

CHAPTER 9

THE REPLACEMENT OF SCRIPTURE AS SOURCE AND NORM IN PASTORAL COUNSELING

Luke 11 records the account of people accusing Jesus of driving out evil spirits by the power of Satan. That, Jesus showed them, was an absurd idea. That would mean that Satan's kingdom was divided against itself. The Savior went on in verses 24 to 26 to tell what happens when an evil spirit is driven out of a man and nothing godly replaces it. The void created will be filled with something. Jesus says that the final condition of the man will be worse than the first unless God fills the void.

This is an apt picture of what happens when the Word of God is not the source and norm for doctrine and practice in pastoral counseling and psychology. If it is not the source and norm, then what is? Something else will replace it. Only harm can come from that. But what are the replacements that workers in the field suggest? Are they all dangerous? Are any of them helpful?

We might be surprised to see what some of the replacements for Scripture are among those who work in pastoral counseling and psychology. While we must list things like human reason and the personality of the counselor, we must also mention the church itself and even the encouragement to use something the Bible has already said clearly enough as if it were some new discovery. Hopefully this list of substitutes for Scripture will help us to be on guard against them when they appear. We cannot be satisfied with less than the genuine article.

Human reason must lead the list of replacements for Scripture as

source and norm because of the massive amount of material that is being produced among Christian publishers. Human reason allows Scripture to be superimposed over almost any idea. The Reformed will consistently ask what works and what makes sense. If common sense works, then use it and find a passage to support the idea. Some of Dobson's work exemplifies this idea. As we have stated, Dobson acknowledges that his ideas in Dare to Discipline are not new. He traces them back to the Bible. Many of his ideas appear within the pages of Scripture. But they also appear outside the pages of Scripture. One does not need the Bible to support the idea that children need to know their limits and boundaries. The same is true in Dobson's work, Love Must Be Tough. Most of Dobson's ideas about love have biblical support. Some even have gospel roots. We appreciate that where it occurs. Nevertheless, the central idea of the book is that love must say no to unacceptable behavior. That idea can also be found outside the pages of Scripture. Again, one can usually find a passage that in some way supports the idea being presented. The actions suggested could be considered both to have a biblical source and a source in civic righteousness. The ideas are not uniquely biblical.

The most evident trait of this use of Scripture is the selective use of Bible passages and stories instead of whole biblical concepts. For example, James Dobson wrote the entire book, Dare to Discipline, with the use of very few passages. The basic premise was that permissiveness doesn't work. The Bible verifies that fact. The same is true of the "tough love" idea spoken of by Dobson and many others. The ideas presented in Dobson's book did not originate with him. Most of the premises are part of the natural law written in man's heart from creation. Common sense will provide the same directions if we pay attention

to it. Substance abuse programs have for years encouraged parents in the use of "tough love" to lay the responsibility for unacceptable behavior on the one who is behaving unacceptably. These ideas have more roots in reality therapy than in the Bible. We cannot say that these are not biblical concepts. They certainly are. They do not, however, bring out the full concept of love and discipline as taught in the Bible. A presentation on "tough love" could only be biblical and Christian in the full sense of the terms if the law is used to mirror unacceptable behavior before God and man and the gospel speaks of the love of God for the world and the sinner in Christ. With that kind of presentation, "tough love" will have the proper motivation that Scripture presents.

Permission is closely related to reason as a substitute for Scripture as source and norm. When the Bible speaks clearly on a particular subject, we don't need a human authority to give us the permission to use it. We know, for example, that the Bible teaches that strict but loving discipline of children is a responsibility God places on parents. The Bible is the authority on that subject, not the writer who talks about it. If a particular writer says we should dare to discipline, then he is the authority to his readers. But that place belongs to God. Perhaps we Christians aren't reading our Bibles the way we should. Perhaps some have forsaken the Scriptural authority they claim for themselves and replaced it with the authority of a human being who speaks about biblical topics.

If we need a book on a subject the Bible clearly teaches, then we need to ask whether that is because the Bible is unclear or whether we aren't reading it. If we are reading it, are we applying it? If we are applying it, why do we need someone else to reinforce what we already

know? There is no excuse for saying "LaHaye says,..." or "Dobson says,..." when in fact the Bible is doing the talking. As Christians who claim Scripture as our source and norm we need to give credit where credit is due.

Another problem related to this kind of thinking exists in the minds of many Christians. All people are naturally unwilling and unable to admit their guilt, confess their sins and trust God's forgiveness. Many times people might be looking for someone else to do their work for them. One of the ways to get someone else to do the work instead of doing it yourself is to spend money on books that tell you only what you already know. If you have spent the money on the book, then you have done your work. There are all too many instances of people who spend a great deal of time and money reading or counseling about raising children, for example, and not nearly enough time and effort doing it.

The work of Leo Buscaglia on love shows just how much people want to learn about the subject, how inadequate they feel about it and how little loving actually gets done because people are spending too much time and money on books and lectures and not enough on loving. An additional danger is that since writers like Buscaglia deal with a biblical subject like love, the assumption is that the work must be biblical. Buscaglia makes no such claim.

The person himself is the next logical replacement for Scripture. One wonders why a person should have more authority in the minds of some people than the Bible itself. That is human nature. Many have fallen victim to the idea that there are so many interpretations of the Bible that we can't really depend on what we read in it ourselves. If that is the case we have forsaken Scripture as our source and norm. We have adopted another authority. Our authority is popular opinion, not the

Bible. Is that really very much different from Roman Catholic Traditionalism? If we don't feel competent to say anything unless we can find a writer to back us up, then we are not saying the Bible is our source and norm.

This part of our consideration becomes even more confusing. We quote many of these people because of their claim to be biblical. In too many instances we are content to believe their claim instead of testing whether the things they say truly are biblical.

When our authority is an author's work on the bookstore shelf, we are, at best, content with a shallow presentation of a few things the Bible says while possibly ignoring the most essential issues. It is difficult to find a truly valuable presentation of sin, grace, atonement and redemption on the popular market. People seem to be much more interested in subjects like stress, depression, anxiety, communication, sex, marriage and child raising than they are about their own eternal salvation and the salvation of those they love. Browsing through the shelves of a Christian bookstore almost anywhere will show us that. Shelves and catalogs are filled with temporal matters of concern that do little to remind us of our heavenly goal. Jesus, himself, faced the same problem. He did not accede to it, however, and neither should we.

Nondirective counseling does not have the same wide acceptance it did a few years ago. This kind of counseling involves only a sympathetic and understanding listener and someone who wants to talk to him. In some ways it bears some of the marks of Freudian transference, which makes it dangerous in two ways. First, the nondirective counselor might in reality, simply be called a friend, an expensive friend. As the name implies, he is not counseling to give directions. He is counseling to allow his client a time and place to talk. His questions, if any, are

only to draw thoughts out of a client with some kind of organization. In years past it was not necessary to pay someone to listen sympathetically. People turned to their friends instead of to paid counselors who offered no direction. Second, it is impossible to be nondirective where the Bible is concerned. The purpose of the Bible is to give us what God wants us to have for faith and life. We cannot be content to listen without ever providing the direction that God's Word provides for faith and life. Direction is one of the purposes for which God gave us the Bible.

Anyone who has done any amount of counseling knows that there are troubled people who are not interested in getting better. Some are only interested in having someone listen to them. At times this is valuable. At other times, however, nondirective counseling can be very harmful. If people think they are being counseled while not being directed, they may think that they are doing what they should to correct their problem when they actually are not doing anything at all.

One man, and probably many others like him, saw a counselor at least once a week for two years. His low self-esteem affected his job and eventually his marriage. In one way he was ready to give up on his non-directive counselor. He had seen no improvement. In another way he had become dependent on the man and felt he couldn't get along without him. When he came for pastoral counseling he also came with an ultimatum, "If you can't make me better in six weeks I won't have anything to do with you anymore." His words expressed the frustration of two years of useless counseling. They also expressed the fact that he expected the counselor to do all the work while he did nothing. Finally, they expressed the frustration of spending two years thinking that he had actually been accomplishing something.

Too many times people with marriage problems have said, "I've gone to counselors but it didn't help us work things out." This betrays the attitude that someone else should be able to fix what is wrong. The troubled person is not taking responsibility for his or her own actions. He thinks the counselor can perform a miracle that will make it unnecessary for him to change unacceptable behaviors. Unfortunately we frequently hear people who have already made up their minds to break a marriage say, "I've done everything I could to help this marriage stay together." What they really mean is that they spent money on a counselor who they didn't think could help them and they still want to do what they intended to do in the first place. Most likely such a couple will not heal their marriage problems because they don't want to heal them. They have simply provided themselves with an excuse for their unacceptable actions by saying they tried to work out the differences.

The nondirective counselor will not take responsibility for leading a client in any direction, let alone a God-pleasing one. How will a troubled person figure out a God-pleasing direction? A counselee who initiates the necessary action didn't need the counselor. He or she was willing to listen to the Word of God that speaks clearly for itself.

Secular psychology is another replacement for Scripture as source and norm. The layperson often sees this field of study as a mysterious kind of no-man's-land. In many ways it is, even to the psychologist himself. A wide variety of psychotherapies exist. A study of them will seldom stay current for more than a year or two.

All of the well-known psychotherapies have two things in common: all of them are humanistic, and all of them speak authoritatively. The writers and speakers in the field speak as authorities on their various subjects. The Ph.D. after a person's name impresses people. We are

living in a time when society wants to be able to turn to authorities on almost any subject. We look to people with various academic degrees as authorities. Medical doctors are specialists, not general practitioners. They are authorities in their specialty. This is not to say that this trend is all bad, but we tend to trust what people say because they are authorities. This tendency of our times can work against Scripture as our source and norm for doctrine and practice. Very likely all faithful preachers have spoken openly from the pulpit against the random acceptance of authority. Are we equally as cautious in our counseling?

All pastors who have done any amount of counseling have faced the problem of not being enough of an authority to their people to qualify as a counselor. Again, our people will often look to specialists to help them with their problems rather than to their pastors. This demand for authority can cause some pastors to think they are not competent to counsel. It can make them turn to specialized resources to meet the needs of their people without regard to scriptural content. It can cause pastors to try to compete with the general field of counseling in an attempt to be a counseling authority. The demand for authority can also cause pastors to think that it is more important to be a competent counselor in the eyes of his people than it is to be a faithful shepherd. The two do not necessarily conflict. We can be both competent and faithful if we are convinced the Scripture is the final authority.

All modern psychotherapies are humanistic. None of them admits to the intervention of the Triune God. The god they speak about, when they speak of god at all, is the person himself. Attempts have been made, as we have seen, to integrate what Scripture teaches with these psychotherapies. We can easily lose sight of the essential fact of

humanism. It is not possible to make a humanistic psychotherapy Christian (anymore than it is to make atheistic evolution theistic). All efforts toward this end are doomed to failure when they do not acknowledge the humanism of psychotherapy.

What we are saying about psychotherapy in particular holds true for psychology in general. The entire field is human-centered by definition. Many books have been written attempting to set forth a biblical and Christian view of people in their relationship with God. What Then Is Man, published by Concordia, is perhaps the most valuable contribution. Few books available today set forth more clearly and accurately the true nature of man in a psychological setting. Nearly all the serious writers in the area of pastoral counseling and psychology acknowledge the book either in quotation or bibliography. Unfortunately no one has done much to expand this valuable book into a working Christian psychotherapy. Most modern writers ignore the essentials the book sets forth. Secular psychology, on the other hand, holds a position stating the exact opposite of truths set forth in What Then Is Man. In short, Christian psychologists should be using this book more while secular psychologists won't make any significant use of it at all.

Medicine as a science neither promotes nor denies the existence of God. The science remains intact whether one believes in God or not. The same cannot be said of psychology. Psychology essentially says that if a person has a problem, then a person must have the solution. Either the problem was caused by someone else's influence on another human being or the human being has some mistaken way of looking at oneself, one's life situation or one's relationships. There is no room for God in this kind of thinking; there is no legitimate way to try to introduce God within such thinking. As we have seen, even though the field

of psychology has made significant changes during the last fifty years, the essential ingredient is still the same as it always was. That essential ingredient is man, not God. A person's problem is within himself and the solution to the problem is also within himself. Either psychology or theology must fall. All too often it is the theology that falls for the sake of maintaining a psychology with some integrity.

Psychiatry with its medical emphasis may be viewed as a possible replacement for Scripture as source and norm in the minds of some troubled people. In general too little attention may be given to the organic factors in mental illnesses or emotional disturbances. People who feel bad emotionally may not give proper attention to such things as proper eating, sleeping, relaxation and the like. Chemical imbalances from these or other causes may be easy to detect and treat when appropriate.

The obvious danger is for troubled people to look to medical treatment, particularly pharmacology to cure disturbances that demand spiritual attention. A depression, for instance, could involve important medical considerations. Some imbalances causing depression lend themselves to antidepressant treatment. Only a medical doctor can make such an evaluation. Or proper diet, relaxation and sleep may be all that is necessary. But if a person is depressed because he is not getting what he wants, it would be important to consider whether his central problem is not idolatry. No amount of medication can cure the idolatry of fearing, loving or trusting oneself more than God. (This factor may be one of the root causes for the wide spread abuse of prescription and nonprescription drugs, including alcohol.) If people look to such things to cure what can only be cured with confession and absolution, no such treatment can ever qualify as biblical or Christian.

