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### A Study of Jesus' Counseling Techniques with Individuals in the Gospel of St John Chapters Three and Four

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A STUDY OF JESUS' COUNSELING TECHNIQUES  
WITH INDIVIDUALS IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN  
CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by  
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June 1956

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SHORT TITLE

CHRIST-CENTERED COUNSELING

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## CHAPTER I

### THE CHALLENGE OF A CHRIST-CENTERED COUNSELING

As bearer of the prophetic word, and as a shepherd of souls, the modern evangelical pastor realizes the potential strength and weakness of personal counseling in his ministry. In addition to the preached word, he sees the necessity for personal, individual application of the Gospel in caring for souls in his parish. Yet much of the literature available, even under religious or Christian titles, fails to take seriously the evangelical nature of the Christian ministry and seems rather to draw on sources outside the Church and to espouse philosophies and attitudes toward God and man which are not in harmony with the kerygma of the Christian Gospel. The purpose of this study is to set forth some counseling methods of the Lord Jesus as a criterion and guide for pastoral counseling. Particularly the incidents recorded in the Gospel of St. John, chapters 3 and 4, where Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria, will engage our study. The problem which this paper attempts to study and solve is: Can the non-directive or psychoanalytic approaches to counseling subtly presupposed in most counseling literature be the modus operandi of the Christian minister when these approaches are examined against the attitudes and methods of Jesus towards individuals as recorded in the Gospels, especially chapters three and four of St. John?

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At the center of the area of ministerial work called pastoral care is counseling. To some members of the clergy counseling is merely a small appendage to their pastoral duties. It may be considered a necessary evil whose time and energy expenditure is hardly in proportion to its proved results. To others counseling becomes the chief way for presenting the message of the Gospel. Thus while some ministers ignore the potentialities of personal counseling, others have set up hours for counseling at their churches, hired professionally trained psychiatrists to complete the church's program, and considered other areas of church work as second rate compared to the dynamic situations met in personal counseling.

We may say at the beginning of this study that we take the attitude that in the words and actions of the Lord Jesus we find certain examples and attitudes which suggest and limit counseling procedures. We will look at His conversations as indicative of attitudes to follow and goals to strive for. In reading the works of such popular writers in this field as Seward Hiltner, Russell Dicks, Carroll Wise, and others, which shall be examined in somewhat critical detail in chapter VI, we have found that the specifically Christian life are not only absent, but frequently slighted and rejected. In addition to this, the secular writers on counseling, such as Carl Rogers and Ruth Strang and other recent authors, are suggestive of techniques and principles which may be directly opposite to the Christian concepts that Jesus expresses. Therefore we find a personal desire to search into the Gospel narratives and ferret out from there "case-studies" in which the Lord Jesus faced individual people with their weaknesses and problems, and gave not only

immediate answers, but also struck a universal note which makes such situations relevant to our ministerial activities with individual people today.

This brief study will attempt to explore the Gospel narrative for information on Jesus' counseling techniques and procedures. We shall refer particularly to the Gospel of St. John, examining the conversations between Jesus and Nicodemus in the third chapter, and Jesus with the woman of Samaria in the fourth chapter. Unless otherwise noted references will be found in the Gospel of St. John. All Bible quotations will be from the Revised Standard Version of 1952.

The last two chapters will examine counseling concepts as found in secular and religious literature. We shall summarize by examining these concepts in comparison with the counseling techniques of Jesus and the basic tenets of Christian faith.

## CHAPTER II

### JESUS AND INDIVIDUALS

As we follow the Lord Jesus along the paths of Galilee and Judea, we are struck by the great amount of time which one who was hailed as great and popular, whom crowds fought to approach and who aroused both intense love and hatred, spent with individual people. He chose His disciples individually from different groups of people. He knew the fishermen from the Sea of Galilee: Peter and Andrew, James the Elder and John. He rescued the little Jewish tax-collector, Matthew, from his distasteful business. And He attracted the pious Nathanael, and had patience with the doubtful Thomas. Jesus also developed friendships outside the chosen Twelve. We think of Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus.

Jesus also felt a compelling responsibility toward the down-trodden, the openly sinful. He picked up where others had left off or were indifferent. No sickness was too disfiguring, no "possession" too frightening, to one who came as a "physician" (Mk. 2:17), and a victor over demonic powers (Matt. 12:25). The activity of Jesus denotes a relation to humanity which is both personal and universal. He became "like his brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:17), and thus was able to sympathize with weakness and infirmity, although He was strong.

It was in personal conversations that we see Jesus relating Himself to individual people in a dynamic, close, empathetic



relationship. When this situation changes the life and personality of the one to whom the conversation is addressed, we may say that counseling is being carried on. It is to these interpersonal relations that we now address our study.

We first see Jesus in His relations with His parents. The twelve year old Jesus had to explain His absence from Mary and Joseph (Lk. 2:46-9). Mary is reported as saying that she and Joseph were "in great anguish of mind" (ὀδυνώμενοι). Jesus' answer is more one of surprise than reproof.<sup>1</sup> But He firmly reminded them of what they knew, or should have known, concerning His mission in life. He pointed to the role He had to fulfill in the light of God's will in a gentle but decisive reply.

Joseph is no more heard of, but we see Jesus confronting His mother in another situation, at Cana (Jn. 2:1-11). Plummer finds that Jesus' reply to Mary's comment, "They have no wine," implies a rebuke to her, perhaps because of some supposed vanity about her Son, as Chrysostom suggests, or for interference.<sup>2</sup> If Mary, as has been suggested, "shared her contemporaries' secular ideal of the Messiahship,"<sup>3</sup> then this statement was

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Plummer, The Gospel According to St. Luke, in International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John, in The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: The University Press, 1912), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Robert E. Speer, Jesus and our Human Problems (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), p. 10.

needed as Jesus asserted His relation to the world which went beyond the relation to His earthly mother. Mary's continued faith (2:5) showed that even these somewhat harsh words fitted her needs and served her betterment.

Except for Jesus' association with His immediate family (Lk. 2:41-51), we see Jesus in no recorded situation with individual people during His hidden years until the recorded conversation with John the Baptist (Mt. 3:13-17; Jn. 1:31-4). As the scene is recorded in St. Matthew, "Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him." We can imagine a childhood association with this cousin of almost the same age. Then followed the years of Jesus' apparent obscurity, as Jesus lived in Galilee and John in Judea, until John began his searing preaching and evangelizing. Jesus then went to be baptized by John. The sinless Jesus was baptized by a water "of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4). And here we see a facet of Jesus' personality that explains much of His attitude towards individuals. It has been pointed out, "As a man and the example to all men, he would suffer humiliation, however great it might be, in order to give a lesson; he would take upon himself the burden of the Law, so entirely inapplicable to him."<sup>4</sup> The Lord said to John, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

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<sup>4</sup>Daniel-Rops, Jesus and His Times, translated from the French by Ruby Millar (New York: E.P.F. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954), p. 106.

Jesus knew that John would have to decrease; his mission was complete. But Jesus is obedient to the Law, gently reminds John that they both must strive to carry out God's will, and points ahead to the time when He, whom John called the "Lamb of God" (1:29), would in humble obedience follow His cousin into death by cruelty and violence. Until then John was left to his work while Jesus began to fulfill the role to which John pointed.

In the call of the disciples we see the Lord Jesus meeting strange men, winning them over to give their life in dedication to His cause. It is strange to see these men in their various occupations being drawn under the sway of a preacher who demanded that they leave home and family and follow Him. Jesus' life and death would influence all history and human life, and the message of that life and death would be carried by individuals whose minds, hearts, wills, and souls were influenced by Jesus. We find the record of the calling of the first of the Twelve in John 1:35-51 and parallel passages. John introduces some of the disciples individually. Andrew and John had been disciples of the Baptist (Jn. 1:35-40; Mk. 1:16-20). Probably they saw, as Daniel-Rops suggests, that Jesus was:

a plain man and that he lived among the humble folk, from whom his disciples were drawn. . . . Jesus had many traits in common with the crowds who followed him; he had many others however, which they instinctively recognized as belonging to a higher order.<sup>5</sup>

They followed this Preacher who came to be baptized by their master, until Jesus turned to them and asked, "What do you

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

seek?" (Jn. 1:38). With bold directness Jesus searched their hearts. He questioned the purpose of their following, whether it was of devotion or curiosity. Elsewhere Jesus also asked direct questions to those who needed such stimulation: "Whom do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15); "What do you want me to do for you?" (Matt. 20:32); "What do you think of the Christ?" (Matt. 22:42). Jesus was able to stimulate people so that they would think through important questions. So in these direct questions we find Jesus causing these novice disciples to examine themselves, to gain insight into their own motivations, to understand their own purposes in following Him. Their answer to the question, "What do you seek?" has been described by Daniel-Rops: "Like the sturdy peasants they were, they blurted out one of those half-embarrassed questions which so often enshrine the most honest sentiments."<sup>6</sup>

Jesus spoke to the burly fisherman whose name was Simon. He renamed him Peter, the Rock, perhaps in direct contrast to Peter's impulsive, vacillating personality. So Jesus told Peter that God would work in his heart and make him a rocklike person. Philip received the mere command, "Follow Me" (Jn. 1:43). But he found in those words, spoken by one who spoke with authority, an offer that caught his soul. He soon went out to proselytize others.

We find Jesus in the interesting conversation with Nathanael as recorded in John 1:45-51. Nathanael received Philip's

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

witness glumly and probably followed with reluctance the "Come and see!" with which Philip eagerly challenged Him. Jesus again analyzed His listener. He knew just the right words which would capture his heart. Jesus spoke kindly to Nathanael, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile" (1:47). Jesus addressed him with a laying-hold on that goodness of a pious seeker after God's promises. Nathanael's original disgruntlement over the fact that Jesus had come from Nazareth disappeared as Jesus' revelation "went to the heart of Nathanael, and filled it with holy enthusiasm."<sup>7</sup>

Jesus also took the long view of a person. We find the call extended to Matthew. His name sticks out in the list of the disciples with the appendage "tax-collector" (Matt. 10:3). The crowds saw only a despised public official. But Jesus' heart reached out to him with the same offer of grace and hope as to the others. Jesus saw one that could be created anew by God's grace. Despite the condescending looks of the crowd, Jesus saw that God could create a disciple, an evangelist, out of a tax-collector.

An interesting situation is described by St. Luke in chapter 10, vv. 38-42 of his Gospel. There Jesus is in the home of the two sisters, Mary and Martha. Luke recorded the intimate conversation there, and we see again the Lord searching out hearts. We agree with Hitchcock who said:

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

None of these private conversations is exhausted in its first application, but contains vital elements which make it still serviceable. He was so eager to meet each personal need that he established types of experience which are universally repeated.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus with these intimate friends was able to rebuke a fault with encompassing love which both softened the blow and assured the chastised that His rebuke was for their own good. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled," He said. He conveyed an expression of affection and concern. Jesus appreciated the graciousness of Martha's *δοεῦβάβη* (Lk. 10:41), but had to point out to her that distraction and division of mind could work against focusing her heart on what was really *χρεία*. Even Jesus' comparison of Martha's behavior with Mary's is done without harshness, not aiming at showing Martha's inferiority. He points to the positive, the constructive, and does not dwell on criticism.

The breadth of Jesus' interest and concern for others is found most pointedly in His attitude toward those who were public sinners, and whom society spurned. Jesus became known as "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19).

Speer points out:

The piety of Christ was not obtrusive. Conscious but not self-conscious. In spite of His spotless holiness, He was ever accessible and near. His holiness made Him an utter stranger in such a polluted world. His grace kept him ever active in such a needy and afflicted world.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>A. W. Hitchcock, The Psychology of Jesus (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 191.

<sup>9</sup>Speer, op. cit., p. 10.

St. Luke makes the welcoming of outcasts prominent in his Gospel. Thus in Luke 7:36-50 we find Jesus confronting the sinful woman in Simon's house. Plummer labels this ἀμαρτωλὸς a person of notoriously bad character and probably a prostitute.<sup>10</sup> Her very presence Jesus considers an act of faith and trust. Her contrition shown by her tears accompanies the personal sacrifice of the costly ointment (Lk. 7:37). Jesus states the fact of her sins, by implication in v. 41, and explicitly in v. 47. He does not hide or cover up this fact. But facing both the sin and the act of faith in v. 50, Jesus speaks kindly to the woman graciously receiving her gifts to Him, and announcing to her the basis of new life in His forgiveness (v. 48) and His benediction of peace on the basis of this faith in Him (v. 50).

