

ANALYZING THE APOSTLE PAUL'S "ROBUST CONSCIENCE":
IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONCERNS OF KRISTER STENDAHL'S INCEPTIVE ARTICLE

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I. *A Cloud and the Coming Storm: Tracing Stendahl's Praise,
Potential, and Position Fifty Years Later*

1. *Stendahl's Praise*

Krister Stendahl's article "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,"¹ published fifty years ago, was the seminal work of the so-called New Perspective on Paul (NPP).² All works published thereafter were heavily indebted in their conceptual framework to Stendahl's article. N. T. Wright, a proponent of the NPP, says of the article, "This article, like a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, gave promise of the coming storm,"³ and later, "Stendahl's seminal essay on 'Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West' . . . alerted the world to the problems in traditional readings of Paul some while before Sanders."⁴

The issue of the NPP may seem several disciplines removed from psychology and/or counseling. However, two years before Stendahl first published

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¹ The article "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" was originally published in Swedish as "Paulus och Samvetet," *SEÅ* 25 (1960): 62-77, and later in English in *HTR* 56 (1963): 199-215. The citations in this article correspond to the version reprinted in Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78-96.

² Krister Stendahl compiles, expounds upon, and explicates previously published original theses in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, the evaluation of which will be the topic of the present discussion. E. P. Sanders attempts to provide the socio-historical framework of first-century Judaism within which Stendahl's thesis in his article "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" might work in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). James D. G. Dunn appropriates Sanders's socio-historical work and Stendahl's thesis in "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" as guidelines for interpreting key passages regarding the law and justification in Paul in *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

³ Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1986* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 372. Dunn mentions Stendahl's article 26 times in *New Perspective* and 7 times in his *The Theology of the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Sanders mentions the article 9 times in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, and 4 times in *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). These are all very foundational works for the NPP.

⁴ N. T. Wright, *What St. Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 190.

his article in *Harvard Theological Review* in 1963, he presented it at the 1961 Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (APA). Stendahl's exhortation was therefore not merely for academic theologians to read Paul with some interesting new insight. It was for counselors (which can be extended to pastors,⁵ teachers, and most importantly, the individual) who used Scripture in their counseling to *stop* using Paul's doctrine of "justification by faith" to address a person's guilt, since Paul did not have an "introspective conscience," but a "robust conscience," and

would be suspicious of a teaching and a preaching which pretended that the only door into the church was that of evermore introspective awareness of sin and guilt. For it appears that the Apostle Paul was a rather good Christian, and yet he seems to have had little such awareness.⁶

2. *Stendahl's Potential*

Stendahl's concerns are therefore practical at the core. If his claims are accepted, and the Pauline Corpus is read as providing no explicit solution for man's plight of total depravity, and moreover, as implying that mankind (under Adam) is *not* inherently depraved, then Wright's words hold true in a greater sense than first intended. The cloud of Stendahl's thesis foreshadows more than a storm in the theological academy. It foreshadows a typhonic desolation of discouragement among believers who may find no solace for their sin. Because the NPP is gaining traction in evangelical circles, Stendahl's article must be analyzed and engaged with in order to protect Paul's gospel as a tool for pastors, biblical counselors, counselees, and Christians alike.

Stendahl's article is representative of the general structure of the NPP, and the fact that Stendahl presented it to the APA and addresses psychologists throughout the article demonstrates the deep-seated psychological presuppositions and concerns of the NPP. There is an intimate intersection between theology and psychology in that they both ask many of the same questions. Yet there is an immovable impasse between Reformed orthodoxy and the discipline of secular psychology in that they each give antithetical answers to those questions. The psychological presuppositions and concerns in Stendahl's work must therefore be identified, engaged, analyzed, and replaced.

The body of this article consists of three sections: Exegesis, History, and Biblical Psychology. The exegetical section will examine the primary texts in Paul that Stendahl uses to remove a notion of individual sin. The historical section

⁵ For works demonstrating the rise of the secular mental health system in response to the decline of pastoral effort to engage more complex psychological issues, see Andrew Abbott, "The Construction of the Personal Problems Jurisdiction," in *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 280-314; David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, N.C.: New Growth Press, 2010), chs. 1-3.

⁶ Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 96.

will demonstrate Stendahl's dependence on the psychoanalytic tradition for his reading of Luther and "the West," and the internal inconsistencies that accompany his psychoanalytic historical method. The biblical psychological section frames practical issues in terms of theological categories, replacing the secular psychological categories that Stendahl uses.⁷

3. *Stendahl's Position*

The argument of Stendahl's article has three historically successive tiers: (1) The Apostle Paul did not suffer from a "plagued conscience," either before or after his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Phil 3:6), but had a "robust conscience" and "had been 'flawless' as to the righteousness required by the law . . . [and h]is encounter with Jesus Christ . . . has not changed this fact" since "for the Jew the Law did not require a static or pedantic perfectionism but supposed a covenant relationship in which there was room for forgiveness and repentance and where God applied the Measure of Grace";⁸ (2) Augustine misread Paul because of his morbid introspectiveness, as demonstrated in his *Confessions*, and Martin Luther became introspective as an Augustinian monk, and in light of the Roman Catholic system of penance developed an introspective, and therefore *guilty*, conscience; and (3) in the West, where Christians have adopted the Augustinian-Lutheran framework of an "introspective conscience," "the Pauline awareness of sin has been interpreted in light of Luther's struggle with his conscience."⁹

For Stendahl, Paul's entire doctrine of justification by faith centers on the inclusion of Gentiles in the new messianic community.¹⁰ In other words, the question in Paul's mind was not, "How can I find a gracious God?" but rather, "What are the ramifications of the Messiah's arrival for the relation between

⁷ This article is not, however, concerned with setting forth a comprehensive critique of the NPP. For works that attempt to do so, see F. David Farnell, "The New Perspective on Paul: Its Basic Tenets, History, and Presuppositions," *The Master's Seminary Journal* (2005): 189-243; D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001-2004). Ernst Käsemann critiques Stendahl's article in his *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 60-78. Käsemann writes, "In Stendahl, consequently, the antithesis arises between salvation history as the apostle's fundamental position and his doctrine of justification as an early Christian defense against Judaism, conditioned by its time" (p. 63). Stendahl responds, "In any case, the first question to raise is whether such a use of justification by faith is an authentic or even a legitimate use of Pauline thinking" (*Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 133). Unfortunately, although Käsemann's critique is penetrating and convincing, Stendahl's rejoinder fails to address many of Käsemann's key concerns. Beyond mentioning it, we will not interact with this conversation in this article since our goal here is to address more foundational issues than Käsemann and Stendahl were seeking to address.