The church, strange as it might seem, can be used in some ways as a replacement for Scripture as source and norm. This replacement is most obvious in the writings of men like Bonhoeffer and Jung. Bonhoeffer sees the church as a community. To him it is a gathering of caring individuals with a common concern. That tool for doing its work is a caring fraternity who are members of the church community. Some of the things Bonhoeffer suggests about showing concern and caring for others are matters the visible church should be hearing. His foundation, however, is not the Word of God or the unity of doctrine and practice believers share as they gather around it. His teachings are neoorthodox and existential. Although he might use the same words we do, he does not always mean the same thing we understand.

C. G. Jung spends a great deal of time in his writings speaking about the importance of the church. To understand what he is saying we need to remember that he is essentially a Freudian psychologist and he is a Roman Catholic. His work is an attempt to integrate Freud's humanistic psychoanalysis with the forms and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church. The result of this attempt is confusing. Understanding Jung's psychotherapy is beyond the scope of this paper and not very profitable. Suffice it to say that in Jung's terminology the church is a visible organization in accord with Roman Catholic theology. This visible organization has the authority and the responsibility to perform its acts and rituals in a way that will aid healing. It is the external act, such as absolution, that is the effective healing agent. For this reason Jung considers the union of psychology and the church to be essential for the work of psychology to be effective.

Some of Jung's thought is even evident in the writing of Walter J. Koehler, a Lutheran professor, in his book Confession and Absolution.

His points about the importance of confession and absolution are valuable contributions to this study. At times it is questionable, however, whether his focus is on the confession of sin and the assurance of forgiveness in Christ or on the fact that the church is performing the work. Perhaps a study of the first of Luther's 95 Theses would be an even more valuable contribution. In Thesis One Luther states: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."¹ We hold that the real essence of confession and absolution is in the individual sinner's realization of his or her guilt before our just but forgiving God along with the faith God works to trust Christ's forgiveness. Emphasis is not so much on the act of the church that brings about such a confrontation.

In a slightly different sense, we could speak briefly about the use Crabb makes of the church. He too sees the church as a community of believers in the orthodox sense. He sees believers gathered around the gospel as a caring and sharing community. Without question Crabb is correct on this score. The problem is that the visible branch of the Holy Christian Church is still sinful. It is not always as caring and sharing as it should be. If too much emphasis is placed on the church doing the work and not enough on God whose work is being done, disappointment is bound to follow. As has been stated before, if we could wish for any improvement in Crabb's work it would be more emphasis on the acts of Christ rather than on the acts of the church of Jesus Christ.

The cure is the final replacement of Scripture as source and norm

1. Luther's Works vol. 31 (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House 1957), page 25.

we will consider. This may seem like putting the cart before the horse and it probably is. We are referring to the fact that many people consider something valuable only if it works and if it works quickly. We live in an age when people expect to get better if they want to. No one likes to hear a doctor say that the wound will take time to heal or that no medicine will cure the virus. We want to be told that if we take this medication or if we read this book or if we hear this lecture, things will get better. Anything that works when and how people want it to work makes an acceptable source and norm. Testimonies of various people reinforce the idea that there is a cure for whatever is ailing you. We look at the results to see what books, what writers, what pills deserve our attention. We read in the newspaper about what has been done in cancer research, for example, and suddenly every cancer patient wants to be a subject for some new experiments. The same thing is true in counseling. Rather than looking at whether something is genuinely Christian and biblical we tend to look at what works and then justify using it whether it is biblical and Christian or not.

On the other side of the same coin, we can generally count on God's way of healing to work more slowly and often more simply than man's. God's Word confronts sinners with their own sinfulness which they don't want to see and shows them the answer in Jesus Christ where they don't want to look. It is easy to avoid the proper application of law and gospel because they don't tell people what they want to hear. They don't seem to present the right cure. Naaman wasn't impressed with the cure Elijah gave him, almost to the point of missing all the benefits. The Bible presents countless other examples of people who went away to walk no more with God just as the people turned away from Christ when he made it clear that he had no intentions of being their "bread

king." Every pastoral counselor has probably worked with an individual who seemed very serious about improving a condition, emotion or relationship only to see that person give up. When the person has been confronted with his sin and sees that repentance is the only way to correct a bad situation, many would rather keep their problem than face God's solution.

The replacements for Scripture as source and norm for doctrine and practice may be blatant or they may be subtle. They come at us in many different forms; some come from within us. Any time something replaces Scripture as source and norm for doctrine and practice a potential for spiritual tragedy exists. We have an obligation to the people we serve to be ready to warn them of the dangers. We must offer the alternatives that God offers. Scripture may not be as popular as some of the people who claim to write scripturally, but it does provide the answers. If we have failed in this area it is not because we don't know the Bible, it is because we don't know how to apply the Bible to our people.

Others are trying desperately to find ways to give people the help they want, need and deserve. Most of them are handicapped in their work because they don't have the conviction that Scripture is the source and norm for doctrine and practice that we have. Yet they are doing their work and trying their best, and many of our own people appreciate it very much - too much. If we are going to win people for the Savior and keep people with their Savior, we need to use his Word. If we fail to address the people we serve with the application of God's Word to their lives, we have no one to blame but ourselves when they accept a message that comes from somewhere else.

CHAPTER 10

THE CONSEQUENCES OF REPLACING SCRIPTURE AS SOURCE AND NORM IN PASTORAL COUNSELING

Whether Scripture is replaced with something else in a subtle way or in blatant disregard for it, the consequences are always serious. Whether it is replaced with something else in our pulpit or in our counseling session, we as pastors are being unfaithful to Scripture. We do serious damage when we replace Scripture as source and norm in pastoral counseling and psychology.

Not many people take that vow of faithfulness to the Word of God more seriously than the members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We have only God to thank for that; grace alone allows us to make that statement. We have a double responsibility then to be sure that on all fronts and at all times we are reaffirming our faithfulness by examining it with renewed study of the Word of God. If we expect our people to be like the Bereans, we must be their examples.

It is impossible to keep up with all that is new on the market for our people to read about solutions to their daily problems. No one would have time or resources to know even what kind of material is available for the pastor as counselor. Any pastor could fill his week with seminars, lectures, books, newsletters and so forth and still not begin to cover what is available. That says nothing of all the other responsibilities the average pastor has to his people. The problem of time in itself accounts for two of the consequences of replacing Scripture as source and norm with something else. Somehow we must be careful

not to devote too much or too little time to this study. We must find a balance that allows us to be knowledgeable enough to direct our people and still available to help them when they need help. Similarly, it would be a mistake to be so devoted to counseling that no time remains to preach profitable sermons or visit. A great burden could be lifted from busy pastors if competent Scriptural material were available to read. That would make it unnecessary to sift through material that contains false doctrine or no doctrine at all looking for something valuable.

One of the problems a busy pastor has is finding the time to do the counseling he would like to do. Rather than spending the time to counsel new cases, it is easy to pull a book off the shelf, give it to the person to read and leave it at that. As we have seen, books are available to deal with almost any kind of problem our members might have. Pastors can buy them as well as members. Once these books become part of the pastor's library, they may also become part of a lending library, a resource library for people to use when they have problems. A resource in counseling is one thing, a replacement for counseling is another.

When a parents comes to their pastor with a problem raising a teen-ager, that problem could involve a great deal of the pastor's time. It might begin with a meeting with the parents. It might continue with one or more meetings with the adolescent. Then sessions with parents and teen-ager together might follow. An investment of ten to fifteen hours might be involved. The time involved could easily exceed that. For some reason, maybe just Murphy's law, those problems seem to surface at the wrong time. Perhaps a pastor receives the initial plea for help on Ash Wednesday. Does the pastor have the time to deal with the matter

adequately? Should he postpone the sessions until after Lent is over? Might he give his people the impression that he is just too busy to deal with them at all? Will they come back for help again if they are denied help now? All kinds of thoughts like these go through a pastor's mind. No wonder many pastors are content to tell their people that fortunately the church has purchased Dobson's Preparing for Adolescence tapes and the tapes are available for them to borrow. Perhaps they will help. The pastor has done something to show his concern. He has provided the people with material that speaks to the problems they face. He is free to do the other work weighing on him at the time. But what has he really accomplished? How much help was the material? What did the people get out of it? How are they doing with their problem? The investment of time varies considerably between these two scenarios. One may involve ten or fifteen hours the pastor doesn't have. One may involve ten minutes. In the final analysis, it wasn't the church that answered the need, it was the material available to borrow. How can we deny that we have given our people the impression that the producers of the material are more concerned and more competent to answer their questions than we are?

Another factor involved in this type of counseling ministry is that members may actually appreciate this kind of help for the wrong reasons. When a person uses his or her pastor as a resource library, a pastor should naturally wonder what kind of problem is leading the member to ask for resource material. If a person asks for something to read on self-esteem, for example, the pastor might expect that the member has self-diagnosed a problem with low self-esteem. A bit of experience reveals that most people who do have a problem with low self-esteem don't ask for help with the problem. They are too ashamed to ask

for help. They don't even want to admit their low opinion of themselves to themselves. Sometimes people practically need to be told they have low self-esteem because they have refused to acknowledge it. That experience reveals that if a person thinks he or she has a low opinion of himself or herself, the diagnosis might be incorrect. It is entirely possible, for example, that what the person thinks is low self-esteem is really an unwillingness to admit that he or she doesn't always have his or her own way. The simple request for a book on self-esteem may be a cover-up for confronting the first commandment applied very personally. If other people don't always give you what you want, a strong possibility exists that God doesn't always give you what you want either. That makes it unnecessary to confront problems personally where sin may need to be confessed. Depending on the problem, a person may not think it necessary to confront sin at all. The busy pastor may have freed himself for other things, but the need of an individual may have gone unmet.

On some occasions I have refused to give people material that may have been valuable to them because I felt they were already experts on the subject in question. That may not mean they were experts in the good sense of the term. A person with his or her own library of books on personal problems probably must still face the biggest problem of all. That is that all those books were purchased with the intent of finding something that would make all the problems go away with no personal effort. Many people are experts at avoiding a confrontation with themselves and where they stand before God. In fact, we must say that by nature all of us are inclined to avoid such confrontation. Almost unwittingly, a pastor can give the impression that buying or at least reading one book or another is a suitable substitute for diligent

Bible study together with the pastor who has been called to serve in that situation. If we begin the healing process by opening a book other than the Bible to our people, we are telling them that something else will give them the answer they can only expect to get from God.

Hopefully our members come to us as pastors because we are spokesmen for God. If we have gained a reputation as something other than that, we are not being faithful to our central calling. If we have a reputation as good counselors, we must be good counselors as spokesmen for God. If we have a reputation of passing off counseling responsibilities to writers in the field, we shirk our calling as spokesmen. Those writers become prophets instead of us. None of them have spoken the same vows of faithfulness to the Word of God that we have.

If we do choose to refer our people to other writers, other lecturers or other counselors, it is up to us to recognize that they in turn become God's spokesmen on our behalf. We have recommended them. It is our responsibility to know what we are recommending. That can be just as time-consuming as the counseling itself. We should not be too ready to admit that the work should be left in the hands of "experts." We are the experts on the Word of God and we have no reason to apologize for that as counselors that we do as preachers.

Even though we cannot begin to read books as fast as countless others can write them, still we can have a general knowledge of what those writers are saying. We should know Reformed theology when we see it. We know what the dangers and flaws are in it. We can, generally speaking, expect Reformed theology from Reformed publishing houses.

The same is true with Roman Catholic or humanistic writing. We may not know every Roman Catholic thought that has been expressed, but we have been trained to know what the general doctrinal base is. That

should be enough to make us skeptical about the value of such things as the "Marriage Encounter" or books that come from publishing houses that we know have a particular doctrinal stance.

Our people may not know the differences in doctrine that exist among the Reformed, the Roman Catholic and the humanists. It is our responsibility to teach them to recognize those differences when they see them. We need to warn against the consequences of following them. We need to teach them the dangers of errant doctrine especially when writers are speaking directly to problems our people are facing. Any answer is not necessarily better than no answer at all. We are the ones with the primary responsibility to help our members recognize God's answers.

The second consequence of replacing Scripture as source and norm for pastoral counseling is that our people will go to someone else to help them deal with their problems. Our people have many different kinds of problems. They may range from limited communication skill to serious emotional or psychotic disorders. Our people will seek help in dealing with those problems when the pain of their problem is sufficient to move them to do so. If they cannot come to us, what will they do? The answer is obvious: if for one reason or another they cannot come to us, they will go to someone else. The field is wide open. They can go to authors, lecturers, tapes, videos, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors or trusted friends. Unfortunately most of these will not convey the message of God's Word troubled people need to hear.

On the market of Christian literature, virtually nothing deserves our complete support. Nothing deserves to be called biblical and Christian in our sense of the words unless it begins with full endorsement of

our position on Scripture and works from the Scriptural premise of sin and grace. This is not said to sound snobbish. We hold our position on Scripture as source and norm for doctrine and practice because that is the position the Bible teaches us to hold. Our definitions of Scripture as source and norm are the definitions the Word of God leads us to accept. No one can do work that we can accept as biblical and Christian if the Word of God has not led him to reach the same commitment.

