

Does the Body Keep the Score? Biblical Counseling and the Body

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The body keeps the score: If the memory of trauma is encoded in the viscera, in heartbreaking and gut-wrenching emotions, in autoimmune disorders and skeletal/muscular problems, and if mind/brain/visceral communication is the royal road to emotion regulation, this demands a radical shift in our therapeutic assumptions.

—B. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*

Traumatic experiences seem to shape a person in unpredictable ways. Trauma seems to change worldviews, deteriorate trust, affect relationships, and incite the various ways a person might deal with hardship: violence, escapism, and substance abuse to name a few. Of note, trauma has been debated regarding its nature since at least Herman Oppenheim, Karl Bonhoeffer, and Sigmund Freud in the early 20th Century. The idea of trauma had more to do with physical injury, which is why traumatic responses, to include PTS/D, was originally termed *Kriegsneurose* (i.e., “shell-shock”).¹ Studying trauma started more akin to studying those who had experienced a concussion, with physical-only triggers.² Now, treatment for trauma instigated problems has evolved from physical only triggers to physical-only responses.

¹ Hermann Oppenheim, *Textbook of Nervous Diseases for Physicians and Students* (London: Otto and Schulz Company, 1911), 814, FN1.

² Cf. Greg Gifford, “Helping Marriages Though PTSD,” ACBC Essays, Vol. II, 2019. In that paper the author demonstrates the origination of the conversation of PTSD moving from purely physical triggers to form as traumatic to Hermann Oppenheim, Schuster, Karl Bonhoeffer, Hugo Liepmann and Karl Birnbaum. Bernd Holdorff, “The Fight For ‘Traumatic Neurosis’, 1889-1916: Hermann Oppenheim and His Opponents in Berlin,” ed. Tom Denning, *History of Psychiatry* 22, no. 4 (2011): 471. Table 2. Diverse concepts of traumatic neurosis (war neurosis) in the Berlin debate of February 1916:

“Oppenheim: Paralyzes through *loss of memory pictures* for movements (akinesia, amnestica, and reflex paralysis), similar to diaschisis due to *molecular alterations*. Schuster: psychogenesis and endogenous factors were most important. Somatogenesis was subordinated, but for both an *identical material basis* as long as this substantial damage remains unknown. Bonhoeffer: the biological effect of emotion of fright on motility and vasomotor functions becomes fixed in individuals with suitable psychological disposal, under the influence of affects and

Trauma has morphed quite dramatically to include as Bessel Van Der Kolk says in *The Body Keeps the Score* (BKS), anything that, “is unbearable and intolerable.”³ The BKS position holds that trauma can be physical and non-physical: sexual molestation, combat, physical violence, abuse, witnessing family abuse, or exposure to PTSD symptoms, to name a few.⁴ Thus, trauma as a phenomena is nearly impossible to objectively identify. In other words, the answer to “What is not traumatic?” remains elusive. The trauma conversation has come full-circle, starting with physical trauma by Oppenheim, to Freud’s immaterializing trauma, to non-physical triggers with body-first effects as demonstrated by Van der Kolk.⁵

The anthropology of the BKS position holds that the body is indeed the keeper of the effects of trauma.⁶ This means, practically, that the body—to include the brain, nervous system, and autoimmune responses—are directly affected and fundamentally changed by trauma. To effectively help those who have been traumatized, according to Van der Kolk, one must “engage the entire organism, body, mind, and brain.”⁷

The BKS position has led the author to ask the question, “According to the Bible, can the body actually keep the score?” If the body keeps the score, what score does the body actually

imagination with the consequent development of well-recognized hysterical features. Liepmann: *initial material changes after the first wave of affect*, following their own physiological-biological laws, followed by secondary psychological effects. *The second impact* is indirect (ideogenic), mediated by *psychological processes*. Birnbaum: (1) emotion- and fright neuroses with their continuous pathological fixation of the affect expressions; (2) hysteric states with their characteristic dissociative and suggestive appearances; and (3) traumatic neurosis of Oppenheim, due to extensive nerve irritations, causing molecular changes. Lewandowsky: no brain-physiological concept of traumatic neurosis; his approach was exclusively psychogenetic” (471-72).

³ Van der Kolk, Bessel A. 2014. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking, 1.

⁴ Van der Kolk, Bessel A. 2014. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking, 1.

⁵ Hermann Oppenheim, *Textbook of Nervous Diseases for Physicians and Students* (London: Otto and Schulz Company, 1911), 1193. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVII (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 214.

⁶ “The body keeps the score: If the memory of trauma is encoded in the viscera, in heartbreaking and gut-wrenching emotions, in autoimmune disorders and skeletal/muscular problems, and if mind/brain/visceral communication is the royal road to emotion regulation, this demands a radical shift in our therapeutic assumptions” in Van der Kolk’s *The Body Keeps the Score*, 86.

⁷ Van der Kolk, 52.

keep? It is the author's conclusion, and thesis of this paper, *that the body only causes physical responses and can only influence immaterial responses—of note, the body never causes immaterial responses.*

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that, according to Scripture, the physical body does not cause immaterial responses (IR's), but may encourage or solicit immaterial responses. The soul, vice-versa, may cause material and immaterial responses and/or encourage material and immaterial responses. This will be demonstrated in analyzing key passages of Scripture that demonstrate the body-soul dynamic regarding causation. Once biblical anthropology has been revisited in this paper, the BKS position will be evaluated in light of those conclusions. The scope of research will be within the Bible and consultation of the BKS position, as defined by Bessel Van der Kolk.

Key Definitions

According to the Scripture, the primary understanding of the body is depicted with either the term בָּשָׂר (i.e., “basar”), גְּוִיָּה (i.e., “gewiyat”) or גֶּשֶׁם (i.e., “geshem”) in the Old Testament.⁸ The difference is that *basar* references “skin” both of people and animals (Ps 102:5; Gen. 2:21).⁹ Whereas, *gewiyat* and *geshem* refer the outer person of the body as seen in Genesis 47:18, Judges 14:8, 1 Samuel 31:10, Ezekiel 1:11, and Daniel 3:27-28, 4:33, 5:21. The OT offers the semantic difference of both the skin from the “living human *body*.”¹⁰

⁸ Another option to review would be that of גֶּשֶׁם, which literally is translated as “body” in Leviticus 18:12-13, 20:19, 21:2; Psalm 73:26; Micah 3:2, and Proverbs 5:11.

