we shall simply carry on a conversation and bear our witness in the form of this conversation.”⁴⁶ However, one should not betray or conceal one’s spiritual convictions in the course of a conversation.

Thurneysen does, however, incisively differentiate between soul care that seeks to make known God’s offer of forgiveness of sins, and soul care that offers what he believed to be thinly veiled evangelism. His concerns had two parts. Firstly, a theological objection based on different understandings of the *Ordo Salutis* (order of salvation). Thurneysen held a strongly Reformed position that the acceptance of redemption preceded repentance. In contrast, he saw much evangelistic practice as placing the work of repentance before salvation, thereby making redemption conditional on a person’s repentance. His second concern was that noted above, that is, the possibility of manipulation or ambush, which had the effect of negating the trust necessary for true soul conversations.

Connecting without controlling

Although Thurneysen’s expression of hospitality soul care was dependent upon divine influence and the work and fruit of the Spirit, this did not lessen the importance he placed upon the study and documentation of foundational knowledge. Thurneysen’s careful study of Scripture, people and psychology alerted him to the dangers that could be associated with personal ministries, hospitality, and friendship with vulnerable people. Dangers or concerns that may arise in ministries of soul care included manipulation, coercion, transference, projections, and using others to meet the carer’s own deep unmet needs. He advocated for safe ministry, and, describing a stable base for a theology of soul care, he sought in his instruction to reduce the elements of uncertainty when entering a pastoral encounter as well as highlighting possible risks that might arise in such engagements. He carefully

⁴⁶ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 125.

separated his understanding of ministry into a series of layers: theology, anthropology, method, and context. By so doing, he was attempting to simplify the number of variables within a complex matrix of possibilities, to limit the range of unknown and potentially difficult or harmful outcomes.

Thurneysen's goal was to try to disentangle what could be known generally from the specific presenting human situation, placing the pastoral encounter under the light of Christ, with the goal of bringing real spiritual benefit to the recipient.⁴⁷ By so doing, his practice had within it a warm openness combined with patience and self-control with alertness to overbearing, manipulative or imposing behaviour.

A worked example

But what of his own practice? Were these prominent features of his own pastoral engagements and conversations? How does the warmth Thurneysen exuded in a reciprocal friendship translate into a pastor's asymmetrical relationship to parishioner? Pastoral care, unlike sermons or lectures, happens privately. To have access to what takes place, one must rely upon self-reported case studies or "verbatim,"⁴⁸ written by the pastoral carer, or from accounts relayed by soul care recipients.

Thurneysen has been criticised for not providing case studies illustrating his method. To assess whether Thurneysen achieved his own articulated aims in soul care, we are dependent upon his written correspondence where he refers to his soul care practice, and upon the accounts of others, including those who were recipients of his care. Here is the testimony of one woman, Dorothee Hoch, which provides insight into general patterns of Thurneysen's soul care.⁴⁹

Dorothee recounted that Thurneysen gave her his whole concentration and attention. Quite cautiously, he helped Dorothee express the most difficult things and get to the bottom of the problems. She did not notice the conversation move from the "forecourt and the inner court" – the break in the conversation or high words coming "vertically from above" – she noticed nothing. The pastor simply

⁴⁷ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 123.

⁴⁸ *Verbatims* are the technical name for soul care conversations written up from memory by the pastoral carer and are used in many clinical pastoral care courses. Thurneysen's lack of inclusion of pastoral conversations was a major criticism of Thurneysen's book when published in the United States. Cf. Seward Hiltner's book review in *Pastoral Psychology* (1962). This is something that Bohren seeks to address by providing several accounts of Thurneysen's pastoral care and example of pastoral correspondence with parishioners.

⁴⁹ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 203–4.

tried to work with her to find the specific moment she experienced freedom in Christ. Thurneysen spoke very little. He gave her no rules, no orders and offered no judgement. Nevertheless, he helped to order things, to find a little courage to take new steps. When he finally prayed, she felt: “Now he is giving me back into the hand of God. He does not want to bind me to himself.”⁵⁰

Dorothee said that she scarcely remembered the words spoken, but she remembered her feelings – the feeling of total security, of total acceptance, of amazement at so much personal attention, trust and closeness. She learnt that instead of feelings of recrimination, condemnation, and inferiority, she was fully acknowledged and considered worthy of Thurneysen’s time and interest, and he accepted her as a person. She also learnt from this conversation that she did not need to gain God’s pleasure through accomplishments.⁵¹

If this account is to be trusted and is indicative of his normal practice, it appears that Thurneysen’s desire that soul carers connect with sensitivity and prayerfulness with those to whom they offered care featured in his own pastoral practice. People mattered to him, and every individual was to be valued and treated with significance, irrespective of their history or spiritual condition. For Thurneysen, because of the incarnation – that Jesus Christ has become flesh – there is no *fleshly* subject, no matter how “fleshly and human, however sinful and corrupt that cannot be reached and grasped by the Word of God and translated in God’s own.... There is no problem, no sorrow, no sin, no pain, and no death over which the word of judgement and grace cannot and must be pronounced in the power of this name.”⁵² This was the attitude and perspective that he appears to have carried into these pastoral encounters.