The literature we find on the market may not be wrong doctrinally, but that does not make it safe and worthy of our full endorsement. A book that does not teach something that is false may still fail to qualify as Scripturally sound. For example, books on marriage can be either biblical or non-biblical. The biblical material deals with a very small portion of what God has to say in his entire Word. All of us know how important a proper understanding of Ephesians 5:21 and following is to an understanding of the marriage relationship. A book may say some beautiful and helpful things about marriage, but if it fails to deal adequately with the relationship between Christ and his Church, the material is unacceptable. To put it in other words, it is hard to disagree with a doctrine when the doctrine is not stated. It is the absence of doctrine that makes much of the material dangerous. If there is no doctrine presented in it and it still gives the impression of being biblical and Christian, then the obvious conclusion is that Christian and biblical don't necessarily have to do with doctrinal statement when no doctrine has been stated. St. Paul says, however, that doctrine is the essential reason why God gave us Scripture. Jesus left the commission to teach to his church as the essential part of his great commission. Without Scripture we can have no doctrine that deserves to be called biblical and Christian. Without doctrine we cannot claim that

we are being biblical.

Our people face conflict with humanism and materialism every day. The one haven they have to depend on is the church that by grace is faithful to the Word of God. If they are allowed to think that earth-centered and human-oriented thinking is Christian and biblical, then they have lost the refuge and strength that God wants them to have in his church. At the very least we can expect to lose them to a church body that will answer their human needs, because they have learned that we are doctrinally indifferent to their problems. At the worst they will be lost to the kingdom of God altogether because we allowed them to focus on earthly problems with earthly solutions and no Savior from sin.

Jesus set our priorities when he told us to seek his kingdom and his righteousness first, trusting that everything else would be added as well. The natural human inclination is to reverse those priorities. A person who continues to stand by those priorities will probably never get around to seeking the kingdom of God and Christ's righteousness at all. Yet this is exactly the procedure most writers of Christian counseling material follow. The exceptions to the rule are all too few and they are probably not in the hands of the general reader. Instead the field that is forging ahead to meet people where they live is humanistic psychology. The authority on human problems is the counselor who is an "expert" in dealing with a particular problem. These counselors come with no guarantee for their competence, let alone their Christianity.

The sad fact is that almost anyone with or without qualifications can be a counselor and probably maintain a successful practice. These are the "experts" our people learn to trust. While there are licensing procedures for clinical psychologists there are no such licensing procedures for those holding degrees lower than that in many states. A

person with a master's degree in social work can claim to be almost any kind of counselor he wants to be. This fact addresses only secular qualifications. It says nothing of a counselor's Christianity or position on the Word of God. A member may ask the pastor to recommend a Christian counselor. All that says is that the person doing the counseling may be a Christian. It says nothing about his counseling procedures. Many pastors have probably felt like answering, "What about me?". We may be too ready to assume that Christian counselors will do Christian counseling with our people and do it competently just because the counselor says he or she is a Christian.

Our people make use of these counselors on a regular basis. We can be sure of that. We cannot be sure of what they are hearing. On some occasions it may be possible to do cooperative counseling with a qualified counselor or licensed psychologist. That individual may allow the pastor to supply the spiritual insights necessary to do truly Christian counseling. He may be willing to submit his learning to God's authority. If that happens we can thank God for the learning experience we gain and especially for the maintenance of the Scripture's integrity. The occasions for such work are few, and they are time-consuming. They are, nevertheless, worth the effort.

In this setting, perhaps the most frequent opportunity we might have for cooperative counseling is in a local hospital's detoxification unit. These alcohol and drug abuse rehabilitation centers usually involve counseling work. Most of them make significant use of the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. That means there is a spiritual side to the counseling being done. Those who follow the principles as they are set down by Alcoholics Anonymous will be confronted with the acknowledgment of a being greater than themselves who must supply the

strength for rehabilitation. This could be a wonderful opportunity to tell a straying Christian more about who that supreme being is than he or she ever knew or understood before. Not all pastors have received that kind of cooperation, but where it is available, the potential for truly biblical and Christian counseling exists. Where it does not, we will be at odds with the program from beginning to end. The consequences of alcoholism could be a very effective message of the law. The assurance of forgiveness could be more meaningful than ever before. The motivation of the gospel to change a sinful life can do what no human being could ever do if we are allowed to present it.

In its raw form Alcoholics Anonymous and their principles provides one of the best ways to make a human being into a professing, testifying pharisee. Generally speaking, Alcoholics Anonymous will not tell people about their Savior, Jesus Christ. That's our job, and we have no reason to expect someone else to do it for us. As we have stated before, if one evil is driven out of a person's life another will replace it. In this case, soberness may be obtained, but if the recovering alcoholic finds his strength in what AA has done for him, and his glory in what he has done himself, trading one for the other is not a benefit. Only a doctrinal presentation of law and gospel can set the priorities in the right order. We are the presenters.

The third of the consequences of replacing Scripture as source and norm in pastoral counseling is giving our people the impression that God's Word does not apply to their lives. If we allow someone else to do the job God wants us to do or if we use some other tool than the Word of God for doing the work, we are guilty of saying that God's Word is meant for Sunday morning, but not for the rest of the week. Not one pastor among us has ever knowingly tried to give that impression. For

that commitment we thank God. We must be just as aware of the fact that the Word is meant for the entire lives of our people when we counsel them as when we preach to them.

It has been said that with more faithfulness in our preaching of the law and gospel we might be able to avoid some of the counseling we need to do. There is some truth to this. When the Word of God is applied to the lives of our people from the pulpit, they will see for themselves that the law and gospel do have a place in their lives beyond the walls of the church. When exegesis leads to a clear unfolding of the truths of Scripture it will apply to living people in a living way. Once again we can thank God that this is the process we are taught in our seminary and one we hopefully practice in our own pulpit. We address our people in the setting of their daily lives with the changeless Word of God because it is alive to their needs. It is the authority they need to have in order to give meaning and direction to their existence.

This axiom of vital, scriptural preaching involves a relationship with our people that is both public and private. No pastor will be able to address the needs of his people if he does not know what those needs are. We cannot meet their needs satisfactorily without the pulpit and the study. We cannot get to know our people, however, from the pulpit or from the private study where we work alone. We get to know our people by talking to them and by listening to them. As we hear their problems in the counseling session we have first hand information about what they really need to hear. While we don't preach to one person or to one person's problems, we may begin to recognize that many people seem to be dealing with the same problems.

The basic needs of all people are the same. We are sinners and we need a Savior. Are we content to leave it at that, failing to find out what kinds of sins are involved, what kind of proclamation of the law is necessary and how the gospel can best be communicated. One pastor said that in his counseling experience, every problem was ultimately the result of a weakness of faith. One wonders how much counseling he did? That is a failure to be concerned about the needs of his people. We all know our people have weak faith. We all know that weak faith causes problems. We have the same problems our people do in that respect. The question is, what are we going to do about the weakness of faith? Every sin is ultimately a sin against the first commandment, but God did give us nine other commandments because his Word meets us in every aspect of our daily lives. That includes our thinking, our talking and our actions.

We need to know the Word of God first and we need to know our people second. Knowing our people should make us better students of the Word of God. If we don't care enough to do that additional study, our people will go to someone who will care enough about them to consider their problems seriously. More than likely the person they turn to will not have the necessary knowledge or appreciation for the Word of God to help them the way God wants them to be helped. How can they have it when we are the one who are supposed to teach that appreciation.

From a human standpoint, when something hurts, people want the pain to stop. When it hurts it doesn't matter much how they get it to stop as long as it stops. That is the precise reason why we need to be concerned and caring individuals. Being concerned and caring individuals is not enough in and of itself, but that is not all we are. We are messengers of the Word of God. When we don't care, it leaves the

impression that God doesn't care. When we don't give the answers people need to hear from God's Word, we give the impression that God's Word doesn't contain the answers. When people don't get the answer God wants them to have from us, they will look for someone else's answer. That other answer might help the person feel better. It just might, however, leave a person content and thinking that everything is fine when there is nothing fine about his relationship with God.

We can tell our people that there is nothing in the world more valuable than their own soul and nothing that God would want them to exchange for it. It is hard to remember that in the depths of a depression, when a marriage isn't working, when the children aren't acting the way they should, when you're having trouble communicating with your spouse. It takes time and energy, prayer and study and, above all, the grace of God to tell a person in any of those conditions what God wants him to know, both law and gospel. But the Word of God does have something to say to all of these things and a multitude of others. How often should our people be allowed or even encouraged to find answers somewhere else than in God's Word? Once would be too often. The cost is too high to allow it. We need to know our people as living blood-bought souls at work in a sinful world where only God can get them through it victoriously.

When we know our people that way, the preaching we do will be more effective, and perhaps it will make our counseling time even more efficient. It is also possible that preaching so that people know that God and his preacher understand their needs will increase the amount of counseling a pastor does. What really matters either way is that God's people will know God's messenger is there with the Word of God for them.

CHAPTER 11

THE APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE

AS SOURCE AND NORM IN PASTORAL COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGY

The method of presenting Scripture as source and norm for doctrine and practice in this thesis may leave the impression that no counseling can be done unless the Bible is the source of the counseling material. While our method has been intentional because of the careless way most modern writers treat the Bible, it is not our intention to rule out every resource but the Bible. Reason does have its place. Common sense does fit into counseling and psychology. In fact, some of what the Bible says, for example in the Book of Proverbs, appears as common sense direction for living rather than specific law and gospel. None of these resources is complete in itself to qualify as Christian and biblical counseling, but each has its place as long as Scripture remains the norm for evaluation.

Our primary emphasis up to this point has been on Scripture as the source for doctrine and practice in pastoral counseling. A substantial amount of material is available that makes little if any reference to Christ and his work to save us eternally and to motivate and direct us daily in love. We want to be sure that Christ is at the center of our counseling just as he is in all the work we do as pastors. Then our work deserves to be called Christian and biblical.

In addition to our study of Scripture as source, we need to focus some attention on what it means to have Scripture as our norm. It is the standard by which we must measure and judge all the counseling

material we use. We will naturally be measuring and judging such things as common sense, reason, therapies and written materials.

The work we will be discussing in this chapter deserves an entire treatise of its own. Hopefully the need for such a treatise will be satisfied. With the Scriptural foundation we have in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and with the interest and experience of pastors and professors, we certainly have the capabilities and facilities for producing such a work. Prof. Armin Schuetze is currently addressing our counseling responsibilities in writing. I will concentrate primarily on such things as personality disorders and emotional problems. Depressions, stress, anxiety and mental disorders in varying degrees of severity and kind all fall under these considerations. In this chapter we will consider first what we can do currently and second what we can do in the future to strengthen ourselves as Christian counselors equipped with the Word of God.

THE APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE AND CURRENT THOUGHT

At first it might appear that our definitions of Scripture as source and norm severely limit the material that we can use or would want to use as pastoral counselors. Actually, the opposite is the case. When a counselor starts with the premise that the Bible is the source and norm for his teaching, wide varieties of material become available to him. This is the premise that Crabb uses in his concept of "spoiling the Egyptians." He draws from many different philosophies and therapies to produce a workable model for Christian counseling. The essential matter for us is the place of Scripture as source and norm.

As we apply Scripture as source and norm in pastoral counseling we will not forget the essential doctrines of anthropology and soteriology that most Christian writers are inclined to pervert, forget or take for granted. We can never take our salvation in Christ for granted no matter what difficulties we or our people are experiencing in life. That fact is evident every time we make a call in the hospital. Our member may be in pain, depressed, anxious or perhaps joyful over what he or she is experiencing there. None of these emotions, however, are the primary reason the pastor makes his hospital call on the person. The reason the pastor ministers to that person is that he or she is a child of God who needs the assurance of God's love and power at work for him or her. Even though the person may be afraid to have surgery, the pastor is present to assure God's presence and blessing for Jesus' sake. God does not stop being our Savior from sin and start being our guardian in surgery or illness. He is both our Savior first and then our guardian second.

If we remember this essential fact of our salvation in Christ and keep it before our people, we can look to God to be the healer of the emotional as well as the physical illnesses he allows to enter our lives. Most of the material available today ignores that essential feature of God's work. That turns God into the one who heals stresses, cures depressions and relieves anxieties. There is no question that he does all these things but he does not do them instead of saving us, he does them because he saved us.

We cannot address a single matter in our congregations without beginning with the law and gospel. We would have no reason to have physical property to maintain if it were not for the fellowship that we have as believers based on the Word of God. We would have no reason to

carry on mission work or even to have a congregation at all if we were not blessed with the Word of God and the privilege we have to share it. Without the Word of God a church is only an organization of people committed to some purpose. Without the Word of God our counseling is likewise shallow, hollow and aimless. I would submit that no part of our ministry is more susceptible to that trap than our counseling work. The pressures on us and on our people from numerous outside sources are monstrous.

As we have stated, the amount of material available on any of the subjects mentioned and many more as well goes beyond imagination. While some of the writings are of little if any value, some do make good sense. They do provide logical and effective paths to follow to find relief from many emotional problems. Some of these writings can be called biblical and Christian in the limited sense we described earlier. Some make no reference to the Bible at all. In both cases the foundation of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ must be supplied by the counselor. Virtually nothing on the market today will do that for us. We have no reason or right to expect that anyone else should administer those essentials for us. That is the sum total of our ministry in a nutshell. In a sense the pastor is saying, "Salvation in Jesus Christ is what Christianity is all about. That is the greatest of God's works. The same God who has done everything to save you eternally can help you with this problem you are having too. Just remember that his love in Christ is what makes it all work in the way that is best for you. You have God's Word on it."