⁸ Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 80, 81.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰ "Where Paul was concerned about the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic community, his statements are now read as answers to the quest for assurance about man's salvation out of a human predicament" (*ibid.*, 86).

Jews and Gentiles?” (cf. Gal 3:24).¹¹ However, it can be said, and I think Stendahl would have agreed, that the question we must ask is, “How did Paul conceive of himself in relation to sin?” Or, put even more simply, “Did Paul think he was guilty before God?”

II. *Psychological Exegesis or Exegetical Theology: Engaging Stendahl’s Psychological Reading of Paul*

1. *Philippians 3:6-9*

Stendahl reads Paul as conceiving of himself as a righteous Jew on the basis of his adherence to the Mosaic Law. As justification for this, he examines Phil 3:6-9. Stendahl’s argument is that in Phil 3, Paul describes himself as not having a guilty, introspective conscience before he was a Christian, but a robust conscience that carried over into his Christian life. On the basis of his interpretation of Phil 3:6, he says,

It is also striking to note that Paul never urges Jews to find in Christ the answer to the anguish of a plagued conscience. If that is the case regarding *Paul the Pharisee*, it is, as we shall see, even more important to note that we look in vain for any evidence that *Paul the Christian* has suffered under the burden of conscience concerning personal shortcomings which he would label “sins.” The famous formula “simul justus et peccator”—at the same time righteous and sinner— . . . cannot be substantiated as the center of Paul’s conscious attitude toward his personal sins.¹²

Put simply, Stendahl claims that Paul makes a blatant statement about the clarity of his conscience in Phil 3:6 when he declares himself “blameless,” not in a “self-righteous” way, but as an explanation of the covenantal blessings which Israel receives through the law, since Paul attributes real “gain” to his righteousness (v. 7), regardless of the fact that it does not transfer to the new messianic community.

The initial problem with Stendahl’s reading of Paul’s “blameless” relationship to the law as an indication of a clear conscience is glaring: he is importing the same psychological categories as the “introspective” reader. Stendahl assumes that Paul is talking about a “blameless” conscience when it seems that Paul is not speaking about his conscience at all, but of his official “track record” as a Jew.¹³ Paul lists his pedigree, physical covenant signs, official occupation, and religious duties in vv. 5-6 as objective reasons for having confidence in the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84. Cf. Stephen Westerholm, “Justification by Faith Is the Answer: What Is the Question?” *CTQ* 70 (2006): 297-317.

¹² Stendahl, “Paul and the Introspective Conscience,” 81-82.

¹³ Moisés Silva, *Philippians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 175. Other commentators who take this view are Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1983), 187; Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 392-403, 415-16.

flesh, so for him to introduce, at the end of v. 6, a subjective, unverifiable reason to have such confidence would be arbitrary.¹⁴

The second problem is that in v. 9, Paul makes explicit what was implicit in v. 6: his "blameless" relationship to the law not only had nothing to do with his conscience, but also had nothing to do with real righteousness, but only, as mentioned above, his "track record" as a Jew, for he speaks of himself as "not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law." Stendahl might reply: "When [Paul] says that he forgets what is behind him (Phil 3:13), he does not think about the shortcomings in his obedience to the Law, but about his glorious achievements as a righteous Jew, achievements which he nevertheless now has learned to consider as 'refuse' in the light of his faith in Jesus the Messiah."¹⁵ In other words, the blamelessness that Paul refers to in v. 6 is Paul's righteousness *as a Jew*. And when Christ came, Paul's Jewish righteousness was not discounted. It simply would not transfer into his Christian life.

However, Stendahl fails to observe the different nature of the "righteousnesses" Paul exchanges. Paul says in vv. 8-9, "I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish . . . not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but . . . the righteousness from God that depends on faith." Paul makes an important distinction: he loses the righteousness that comes from the law and gains the righteousness that comes from God.¹⁶ How much more clearly can Paul speak about the "righteousness" of v. 6? It is not from God. Paul speaks of two kinds of righteousness in this passage: righteousness before men (v. 6) and righteousness from God (v. 9). Paul's righteousness in v. 6 is "blameless" because his Jewish credentials listed in vv. 5-6 are acceptable to men. The context of Paul's blamelessness in v. 6 is his reason to give confidence in the flesh. Paul does not describe his righteousness in v. 9 as blameless because it is the righteousness of Christ, and is therefore not open for evaluation by anyone other than God. The "blameless" righteousness of v. 6 is the opposite kind of righteousness he speaks of in v. 9, righteousness from God, the only righteousness that ever had any value. Therefore, Phil 3:6-9 makes a twofold point: only righteousness from God is true righteousness, and *any* confidence

¹⁴ It must be noted that in order for Stendahl's reading of Paul as professing to have a robust conscience in v. 6 to hold, the robust conscience must be understood as functioning within Paul's stated purpose for listing his credentials, which is: "I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh," which means that in this passage Paul directly identifies his conscience with "the flesh." This identification completely contradicts Stendahl's primary interpretive point about Rom 7, which is that Paul is making a case for his blamelessness on account of the fact that his conscience and "the flesh" are two entirely different things, bearing two separate sets of moral responsibility (cf. below for further explanation of Stendahl on Rom 7). This is an example of an unavoidable inconsistency of Stendahl's reading of Paul.

¹⁵ Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 80.

¹⁶ Paul makes his juxtaposition of the "righteousness . . . that comes from the law" and "righteousness from God" explicit in the very grammar of the passage by using the exact same noun, article, and preposition for righteousness from "the law" and "God": *δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου* . . . *τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην* (Phil 3:9).

in justification on the basis of one's own works is "rubbish." All the same, Paul's doctrine of sin still must be established in order for his doctrine of justification by faith to have real theological traction.