There is evidence that Thurneysen had a rare talent in personal conversation. He demonstrated a profound interest in others and was adept at putting them at ease. Karl Barth valued his friendship with Thurneysen and commented that Thurneysen offered special soul care toward him.⁵³ Barth wrote of

⁵⁰ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 203–4.

⁵¹ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 203–4.

⁵² Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 118.

⁵³ Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barths Lebenslauf, Nach seinem Briefen und autobiographischen Texten* (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1975), trans. John Bowden from 2nd rev. German ed. as *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (London: SCM, 1976) 74.

Thurneysen that “he gets on with people in an astonishing way. He can put himself in their place, walk with them and help them by understanding them (through his more lofty vantage point and in a transfiguring light). He shares their sorrow or their joy. The very evident criticism which he brings to bear on them is almost always a radical immanent criticism which is constructive by being comforting, helpful and friendly.”⁵⁴ A Basle psychiatrist recalled of Thurneysen, “He never tries to impose his opinion on the other. His message he has directed by way of receiving, not by teaching.”⁵⁵

Conclusion

Beneath everything, Thurneysen was a realist. He held together the contradictions of worldly realities such as grinding poverty with the spiritual reality of life lived in the glorious light of the Word. This attitude can be observed in a comment comparing Thurneysen’s radical theological attitude with Freud’s sober worldliness. Quervain’s observation is that Freud transformed “hysterical misery” into “mean misfortune,” whereas Thurneysen saw the possibility of a “lasting distress” being transformed into a “lasting hope.”⁵⁶ This had been Thurneysen’s own experience. He himself had experienced the transformation of distress into hope, even though the scars from that distress remained. His wife said that a long shadow lay across and beyond his life.⁵⁷ He was a true realist: his childhood sadness and loneliness continued to live within, but Thurneysen knew that his sensate experience of a fallen world was not the whole picture. He was also informed by revelation through the Word of God. And the realities at play from him in both the earthly and the spiritual realm gave shape to his practice of soul care. People found him to be a friendly, sincere and trustworthy person who could engage with and minister to their own souls.

Such sincere hospitality was not, however, simply the mark of a pleasant personality trait.

Thurneysen’s hospitable care was undergirded by rigorous understanding of ministry and counselling principles. His foundational ministry principles were acceptance of the other in their situation, and to gift the other the whole of his attention and mind. While ministry was usually conducted through the

⁵⁴ Karl Barth, “Introduction to E. Thurneysen,” in *Das Wort, Gottes und die Kirche* (1971), 227f. Quoted in Busch, *Karl Barth*, 74.

⁵⁵ Gaetano Benedetti (17 September 1980), in Bohren, *Prophetie*, 16.

⁵⁶ Quervain, “Die Krise,” 41.

⁵⁷ Bohren, *Prophetie*, 29.

role of the minister, the minister even in this role, was to remain sincerely and congruently in connection with their own soul. Soul care for Thurneysen was a churchly ministry, but he leaves hints as to the shape of ministry beyond the church. Clues left for a ministry in a public space included not collapsing soul care into counselling or therapy, but remaining focused on the soul of a person. Ministries in public places usually forbid proselytisation, and Thurneysen was reticent about much evangelism where there was no attempt to know the person before the evangelist or even worse, the use of manipulation, coercion or guilt to pressure a person to make a decision. Thurneysen would affirm the soul carer offering a hospitable space to talk deeply about the things that matter to them, and asking questions in such a way that helps the other discern their own meaning, while in prayer for self and the other and offering to hold the other in prayer.

Chapter 7: Implications for Spiritual Care Ministries in the Public Space

When considering spiritual care ministries in the public space, why does Thurneysen matter, and what does he contribute?

Soul care ministries in the public space fall under the broader category of spiritual care. Spirituality encompasses how a person makes meaning in their life, drawing on their deep philosophy of life, spirituality, and the life events that have shaped their spirituality. Spiritual care helps people access their spirituality and supports them by extending or reframing their existing beliefs to meet current and emerging situations. Spiritual interventions help people find wisdom in their situation and discover the choices available to them. Spiritual interventions work within existential challenges and provide a scaffold for others to explore their values, attitudes, and considerations concerning foundational beliefs and religious concerns.