Material to assist us in counseling is available in the secular community and in the Christian community. In some ways it may be easier to apply counseling material in Christian counseling if it makes no

appeal to Scripture at all. Secular material does not claim to be biblical. It does not invite us to measure what is being said against the standard of Scripture. We know it is not biblical so naturally it is suspect from the outset. Material that claims to be biblical and Christian can lull us and our people into a false sense of security so that we don't bother to examine it with the scrutiny we should be exercising at all times. With secular material we can caution people to realize and recognize that it is secular material and probably does not agree throughout with what Scripture says. With material that claims to be biblical and Christian we may not be quite so ready to issue the same warning and our people may not be quite as ready as they should to read it cautiously.

Once we have measured and judged the writing by the standard Scripture sets we will know whether it is directly contradicting Scripture or stating something that Scripture does not declare right or wrong. If the presentation makes good sense we can provide the proper foundation of law and gospel and see whether the material may be helpful to the troubled person. We can't offer any guarantees about the material's helpfulness but we can be sure we have used the opportunity to apply law and gospel.

Many of our churches make either limited or extensive use of Dobson's materials in the forms of books, tapes, films and videos. Much of Dobson's work makes good sense and has some Scriptural support. Dobson's work, however, is not to shepherd the flock we have been called to serve. His work does not exhaust the responsibilities the pastor has to his congregation. His work does not address the full scope of needs our people have. His work is not the end of our counseling materials. His work is not the reason people come to our churches.

The Word of God is the reason our people belong to our churches. They may forget that occasionally. They may fall victim to mistaken priorities. They may think it is the church's responsibility to address their problems. Perhaps that is our responsibility. But the daily problems of our people are not the reason for the church to exist. The Word of God is the foundation for the church and with that we address the needs our people have in the best way we can communicate it to them. If Dobson or one of the other writers aids us to communicate the Word better, then we should be using Dobson's material. If it detracts from the Word of God or gives people the wrong impression about what the church's work is, then we should not use it at all.

We must establish the foundation set by the Word of God. We are the shepherds God has placed in the locations we serve. Our responsibility is to give appropriate warnings about false doctrines that may be present. Our responsibility is to remind our people about the central truths of Scripture that may not be properly addressed in the writing other people do. Just as we are responsible for the words of others who may speak from our pulpits on various occasions, so we are responsible for the words of anyone who speaks on our behalf anywhere within the congregation even if that person is only speaking on tape.

Organizations within our Synod have made significant efforts toward informing the synodical membership in particular areas of concern. We receive numerous invitations to seminars and programs that deal with many of the areas of concern involved in this paper. We have programs on drug abuse, alcoholism, child-raising, pro life and many other subjects available to us. We appreciate very much the concern of the people involved to provide the indications of concern to our people that all these programs offer. We can assume they are always being

offered with the best intentions, the best of material and the best presenters available. It is no secret that outside of the church this same kind of work and more is being done.

The fact is that most of the experts in these areas of concern are also outside the church. They often become source material for the work we want to do. The setting we provide is Christian without a doubt. It is the work of a fellowship of believers. We are confronted with a problem then. If a presenter offers us good advice and a common sense approach to dealing with a problem, but his entire presentation is humanistic, where does that leave us? Do we challenge his humanism publicly in light of our Christianity? He came as a presenter dealing with a particular problem, not to propound a Christian point of view. Do we leave his presentation unchallenged and give our people the impression that they can accept his presentation totally? Any presentation of this nature can easily turn into a "humanism sandwich" with a Christian devotion at the beginning and the end and nothing but humanism in the middle.

Perhaps the answer to this dilemma is to create more experts of our own who know what Christianity is and why Christian motivations work while humanism only offers temporary relief at best. We need and have people who are thoroughly trained theologically and totally committed to the Word of God. All they need is a concern about any one of the problems we are dealing with and the desire and opportunity to learn as much about dealing with that problem as they can. Then we will have our own source material, expert source material, theologically trained source material to provide to our people. The essential ingredient is a theologically trained individual who is firmly committed to the Word of God. Without such a thorough understanding and commitment, humanism

will replace genuine Christianity.

It is easy for a person with wonderful intentions to seek expertise in a particular area of concern, perhaps drug abuse or child development. That person may become an expert too soon. His expertise in his specialized area is what pastors, teachers and people want to hear about. Perhaps he will offer his expertise to others without adequate foundation in the Word of God. That is offering expertise too soon. If he does not have a sufficient theological foundation in the Word of God, he may not be aware that his expertise is filled with false doctrine or humanism. Anyone who speaks to our people on our behalf must know false doctrine or blatant humanism when he sees it. Outside our circles that is almost all anyone will see.

Any pastor who has done counseling work with professionals and professional agencies knows that professionals often guard their professionalism jealously. They should do so. They have earned the right to be professionals in their field. We would be brashly arrogant to give someone we consult for help the impression that we know as much or more about his field than he does. A doctor whose patient claims to know more than he does could justifiably tell his patient to find another doctor, or perhaps that the patient doesn't need a doctor at all under those circumstances. Shouldn't we guard the precious heritage of the Word of God with the same kind of professional and Christian jealousy as someone in another field guards his professionalism?

We can use any material, any philosophy and any common sense approach to a problem as long as we remember to measure it first against what Scripture teaches. If Scripture contradicts what is being set forth, we must warn against it and disregard it. If Scripture says the same thing as the material does, we can encourage the use of it. If

Scripture says nothing about what the material is saying we can use it with sanctified reason. In all instances Scripture will always be the final judge of what we think, say and do. Nothing will be allowed to replace the central truth of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing will equal Scripture's authority. Everything will be done to encourage and strengthen a God-blessed relationship in Christ.

APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

No psychotherapy has yet been proposed that can be called Christian. All current psychotherapies are humanistic because of the basic humanistic philosophy of secular psychology. There is no reason why a psychotherapy cannot be genuinely biblical and Christian. It is not the term psychotherapy that rules out this possibility; it is the humanistic secular psychologists who rule it out. The only reason no Christian psychotherapy exists is that no Scripture-grounded Christian has organized it. Some psychologists, especially those within our circles, do what can be called thoroughly Christian psychotherapy. Now it is time to share that expertise with others.

To share competent expertise would naturally require a firm commitment to Scripture based on thorough knowledge and experience in working with it in the ministry. I also believe that a thorough knowledge of what the field of psychology has to offer is essential to organize such a Christian psychotherapy. I do not believe that anything short of a study of psychology on a doctoral level would provide that competence the work deserves. Without that kind of exposure to what psychology has to offer, we would spend more time defending our compe-

tence than our psychotherapy.

A psychotherapy that is truly Christian and biblical must begin with a detailed exegesis of Scripture in the light of its application to personal and emotional problems. Such a psychotherapy must maintain and build on the essential truths of law and gospel. It must begin and end with Jesus Christ. He is the beginning and the end of counseling because he is the Alpha and the Omega of everything.

People who are properly trained first theologically and then psychologically could be some of the most valuable resources we could have in the Synod for pastors doing their counseling work. We could address the needs of our people with our own writings. We can address conferences, seminars, meetings and so on with people who have the same kind of commitment to Scripture that all our called workers have. We could eliminate the idea that the only experts who can deal with our problems are outside our circles. God has certainly blessed us with the intelligence and the talent to gain this kind of expertise. All we need to do is to decide that the work needs to be done.

With this standard of Scripture as source and norm all attempts at integration that we have already discussed must be eliminated. The integration we refer to is the attempt to combine theology and psychology. The term integration gives the impression that two equals are being combined into a unit. Psychology and theology are not equals when Scripture is the source and norm for doctrine and practice. Theology is the only valid starting point and everything else must be considered an application. We should not be considering attempts at integration, we should be considering additional valid applications. Scripture will judge whether the applications are valid or not.

A study of various psychotherapies is beyond the scope of this

work. Books on current psychotherapies are available in any college or university book store, if not in larger secular book stores. Authors such as Collins, Walter Koehler, Crabb and others provide valuable insights into the relative usefulness of some moderns psychotherapies as they apply to pastoral counseling. A more thorough study could provide valuable information in a treatise intended to deal with the applications we are considering. We can say, however, that the field of psychology has made some valuable contributions to the work of emotional healing in the setting of pastoral counseling. Those contributions need not replace or contradict Scripture. Some thoughts can be used to apply Scripture.

For example, Ellis' rational-emotive theory says:

RET holds that virtually all serious emotional problems directly stem from magical, empirically unvalidatable thinking; and that if disturbance-creating ideas are vigourously disputed by logico-empirical thinking, as is done in the elegant form of RET, they can almost invariably be eliminated or minimized and will ultimately cease to occur.¹

What Ellis' school of thought maintains is that unacceptable behavior is also unreasonable behavior. Reason, properly used can alter inappropriate emotional behavior. When we place this theory in the context of repentance with the law as the guide for rational and God-pleasing behavior and the gospel as the motivation for changing the behavior, the result could be some valuable assistance in accomplishing our goal as Christian counselors. On the other hand, Ellis believes that human beings have the capability within themselves to act both rationally and irrationally. His thinking comes very close to saying that man is a morally, emotionally and rationally neutral being. That, of course, eliminates many of the essential values of his psychotherapy.

1. Raymond J. Corsini, Current Psychotherapies, Itasca, Ill.: 1979, page 187.

William Glasser's reality therapy deals with the responsibility for behavior. Eight principles are set forth to accomplish therapy.

- (1) Reality therapy is personal, that is, the counselor conveys a caring attitude. The pastoral counselor certainly cares about his people, but with much higher goals and for much higher reasons than any secular counselor could.
- (2) Reality therapy focuses on present behavior rather than feelings. As we have seen, our work focuses also on behavior because feelings are not appropriate standards for evaluating and strengthening our relationship with God.
- (3) Reality therapy focuses on the present. We also recognize the need to place responsibility for sin where it belongs, namely on the sinner. Reality therapy has some valuable techniques for training a counselor and a troubled person not to blame other people or other circumstances for their present condition.
- (4) Reality therapy makes value judgments. We could not agree with the values that reality therapy establish because they are subjective and humanistic. We could, however, replace those unacceptable values with the values God sets in his Word.
- (5) Reality therapy plans for change in behavior. This obvious concept is one that could benefit the busy pastoral counselor who needs organization both in his treatment and in his schedule for dealing with troubled people. On the other hand, we recognize that in the final analysis, God controls all the schedules anyone makes.
- (6) Commitment is the keystone of reality therapy. That is a commitment on the part of the counselor and the client to follow through with the plans that have been established and agreed on. Commitment is a matter that deserves serious attention when we are dealing with troubled sinners. Their counseling work will bring them into confrontation with the law and the gospel. The work is not finished unless that commitment is kept.
- (7) Reality therapies allows for no excuses for failures to meet commitments to the plan.

Again, some of this forcefulness probably should find its way into our counseling. We can easily allow people who aren't serious about working with their problems to put us off endlessly in a refusal to face the responsibility they have to live repentantly. (8) Reality therapy eliminates punishment as a means for changing unacceptable behavior.² In its proper context, the pattern of Christian discipline in love fits well. Without that Christian setting, reality therapy can become very permissive at this point.

Hopefully these examples show that not everything secular psychology has to say is bad. When nothing but humanistic standards are applied to the theories, we find nothing very useful to us. If, however, the Word of God establishes the source and norm for the psychotherapy, some basic thoughts and concepts, may apply to what Scripture already says. In addition, with the standard of the Word of God as the basis, some of the techniques suggested by these therapies may become tools for better communicating the Word of God to troubled people.

Another valuable contribution that psychology has made involves diagnosis. A vast amount of testing material is available to the competent psychologist. Evaluating various diagnoses in the light of scriptural principles of sin and grace would not be a difficult process. The following is part of a computer printed psychological test selected at random. The test can be written in any convenient location. It can be mailed or carried to any psychologist who is willing to allow the pastor to act as his agent. The fee charged for this particular test is \$150.00 paid to the psychologist who allows us to act as his agent to administer it. While most of us would not be competent to read and evaluate a large part of the test, what is presented in Appendix B would

2. Ibid., pages 316-323.

certainly be of some help if all involved thought the cost was worth it.

Some of the information provided by the example diagnosis found in Appendix B may be helpful to provide direction for our counseling. It could be helpful to confirm suspicions we might already have. It might offer insight into whether additional help is necessary from the professional community. It would provide the psychologist who might be called in with valuable information that could shorten the time needed for professional counseling considerably. The information could also provide a basis for communication with an outside cooperating professional while the pastor continues to carry on the work himself. To say the least, a counselor has a fairly clear picture of the personality and emotional structure of his member. Hours of counseling for observation can be eliminated with such available help. Considerably more could and should be said about this subject that falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

Whatever we would choose to use or disregard from psychologists and counselors must be determined by the Word of God. If we should choose to expound a truly Christian and biblical psychotherapy, it would begin with Scripture and be measured and judged by Scripture's standards. It would center in Jesus Christ both as the beginning and the end of Christian counseling. For all of these reasons I would propose that we can provide such a model for psychotherapy that is workable on any level of counseling and psychology. I would suggest the name Soteriological Psychotherapy to emphasize the source and norm aspects of Christianity. Such a psychotherapy can be established with the cooperative efforts of professionals working in counseling and medicine as long as all those involved understand the place of Scripture as source and norm and the place of Christ in the beginning, the center and the end of therapy. Such a model could serve an extremely valuable purpose

for all areas of pastoral counseling.