2. *Galatians 3:24*

The primary example that Stendahl uses of Luther's tendency to interpret introspectively is Gal 3:24, arguing that when Paul says "the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ," he meant "my fellow Jews and I," and not "all of us Christians," since the law, in Stendahl's view, is invalid in the messianic age simply because it had fulfilled its purpose. According to Stendahl, Luther makes this hermeneutical misstep when he interprets v. 24 as his "second use of the law," or as a mechanism to convict the world of sin.¹⁷ *Contra* Luther, Stendahl claims:

Once the Messiah had come . . . the Law had done its duty as a custodian for the Jews, or as a waiting room with strong locks (vv.22f.). Hence, it is clear that Paul's problem is how to explain why there is no reason to impose the Law on the Gentiles, who now, in God's good Messianic time, have become partakers in the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham (v.29).¹⁸

In order to understand what Paul means when he says "the law was our guardian [or custodian] until Christ came," we must understand why the law is spoken of in that way. First, when Paul says "*our* guardian," does he mean "my fellow Jews and I" or "all of us Christians"? In v. 1 Paul addresses the "foolish Galatians," and there is no indication that he has any other group in mind when he says "our," for he does not even say "Jew" in ch. 3 until v. 28. The last time he mentioned "Jews" he said, "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners" (v. 15), *immediately* after speaking of his confrontation of Cephas, and therefore clearly not establishing a rhetorical Jewish "we" for ch. 3, but rather establishing the worthlessness that Cephas and Paul's Jewishness has for their justification. In one place, Rom 7:1, Paul addresses "those who know the law," which could prove that Paul does occasionally speak exclusively to Jews. But if Rom 7:1 proves anything, it is that Paul formally introduces passages in which he has different audiences (which he does not do in Gal 3). Furthermore, he says this in Rom 7:1 only because a proper understanding of his metaphor for

¹⁷ Stendahl's interpretation of Gal 3:24 can be summarized in a more text-centered way: Paul viewed the law as "meant to have validity only up to the time of the Messiah (Gal. 3:15-22)" and that "its function was to serve as a Custodian for the Jews until that time" (in an antinomian sense), whereas Luther errantly interprets v. 24 (according to Stendahl) as teaching his famous "second use of the law," namely, as "a tutor *unto* Christ" through which "all men must come to Christ with consciences properly convicted by . . . its insatiable requirements for righteousness," since he supposedly misses Paul's supposed Jew-Gentile reconciliatory campaign in lieu of his own personal question, "How can I find a gracious God?" as the center of Paul's theology. See Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 86-87.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

a depraved humanity's relationship to the law requires a knowledge of the law. Therefore, when Paul says, "the law was our guardian," he most likely means "all of us Christians," since it is not probable that Paul is speaking of another group in the context of this passage.

Second, did the law function as a "custodian" or "waiting room," or was it a "guardian" in a prison of sin and death intended to convict those under the law of sin (as Luther's second use of the law proposes)?¹⁹ Paul answers this question in v. 22: "But Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." For Paul, the expressed purpose of everything being bound up under sin is that those who believe would receive the promise of Abraham (vv. 18, 29), which is the exact formula of Luther's second use of the law. Furthermore, in the subsequent verse, Paul speaks the same way about the law as he does about sin, saying "Scripture imprisoned everything under sin" in v. 22 and "we were held captive under the law, imprisoned" in v. 23, implying that the law and sin are virtually synonymous when they intersect at the human horizon,²⁰ which leads to the climactic content of v. 24: "We were held captive under the law, imprisoned. . . . So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith." Paul again states the expressed purpose of imprisonment under the law and sin as receiving justification after the imprisonment, affirming the validity of Luther's second use of the law and vindicating him, at least in the exegetical foundation for his second use of the law, from Stendahl's charge of psychologically derived hermeneutical incompetence.

In Stendahl's reading there is a disconnect; the law ceases to be relevant simply because the Messiah has come, whereas for Paul, the law ceases to exercise imprisoning power over believers because they are "in Christ . . . sons of God through faith . . . Christ's . . . heirs according to promise" (vv. 26-29). Therefore, Gal 3:24 allows us to claim that the law teaches all men of their sin through their inability to attain righteousness through it, because "if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law" (v. 21; cf. Phil 3:6).

¹⁹ Luther's second use of the law is exemplified well when he says, "All people would long since have been good: for I preach daily that you should be good and not steal, but the more you hear it the worse you become; you remain the same rascals you were before. Therefore it remains merely letter. When the hangman comes he can chop off a finger, but the heart remains a rogue" (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American Edition [ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann; 55 vols.; Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986], 51:227 [hereafter *LW*]). Cf. Martin Luther, "Concerning the Letter and the Spirit," in *Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig—Including Some Thoughts regarding His Companion, the Fool Murner* (1521) (*LW*39:175-203), cited in David J. Lose, "Martin Luther on Preaching the Law," *WW*21 (2001): 259, 253.

²⁰ Todd A. Wilson, *The Curse of the Law and the Crisis in Galatia* (WUNT 2/225; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 37-40.

3. *Romans 7:7-25*

Romans 7:7-25 is often read as Paul's most introspective moment. Stendahl argues, however, that the purpose of Rom 7 is to prove that the law is good, the flesh is evil, and the transgressor is blameless. He would admit that Paul acknowledges sin in his own life in Rom 7, but because "The 'I', the *ego*, is not . . . identified with sin and Flesh," Stendahl insists that "the argument [of Rom 7] is one of acquittal of the ego, not one of utter contrition."²¹ In support for this reading Stendahl cites Paul saying, "Now if I do what I do not want, *then it is not I who do it*, but the sin which dwells in me" (Stendahl's emphasis), while also claiming, "I serve the Law of God." In short, Stendahl claims that even though Paul may have been aware of sin in his life, he did not believe that he was truly responsible for it since it was Paul's flesh that sinned, not Paul's "ego." He posits that a Western introspective "interpretation [of Rom 7] reaches its climax when it appears that . . . the will of man is the center of depravation. And yet, in Rom. 7 Paul had said about the will: 'The will (to do the good) is there . . . ' (v. 18)."²²

Although the deep structure of Rom 7 is strewn with hermeneutical complexities, the nature of Stendahl's claim allows us to slip past many of the major questions about the "I" Paul uses throughout vv. 7-25. He claims that Paul is arguing for the vindication of *himself*, on the basis of a distinction between his "ego" and the "flesh," the "flesh" being the alleged transgressor, and the "ego" the innocent, "blameless" bystander.