A cursory analysis of Thurneysen's ecclesial theology of soul care might suggest that he has little to offer a spiritual care ministry in a busy secular hospital, especially if one gives due weight to his observation that Christian social ministries tend toward secular psycho-social care once separated from the church's mission. Nevertheless, other features of his theory and practice hold out more promise. For example, an essential principle for Thurneysen was that soul care depends, in no small extent, on the personal faith, qualities, attributes and skills of the individual carer, and when a carer acts on behalf of Christ and the mission of the church, then they are conducting Christian soul care. Similarly, when spiritual care is offered faithfully from a Reformed evangelical perspective, it can be assumed that the practitioner is offering genuine soul care in tandem with general spiritual care.

As we have noted, the soul conversation was a central element in Thurneysen's method of soul care. A soul conversation only occurs in dialogical interaction when a breach between ordinary matters and divine matters appears and is crossed. In the parish context, certain preconditions are at play that facilitates this process. There are assumed shared values, interests and faith. There is often the common aim of moving beyond ordinary conversation into deeper spiritual significance with an openness to God's revelation speaking into the individual's situation. By contrast, within the secular

hospital, shared values or faith commitments cannot be assumed. Indeed, there needs to be a particular sensitivity to the ordinary spiritual care situation in a hospital. There is no prior relationship between a spiritual carer and patients except when they have requested a particular religious representative, so soul care must begin at a more ordinary and exploratory level. Moreover, active proselytisation is forbidden except in chapel services. In these cases, a greater weight falls on the soul carer to be keeping the other and the encounter in prayer as they open up a hospitable place for the other, trusting that God is with them.

In a secular context, the pastor may not rely on their formal ministry “persona,” that is, their “role,” because, except in cases when a minister of a particular faith has been requested, they are not engaging in the asymmetrical pastor/parishioner role. In the hospital, chaplains minister from their underlying identity as a “person” or a “soul.” A pastor, like all Christian believers, enters into a series of obligations: to love, to offer hospitality, to care and to burden bear, to attend to the needs of others, and to witness through faithful presence¹ and enduring love. Even within the church context, the best soul care happens when the pastor enters the other’s situation, their soul aligns with their role, when their beliefs and life are congruent and genuine, and it is this internal cohesion that a Christian can bring to ministries in this secular context.

Beyond the confessional faith of the carer, Thurneysen outlined five personal attributes he considered essential in a soul carer: 1) a willingness to self-reflect on life and past experiences and a capacity for empathy; 2) friendliness and openness to other people; 3) to be well informed about findings in psychology and sociology that may impact the life of the soul; 4) to read and watch good literature and films to understand people better and why they do what they do, and 5) to read Scripture with interest in the genre and what it can teach about human nature combined with a practice of prayer for self and the other. These personal qualities of the soul carer coincide with qualities that are sought in people who offer spiritual care to patients and families in the hospital setting. The practice of soul care cannot exist as theology, anthropology, or even a method without someone mediating these facets of

¹ James H. Davidson, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 241–54.

knowledge and skills through their own being or soul and in Thurneysen's view, soul care was more than possessing a compassionate attitude toward others.

These qualities and other features within Thurneysen's approach resonate with Christopher Swift's perspectives on the task of chaplaincy. He observes, "It may be that the chaplains themselves need to do far more work to explore those parts of the Christian drama that resonate with the experience of patients. There is good reason to believe that faiths which embody narratives of suffering, loss, death, hope and love should be able to say – and do – meaningful things within hospitals."² He adds a further challenge, "However, whether chaplains can engage effectively with this context will depend upon their charisma and authenticity far more than on their institutional and historic privilege."³ Swift draws attention to the need for a chaplain or spiritual carer to draw upon a deep well of wisdom, springing from their faith, that they can bring into situations of suffering and loss.

Swift suggests that chaplains of religious faith can say and do meaningful things within a hospital context.⁴ This assertion makes sense considering the nature of what is taking place in chaplaincy or spiritual care contexts. It could be argued that all soul care or spiritual care operates out of a set of implicitly and explicitly held beliefs and practices concerning what it is to be human. Like other spiritual carers, the Reformed evangelical minister operates out of a deep well of religious, existential and religious beliefs to the humanity of the people subject to their care. A well-trained Christian spiritual carer can facilitate another exploration of their beliefs, the web of relationships in which they are embedded, and future hopes and fears. In their heart, the soul carer prays that God may illuminate them under the light of Scripture, praying for guidance as to how best to process in a way that brings life and hope into the situation. There is wisdom when a Reformed evangelical soul carer recognises that some of the tension they may feel between proclamation and providing space to host the soul of another is between Scripture and an overly narrow view of ministry rather than a tension within the

² Christopher Swift, *Hospital Chaplaincy in the Twenty-first Century: The Crisis of Spiritual Care on the NHS*, 2nd ed. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 150.

