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Principles of Counseling

By HENRY L. LIESKE *

PASTORAL counseling is currently receiving much greater emphasis in the seminary curriculum than was the case a decade or two ago. This does not mean that effective pastoral counseling has been carried on only recently. Throughout the ages the "cure," or care, of souls has been a matter of vital concern to the Church and its pastors. McNeill in his *A History of the Cure of Souls* summarizes it like this:

The cure of souls has been a vast historic enterprise. . . . The physician of souls has not taken his duties lightly. . . . Deeply conscious of their limitations, but sustained by high faith and heroic devotion, countless members of our race have spent themselves in this spiritual service to damaged or endangered souls.¹

Gladly granting this, we may, however, have to agree with Bergsten in his *Pastoral Psychology* when after tracing the development of pastoral care through the centuries, and characterizing the specific emphases in this field in the days of primitive Christianity, the early Christian Church, the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, the Reformation era, post-Reformation Lutheranism, and in Reformed circles, he finds it necessary to conclude (p. 41): "It can hardly be said that the care of souls has hitherto been undertaken methodically; no special methods of treatment have been described or taught."²

The difference between the past and today, as I see it, is that today there can be a much larger number of helpful pastoral counselors. Besides those who intuitively have a "feel" for counseling,

* During the summer of 1952 the Board for Parish Education of the Central District conducted a workshop on "Pastoral Counseling," discussing such problems as "The Nature and Formation of Personality"; "General Types of Personality Problems"; "Measuring Personality Traits with the Johnson Temperament Analysis Test." The following pages contain in condensed and rewritten form the material presented at this workshop by the Rev. Henry L. Lieske on "Principles of Counseling," emphasizing the underlying principles common to all fields of counseling and then endeavoring to relate these to the special field of pastoral counseling. The author graduated from Concordia Seminary in 1935 with the B. D. degree and has held pastorates in the Central District of the Missouri Synod. — ED. COM.

or those to whom it comes quite naturally, many others, who would have just gone on blundering through, can learn to counsel. Their ministry can be enriched by what these twin fields have to offer. And they to whom counseling comes very naturally can render the additional service of formulating the laws and principles operative in effective pastoral counseling and of handing down as a heritage the elements of the process by which people are most effectively helped.

I. COUNSELING IN GENERAL

We can catalog and study the principles operative in human behavior and fix the "locus" underlying human behavior and describe the deep emotional conflicts and personality disturbances resulting in complexes, neuroses, and psychoses.

Let us assume a person in emotional distress, recognized or perhaps not recognized by him as an emotional conflict. Let us further assume that you have such a correct and thorough understanding of the "dynamics of human behavior" that you can rather quickly explain that person's behavior to him, show him what he is doing, why he is doing it, and how it is actually operating to cause his present distresses. It might seem that all one would need to do is to be able to say with accuracy: "Here's the analysis, here's the explanation. There now, now you'll be all right!" But that is not pastoral counseling and does not help the patient. Here is a person who is ill in his soul because, instead of facing things squarely, he consistently engages in "flight," always "withdrawing" and running away and leaving things unsolved; another blots himself out with alcohol; another does not realize that his headaches, or heart reaction, or indigestion, or blindness, or limp arm, are not caused originally by organic factors, but are psychosomatic illnesses; yet another has seething in him a deep inner rage that makes him bristle with hostility, not knowing that his inner rage may be dated back to hostility against his parents and sisters and brothers. It would seem that the counselor could help such people by merely explaining to them their withdrawing behavior, their psychosomatic pattern, the roots of their hostility and inner rage, and the non-problem-solving nature of their resort to alcohol. *But it is not enough merely to explain their behavior to them, correct as such explanation may be.* I quote from Rogers' *Counseling and Psychotherapy*:

As clinical counselors learned to understand more adequately the factors which underlie behavior and the causes of specific behavior patterns, they tended to make more and more adequate diagnoses of individual situations. Then came the natural mistake of assuming that treatment was merely diagnosis in reverse, that all that was needed to help the individual was to explain to him the causes of his behavior. There was a naive faith that this intellectual explanation of the difficulty would result in changed attitudes and feelings. . . . However, interpretation, no matter how accurate, has value only to the extent that it is accepted and assimilated by the client. It has come to be recognized that we do not change the client's behavior very effectively simply by giving him an intellectual picture of his patterning, no matter how accurate.³

Counseling is more than that. It is the process to aid the human being in his soul distresses, to enable him to get an insight himself into what he is doing, to see and accept this, and then to bring about enough major or minor alterations in his personality make-up that things that have been a problem to a person begin to be solved at the very root. For long years other methods have been used in trying to alter the behavior that has been damaging to the self and others. Some of these methods are threats, punishments, lectures, prohibitions, orderings and forbiddings, admonitions, exhortations, pledges and vows, inducing shame and humiliation, personal appeals on the basis of love and loyalty, and the giving of advice. These methods have not proved too successful. The method referred to as "counseling" seems to be more effective at bringing about a change of viewpoint, a change of attitude, not merely at surface levels, but at deeper levels, and where a genuine change in attitudes and feelings has been brought about, a change in external and surface behavior seems to proceed from it in a spontaneous manner.

Counseling is not "advising" someone how to solve his difficulty. In fact, it is a label for a process that is almost at the opposite pole of advice giving. Overstreet puts it this way:

If the advice is not "good," in the sense that it is itself the product of constricted insight and hasty conclusion, the person who follows it both experiences failure and at the same time is provided with an explanation of that failure that lies outside himself: after all, the failure is not his own, but primarily that of the advice-giver. However, even if the advice is "good," in the sense that it takes account of the major relevant facts of a situation, it still asks that

X behave in terms of what Y sees. The following of it cannot be the sort of spontaneous, independent, insightful experiences on which human nature matures.⁴

A great many of the pastor's contacts with his people will not be counseling situations. It is well to keep in mind, in reading counseling literature, that while many relationships call for counseling, not every situation calls for that type of dealing. Oates⁵ lists six levels of pastoral care, and only one of these is classified as counseling.