But in my view, there is something obvious standing in the way of Stendahl's claim. In Rom 8:1, Jesus is presented as the solution to Paul's crisis of conscience. Since vindication is presented as christological, Rom 7 cannot be Paul's vindication of his own "ego," arguing on the basis of the distinction between "ego" and "flesh." No matter how much the "ego" wants to do good, Paul finally cries out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (v. 24). And yet Stendahl dismisses Paul's solemn cry as insignificant to the argument of the passage. On the contrary, at the grammatical level Paul makes an existential identification between "Wretched man" and "I," and this simple identification undoes not only Stendahl's interpretation of Rom 7, but his entire interpretative framework for Paul.²³

²¹ Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 92, 93.

²² *Ibid.*, 93.

²³ Here Stendahl's psychoanalytic anthropology shines through in his diagnosis of Paul as a self-conscious schizophrenic attempting to vindicate himself. On the contrary, Scripture nowhere separates "parts" of man in order to jettison his moral responsibility. Every man stands as a single, morally responsible agent in covenant with God (cf. Rom 1:18-32).

III. *Psychological History or Historical Theology: Analyzing Stendahl's Psychoanalytic Reading of Luther*

Stendahl calls on his readers to "be suspicious of any 'modernizing,' . . . for . . . psychological purposes," pointing a finger at Carl Jung in particular for modernizing Paul with his "Individuation Process."²⁴

Here, Stendahl is reading Jung's interpretation of Paul through David Cox's work, *Jung and St. Paul: A Study of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and Its Relation to the Concept of Individuation*.²⁵ In the initial thrust of his article, Stendahl cites Cox's reading of Jung as an example to support his idea that Western readers unwarrantedly project psychological frameworks onto Paul. Ironically, however, Cox says that Jung rejects the interpretation that Paul's doctrine of justification is merely forensic, much like Stendahl:

Again, when it is said that Justification results in nothing but a change . . . from law to grace . . . then Justification is not thought of as an actual human experience: or when, on the other hand, we are told that what the grace of God does is to save us from the sense of guilt . . . then it is no longer thought of as something which happens to a man but something which man does.²⁶

The looming contradiction of Stendahl's charge in an article about "the introspective conscience of the West" is that it leans *heavily* on psychological categories, imposing an arbitrary and ambiguous psychological framework not only onto Paul, but also Augustine, Luther, and "the West" as having something vaguely to do with ill-defined psychological concepts such as "introspection," "guilt," and "conscience." This is seen clearly in the similarity between Jung and Stendahl's interpretation of Paul's doctrine of justification.

Throughout his article Stendahl endorses the works of Jung, Erik H. Erikson, and Sigmund Freud, which is telling for his psychological presuppositions since they are all in the psychoanalytic tradition. What is incongruous is the fact that Stendahl accepts an Eriksonian (and therefore psychoanalytic) reading of *Luther* as historically valid to support his thesis that the West should *not* follow Jung's psychoanalytic reading of *Paul* (who, as noted above, actually falls in line with Stendahl in his rejection of a forensic reading of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith).²⁷

²⁴ Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 78.

²⁵ David Cox, *Jung and St. Paul: A Study of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and Its Relation to the Concept of Individuation* (New York: Association Press, 1959).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁷ Stendahl ("Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 79 n. 1) comments, "For an unusually perceptive and careful attempt to deal with the historical material from a psychoanalytical point of view, see Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (1958). Not only the abundance but also the 'Western' nature of the Luther material makes such an attempt more reasonable than when it is applied to Paul, who, as Erikson remarks, remains 'in the twilight of biblical psychology' (p. 94)." This historiographical comment presumes to have an objective method of history that is *not* psychoanalytic.

Stendahl's primary thesis concerning Luther is that he used Paul's language of "justification by faith" to soothe his guilt in the context of medieval penance:

For those who took [the practice of penetrating self-examination] seriously . . . the pressure was great. It is as one of those—and for them—that Luther carries out his mission as a great pioneer. It is in response to their question, "How can I find a gracious God?" that Paul's words about a justification in Christ by faith, and without the works of the Law, appears as the liberating and saving answer.²⁸

Summarizing his conception of Luther's irrepressible introspective conscience, Stendahl describes Luther's exegetical process:

So drastic is the reinterpretation once the original framework of "Jews and Gentiles" is lost, and the Western problems of conscience become its unchallenged and self-evident substitute. Thus, the radical difference between a Paul and a Luther at this one point has considerable ramification for the reading of the actual texts.²⁹

Luther's exegetical practices oppose such a reading. First, he was firmly committed to finding Paul's intention in the text and opposing any tendencies for the interpreter to prioritize his own interests over the interests of Scripture, as demonstrated when Luther writes,

This is what happens to lazy readers and to those who superimpose their own ideas on the reading of Sacred Scripture. What they should do is to come to it empty, to derive their ideas from Sacred Scripture, then to pay careful attention to the words, to compare what precedes with what follows, and to make the effort of grasping the authentic meaning of a particular passage rather than attaching their own notions to words or phrases that they have torn out of context.³⁰

Of course, Luther, like any interpreter, could commit eisegesis in spite of his better intentions. However, the above quote puts the burden of proof on the one who would accuse Luther of introspective eisegesis. Stendahl must first demonstrate that Luther prioritized his own psychological bias over the meaning of a *particular passage in a particular commentary*, rather than psychologize Luther's interpretative approach as a whole by claiming that the entire product

However, what reveals Stendahl's psychoanalytic presuppositions is his grouping of Luther and "the West" into a homogenous psychological category, as well as his division of Luther and Paul into two distinct psychological categories. What makes these categorizations so obviously psychoanalytic is that Stendahl adopts these psychological historical analyses *from a psychoanalyst*, namely, Erik H. Erikson.