⁹ William Lee Holladay and Ludwig Köhler, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 51.

¹⁰ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 156. Of note, dead “gewiyat” of Saul and his sons are removed from the walls of the city of Beth-Shan (1 Sam. 31:10, 12). Or Nahum warns Ninevah of the dead “gewiyat” of the judgment of God against this city (Nahum 3:3). A body can ontologically be a living or dead body.

In the New Testament, the ideas are like the OT with “σῶμά” (i.e., “soma”) referring to the outer person, often translated as “body.” *Soma* is translated as “body” approximately 138 of its 142 uses in the NT. The term σὰρξ is used 147 times in the NT but is often referring to the flesh that covers the physical body rather than the totality of the body itself.¹¹ Thus, the term body is a reference to the physical human body—whether living or dead—and this paper will use *body* in this biblical form. Furthermore, when referring to the flesh (i.e., sarx/basar), the term flesh will be employed to differentiate between body and flesh.

Next, the key phrase of “material response” (MR) necessitates clarification. For this phrase, the author will use MR to describe a response that “has a material existence.”¹² Material existence must be present to demonstrate observability in both causation and symptom, otherwise it would be impossible to determine the body’s role. For instance, an allergic reaction to a food would be evidenced in symptoms (material existence) that were caused by a food (material existence). For a person to respond to a physical/material stimuli like that of food with an immaterial response, like anger, is an inherently different claim. According the Bible, the physical can cause a MR, as will be demonstrated.¹³

The term “influence” will be used by the author in its modern understanding to represent, “to affect or alter by indirect or intangible means.”¹⁴ The body, as will be demonstrated is

¹¹ Cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1, 5; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 2:5; Hebrews 9:10; 1 Peter 3:21. Thus, the term σὰρξ is often translated as “flesh” rather than “body.” Of this term, perhaps the clearest differentiation is Colossians 2:11, which says, “ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδόσει τοῦ σώματος τῆς σαρκός,” or “by the removal of the body of the flesh.”

¹² Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/physical>. Accessed 16 May. 2023, s.v., “physical.”

¹³ See the note under the key term “cause” for clarity on how the author is employing the term “causative.” Furthermore, it must be noted to claim the body can cause immaterial responses inherently lacks verifiability and is speculative, at best. As a non-basic belief, the claim of the body causing immaterial responses is both unverifiable and also not supported in the Scripture. Consequently, this position will be unverifiable and not supported in Scripture making it untenable as an anthropological category.

¹⁴ Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/influence>, Accessed 16 May. 2023, s.v. “influence.”

influential in certain ways, both in material and immaterial ways. This is to say, it affects by indirect or intangible means. However, this prevents causative language or an understanding of the body as being the source of the material or immaterial response. The Bible will clearly demonstrate that the body does not cause immaterial responses, but only influences them.

What is an “immaterial response” (IR)? According to the modern understanding and vernacular, the author is using the phrase, IR, to represent “not consisting of matter.”¹⁵ A synonym could be *incorporeal* or *nonphysical*. Please note, the author is not claiming that the material and immaterial are wholly distinct and disconnected. Rather, the author is claiming that MR and the IR are different.¹⁶

Causation is “when the first event (the cause) brings about the other (the effect).”¹⁷ The Bible does not ascribe causal stimuli to the body for IR’s. Causation necessitates or predicts with high probability a response will follow a stimulus. “Causation,” as used by the author, reflects the assumption that the first event brings about with high probability the other event. In this way, a “cause-and-effect” relationship can be used synonymously with *causation, which is what is meant when referencing the body “keeps the score” by Van der Kolk and the author of this paper.*

The Body Causes Material Responses

¹⁵ Ibid., s.v. “immaterial.”

¹⁶ This distinction is not to be confused with separability. The Bible supports the position of a psychosomatic unity from the outer and inner man. See 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Psalm 32:3-4; Psalm 73:26. Also see Anthony Hoekema’s term, “psychosomatic unity,” in *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 217. Christopher Hitchcock, “Probabilistic Causation,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2021. (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021), accessed May 17, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/causation-probabilistic/>. Katherin A. Rogers, “Hume on Necessary Causal Connections,” *Philosophy* 66, no. 258 (October 1991): 517–521.

¹⁷ “Causation | Philosophy | Britannica,” Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023. May 6, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/causation>. It is not within the scope of this paper to determine the different

In the book, *The Body Keeps the Score*, a position is put forward regarding the causative nature of the body. Van der Kolk says, ““The body keeps the score: If the memory of trauma is encoded in the viscera, in heartbreaking and gut-wrenching emotions, in autoimmune disorders and skeletal/muscular problems, and if mind/brain/visceral communication is the royal road to emotion regulation, this demands a radical shift in our therapeutic assumptions.”¹⁸

Pointedly, the reader must ask, “What does the body cause according to the Scripture?” Causation and “keeping the score” are the interchangeable terms that Van der Kolk has offered. So, what score does the body keep? The Scripture includes the following categories for the jurisdictional responsibilities of the body: (1) physical life, (2) physical health, (3) physical cravings, and (4) sensory functions. The body does keep the physical score in MR’s, as will be demonstrated.

Physical Life: The Body and Birth

The beginning of physical life starts with the formation of the body in the womb of the mother. The Scripture uses significant language to speak of God’s active role in formation during the gestation process: “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb” (Ps. 139:13), He “made you and established you” (Deut. 32:6), He created the body and spirit (Zech. 12:1), and gives “who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it” (Isa. 42:5). Jeremiah was called by God in the womb before God “formed” him (Jer. 1:5). The body corresponds to existence and physical life.¹⁹ Preceding the creation of the physical body, a person was not yet existent.