1. The level of friendship — rapport producing.
2. The level of comfort — the pastor in the supportive role.
3. The level of confession.
4. The level of teaching — where the thought content, the intellectual content, is the important thing, and the method is the dialectical method of helping people to learn or at times also the information-giving method.
5. The level of pastoral counseling and psychotherapy.
6. The level of referral to others.

In his total work and in his pastoral care of souls the pastor will at times have to give information, to clarify ethical issues, to teach, to comfort and support, and to make referrals, and perhaps even to "offer advice" in the sense of outlining several possibilities, but, strictly speaking, we need to distinguish these from what is today referred to as counseling.

Counseling is a process which endeavors to help people to grow in the ability to help themselves. The emphasis is on the *person* and on the emotional conflicts that have prevented him from handling a situation himself rather than on the specific *problem* which at that particular moment may be vexing the person. And *pastoral* counseling endeavors to keep everything that is sound and valid from its rich heritage of the past, and combine that with whatever is valid in the general field of present-day counseling, for a still more effective *Seelsorge*. McNeill concludes his book with the words which we make our own:

To the shining company of *curatores animarum* whose efforts have claimed our attention let us accord a reverential salute. May their successors, equipped with new skills, profit by their insights, avoid their mistakes, and surpass their achievements!⁶

II. THE RESPONSES AND TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS OF THE COUNSELING PROCESS

In counseling, three major factors are of vital importance: (1) the counselor, (2) the so-called "permissive atmosphere" in which he works, and (3) the skills and techniques, especially the "responses," which the counselor employs. I shall touch on the third one first, not because it is the most important; but if we take this first, then the subsequent consideration of the personality and make-up of the counselor will be more meaningful, for we shall have seen what kind of personality is desirable for this kind of work. However, if we study only the matter of responses and techniques and skills employed in counseling, then we are definitely not treating the subject adequately and may leave the erroneous impression that counseling is merely the mechanical use of a certain kind of response, the mechanistic use of a "bag of tricks." Instead of being helpful, such "counseling" may prove to be quite damaging.

Becoming Conscious of the Type of Response That Each of Us Is Now Customarily Making

Only good can come of it if a person can become conscious of the type of response that he is now customarily making. If a person can catch himself in action and take candid camera shots of himself in his everyday work, he can later examine the shots he has taken. In that way he can also learn to label the type of response that seems to come most natural to him and the kind that he automatically resorts to in most situations. Thus he can evaluate whether it is a type of response that tends to be useful in counseling and in pastoral work or whether it is possibly hindering him in the work that he wants to do as pastor. Several techniques have been devised which enable individuals and small groups to study their own counseling methods—on the basis of phonographically recorded expressions by counselees and counselors.⁷

Learning to Label Various TYPES of Counselor Responses

Some who have made a close study of phonographically recorded counselor and counslee responses think that practically all counselor responses fall into one of five different types. This is the viewpoint of Porter in his *Introduction to Therapeutic Counseling*. He holds that there are five fundamentally different counselor attitudes

and responses, that consciously or unconsciously each counselor holds some given attitude toward counselees, and that the type of response employed merely implements that basic underlying attitude and feeling.

1. *Probing*. — This is a response which indicates that the counselor's intent is to seek further information, to dig for something that the *counselor* thinks is important, to push in a certain direction, to provoke further discussion along lines which the counselor thinks should be explored, rather than allowing the counselee to choose the area of discussion. He has in some way, either rather openly or rather subtly, indicated and implied that the counselee, or client, ought or might profitably develop or further discuss a point thought by the counselor to be significant.

2. *Interpretive*. — This is a type of response which indicates that the counselor sees through and understands the parishioner and his behavior or problem. "I'll explain to you why it is that you are doing this." "Now I'll tell you what this means." This may be done crudely or subtly.

3. *Evaluative*. — This is a type of response which indicates that the counselor has in his own mind made a *judgment* of relative goodness, appropriateness, effectiveness, wisdom, or rightness. It is a value judgment. It may be a moralistic evaluation, a psychological or psychiatric evaluation, or an evaluation of still another kind. It may be either positive or negative. The response conveys the counselor's approval or disapproval. There are countless devices and techniques by which this attitude is implemented: some of them quite coarse, others very subtle, many of the subtle ones making use of moral coercion.

4. *Supportive*. — This is a type of response which indicates that the counselor's intent is to reassure, to temper and ease the way the client feels about something, to reduce the client's intensity of feeling, to bolster him up. In one way or another the counselor has indicated that the client really need not feel as he does.

5. *Understanding*. — With this type of response the counselor is endeavoring to summarize how the counselee, or client, feels about a matter, how it "strikes" the client, how it looks from the client's "corner" or frame of reference; and the understanding response is worded in such a way as in effect to inquire whether the

counselor has accurately caught both the thought content and the feeling which the counselee is expressing. He says in effect: "Is this what you are saying?" "Is this how it strikes you?" "This is the way you feel about it, isn't it?"

The Non-directive or Client-centered Approach to Counseling

There are different schools of thought in counseling. They can roughly be divided into three groups: the directive, the nondirective, and the eclectic. This particular paper dwells especially on the nondirective type of counseling, because it seems to be remarkably successful in the altering of viewpoint and in the reorganization of the personality and because the nature of its approach is possibly foreign to most of us. This is no doubt true of ministers of all denominations, but seems to be even more true of ministers of the Lutheran Church. We preach with the authority of God's Word. We can say: "Thus saith the Lord." This attitude can, however, also give us quite an authoritarian bent in all our work, and thus we would quite naturally also be directive in our pastoral counseling. Furthermore, our office requires us to speak a great deal. Directive counseling comes most natural to us, and possibly is the kind that has been most frequently employed by ministers. The nondirective method of counseling, on the other hand, demands the utmost *restraint* in speaking and requires careful listening. None of us will ever fully and entirely become nondirective in his counseling, even if our calling would permit it, the calling of ministers of the Gospel, communicators of the *good news* "of the grace of God in Christ Jesus," things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9). Nevertheless the non-directive counseling may frequently help us in maintaining the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. We may have sensed that there was a bear in the woods somewhere, but probably took a shot long before we spotted the bear. A thorough acquaintance and assimilation of the nondirective method will go a long way in correcting such hastiness and in making our pastoral counseling much more helpful and effective.