²⁸ Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 83.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 79. In light of his affinity for the psychoanalytic tradition, one might wonder if Stendahl has in mind Freud's words: "Everything new must have its roots in what was before. Few tasks are as appealing as inquiry into the laws that govern the psyche of exceptionally endowed individuals" (David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* [Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1958], vi).

³⁰ LW27:29; see Robert G. Artinian, "Luther after the Stendahl/Sanders Revolution: A Responsive Evaluation of Luther's View of First-Century Judaism in His 1535 Commentary on Galatians," *TJ*, n.s., 27 (2006): 91, citing Arland J. Hultgran, "Luther on Galatians," *WW20* (2000): 234.

is due to a guilty conscience. Otherwise, Stendahl is left with an *ad hominem* argument: what Luther says about Scripture must be discounted because of Luther's personal psychological flaws. This is an unacceptable historical methodology, and an unacceptable argument.

Furthermore, the above quote is taken from Luther's 1535 commentary on Galatians, a pastoral work, which explains much of his application of Galatians to issues surrounding him (i.e., applying Paul's polemic against Judaizers to his war with Rome). It was his pastoral duty to make such applications, even if in some sense they "go beyond" the text and talk about indulgences rather than circumcision. Therefore, this sort of practical application of Galatians cannot be used as evidence *per se* for reading Luther as performing eisegesis on the text itself.

Second, if Luther had cast grammatical-historical exegesis to the wind for the sake of psychological solitude with Paul, Rom 7:7-25 would have been the perfect place to do it. And so, if Luther fits the mold Stendahl places him in, Luther should want to interpret Rom 7 as Paul speaking from the perspective of an unbeliever struggling with the law, since Luther himself was known for experiencing a shift from a troubled conscience to a "robust conscience."³¹ In short, when Luther read the words "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate," he should have "free associated" (to take Stendahl's psychoanalytic cue) Paul's experience with Jewish legalism with his pre-conversion guilt under Roman Catholicism in order to identify a conversion from guilt to freedom in Paul. But he does not. Rather, he follows Augustine and reads Paul as speaking as a Christian in Rom 7:7-25.³² In light of these evidences Stendahl's proposal that Luther is a psychologically damaged and guilt-dominated eisegete is historically inaccurate.

A third inconsistency in Stendahl's reading of Luther is that he initially accepts Erikson's reading of Luther as support for equating Luther's psychological bias with the psychological concerns of "the West." However, Erikson, in the very same paragraph Stendahl cites, makes the case not only for a complete psychologizing of Luther's conversion, but of *Paul's* conversion also, arguing that "Paul's reported symptoms definitely suggested the syndrome of epilepsy. They [Paul and Luther] both claimed that by a kind of shock therapy, God had 'changed their minds,'" which is an example of the exact method of reading Paul (a psychologically dominate one) that Stendahl spends the rest of his

³¹ "If grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. *Be a sinner and sin boldly*" (Martin Luther, *Letters I* [LW48:281]; emphasis mine).

³² Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans* (ed. Wilhelm Pauck; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 200: "Beginning with this passage until the end of the chapter, the apostle speaks in his own name and as a spiritual person and not at all as a carnal person." I first came across the discrepancy between Luther's interpretation of Rom 7 and the NPP's reading of Luther in Carl Trueman's article, "A Man More Sinned Against than Sinning? The Portrait of Martin Luther in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship: Some Casual Observations of a Mere Historian," which he read to the Tyndale Fellowship, Cambridge, in 2000.

article fighting against.³³ In this section, we have seen that Stendahl's historical methodology is deeply rooted in the psychoanalytic tradition, even though his thesis is that interpreters of Scripture must cast aside psychological agendas in their interpretation of the Apostle Paul.

IV. Psychological Theology or Theological Psychology: A Formulation of the Bible's Own Psychological Concerns

How the Christian understands himself in light of Paul, and Luther's understanding of Paul, determines his answer to the question, "Must I have a guilty, introspective conscience?" The answer to this question comes down to a proper understanding of sin and, therefore, of justification and sanctification. Stendahl collapses the two, arguing that one's life-lived (sanctification) is categorically identical with God's declaration (justification), whereas Scripture seems to have a rather rigid distinction between the two. God's ongoing work in the life-history of Christians (progressive sanctification), and God's definitive work through the life-history of Jesus on their behalf (i.e., justification, definitive sanctification, etc.) carry categorically different imports for believers.

1. A Biblical Psychology of Sinfulness

In the treatment of Gal 3:24 above it has been demonstrated that one purpose of the law is to teach people that they are sinful with no hope of justification outside of Christ. The most important implication of the fact that the law teaches us that we are sinful is that we do not teach ourselves that we are sinful. Knowledge of sin does not begin with introspection. It begins with God's objective moral standard revealed to us by the law which only curses and brings death (Gal 3:10, 21).³⁴ This is not only because the basic definition of sin is "[to worship] . . . the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom 1:25), or "to do bad things," but also because it is God who ordains the law's role as a "tutor" of sin, for Paul says, "Scripture [God's Word] imprisoned everything under sin" (Gal 3:22). That is, it is because God himself is the standard for holiness that those who bear his image, yet disobey, must die. Therefore, the reader of Paul is not only allowed, but required to acknowledge that he is guilty and sinful, not because Paul says "all who look inside themselves will find sin and guilt," but because Paul says, "one trespass led to condemnation for all men" (Rom 5:18).

³³ Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1958), 94. In quoting "changed their minds," Erikson is citing Ernst Kris, "On Inspiration," in *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952), 291-302.

³⁴ While Paul is simply referring to the Mosaic law in Gal 3:10 and 21, God's standard of moral perfection, more broadly conceived, confronts every person through every fact (Rom 1:18; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:3), and therefore confronts those who bear his image with a nonverbal, "Be holy, for I am holy," namely, his eternal power and divine nature revealed and immanently present before the conscience of every man (Rom 1:19).