The story of Zacchaeus also exemplifies Jesus' concern for the outcasts of Jewish society (Lk. 19:1-10). The criticism of those who said, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner," does not deter Jesus. He is not swayed or deflected from what He deems God's will for Him to do, either by the applause or the condemnation of the crowd which followed Him. Jesus saw Zacchaeus' need and offered Himself to fill that need. This "chief tax collector" (v. 2) expressed his repentance in promises of amending his sinful life. Jesus announced, "Salvation has come to this house." As Plummer points out when Jesus revealed His Messiahship to the despised schismatic

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<sup>10</sup>Plummer, The Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 210.

(Jn. 4:26), to an outcast from the synagogue (9:37), and now to this tax-collector, he made a spontaneous revelation of His mission and purpose and of Himself.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus, in traveling around the area of the Sea of Galilee, carried on that tremendous battle against the devils and diseases "that wrench and wrack the minds and bodies of men."<sup>12</sup> Throughout the Gospels are accounts of Jesus exercising the love of God towards men and women whose diseases and disfigurements and mental derangements were either ignored or spurned by those about them. Yet Jesus always treated these people as objects of God's love. His efforts were directed toward their basic needs in relation to God, yet His pity healed their bodies as well. Thus the parade of lepers, cringing along the walls to be unseen by those around; the demon-possessed, shouting irrationally their pitiful fears and hates; those in perpetual darkness, receiving Him whom John called Light (Jn. 1:4f.) in such a direct, physical way--all these found a sympathetic ear and a miraculously helping hand from the Lord Jesus. He did not sanction the idea that all suffering is the result of the sin of the sufferer. This we see in Luke 13:1-5, as Jesus struck out the parallel that the greater sinners received the greater punishments, and in John 9:2f. He refuted the charge that the man born blind was in such a condition because of sinful acts

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<sup>11</sup>Plummer, The Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 436.

<sup>12</sup>Elizabeth Goudge, God So Loved the World (New York: Coward McCann, Inc., 1951) p. 105.



that he committed. Jesus also penetrated beyond the concern for healing of mind to offer forgiveness of sins, thus to gain wholeness of soul. To the woman who would secretly cure her infirmity by Jesus' power, the extension of her soul's needs to Him caused His love to save her, not the mere touching of a garment to heal a physical malady (Lk. 8:43-8). Likewise before the miracle of raising Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44), preliminary preparation is impressed upon the minds of those who witnessed that miracle. He tried to avoid wrong motivations and expectations, and instead pointed to the spiritual value of each physical act. He was always conscious of His mission as Messiah and not just miracle worker. Each individual was an object of God's grace in forgiving sins; for this reason Jesus came into the world.

Jesus also felt a concern for the wealthy, for the high caste. The rich young ruler thus became an object of Jesus' concern (Luke 18:18-30 and parallel passages). This appears to be one failure, in which Jesus was not able to reach the heart of the man burdened with possessions. Jesus had questioned until He discerned that possessions were the young ruler's problem, his besetting sin. His pride and self-satisfaction prevented the young man from perceiving his sin. Jesus especially pointed this out, not rebuking the young man's comment concerning the commandments, that he "observed all these from my youth" (Mark 10:20). But Jesus tried to hold up this one inadequacy which would have thrown him upon God's mercy and broken the self-righteousness. Likewise the man in Luke 12:13,

who had rudely interrupted Jesus in the middle of a discourse concerning a request for Jesus to make his brother divide an inheritance, would ordinarily have been rebuked or ignored for his rudeness. But perceiving the man's covetous heart, Jesus turned aside from the discourse and gave him a lesson aimed at his personal need.<sup>13</sup> As Curtis points out "Jesus' teaching is essentially and wholly occasional. . . . elicited by daily and hourly emergencies of contact and conversation and incident."<sup>14</sup> That teaching was always basic and radical, going to the heart and root of the matter.

We have scanned in a brief way some of the social situations in which we read of Jesus' conversations with individuals as recorded in the Gospels. Naturally these comments were not necessarily complete records of each conversation. But we may find in these situations attitudes and techniques which help us to understand Jesus' concepts of counseling with individual people.

Was this counseling? Definitions of counseling vary in different schools of thought. A psychiatrist may define the term so that it becomes synonymous with psychotherapy and is therefore restricted to professional workers. On the other hand, Carl Rogers states: "There has been a tendency to use the term counseling for more casual and superficial interviews

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<sup>13</sup>J. M. Price, Jesus the Teacher (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1946) p. 39.

<sup>14</sup>W. A. Curtis, Jesus Christ the Teacher (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 75.

and to reserve the term psychotherapy for more intensive and long-continued contacts. . . ."15 We will use a working definition of counseling as we observe the activities of Jesus with individuals. Thus counseling, as exemplified by Jesus and as suggestive for pastoral care, is: A face-to-face relationship in which the counselor is bearer of the revealed word of God in Christ; brings the message of reconciliation of a sinner to God; helps the client gain new insight into himself, a new orientation to the world around, a more acceptable and realistic self-concept, and a power from Christ to think and act in a way conforming to God's will.

Jesus thus looked beneath the surface of a person to find what was in his heart. His gentle rebukes to Mary, His mother, to Martha, and to the rich young ruler were pointed to certain deflected principles which Jesus wanted them to understand more clearly. His dynamic pronouncement of the activity of God in the world and His positive attitude toward individual people attracted those hard to convince. Thus the gruff, perhaps proud Nathanael was won immediately to the service of this Messiah. Jesus had an "unlimited range of sympathy"16 which extended beyond the bounds of local custom and prejudice, beyond ecclesiastical regulations and traditions. He never

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<sup>15</sup>Carl Roger, Counseling and Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942) p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Malcolm Ballinger, Clinical Pastoral Training Syllabus (Ann Arbor: n. p., 1953) p. 5.

shrank from any one who needed Him. His complete devotion to God's will spoke realistically about repentance. Jesus went beyond the physical healing to point out the part of faith in healing the whole person.

Already these few principles are apparent to us from perusing the Gospel accounts. As we look more carefully at two such narratives, we shall attempt to plunge deeper into the counseling techniques of Jesus with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman.

The authorship, the reliability of the Gospel, the difficulties in relation to the Synoptic, etc., will in the main be ignored by this study. We follow the arguments of Dodd<sup>1</sup> and Spemann<sup>2</sup> expounding their conclusion that the Gospel was written by the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee. We find other theories such as Barrett's<sup>3</sup>, although attractive and interesting in their attempt to harmonize all criticisms and to give credit for authorship to a close disciple of the Apostle, of little positive help in the authorship problem.

<sup>1</sup> Luke 2:1-7; 4:10-19; 12-9; 6:27-41; 41-50; 51-60.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick W. Farrar, The Life of Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1875) p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> W. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to John, in The Evangelist's World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931) pp. 68-70.

<sup>4</sup> W. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, in The Evangelist's World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931) pp. 77-82.

<sup>5</sup> W. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931) p. 13.

### CHAPTER III

#### JESUS AND NICODEMUS

The Fourth Gospel records six intimate discourses between Jesus and individuals or small groups of people.<sup>1</sup> With Farrar we may say that the validity and authorship of the Fourth Gospel will not be argued when we quote a reference.<sup>2</sup> Thus the large literature of apologetic material defending or destroying the Johannine authorship, the reliability of the Gospel, the difficulties in relation to the Synoptics, ect., will in the main be ignored by this study. We follow the arguments of Dods<sup>3</sup> and Plummer<sup>4</sup> espousing their conclusion that the Gospel was written by the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee. We find other theories such as Barrett's<sup>5</sup>, although attractive and interesting in their attempt to harmonize all criticisms and to give credit for authorship to a close disciple of the Apostle, of little positive help in the authorship problem.

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:3-9; 4:10-15; 32-9; 6:27-41; 41-50; 51-60.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick W. Farrar, The Life of Christ (New York: Fred W. Hurst & Co., 1875) p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> M. Dods, The Gospel According to John, in The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1951) pp. 655-70.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John, in The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: The University Press, 1912) pp. 18-32.

<sup>5</sup> C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1955) p. 13.

We turn first to the rich source of personal information about Jesus' counseling with Nicodemus, then to the conversation with the Woman of Samaria. Besides giving us accurate historical settings, as in Chapter 4, vv. 1-6, St. John records intimate details that help us understand the persons to whom Jesus speaks. Although John writes with a sparsity of actual words, he makes the personalities of Nicodemus, the woman at the well, Nathanael, John the Baptist, Thomas, Peter, Philip, and the others stand out. Even the nameless ones who speak for the "Jews" or the "Pharisees" are seen to be real people. Many have weak, insecure personalities. They speak to one whom they feel to be strange and somehow set apart from themselves, but nevertheless one with answers to help them.

Apparent in the Gospel of St. John are certain hallmarks which we may find pertinent to our further discussion. These are the combination of Jewish modes of thought and opinion with Greek characteristics from a Gnostic frame of reference.<sup>6</sup> We find certain recurrent words which become themes throughout the book: "light," "Holy Spirit," "life." Scholars have emphasized these themes and shown some of the high-points of St. John's theological perspective. We shall examine briefly six of these themes as pertinent to our discussion of the third and fourth chapters.

1. ~~Eschatology.~~ There were few if any Old Testament eschatological ideas that were not discussed and well-known in Jewish thinking in the first century of our era. In addition,

<sup>6</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 10.

the apocryphal writings after the close of the Old Testament canon abounded in grandiose apocalyptic visions (e.g., Books of Enoch, Ascension of Isaiah, etc.).<sup>7</sup> Jesus spoke in apocalyptic tomes in His description of the coming last days (Matt. 25:31-46). Jesus described His ministry in less futuristic words, yet He often implied the close of the age and the ushering in of the new era to come (Mark 13; Matt. 19:1-25; Lk. 13:29; 19:41-44). Thus Jesus spoke in terms understandable to the people of His time. But where the eschatological element in the synoptics is generally isolated, in the Fourth Gospel it becomes almost fundamental.<sup>8</sup> Thus as we shall see, the tenses in John 4:23 indicate both a future element and a present reality. And much of the material in chapter three pointed at Nicodemus indicates a concern that the coming of the Kingdom be viewed immediately and internally, not only as some grand future event. John used the words of Jesus to point up false views of the coming eschaton, and to show the coming of God's Kingdom to be realized in the present as well as the future.

2. Christology. As Barrett points out the person of Christ is defined in a clear, insistent way, such as is not found in the synoptics.<sup>9</sup> Thus the dialogue with Nicodemus

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<sup>7</sup>Henry H. Halley, Pocket Bible Handbook (Revised edition; Chicago: Henry H. Halley, 1951), p. 360.

<sup>8</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

blossoms forth into a magnificent monologue on the divinity of Jesus. Also, the schismatic Samaritan woman becomes the object of Jesus' self-revelation as the Messiah, "He who is called Christ" (4:25). Jesus reflects the character of the Father (4:23) and explicitly relates Himself to the Father (14:9-13). Although John is careful to point out the strong bond with humanity in His being wearied (4:6), His weeping (11:35), His hunger (4:8), nevertheless, it is always the divine Christ that shows the signs of glory with that humanity (e.g., 3:14 even in death).

3. Salvation. Particularly in chapter 3:13-21 John portrays the plan of salvation as God had revealed it through Jesus. The terms are characteristic of John although put into the mouth of Jesus. But though the wording is St. John's, the substance is that of the Lord. And the historical connection with the revelation of the Old Testament is retained as Jesus insists that "salvation is from the Jews" (4:22). This salvation is from condemnation (3:18-19), from darkness (1:8), from sin (1:29), and it is a salvation to life (3:15; 20:31; 3:36).

4. Sacraments. Although there is no specific command to "Baptize," or with regard to the Communion to "Do this in remembrance of Me," yet it has been said there is more teaching about the sacraments in St. John than in the synoptics.<sup>10</sup> In 3:9 we see the picture of water working with

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.



the Spirit to bring this new birth. As we shall discuss later, the Spirit does not supersede the water or obliterate the external sign but deepens the meaning of the baptism as the Jews and even as John the Baptist had practiced it. Here the Spirit was to be acting with the water. Although not relevant to our discussion it may be said that chapter 6 is seen by many to imply Holy Communion, which again points out John's value on the sacrament as well as to his assumption that the audience to whom he writes had known about the commands in the synoptic Gospels.