³ Swift, *Chaplaincy*, 150.

⁴ Swift, *Chaplaincy*, 150.

Word of God itself. Scripture endorses words and deeds, and speech and silence, proclamation and lament, words of life and prayerful groans.

Swift notes that although the chaplain, or soul carer, has meaningful things to offer, it is less related to their religious office or role and more closely connected to who they are as a person. How the chaplain expresses their person impacts their relationships, with features such as their personal qualities, possessing wisdom in the face of difficulties, and the ability to walk alongside and accompany people towards their future, whatever that might be.⁵ It is recognised that spiritual care ministry involves care of the whole person in its many facets: their creatureliness, physical and mental health, personhood, values, relationships and community. Therefore, appropriate care will be holistic, incorporating faithful presence, psycho-social interventions, prayer for and with the person. Some forms of care will include things that Bonhoeffer considered penultimate goods, such as prayer for and with the other, which Barth considered as pointers and witnesses to a greater truth; or lovingly staying the course through prayer and holding space for another as they pass through their valley of the shadow of death. In other cases, there is the freedom to respond to questions asked specifically about the Christian faith if the other person is open and receptive to this information and ministry. Thurneysen's account of soul care contains valuable insights to be gleaned, which have the potential to enrich both the vision and scope of chaplaincy and spiritual care in a public setting.

[A methodology for preparing and training spiritual carers from a Reformed evangelical perspective based on Thurneysen's soul care](#)

From Thurneysen's perspective, all spiritual engagement is mediated through the soul. This mediation includes a person's relationship with God, their own body and physicality, their conscious and unconscious psyche and personality, and how the soul relates to other spheres of knowledge, philosophies, religions and spiritual entities and sentiments. In many ways this understanding of human spiritual engagement aligns with the central aspects of the ministry of a Christian spiritual carer seeking to care for another. Spiritual care involves being interested in and caring for the whole person

⁵ Swift, *Chaplaincy*, 150.

in their web of relationships with God, themselves, others, communities of significance and spiritual realities.

The gap between Christian soul care and the rapidly evolving field of professional chaplaincy should not be underestimated. It has been observed that there has been a “secularising decline of religion and, simultaneously, the sacralising growth of spirituality, overlaid on a bed of increasing religious diversity.”⁶ The twenty-first century has seen “the redefining of professional chaplaincy as a service that is broadly spiritual rather than narrowly religious care.”⁷ At the same time, it has been observed that people value chaplains, including people with no religious affiliation or those who function from a different perspective from their religious institution.⁸ On this basis, we can see a genuine role for Christian soul care in the broader marketplace of spiritual care.

Thurneysen’s careful study of the soul and the way it related to God, its connections and relationship with its embodied self, its personality, and other people and communities, have correspondences with ideas of spirituality expressed as “meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and the significant or sacred.”⁹ Thurneysen presents an encompassing account of soul care that covers a range of essential elements that contribute to a robust account and theory practice of soul care and the formation of the carer. He believed, humanly speaking, the soul carer has a range of variables within their sphere of control. The elements or segments that he repeatedly returned to throughout his writing were: the importance of a faith established in the Word of God and the gift of grace from God in Christ, an understanding of how the Word and the world fit together, the particularities of time and place, competency in the art of conversation, personal aptitude to soul care, an interest in gaining further formation and training, and a practice that was both hospitable and disciplined in service of the other.

⁶ Steve Nolan and Duncan MacLaren, “Religious, Spiritual, Pastoral ... and Secular? Where Next for Chaplaincy?” *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 9.1 (2021): 3.

⁷ Nolan and MacLaren, “Religious, Spiritual, Pastoral,” 3.

⁸ Nolan and MacLaren, “Religious, Spiritual, Pastoral,” 3.

⁹ C. M. Puchalski, et. al.: “Improving the Quality of Spiritual Care as a Dimension of Palliative Care: The Report of the Consensus Conference.” *J. Palliat. Med.* 12 (2009): 885–904.

Therefore, a reasonable argument can be made that there is a general overlap between Thurneysen's soul care and secular concepts of spirituality, notwithstanding his clearly stated concerns with specific spiritualities. The overlap lies in the general concern for religious, spiritual and existential accounts of meaning, purpose and connectedness, of which Scripture presents a robust account that addresses these areas, but with the specificity of tying these notions to the faith, love and hope revealed through Jesus Christ. Despite Thurneysen not directly addressing the question of the precise relationship between soul care and spiritual care in secular settings, there are rich streams within his thought and practice that offer material that can help build a cohesive account of how Christian ministry might be expressed within the public context of spiritual care. Thurneysen provided enough clues to inform a methodology for preparing soul carers to minister effectively in these settings, providing high quality spiritual care in public institutions. His insights provide a set of touchstones essential in the training of soul carers ministering in public settings. Thus we believe that Thurneysen's theology and practice of soul care have much to offer those preparing for soul care ministries both in sacred and secular spaces and can be scaled to meet the needs of those preparing for such ministries at introductory, intermediate and advanced levels.