¹⁸ Van der Kolk, 12-13.

¹⁹ This view is also known as Creationism, which says, “... that God creates *ex nihilo* a fresh soul for each human individual at or after its conception” in F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 433. “The Biblical belief that ‘God created all things out of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good’

Physical life begins at the formation of the soul *and the body*. God breathes life into Adam after forming his physical body (Gen. 2:7) indicating physical, human life has now been created. Life beginning and coming into existence are evident in texts such as the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist. The angel of the Lord told Zechariah: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John” (“γεννήσει υἱόν σοι καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννην”) (Luke 1:13). Future tense use of γεννήσει and καλέσεις both indicate this has not occurred, John *will be born* and his existence is future tense. Jesus speaks of his own eternality by saying, “Before Abraham was, I am” (πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί; John 8:58). There was a time before Abraham, and Jesus was existent in that time. The Jews clearly understood this to be a claim of superiority to Abraham and concurrently, Jesus’ deity as evidenced in their response (John 8:59).²⁰ A person does not exist before their body is created and the creation of the body inaugurates existence, to include physical life.

Physical Death

If the body is the source of physical life, its death is the end of physical life resulting in physical death. Death is present in the earliest parts of Scripture as a consequence of sin. The warning of eating the tree of knowledge of good and evil is that Adam and Eve would “surely die” (Gen. 2:17) and they did (Gen. 5:5). The Scripture teaches that when a person dies, their soul continues to exist but their body ceases to be alive for a period of time.²¹ “We know that

(Shorter Catechism). This doctrine of creation* is often referred to as creation *ex nihilo* (“creation out of nothing”) in Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 117.

²⁰ Other evidences are seen in the promise of Isaac (Gen. 17:16) and Samuel (1 Sam. 2:21) where both births were foretold and fulfilled in the future.

²¹ Paul further illustrates this in Philippians 1:20 when he says, “As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death [“εἴτε διὰ ζωῆς εἴτε διὰ θανάτου”]. It is either life “in the flesh” or death as a consequence of the “flesh” (i.e., “σάρκι”) being separated from the soul.

while we are at home in the body [i.e., “σώμα”] we are away from the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:6). Paul sees that the cessation of physical life is the moment of the physical body expiring. When Jesus “yields His spirit” (Matt. 27:50), it was at the moment of the separation of his body from his human soul (cf. John 10:18).

For the Christian, physical death is analogous to sleeping. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 uses the term “sleeping” (i.e., κοιμάω) to reference the believer is “sleeping.” The believer exclusively can be the “dead in Christ” (4:16; 1 Cor. 15:18, 23) who are said to merely be “sleeping.”²² The authors of Scripture understood physical death to represent the moment of physical life leaving a person’s physical body, and for the Christian, to sleep.²³

One last role of the body in death is to note the body is not the person after death. In other words, the person exists apart from their body. In the instances of Joseph’s death (Exod. 13:19), King Saul’s death (1 Sam. 31:1-12), Jesus’ death (Mark 15:43), John the Baptist’s death (Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 9:24-28), and others, each are mentioned as their bodies being impersonal. For instance, the phrase, “their bodies” or “their bones” are used. This further indicates life exists after the cessation of physical life in the physical body. The body of a person ceases to exist, but the person is not only their body.²⁴

²² To see those who “die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13) or those who are “dead in Christ” (1 Thess. 4:13) would be appropriate in either case (Also Cf. Acts 7:60).

²³ Physical life, spiritual life, and eternal life are varying “lives” spoken of in the Scripture. However, there are known ethical issues of when that cessation of physical life has occurred. For a good resource on the cessation of physical life see Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics : An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2018), Chapter 24.

²⁴ This has further consequences as one considers the body of a person is not the person, themselves. This understanding is paramount to understanding physical existence and dignity in human existence. For instance, because the body is not the totality of human existence, this prevents less human dignity for those with amputations and less “physical body.” In this way, by understanding the difference between personhood and body, a Christian maintains the dignity of all human life despite the physical body of that person.

Physical Health: Pain and Sickness of the Body

The next aspect of the role of the body is the effects of sin on the body regarding pain and sickness. From the promise of the curse of sin, the body has been affected with pain via childbirth (Gen. 3:16) and pain in work (Gen. 3:17). Pain is promised to be removed in the New Heaven and Earth (Rev. 21:4) but is present for varying reasons until then.

Sickness in the physical body is present from God removing the Egyptian sickness (i.e., Deut. 7:15) for Israel, Hezekiah getting sick (2 Kings 1:2), the woman with the blood issue (Luke 8:43-48), Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39), and the miraculous healings of the apostles in Acts 19 where the "sick" had their "diseases leave them" (19:12).²⁵ According to the Scripture, the body receives physical pain, sickness and illness.

Physical Cravings of the Body

Physical cravings correlate to the functioning of the physical body.²⁶ These physical cravings seem to include but are not limited to hunger (Matt. 4:2; 1 Cor. 4:11), thirst (Exod. 17:3; John 19:28), tiredness (John 4:6; (Rev. 2:3), and sexual expression/desire (1 Cor. 7:2, 9-10). To suggest the body has *cravings* is consistent with the use of *soma* within the Scripture. Note, these physical cravings are neither inherently good nor bad but are simply part of the functioning of the human body.²⁷

²⁵ For further study on the use of *πνευμάτις* see Matthew 8:15, Mark 1:31, Luke 4:38-39, John 4:52, and Acts 28:2. In each instance *πνευμάτις* is used to describe physical illness of the physical body. Furthermore, *νόσος* is used to describe illnesses that are entirely physiological (Matt. 4:23; Matt. 4:24; Matt. 8:17, 9:35, 10:1; Mark 1:34; Luke 4:40, 6:18, 7:21, 9:1; Acts 19:12).