Knowledge of sin is not essentially introspective, but *receptive*, the point of which is not that we opt for a theological category (the law) in lieu of a psychological one (introspection). The point is that what we receive is theological, and it is a psychology.³⁵ Put simply, the law teaches us that we are sinners and it enlightens our introspection to teach us how we are sinners with reference to it (Rom 7:7). Yet we must understand the meaning of sin with reference to God. An exclusively introspective understanding of one's own sin does not immediately point to Christ. It interprets sin as "selling myself short"; it points to a desire to be "a better person," "comfortable with myself," "basically good" (or at least perceived to be good), and "a 'me' I can be proud of." A conscience like that can be convicted of sin, but will interpret that conviction according to selfish concerns and not according to its offensiveness to God. That is not a biblical understanding of sin at all.³⁶

Paul's conception of sin regards its offensiveness to God and the dominating power it has in every life outside of Christ, not the emotional volume it invokes within each person. Of course, sin and guilt are introspective as well as receptive, but unless knowledge of sin is received from God through his word enlightened by his Spirit, and not merely from rummaging around in our own emotions, the meaning of the "sin" language of Scripture will be missed every time. If introspection is the only tool we have for understanding sin, we will sell short (a) our depravity (and leave many confused by their inability to "live a good life" according to God's standard), (b) our sanctification (by understanding the genuine progress we make as a product of our own effort), and (c) God as a gracious savior for us through Christ in our justification.

2. *A Biblical Psychology of Justification*

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith solves the crisis of sin's offensiveness to God for those who are in Christ, for Paul says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). Therefore, the Christian, after "[receiving] the promised Spirit through faith" (Gal 3:14),

³⁵ David Powlison, "A Biblical Counseling View," in *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views* (ed. Eric Johnson; 2d ed.; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 245. Powlison says, "Christian faith is a psychology." Ridderbos eloquently puts it this way: "The theological (sin) does not arise *sub specie hominis*, but the anthropological (death) *sub specie Dei*" (Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* [trans. John Richard De Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 104).

³⁶ Secular psychologists even describe self-esteem as an aspect of human personality that functions in much the same way that the doctrine of justification by faith does for believers. In other words, without an awareness of sin revealed through revelation, secular psychologists still account for the phenomenon of the offensiveness of sin, except, instead of sin being counted as offensive toward God, it is counted as offensive toward the self: "Feelings of self-worth rise and fall in response to particular outcomes, but global self-esteem (or self-love) is enduring. . . . In our judgment, this is the primary function of self-esteem: It allows people to fail without feeling bad about themselves" (Jonathon D. Brown, Keith A. Dutton, and Kathleen E. Cook, "From the Top Down: Self-esteem and Self-evaluation," *Cognition and Emotion* 15, no. 5 [2001]: 617, 629).

never actually experiences a guilty declaration from God in his life ever again, though he may have guilty feelings, as every Christian does. Consequently, the proper response to the question, “Did Paul think he stood guilty before God?” is a resounding, “No!”

This is one of the few things we can commend Stendahl for getting right: Paul did not struggle with a guilty introspective conscience in his Christian life. His acknowledgement of his struggle with sin in Rom 7, whether speaking of a Christian or pre-Christian experience, is consistently made with reference to the standard of the law, not his own feelings. He does not finish his discourse on sin and the law by declaring his guilt, but vindication because of Christ.³⁷

Does Paul lament his sinfulness? Of course! (Rom 7:24). Does he struggle with a guilty introspective conscience? Not at all. This means that the answer to the question, “Must I have a guilty introspective conscience?” is, if you are in Christ, “No. God judged and justified you on the basis of Christ’s active and passive obedience; and because of your union with him, his righteousness is your righteousness. The anxious, dark beckoning of guilt, calling you to loathe yourself, has lost its right to demand your attention—you are free.” If you are not in Christ, the answer is, “Yes, because God will judge you on the basis of your own works unless you are united to Christ who received the wrath of God for those who are united to him. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.” The question of whether there is “guilt” in the Christian life must first be asked with reference to the self-consciousness of the sovereign God: “Does he consider guilty those who are in Christ?” The answer will always be an unswerving, “No.”

3. *A Biblical Psychology of Union with Christ*

Taking a biblical psychology of sinfulness and justification into account, every Christian is in a process of growth and sanctification, and continually carries on the battle with sin. It is obvious for those who wage war against sin that such a glorious truth about justification described above can quickly become a twisted, pat response to serious feelings of guilt and shame that accompany indwelling sin in the Christian life. The apparent disconnect between Paul’s understanding of justification and his understanding of the Christian life is that, although Christians are no longer guilty, they continue to perform acts, think thoughts, and nurse addictions that are worthy of condemnation. They are unable to live a life in perfect accordance with God’s call to live consistently with their new birth (Rom 6:1-3). Their growth in Christ-likeness is organic, not instant. Therefore, sin, while inappropriate for the Christian, must be expected.³⁸ And

³⁷ “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 7:24, 25a; 8:1).

³⁸ Richard Gaffin comments, “The Reformation tradition has clearly grasped, as Paul teaches, the eschatological ‘not yet’ of our sanctification, penultimately at the death and climactically at Christ’s return, and that our being perfectly conformed to the image of Christ is, until his return

grace, while powerful, should not be measured by behavioral expectations that violate the nature of the process of growth. This provides an opportunity to give a biblical picture of progressive sanctification, or a Christian's ongoing growth in holiness, which is at the heart of the Christian life.

Union with Christ is the subject of this picture, and how it relates to progressive sanctification is important for understanding the nature of this progress. The relationship of union with Christ to justification and sanctification is explained by John Calvin: "By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace, namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father, and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's Spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity and life."³⁹ The Westminster Larger Catechism says, "The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ, is their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him."⁴⁰

The point that Calvin and the Westminster Divines are making is that justification and sanctification are two entirely distinct (though not separable) benefits which flow from union with Christ. In other words, God's declaration that the one united to Christ is righteous, and God's progressively making the one united to Christ more holy, are two different categories of salvation which are manifestations of union with Christ. The distinction between justification and sanctification allows Christians to interpret their sin, not exclusively through the legal lens of justification, but also through the sanctifying lens of the sovereignty of God. That is, if justification is exhaustively constitutive of, or comprehensively founds, a Christian's concept of salvation, all that can be said in response to sin is, "You are forgiven. Believe that."