A soul care wheel

We noted earlier that Thurneysen located all practical ministry and soul care under a broader category of wisdom. Six features of the holistic soul care wisdom that he sought have been identified. In preparing and training soul care practitioners to serve others, each of these elements can play a vital role. And these features are even more significant when preparing individuals for the ministry of spiritual care in secular spaces, as there are even more variables at play in these contexts than in church ministry.

Thurneysen's theology and practice of soul care addressed a range of questions. For example: Why do we do soul care? Who are living souls? When and where are these living souls? How do souls connect and change? Which people care for souls? What does soul care look like? By placing these questions, or the critical element they address, in a wheel, a model can be constructed that provides a visual metaphor. The model conveys the scope of the complete ministry and locates each distinct segment

within the whole. By separating the segments from each other, the model assists in avoiding the error of making the part the whole by collapsing the ministry of soul care into one segment. The full-orbed and complex nature of soul care is thus preserved.

In the diagram below (Figure 2), the soul care wheel represents six different facets of soul care ministry. The classification is based on the notion of “soul” concerning these different facets of ministry. We consider the soul as created, enculturated, embodied, communicating, self-reflective and connecting (or hospitable).

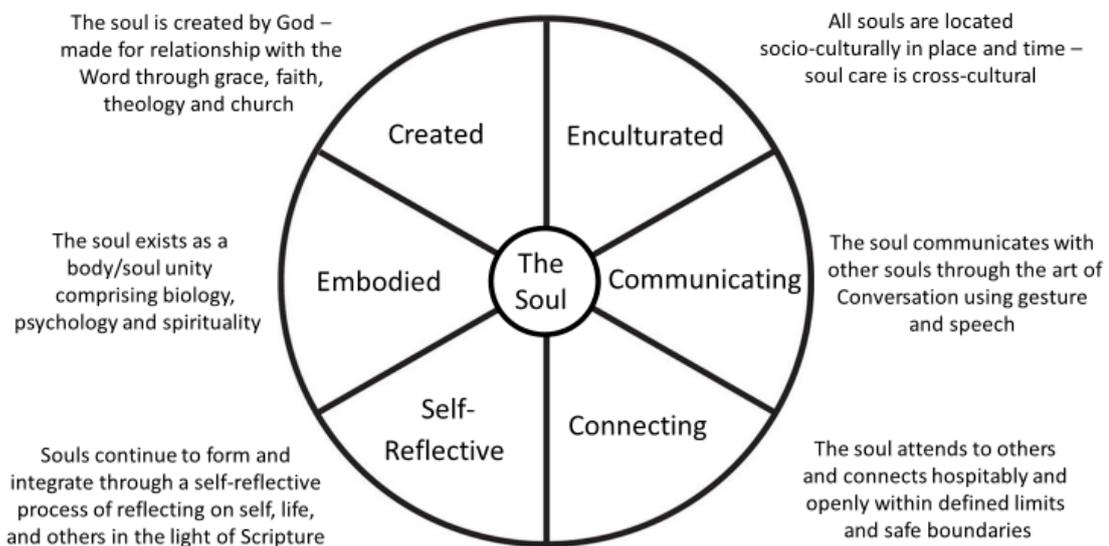


Figure 2: Diagram of a Soul Care Wheel Based on Thurneysen’s Theology of Soul Care

The created soul

Soul care takes its foundational orientation from the theological understanding that the soul is created and given breath (and therefore life) by God. The soul’s life and meaning lie in its relationship with its Creator. Therefore, soul care must be grounded in dependence upon God and pay careful attention to orthodox theological truths that he has revealed. Thurneysen’s theological beliefs concerning Christ, the Holy Scripture, the Trinity, salvation, and the church’s role in mediating and proclaiming the forgiveness of sins were central to his soul care practice. From the perspective of Scripture, a soul has

an existence before God. However, without receiving the offer of forgiveness of sin, the image of God remains tarnished, and the soul is only fully restored when in right relationship with God through Christ, engaging with the Word of God enlivened by the Holy Spirit, and in fellowship with other Christians. Soul care informed by this notion of the created soul will emphasise a confessional faith that will acknowledge that all people are created by God and have their being in him and live in the context of his creative love and care. Nevertheless, it will also acknowledge that ultimately all true anthropology is Christological and eschatological. The implication flowing from this concept of the created soul is that the soul carer needs a solid grounding in biblical studies, theology, and Christian thought history.