²⁶ Of note, Galatians 5:16 says, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." The physiological *σάρξ* and the body of flesh representing the old man in Adam (Rom. 5:12) are different. The desires of the *σάρξ* lead to the works of the *σάρξ* as evidenced in verses 19-21. But these are different from physical cravings and physical appetites of the body/flesh. Furthermore, *ἐπιθυμία* (i.e., desire) does not equate to physical craving in Galatians 5:16. According to R. Jewett, "the flesh is Paul's term for everything aside from God in which one places his final trust" in F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 243.

²⁷ This statement warrants clarification. The Bible does not condemn these cravings inherently, rather it assumes them and then guides the expression of them. For a person to crave oxygen does not necessitate sinful

In each of these instances, a physical craving—hunger, thirst, tiredness, sexual craving—has an organic genesis in the body. Although these physical cravings can become idolatrous, like that of the false teachers in Philippi (Phil. 3:19) or the divisive individuals in Rome (Rom. 16:18), a physical craving is not inherently sinful. It is only a physical craving of the physical body.²⁸ These physical cravings are part of the rightful and good function of the physical body.

Sensory Functioning and Problems of the Body

Then the Lord said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?

—Exodus 4:11

Due to the functioning of the physical body, the body also possesses certain functions of sensory operations. These functions correspond to seeing (Gen. 27:1; John 9:6), which can also possess a problem of the functioning of the eyes as demonstrated in blindness. Blindness is a functioning of physical eyes that is not always caused by IR’s but may be caused by an IR (which is what the disciples assume). Jesus said of the blind man in John 9, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him” (v. 3). There is a working assumption that some MR’s are cause by IR’s in the Scripture.²⁹

The function of hearing is an aspect of the physical body where the physical ears process sounds to discern information (Gen. 23:10; Exod. 24:7). To fail to hear is the physical response of deafness. Levitical law protects the deaf (Lev. 19:14), Jesus heals the deaf (Mark 7:37), and the Jesus testifies to being the Messiah through the healing of the physically deaf (Luke 7:22).

action, but the way oxygen is pursued can become sinful, for instance. Thus, for a person to be described as “their god is their belly” (Phil. 3:19) is the ultimate expression of physical cravings leading and dominating one’s life.

²⁸ This seems to be the misuse of the Corinthian understanding of physical cravings when they were legitimizing their sinful physical cravings in saying, “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food” (1 Cor. 6:13).

²⁹ This thought will be later addressed under the section, “The Soul as the Originator of IR’s and the Body as Receptor.”

Other sensory functions of the body are touch (Luke 8:46), speaking/muteness (Exod. 4:14; Luke 1:22), smell (Gen. 27:27; 1 Cor. 12:17), taste (Exod. 16:31; Col. 2:21).³⁰ Each of these functions are either assumed or stated “as-is” in the Scripture, specifically that they possess a physical component. Touch assumes physicality. Taste assumes physicality. In that way, the body is the originator of these varying sensory functions.

What the reader can take away from these aspects to the functioning of the body is that the body does function physically with MR’s, but in none of these instances does the body possess causation of IR’s. The IR is a result of the soul responding. As the reader will see, the body causes the MR’s but not IR’s. However, the soul causes both IR’s and MR’s.

The Body Creates the Trial to Which a Soul Responds

There are instances of physical sicknesses that elucidate soul responses throughout the Scripture. Hezekiah is told that he will die and weeps bitterly, appealing for God to preserve his life (Isa. 38:3). The Lord relents of the sickness and delivers Hezekiah, of which Hezekiah says, “Restore me to health and make me live” (Isa. 38:16b). The body was failing and Hezekiah responded in “weeping bitterly.” It must be noted that the body did not cause the weeping, but as response to knowing his body would fail, sadness overcame him. Sadness, of note, is the response of his soul.³¹ God did ultimately heal Hezekiah, but Hezekiah’s body created the physiological trial (i.e., MR) to which his soul responded in sadness (i.e., IR).

³⁰ In 1 Kings 18:27, Elijah even mocks Baal’s lack of response with a consideration that he is “relieving himself,” which is another human functioning.

³¹ While the reader is not told the exact nature of Hezekiah’s sadness, “Josephus says, the reason why he wept so sorely was that being childless, he was leaving the *kingdom* without a successor. How often our wishes, when gratified, prove curses! Hezekiah lived to have a son; that son was the idolater Manasseh, the chief cause of God’s wrath against Judah, and of the overthrow of the kingdom (2 Ki 23:26, 27)” in Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 471.

In the death Lazarus wherein Jesus said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (John 11:4), there is a glimpse of the role of illness to the physical body. It creates opportunities to respond to sickness in a way that glorifies the Lord. The body creates the trial to allow the soul to respond in a way, “to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Cor. 4:7). The body elicits the soul’s response but does not cause IR’s.

The body of Paul is used by God to prompt humility. 2 Corinthians 12 Paul identifies a “thorn in the flesh” (σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί) that is used by God to prompt the soul’s response of humility. If one interprets this as a physical body problem, such as eyesight (Gal. 6:11), then the physical pain is a means of producing a clear response of the soul.³²

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 provides an understanding of how Paul is facing physical mistreatment and pain in his own body.³³ To establish “jars of clay” as a reference to his human body is demonstrated in his description of affliction.³⁴ They are “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies” (v. 10). Through the persecutions Paul has faced, he carries in his *soma* the death of Christ. This is purposeful because it is in weakness of the *soma* that the life of Christ is demonstrated. Paul reiterates that his *sarx* and his *soma* are both being afflicted so the life of Jesus would be demonstrated (v. 10-11). The physical trials he endures are to help “produce an eternal weight of glory” (v. 18). Paul

³² Although a clear understanding of this thorn is hard to discern, the use of “σάρκι” in 2 Corinthians all refers to the flesh, body, or old nature. There are strong suggestions of the flesh meaning the physical body or a physical representation as seen in 2 Corinthians 1:17, 4:11, 5:16, 7:1, 7:5, 10:2-3, 11:18, and 12:7.

³³ Cf. 2 Timothy 2:20-21: “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. ²¹ Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.”