All schools of thought on counseling, and especially the non-directive school, attach more importance to sensing and catching the feeling content of a counselee's comments. Our training and background is such that we rather readily catch the idea content,

the thought content, the intellectual content. And for various levels or strata of pastoral relationships, this is the important thing, especially on what Oates calls "the teaching level." But for good counseling it seems to be of even greater importance that we catch the feeling content of what the counselee is conveying. "The counseling process focuses attention on the parishioner's situation, and his feelings about it. The process proceeds through real understanding on the pastor's part of how the parishioner feels about the situation."⁸ "This newer therapy places greater stress upon the emotional elements, the feeling aspects of the situation, than upon the intellectual aspects."⁹ Ever since the findings of Freud it has become increasingly evident that most maladjustments are not failures in *knowing*, but that it is in the realm of the feelings and emotions that most maladjustments have their roots. People seem to be helped most when they can give free expression to their feelings relating to a problem. To aid people to do so the counselor needs to catch not so much the intellectual content of what a person is saying, but the feeling which underlies it. This does not mean that the idea content is entirely unimportant. But this feeling is the car, as it were, on which the thought content is hitch-hiking. Follow the car, and you'll get there.

Nondirective counselors think that it is not the probing, or the interpretive, or the evaluative, or the supportive response, but the *understanding* response that is best suited to help people express their feelings relating to a problem. Careful listening plays an important part in making such an understanding response. The counselor listens attentively (that does not mean tensely, however) and endeavors to place himself in the client's frame of reference, in the counselee's "corner," to catch how the counselee feels about a matter, how he sees it, how he sizes it up. In the understanding response he then reflects the feeling and thought which he has caught, he rewords it, tries to phrase it in such a way that the parishioner says, in effect: "Yes, that's it! This is the way I see it. That's what I mean to say." Phonographic recordings seem to indicate that if this is consistently and accurately done, it aids the counselee to go on to express himself still further to speak about his attitudes further, to verbalize what he has never before put into words, to explore further branches of his problem. And as he

does so, he himself gradually gets to see things differently and gets to feel differently about things, not only because he is "getting things off his chest," but also because he thus begins to see a different relationship of cause and effect in the things he is talking about.

Porter points out that when one more closely examines counselor responses which endeavor to be understanding responses, one will be apt to find that among them there are some that are (1) *too contenty*, largely a simple repetition of the exact words used by the counselee; or (2) the response may be *too shallow*: the client has just expressed a very intense feeling, but the counselor has failed to respond similarly, so that the client says or feels in effect, "He didn't understand me"; or (3), on the other hand, the client has not yet come to the point of freely expressing his intense feelings, has expressed comparatively shallow feelings, but the counselor goes beyond what the client has so far been able to express, adds meaning or interpretation, goes too fast, expresses too deep a feeling, as a result of which he may easily "lose" the counselee. And then there is the understanding response, which (4) *accurately reflects* feeling tone and thought content just expressed by the client. This response seems to be the one that is most apt to help the client to go on and further express how he feels about a situation. *This response seems to be the chief skill and technique for therapeutic counseling.*¹⁰

The counselor may expect the counselee to express three kinds of feeling: (1) negative, (2) positive, and (3) ambivalent, including all degrees of intensity of any or all three of these. They will show how the counselee evaluates *himself* and how he feels toward any one of the many "people in his life." In the so-called "permissive atmosphere" of the counseling situation the counselee gets to feel free to put into words even the intensest negative feelings which he may never before have ventured to put into words, which stayed locked up in his bosom, and there, untold and unfaced, became the cause of untold misery and distress. "The literature in psychology seems to be consistent in observing that denial or repression of feeling is more likely to do harm to the personality than is expression and acceptance of the feeling."¹¹ Skill in the use of the understanding response can make a pastor's contact with such

situations fruitful and therapeutic. They can become opportunities for growth and spiritual development. In them God can be at work to bring good out of evil. Through effective pastoral counseling God can be operative in making "all things work together for good to them that love God."

The long-range goal in *pastoral* counseling will in some respects be the same as in secular counseling, but in one fundamental respect it will also be different. The goal of all counseling is more concerned with bringing about a change in the *person* than with solving a present *problem*. Counseling aims to aid the counselee to verbalize the negative, ambivalent, and positive feelings "gummed up" in him, thus helping him to achieve insight into his persistent habits of thought, of emotional response, and of behavior. It aims to help him untangle and become *conscious* of his conflicting feelings, e. g., of his love and hate for the same person, so that, conscious of what before had been lurking in the hinterland, he may now find a way of handling the situation. In this process, changes take place in the person. There is a reorganizing and a reorientation of self. Secular counseling may be entirely satisfied to have such reorganizing take place on a purely naturalistic, secularistic, this-worldly basis. Parting company at this point, *pastoral* counseling will endeavor to place such change and alteration on a God-centered and Christian basis.

Pastoral counseling can use many of the same "tools" and skills used by secular counselors, especially also the "understanding" response, which will help keep the conversation going. In addition, the pastor has the use of the "tool" of "the Word of the Lord, which is alive and powerful" (Heb. 4:12), both Law and Gospel. In the course of the counseling the counselee may himself recall and put into words a pertinent truth from the Law area, may all of a sudden, as he speaks, achieve insight into what a given attitude or action really is. The counselor need not add to it. In another case, however, the counselor should quietly project into the picture a given truth as the counselee is wrestling with his problem. During the counseling period the counselee with a Christian background may recall portions of the divine Law or of the very Gospel truth that applies to his condition. In that case the counselor can work along with the counselee without actually adding that truth.