"Believe that" is certainly an appropriate response in some counseling scenarios, but if the counselor's goal is to arrive at a place where he may say, "You are forgiven" every time a frustrated Christian struggling with sin comes to him, it will result in regularly using a valuable resource inappropriately, and even harmfully. It would make every person and problem fit the purposes of one theological tool. The exhaustive "Believe that" mantra rings of cognitive-behavioral therapy at the most fundamental, programmatic level of a theology of progressive sanctification.

Keith S. Dobson and David J. A. Dozois propose that all cognitive-behavioral therapies build on three propositions: (1) cognitive activity affects behavior, (2) cognitive activity may be monitored and altered, and (3) desired behavior

and the resurrection of the body, still future. It has maintained that truth more or less consistently, even though at times some have been drawn away, for example, toward various cheap perfectionisms and easy 'victorious life' positions" (Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *By Faith, Not by Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006], 75).

³⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; 2 vols.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 1:725 (3.11.1).

⁴⁰ WLC Q&A 69. The Divines cite Rom 8:30; Eph 1:5; and 1 Cor 1:30 to support their point.

may be effected through cognitive change.⁴¹ There is nothing unbiblical about a counseling method that takes into account the noetic aspect of progressive sanctification, because being sanctified surely involves being “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom 12:2). However, the dynamic of biblical change that Scripture lays forth is more comprehensive than a change in thinking. It involves a change of the heart through the victory of the inner man by virtue of the Spirit of Christ (Rom 7:22; 2 Cor 3:3; 5:15-17; Gal 5:17). We are united to a person, not a thesis. Any doctrine of progressive sanctification that so closely mirrors the kind of reductionist theory of human change that Dobson and Dozois propose by overemphasizing noetic works should be regarded as highly suspect until thoroughly qualified by Scripture.⁴²

“Taste and see that the Lord is good” is an admirable counseling goal, but it is questionable as a counseling method. A Christian’s progressive sanctification is not simply getting used to (or realizing) their justification. In fact, it is not even essentially that. Progressive sanctification, Peter writes, is to “count the patience of the Lord as salvation” and “growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:15, 18). Both imputed righteousness and growth in holiness are distinct and separate blessings that we simultaneously receive through our union with the person of Jesus Christ by the Spirit. Our union with Christ is an organic union with a personal singularity, not a mechanical transfer of a list of benefits.

4. *A Biblical Psychology of Progressive Sanctification*

Progressive sanctification is the concrete psychological capstone on the definitive benefits a believer receives through union with Christ. And in order to have a God-centered view of progressive sanctification, one must also have a God-centered view of the indwelling sin in the believer. The Westminster Confession of Faith says,

The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon

⁴¹ Keith S. Dobson and David J. A. Dozois, “Historical and Philosophical Bases of the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies,” in *Handbook of Cognitive Behavioral Therapies* (ed. Keith S. Dobson; New York: Guilford Press, 2010), 4.

⁴² Union with Christ expands the psychological aspect of sanctification beyond this kind of mechanical, syllogistic change. For the Christian, change in both thinking and behavior is a result of the indwelling Spirit’s work (Rom 8:5; 1 Cor 2:14; Col 1:21-22). Furthermore, neither necessarily implies the other: understanding does not necessarily imply obedience (cf. 1 Sam 8:3; 1 Kgs 13:33; 1 Cor 10:1-5); neither does obedience necessarily imply understanding (cf. Jonah 3:6-10). A proper Pauline soteriology refuses to prioritize either the cognitive or the behavioral.

Himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.⁴³

Union with Christ offers a category for understanding sin in the lives of Christians that is not essentially forensic, and which may provide a more encouraging, and in fact more germane, articulation of the world the counselee lives in than "You are forgiven. Believe that." To rephrase WCF 5.5, God could triple the sanctification "rate" (if we may speak this way) of any given Christian in an instant, but his sovereignty prevails all the more to his glory in the midst of sin. That is, God is sovereign over every sin in a Christian's life in such wisdom that he is able, by the medium of sin, to most effectively progressively sanctify the one who is united to Christ in a way that pleases him, and which is for the purpose of growing the Christian's deepest love for God.

This is why Paul says in Rom 8:28, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." What are the "all things"? He says it in v. 26: "our weaknesses." Our weaknesses work for our good. Our failures work for our good. Our most frustrating inabilities ("we do not know what to pray") work together for our good. And this is all bound together in Christ through union with him ("No, in all these things we are more than conquerors *through him* who loved us. . . . [Nothing] in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God *in Christ* Jesus our Lord" [Rom 8:37, 39]).

The error of the NPP is that it makes man's own moral intuition (introspection), and not God's revelation (extraspection), the reference point for man's awareness of his own sinfulness. The issue at hand is the reference point for a Christian's consideration of sin in his or her life. Union with Christ gives freedom from condemnation through imputation, yet also freedom from moralism through sanctification, such that when sin seems to prevail in the Christian's life, it is actually God who prevails in the details of a Christian's sin in the most concrete sense. This is not to say that God is the author of sin, but rather that the concept of union with Christ has the potential to extricate the counselee (and the counselor) from an exhaustively indicative conception of the soteriological program to a radically non-indicative aspect of God's comfort in his sovereignty over sin and suffering without making Stendahl's misstep of underestimating the weight of sin.

Union with Christ gives freedom from slavery to sin through regeneration. Union with Christ initiates an irreversible process of progressive sanctification through an irrevocable act of definitive sanctification,⁴⁴ such that no matter

⁴³ WCF 5.5.