5. The Holy Spirit. Barrett points out that, as Jesus ascended into heaven as He had promised His disciples (14:1-4), so the Holy Spirit as the gift of God became apparent and active in the lives of the faithful. We see this concept of the Spirit at work in connection with baptism (3:5) and worship (4:24).

6. Universality--the outreach of the Church. The terms "all" and "world" indicate John's concern with expressing the universality of the message and person of Jesus. Thus, to Nicodemus, Jesus speaks of the same requirements as would have been given to a Gentile. There is no preferential treatment of the Jew. And St. John takes up this thread as he tells of the love of God for "the world" (3:16). The brazen serpent of Moses could be raised over all for all to see. Likewise to the Samaritan woman, the sights of her worshipping eyes would be lifted from Mt. Gerizim (4:20) past Jerusalem (4:20) to the broad expanse of the universe to worship that God who is Spirit

(4:24).

We may conclude that St. John emphasizes certain aspects of the Christian faith which are not found in a pronounced way in the other Gospels. It is assumed that the late date of his writing (90-100 according to Plummer, Barrett, and others) presupposes that the synoptic Gospels are known and circulated. Thus the fourth Evangelist's work is to point up, complete, and complement the other writings. His purpose is found in 20:31,

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." Without stating the primary elements of the earlier narratives, St. John portrays the holy Christ as Savior, God-man, and present in the Holy Spirit. In the "farewell discourses" Jesus also promises that guidance will be given for writing these things for those to come. Thus in 14:26:

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."

Looking at the immediate setting of the conversation with Nicodemus we see Jesus early in His ministry. Jesus first appeared to be baptized by John (1:29ff.). He then met those who became His first disciples (1:35-50). His first miracle recorded in St. John was at Cana (2:1-11). Then Jesus attended His first Passover at Jerusalem (2:13). Assuming a chronological order, we find Jesus already with a name and reputation for Himself. The Baptist had pronounced his great statement of faith (1:29).

Jesus' first miracle had been understood by the disciples (2:11). And His experience in the temple had aroused the ire of the Jews (2:18). With Dodd we connect the last verses of chapter two with the next chapter as part of the following narrative. Thus it was the time of the Passover Feast. Already Jesus' σημεῖα had created faith in many (2:23).

This first discourse takes place with Nicodemus. We may see a connection with 2:23 and infer that Nicodemus was one of the "many" who believed in Him. John mentions Nicodemus elsewhere (7:50-52; 19:39). Nicodemus has been described by Daniel-Rops:

This Nicodemus seems to have been a good man, one of those whose moral sensitivity enables them to recognize the way to perfection, but who are inhibited from entering upon it with all their heart by intellectual scruples and social responsibilities, and also, to tell the truth, by a fundamental lack of courage.<sup>12</sup>

He has been at times identified with unnamed persons in the other Gospels. Thus he has been called the rich young man of Luke 18:18ff.,<sup>13</sup> the "ruler who belonged to the Pharisees" where Jesus went to dine (Lk. 14:1), and even the "ruler" of Matt. 9:18 who is called Jairus in Lk. 8:41. None of these suppositions is convincing.

But we are given somewhat of a picture of the man in St.

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<sup>12</sup>Daniel-Rops, Jesus and His Times, translated from the French by Ruby Millar (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 204 f.

<sup>13</sup>J. H. Bernard, Gospel According to John in The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), I, 104.

John, to whose description we shall confine this study. He was "of the Pharisees" (3:1), and a "ruler of the Jews" (3:1), "A teacher of Israel" (3:10), a member of the Sanhedrin (7:50-52). Tradition also assigns to him some activity after the Gospel account becomes silent:

Tradition says that after the Resurrection, he became a professed disciple of Christ, and received baptism from Peter and John, and that the Jews stripped him of his office, beat him, and drove him from Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>

Concerning the Sanhedrin, by the opening of the Roman Age in Palestine (ca. 63 B.C.), the Sanhedrin had become a "layman's movement" from the middle class. The unsympathetic pro-Hellenistic priesthood had lost contact with the people, and the Sanhedrin took as its purpose to interpret the law with intelligence.<sup>15</sup> During Herod's reign many Pharisees became members of it. The Sanhedrin during Jesus' time had authority only in Judea, and therefore could not touch Jesus in Galilee or Perea. Thus we may see something of Nicodemus' character also in the fact that he had membership in this judicial body. Although the Pharisaic party was bigoted and many authorities believe it was lined against Jesus from the beginning, we can see the integrity of men like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus as a leaven in the group. Despite the apparent timidity of his appearance "by night" (3:2), the picture of Nicodemus standing up in the midst of the chief priests and Pharisees in chapter 7 vv. 50-1

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<sup>14</sup>P. W. Farrar, op. cit., p. 159, note 2.

<sup>15</sup>I. G. Matthews, The Religious Pilgrimage of Israel (New York: Harper & Bros., 1932), pp. 406-08.

shows that he had become in some sense "one of them" (7:50) and had gained courage for his convictions (7:51). Likewise immediately after the Crucifixion, Nicodemus came with spices for Jesus' burial. Although his protestation against the judgment against Jesus is not recorded, if it was ever made, yet we can respect his devotion to Jesus in those hours when few would dare to show such devotion.

The immediate situation may thus be reconstructed according to our preliminary survey. Jesus is the young, new religious figure who has gathered followers and gained notoriety. He has withstood the ecclesiastical figures of His time and accused them of lack of spirituality and even of making the temple a "house of trade" (2:16). He has received a witness of approval from the prophet of repentance, John. Many believed in Him because of the signs (2:23), but Jesus was not trusting Himself to such a fickle crowd nor to such superficial acclaim. Nicodemus apparently embodied some of this strength and weakness of a pious Jew of that era. He was in a group, the Pharisees, whose zeal could consume their sense of the holy and the good with nationalistic prejudice and hate. Their sense of religious heritage was connected with the political glory of former years before the bondage of Rome was placed on them. Thus we see the leader of Israel with perhaps a similarly materialistic conception of God's promises, and the same earthly view of the Kingdom as is often apparent even in the thinking of Jesus' disciples (Matt. 20:20ff; Acts 1:6).

John 3:1-2 states that this Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Nicodemus came with the same curiosity that may have been present in many earnest souls seeking the Kingdom in that day. Because of John, Israel was a nation aroused. The main subject of religious discussion must have been the Kingdom. What was its nature? How near was its approach? Perhaps Nicodemus came by night to avoid the hostility of his colleagues.<sup>16</sup> The reply of Jesus to the Jews that His body could be destroyed as a temple, and that He would live nevertheless, would have caused much discussion (Jn. 2:20). Jesus was now in Jerusalem. Perhaps he stayed at Zebedee's house in the city as Elizabeth Goudge suggests.<sup>17</sup> James and John may have had this house in Jerusalem as a town house for the sale of their wares in the large city. It has been suggested that John was present at the interview there in his house.<sup>18</sup> However the absence of any reference to John's presence and the intimate nature of the conversation would almost certainly presuppose privacy between the two men. Farrar portrays the scene well.

These were indeed the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven . . . And although they violated every prejudice and overthrew every immediate hope of this aged inquirer - though to learn them he must unlearn the entire intellectual habits of his life and training - yet we know from the sequel that they must have sunk into his inmost soul. Doubtless in the

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<sup>16</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>17</sup>Elizabeth Goudge, God So Loved the World (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1951) p. 91.

<sup>18</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 160.

further discussion of them the night deepened about them; and in the memorable words about light and the darkness with which the interview was closed Jesus gently rebuked the fear of man which led this great Rabbi to seek shelter of midnight for a deed which was not a deed of darkness, needing to be concealed, but which was indeed a coming to the true and only Light.<sup>19</sup>

Nicodemus addressed Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (3:2). Nicodemus used the plural, οἱ δὲ αὐτῶν, indicating that he was speaking for the many who had heard and seen Jesus. They had seen the σημεῖα which Jesus had performed (2:11,23). Bernard points out that these signs were interpreted as "a mark of Divine Assistance and favour . . . a universal belief in the first century"<sup>20</sup> Like many that were to follow, these signs had the effect of arousing faith in the person, and pointing to a power beyond (Jn. 14:10-11). Thus, Nicodemus speaks to Jesus seeking something beyond the individual persons, the preacher, and the miracle-worker.

The address, Rabbi, transliterating the Hebrew רַבִּי, was the common title of a scholar and public teacher. Yet even such a designation, paralleling that given to many another teacher was not a pronouncement of strong faith in itself. Nicodemus probably was referred to as a Rabbi himself. So he spoke as one Rabbi to another, the one seeking truth, the other trying

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<sup>19</sup>F. W. Farrar, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>20</sup>J. H. Bernard, op. cit., p. 104.

to help him find it.<sup>21</sup> The Pharisee also called Jesus "Teacher" -- διδάσκαλος . Westcott points out that Jesus was referred to as a teacher, not different in kind from other teachers.<sup>22</sup> Nicodemus also adds that no one could have done those signs, unless "God is with him." One might expect him to say, "unless he be a prophet, or the Messiah," but again Nicodemus is weak in his attestation. He is trying to express some feeling of veneration yet, careful not to overstate his case, he covers up the questions that his heart feels welling up. This designation, "from God" compares with the statements about Moses (Ex. 3:12) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:19), and although a connection is made with the great prophets, there is no strong pronouncement calling tradition into question, breaking with the general feeling of his Jewish learning.<sup>23</sup>

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Although the question was asked in a vague plural sense, "I and some others feel this way or that,"--Jesus answers him personally, λέγω σοι . Jesus had penetrated, this man at a single glance. He saw the "deposit of conformity, of second-hand opinions."<sup>24</sup> Jesus' answer was not to the weak statement, but

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<sup>21</sup>E. Goudge, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>22</sup>B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1954), p. 105.

<sup>23</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>24</sup>Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 204.



to the feeling He knew was in the heart of the man. The Lord penetrated to the inner longings and feelings that were couched in timid, searching words. If there was no dialogue in between, we are surprised at the curtness of the reply, and the immediate intrusion of Jesus' long-range goal with this person.

Jesus said one must be "born anew" γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν. No appreciation of signs or miracles would by itself bring a man any nearer to understanding the coming of the kingdom of God, nor the coming of the Messiah, nor for that matter the purpose of Jesus' ministry itself.<sup>25</sup> As Dodd observes in Jesus' words, rebirth ἄνωθεν "instead of lying in a scarcely imaginable future, becomes the condition of entering the Kingdom of God".<sup>26</sup> Thus, the idea of rebirth had eschatological significance to it. Nicodemus, filled with these eschatological ideas of God's Kingdom coming to judge the nations of the world and to deliver Israel as a nation must have been struck by Jesus' personal application. Edersheim comments on the religious insight in that day:

Judaism could understand a new relationship towards God and man, and even the forgiveness of sins. But it had no conception of a moral renovation, a spiritual birth, as the initial condition for reformation, far less as that for seeing the Kingdom of God.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>J. H. Bernard, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>26</sup>C. H. Dodd, op. cit., p. 304.

<sup>27</sup>A. Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1904), p. 385.

Examining the words more closely we see that the word  $\alpha\lambda\omega\theta\epsilon\nu$  has evidence for meaning either "again, anew, fresh," or "from above, from heaven." We agree with Schlatter, Vincent, Calvin, Dods, and others that the meaning is mainly temporal, meaning, as the R.S.V. translates it, "anew". This is also commended by the use of the Term  $\delta\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$  in v. 4. But the alternate interpretation of "from above" has evidence too (Cf. 3:31; 19:11). It is interesting that the term  $\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\alpha\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  is used frequently in the synoptics, but occurs only here and in v. 5 in St. John. The verb  $\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{\epsilon}\iota\nu$ , "to see," is understood as "to experience," pointing to other instances: to see death (Lk. 2:26); to see corruption, (Acts 2:27); or to see good days (I Peter 3:10).