In another case, however, the counselor may need to add a Gospel verse or truth, just at the right spot, the very truth that best fits his client's condition. A subsequent interview will often reveal how something hitherto lacking has in the meantime become an assimilated or partly assimilated part of the total attitudinal make-up of the counselee. Thus will pastoral counseling differ from secular counseling. On this account also it will perhaps never be entirely non-directive, for, in the words of Thurneysen in *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge*, "die Seelsorge kann nichts anders mehr heissen und sein als der Dienst der Ausrichtung dieses freisprechenden gnaedigen Wortes an den Einzelnen" (p. 73); or as Bergsten says in his *Pastoral Psychology*: "The Christian care of souls must become conscious of itself as an essential ministry, having its own peculiar responsibility and opportunity."

III. THE SO-CALLED "PERMISSIVE" ATMOSPHERE

In good counseling (1) the understanding counselor (2) creates and works in a "permissive" atmosphere, and (3) makes use of the best counseling techniques at man's disposal. What is this "permissive" atmosphere, and where can the pastoral counselor create it?

The term "permissive" as used by psychologists has been misunderstood as denoting an atmosphere which permits and condones virtually everything. This is not the case. The term is used to denote a firm but loving attitude toward the counselee. It is best illustrated in the Savior's attitude toward the woman taken in adultery, his conversation with publicans and sinners, his firm and loving dealing with the erroneous views of His disciples, and His conversation with the woman at Jacob's well. What many psychiatrists and psychologists and counselors refer to as the "permissive" atmosphere could be labeled the "Jesus atmosphere." The "permissive" atmosphere is the extreme opposite of a condemnatory atmosphere. Rogers refers to it, under the heading "Basic Aspects of a Therapeutic Relationship," in the following terms:

There would seem to be at least four definite qualities which characterize the most helpful counseling atmosphere. We shall describe these in terms of the situation which the counselor endeavors to create. (1) First there is warmth and responsiveness on the part of the counselor which makes rapport possible. There

is an affectional bond, however, with defined limits. It expresses itself in a genuine interest in the client and an acceptance of him as a person. . . . (2) The second quality of the counseling relationship is its permissiveness in regard to expression of feeling. By the counselor's acceptance of his statements, by the complete lack of any moralistic or judgmental attitude, by the understanding attitude which pervades the counseling interview, the client comes to recognize that all feelings and attitudes may be expressed. No attitude is too aggressive (hostile), no feeling too guilty or shameful to bring into the relationship. Hatred for a father, feelings of conflict over sexual urges, remorse over past acts, dislike of coming for help, antagonism and resentment toward the therapist, all may be expressed. It offers a place where the client may bring into the situation, as rapidly as his inhibitions will allow him, all the forbidden impulses and unspoken attitudes which complicate his life. . . . (3) While there is this complete freedom to express feelings, there are definite limits to action. . . . (4) A fourth characteristic is its complete freedom from any type of pressure or coercion. The skillful counselor refrains from intruding his own wishes, his own reactions or biases, into the therapeutic situations. . . . This is the positive ground for personality growth and development, for conscious choice, for self-directed integration. It is in this type of soil that growth can take place. . . . The client responds to the atmosphere of freedom from all moral approval or disapproval. He finds that he does not need his customary psychological defenses to justify his behavior. He finds neither blame nor oversympathetic indulgence and praise. The client can, often for the first time in his life, be genuinely himself . . . he is freed from the necessity of defending himself from attack.¹²

In the language of the Gospel the permissive atmosphere is the very opposite of a condemnatory, judgmental, evaluative atmosphere.¹³ It is somewhat akin to the permissiveness which a child of God feels in the presence of His gracious, pardoning, and forgiving Father whom he has learned to know in Christ Jesus. Into His presence I a sinner can come "just as I am." In His thirty-three years "in the flesh" Jesus demonstrated by word and deed the "permissiveness" of the Father, for in Jesus man beheld and knew the Father.¹⁴ Things cannot prosper in the innermost soul of a person who "covers his sins." But in the presence of God, revealed in Jesus, a person need not "cover his sins," but can "come clean" with

his sins, pour out before such a Gospel God the vilest and the worst. He need not resort to those countless mechanisms and devices with which man is so accustomed to defend himself, those mechanisms and devices of which not only psychology but also Scripture speaks when it describes the heart as "deceitful and desperately wicked."¹⁵ In the Jesus atmosphere we find release from that dreadful "silence" in which "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."¹⁶ Then the *metanoia* takes place as the sinner confesses his sin and his faith:

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind,
Sight, riches, *healing of the mind*,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Luther describes the permissive relationship with God as one's feeling toward some familiar friend. He says:

A man ought in this matter to be altogether frank, and to speak of himself within himself just as he feels himself moved to speak, just as he could wish to speak if there were no punishment, no God, no commandment, and just as he would speak in the ear of some familiar friend, to whom he would not be ashamed to reveal everything about himself. As he could wish to speak quite freely to such a one about his faults, so let him speak to God.¹⁷

In the permissive type of counseling an honest attempt is made to avoid two pitfalls of (1) resorting to the condemnatory, judgmental, evaluative approach and (2) giving the impression that good counseling fosters an indulgent love, a softish, coddling, indulgent, condoning attitude. Those who write carefully about the permissive atmosphere want to avoid both pitfalls. "When the client begins to believe the unbelievable fact that he is not condemned for his shortcomings, he will assume that the counselor condones everything . . . the counselor is neither a condemning judge (black giant) nor a condoning nurse (white giant)."¹⁸ "Therapy, it cannot be stressed enough, is not merely being nice to a person in trouble. It is helping that person to gain insight into himself."¹⁹