We must address the question of whether such competent professionals exist who would be willing to work with us in our concerns for genuine biblical and Christian counseling. Obviously not many such professionals are available to us who come equipped with their own commitment to Scripture as source and norm and their own readiness to address their clients with both law and gospel. It has been my personal privilege to work with some who can and do. The blessings this cooperation provides have been numerous.

What we can find more often in the professional fields are people who respect our commitment to Scripture and the belief structure we wish to maintain with our people. More often than not it has been my experience that if we remain professional in our sphere of expertise and allow others to remain professional in their sphere, we can provide each other with helpful information and service. I have been invited by medical doctors and nurses to minister to terminal patients I had not known previously. Some of these opportunities have resulted in eternal blessings. We thank God for providing the opportunities. I personally appreciate the privilege of working with these people professionally. The key factor is a mutual respect for the sphere of expertise. Cooperation and competent work stems from that mutual respect. We need not think that everyone outside our fellowship has the goal of destroying Christian faith and commitment to the Word of God. My experience has been that many professionals who do not hold our commitment to the Word of God themselves are very willing to accept the commitment we have. Many respect us for holding the position we do even when they do not fully understand the depths of it. We cannot allow our personal suspicions to keep us from exploring the possibility of cooperative work.

SUMMARY

We have considered only a few areas in which our work as pastoral counselors could be applied and expanded. The applications deserve much more thorough attention and thankfully they are receiving more attention within our circles. No matter how much work we do we will always face the same responsibility. We must draw from Scripture everything it has to say to the specific needs of our people. We must measure everything we do and everything we share by the standard which Scripture sets. We will continually remind our people that above everything else they are the people of God only for Jesus' sake. Nothing God does for us is more important than his work to save us. Nothing can replace that work our Savior has already done. All we need and want to do is to increase our competence in bringing the message of our God into the lives of our people no matter what they are facing in their daily lives. God always has a message intended just for them.

CHAPTER 12

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAITHFULNESS TO SCRIPTURE AS SOURCE AND NORM IN PASTORAL COUNSELING

The final question to address is what will happen when an individual pastor, his members and our Synod remain faithfully committed to Scripture as source and norm for doctrine and practice in pastoral counseling. Just as we have seen that unfaithfulness has undesirable consequences, faithfulness produces rewards by God's grace. Some of those consequences involve renewed commitment to old truths. Some involve an increased understanding and application of scriptural truths in the area of pastoral counseling. All of them involve the blessings God has promised to those who are faithful to him and his Word.

In the concluding chapter of this thesis, we will consider the three areas I have already mentioned. Faithfulness to Scripture as source and norm in pastoral counseling involves different things for different people. Faithfulness is a requirement of the pastor who does the counseling. It is a blessing to the member who is counseled. The Synod that trains people to be pastors and then also pastoral counselors is committed to the same faithfulness.

We must accept ourselves for what we are and what we have. We need not apologize for our Scriptural principles in the work of pastoral counseling even though others might think Scripture is an inadequate tool for counseling. In some cases, however, we can do more. Growth in knowledge and experience should always be an ongoing part of the ministry. Our purpose here, as it has been throughout, is to recognize the

gift that we have when Scripture is our source and norm for doctrine and practice. Then we can strive to work with Scripture to produce pastoral counseling work that has the excellence Scripture both demands and deserves.

In the gift of his Son, God has given us the most precious gift we have. In his Word he has provided the absolute truth we must have to know him, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. That means God has provided us the only effective tool there is to do God's work. Counseling is only one part of that work, but it is an important part. Those who come to us for counseling are coming with a problem for which they need help. They know, by the grace of God, what they will hear from the pulpit. By the same grace they need to know what they will hear in their private counseling with us.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PASTOR

Jay Adams performed a great service for the church when he wrote Competent to Counsel. The benefits of his work are not so much in his theory of nouthetic counseling nor in his spiritualizing of problems that perhaps shouldn't always be spiritualized. They are certainly not in his Reformed theology. The benefits are in telling pastors, theologically trained servants of God, that they have the most important tool of all for doing counseling work. All too often we have heard and said that we just aren't qualified for the complex kinds of situations that counseling presents us time and again. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In that commitment to biblical counseling, Adams is certainly correct and deserves our attention. Crabb too has performed a

valuable service in this area. With more realism and faithfulness than Adams, he has presented us with the task in this important area.

Our position on Scripture is much more clear than that of either of these men or virtually anyone else who has published works on this subject. Rather than looking to men like Adams and Crabb to tell us what we can be doing and why, our theology, derived from Scripture, tells us everything we need to know. We need not sort through false or watered down doctrine to know what Scripture teaches about itself. We enter the ministry with a vow of faithfulness to the Word of God. Holy Scripture is our source and norm because Scripture says it is our source and norm. We have committed ourselves to Scripture because God has led us to that commitment.

No matter what problems people present to us in the counseling situation, Scripture tells us that we are always dealing with sinful human beings. Sinful human beings offend God's holiness by their nature as well as their actions. Those offenses against God's holiness cause disruptions in people's lives, in their relationships with others and especially in their relationship with God. Conscience speaks in many different ways. Conscience can be suppressed in many different ways. Still God's law speaks loudly and clearly of our sin in preparation for the gospel that heals the wounds sin has created.

This is perhaps the most difficult thing for pastoral counselors to remember. When people come with the vast array of problems they have and present them to us, it is easy to forget that there is not one righteous, not even one. No matter how badly people have been hurt by someone else, no matter how badly they themselves are hurting, they are still sinful human beings and the pain they feel is a symptom of that. We can easily allow the tears, the sadness and the pain to cause us to

ignore the fact that this person, no matter how badly hurt, no matter what someone has done to him or her, is still a sinner. The pain is merely an indication that something is wrong with a sinful human flesh. For example, when a person has experienced a severe loss, it is not unusual to be virtually without words to speak, much like the friends of Job who came to console him. Their words and comfort were no comfort to him at all in his grief because they did not confront Job's real problem. He was not guilty of great sins against God that he needed to confess. He was, nevertheless, a sinner. The things that happened to him happen to people in this world because the world and everyone in it is sinful. Job's pain was not the problem. It was only a symptom of the real problem. Job could not stand righteous before God on the basis of his own merits. He needed God's forgiveness to find peace, not a declaration of guilt or innocence from his friends.

Sympathetically we might look at the person in the office and see his or her tears and think that our responsibility is to find a way to stop the tears. Kleenex can take care of that. However, when we remember the essentials of our work we may soon realize that the tears may be some of the best clues to the real problem. We may not want to stop them any more than a doctor would want to deaden pain before finding out what is causing it. This one example only serves to illustrate the countless ways that sin can hide itself behind something else. We are detectives in a sense, but the case is already solved. We know the people we counsel are sinners.

We are not seeking to find out whether a person is a sinner who needs God's forgiveness, we only need to know what kind of a sin is involved. The person may need to confess a sinful action. The sin may be hidden deep in his or her heart. Pride and self-righteousness might

be hidden behind the tears that show how badly the person has been hurt by someone else. When we find out what kind of sin is involved we can find the best way to apply the gospel of forgiveness. No one will appreciate that forgiveness until he or she knows it is necessary. It may be difficult, for example, to tell a person in the depths of depression about sin. Most counselors warn against it. In fact, they say, confrontation with sin will only drive him or her more deeply into depression. That happens, however, only when we forget that we confront sin in order to present the gospel. We can't simply say that depression is sinful and leave it at that. We need to look for the root cause. Is it clinical? Is it the idolatry of wanting someone or something more than God? Is it a failure to take care of one's own body? When we begin to understand some of those things more completely, then we will be able to use the gospel more effectively. The gospel is the motive for change. The law shows the need for change and gives direction for change that the gospel motivates in a Christian.

The use of the law in counseling is not a difficult concept to find among modern writers. Much of what is called biblical could be natural law just as well as revealed law. Much of it simply falls into the category of common sense, and much of that comes from the natural law. The gospel is difficult to find among modern writers. Unfortunately, most of what our people have available to read has little if any gospel in it at all. Occasionally there is a word about forgiveness, but that is no more a presentation of the gospel than hanging a plaque in the house that says "Christ is the Head of this house." How much truth do we allow to come through the words?

A real presentation of the gospel involves a great deal of human, not humanistic, psychology. The gospel presents everything that human-

istic psychology cannot begin to understand. Human psychology (again note the distinction from humanistic) begins with the understanding that we have a God to whom we are responsible. We have offended God and satisfaction must be made for those offenses. The gospel, first of all, tells us that God knows all about our situation. He is concerned first and foremost with the broken relationship between us and him. He invites us to admit our guilt instead of hiding it, rationalizing it, excusing it, blaming it on someone or something else, or covering it up as an illness. He invites us to realize that he will still talk to us. We are guilty of sin, but God still has an invitation for us to repent. As long as we are alive that invitation still stands.

In the gospel, God invites us to look at the matter of payment that must be made for sin. Rather than telling us what we can do to pay for it, he takes us to the cross of Jesus Christ and invites us to realize that our sin is there on the cross and Jesus paid for it in full. As Christian counselors we can say, "This is your sin Christ is carrying on the cross. He knows all about you, what you are and what you have done. You know that. Now why did Jesus die? What difference does it make to you now? You're carrying a load of guilt that you shouldn't be carrying because Jesus already carried it and paid for it." We can keep on working with the law and gospel until the person is ready to say in concrete terms, "He died for that sin of mine. I am forgiven."

This process goes directly to the root of the majority of human problems. All people know that sin must be paid for and that they are responsible to someone. They may not know to whom they are responsible and they may try to deny that responsibility, but that does not change the reality. People believe, by nature, that they must pay for their

own sins themselves. Countless thousands try to pay for those sins by punishing themselves to the point of mental and physical illness. Isn't it possible that Jesus was talking about just such a weight of guilt and payment when he invited people to come to him for rest? If sinners are shown by a spiritual visit to the cross that the payment was made for them, then consequently the reason for self-punishment disappears. Only the gospel can accomplish that.

Sadly, the matter of redemption, Christ's payment for our sins, while standard in our theology and preaching, is pitifully lacking in what is called Christian counseling. No matter how many books are written on the subject of counseling and no matter how much people claim to know about it, there is no reason for any of us to apologize for the fact that our equipment for counseling is the law and gospel. When we make use of the most obvious tool we have we are doing scriptural and Christian counseling. I believe that redemption has marvelous healing qualities psychologically. We overlook those qualities all too easily. Only through Christ's redemption can justification make sense. Only Jesus Christ can provide reconciliation between God and man. His work satisfied both God's justice and his mercy for us. Obviously those who overlook redemption will overlook justification as well. Worse yet, they will proclaim a justification that portrays the kind of "cheap grace" Bonhoeffer warns against so clearly. Cheap grace is forgiveness without repentance and without Christ's redemption to support it. That is not forgiveness as God intended it. It is not healing as some present it.

This brings us to the matter of genuine competence in the pastoral ministry. The tools can never be replaced. The law and the gospel are the tools that accomplish healing. None of us has any reason to say

that we are not prepared for our counseling work in the ministry. In fact, most of the time when we are forced into counseling situations that seem over our heads and we have nothing else to fall back on but our knowledge of Scripture as source and norm, we will do some of our best work. St. Paul knew what it meant to have God's strength at work when only his weakness was evident otherwise. We may not understand all the intricacies of a particular problem, particularly if it is an emotional disorder, but we will be using the right tools to deal with the problem. This has been the experience of many pastors, young and old alike. While they may express the inadequacies of their training in pastoral counseling, they usually show considerable competence to deal with those problems. That is because the Word of God is the tool that does the work. Pastors may have done sound and competent Christian counseling while feeling very inadequate to do it.

On the other hand, we recognize that there are some who have particular gifts and interests that lend themselves to this special part of the ministry. As with any of the gifts God gives, service to God requires and motivates excellence. We will not learn much from the field of psychology because the basic premises are diametrically opposed to God's own premises. We will not learn anything that would change our purpose as we do Christian counseling. Some counseling skills and valuable techniques may be available to help with our work, but nothing that would make it unnecessary to use the law and gospel.

The study of modern psychotherapies has only limited value. It does help us understand what is available to a public that has become very sophisticated in the use of psychology. Such a study may call to mind some applications of Scripture that we might have otherwise ignored. However, as pastors committed to the Word of God, the study of

humanistic psychotherapies is no more valuable than a study of evolution. We may never use such material, but we might want to know what is popular.

We cannot be so naive that we think that just because we have the Word of God and our commitment to it, we likewise have all the effective skills we will ever need for communicating it. Experience alone will provide and sharpen counseling skills. Most pastors will gain that experience whether they want to or not. Some pastors may welcome the call for individual help that comes from their members, others may dread it. Only those who actively discourage people from counseling with them are likely to avoid gaining counseling experiences. As a general rule, everyone does things better the second time than he does the first time. We will probably be more proficient in recognizing a problem and correcting a problem if we have been through the situation before. That is what experience is all about.