⁴⁴ John Murray gives a helpful definition of definitive sanctification: "In the New Testament the most characteristic terms that refer to sanctification are used, not of a process, but of a once-for-all definitive act. We properly think of calling, regeneration, justification, and adoption as acts of God effected once for all, not requiring admitting of repetition. It is of their nature to be definitive. But a considerable part of New Testament teaching places sanctification in this category." Murray later describes progressive sanctification as the process by which the Christian "law of . . . psychology"

what sin is present in a Christian's life, he may say, "God has me struggling with this sin at this time for his own purposes." "He is at work." It is an immanent reality that reaches the details of sin, not more or less than justification, but in a categorically different way. The lens of God's sovereign progressive sanctification brings a Christian counselor's perspective out of a "Believe that" mindset into a mindset that says, "It is likely that you may never understand the 'deeper' meaning of this sin/suffering, and that is to be expected" (Rom 8:26, "we do not know what to pray for as we ought").⁴⁵ Of course, Christians are called to fight sin continually with all their might in their pursuit of holiness (Eph 6:10-11; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7). But again, a God-centered battle against sin requires a God-centered view of sin. John Murray says well,

The law of growth applies, therefore, in the realm of Christian life. God is pleased to work through process, and to fail to take account of this principle in the sanctification of the people of God is to frustrate both the wisdom and the grace of God. The child who acts as a man is a monstrosity; the man who acts as a child is a tragedy.⁴⁶

V. Conclusion: The Buoyancy of a Biblical Psychology in the Season of Stendahl's Storm

The particular issue of the NPP may catch many biblical counselors (again, including pastors, practitioners, and individual Christians) off guard since, in this instance, secular psychology turns the question of "Christianity and Psychology" on its head by stepping out of the dock and attempting to psychologize Scripture itself. When we engage secular psychologies, we must be competent to do more than simply shoot from the hermeneutical hip with a psalm or two. Before we can even ask the question, "How can I reinterpret this secular psychological paradigm," we must answer the questions, "What part of God's truth is at stake," and "How can I defend that part?"⁴⁷

is realized: "The goal of the whole redemptive process, as it has respect to the people of God, is conformity to the image of Christ as the firstborn among many brethren. . . . It is a law of our psychology that we become like that in which our interests and ambitions are absorbed. . . . But the apostle [in 2 Cor 3:18] reminds us that natural factors are not the secret of this transformation; it is from the Spirit of the Lord that this transformation proceeds" (*The Collected Works of John Murray* [4 vols.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 2:277, 297).

⁴⁵ For a more theologically and exegetically rigorous defense of these points regarding the relationship of union with Christ, justification, definitive sanctification, and progressive sanctification, see Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (2d ed.; Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1978), 31-59, 114-43; and K. Scott Oliphint, ed., *Justified in Christ* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2007), 1-21, 23-49, 153-73.

⁴⁶ Murray, *Collected Works*, 2:298.

⁴⁷ Van Til puts the issue in a helpful way: "Is there, then, no place for apologetics? It would seem so. Yet perhaps there may be the work of a messenger boy. Perhaps the messenger boy can bring the maps and plans of one general to another general. Perhaps the man who is engaged in biblical [counseling] is in need of the maps of the whole front as they have been worked out by the

Stendahl makes sin an exclusively secular psychological category, instead of a theological and psychological one, by insisting that guiltiness of sin must be a product of introspection (and for that reason only subjective),⁴⁸ and on that basis calls for a de-psychologization of Paul. He thereby launders the entire doctrine of sin out from the biblical counselor's methodological treasury by making Paul's biblical psychology of sinfulness a psychoanalytic phenomenon, and calling for the removal of all psychological readings of Paul. It is this matrix of psychological presuppositions and concerns that undergirds the enterprise of the NPP.

The only appropriate response that can catch this kind of theological thievery red-handed is a thoroughly exegetical and theological one that can not only quote from Scripture, but also demonstrate from Scripture that it resists the imposition of arbitrary psychological categories in its interpretation. More than that, if we are to speak into a secular-psychologized atmosphere, we must demonstrate that Scripture's psychology is anything but arbitrary by showing the redeeming reality of its relevance, not for sinners' "felt needs"—"forgiving myself for the bad I've done"—but their *real* needs: union with Christ by his Spirit. If sinfulness is not addressed, many who have been taught by the law that they are guilty, sinful, and in need of union with the Person of Christ, will be cast away in the storm of the NPP that preaches a psychoanalytic doctrine of sin, and thus a truncated soteriology.

Stendahl was later featured in a counseling text. Commenting on God's future judgment, he wrote, "I always think that is marvelous . . . that we are going to be judged by God who knows every secret thing, who sees us with complete clarity, who knows everything completely. It is such a profound idea. We can know that God will not judge us based on superficialities, but based on a thorough understanding of everything about us."⁴⁹ And he says this on the basis of Eccl 12:14 with *no* reference to Christ. Commenting on Ps 139:1, he adds, "God knows us through and through. This implies a judgment that is fair,

man engaged in systematic theology. *Perhaps there will be a more unified and better organized defense of Christian theism as a whole if the apologist performs this humble service of a messenger boy*" (Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003], 22; emphasis mine).

⁴⁸ Stendahl would have been considered *passé* by the APA's annual meeting attendees to whom he presented this article by using the word "introspective," since the term had, for several decades by 1961, acquired negative, unscientific connotations and been replaced by "self-conception." Cf. Edwin G. Boring, "A History of Introspection," *Psychological Bulletin* 50 (1953): 174: "Classical introspection, it seems to me, went out of style after Titchener's death (1927) because it had demonstrated no functional use and therefore seemed dull, and also because it was unreliable." That is, the notion of using introspection in psychotherapy as a primary tool to understand a patient's psyche was for the most part dismissed, and using introspection is exactly what Stendahl attempts to do with both Luther and "the West."

⁴⁹ Krister Stendahl, "Comment by Krister Stendahl," in *Affirming the Soul: Remarkable Conversations Between Mental Health Professionals and an Ordained Minister* (ed. Jeffery H. Boyd; Cheshire, Conn.: Soul Research Institute, 1994), 163.

not one that is superficial. Isn't it marvelous, the clarity . . ."⁵⁰ And to that we might respond, "We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. . . . All that he possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with him."⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵¹ Calvin, *Inst.* 1:537 (3.1.1).