The enculturated soul

All souls as partakers of the human condition are socially and culturally located, living in a particular place, context and time. People cannot be extracted from their socio-cultural location, which always remains a sedimentary layer of their personhood.¹⁰ This socio-cultural dimension was not a topic that Thurneysen addressed at length; yet this located-ness is as valid for the carer as for the recipient of care. Nevertheless, Thurneysen's theology arose and was informed by particular contexts, including two World Wars, significant intellectual ferment during his theological studies, and other significant intellectual influences during and after this time. We have suggested that the tragic circumstances in his family of origin might also have influenced his approach to soul care.

An acknowledgement of the reality of the enculturated soul will mean that the soul carer needs a grounding in understanding cultures, history and the practices of different environments with specific reference to the people, places and spaces with and within which they are ministering. It is crucial to have a range of cross-cultural competencies and a proficient understanding of family systems theory and scripturally informed approaches to working and ministering in cross-cultural contexts.

¹⁰ The image of sedimentation was drawn from Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

The embodied soul

Central to this whole thesis on soul care is the need for expertise in understanding the complex facets of an embodied soul that can be known from Scripture, observation of the created order, and sciences such as psychology and sociology. The soul in its embodied form is the point at which the person connects meaningfully with their physicality, psyche, emotions, relationships, values, community and spiritual realities. Given this vast web of relationships involving the embodied soul, a soul carer should be well informed at a general level of discussion around different topics relating to disciplines such as psychology and neuroscience. Although Thurneysen was writing in a time before the significant advances in psychological and other science that have blossomed in recent decades, he saw the wisdom in the soul carer engaging with significant theoretical works rather than simply reading popular scientific literature. A further challenge for a soul carer that ought not to be overlooked is how to think theologically about the relationship between theological anthropologies and non-theological anthropologies. The soul career needs to have a model or pattern for weighing and utilising non-theological material in their theologically informed practice of soul care. This pattern enables the practitioner to wisely address the multiple issues that impinge upon the dual citizenship of Christians who inhabit both the world and the kingdom of God and provide appropriate care to unbelievers in their particular settings.

The communicating soul

Communication, and the method of engagement between two people in the communicative process, is central to the nature of soul care. The paradigmatic communicative method for Thurneysen is the act of speech, clearly displayed in God's form of address to us through the Word. The conversation is also a vital communicative activity. Soul communication includes conversation, but effective communication depends upon other factors, such as the subconscious and intuitive connections in the dialogical encounter. The carer needs to be alert to the subtleties that emerge when communicating. For example, the carer should be aware that they are operating from a role, because even as they empathise and accompany the other person on their journey of personal or spiritual discovery, and

even if their souls connect while this process is taking place, they need to remain integrated within themselves and differentiated from the other person.

Therefore, those involved in soul and spiritual care require a wide range of communication skills, including listening, empathising ability, and a facility for open-ended conversation. In order to follow Thurneysen's approach of introducing themes from Scripture into everyday conversation and language, they must be mindful of the possibilities of coercion and manipulation. At the same time, while Thurneysen sought to convey the message of forgiveness of sin through conversation, he also believed that the conversation style in soul care had a bearing on whether a recipient might be open to the Christian message. Therefore, factors such as prayer, patience, perseverance, love and friendship are significant in the communicative encounter to bear spiritual fruit.

These skills of connecting, communicating and conversing at a soul level are learnt in communities where theories and practice are reflected upon with others under supervision.

The self-reflective soul

Faithful soul care is not simply a matter of skill but depends upon the personal qualities of the carer of souls. There needs to be an integration between the life and the faith of the practitioner. They need to possess the ability to be self-reflective and to have a posture of open curiosity about people and the world. Effective soul care entails a combination of the right person with the proper training and skills.

Thurneysen believed that soul care as a ministry was not for everyone, requiring a particular set of qualities and aptitudes. Maturity was essential, and this should be intentionally cultivated through reflection upon Scripture and personal reflective practices. Thurneysen encouraged self-reflection, personal formation, and engagement with a cross-disciplinary reading of literature and poetry, and reflection on human nature as it is portrayed in different contexts. This aspect of soul care emphasises the need for the cultivation of self-reflection, self-awareness and a deepening of self-understanding of one's own soul before one takes on the weighty task of ministering to other souls.