Thus we see Jesus drawing on that germ of truth in Nicodemus' confession, and answering in a way fitted to guide him to the truth that he is seeking. There are no formalities, nor is there any discussion of preliminaries. But Jesus "startles him at once with the solemn uncompromising address in v. 3."<sup>28</sup> Drawing upon the experience and training of Nicodemus, Jesus strikes at the heart of the matter--the heart. He substitutes for all vague religious longings for earthly glory and power, the power to move an individual heart. His immediate leap into the subject took the statement of Nicodemus, plus all that his very coming to Jesus implied as preliminary, and faced Nicodemus

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<sup>28</sup>f. W. Farrar, op. cit., p. 158.

immediately with the goal which he only timidly sought. He placed the religious question in the immediate present, and to the individual person. As Barrett correctly sees, Jesus made renewal an immediate possibility; it cannot wait for an "apocalyptic denouement."<sup>29</sup> Thus the burden was thrown on Nicodemus to receive this startling message and face up to its implications.

Nicodemus took the words of Jesus at their literal meaning. He asked Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" The words of Jesus had struck deep, perhaps causing Nicodemus to pause before replying. Nicodemus pretended to think that Jesus was speaking of ordinary birth. Yet the metaphor "new birth" for spiritual regeneration was familiar in that time. John the Baptist had issued the call to repentance, the essence of which was being "born again." The words of the Old Testament also intimate this complete spiritual regeneration (Ez. 36:25-7; Eccl. 11:5, Ps. 51:10, Is. 40:31). But perhaps Nicodemus, not knowing what to say, asked what he might have known to be foolish. Or he may have asked his incredulous "How?" in the same naive ignorance as Mary had (Lk. 1:34). At any rate Nicodemus was startled by the comment, and doubtless he listened to the conversation with greater earnestness, henceforth we need not conclude that Nicodemus was old because of his use of the adjective *γέρων*. Perhaps just as an adult he saw what he

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<sup>29</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 189.

had made of his life, the decisions and the failures. These things could not be changed, he knew. Thus he reflected a universal feeling of impotence when a man confronts the perfect demands of God. He showed the feeling of inadequacy and perhaps by these words intimated that he could not follow any visionary or mystical teaching. Thus he brought the thoughts down to common life experience. He faced the preacher with the literal meaning of His words. Yet Nicodemus' question also looked for an answer. He received more than he could have imagined.

Jesus shed further light by reiterating his former warning.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit." (vv. 5-8).

Nicodemus had had his interest aroused by the striking statement which swept aside all the preconceptions concerning this "teacher come from God." If he did not grasp the complete significance of the first statement, Jesus explained it more fully here. Jesus did not pause for Nicodemus' question but immediately leaped to the heart of the matter, again interpreting the question as signifying more profound yearning. The two

great factors that make this second birth possible are the "Spirit and water." Thus an external work is necessary for such birth. A man does not enter into his mother's womb as if that would accomplish the end which Jesus promises. But the two elements--spiritual and external, or ritual--are a part of God's plan to effect this change. We may reject at once Calvin's statement that these two are merely names for one act.<sup>30</sup> Rather we find that Jesus gave spiritual significance to the baptism already performed by John, and thus used the ritual element familiar to Nicodemus, yet adding new meaning. As Vincent points out: "The spiritual element is not to exclude or obliterate the external or ritual element."<sup>31</sup> Again the ground of Nicodemus' earthly comprehension was cut away. Jesus pointed out the two experiences--to be born of the flesh (as all men are), and to be born of the Spirit. Those born of the spirit must give up trying to effect a life in God from their own flesh. Rather they must rely upon a renewing work, from God Himself. The body of a child is made from the physical body of its mother. And the spiritual man is made by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Thus the being born again demands complete transformation. "It is that integral renewal which crowns the desire for penitence instilled by the Baptist, but it would have special

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<sup>30</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 713.

<sup>31</sup>M. R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 91.

significance for the strict observer of the Law."<sup>32</sup>

Jesus also pointed up the new statement with a wording different from that of the first announcement. He said, "You must." The general statement of vv. 3 and 5 now shows that no one is exempt. Jesus said this to one who represented the chosen people, the Parisees, the rulers. And He said, "You must" (δεῖ ὑμᾶς) in the plural. Barrett suggests that the verb θαυμάσῃς in the aorist is "colloquial or idiomatic, with the effect of impatience."<sup>33</sup> But the words themselves indicate no impatience at all. Jesus realizes the catastrophic weight of the words to this man. Rather He is sharpening the point of the words to reach all the way into Nicodemus' heart.

Concerning verse 8 there has been much written on the term πνεῦμα. We cannot go into a long discussion of this word. We may follow the study of Dods which states that πνεῦμα is used 370 times in the New Testament, and it is only translated as "wind" once, and that in a translation of an Old Testament passage.<sup>34</sup> The term πνεῦμα in this verse was translated as "spirit" until the late fathers.<sup>35</sup> It may be desirable, however, to think also of the use of the term as "wind"; thus Jesus may have used the creature as a figure of the Spirit. Perhaps Barret is wise in thinking that Jesus used a term that is

<sup>32</sup>Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>33</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>34</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 714.

<sup>35</sup>J. H. Bernard, op. cit., p. 108.

purposely ambiguous and can be understood in both senses.<sup>36</sup> Thus Nicodemus was to understand πνεῦμα as the influence of the Spirit which comes as incomprehensibly as the wind in its origin, is from above, and has as its end something equally difficult to localize--eternal life. Jesus attempted to put into terms of experience that which is utterly and completely beyond experience. To the materialistic statement of Nicodemus Jesus relates this metaphor. And yet, its wide application is immediately understandable. One cannot look for material fulfillment of the divine activity in the earth. Its work upon the human heart cannot be reflected in biological activity. Again one must emphasize the universal concept--so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. Jesus does not limit this in any way to the Jews, or to the proselytes who received certain Jewish rites. Rather here is a universal experience. When the activity of God, manifest in Christ, enters the heart, no ritual background, no tradition, has exclusive significance. Yet again we say that the ritual element is not discarded but heightened into a new meaning, as "the water and the spirit" adds a new meaning and fulfillment to the message of John, and to which he referred (Jn. 1:33).

Nicodemus again asked "How can this be?" He fell back again on his bewilderment. The answer, far from satisfying, left more questions unanswered. Examining original we find

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<sup>36</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 176.

that the words mean not "How can these things be," but, "How can these things happen?"<sup>37</sup> We may analyze Nicodemus' answer here. It appears that here is a sincere questioning attitude. There was no rebuke in Jesus' words, no underlying impatience in His answer. Nicodemus does not go back now to the former point, which the Lord apparently did not care to answer directly. Jesus was able to remove some of the poor and mean ideas which Nicodemus might have brought to the interview and substituted a searching attitude by which the Lord might lead Nicodemus to the goal that was set up for this conversation.

We must examine briefly a critical point here, concerning the end of the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. It has been suggested that this dialogue between two people here becomes a monologue, no longer directed at Nicodemus, but rather aimed at the readers who now possess the written account.<sup>38</sup> Others believe that Jesus is still in conversation with Nicodemus until v. 21.<sup>39</sup> We follow the R.S.V. suggestion that the direct quotation of Jesus' answer to Nicodemus ends at v. 15. The language of vv. 10-15 seems to be of a different type than that of vv. 16-21. We find a strange vocabulary here and the picture in the latter section resembles more St. John's individual style.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>C. H. Dodd, op. cit., pp. 304 ff.

<sup>39</sup>M. Dods, A Plummer, Hoskyns, and Davey.

<sup>40</sup>cf. 1:9,12; I John 1:5-7; 4:10.



Jesus does not express a self-concept as found in the words "Son of God" in any other Gospel passage. We take the position that vv. 16-21 are St. John's commentary.

Jesus answered Nicodemus, "Are you a teacher in Israel, and yet you do not understand this?" Jesus spoke to Nicodemus as a wise man, who had studied much, was expected to be a teacher, and yet did not realize that there is mystery upon mystery which one will never understand but must accept on faith. Plummer points out that Jesus called Nicodemus, "The teacher", the well-known Rabbi, the representative of supreme authority in the church.<sup>41</sup> Yet we may point out two things. We understand here how the petrified seeking of the Jews was unable to comprehend God's presence in Jesus. We see the difficulty Nicodemus had to appreciate the "testimony" Jesus spoke of, though He used familiar concepts from the Old Testament and from the Judaic thought world of that time. On the other hand we can also picture the modern Christian with his fund of knowledge also asking basic questions which reveal a lack of comprehension about the profound depths of religious faith. Jesus intimates that although the Rabbi was a teacher, he lacked personal insight into the material he taught. Daniel-Rops observes sagely:

To a pious Jew, this was a disconcerting Messiah, not conforming at all to the expected pattern. Nicodemus kept silence; he did not dare to believe Jesus and he knew it.

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<sup>41</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 96.

He told him that if those to whom the message was first brought hesitated to accept it because they were disconcerted by simple wonder, they would certainly shirk transcendental things. In this the Lord summed up the tragedy of the Chosen People.<sup>42</sup>

We find in the use of the plural here that Jesus is addressing Nicodemus and all who would hear the words of this discourse. The Lord does not merely deplore the lack of spiritual understanding. For Jesus "descended from heaven" to bring men news of heavenly things. In the first person plurals of verse 11, Jesus is perhaps referring to all those who really did comprehend what new birth meant. Thus He includes the Baptist, the disciples, the prophets who spoke before and looked to this heavenly revelation.<sup>43</sup> Again we note that Jesus does not spend time berating the lack of comprehension even on the part of one who professed to be a teacher. After a patient, short explanation, the Lord continues with a positive proclamation of the faith. Perhaps He looks again beyond the unseeing question into the truly searching heart and answers the question that could not find utterance, acknowledging the weak faith and bolstering the timid spirit. Vv. 14-15, which appear to close the discourse, are a magnificent summation of the hope of Israel, and the hope of the world. The Lord reveals in rich, profound terms His ministry and His mission to Nicodemus and to the world. He calls upon the Pharisee's acquaintance with

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<sup>42</sup>Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>43</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 715.

the experience of Moses in the wilderness and the meaning attached to the miracle of the brazen serpent. Thus Nicodemus, the traditional Jew, is made to send his thoughts back across the centuries to a decisive act of God in saving the people who trusted Him. And in the immediate present Jesus reveals Himself as the one who would be again raised up so that those who believed on Him would also find salvation, and have the eternal life which is the goal and substance of new birth. This adjective  $\alpha\acute{\omega}\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$  points not so much to the devotion of the new life as to its quality. This new birth of water and the spirit had as its purpose a sharing in the life of God.

As we study again the verses following, vv. 16-21, we agree with Bernard that they appear to be reflections and comments by the evangelist on words he has already ascribed to Jesus in His discourse with Nicodemus.<sup>44</sup> Thus the words spoken to the Pharisee, the exclusive leader of the exclusive people, St. John applies to the world, the whole human race.

Without stopping to draw extended conclusions, we may suggest a pattern of discourse which Jesus followed here, and which forms the basis for His method of counseling with other individuals and groups in this Gospel account. This narrative provided Jesus with the occasion for the first outline of His mission and His teaching. Thus we find a completeness of purpose in this discourse which give us a rounded view of Jesus' purposes with counseling people.

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<sup>44</sup>J. H. Bernard, op. cit., p. 116.

1. Jesus speaks to the intention or mental attitude of His listener rather than to His words. In this instance He cuts Nicodemus ruthlessly short in his questioning. The Lord in His omniscience can perceive the inner workings of a man's heart in a way that we cannot. Yet we also can say that Jesus was aware of the background of this visitor, and could be observant of the characteristics that Nicodemus expressed as he came "by night."
2. Jesus used thought-provoking ideas and challenging images. It has been suggested that the Lord, used particularly words of double meaning as πνεῦμα and ζῶθεις to create an attitude of inquiry and interest if not misunderstanding that would seek further revelation.<sup>45</sup> He challenged old forms of thinking.
3. Jesus' goal was not to impart information but to create faith. The Lord did not spend time discussing the nature of physical rebirth, but immediately showed the spiritual meaning of His words. All of the conversation seemed to be pointed to the goal of vv. 14-15, as Jesus took each cue to lead to a higher stage of understanding.
4. Jesus pointed to Himself as the goal of this faith. He posed not as miracle worker--He ignored the term σημεῖα and showed the weakness of being a διδάσκαλος (paralleled in vv. 2 and 10)--but spoke as the one who came down from

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<sup>45</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 174.

heaven and would return there. He revealed His source of revelation as being from heaven itself. He showed himself to be the fulfillment of Old Testament promise or type concept of salvation, coming as a free gift from God to save an individual soul, as God had saved the Israelites through the brazen serpent raised up by his prophet Moses.

The discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus focuses some of the basic attitudes of Jesus towards individuals. It does so in few words, perhaps much fewer than were actually spoken, and certainly much fewer than we should desire to hear. But we can see clearly the concern of Jesus for this individual man. We see the zeal of Jesus to convince one soul of sin and salvation. But before we can begin a complete summary of Jesus' counseling techniques, we must carefully study another, different story which is more complete in its description of the interview and which presents a different facet of Jesus' work with individuals.

...of revealing words to any physical tabernacle. Looking at the whole discourse, we discover a series of questions and answers which reveal the conversation with Nicodemus. We shall, however, see differences in approach and in result between Jesus' conversation with this single Samaritan woman.

...which, *How Jesus Deals with Men* (New York: ... Press, 1952), p. 24.

...the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Chicago: University Press, 1931), pp. 112-13.

## CHAPTER IV

### JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

The story of Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria as recorded in John 4:1-42 has been called a "Gospel within the Gospel."<sup>1</sup> After a prolonged conversation with a strange woman, in which Jesus drives home some important spiritual truths, He reveals Himself as the very Messiah Himself, the one anticipated as Savior and Revealer of God's will. We may divide the interview into two rather distinct parts. Verses 7-15 use the theme of living water. Jesus there develops the metaphor to describe God's life-giving activity towards man. Then follows a brief transition in verses 16-18, which is not unimportant because of its brevity. The theme of the last section, verses 19-27 is the purifying of worship, previously symbolized in the cleansing of the temple (2:13-22). Jesus here shows the inadequacy of directing worship to any physical tabernacle.<sup>2</sup> Looking at the entire discourse, we discover a series of questions and answers reminiscent of the conversation with Nicodemus. We shall, however, see differences in approach and in result between Jesus' conversation with this simple Samaritan woman

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Calkins, How Jesus Dealt with Men (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), pp. 311-15.

and His conversation with the erudite Jewish teacher. Jesus knew that the Pharisees were suspicious of His activities (4:1-2). John the Baptist's arrest was imminent, if not already carried out as Daniel-Rops suggests.<sup>3</sup> Jesus "left Judea and departed again to Galilee" (v. 3). Of the two possible routes, along the Jordan valley or by way of the hill road through Samaria, Jesus chose the latter, perhaps to avoid the intense heat in the valley.

The hill road led through Samaria which no Jew would enter without hesitation. The animosity between the Jews and the people of Samaria dated back to the fall of the capital city of Samaria in 722 B.C. Assyrian colonists had been sent there and how intermarried with a remnant of the northern tribes. When the exiles of Judah returned they would have nothing to do with this mixed race.<sup>4</sup> The men of Judah regarded the Samaritans as heathen, or worse. Daniel-Rops writes:

The Samaritans retaliated by intriguing against the Jews and finally, in the time of Ezra, a renegade priest from Jerusalem, having quarreled with the Temple authorities, went to Samaria and set up a rival sanctuary of the Most High on Mt. Gerizim. From that time the Samaritans had stopped at nothing to incense the Jews. . . . "The water of Samaria is more unclean than the blood of swine," said the rabbis.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Daniel-Rops, Jesus and His Times, translated from the French by Ruby Millar (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954) pp. 210-11.

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Goudge, God So Loved the World (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1951), p. 95.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 213.

The differences which had originally separated the two peoples had hardened to a solid mutual hate. However, as Eder-sheim points out, portions of Old Testament and traditional Jewish doctrinal teachings were preserved among the Samaritans. He lists: the unity of God, angels and devils, the Penteteuch as of divine authority, Mount Gerizim as the only mountain not covered by the flood, and strict observance of what Biblical or traditional law they received. They also looked for the Messiah whom Moses' prophecy (Deut. 18:18) would be fulfilled.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus usually used the north to south footpaths along the Jordan to go from Galilee to Judea thus avoiding the Samaritans. No mention is made of any overtures to the people of Samaria in the gospels of St. Matthew or St. Mark. At one place Jesus forbade the disciples to go through Samaria (Matt. 10:5). But St. Luke mentions several instances (9:51-56; 17:11-19; 10:30-37) that show that Jesus did not share the Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans. These examples, plus the story in St. John, indicate that Jesus seemed to ignore customs and traditions that had in them neither kindness nor good sense. Nor would He allow hatred, whether it was racial hatred or personal hatred, to exist in Him.<sup>7</sup>

Hoskyns gives a penetrating analysis of the situation between Jesus and this woman. Samaria bore the brunt of Jewish

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<sup>6</sup>A. Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1904), I, 396 ff.

<sup>7</sup>Goudge, op. cit., pp. 96-7.



racial prejudice. Yet Jesus understood the separation to be not mainly between Jews and Samaritans, but basically to be a separation between God and man. Thus the chasm between Jesus and the sinful woman of Samaria was that between the Son of God and a whole idolatrous people. "The wider gulf must be bridged before arrogant human distinction can be removed."<sup>8</sup> The individual and his relationship to God was considered more important than human bigotry.

St. John gives detailed background material for the discourse:

He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour (4:5-6).

Jacob's Well has been called one of the most exactly identified sites. It is one half mile south of Askar, thought to be the ancient Sychar. The well is an ancient stone one; its shaft is about eighty five feet deep. The quality of the cool water is considered excellent.<sup>9</sup>

The dialogue begins with verse seven: "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'" It has been noted that this request was unusual if not shocking.

The rabbis had decreed that it was improper to address a woman publicly, even one's own wife on the street or one's sister or daughter in an inn, 'because of what might be said about it! Secondly, it aggravated the scandal

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<sup>8</sup>Hoskyns and Davey, The Fourth Gospel (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1947), p. 236.

<sup>9</sup>M. S. Miller, and J. L. Miller, Harper's Bible Dictionary (New York: Harper & Bros., 1952), p. 300.

that a true and pious Jew should address a heathen woman of Samaria. But it was neither the first nor the last time that Jesus calmly broke traditional conventions, which, however honored they might be, were really only manifestations of the worst of Jewish exclusiveness.<sup>10</sup>

Although Jesus' thirst must have been very real after the hot and tiring journey, His request of the woman had far-reaching implications. He was willing to breach tradition if He could thereby present to someone the message of God's will. Jesus went beneath the artificial distinctions of race and society and dealt with men on the deeper level of their common humanity.<sup>11</sup> Jesus was thirsty and needed refreshment, but He had a deeper reason for His request. He perceived that this woman was a sinner who needed the grace of God in order to be freed of this burden her guilt and to receive forgiveness.<sup>12</sup>

"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (v. 9). The woman appeared to know how to talk to a strange man. One may see a trace of insolence in her tone. We follow the suggestion of the Nestle text<sup>13</sup> in regarding the second half of the verse as a comment by the Evangelist rather than as a part of the woman's answer.

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<sup>10</sup>Daniel-Rops, *op. cit.*, pp. 214 f.

<sup>11</sup>Calkins, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>12</sup>David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh* (New York: Harper & Bros., n.d.), p. 75.

<sup>13</sup>Eberhard Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Erwin Nestle (20th edition; Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1950), p. 239.

Plummer suggests that the woman thought Jesus was a Judean. The Galileans seem to have been less strict (e.g., the disciples went and bought food in the Samaritan town according to verse 8).<sup>14</sup> The term that St. John uses, συγγεῖομαι, is perhaps better rendered, "to use together with," rather than to "have dealings with."<sup>15</sup> The woman was surprised that Jesus would want to use the same vessel as she used.<sup>16</sup> Her answer was defensive as she considered the national feelings she knew prevailed between the Samaritans and the Jews.

"Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" (v. 10). Jesus' thought here turns on her misunderstanding of His own person. Jesus is not only a thirsty traveller, but the Son of God. He is not the one who receives, but the one who gives. Jesus said to her, εἰ ᾔδεις. We observe the same technique which we saw in the dealing with Nicodemus, that Jesus does not belabor a controversial point (3:4) but rather approaches His counseling goal by stimulating His listener to think through the subject matter through a different approach. Here Jesus

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<sup>14</sup>A. Plummer, The Gospel According to St. John, in Cambridge Bible for Schools (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), p. 108.

<sup>15</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 194.

<sup>16</sup>M. Dods, The Gospel According to John, in The Expositor's Greek Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 725.

uses the familiar metaphor of water to express the life-giving quality which God is eager to give. Thus He turns the request into an offer. He reveals the  $\delta\omega\epsilon\alpha\iota\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , what God is ready to give this woman, her salvation.<sup>17</sup> And Jesus also points to His own Person as the source and bearer of this gift. In describing this offer of such great resources to this humble person, it has been said, "He lavished all that He was and had to feed the hunger of one solitary soul."<sup>18</sup> Jesus saw the woman "standing on the brink of the greatest possibilities, but utterly unconscious of them."<sup>19</sup> He sought to open her eyes to them.

The metaphor 'living water' was used in the Old Testament to describe divine activity in quickening men to life (Jer. 2:13; Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:9). The figurative use of the term "water" alone was also common in Rabbinic literature. Here too we may see a connection with Jesus' answers to Nicodemus. Two points find a parallel with the discourse of chapter three: (a) In Jesus Judaism and the Old Testament find their fulfillment; and (b) the term water is used as a metaphor.<sup>20</sup> Jesus presents Himself as the dispenser of God's living water, with all its implications of vital activity, cleansing power and its divine

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<sup>17</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>18</sup>R. Calkins, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>19</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

source. We can again point to the ambiguity of the phrase τὸ ὕδωρ δαει τὸ ἕωυ. By it we find in the next verses that the woman meant the flowing water of the well. But Jesus operated with that term as a metaphor of divine resource--a water which gives life. If the woman would have perceived God in Jesus then she would have asked of Him, instead of treating Him as a suspected intruder into her country. Plummer posits an interpretation of Jesus' reply:

Spiritually our positions are reversed. It is thou who art weary, and foot-sore, and parched, close to the well, yet unable to drink; it is I who can give thee the water from the well, and quench thy thirst forever.<sup>21</sup>

The direction of the conversation is from here on controlled by the paradox that He who asks is He who gives (cf. Rev. 21:6: To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life.)

The woman's mind is still on the level of material things. She said to Jesus, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself?" (vv. 11-12). We note the loquacity of the woman as contrasted with the reticence of Nicodemus; yet she persists in showing a perverseness in misunderstanding the spiritual metaphor just as the "Teacher of Israel" had.<sup>22</sup> After her implied rejection of Jesus' ability to fulfill his offer,

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<sup>21</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

she expresses her interest to know more with a phrase similar to Nicodemus' "How can this be?" (3:9). We can perceive a note of sudden courtesy in her address to Jesus as *κύριε*. Smith's conjecture that she returned to a note of insolence is not borne out however, by the tenor, of the next few verses.<sup>23</sup>

The woman does not realize that her question to Jesus can be answered in the affirmative. He is greater than the "father Jacob." We see a parallel to this verse in 8:33 and 8:53 where Jesus is compared to Abraham, as the people similarly evoke the security of their tradition to challenge His message.

Jesus did not answer her question directly; that would not have focused her attention on the message which is evolving through Jesus methodical restatement and clarification of her wrong perceptions. Jesus said to her, "every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (vv. 13-14). As Farrar correctly observes:

Our Lord is not deterred by the hard literalism of her reply; he treats it as He had treated similar unemaginative dulness in the learned Nicodemus by still drawing her thoughts upward.<sup>24</sup>

Jesus continues to use this figure of water, as elsewhere He used bread (chap. 6) and light (chap. 8), the three most

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<sup>23</sup>D. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup>Farrar, Frederick W., The Life of Christ (New York: Fred W. Hurst & Co., 1875), p. 85.

necessary things for life.<sup>25</sup> He continues to develop the metaphor by adding new elements to it. Jesus explains that He is not speaking of "this" water, which must be drunk day by day.<sup>26</sup> Thus the Lord tries to divide clearly the thinking of the woman between the material, visible object to which she is referring, and the spiritual, dynamic "gift of God" which He offer.