³⁴ “Picturing himself as an ordinary, everyday utensil conveying an invaluable treasure is as striking an image as Paul’s picture of himself as a defeated but joyous prisoner marching in God’s triumphal procession (2:14)” in David E. Garland, [2 Corinthians](#), vol. 29, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 220.

understood his body was temporal (v. 16), but the trial of his body was producing an eternal reward (v. 18).

From this one can discern that the body creates the trial (πειρασμοῖς; James 1:2) to which the soul responds. The body creates a pressured circumstance by which one's faith is tested, and to which a person's soul responds. Whether it is aging (Gen. 18:11-12), affliction (2 Cor. 4:10), a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7), blindness (John 9:3) or some combination of these, the body creates a trial by which and to which the soul responds. Due to the fact that cognition, volition, desires, and affections are sourced in the soul, the body is the receptor of the soul's responses to the physical trial the body has created.³⁵ Craig Troxel offers a helpful synopsis:

The heart is the governing center of a person. When used simply, it reflects the unity of our inner being, and when used comprehensively, it describes the complexity of our inner being—as composed of mind (what we know), desires (what we love), and will (what we choose).³⁶

As biblical counselors, one acknowledges the spark of cognition, desire, and will is sourced in the heart. Thus, the body may incite but does not cause, which warrants the question of bodily damage that may occur.

A Body May Be Damaged but Still Does Not Create an Immaterial Response

Of note, sensory problems may be a result of body damage. Sensory issues such as hallucinations, of which Rhoda was accused of in Acts 12:12-18, misperceptions (Luke 24:36), and faulty functions of the body (John 9:3ff) do not create or cause immaterial responses (IR's). Rather, these faulty or damaged senses may only incite IR's. A person is still choosing, thinking,

³⁵ Cf. 2 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:34; Mark 7:23-25. Consider the body creating the trial of pain. In this way, pain is material but the soul responds creating an influence on the body.

³⁶ Troxel, A. Craig. 2020. *With All Your Heart: Orienting Your Mind, Desires, and Will Toward Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 21.

and desiring according to their soul even when their body fails them.³⁷ David acknowledges “there is no health in my bones because of my sin” (Ps. 38:3). Or that his strength is dried up and his bones wasted away (Ps. 32:3-4) because of the soul’s influence on his body, not the converse. A body can, in this way, encourage an IR but does not cause one—even if that body is damaged or lacking function in some way.

The Influence of the Body on Immaterial Responses

Jesus uses the strongest language, perhaps in the entire Scripture, to describe the role of the body in inciting IR’s. Jesus says, “If your right eye causes you to sin” (“εἰ δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου ὁ δεξιὸς σκανδαλίζει σε”) or if your right hand “causes you to sin” (σκανδαλίζει σε) then tear it away or cut it off. The phrase “causes you to sin” is reiterated here and in Matthew 18:6, 8, and 9. It literally means to “to cause to be brought to a downfall, *cause to sin*.”³⁸ In an isolated context, Matthew 5 and 18 both seem to suggest that a person can be caused to sin but Paul reminds the believer that they are not a slave to sin (Rom. 6:1-6).³⁹ Jesus is saying that the body can cause a stumbling block or enticement to sin, which explains Matthew 6:22-24 aptly in seeing the role of the “eye” in affecting the “body” toward light. Meaning, in Matthew 6:22-24, the body encourages one toward IR’s that are God-honoring.

Part of the call of sanctification is to leverage one’s “mortal body” (literally, “θνητὸ ὕμῶν σώματι”) toward Christlikeness. While the body entices one to obey the body’s “passions” (Rom. 6:12), the believer understands sin is no longer able to have dominion in their body (Rom.

³⁷ In fact, numerous examples exist of those who have body problems and yet still believe accurately. The woman who had an issue of blood, still believed Jesus could heal her (Luke 8:43-48). A blind man cries out for Jesus to heal him and acknowledges is Davidic lineage (Luke 18:38). Furthermore, the paralytic in Luke 5:17-36 demonstrates faith, along with his friends. One could say that the physical body is damaged by is still does not create or prevent IR’s.

³⁸ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 926.

³⁹ While the believer is not a slave to sin, the unbeliever is characterized as being enslaved to the “passions of our flesh” (Eph. 2:3).

6:13; Eph. 2:3). Nevertheless, the body has passions that must be resisted. Paul says he “disciplines his body” (1 Cor. 9:27) for longevity in ministry and usefulness as a minister of the Gospel. The body can pull one from IR’s that honor God, which is why the “deeds of the body” must be put to death (Rom. 8:13). This is perhaps the essential understanding of self-control, to deny oneself the physical and spiritual cravings and subject them to the Lordship of Christ.⁴⁰

In the end, the body does indeed entice and influence IR’s but does not cause IR’s. These IR’s can be both toward greater Christlikeness (Matt. 6:22-23; 1 Tim. 4:7-8) or toward sinfulness (Matt. 5:29-30). The body, though, does not cause the soul to respond in any form or fashion. In sum, it can be stated as follows:

1. The body does cause MR’s,
2. Bodily problems influence MR’s and IR’s, and
3. Bodily problems do not cause IR’s.⁴¹

Now, in light of the above, let the reader consider the source of IR’s according to the Scripture and the implications for trauma and body keeping the score (BKS) anthropology.

The Soul as the Originator of Immaterial Responses and Body as Receptor

According to the Bible, the soul keeps the score. That is to say, the inner person is the source of cognition (Jer. 17:10; Col. 3:2), desire (1 Sam. 23:20; Ps. 20:4), and volition (Josh. 24:15; Ruth 1:16) not to mention other functions of the soul.

⁴⁰ Self-control is “restraint of one’s emotions, impulses, or desires, self-control” in William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 274. Titus 2:11 says the grace of Jesus Christ “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,”⁴⁰

⁴¹ Remember, material responses are “MR” and immaterial responses are “IR.”