The connecting soul

Soul care can be viewed as a practice of hospitality that is offered and accepted based on deep levels of trust and safety. Hospitality offers a connection to another without seeking to control the outcome. It involves a willingness to enter a soul conversation with the desire to connect with the other's soul concerns without a preconceived outcome in mind. Hospitality creates spontaneous opportunities to care within horizons of hope, prayer and love. At the same time, however, this creativity is paired with a deep-rooted disciplined awareness of the dangers inherent in a one-on-one interaction between two human beings, such as the potential for manipulation, coercion, imposition, taking advantage of another, transference and projections. The carer must remain well differentiated from those they care for, exercising patience, forbearance and self-restraint in the support they provide. This practice of hospitality is also best learnt and honed in a supportive, disciplined reflective community, initially during a supervised placement.

Conclusion

The art of soul care is a disciplined practice that skilfully weaves a living encounter that builds on both the soul carer's and recipient of care's life experiences and socio-cultural location, with beliefs about faith and humanity that are faithful to God, that is hospitable and prayerfully respectful of the other, thus opening up possibilities of new life in the future at whichever horizon was under view.

Conclusion

Facilitating a soul conversation requires knowledge, skills and experience. Soul care is the art of attending to another's soul and prayerfully placing their concerns under the light of the Word of God. Soul care is a discipline well-grounded in theology, anthropology, and a disciplined way of being that creates a hospitable space facilitating a soul encounter or conversation. Thurneysen demonstrates a careful method of moving from theology to practice. He separated his understanding of ministry into a series of layers: theology, anthropology, method, and context. By so doing, he was attempting to simplify the number of variables within a complex matrix of possibilities to limit the range of unknown and potentially difficult or harmful outcomes. Thurneysen's goal was to disentangle what could be known generally from the specific presenting human situation, placing the pastoral encounter under the light of Christ to bring real spiritual benefit to the recipient.¹¹ By so doing, his practice had within it a warm openness combined with patience and self-control with alertness to overbearing, manipulative or imposing behaviour. He saw within soul care the possibility of seeing people's "lasting distress" being transformed into a "lasting hope."¹² The *finesse* of Thurneysen's pastoral practice hinted at a more encompassing theology than he articulated, and his soul hospitality engaged people at many more layers of their soul than the facility of speech. He was acutely sensitive to the person in front of him while simultaneously his theological compass stayed focused on the revelation of God. He did not lose sight of the deep spiritual need of the person with whom he was meeting. Thurneysen remained aware of the shadowy world of spiritual forces and actual power of the darkness while firmly remaining anchored to Christ and secure in their forgiveness of sins, knowing that it is only the light of Christ that can overcome and dispel this darkness. It is precisely this interest in soul care that alerted him to the danger of theology being collapsed into psychology – that in matters of soul care, the horizontal could potentially consume the vertical.¹³ In doing so, such a collapse renders much soul care and all prayer powerless.

¹¹ Thurneysen, *Theology of Pastoral Care*, 123.

¹² Quervain, "Die Krise," 41.

¹³ Quervain, "Die Krise," 43.

Thurneysen possessed insight into how thin the boundary is between an instinctual spirituality and people's vulnerability to being exploited by cultish practices, which offered only counterfeit avenues to spiritual wholeness instead of forgiveness of sin and new life in Christ and restoring a person's image in God. He understood that when a person feels spiritual distress within their soul, they will seek out means of alleviating this distress through religious practices, health and wellness programs, medication, exploring spiritualities, and even the occult. Notwithstanding the abuse of people's psychological and spiritual need exhibited by Anthroposophy and other occult practices, there is a need for a soul carer to discern different spiritual needs of the soul and in which facet of the soul the need lies. Is the distress related to the soul's creatureliness, physical, mental, or psychical health or distress? Is the distress in their personhood a moral dilemma or an issue related to a more extensive spiritual system in which they are enveloped?

Thurneysen, like all people, cannot be separated from the times and context in which he was formed; his life, theology, methods and practices all bear the imprint of his socio-cultural context. However influential, these formative circumstances are not to say that the context limited his theory and practice, but rather that it shapes and frames it to varying degrees, otherwise this would be to discount the transformative power of the Word of God. Christian soul care is the offer of addressing the soul's distress mediated through the carer's faith, the Holy Spirit, and revelation of the Word of God. This faith is combined with knowledge, skills, experience, and an understanding of patterns of soul care reflecting how the realms of the Word and the world fit together under God. This knowledge can help dispel some of the challenges and tensions of a Reformed evangelical who wishes to move into the ministry and practice of spiritual care in the public space, particularly as they minister out of their soul as a fellow neighbour, not from a pulpit or a well-defined role. They will find themselves in an environment where people's belief systems are existential or spiritual but not religious, or conversely, religious but not spiritual, or both or none. The soul carer will need cross-cultural competencies and the ability to live with tension and ambiguity. They will need the insight to differentiate between their own beliefs and those of another person, to self-reflect, and to view themselves as part of a highly specialised multidisciplinary team. However, this situation should not come as a surprise to the soul carer as this is the world most Christians enter each day of their lives.