Materials are also available that deal with counseling skills but don't waste time with psychotherapies and incorrect or incomplete theologies. We can obtain some valuable and time-saving skills by attending classes or seminars or reading books on simple counseling skills. The Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service has provided several seminars of this nature. Many secular universities provide courses in counseling techniques as part of their post-graduate courses in psychology. Courses in counseling skills can be very beneficial without demanding that we defend our belief structure or accept a faulty one. My personal experience with such a course was a very happy one. The instructor knew my position as a pastor and my commitment to Scripture. She knew that I was not interested in partaking in religious debates. She did not share our Lutheran theology, but she certainly respected

mine as did all the members of the class of thirty five. Again, I do not believe that everyone outside our circles intends to undermine or destroy the faith we have.

Courses in counseling techniques usually center primarily around actively listening and evaluating what people are saying. They involve organization of thought and counseling time so that a busy pastor has time to counsel and uses that time effectively. While the field of secular, humanistic psychology can offer us nothing as a tool to replace Scripture as source and norm, secular professionals have learned some valuable techniques for diagnosis and communication. In those areas, we don't need to reinvent the wheel.

We can also make use of the professional community in another way. Although it may not be common practice and it does involve a great deal of time, I have found it extremely helpful to work closely with members of the professional medical and counseling community. A respect for the professionalism of medical doctors and secular psychologists may provide a good working relationship with members of those fields. My experience is that doctors are frequently willing to discuss the condition of a patient so that families can reach God-pleasing decisions about future treatment. This is particularly true, of course, when ministering to terminal patients and their families. The same is true, however, when discussing a matter with a psychologist or psychiatrist. I have personally gained a great deal of insight into the problems people are having by discussing them with a psychologist whom I have come to know and trust. In most of those instances, the individual was not referred to the psychologist because I was able to continue the counseling alone. The insight was helpful and provided direction where necessary. The reason for having a good working relationship like that

did not stem from a common faith in all instances. It stemmed from a mutual respect. The doctors knew that I was not trying to do their job and they were not trying to do mine.

We might add, that in some cases, this outside assistance provides a warning that a problem might be more serious than it appears on the surface. That is a warning we need to consider very seriously and we can appreciate having it.

A great deal of helpful information can be gained from watching or participating with those who deal with this work daily. I am grateful for many opportunities to do so with people who understood that I have only one tool to work with. Some in the professional fields respect that same authority of Scripture. Many respect the pastor with such a commitment because they consider him a professional in his field allowing the doctor to be a professional in his. With that understanding there is seldom a problem in doing cooperative work.

One more skill in counseling which the pastor can gain with experience and education is that of recognizing just how serious some emotional disturbances can be. Alcoholism and drug abuse are easy to overlook in counseling. Many of us still have the idea that our people just don't have problems like that. My experience is not only that they do have those problems, but that they have them in about the same proportions that they occur in national statistics. Our churches are not havens for people to be able to live in a rose garden that is free from the problems of the outside world. We cannot treat our counseling work as if such a rose garden exists within our congregations. That simply is not the case.

Professional counselors will often be able to recognize such a hidden problem where we wouldn't think of such a thing. Frequently

people present suicidal thoughts and tendencies that are hidden in some other disguise or language. For example, a person may talk about how sad he feels for twenty minutes and only once say, "Sometimes I wish I wouldn't wake up in the morning." That may be a serious cry for help and a warning of suicidal thoughts and tendencies. A person may say, "I don't think I'll live to see another day." We can too easily content ourselves by saying, "Oh, you don't really feel that way, do you?" If the person says no, then a pastor might think his counselee has no further suicidal thoughts. That person could be dead before morning if we don't pay better attention to our work than that.

At times what seems to be an unusually strong anxiety or depression needs immediate medical attention as well as counseling. Families involved in such crises need to know how and where to get this kind of attention and treatment when it is called for. We need to know when it is necessary and how to help these families get the help. Most families are much better equipped to deal with medical emergencies than they are with emotional emergencies. The pastor is often the one they turn to for help. The experience of dealing with mental illness and personality disorders in this way is not pleasant for the pastor or for the families or for the person himself or herself. Nevertheless, these emergencies do occur and we need to know how to deal with them when we see them.

The list of skills that can be acquired by the pastor is lengthy. We have only one tool, Scripture, our source and norm for doctrine and practice. We can add many techniques and skills to the foundation we have. Secular counselors use different tools than we do. Most do not work with the Word of God. They work with various psychotherapies that are thoroughly humanistic. We have the tool we need in the Word of God. Some professional skills may help us as we use the Word of God in the

special setting of pastoral counseling. Any skills we can acquire to use Scripture more effectively only serve to make us more ready spokesmen for God as we preach his Word in public or in private.

CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR MEMBERS

People have different reasons for joining a particular church. Some of those reasons are wholesome; some are not. They can range from social ties to a commitment to sound doctrine. Somewhere within the spectrum falls a desire to have a place to turn when help is needed. The help people seek has a spectrum of its own. Some want spiritual help in crisis, some want financial help that the church may not be set up to give. The kind of help we are talking about is the help that comes from the Word of God and the application of law and gospel.

In our times the list of helping people and agencies is long. The church is just one on the list in the minds of most people. The days are past when people come to their pastor or to their church with family problems, emotional problems, personal problems or what have you because it is the only agency to which they can turn. As these lines are being written, a lifelong member of our congregation called to ask if I do counseling work. This only proves that people don't automatically think in terms of the church. This person turned to the church instead of a school counselor. I thank God she did. If people turn to the church with these problems they do so because the church has earned their confidence. In some cases people come only because it is less expensive to turn to the church than to turn somewhere else. But even the cost is not the factor it once was. Most insurance policies provide

for financial support in counseling to some extent. Consequently, if money is available either with the person himself or through insurance, it is more than likely that the person will not turn to the church for help, because it costs nothing to do so. Many feel that you get what you pay for.

Generally speaking the church no longer has a very good reputation for counseling. Most of that results from the competition in the secular field and with Christian book concerns that show more sensitivity to our people's problems than we do. In some ways that reputation might be earned. As we have seen, many religious leaders have ceased to be professional theologians for the sake of being amateur psychologists. Perhaps those people had no adequate Scriptural theology in the first place. The result is incompetence, and many in the professional community recognize this incompetence for what it is. That kind of incompetence is what has caused most of the tension between the professional fields and the clergy. It stems from an unwillingness to respect the professionalism of other professionals. Why should we expect professionals to respect our competence if we are not doing our job competently. We are pastors, not amateur psychologists. Any professional with the intelligence to earn his degree can recognize the difference.

A professional theologian, a pastor, is competent to do his work as a pastor. He is not competent to do the work of people like psychologists, who have much more training in their field than we do. We may not agree with their theories and premises, but they are much better trained in that area than we are. That does not mean their work will be more effective and more correct, it simply means that we are willing to respect their position and expertise even though we might disagree with

its foundation. Just as we would not think that a medical doctor is competent to preach a sermon, so he would naturally think that we are not competent to do surgery. He has his work to do and we have ours. It is not very likely that we would want to "play doctor" on a hospital visit, but we might give a psychologist the impression that we consider ourselves to be just as competent as he is. We may be able to do work that is psychological in nature as we deal with our people on the basis of Scripture, but we have not earned any degree whatsoever in psychology unless we have obtained additional training in that field. No wonder disdain is often expressed by those working within the professional counseling community toward those working within the church. We earn their disdain if we try to be something we are not. We are pastors. That is the highest calling God allows a person to hold. Why should we act as if we are ashamed of the fact by trying to act like psychologists?

Our priority in our counseling work is the same priority we have in our entire ministry. We are preachers of the Word of God. Sometimes we preach it publicly and sometimes we preach it privately. We can more easily ignore private proclamation of God's Word than public proclamation. Our people are much more likely to notice when we aren't in the pulpit than they are to notice that we aren't doing much counseling. With all the agencies and services available around us and with all the material that is available to read, we can easily turn the work over to someone else. The last thing we would want to do to or for our people is to give them a list of agencies to turn to for help with problems that we ourselves should be handling with them. While outside agencies will be needed from time to time for problems that go beyond the scope of our competence, people need to know that their problems always affect

or are affected by their relationship with God.

No good is accomplished by multiplying the agencies to which people can turn to find help. That often only multiplies the problem. Spiritual healing results when people confront their sins directly and learn more of Christ's forgiveness directly. That healing can only be accomplished when people address their problem with correct spiritual guidance. By nature we would all rather do anything than to repent. The natural man rebels against the admission of wrong and the work Christ has done as our Substitute. That may mean that in some counseling our people will not like what they hear. The old sinful flesh will urge them to avoid returning for such direct confrontation. With all the agencies and materials available, a troubled person might easily feel that he or she can go somewhere else to hear something that would be more tolerable to the sinful flesh. He or she can avoid confrontation with sin and grace. It is not uncommon, for example, for secular counselors to recommend extra-marital affairs for those who learn their spouses are having affairs. Alcoholics are commonly told they only have an illness. Some escape responsibility for sin that way. Certainly those words are easier for the flesh to tolerate than, "You have sinned. You need a Savior. Jesus is the Savior you need." How can this avoidance help to correct the spiritual problems that really exist? We certainly do not want to be party to providing even more escape routes for the sinful flesh to take.

Our people will have no problem finding outside agencies to help them with almost anything they might face. They may, however, turn to us as pastors for directions in finding the right kind of outside agencies. They may ask whether we know of any Christian counselors who can help them or any Christian books they can read. This is the perfect

opportunity to train them to ask the same question the disciples asked when Jesus wanted to know whether they wanted to leave with the crowd. The answer came in the form of another question. To whom would they go? Jesus had the words of eternal life.

When people hurt they want the pain to go away. Most of the time people won't even seek help until their pain is bad enough to do something about it. Family and friends may see the pain before the sufferer can see it himself or herself. To whom should one go? Would we allow that person to think that the pain is his or her only problem? Or would we allow a member to think that the Lord doesn't care or can't act on the sinner's behalf? Our real purpose is to teach our people that Jesus does have the answer to their problems and then show them that he does. We can easily speak words that are empty and meaningless because we have made no application of them. St. James warned against that kind of hollow Christianity. If we don't show that we care in order to show that the Lord cares, our people will look for someone who does show a little concern for them.

Naturally members of our congregations will turn to other agencies if they don't believe anyone within the church is competent or willing to help them. If they are to understand our competence, they must see our confidence in the power of the Word of God to help them. We would certainly give the wrong impression if we preached the Word of God on Sunday and then turned to all kinds of other "experts" and "expertise" in our counseling. If they are to see our willingness, we must be ready to act with the Word of God. Even in the most severe cases of mental disorder, one session can establish a plan of treatment that will center around the Word of God. Even when psychotic disorders are involved, the family can be shown that hospitalization and profes-

sional assistance are necessary only to obtain a rational mind so the Word of God we can once again share the Word of God.

Counseling is a very time-consuming part of the ministry. As stated before, I am convinced that the statistics involving those who need our special help are about the same both inside and outside the church. If one counseling treatment with one family involves fifteen to twenty hours over a period of weeks, we must still acknowledge that we have many more families in the congregation who need similar help. This factor alone makes it mandatory that we expend the time and effort necessary to become as proficient and efficient with our time as possible. In larger and sometimes even in smaller congregations, it is not unusual to have ten or twenty ongoing counseling responsibilities. Some pastors would be glad to have a number that small.

Counseling may not be a part of the ministry in which a certain pastor feels particularly comfortable. Some have more talents and interests in the work than others. That is not the point. Every pastor will do some counseling work. We can convey the impression that we don't have the time or talents for the work much more easily than we might think. Our people do have alternatives to us as counselors. If the church can't or won't help, then someone else will. Since our people look to us as spokesmen of God and since we are committed to being spokesmen of God, then our work is to share God's Word privately as well as publicly. If we give the impression that the church equipped with God's Word can't help, then we are conveying the impression that God can't help. More than that we are not permitting God to help because we are not conveying the means of grace, the tool through which the Holy Spirit does work. That is not a responsibility we can entrust to someone else.

We have an obligation to our people to be ready to hear their problems and their needs. We have the responsibility to claim no knowledge except Jesus Christ and him crucified. We need to know what problems require medical or other professional assistance, and then we need to stay with our people when they get it. We may know that nothing but the Word of God can heal them, but they will not know it unless we show them the truth of it.

The same thing holds true with the wholesale use of materials on the market such as books, tapes, videos and radio programs. Without doubt, much of this material can do a great deal to reduce the workload of the counseling pastor. That is not a special blessing. We may not need to counsel those people when they believe they have already received the answers they wanted somewhere else. The vast market of materials available can actually keep people from coming to us for help. That is no way to reduce a workload. We could just as easily tell people that if they listened to religious radio stations we wouldn't need to prepare sermons. They might easily conclude that these materials are offering them things their church can't or doesn't offer.

Our use of these materials could also be considered an endorsement. We may know what we are looking for in materials that come from outside source. We may know what is valuable and what is harmful in it. We have no right to assume that our people are that sophisticated. They may be sophisticated in what is new in psychology and counseling. They may not be so sophisticated in recognizing what is biblical and Christian in it. If they are hurting, they want the pain to go away. If it goes away without our ministry they may conclude that they don't need us or the Word of God. That conclusion holds very dangerous consequences for the troubled sinner. It is a shame to the church that allows it to

happen doing nothing to stop it.