The three approaches catalogued by psychology have their counterpart—at least in a measure—in theological terminology. The permissive approach has much in common with the evangelical approach in theology. The basic difference is that the evangelical has a dynamic, the Gospel of Christ. The two false approaches,

rejected by psychology, are rejected by theology as incompatible with the Christian faith. In the accompanying chart the three approaches are described in both psychological and theological terminology (see page 729). It is only natural that the pastor will endeavor to create a situation in which he can counsel under the best conditions. Using the term "counseling situation" in a somewhat free and loose manner, one could say that the counseling situation may develop for pastors anywhere, although ordinarily the counseling situation takes place by appointment in a so-called "controlled situation."²⁰ However, a true counseling situation need not be by appointment in the pastor's office. In fact, many a lost sheep, in dire need of counseling, will not come to the pastor's office. Their very "lostness" consists in this, that they would never on their own get back into the fold. It requires the outgoing love of an assistant of the Good Shepherd, someone with enough love to "risk" a move or a whole series of moves, to go out and seek the sheep.²¹ Yes, this kind of warmth and love, plus the counseling skills, is needed to disentangle the sheep from the briars of his own thoughts and emotions which are keeping him "insidely" tied and preventing him from making the move back himself.²² Such counseling situations may develop anywhere. And there is where the counselor will endeavor to create the permissive atmosphere. Of course, wherever possible, we will meet by appointment, in which time, privacy and quietness can be assured.

Perhaps most pastors make out a daily list of pastoral calls. But in doing this we dare not be blind to the unscheduled contacts which the Lord Himself is creating and which may be the most fruitful ones of all. Oates speaks of "the market place of ministry" in referring to the unscheduled, unlooked-for, and unplanned contacts of each day.²³ Consider how frequently the contacts of Jesus were just of that kind. We do well to become adept at spotting them. It may also require that each morning we "gird our loins," pull ourselves together, tuck in the loose ends of our souls, as it were, ready ourselves for each day's rich potentialities connected not only with scheduled appointments and planned calls, but also with unforeseen and unscheduled contacts, so that, thus alerting ourselves for the day, we may possess that keen yet relaxed alertness so indispensable for dealing with the souls of men.

IN THE LANGUAGE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING

*The Condemnatory, Judgmental,
Evaluative Approach*

There are many devices through which this approach is implemented; often by applying coercions and pressures of various kinds—coarse or subtle, moral or emotional, attitudinal or verbal, etc. Through them people are “made to feel” that a certain direction of action ought to be forthcoming or avoided.

The Legalistic Approach

Its standards in regard to *views* (teachings, truths) and in regard to *morals* (ethics, conduct, etc.) may be very high, and entirely correct, but it would *impose* these on others without taking into consideration the slow and gradual growth process by which truths and behavior become a genuine and spontaneous part of an individual.—It fails to distinguish between the *product* that is desired and the *process by which* it is healthily brought into existence.

The Permissive Approach

Loving, yet firm; firmness coupled with affection. Showing a warmth and an outgoing love to persons without condoning their wrong views or deeds.

IN THE LANGUAGE OF THEOLOGY

The Evangelical Approach

Its standards in regard to *views* and *morals* can be just as high, but it takes into consideration the *process by which* the human being gradually comes into *insightful* possession of a truth. Where curiosity and interest are awakened, it brings pertinent truths into the picture, but does not press or crowd for immediate acceptance. *Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*. Makes for convictions and for spontaneous behavior proceeding genuinely from a change of view and change of attitude.

The Indulgent Approach

This is the spineless, standardless, structureless approach. It intends to be “loving” and sympathetic, but has sold out on convictions in regard to views and truths and also in regard to standards of morals or ethics.

The Antinomian Approach

A way of preaching the Gospel which makes it look as if the God of grace were at the same time indulgent and standardless. When this approach is followed, it leads finally to license and libertinism.

IV. THE COUNSELOR HIMSELF: HIS PERSONALITY AND TRAINING

Hiltner in his *Pastoral Counseling* makes the statement (p. 58): People are not inclined to open up their deepest feelings unless they feel some kind of confidence in the person to whom they are talking. Hence he who would counsel has to pay some attention to whatever there is in him which tends to give people such confidence, and also to whatever there is in him which tends to discourage such confidence.

In an article in the *Pastoral Psychology*, February, 1951, pp. 12, 13, Carroll Wise says:

What we communicate depends on the kind of person we are . . . on dynamic factors over which deliberate decision has little influence. A first factor which determines the counselor's responses is his attitude toward persons and their problems. This may range from complete understanding and acceptance to scorn and rejection. . . . The minister who attempts any counseling should understand that his communications to other people will be determined by feelings in himself of which he may or may not be aware.

All this points to the importance of the attitudes and make-up and, in that sense, to the personality of the counselor. Techniques and skills are comparatively meaningless; in fact, they may just be a "bag of tricks" and may even be used damagingly unless the counselor is or becomes the kind of person that will make a good pastoral counselor. In the next section we shall list *desirable and important characteristics of the counselor*.

1. *Permissiveness*.—Having seen how important the permissive atmosphere is for therapeutic counseling, we quite naturally list *permissiveness* of the pastoral counselor as one of his most important characteristics. With it he establishes "rapport," loving the sinner while not condoning the sin. It is like the sunshine which shines with the same warmth on an apple, a rose, or a pile of manure. Such outgoing love is not at all determined by what it "lands on" or how it is received. It is not the soul-damaging kind of "love" which merely "loves" people if they are or think a certain way. That kind of love only causes further distortions and twists in personalities, hidden away under surface compliance. The out-

going love and warmth required of a pastor is described by Luther as follows:

Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself. . . . He ought to think: "Though I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy. . . . I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor. . . . Lo, thus from faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss. For a man does not serve that he may put men under obligation, he does not distinguish between friends and enemies, nor does he anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but most freely and most willingly he spends himself and all that he has, whether he waste all on the thankless or whether he gain a reward."²⁴

2. In the section on the techniques and skills of the counseling process we stressed how important it is for good counseling to sense and catch the feeling tone of a parishioner's comments. It is natural, then, to enumerate as an important trait of a counselor "*a sensitivity to the expression of feelings.*"²⁵ Unless one is able to develop sensitivity, one's dealings with the delicate movements of the souls of men is apt to be like operating on a gnat with a butcher knife or like walking over a highly polished concert piano with hobnailed boots.