The Scripture is replete with examples of the functioning of the soul that animates the body.⁴² Consider the following examples of the function of the soul. The soul abhors (Lev. 26:15), loves (Deut. 6:5), is vexed (Judg. 16:16), embittered (1 Sam. 22:2), lives (1 Sam. 25:26), desires (1 Kings 11:37), troubled (Ps. 6:3), experiences turmoil (Ps. 42:5), hates (Isa. 1:14), delights (Isa. 42:1), yearns (Eze. 24:21), experiences sorrow (Matt. 26:38), experiences awe (Acts 2:43), can be unsteady (2 Pet. 2:14), and longs (Rev. 18:14).⁴³ The soul, is seen as the source of these functions according to the Scripture.

In light of the function of the soul one must acknowledge it is the soul that keeps the score. Its “scorekeeping” necessitates the soul possessing ultimate value (Matt. 16:26), the possibility for redemption (Ps. 55:18; Acts 2:47; 1 Pet. 1:9), and continuing to exist after a person has physically died.⁴⁴ The parable of Lazarus and the Rich man provide insight to the functioning of the soul after death (Luke 16:19ff). In the story, both Lazarus and the Rich Man physically die—which necessitates the cessation of the body’s functioning (2 Cor. 5:8). Furthermore, the Rich Man demonstrates cognition (v. 24), reasoning (v. 27), and the ability to recollect his brothers (v. 28) all while not possessing a body. Perhaps angels could also serve as an example of the soul, since angels are non-corporeal but have a will (Heb. 1:6), intellect (2 Sam. 14:20), and emotions (Luke 15:10)?⁴⁵

⁴² Of note, the term “soul” is used interchangeably with “inner man, heart, or spirit.” This is because the Scripture does not delineate between the difference of spirit, soul, heart, or inner man. In quoting the Shema, Jesus demonstrates this: “And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this paper to establish the dichotomy or complex unity positions of the inner and outer man. For more information on this, see John 12:27, 13:21; Matthew 10:28, 2 Cor. 7:1.

⁴³ These passages are instances of the OT use of “נֶפֶשׁ” or the NT use of the term, “ψυχή.”

⁴⁴ Though, arguably, the soul is not a reference to spiritual salvation but salvation of life in Psalm 55:18. Furthermore, the body will experience the effects of redemption in the resurrection of the dead but the soul never ceases to exist (Job 14:14; John 11:23-24; Rom. 8:23-24; 1 Cor. 15:35-54).

⁴⁵ This does not begin to address the functioning of God the Father and Spirit who both possess spirituality, without corporeality, and maintain perfect personhood. If the reader is not satisfied with the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, the transfiguration is also another example of non-corporeal Moses and Elijah communicating with

Since in these instances we see the functions of the soul continue to occur after physical death, it again reiterates that the soul is the source of these IR's/functions. If these functions occur after the cessation of the physical body, then it reiterates that the physical body is not the source of these functions. How then does this understanding of the soul correlate to the BKS anthropology?

BKS Critique

One of the key components of the BKS anthropology is that trauma is “encoded in the viscera” or “after trauma the world is experience or with a different nervous system.”⁴⁶ This anthropological understanding is faulty for two primary reasons. The first is that trauma is often non-physical, meaning there were no physical damages to the body. Secondly, this is faulty because the body receives the interpretation of the soul to the traumatic event. Let the reader now consider these two primary points of anthropological disagreement.

First of all, trauma is interpretive. The author has stated this since 2017 and will continue to remind the reader that the trauma a person experiences necessitates inner person responses to discern how one should respond.⁴⁷ The American Psychiatric Association defines trauma as, “an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster.”⁴⁸ While the author is not disagreeing that these instances are indeed traumatic, the author is demonstrating for them to elicit an “emotional response” the soul must interpret the circumstances.

Jesus (Matt. 17:3). It must be understood that these soul responses continue after the failure of the human body according to the Scripture.

⁴⁶ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 52, 86.

⁴⁷ Cf. Greg E. Gifford, *Helping the Family Through PTSD* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017).

⁴⁸ “Trauma.” n.d. <https://www.apa.org>. Accessed May 31, 2023. <https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma>. Or see Psychology Today’s definition of trauma: “Trauma is a person’s emotional response to a distressing experience. Few people can go through life without encountering some kind of trauma. Unlike ordinary hardships, traumatic events tend to be sudden and unpredictable, involve a serious threat to life—like bodily injury or death—and feel beyond a person’s control” in “Trauma | Psychology Today.” n.d. Accessed May 31, 2023. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/trauma>.

Furthermore, the emotions are soul responses (Matt. 26:38). Thus, the body responds to the soul's interpretation of the incident that is perceived as traumatic in the first place.

The BKS position blurs the understanding of the source of trauma between material and immaterial while unwittingly including trauma sourced in matters of the soul. For instance, Van der Kolk opens the book describing the carnage of the Vietnam War with two veterans he interviewed—Tom and Alex.⁴⁹ Tom and Alex were in the same platoon and through their time in the military grew close in friendship. They spent free time together and slowly developed a friendship. Yet, Alex died in an ambush on their patrol. Tom is said to have seen Alex's dead body face down in the mud. This led Tom to a time of rage against the Vietnamese people where he would, out of revenge, go to a neighboring village and kill children, a farmer, and rape a Vietnamese woman.⁵⁰ Note, Tom was not blown up, shot, physically tortured, or starved as a prisoner of war. There is no stated damage to Tom's body. No, Tom responded to the death of his friend in a fit of sinful rage (cf. Eph. 4:31). Tom interpreted the death of his friend in a certain way (soul as originator of IR's) and then responded to this interpretation of Alex's death with complicating sinful responses (the body murdered those in the neighboring village because of his soul's response in anger). Van der Kolk goes on to say, "deep down many traumatized people are even more haunted by the shame they feel about what they themselves did or did not do under the circumstances."⁵¹ The author has no disagreement with this claim, but it further demonstrates that trauma is highly interpretive.

Why does this matter? Because the BKS position omits the soul as the originator of the interpretation of the trauma and thus leaves out a core anthropological component. *The soul*

⁴⁹ Von der Kolk, 12-13.

⁵⁰ Van der Kolk, 13.