Our members should be able to find within their church all the concern and compassion that writers like Bonhoeffer, Adams and Crabb speak about when they speak on the subject of the church. We should be able to add more meaning to the proper understanding of the church and its work because we know it is a union of believers in Christ gathered around his means of grace. We should understand the power of Scripture better than these various Christian authors express it in their works. To us Scripture is the power of God for salvation. When we show our people that we understand the priorities Jesus established for us, they will have a reason for learning the same lesson on priorities and following the same example. If that is the case the church will be the first place they will want to come. They will come because they will find their Savior there in a way they may not have known him before. They will not come because it is cheap, warm and friendly or accepting. The fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ is much more concerned about the eternal relationship with God than it is about providing temporary "cures." The church's goal is not for its people to merely feel better, the goal is to bring them closer to God and the genuine healing he provides. The pain they feel is a symptom, not the problem. Pain results from some kind of ailment that is always related to sin. Jesus has the answer to the real problem and he's the only one who does.

CONSEQUENCES FOR THE SYNOD

When we speak of the work of the Synod in pastoral counseling, we naturally begin with its primary agency for training pastors and fur-

thering their education, the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Here and in the Synod at large we have a great deal for which we can thank God. It is the expressed intention of all involved to carry on the commitment to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. If this were not the case there would be no point in talking about Scripture as source and norm in the first place. We thank God that within our fellowship there is no debate whether Scripture is the Word of God. There is no question that the Word of God is our infallible source and norm for doctrine and practice in all our work.

Our training in Scripture teaches us to use it as a unified whole with a unified purpose. Whether we apply law or gospel, we do it to convict the sinner of his sinfulness and show him his need for the Savior. Then, above all, we are privileged to show him the Savior God has given us. Without the continuation of such Christ-centered teaching and Scripture-oriented theology, nothing of any eternal value remains. We all pray that nothing of that will ever change either in our curriculum or in our philosophy.

We appreciate and praise the efforts of those who have written and are writing material on pastoral counseling in our circles. We pray that a growing awareness of all the other material available from outside sources will only encourage our constituency to provide even more material that addresses the needs of our people in their daily living no matter what kind of problems they may face. The Word of God always has something to say.

We appreciate the opportunities provided through Pastors' Institutes and the Summer Session at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to gain skills as pastoral counselors. These special opportunities address the special needs and desires pastors have to gain proficiency. Those who

want to do so have some vehicles for adding valuable skills within the framework of our fellowship. We can only encourage more of these opportunities for pastors with these special needs and interests.

A great deal of the work to provide additional training in counseling to graduates of our seminary has been done through the Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service. The agency has worked both within the framework of the seminary curriculum in Summer Session and in special seminar sessions. In addition to the specialized training the agency provides, the Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service also meets our members under special circumstances. Because of that we expect that this agency will work with the same thorough knowledge of and commitment to the Word of God that all our pastors have. Often our referrals to the WLCFS are direct referrals to a Christian agency of our fellowship. This is the only counseling agency that exists as such. We expect that competency motivated by a love for Christ and his people as well as devotion to his Word will prevail. We cannot give an unreserved referral without that confidence. Certainly it is the commitment of the Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service to live up to those expectations. They are not, after all, our expectations, they are God's expectations of his faithful people. Any agency representing the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has a mandate to produce material and do work that is biblical and Christian as God defines these terms. The Synod itself holds such a commitment. Its various agencies can only do likewise. Because of its strong influence in the area of pastoral counseling, we also look to the Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service to be the forerunner in teaching and exemplifying what is Christian and biblical. This calls for constant reevaluation and restudy of the basic principles of Christian, biblical counseling that we can take for gran-

ted all too easily.

In the commitment we have to Scripture we also have the strongest possible motivation for competence and excellence in the work we do. A multitude of resources is available for increasing proficiency in the application of law and gospel in pastoral counseling. Some of the best techniques might easily form course studies within the Summer Session, Pastors' Institutes or other seminars. Some pastors of the Synod may desire to advance their education in this part of the ministry and their work could be beneficial to many other pastors who have neither the time nor the resources for doing advanced work. We cannot say that the time spent on becoming more proficient counselors is wasted time unless nothing of value is presented. We have the gifts of God necessary within our framework to obtain valuable information and share it with others. All we need do is ask for it in prayer and in person.

The suggestions that have been offered all lie outside the curriculum of the Seminary. These are purposeful suggestions. The responsibility of the Seminary is to provide the Synod with pastors thoroughly trained in and committed to the Word of God. The work those pastors will do in their ministries involves much more than pastoral counseling. The Seminary is the place where the foundation of the Word of God is "set in concrete." The Seminary is not the place to offer skills that others see as replacements for the work Scripture alone can do. Doing pastoral counseling is no more separate from the Word of God than our preaching is. As with our training as preachers, so in our training as counselors, the Seminary teaches us to look only to the Word of God as our source and norm. After we have preached the Word of God we can learn ways to be better preachers. We can learn to know our congregations and their needs. We can develop skills and expertise that enables

us to do better work in less time. The Seminary is not the place to teach quick and easy ways to write sermons or to do counseling. Time and experience will show that our conviction is correct, only the Word of God can serve as source and norm. As the seminary graduate has opportunity to see this fact in action, he will view additional study as an aid to proficiency rather than a replacement for the essential equipment, holy Scripture. He will also have opportunity to evaluate whether he personally wants and needs additional proficiency. In either case the essential ingredient is the Word of God.

When we view the consequences of faithfulness to Scripture as source and norm from the standpoint of our members on a synodical level, the matter of publication becomes significant. A substantial portion of this paper has focused on the massive amount of material available on the Christian market. As we have seen, the amount of material that actually deserves to be called Christian and biblical in the full sense of the term is very small. This carries two implications for our work as a synod. We need to be extremely cautious about our endorsements of material that comes from outside sources. We can easily convey the impression that if our publishing houses sells material, it comes with complete endorsements. It is impossible to give complete endorsement to material that we have not been responsible to review and edit. That is not to say that our publishing house has no business selling material that comes from the outside. All of us as pastors know what a substantial part of an average pastor's library is not even Lutheran. Rather, it lays on all of us the responsibility to teach our people what to look for and accept as truly Christian and biblical and to warn them against what is not.

The members of our Synod look to our Northwestern Publishing

House to publish material that they can trust doctrinally throughout. We appreciate the thorough and scriptural standards with which our publications are produced. Since the material that comes from the Northwestern Publishing House comes as a representation of the doctrinal commitment of the entire Synod, we cannot allow for anything less than such high and exacting standards.

The publishing house regularly makes notations regarding the value and doctrinal integrity of material that comes from outside sources. By doing this the Northwestern Publishing House is providing a great service to our membership. We have every indication that the staff of the publishing house recognizes what an important service it performs when the substance of what is biblical and Christian and what is not is clarified for our people in book descriptions and notations. Such endorsements and warnings carry significant weight. We appreciate every attempt to provide our people with carefully and clearly worded descriptions of the material provided through the catalog of our Northwestern Publishing House. This practice has a significant impact on the understanding our people have of what is genuinely biblical and Christian.

We produce our own materials with a commitment to be faithful to Scripture in every sense. We can only encourage more production as time and facilities allow. We have the theological commitment to allow our people to see that there is a difference between material that is genuinely Christian and biblical and that which only claims to be Christian and biblical. Generally speaking I believe that most of our people who are looking for materials relevant to their own daily lives would prefer to obtain them through our own publishing house rather than another. The Northwestern Publishing House is certainly aware of the vast amount

of publishing being done by other Christian book concerns in the area of pastoral counseling. Sufficient evidence exists that such material is desirable and will be marketable. Our publishing house has increased its publication output considerably and has expressed the desire to do more. We can only hope that time, funding and facilities will allow for an increase in publications in the area of pastoral counseling as well.

SUMMARY

This paper has reaffirmed the commitment upon which the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod stands by the grace of God. Holy Scripture is the Word of God and as such is the only source and norm for doctrine and practice. Our attention has focused specifically on the application of this principle to that part of the ministry that we call pastoral counseling and psychology. Although this is only one part of the ministry of the pastor, it is a significant part of it. It is an area that is showing increasing importance and one in which many others are doing work that they are calling biblical and Christian. In all too many instances the work does not deserve the name. Nothing that comes from a lesser commitment to Scripture deserves our full endorsement.

We have been in a unique position with our doctrine of Scripture for many years. We have defended that position vigorously. God alone deserves the praise for leading us to that conviction and keeping us in it. Every Sunday we have the opportunity to reaffirm our position publicly from our pulpits. Every Sunday we attempt to bring the Word of God into our listeners' daily lives with direct application of our exposition of Scripture. In pastoral counseling that same application can be made on a direct and personal level.

That is our commitment and our prayer. May God keep us vigilant to anything that would weaken our commitment and effectiveness. May God strengthen us as we serve as his spokesmen to say "Thus says the Lord," whether in the public forum of the pulpit or the private forum of the counseling session. We are spokesmen for God - nothing else.

APPENDIX A

From 1517 to 1522 Desiderius Erasmus viewed the Reformation as an interested onlooker. In some ways he could actually find reason to admire Martin Luther, if for no other reason than that the Lord was using him to chastise and to purge the church with which Erasmus was content to hold loose connections. After the Diet of Worms, however, it became obvious that Erasmus needed to state clearly that He was not a part of the Reformation camp but actually a supporter of Rome. Erasmus' Diatribes on the freedom of the will was not something he had any real desire to write; he held no strong convictions on the subject. He was a humanist philosopher looking at Christianity as morality with minimal doctrinal content. To him Christianity needed to return to the simplicity of doctrine and life that marked its origin in Apostolic Christianity. He was a semi-Pelagian who saw within the human will the capability of initiating a peaceful relationship with God and, with help, working it through to completion in salvation.

This work does not evidence much conviction, doctrine or appeal to Scripture. Erasmus does not make a good case for himself, much less for the church of Rome. Erasmus' diatribe is the work of a scholar getting on in years who needed to let it be known that he stood on the side of his church when it was being attacked to the very core by Luther, who was determined to stand on the doctrine of Scripture alone. What Erasmus wrote and published on September 1, 1524, was rebutted by Luther in December 1525. More than anything else, Erasmus gave Luther a reason for writing The Bondage of the Will.

Erasmus undermines the credibility of Scripture, on which he knows all of Luther's arguments will rest. After all, he says, Scripture is difficult to understand, and many people understand it in many different ways.

For there are some secret places in the Holy Scriptures into which God has not wished us to penetrate more deeply and, if we try to do so, then the deeper we go, the darker and darker it becomes, by which means we are led to acknowledge the unsearchable majesty of the divine wisdom, and the weakness of the human mind.¹

He goes so far as to say that there are some things in Scripture that God really doesn't want us to understand, and it would be presumptuous for us to try to understand them. The interesting effect of all this is that when the Scriptural basis is placed in question or removed, only the rational basis remains. That is exactly what Erasmus wants. From that point on, everything Luther has to say is only his opinion and interpretation. More than that, perhaps Luther is actually doing a disservice by his presentation on the bondage of the will. People will not understand what he is saying because it is too deep and confusing. People may actually be led to immorality by thinking that they are mere pawns in God's hands with no free will of their own. The obvious difference in attitude toward the Scriptures is important in a proper understanding of what Erasmus has to say.

Erasmus does not make direct appeals to the church fathers who he knows support his position. He might as well make those direct appeals, however, because he continually makes references to all the others who agree with him but without making any mention of who they are and what they said. Instead he pretends agreement with the authority of Scripture when he says,

1. E. Gordon Rupp, Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) page 38.

I confess that it is right that the sole authority of Holy Scripture should outweigh all the votes of all mortal men. But the authority of the Scripture is not here in dispute. The same Scriptures are acknowledged and venerated by either side. Our battle is about the meaning of Scripture.²

With this supposed basis of Scripture, Erasmus studies various passages that seem to set forth free will. He says, "By free choice in this place we mean a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them." This is the heart of the controversy. Unfortunately it is sometimes difficult to see how Erasmus is remaining faithful to his own definition. Often he is talking about morality and choices in life instead of salvation. This brings out both his semi-Pelagian attitude toward salvation as well as his deistic humanism that sees Christianity in terms of morality instead of salvation.

Erasmus insists that the reasonable will is not extinguished in anyone, only diminished. It receives some light from nature and some from grace. This is the law of nature, the law of works, and the law of faith.