3. *Objectivity* is essential. Anyone who is very "suggestible" and too easily "identifies himself with" a parishioner will find that by taking sides he has maneuvered himself into a position where he cannot be very helpful to either side. "Counseling proceeds by understanding and not by agreement or disagreement."²⁶

4. The greater the insight a counselor has into his own make-up the more therapeutic his counseling will be. Before psychiatrists are given the green light to practice their "*psyches iatreia,*" they must themselves undergo intensive psychoanalysis. And they are advised to undergo supplementary psychoanalysis at future times, especially in areas where they sense their need for it. "A similar level of understanding and control is expected of the minister, but nowhere in his training is he given sufficient opportunity to

achieve it.”²⁷ There are many characteristics which hinder effective pastoral counseling, such as a hostile reaction whenever negative feelings are expressed against him or the church or religion; or when the pastor who is quite suggestible and easily “taken in” by someone’s pathetic story quickly sides with one party and identifies himself with the one side; or, again, when the pastor permits the subtle domineers in his congregation to impose on him; or when he cannot stand the free pouring forth of painful sorrow and grief but rushes in immediately in a supportive role, comes prematurely with the comfort of the Gospel, and thus seals in the negative feelings which would be much better out of the system and out in the open; or the pastor who is judgmental and evaluative and puts his weight on a given side and must come with praise or blame; or the pastor who believes that his prestige might suffer unless he is wiser than the counselee, wins the argument, or in some other way succeeds to show this “superiority.”

Lack of space permits us only to mention four further characteristics of the good counselor:

5. A sincere interest in and respect for the worth of each individual.
6. Patience coupled with keen alertness to carry on the hard work of “creative listening.”
7. A thorough acquaintance with all that can be scientifically determined about human behavior (psychology).
8. And, of course, a thorough understanding of the revealed Word of God.

In his book *An Introduction to Therapeutic Counseling* Porter aims to give the counselor insight into his basic attitudes. “It is the contention of the writer that unless the counselor can and does ferret out his own attitudes, the counselor operates more blindly than he needs.” Could the seminary training include something that would be comparable to the analysis which psychoanalysts need undergo? Or could an “in-service” program be arranged for the active pastor?

When one considers the skills and techniques so essential for a workman who would endeavor to deal helpfully with the delicate intricacies of the souls of men, and when one considers what is so

essential besides the tools, namely, the traits and attitudes and habit responses that make up a personality usable for therapeutic pastoral counseling, for the saving of souls and for the reclaiming of personalities, who of us will not say with Moses (Exodus 3 and 4): "Who am I that I should go?" or, again: "Lord, Lord, I am not 'eloquent' in the choice of the right words and responses"? Then it is good to know that it is the Lord's work that we are doing; that our Lord Himself didn't always succeed; that He who stood by Moses and Nathan will also be at our side; that while we are indeed not "sufficient of ourselves . . . our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5, 6), who makes us competent to be ministers of the new testament; and that the additional insights into the workings of the human soul for which we are indebted to this our century can also be used by God to make us more competent for our task. Also our very failures — and we aren't successful in every counseling situation — our very failures can humble us so that, turning anew to God, we may be made the more adequate for that which we endeavor to do in His name.

Our seminaries have always included courses on "pastoral theology" in the curriculum. These courses aimed to help the students of each generation to come into possession of the Church's own rich heritage in the field of pastoral care. "Each age its solemn task may claim but once," and it is the solemn responsibility of the Church of this era (1) to retain and repossess all that is valid and sound in its own heritage; (2) to enrich itself by adding to this heritage whatever can be definitely and scientifically determined to be truly valid about human behavior from the fields of psychology and psychiatry and related sciences; and (3) to adopt or adapt from the field of secular counseling whatever is usable for its own specific task of pastoral counseling.

That will be no simple task. It would be a mistake, on the one hand, to be so self-sufficient as simply to ignore these other fields entirely. It would be an even graver error simply to ignore the Church's own heritage. There are principally two ways in which our seminaries today are endeavoring to meet this challenge, (1) in their classroom courses on pastoral theology, pastoral care, and pastoral counseling, and (2) through so-called "clinical training" courses.

1. For the *classroom courses at our seminaries*, and also for the further study and development of those who are already in the work, a carefully selected bibliography will prove very helpful, because there is a veritable flood of books, some good, some mediocre, some of little value.

2. The last decade has witnessed a remarkable development of so-called "*clinical training* courses" for the initial and further training of pastoral counselors. Most of such clinical training courses are conducted at hospitals or other institutions where there is a concentration of human beings who are under more than ordinary stress. Such clinical training courses either form a part of seminary training or can also serve to supplement the training of those who are already in parish or other work. Courses vary in length and intensity: one week, six weeks, twelve weeks, four months, one year. The idea is that the training be carried on under trained and experienced chaplain supervisors. Other Protestant churches have rather thoroughly developed this method of training counselors.²⁸ Just recently there has been considerable progress in the development of this training device also in the Lutheran Church.²⁹ It is my impression that the training of pastors by clinical training has been stressed especially for those who plan to enter institutional mission work or the chaplaincy. In my opinion it is an error to hold that only those or especially those will need this type of training. The men in the parish ministry need it just as desperately for an effective ministry.³⁰ Our entire Church could profit from it, and our entire Church needs to become aware of both the good that can be absorbed and the pitfalls that need to be avoided in this new field. A beginning has been made.³¹

3. The last several years have seen the appearance of several *magazines* on pastoral care, pastoral counseling, and pastoral psychology. *Pastoral Psychology* has been published monthly since February, 1950 (see note 12). *The Journal of Pastoral Care* has been published quarterly since 1947. There are some excellent articles in these magazines and some not so excellent. In the main they are psychologically oriented, and in general one misses what Thurneysen stresses and develops at length in his *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge*, summarized in two quotations: "Seelsorge, ihrem Inhalte nach, kann nichts anderes sein als ihrerseits eine Ausrich-

tung des Wortes Gottes in einer besonderen Gestalt." "Die Seelsorge kann nichts anders mehr heißen und sein als der Dienst der Ausrichtung dieses freisprechenden, gnädigen Wortes an den Einzelnen."³²