A public hospital is where some of those with the greatest need for soul care present themselves. They come suffering and afflicted, not simply concerning physical health issues, but also from other significant factors. They may have experienced loss, trauma, abandonment or abuse. They may be living with conditions that significantly impact their relationships and human connections, such as mental illness or neuro-atypical conditions, including autism and schizophrenia. These losses and afflictions evoke deep questions around suffering and struggle, guilt and failure, and life and death. How do we care for these souls?

This conversation with Eduard Thurneysen has yielded a range of insights into the nature of soul care and the ministry of the soul carer. His theology of soul care was not written for a spiritual care ministry in a secular hospital. However, deep streams of subterranean wisdom flowing through his key book of pastoral theology, *Theology of Soul Care*, can be tapped into by Christian spiritual carers and that enrich and resource a faithful and hopeful ministry to souls. Thurneysen's work has made it possible to distil a cohesive approach to soul care with application to a broader secular spiritual care system within public institutions. Moreover, he meticulously explains his theological principles, which provide bearings that can be extrapolated and applied to various contexts.

Thurneysen could deal with complex thoughts across various disciplines, which was invaluable in informing his theoretical perspectives. He was also able to integrate and differentiate between material from differing fields and viewpoints. He possessed creative ability with language, metaphor, and aphorism to communicate and challenge, which he brought to bear in his specialised field – soul care. Nevertheless, for Thurneysen, all this paled into insignificance when placed against the revelation of the Word of God. He wanted all his theology and ministry to be in fundamental alignment with a rich and thick account of the Word of God, as found in Scripture.

The reception of his *Theology of Soul Care* involved criticism from some. His emphasis on the Word of God and “kerygmatic pastoral care” was taken to mean that he was advocating for indiscriminate preaching and evangelism to vulnerable people. His concept of the “breach in pastoral conversation” was misunderstood, and some thought it pointed to something far-off and in the future. Various aspects of his thought were difficult to apprehend. Nevertheless, these criticisms should not be allowed

to detract from the book's strengths, personal qualities, and the genuine soul care for which he was remembered. The book reflects the essential incongruity of capturing actual practice and attempting to document it and provide a rationale for it. As a modest person, his theology and his connection with Karl Barth were known, but far less transparent is his personal story and his self-perception of his role – to be one pointing and signalling to the Word, the most significant compass from which he took his bearings as he cared for those caught in their human situation. His ultimate hope was fixed in Jesus Christ, the one in whom God addresses man in his sin and rescues him.¹⁴

At this distance, it is not easy to know what Thurneysen may have thought about his work being extended and applied in spiritual care ministries in public institutions, but for anyone coming from a Reformed evangelical background, his concern to neither see the vertical collapsed into the horizontal, nor soul care collapsed into social care, is refreshing. It is essential to consider his concerns about secularising forces in ministries in social service areas and how often such ministries become separated from the ministry of the Word and all proper soul care to his mind. Thurneysen's careful assessment of non-theological anthropologies arose from his concern not only with secularising forces from the social sciences but perhaps even more critically, from what he perceived to be false spiritualising forces. These spiritualising forces could be found in a range of religious, spiritual and psychological beliefs that promote transcendence and transformation but do not contend with the creatureliness of a person and a scripturally informed perspective on the actual spiritual condition of humankind. Such approaches offer solutions that attend to the present physical and visible existence but do not address the invisible and eternal existence of the recipient of care. Thurneysen's alertness to such false trails provides a necessary caution to the Christian soul carer working in a secular context. At the same time, Thurneysen knew that knowledge not sourced from Scripture was also a necessary component of truly Christian soul care. The sophistication of his perspective speaks powerfully to contemporary concerns.

Finally, another critical insight from Thurneysen is the importance of the soul carer's faith, character and skills. To a large extent, the quality of soul care offered depends upon the living reality of the

¹⁴ Becker, "Book review," 264.

carer's faith and how they live in the light of the knowledge of their forgiveness of sins. Nevertheless, along with a particular set of essential qualities and attitudes was the acquisition of finely-tuned, other-person-centred conversation skills that demonstrated a genuine interest in the other, an ability to attend to the person and their situation as it is, while at the same time praying that God will provide the carer with the appropriate words to say. If Thurneysen's primary devotion was to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, he did not neglect the second commandment of the love of neighbour, and his approach to soul care is an active demonstration of this truth.

All in all, Eduard Thurneysen's theology, methodology and practice of soul care, though far removed from contemporary pastoral contexts, provides significant insight for anchoring a faithful and hopeful methodology of soul care and practice in the public space.

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