The law of nature is thoroughly engraved in the minds of all men, among the Scythians as among the Greeks, and declared it to be a crime if any does to another what he would not wish done to himself. And the philosophers, without the light of faith, and without the assistance of Holy Scripture, drew from created things the knowledge of the everlasting power and divinity of God, and left many precepts concerning the good life, agreeing wholeheartedly with the teachings of the Gospels, and with many words exhorting to virtue and the detestation of wickedness. And in these things it is probably that there was a will in some way ready for the good but useless for eternal salvation without the addition of grace by faith. The law of works, on the other hand, commands and threatens punishment. It doubles sin and engenders death, not that it is evil, but because it commands actions which we cannot perform without grace. The law of faith commands more arduous things than the law of works, yet because grace is plentifully added to it, not only does it make things easy which of themselves are impossible, but it makes them agreeable also. Faith, therefore, cures reason, which has been wounded by sin,

2. Ibid., page 43.

and charity bears onward the weak will. The law of works was like this: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gn 2:16-17). This law of works was further revealed by Moses: "You shall not kill: if you have killed, you shall be killed; you shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20:13-14). But what says the law of faith, which orders us to love our enemies, to carry our cross daily, to despise our life? "Fear not, little flock, for yours is the kingdom of heaven" (Lk 12:32). And "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). And "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). This law the apostles showed forth when, after being beaten with rods for the name of Jesus, they went away rejoicing from the presence of the Council. Thus Paul: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Php 4:13).³

To this Erasmus concludes,

If the power to distinguish good and evil and the will of God had been hidden from men, it could not be imputed to them if they made the wrong choice. If the will had not been free, sin could not have been imputed, for sin would cease to be sin if it were not voluntary, save when error or the restriction of the will is itself the fruit of sin. Thus the responsibility for rape is not imputed to the one who has suffered violence.⁴

Erasmus held to three different kinds of grace to accomplish God's purpose. First there is natural grace, which has been implanted by God but vitiated by sin. Some of that grace remains but not enough to accomplish God's will and win God's favor. Peculiar grace must be added with which God arouses sinners to repent of their sins. This peculiar or operative grace awakens sinners to their displeasure with themselves but leaves them with an inability to correct their own situation. The correction is made when the third grace is added. A person's will is put into action to please God with the desires that are already in him or her, but have been lying helplessly dormant because of sin.

There is, therefore, a natural grace; there is a stimulating grace (albeit imperfect); there is the grace that makes the will effective, which we called cooperating, which allows us to perform that which we have undertaken to do; there is a grace

3. Ibid., pages 49-50.

4. Ibid., page 50.

that carries things to a conclusion. These three they think to be one, although they are called by different names according to what they effect within us. The first arouses, the second promotes, the third completes.⁵

Most of the differences of opinion about the freedom of the will, Erasmus maintains, can be accounted for by the differing degrees to which each one of these graces works. Luther maintains that there is no good free will in man to stir up.

To Erasmus the works of a man play an important part in man's salvation. The grace of God has the medicinal effect of healing crippled persons to enable them to walk uprightly in the ways of God. Obviously such people have been equipped by God to save themselves. Erasmus can't imagine how anyone could say anything contrary.

There are those who deny that man, although justified by the gift of faith and love, is unable to fulfill any precepts, but that all good works, since they are done in the flesh, would lead to damnation if God did not pardon them through his mercy, for the sake of their faith.⁶

Erasmus' rationalism comes out even more clearly in his treatment of various New Testament passages. Erasmus would contend that the will is certainly involved in Jesus' words. In spite of all the grace God had bestowed on his people through the prophets, still his people appreciated none of it. (Mt 23:27). Or, "If you would enter into life ..." (Mt 19:21); "If you would be perfect ..." (Lk 9:23); "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). What remains unanswered in all of this is what kind of will we are talking about. Is it the will of a sanctified child of God, of a person choosing his or her own damnation, of a person choosing moral behavior as opposed to immoral, or a person who doesn't really have any choice at all? Erasmus prefers not to make any such distinctions. Likewise there is no thought given to the con-

5. Ibid., page 53.

6. Ibid., page 57.

text of Romans 2:4, I Corinthians 9:24-25, II Timothy 4:7-8 and the like. These passages do not speak of the freedom of the will as Erasmus thinks of it. They teach us that God has chosen to work in and through his people. He has allowed us to be workers together with him?

Erasmus treats some passages that seem to oppose free will in man in a similar way. He mentions Exodus 9:12, which speaks of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Rationally speaking, there would be no judgment on him at all if he didn't have a free will in the first place. Similarly in the case of Judas who God foreknew would betray Christ to his own damnation, rationally speaking, Judas' mind and will remained intact in spite of the fact that God knew what he was going to do. In the case of the potter and the clay, Erasmus says,

In these things we are to submit to God as a vessel to the hands of the potter. Yet in truth this is not to take away free choice wholly, nor does it exclude our will from cooperating with the divine will in order to attain eternal salvation.... Besides, if a man is simply to God as clay in the hands of a potter, whatever shape the vase takes must be attributed to no one but the potter, especially if the potter is the one who first created the clay and molded it by his own choice. Yet here a vessel which has been guilty of nothing because it is not its own master is thrown into eternal fire.⁷

There are hundreds more passages of this kind in Holy Scripture. If man does nothing, why say, "Work out"? If man does something, why say, "God works all things in all men"? If you wish to twist the one passage to support a special interpretation, man does nothing. On the other hand, if you wish to turn the other to your cause, man does it all. If man does nothing, there is no room for merits; where there is no room for merits, there is no room for punishments or rewards. If man does all, there is no room for grace, which Paul urges so many times.⁸

In his examination of Luther's thought Erasmus continually fails to recognize Luther's insistence that man is saved by grace alone through faith. The central belief of the semi-Pelagian is so ingrained that he cannot see repentance as a work of God and not as a work of man.

7. Ibid., page 71.

8. Ibid., page 73.

For if no part of repentance depends on the will, but all things are done by God through a certain necessity, why is man there given room for repentance? ⁹

If all works are evil which are done before the receipt of the highest grace, are we to say then that evil works bring us into the favor of God? ¹⁰

He further says,

And there is also in good men a human spirit from the Spirit of God, as Paul declares in Ro 8:16: "It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God." So that if anybody should wish to argue that the most excellent part of human nature is none other than flesh, that is, wicked desire, I would readily yield - if he proves his assertion by the testimony of Holy Scripture! "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn 3:6). Moreover, John teaches that those who believe the gospel are born of God and become sons of God, yes even gods. And Paul distinguishes the carnal man, who knows not the things of God, from the spiritual man who judges all things. Elsewhere he calls him a new creature in Christ. If the whole man, even reborn in faith, is none other than flesh, where is the spirit which is born of the Spirit? Where is the son of God? Where is the new creature? I wish to be instructed on these points. Meanwhile, I shall make full use of the authority of the Fathers who say that there are certain seeds of virtue implanted in the minds of men by which they in some way see and seek after virtue, but mingled with grosser affections which incite them to other things. It is this flexible will which is called free choice and, although on account of the propensity to sin which remains in us, our will is perhaps more prone to evil than to good, yet no one is actually forced to do evil except with his own consent. ¹¹

In contrast to Luther's insistence on the work of God in us, Erasmus continues to assert that man with his will can do something, even if it is very little.

Nor in the meanwhile does our will achieve nothing, although it does not attain the things that it seeks without the help of grace. But since our own efforts are so puny, the whole is ascribed to God, just as a sailor who has brought his ship safely into port out of a heavy storm does not say: "I saved the ship" but "God saved it." And yet his skill and his labor were not entirely useless. Similarly, the peasant who brings a rich harvest from the fields into his barn does not say: "I have got a fine harvest this year for my-self," but "God bestowed it." And yet who would say the farmer did nothing to provide the harvest? So we say in common speech, "God gave you lovely child-

9. Ibid., page 75.

10. Idem.

11. Ibid., page 76.

ren," though there was a part played by the father in begetting! ¹²

To continue with this would be repetitious to the point of uselessness because if one thing continues to come through, it is that there is no exegesis of the various passages being used, but rather the rational display of a preconceived semi-Pelagian notion that it is within a man to save himself by his own works.

For when I hear that the merit of man is so utterly worthless that all things, even the works of godly men, are sins, when I hear that our will does nothing more than clay in the hands of a potter, when I hear all that we do or will referred to absolute necessity, my mind encounters many a stumbling block. First, why does one so often read that godly men, full of good works, have wrought righteousness and walked in the presence of God, turning neither to the right nor to the left, if the deeds of even the most godly men are sin, and sin of such character that, did the mercy of God not intervene, it would have plunged into hell even him for whom Christ died? How is it that we hear so much about reward if there is no such thing as merit? With what impudence is the obedience of those who obey the divine commands praised, and the disobedience of those who do not obey condemned? ¹³

Erasmus is willing to attribute very small contributions to man cooperating with God, like a child just learning to walk, whose every step must be supported and directed by his father. But he holds that to deny the child's cooperation completely is to make him into something he was not intended to be, a totally dependent person. God simply wouldn't create such a thing. If He had, then all good and all evil would be from Him.

Pelagius has no doubt attributed too much to free choice, and Scotus quite enough, but Luther first mutilated it by cutting off its right arm; then not content with this he thoroughly cut the throat of free choice and dispatched it. I prefer the view of those who do attribute much to free choice, but most to grace. ¹⁴

Erasmus would prefer to see a compromise somewhere between Luther and Pelagius, without understanding that such a compromise is impossible. While we cannot thank him for his doctrine, for his sound de-

12. Ibid., page 79.

13. Ibid., page 87.

14. Ibid., page 96.

fense of his doctrine, his determination to champion what he saw as the truth, or even his depth of interest in the subject, we can thank him for what he said, because it became the reason for Luther to respond. Luther's response was his most powerful statement on the depravity of man and his dependence on God whose grace does not equip us for works that save, but rather saves us and equips us for works of righteousness in thankful praise.

Erasmus portrays for us the traditionalism of Rome, the rationalism of the Reformed and the egocentricity of the humanist all of which surround us today. If any good is to be found in it at all, it is only because God is able to make good come from evil and the truth victorious in the face of the lie.

APPENDIX B

A valuable contribution that psychology has made involves diagnosis. A vast amount of testing material is available to the competent psychologist. Evaluating various diagnoses in the light of scriptural principles of sin and grace would not be a difficult process. The following is part of a computer printed psychological test selected at random. The test can be written in any convenient location. It can be mailed or carried to any psychologist who is willing to allow the pastor to act as his agent. The fee charged for this particular test is \$150.00 paid to the psychologist who allows us to act as his agent to administer it. While most of us would not be competent to read and evaluate a large part of the test, what is presented here would certainly be of some help if all involved thought the cost was worth it.

This female patient showed no unusual characterological or test-taking attitudes that may have distorted her MCMI results.

The following pertains to the more enduring and pervasive characterological traits of this woman that underlie her personal and interpersonal difficulties. Rather than focus on currently distinct but essentially transitory symptoms, this section concentrates on her habitual, maladaptive methods of relating, behaving, thinking and feeling.

This woman is submissively dependent, self-effacing, and non-competitive. Others are leaned upon for guidance and security, and a passive role is assumed in relationships. A striking lack of initiative and a general avoidance of autonomy are notable. Exceeding dependent and vulnerable if separated from those who provide support, she is intensely resentful toward those on whom she must depend since they have often been critical and disapproving. Although infrequent, minor displays of anger have been directed toward those who have failed to appreciate her intense need for affection and nurturance. This intense need for security is threatened when angry impulses are felt, no less expressed. Fearful of further rebuff, she may begin to withdraw from social relationships in a defensive effort to moderate her anxiety.

ety and deaden her sensitivity to rejection. Depressive feelings of loneliness and isolation may be increasingly experienced.

Although this woman may attempt to appear calm and pleasant on the surface, there is underlying tension and emotional dysphoria comprised of disturbing mixtures of anxiety, sadness, and guilt. Insecurity and fear of abandonment underlie what may appear as her quiet, submissive, and benign attitude toward difficulties. Except for an infrequent irritability or outburst, she is likely to be conciliatory, placating, and ingratiating. Moreover, by acting weak, expressing self-doubt, communicating her need for assurance, and displaying a willingness to submit and comply, she hopes to evoke nurturance and protection. By submerging her individuality, subordinating her personal desires, and submitting even to abuse and intimidation, she hopes to avoid abandonment.

Her frequent feeling of weakness, easy fatigability, and a ready succumbing to physical exhaustion and illness may reflect her underlying mood of depression. Simple responsibilities may demand more energy than she can muster. Life may be experienced as empty but draining, with an ever present feeling of weariness or apathy. By withdrawing and restricting her social contacts and emotional involvements, however, she may be limiting the possibilities of new sources of needed support.

Axis I: Clinical Syndromes

The following distinctive clinical disorders are notable. They may be of brief duration, arise in response to external precipitants, and accentuate the more persistent features of her basic personality.

This woman feels apprehensive and restless and may complain of distressful phobias, recurrent indecisiveness over picayune matters, and acute physical discomforts such as insomnia, muscular tightness, headaches, tremors, and cold sweating.

This woman expresses dejection and discouragement about current life matters and maintains a pessimistic view of the future. She reports a loss of efficiency and self-confidence, diminished pleasure in previously rewarding activities, and a preoccupation with matters of dependency security. Feelings of worthlessness or guilt may also be notable.

These symptoms arise from her separation fears and the anticipation of demanding new responsibilities. Feelings of personal inadequacy underlie her concern that new burdens will overtax her competencies and elicit disapproval and rejection from others. By openly admitting her weaknesses she seeks to regain support and reassurance. Her current symptoms may serve to deflect threats and criticism, hopefully transforming deprecatory comments into sympathy and nurturance.

Some of the information provided by this diagnosis may be helpful to provide direction our counseling might take. It could be helpful to

confirm suspicions we might already have. It might offer insight into whether additional help is necessary from the professional community. It would provide the psychologist who might be consulted with valuable information that could shorten considerably the time needed for professional counseling. The information could also provide a basis for communication with an outside cooperating professional while the pastor continues to carry on the work himself. To say the least, this test provides a counselor with a fairly clear picture of the personality and emotional structure of his member. Hours of counseling for observation can be eliminated with such available help. The psychologist can assist in providing interpretation and directing concerns if he is willing to do so. Most psychologists who would be willing to allow the pastor to act as their agents would also be willing to provide additional help in using the data the test provides.

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