4. Another way in which pastors who are already in the field could further develop themselves for the work is through *workshops and seminars*, arranged for on a larger scale by Districts of Synod or by conferences; or, on a smaller scale and in a still more informal manner, several friends, neighbors, conference brethren, could work out some kind of *development program* among themselves. This could take the place of the former "cases of casuistry." It could emphasize how pastors may learn the "process by which" they would handle those cases rather than aim at the conference or group formulating a decision on what advice the brother should hand down. Cases from actual experience could be carefully written up, not a mere summary in paragraph form, but the actual remarks of the counselee and the actual response of the counselor. This could then be discussed and evaluated. With the help of a wire or tape recording, members of a small informal group could practice by duplicating actual counseling cases and practice making responses and then label them. Books could be reviewed. A counselor from some other field of counseling could be invited in, or a psychiatrist could be invited to give a talk.

5. The pastor will learn most about counseling in his active ministry. It will prove helpful to the pastor if he always writes down in detail the exact responses as they developed. If one does that in writing, one gets to detect the following: "Here I was crowding, and see what happened—the parishioner switched to some other subject." Or "in this period significant material came out and significant insights were achieved. Let me analyze and label my responses and see why."

6. We Lutherans might further explore various different ways of conducting our own *private devotions*, especially also with the thought in mind how these might help to give us a better understanding of ourselves, a better understanding of the riches of God's grace, and so also equip us the better for our work of pastoral counseling. Our Church might give thought to publishing some

helps for private devotions, geared to the needs of those in the ministry of the Word. In *Loyalty to Christ and Country* our Church's Armed Services Commission already publishes such helps, geared to the needs of those in the Armed Forces. The development and publishing of one or several bare outlines, or scaffoldings, or "orders of service for private devotions," would prove helpful. We should like to suggest one such scaffolding, and in this case one which has been borrowed and adapted from the devotional literature of the Catholic Church.³³ It will be found to be remarkably closely related to suggestions scattered at random among the introductory paragraphs of the pamphlet "Feeding on the Word," which our Church's Board for Parish Education has put out in 1951 and 1952. Let us try it out, and thereupon alter, add, subtract, with the hope that we may develop one or several "new sets of devotional exercises" that will be thoroughly Lutheran and also have rich potentialities for the private devotional life of pastors in this age.³⁴

We now close this entire presentation on pastoral counseling with excerpts from "A Pastor's Prayer" in the new edition of *The Lutheran Liturgy*:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Chief Shepherd and Only Head of Thy Church, help me to minister unto this flock, to which Thou hast called me as pastor. . . . Help me, O Lord, to give myself wholly to my office by daily meditation—and study of the Scriptures, that I may be able to make full proof of my ministry, to feed, instruct, to build up, to warn, to watch over, and to guide the lambs and the sheep of this flock, which Thou hast purchased with Thy blood. . . . O Lord, make me daily more conscious of the great possibilities (responsibilities) of my high office as Thine ambassador and steward of Thy mysteries, to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness . . . that the Lord might be glorified. For Thy name and for Thy truth's sake hear me, O Lord Jesus. Amen.³⁵

REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES

1. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (Harper and Bros., 1951), p. 330.
2. Göte Bergsten, *Pastoral Psychology, a Study in the Care of Souls* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951). Bergsten was superintendent and chaplain of St. Lukasstiftensens, served on the Institute for Psychology and Spiritual Counsel, Stockholm.
3. Carl R. Rogers, *Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1942), pp. 25—27. This book is basic for an understanding of the non-directive or client-centered approach to counseling. It clearly presents the basic factors of that particular viewpoint on counseling.
4. Bonaro W. Overstreet, *Understanding Fear in Ourselves and Others* (Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 151.
5. Wayne E. Oates, *The Christian Pastor* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951).
6. *Op. cit.*, p. 330.
7. The following will prove helpful for this purpose: E. H. Porter, *An Introduction to Therapeutic Counseling* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950); Rogers, *op. cit.*; Seward Hiltner, *Pastoral Psychology* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
9. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
10. Carefully working through the material in the above-mentioned books by Rogers and Hiltner, and especially also the one by Porter, will help a person to "get on to the knack" of making the so-called "understanding" response. Also Wm. Snyder, *Casebook of Nondirective Counseling* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947). Having acquired that skill, which is in itself an adiaphoron (like the skill of a speaker, writer, or surgeon), a person will be better able to determine just what he needs to do to make his counseling pastoral.
11. Porter, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
12. *Op. cit.*, p. 87. For additional description and characterization of the permissive atmosphere see Oates, *op. cit.*, p. 124; *Pastoral Psychology*, September, 1951, p. 17; February, 1952, p. 35. This magazine has been issued monthly, beginning February, 1950, by the Pastoral Psychology Press, Great Neck, N. Y.
13. Matt. 7:3; Luke 6:37; 15:1, 2; John 3:17; 8:11; 8:47 b.
14. John 1:14, 18; 14:8, 9; Col. 1:15 a; Heb. 1:1-3.
15. Prov. 28:13 a; Ps. 32:1-5, 11; Jer. 17:9.
16. Ps. 32:3.
17. Martin Luther, "A Discussion of Confession," *Works of M. Luther* (Holman edition; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1915), I, 84.
18. Fritz Küinkel and Ruth Gardner, *What Do You Advise? A Guide to the Art of Counseling* (New York: Ives Washburn, Inc., 1946), pp. 112, 107.
19. Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 88, 96—108. This quotation, p. 105.
20. Russel L. Dicks, *Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling* (rev. ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), p. VIII.
21. Luke 15:1-7, especially v. 4 (the seeking and searching grace of God). Cf. "The Shepherd sought His sheep," *Ev. Lutheran Hymnbook* (Concordia Publishing House, 1924), 105:2.
22. Overstreet, *op. cit.*, pp. 6—10.