⁵¹ Van der Kolk, 13.

keeps the score, and the body is responding to the tallying of that score. In so attributing to the body, Van der Kolk omits the role of the soul as the scorekeeper. A person's rationality, cognition, desire, memory, shame, and guilt are not body issues—they are soul issues as has been demonstrated. The body is affected by the soul, as will be mentioned below, but the soul is the originator and the body the receiver of the soul's interpretation when responding to trauma. The interpretive nature of trauma tells the reader that in order for trauma to have a negative effect, trauma must first pass through the interpretive lens of the soul. Once the soul has experienced, reasoned, regretted, desired, felt shame and/or some other combination, then would a person then be "traumatized." Van der Kolk says, "Being traumatized means continuing to organize your life as if the trauma were still going on—unchanged and immutable—as every new encounter or event is contaminated by the past."⁵² The BKS position fundamentally misses the interpretive nature of trauma when putting forward the BKS anthropology, yet uses examples like Tom and Alex to show that trauma is highly dependent on how one interprets their original trauma.

Secondarily, the BKS position neglects that the body receives the interpretation of the soul to trauma. While using overt biological language, Van der Kolk states that, "Danger is a part of life, and the brain is in charge of detecting it and organizing our responses. Sensory information about the outside world arrives through our eyes, noses, ears, and skin."⁵³ He goes on to state that the amygdala "receives from the thalamus faster than the front lobes do, it decides whether incoming information is a threat to our survival even before we are consciously aware of

⁵² Van der Kolk, 52.

⁵³ Van der Kolk, 60.

the danger.”⁵⁴ Van der Kolk emphasizes the body’s role in responding to trauma, but omits the role of the inner person. He presents a body-first anthropology.

Van der Kolk then states that the amygdala is like a smoke detector that releases hormones in a person’s body when it senses danger. “While the smoke detector [i.e., the amygdala] is usually pretty good at picking up danger clues, trauma increases the risk of *misinterpreting* whether a particular situation is dangerous or safe [emphasis mine].”⁵⁵ How does one’s body interpret? Through the soul! Cognition, rationality, desire, emotion, and other critical functions are not bodily functions. They are functions of the soul. In this way, the BKS position has confused its own anthropological suggestions. If trauma were entirely of biological origins, like an explosion, then two people would experience the same traumatic moment, and both would interpret it as traumatic. This is the Achilles heel of the BKS position: *the body is responding to the soul’s interpretation of the potentially traumatic event*.⁵⁶ If the reader understands what the BKS position is teaching, it is claiming that the body is “automatically triggered” or that there are “preprogrammed escape responses.”⁵⁷ Speaking of the body as the one who keeps the score, Van der Kolk says, “When the old brain takes over, it partially shuts down the higher brain, our conscious mind, and propels the body to run, hide, fight, or, on occasion, freeze.”⁵⁸ Yet, the body is responding to the soul’s interpretation because cognition does not reside in the body, per the Scripture. (Even Van der Kolk’s own description suggests a lack of clarity as he interchangeably uses “brain” and “conscious mind,” which are inner and outer man realities.)

⁵⁴ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 61-62.

⁵⁶ It will be demonstrated that there are physical/bodily problems that can contribute to misinterpreting circumstances, but the soul is still the one that must choose (i.e., volition) to not trust the body’s stimuli.

⁵⁷ Van der Kolk, 54.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 54.

These two areas of disagreement lead one to reject a BKS anthropology in sum, but what of the seemingly accurate deductions of the BKS position?

BKS *Seemingly* Accurate Surface-Level Deductions

Ed Welch noted, “It is Van der Kolk’s work on the body that especially gets us thinking. . . . Here is a place in which we are prepared to hear more because we are embodied people and we want to understand more of how body and brain functions and dysfunction affect our daily lives.”⁵⁹ The author agrees that the desire to understand the complicated body the Lord has created draws one to consider the BKS position, especially since there are considerations that seem to be right and comport with the Scripture.

For instance, the Scripture clearly teaches that the body is affected by the soul (Ps. 31:9). As biblical counselors, it is clearly understood the psychosomatic relationship of the body and the soul. This includes not only of sin (i.e., Ps. 32:3-4) but also proper fear of the Lord. One’s body is affected by their soul through the sin of the soul, and the body is also affected by the fear of the Lord, occurring in the soul. David’s confession reminds the reader that his sin is drying up his physical strength (Ps. 32:3-4). Yet, the Scripture also teaches that for one to fear the Lord, it is “healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones” (Prov. 3:8, 4:22, 8:35, 21:21).⁶⁰ Asaph says, “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:26). Van der Kolk *seems* to pick up on the effects of trauma to the body in ways that are helpful from the surface level, but still falls short of a complete understanding of body/soul as found in the Scripture. More accurately, the Scripture affirms that it is possible to

⁵⁹ Welch, Ed. n.d. “Trauma and the Body: An Introduction to Three Books.” *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 33, no. 2: 61–83.

⁶⁰ In fact, multiple commands of Scripture are linked with physical well-being. This includes the promises for Israel to abide by the commands of Moses to “live long” in the promised land (Deut. 32:47) to the ten commandments in which honoring mother and father promotes “that your days may be long” (Exod. 20:12).

have a bodily effect from the soul both for health and hurt. Van der Kolk sees the body as damaged and thus the body needs the treatment, even when there is indeed no evidence that the trauma was of bodily etiology.⁶¹

This is not to even mention the judgments of God on a person's body as a result of sin. The men of Sodom are struck with blindness because of their perversion (Gen. 19:11), Uzziah experiences leprosy of the body because of his pride (2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chron. 26:16), Israel is reminded that disobedience to Yahweh could bring pestilence (Lev. 26:25), Paul reminds the Corinthians some are sick because taking the Lord's Supper unworthily (1 Cor. 11:30), and John says there is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16). While not all bodily ailments stem from the discipline of the Lord, some indeed do. Van der Kolk has no category for this.