Whoever would drink -- πίη -- indicates the choice involved by this aorist subjunctive. Whoever would take that offer οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα --literally, "will certainly not thirst forever." Plummer correctly observes, "the craving is satisfied as soon as ever it recurs."<sup>27</sup> Jesus meets the comments of the woman in two ways: (a) He shows that the effect of the physical water is impermanent, that its effect does not last; and (b) it must be drawn and carried from a distant place. In contrast to these inadequacies of "water," the living water that Jesus offers would become as a fountain within the heart of a man, eternally refreshing him. "Those who accept Him and His gifts are thereafter permanently supplied and their needs are inwardly met."<sup>28</sup>

Whether the Samaritan woman understood His meaning, or whether she thought simply to evade an irksome task, at any rate she replied.<sup>29</sup> She said to Jesus: "Sir, give me this water,

<sup>25</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>26</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>27</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>28</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 215

that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Perhaps had she been a Jew the metaphor of "water" and "living water" which was found in Psalms (e.g., Ps. 42:1; 110:7) and in the prophets (Jer. 2:13; Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:9) would have been more meaningful. But her thoughts are still confined within the framework of purely physical and visible occurrences.

At verse 16 there is an abrupt break in the line of conversation: The Lord Jesus makes a fresh approach here. Jesus said to the woman, "Go, call your husband, and come here." We agree with Dods in rejecting Calvin's shallow interpretation of this verse, suggesting that Jesus meant to rebuke her scurrility.<sup>30</sup> Rather the words point to a new approach, designed to increase her sense of need for the deep, profound gift which Jesus has for the woman. The narrow limits of her comprehension are broken through with this command, and the disorder of her domestic life is laid bare. Hoskyns observes:

"Since the water of salvation is for sin and for uncleanness (Zech. 13:1) it was necessary that Jesus should lay bare the woman's sin (cf. 7:7)."<sup>31</sup>

Thus Jesus gives her the first draught of this living water just as she asked for it. It is the divine condemnation of her sinful life. The sure method to awaken in her the thirst for

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<sup>30</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 726.

<sup>31</sup>Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 241



the full measure of living water, is to make her acknowledge herself a sinful woman.<sup>32</sup> Jesus attacks the sore spot in her character. He proceeds to rebuke her previous pretensions (vv. 11,12). As a surgeon, Jesus sought out the plague spot where the healing must begin. That is her false marital relations.

Plummer understands this situation well:

By a seemingly casual request, Christ lays hold of her inner life, convinces her of sin, and leads her to repentance, without which her request 'give me this water' could not be granted.<sup>33</sup>

The woman answered him, "I have no husband" (v. 17). Perhaps this is a confession, or it may be deceit. Considering her amazement at Jesus' perception of the story behind her statement (vv. 19,29), apparently this was not a statement honest in its intention, but an attempt to avoid the possible chagrin and embarrassment a detailed answer would have meant. Yet, as we regard Jesus' comment, "You speak well," as an honest evaluation then we must reject Dods' view that Jesus "at once veils her deceit."<sup>34</sup> Certainly, veiling deceit is not one of Jesus' evaluation of her remark, accept the woman's answer as including a germ of confession in it, which, despite the apparent curttness of her reply, contains elements which Jesus can develop.

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<sup>32</sup>Dods, op. cit., p. 727.

<sup>33</sup>Plummer, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>34</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 727.

Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly" (vv. 17 b - 18). Perhaps the woman was struggling with this sin which could not come into words.<sup>35</sup> Jesus found the words for her. He told her what she was struggling to tell Him. We are struck by the simple declarative way in which Jesus reveals the woman's inmost heart. He does not reproach her, but "commending her truthfulness, He quietly stated the facts, and we can imagine how they must have pierced her, hearing them as she did . . ."<sup>36</sup> Commenting on the five husbands of this woman, Barrett suggests two possibilities: (a) She had five legal husbands who had either died or were divorced, and she was now living with a man with whom she was not legally joined; or (b) she was now living with a man joined to her legally by the law of Moses but not acceptable by Christian standards.<sup>37</sup> We can reject the allegorical interpretation of the "critical school" that the woman is intended as an allegorical representation of Samaria with its five gods.<sup>38</sup> The Evangelist gives no basis for such fanciful speculation in the text which he presents as a straight forward narrative. Rather the woman realizes that this knowledge

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<sup>35</sup>E. Goudge, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>38</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 727.

of her life is evidence of a supernatural endowment upon the one with whom she is speaking. This is in keeping with Jesus' answer to her in verse 10, "If you knew . . . who it is that is saying to you. . . ." Thus Jesus confronts her with a prophetic insight into her personal history. He reveals to her what she knows to be true, but has not told him. Daniel-Rops summarizes this portion of the discourse:

This brief dialogue reveals the woman completely and it is absolutely true to life. First she is pert, then uneasy; woman-like, she is touched and finally convinced not by argument but by the revelation of her own story.<sup>39</sup>

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (vv. 19-20). The woman is convinced from Jesus' reading of her life that He is capable of drawing even more of her sinful history into the conversation. Thus, with a brief though meaningful acknowledgment of His power, the woman shrinks from introspection and hastily turns the conversation from herself.<sup>40</sup> The woman's interest in worship may not necessarily mean an interest in her personal religion. Jesus understood that her interest might be merely academic and not a sincere desire to strengthen her faith.

The woman called Jesus a prophet. She may mean, as Barret suggests, that she considers Jesus as "The prophet," giving a

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<sup>39</sup>Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>40</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 111.

messianic interpretation to Deut. 18:5; or she may use a term that is more general in its meaning, as the Samaritans unlike the Jews did not accept the authority of "the prophets" in the Old Testament canon.<sup>41</sup>

A brief word on Mt. Gerizim is necessary here. The woman pointed to the fact that this mountain was the holy mount for the Samaritans even as the Jews looked upon Jerusalem's Mount Zion as their chief shrine. From the slopes of Gerizim during the Conquest Joshua and other religious leaders of Israel pronounced the blessings which came to observers of the law<sup>42</sup> (Deut. 11:29; 27:12; Josh. 8:33-35). The mountain had a commanding view of the surrounding land, and the woman probably could see the peak from the well where she spoke with Jesus. The woman brought up the old controversy between Jew and Samaritan. Perhaps she wanted restrict Jesus to His own people and divest His message of significance to her own soul. She pointed out the contemporary idea that according to the Jews the Samaritan tradition they alone remained true to God's chosen holy mountain (I Sam. 1:3) while the Jews were "seduced" by Eli to construct the apostate shrine at Shiloh.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus points out the true significance of Jewish-Samaritan difference, yet reveals God's will as transcendent and supercedent

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<sup>41</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>42</sup>M. S. Miller and J. L. Miller, op. cit., p. 222.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 639.

to them. Jesus (a) does not say that the Jerusalem culture is "man-made" v. 22b! (b) nor does he put it on a level with the Samaritan culture v. 22a! He says that the ancient culture will be, is being, transcended and superseded. Jesus said to her,

"Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (vv. 21-24).

Jesus' reply was a proclamation of God's real demand. Any racial prejudice and human traditions which isolated people from worship of God were swept aside with this fundamental truth. The use of the phrase  $\xi\epsilon\chi\epsilon\tau\alpha\ \omega\epsilon\alpha$  indicates an apparent reference to a later time, a future when pure worship would be possible.<sup>44</sup> Neither the object of worship nor its mode would be found in a geographical location, either exclusively or preferentially.<sup>45</sup> God being absolutely "the Father," all men in all places shall have access to Him. Yet Jesus does point up the actual distinction between Jewish and Samaritan worship. The Samaritan religion was a mixture of true religion with idolatry. The obscurity of a Pentateuch with a garbled text, unenlightened by the clearer revelations in the Prophets, left them with a mutilated religion.<sup>46</sup> Jesus rebuked her false

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<sup>44</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., pp. 198-9.

<sup>45</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 728.

<sup>46</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 112.

religion with the words "You worship what you do not know" (v. 22). And with the use of the plural ὑμεῖς προσκυνεῖτε He included the whole race of Samaritans.

"Salvation is from the Jews." Jesus points up the real difference between the two peoples. The Jews worshipped a God who had made Himself known to them in their history by His gracious dealings with them.<sup>47</sup> They were the keepers of the promise of the coming Messiah. But now Jesus, about to reveal Himself as the Messiah, points also beyond the limits of Israel. Although the Jews were the matrix through which God's grace worked, they did not bound or limit His work. "The hour is coming, and now is," ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν. A reference is again made to time. We quote Barrett regarding the events which must come to pass to initiate this new worship and the essence of man's new relation to the spirit, which is God:

Indeed John does not mean to deny that they do truly belong to a later time, but he emphasizes by means of his oxymoron that in the ministry, and above all in the person, of Jesus they were proleptically present.<sup>48</sup>

In this paradox of tenses Jesus shows that the hopes of the Messiah which are anticipated for the future are already in the present.

And the result of God's activity as revealed through Jesus is that the "Father seeks" those who worship the Father in spirit and truth. Worship is to be ἐν πνεύματι Dods suggests that

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<sup>47</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>48</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 199.

this means "in the heart, not in this place or that."<sup>49</sup> But a profounder observation seems to be that of Barrett who says the meaning of  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \pi\nu\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota$  must depend upon the force of the word  $\pi\nu\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\mu\alpha$  in the next verse. The "spirit" is not regularly contrasted over against matter, but rather it is a life-giving, creative activity, and in this sense John commonly uses the word  $\pi\nu\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\mu\alpha$  (cf. 3:5-8; 6:63; 7:38f; 14:17-19).<sup>50</sup> And these worshippers will worship  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \pi\nu\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota$ . Thus, beyond the worship on Gerizim or in Jerusalem, "true" worship looks to Jesus who Himself is the "truth" (14:6), the "faithful fulfillment of God's purposes and thus the anticipation of the future vision of God."<sup>51</sup> And the pointed phrase Jesus uses,  $\delta\ \pi\alpha\tau\eta\rho\ \tau\omicron\iota\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \beta\eta\tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}$  indicates that God is the active agent not only in revealing Himself, but also in drawing all men to Him. Jesus thus focuses God's revelation of true worship against the national prejudice on both sides. And then He shows this individual woman that God is seeking her, He is searching for her. Jesus tells her the hour is coming when  $\pi\epsilon\omicron\sigma\kappa\nu\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\epsilon\ \pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\acute{\rho}\iota$ . And the Father will Himself initiate such worship, by seeking for worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and truth. This seeking takes place by God coming in the flesh of Jesus to fulfill this Messianic role among men.

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<sup>49</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 728.

<sup>50</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things" (v. 25). The Samaritans seem to have expected the coming of a Messiah though it does not appear that they used that word. The Coming One was called Taheb, He who returns, or Who restores,<sup>52</sup> or Hashab, the Converter, or as El Mudy, the Guide.<sup>53</sup> The R.S.V. translates the term Messiah as a note from the Evangelist and therefore places it in parentheses. This is also the idea of Barrett.<sup>54</sup> The woman by this answer indicates some understanding of what Jesus had said. Barrett suggests that the woman's answer shows that she was "not merely catching at a straw to divert the argument; she grasps the messianic bearing of the reference to worship in spirit and truth."<sup>55</sup> But the words of this verse indicate in a striking manner how impersonally the woman was receiving Jesus' statements. After her confession of v. 17 these words show that there was no application of Jesus' wonderful offer of living water, or of a new spiritual worship, to her own needs. She seemed to grasp two things: that the Messiah would be a prophet who would show us all things," and that He had not arrived yet. Thereby she revealed that she was avoiding the penetrating thrust of Jesus'

<sup>52</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>53</sup>M. Dods, op. cit., p. 729.

<sup>54</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.



words and was remaining on an intellectual level.

Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he" (v. 26).

Farrar observes:

To this poor, sinful, ignorant stranger had been uttered words of immortal significance, to which all future ages would listen, as it were, with hushed breath and on their knees.<sup>56</sup>

This was the climax of the scene. Everything had been said. Jesus had avowed something which he had never before categorically admitted.<sup>57</sup> He removed the temporizing from her previous statement. He said in effect, "You do not need to wait. I that speak to you am the one who has revealed all things needful to you." St. John uses the formula,  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\acute{\omega} \acute{\epsilon}\acute{\iota}\mu\iota$  elsewhere in the Gospel to indicate a probable connection with the great divine word of self-revelation and command in the Old Testament (Ex. 3:6; 3:14; 20:2). All the previous message was preparatory to this final self-revelation. The conversation found its climax as Jesus revealed Himself as the answer to all the needs of this woman, the One who had revealed her inner life, the actual source of living water, and the bringer of a new concept of worship.

The remainder of the chapter adds little to our understanding of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. We may briefly summarize the conclusion: the woman became so excited at Jesus' announcement that He was the Messiah, that she

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<sup>56</sup>Farrar, op. cit., p. 164.