23. *Op. cit.*, pp. 117, 94.
24. *Martin Luther*, "Treatise on Christian Liberty," *op. cit.*, II, 337, 338.
25. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
26. Hiltner, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
27. Carroll Wise, *Pastoral Psychology*, February, 1951, p. 13.
28. The following materials will give a pretty good idea of the way in which clinical training is carried on in other Protestant churches:
 - a) The Annual Catalog of the Council for Clinical Training, Inc., 2 East 103d St., New York 29, N. Y.
 - b) Folder on 1953 summer schools of pastoral care, six and twelve weeks' courses in clinical pastoral education, under the auspices of the Institute of Pastoral Care, Inc., Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston 14, Mass.
 - c) *Pastoral Psychology* from time to time lists places where clinical training courses are offered, e. g., of March, 1953, p. 57; April, 1952, pp. 55—57.
29. For about six years various individuals who could visualize or had seen or experienced the potentialities of clinical training have been discussing and working on the development of a *clinical training program within the Lutheran Church*. Among them there were individual pastors, city missionaries, chaplains, professors in the field of practical theology, and others, none of them officially representing their respective church bodies, but drawn together to wrestle with a common problem. At a meeting in June, 1951, a rather loosely organized "Lutheran Advisory Council for Pastoral Care" was formed. This group studied and discussed what was being done and what more could be done regarding courses on pastoral care and pastoral counseling at the seminaries, regarding orientation courses leading to clinical training, and regarding the actual setting up of clinical training stations. A statement on purpose and objectives, and a set of standards, was drawn up. Members of this group also attended the 2d and 3d national conference on clinical training and assisted in drawing up a set of "Standards for Clinical Pastoral Education." This set of standards stressed especially also the importance of rather closely tying up such a program with the seminaries so that there would be some assurance regarding the thought content and the philosophy absorbed under the program.

At the present state of development the matter is in a somewhat fluid or mobile state, but the matter will no doubt soon take on a more definite structure and shape.— Since about 1946 Chaplain Granger Westberg has conducted seminars on pastoral counseling at Augustana Lutheran Hospital, Chicago (cf. notice on announcement page in *Lutheran Witness*, December 27, 1949). Of the 23 Lutheran seminaries in North America nearly all have courses in pastoral counseling; and several of them offer actual clinical training, guided by the "Statement of Standards of the Lutheran Advisory Council on Pastoral Care." More explicit information can be secured from Rev. H. F. Wind (Missouri Synod) and Rev. Carl Plack (National Lutheran Council), who also serve as chairman and secretary, respectively, of the Lutheran Advisory Council on Pastoral Care.

At the St. Louis Seminary additional courses are today being offered, among which is an orientation course for clinical training involving classroom work and field work. And this last semester a clinical training program integrated with classroom work in a course entitled "Pastoral Care Clinic" has been worked out on an experimental basis by the director of field work, Edward Mahnke, and the department of practical theology.
30. Hiltner, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
31. In our own circles the *Lutheran Witness* has carried several significant articles ("A Christian Psychology," December 12, 1950, pp. 398, 399;

- "Is Psychology in Harmony with Christianity?" November 28, 1950; and others). On a more advanced and technical level for pastors we refer to the article by Prof. Otto Sohn, "The Essentials of Effective Counseling," *C. T. M.*, August, 1951, pp. 567—577; furthermore, we call attention to the excellent book reviews and significant articles in the *Lutheran Chaplain*, especially the one entitled "Pastoral Counseling" by Chaplain Tubesing (in the September-October and November-December, 1949, issues); "A Little Look at Pastoral Psychology" in the September-October, 1948, issue; and "The Function of a Chaplain in Psychotherapy" in the January-February, 1953, issue. Among the essays and papers presented at the meetings of the Associated Lutheran Charities there are also some on counseling which can be borrowed from the files of the association.—*The Journal of Pastoral Care*, first published in 1947 by the Institute of Pastoral Care, Inc.; now, however, by the Council for Clinical Training, 2 East 103d St., New York 29, N. Y. (cf. note 29 above).
32. Eduard Thurneysen, *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (München, Germany: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1948), pp. 43, 73. See review in *C. T. M.*, Feb., 1953, p. 159f.
33. *Introduction to the Devout Life, St. Francis de Sales* (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1948).—A very usable book is John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer* (New York: Charles Scribner Sons, 1949), which "compels a deep searching of our inner life," in the presence of the God of grace and pardoning mercy.
34. The planning of such private devotions will include the following suggestions:
- a) Do not just carelessly drift into a private devotional period, but *consciously and deliberately place yourself into "the presence of God"* (as one would sing the hymn "God Himself Is Present" in a public service).
 - b) A very brief prayer for God's blessing for a fruitful devotional exercise.
 - c) "*Confining the spirit*" to some specific area of consideration (at the workshop we used Ezek. 34:2, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 16, 23).
 - d) Toss around to and fro in your mind some "considerations" and thoughts growing out of the above. Thus "meditate," let in some air and light, for instance, on the fact that God has "called me" to be one of those shepherds, pastors. Check again what those pastors are to do and how the Good Shepherd wants these things to be done. Under-shepherds. Jot down some thoughts that occur to *you*.
 - e) "Affections" and resolutions. Express to God some of the negative, positive, and ambivalent feelings that are in your heart; e. g.: how hard you find it to be a pastor to your people, how inadequate you are for the task. Call to mind one or two specific neglects, fitting in with v. 4. Humbly acknowledge specific ones to the God of grace and pardoning mercy. Also call to mind specific instances of helpfulness on your part. Thank Him "who must work all good within us."—Ask Him to help you love the wayward sheep.—Perhaps a few good resolutions will spontaneously grow out of this meditation.
 - f) Incorporate some of the above reflections, "affections," and resolutions into a prayer.
 - g) At the close, pause for a moment to pluck one or two flowers for a boutonniere, a "nosegay," or small bouquet, and during the day continue to enjoy its fragrance.
35. Concordia Publishing House.
Elyria, Ohio