To say the body is affected by the soul is somewhat old hat for biblical counseling. Jay Adams said in 1979 that "Man's earthiness must be kept in mind at all times when counseling"⁶² or "It is plain Scriptures never represent all sickness as the result of immediate sin or even sinful patterns of life."⁶³ This statement is not news for most in biblical counseling. What Van der Kolk has done is shift the focus from the soul to the body in counseling, yet Scripture encourages the counselor to keep the soul as the primary focus. The soul is the scorekeeper, after all, not the body.

In fact, because the soul and body are interconnected, a biblical counselor should treat soul matters and watch the way those matters affect the physical body. By this point, most have counseled the insomniac on how to roll their cares onto the Lord (1 Pet. 5:6-7). For the guilty/shameful person, struggling with depression, to turn to God's plans for their life—whether

⁶¹ "This explains why it is critical for trauma treatment to engage the entire organism, body, mind, and brain," Van Der Kolk, 52.

⁶² Adams, Jay. 1973. *A Theology of Christian Counseling*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 106.

⁶³ Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 108.

through repentance or biblical thinking (Ps. 32:3-4; Phil. 4:6). From a focus on sanctification to general health, the Scripture teaches that the soul is the scorekeeper, and the body is the receptor.⁶⁴ BKS has reversed the order, making the body the source.

To necessitate physical treatment, without an emphasis on the soul-first anthropology taught in Scripture, as the BKS does, is to imbibe faulty anthropology and consequently, methodology. Van der Kolk's statements like "This explains why it is critical for trauma treatment to engage the entire organism, body, mind, and brain"⁶⁵ show us the shift from soul as scorekeeper to body as scorekeeper. This is erroneous, not to mention the body treatments that Van der Kolk offers are often quasi-scientific treatments, such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Yoga.⁶⁶ When studying neurofeedback as a remedy, Van der Kolk cannot describe what is causing the brainwaves to act as they do, only what the brainwaves are doing.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the BKS position asserts biological etiology only to again fail to demonstrate what in the body has been the problem while recommending speculative physiological treatments. Van der Kolk further perpetuates psychiatry's "lack of validity" per the words of Thomas Insel, the former director of The National Institute of Mental Health.⁶⁸ (Not to mention, he spends the entire book citing the body keeps the score only to start the "Paths to

⁶⁴ See "The Soul as the Originator of Immaterial Responses and Body as Receptor" above. If cognition, desires, volition, affections, and so forth are all inner person realities then one must see that the soul is the originator of many of the health and hurts of the body. Cf. Augustine, *City of God*, "Our faith teaches something very different. For the corruption of the body, which is a burden on the soul, is not the cause but the punishment of Adam's first sin. Moreover, it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; on the contrary, it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible" (299; Chapter 3, Book 14).

⁶⁵ Van der Kolk, 52.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 248, 263. Of practicing EMDR, Welch notes, "The pragmatist in Van Der Kolk is on display here. He is driven by what could help—even if he doesn't know why it helps. ... My own experience is that Scripture brings the coherence that is sometimes claimed for EMDR, and the riches of the Word and prayer make this technique less compelling." Welch, "Trauma and the Body: An Introduction to Three Books," 82. The author agrees but would add that EMDR is speculative at best, and silly at worst.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 309.

⁶⁸ Insel, Thomas. 2013. "Transforming Diagnosis." *The National Institute of Mental Health* (blog). April 29, 2013. <http://psychrights.org/2013/130429NIMHTransformingDiagnosis.htm>.

Recovery” section by a person owning the imprints of trauma on their “soul.” Chapter 13 is titled, “Owning Your Self.”)⁶⁹

It seems that the anthropological assertions of Van der Kolk are often undermined by a lack of clarity on the true nature of people. While surface-level observations initially seem true, the Bible offers a more robust understanding of people as soul-first rather than body-first. And if there are unknown physiological problems, as there often are in response to trauma, a person should seek medical help from medical doctors. This has consistently been the message of biblical counselors because it is the message of the Bible.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, the body is a complex gift to man that provides life, functioning, health, and other contributions to mankind’s existence. The soul is that of utmost value, and it is the soul that will never cease to exist. “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26). It is the author’s conclusion, as has been demonstrated, *that the body only causes physical responses and can only influence immaterial responses—of note, the body never causes immaterial responses*. In this way, the body does not keep the score, the soul does.

For the biblical counselor, the anthropological clarity of the soul as scorekeeper brings a few implications worth noting. First of all, the murkiness of the effects of trauma are clarified as a physiological effect with a soulical etiology, it allows for the counselor to stay in the Word. It is the Bible that is perfect, “reviving the soul” (Ps. 19:7). Trauma is complicated, but biblical counselors who are good listeners will be able to take the authoritative Scripture and be of

⁶⁹ Van der Kolk, 204.

significant help to those who have experienced trauma. Those with trauma related problems, need the Scripture, not Yoga.

Next, the Sufficiency of Scripture is again affirmed. God has provided all that one needs for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3-4), and the soul is outfitted for every good work through the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:17). BKS anthropological positions will come-and-go, but the superiority of the Scripture to speak into the soul of mankind is here to stay. The biblical counselor confesses with Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

And finally, there is a place for genuine body problems for the biblical counselor. Those of non-sin related etiologies (John 9:3) and those of sin-related etiologies (1 Cor. 11:30). If Tom were to meet with a biblical counselor, he could hear something that the BKS position cannot offer: forgiveness for his sin through the work of Christ on his behalf.⁷⁰ Tom sinned against the Vietnamese people and thus his body was affected by his sin. What should Tom do? Submit to Jesus as Lord and repent of the ways he has perpetuated trauma to others. In so doing, Tom will then get to experience a peace that truly does pass all understanding from the God of all peace (2 Cor. 1:3; Phil. 4:7, 9).

Biblical counselors, be encouraged, the soul keeps the score. And God is the keeper of the soul.

*“The Lord will keep you from all evil,
He will keep your soul” (Ps. 121:7).*

⁷⁰ Recall that Tom was Van der Kolk’s opening Case Study, 12-13.