<sup>57</sup>Daniel-Rops, op. cit., p. 216.

"left her water jar" perhaps for Jesus to get his own drink, and running to the city told the people, "Come see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" And we see in vv. 40-42 that Jesus remained with the Samaritans for two days and spoke with them. St. John ends the narrative in words which make Barrett comment, "The Samaritans speak the language of Johannine Christology."<sup>58</sup> "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world'" (v. 42).

Comparing this conversation with that between Jesus and Nicodemus, we are aware of some similarities and some differences. One can imagine that both conversations included more words than St. John records, but to avoid useless speculation, we have remained within the confines of the text as we find it in the Gospel, and our comparisons will remain between the actual words that the Evangelist has given us.

1. The woman of Samaria apparently had no felt need when she entered into the casual conversation with the Man at the well, whereas Nicodemus initiated the conversation, after he came to Jesus." Thus the Lord had continually to try to show the woman her real needs. Each attempt on her part to intellectualize her religious feelings was quickly picked up by Jesus and given a spiritual emphasis. Jesus made the woman

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<sup>58</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 204.

face up to the reality of her sin (4:16-18) and acknowledge her wrong religious belief (4:22).

2. Jesus used familiar concepts that the woman could visualize, and then added new meaning to them. This technique was used in the metaphor of "living water" and in the reference to the worship upon the mountain. Jesus apparently tried to deal with the woman on her level and to raise her from there by explaining a familiar concept in such a way that an understanding would be gained of a new concept. Thus had Jesus spoken to Nicodemus about "new birth," "water" and "the wind."

3. Jesus kept the conversation on a positive, spiritual level. He did not enter into discussion of the values of worshipping on Mt. Gerizim or in Jerusalem, nor did He compare himself with Jacob as the woman did, nor did He explain His breaking of Jewish tradition in speaking to her. Jesus showed interest in the woman as a sinner, and as an individual who needed help. And the Lord revealed His role not as a Jew, nor as a prophet only, but as Messiah. We can trace a development in the conversation as the woman's attitude changes towards Jesus: (a) in v. 9 she is pert, overly sure of herself; (b) in v. 11 she shows some respect to Jesus, although she still tries to maintain superiority over this Jew; (c) in v. 15 although the woman misunderstands Jesus she shows some sincere interest in His words; (d) in v. 19 she shows reverence to Jesus as to a man of God, although she tries to avoid entering into too personal a conversation; and (e) in v. 25, despite her hesitancy,

she shows some anticipation as she speaks of one of the most important and pressing religious concepts in that day.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>A. Plummer, op. cit., p. 111.

Jesus' actual counseling with individuals: Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. From these interviews, plus our introductory material in Chapter II, we shall present in chapters three and four principles of action upon which Jesus operated, and which contain a sample to be followed in our own counseling process.

Jesus stimulates his hearers with a profound statement, and, when that was misunderstood, recalled with a slightly modified illustration.<sup>1</sup> We find this basic pattern of communication as a model elsewhere in other passages of the Gospels such as Luke 4:13-21; 6:27-31; 41-48; 51-60; Mark 7:17-23; 8:11-26. Jesus thus presented a stimulating concept before he explained it or applied its meaning. We may then classify some of the parables in this way. They were often knotty statements that caused curiosity, concern, and often questions. Such examples might be found in the parable of the sower, the new cloth and the mice, and the leaves. Thus Jesus gained not only attention, but interest. We found in the previous chapters that the statements on being "born again" (3:3), the "wind blowing" (3:8),

<sup>1</sup>See also, G. A., The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Publishers, 1951) VII, 348.

## CHAPTER V

### A SUMMARY OF JESUS' COUNSELING TECHNIQUES

From the previous two chapters we have an insight into Jesus' actual counseling with individuals: Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. From these interviews, plus our introductory material in Chapter II, we shall present in summary nine basic principles of action upon which Jesus operated, and which contain an example to be followed in our own counseling procedures.

1. Jesus stimulated his hearers with a profound statement, and, when that was misunderstood, replied with a slightly modified repetition.<sup>1</sup> We find this basic pattern of conversation as a modus operandi in other passages of the Gospels also: Jn. 4:32-9; 6:27-41; 41-48; 51-60; Mark 7:15-23; 8:15-20. Jesus thus presented a stimulating concept before He explained it or applied its meaning. We may even classify some of the parables in this way. They were often knotty statements that caused curiosity, concern, and often questions. Such examples might be found in the parables of the sower, the new cloth and the wine, and the leaven. Thus Jesus gained not only attention, but interest. We found in the previous chapters that the statements on being "born again" (3:3), the "wind blowing" (3:8),

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<sup>1</sup>Buttrick, G. A., The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Cokesbury, 1952) VII, 523.

the "living water" (4:10), brought a question which revealed lack of understanding. Then Jesus could explicitly apply the message which He had suggested beneath the cover of this metaphor or paradox. This technique is not easily categorized, nor can it be followed slavishly. It is in part a matter of style and of personal ability to express thoughts in short, pithy statements, and to stimulate thought without discouraging the thinker. We can see that Jesus' approach to Nicodemus was on a different level from the one to the Samaritan woman. To Nicodemus Jesus spoke as to a well-educated man, versed in Scriptures, one earnestly seeking the truth, and one who would respond to intellectual prodding. The stimulation of the slower mind of the Samaritan woman was more gentle and limited in its outreach than in the case of Nicodemus. For those who can, like Jesus, aim at the greatest clearness in the briefest compass this method of Jesus is meaningful and useful. Others will perhaps confine themselves to the more generally applicable principles to which we now turn.

2. Jesus knew what was in the heart of man beneath the outward acts and the spoken words; the Evangelist states, "He knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man" (2:25). We see this evidenced in the conversation with the Samaritan woman. All through the benign conversation Jesus knew her sinful life. With humility we must at first admit that Jesus as the Son of God was aware of men's hearts from His own divine power. But as true man Jesus also grew and learned and became acquainted with people.

He observed the world around Him and learned to know people from experience. He would have noticed this woman coming at noon (according to John's timing of the sixth hour in verse 6 of chapter 4),<sup>2</sup> which was strange. The majority of women would come in the late afternoon. She came alone instead of in a group from her city. By observing these things Jesus could have assumed that this woman was not readily accepted by her townspeople and was forced to seek water at a time when the others would not be at the well.<sup>3</sup> Jesus became well acquainted with His disciples during His years with them. Thus He opened Peter's heart that he might see his own weakness (Jn. 13:36-38). And He saw the covetous heart of the rich young man (Lk. 18:18-30). In St. Luke's condensed phrase concerning Jesus growth in wisdom and stature (Lk. 2:52), we can assume that the growth in inter-personal relations, in judgment, in mature understanding of men are included. For our purposes, the counselor must also study the heart of his fellow men. This can be done only partially in an academic framework. But the broad framework of parish activity, of counseling, and of wide contacts with different kinds of people can be an experience of growth for the man who is sensitive to people and wants to learn from his experiences. Thus his counseling techniques will grow in depth

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<sup>2</sup>C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), p. 194.

<sup>3</sup>James Jeffrey, The Personal Ministry of the Son of Man (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, n.d.), p. 64.

and understanding of people and their problems. He will become conscious of the superficiality of the words and actions of his clients and will look for clues to deeper underlying attitudes which may not be understood or expressed by the client, (we use the term client as the object of counseling, not in a legal or professional sense). Emphasizing a danger in a non-directive approach to counseling,<sup>4</sup> Ruth Strang says:

If the counselee builds up an unrealistic idea of himself in the interview, his sharpest conflict will only be postponed until he tries to function in real life situations.<sup>5</sup>

Thus Jesus in the case of the Samaritan woman had to look beyond her interest in temple-worship and discover a problem in worship (Jn. 4:19-24). Also the Lord had to clarify Peter's objection to the statement that "the Son of Man must suffer many things, etc." (Mk. 8:31-33). Jesus saw that this objection revealed a basic misunderstanding of the mission of Christ in the minds of the disciples. We saw that Jesus turned aside the kind and complimentary language with which Nicodemus addressed him (Jn. 3:2) and answered his deep needs.

3. Jesus worked at long range, not always for immediate and obvious results. We see this pointedly in the story of the rich young ruler (Lk. 18:18-30). Jesus spoke the words which opened up the man's heart and revealed his "besetting sin." This was all that could be done at that time. The young

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<sup>4</sup>Supra, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Ruth Strang, Counseling Techniques in College and Secondary School (Revised edition; New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), p. 27.



man turned away from the offer "Follow me." Yet he was sad. A note of contrition may be seen in that word--*πείλιυκος*. Jesus planted the seed--he did not demand that it immediately produce fruit. Jesus talking to the disciples in the Upper Room said, "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. Jesus knew that much had to be experienced by the twelve before they could receive His word of more complete revelation. And even the message in the Upper Room, the farewell discourses (Jn. 13-17), would be almost forgotten in the fear and terror of that Maunday Thursday. Yet Jesus worked at a long-range purpose. He relied upon the work of God through His word of reconciliation. And Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be continually at work, to both create and sustain faith (Jn. 14:26). As the sower He had revealed God's plan and promises, yet this seed had to take root and grow in the heart. An immediate application of this principle to our present circumstances is our reliance upon God for His grace to work through our efforts, and a God-given patience which can do the work of the Kingdom knowing that the Word does not return void (Is. 55:11).

4. Jesus counseled in an impromptu, spontaneous way that was directed to the immediate situation, and the personal needs of the hearer. Perhaps Bower is too superficial in his analysis, yet he does reveal a vital concept:

*The Newellian Co., 1948, Introduction by W. E. Lewis, p. 111.*

(Jesus) began not with formulated beliefs, subject matter, tradition or even the Bible, but with living persons where they were in their experience of life.<sup>6</sup>

X We can add that Jesus took the situation as it existed and applied His religious insights into the experience of life. Thus we see that the Lord began by asking a favor of the Samaritan woman. He expressed to Martha a concern for her spiritual growth while he was a guest at her table (Lk. 10:40-41). In method this meant that Jesus used pictures, and parables and metaphors that were apparent, familiar, and commonly understood by the person whom He was addressing. Thus He used "water," "temple," "wind," as we have seen. This method and basic attitude of Jesus presents a challenge to us to present the message of the Gospel in terms and applications meaningful to people in our culture and society. In following Jesus' example in the conversation with the Samaritan woman we would attempt in the most natural way to lead up to the highest spiritual themes, touching the heart and revealing God's will for our client.<sup>7</sup> We may follow Jesus in His use of language, beginning at the grass roots of a person's life. It is "language such as men use--language steeped in all the commonplace associations of the nursery, the inn, the stable, and the street."<sup>8</sup> We found in the two discourses studied in this connection that

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<sup>6</sup>W. C. Bower, Christ and Christian Education (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>J. Jeffrey, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>J. B. Phillips, Letters to Young Churches (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), introduction by C. S. Lewis, p. vii.

Jesus used simple words, simple ideas, yet words weighted with a significance that would take a lifetime, if not an eternity, to comprehend fully.

5. Jesus aimed at eradication of sin before further spiritual development. Jesus did not accuse Nicodemus of leading a sinful life. He did not enumerate the occasions where Nicodemus had transgressed the law of God. But he said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (3:3,5). This new birth intimated and demanded a total regeneration in the eyes of God as the condition for seeing the Kingdom of God. It meant a forsaking of human ability to gain fellowship with God and a radiance upon the Holy Spirit's power. As Phillips correctly translates the passage of John 3:6, "Flesh gives birth to spirit."<sup>9</sup> These terms  $\xi\kappa\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \sigma\alpha\rho\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$  and  $\xi\kappa\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$  "are not the lower and higher sides of human nature; they refer to human nature as a whole (cf. 1:14) and to the divine action and its orbit."<sup>10</sup> Jesus holds that flesh of itself is not capable of entering the Kingdom of God unless God bring it new life by means of water and the Spirit (3:5-6). Thus the sin at the heart of man is that which prevents him from intering into full fellowship with God. Unless that is realized, the development of religious life proceeds upon a way that cannot be God-pleasing, but rather leads into more sin (Lk. 18:9-14). So also the woman at the well was made to look at her sinful life, perhaps

<sup>10</sup>C. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 175.

In more personal detail than Nicodemus. Jesus' words to her concerning her married state (Jn. 4:16-19) proved an important link between the words preceding which the woman listened to in an uncomprehending way, and to the personal Messianic self-revelation of Jesus at the climax of the dialogue in verse 26. Also Jesus' words to her, "You worship what you do not know," (v. 22), aimed at her sin of unbelief in very definite terms. So also Jesus in His conversations with other individuals pointed to pride (Jn. 9:39-41), covetousness (Lk. 18:18-30), and indifference (Lk. 10:41-2). In counseling we frequently find that our clients are unaware of a sin whose guilt burdens them down. Reviewing a case history of such a person, Paul Johnson comments:

The boy's appearance of calm nonchalance was only a mask to conceal his deep anguish and remorse. So painful were his memories that he said, "I can barely remember what happened."<sup>11</sup>

The pastoral counselor thus becomes Beichtvater, the "father-confessor." He must be aware that there may be confession of which has not reassured the client of God's forgiveness. Thus the sin and the guilt must both be eradicated by the call to repentance and the announcement of God's love through Christ. So Jesus concluded His conversation with Nicodemus with the story of the "serpent in the wilderness" (Jn. 3:14) and the announcement of His own redemptive task: "so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal

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<sup>11</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), p. 109.

life" (3:14b-15).

6. Jesus was concerned with people as such; He had wide and unlimited sympathy. His heart was open to the sick and suffering, to the openly sinful. So we have seen that during the brief ministry of Jesus He took time to spend with individuals.<sup>12</sup> We may briefly summarize the attitude of Jesus as found in the Gospels:

He never seems to have despaired of any man. . . . Society He did not divide into two classes distinct from each other, the one class good, the other evil. In fact, He discovered that those most open to His appeals were precisely those who were usually condemned as "sinners", and the most impervious to the truth as He taught it were those who prided themselves upon being among the good.<sup>13</sup>

The counselor must also try to free himself from prejudices so that he can be non-judgmental in his attitude toward the person of his client and accept him as he is. One important distinction must be maintained. That is: (1) we must accept each individual as a redeemed soul, worthy of and needing our love; (2) we must be aware of the sin which keeps this redeemed soul from the full realization of the love of God. Thus our hearts are open to all men who are in need of our counseling and of thus more fully participating in the redeeming love of God in Christ. Jesus also dealt with those who had loathsome, repulsive diseases and did not reject them (e.g., the lepers, Matt. 8:2-4; epileptics, Matt. 4:24; 17:14-18; the deaf, Mk.

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<sup>12</sup> Supra, chapter II.

<sup>13</sup> A. W. Hitchcock, The Psychology of Jesus (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), p. 173.

7:33-35; the Gerasene Demoniac, Mkr. 5:1-13). So the counselor must learn from His Lord to overcome his own emotional upset, upon contact with people suffering disfiguring diseases, by remembering the great need for love and understanding which the client has, and himself being aware of his office as a proclaimer of God's love. Jesus also worked apart from a nationalistic prejudice and bigotry. Thus we see Jesus' contact with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4), His rebuke of John when the disciple complained of another casting out demons "because he was not following us" (Mkr. 9:38), His acknowledgment of the faith of a woman from the heathen Canaanites (Matt. 15:21-28). In the area of racial, national and religious prejudice, the example of Jesus in His work with individuals demands a reevaluation of our own attitudes in the terms of the universality of God's mercy and Christian love. So the Evangelist expounded upon the lesson of Jesus to Nicodemus, in the verses following the conversation (Jn. 3:16-21), to point to the universality and impartiality of God's grace in Christ, that it was effectual for "the world" (3:16).

7. Jesus was always aware of His basic mission. His purpose in His activity among people was that "they may have life and have it abundantly." Jesus called Himself the "Good Shepherd (who) lays down his life for the sheep," and His counseling grew out of that will to save (Jn. 10:10-11). Thus the pastoral work of personal counseling must be dominated by a religious purpose; as Russel Dick's puts it:

It works from a biased point of view. It admits quite frankly that it attempts to influence human behavior and to direct human personality in a way that it believes to be desirable.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the vagueness of his expression, we may agree with Dr. Dicks' emphasis upon the purposefulness of pastoral counseling. Jesus' contacts with individuals were pointed to lead them to the Kingdom of God, to make them aware of sin, and to announce the grace of God in forgiveness. So the pastoral counselor can never be so "non-directive" as to lose his own direction. We shall examine this in the following chapters in more detail.

8. Jesus made religion personal, not national; He emphasized the activity of God upon the heart, not the external rite or ritual by which the Jews had deadened the message of God's promises revealed to them. So Jesus said to Nicodemus that the work of the Spirit on his heart might be compared to the wind which "blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:8). Here is not a matter of flesh, or heredity, or family. The Spirit works upon the heart. And the Spirit is God (Jn. 4:24). So also to the Samaritan woman, Jesus points out that in essence worship is done in spirit and truth, not on mountain or in temple (4:21-24). Jesus offers Himself personally to the Samaritan woman as Messiah "who will reveal all things." He is greater than Jacob despite the woman's mocking question (4:12).

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<sup>14</sup>Russel Dicks, Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949), p. 4.

For although Jacob dug a well, Jesus is Himself the dispenser of living water. So Jesus climactic statement to the women of Samaria pointed to Himself, "I am Christ, speaking to you now" (Jn. 4:26)<sup>15</sup>. The whole dialogue in chapter 6 is understandable from the viewpoint that Jesus is sent with the mission to bring to men the bread of life in the form of Himself, and of the reciprocal indwelling of Christ and the believer.<sup>16</sup> The pastoral counselor will use the concept of the Church, the Bible, prayer and stewardship in his dealing with parishioners. But he must never lose sight of the individual in his personal relationship to the holy, loving God. Any approach which emphasizes the organizational or ritualistic elements of religious life above the personal, individual meaning, must confront the Lord's statement to Nicodemus, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Each of these insights emphasizes the personal elements of religion, breaking through national and institutional limitations, and instilling personal responsibility and faith.

9. Jesus did not argue. He did not compel or dictate, force assent, or impose His teachings. He wanted responses that would be more lasting than if inadequately motivated. Particularly in St. John chapter four we see Jesus avoiding merely controversial argument and substituting positive statements that

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<sup>15</sup>G. K. Barrett, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>16</sup>J. B. Phillips, The Gospels, p. 196.



both transcend the points of contention and obliterate them. Thus Jesus avoids a lengthy argument on racial bigotry (4:9-10) and formal worship of two different religious faiths (4:20-24), although He positively states the transcendent concepts which solve the existing problems.

These nine points summarize briefly some of the attitudes and words which Jesus expressed towards individuals as we have seen in the Gospels. These examples of counseling techniques are not practical in the sense that we can literally "imitate" the words which Jesus used, and we must always remain conscious of the distance between the Son of God and us. But the general principles which He followed are relevant to our counseling procedures.

In their personal counseling with their parishioners, three landmarks may be found in recent years to explain the development of modern concepts of pastoral counseling.

1. The writings of Sigmund Freud have had an important bearing and influence on the development of counseling concepts. His Introduction to Psychoanalysis<sup>1</sup> is considered the classic in the field and has had significant influence upon a generation of disciples (Jung, Adler, Maslow, Alexander, and others) who developed the modern psychiatric schools.<sup>2</sup> This describes Freud's influence and importance for our subjects.

<sup>1</sup>Sigmund Freud, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (New York: Modern Library, 1938).

<sup>2</sup>Fredrick S. Koebel, Psychoanalytic Counseling (Philadelphia: W.B. Eerdmans Press, 1952), p. 37.

## CHAPTER VI

### MODERN CONCEPTS OF PASTORAL COUNSELING

Jesus' interest in individual has always been an example and challenge to ministers of the Christian Church in their own pastoral work. But in surveying the field of pastoral counseling, we are immediately struck by the sudden wealth of recent literature on this subject. A few high points in the history of pastoral care a part of its responsibility to the Lord's command, "Feed my lambs. . . . Tend my sheep" (Jn. 21:16). But particularly in this century we find an intense interest on the part of Christian pastors to improve the techniques and practices in their personal counseling with their parishioners.

Three land-marks may be found in recent years to explain the development of modern concepts of pastoral counseling.

1. The writings of Sigmund Freud have had an important bearing and influence on the development of counseling concepts. His Introduction to Psychoanalysis<sup>1</sup> is considered the classic in the field and has had significant influence upon a generation of disciples (Jung, Adler, Horney, Alexander, and others) who developed the modern psychiatric schools.<sup>2</sup> Dicks describes Freud's influence and importance for our subject:

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<sup>1</sup>Sigmund Freud, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (New York: Modern Library, 1938).

<sup>2</sup>Frederick R. Knobel, Pastoral Counseling (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), p. 87.

Sigmund Freud . . . rejected both his parental religion and his father's domination as being one and the same, and . . . through his brilliant observations moved to the study of spiritual problems, striking out as he did so Judaism, Christianity and the other religions, both authoritarian and autocratic.<sup>3</sup>

Thus we see his significance in drawing lines of tension between the Christian pastor who represents such an authoritarian religion and the psychiatrist who follows Freud's teachings and interprets religious experience with his attitudes.

2. In the church the movement towards a psychiatric approach to pastoral counseling took hold in 1923 by the introduction of what is known as Clinical Pastoral Training. This training took place in psychiatric institutions. Much of the author's experiences within these and other such training programs. It shows at times an uncritical acceptance of modern psychiatric theories.<sup>4</sup>

3. The pastoral counseling movement has been largely confined to a single method of psychotherapy known as "non-directive counseling." This is based on an entirely secular book by Carl R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy.<sup>5</sup> It has been said, "Rogers did not discover the method but has developed it far more systematically than anyone else."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Russell L. Dicks, Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>Carl Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942).

<sup>6</sup>Knubel, op. cit., pp. 6 f.

Although the Christian Church has always engaged in pastoral care and personal counseling, we find that these three events in the past fifty years have brought the formerly uncoordinated efforts of pastors to counsel their parishioners into a scientific methodology, complete with statistics, case studies, and developed theories, and promising that the aim of the new methods of pastoral counseling would "assist the individual to grow so that he can cope with the present problem and with later problems in a better integrated fashion."<sup>7</sup> Before this modern movement, 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.<sup>8</sup>

Granted that the modern approach to pastoral counseling has the methodology and the techniques of training that previous practice has lacked, we must now examine the principles and practices of modern pastoral counseling so that we may compare them with the principles and practices of our Lord Jesus which we studied in previous chapters of this work.

We find the aims and purposes of pastoral care and personal counseling expressed in different ways by different authors. Generally each reflects his theological tradition as well as his psychiatric inclinations. Although Rogers is a secular author, we shall quote him first because of his pioneer work in

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<sup>7</sup>Rogers, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>8</sup>Göte, Bergsten, Pastoral Psychology (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1951), p. 41.

this field and his influence upon pastoral counselors. The basic hypothesis according to Rogers is:

Effective counseling consists of a definitely structured permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of his new orientation.<sup>9</sup>

Ruth Strang represents the school of educational counselors in which she is a leader and represents a moderate viewpoint. Her definition of counseling is:

a face-to-face relationship in which the counselor helps a person to gain insight, a new orientation, a more acceptable self-concept, better ways of thinking about life's problems and relationships, new techniques of living.<sup>10</sup>

Another approach, that of Paul Johnson, stresses the problem--approach to counseling. Thus the counselor is ready to fill a felt need when that arises:

Counseling is a responsive relationship arising from expressed need to work through difficulties by means of emotional understanding and growing responsibility.<sup>11</sup>

Seward Hiltner, states his opinion that there is a sense in which the aims of pastoral counseling are the same as those of the Church itself;<sup>12</sup> but elsewhere his professed aims are much more secular and moralistic:

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<sup>9</sup>Rogers, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>10</sup>Ruth Strang, Counseling Techniques in College and Secondary School (New York: Revised edition; Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), p. 72.

<sup>12</sup>Seward Hiltner, Pastoral Counseling (New York: Abingdon--Cokesbury Press, 1949), p. 19.

I believe however, we should welcome the trend towards the objective-ethical view, even if it is often unaccompanied by what seems to us to be an essential theological corollary.<sup>13</sup>

We may sum up the principles of pastoral counseling as found in these authors: the secular emphases upon self-realization and social benefit, which are basic to the approach of the psychotherapists, have entered the field of pastoral counseling within the Church. We shall develop this initial judgment as we see its application in different phases of pastoral work and the counseling action itself.

The basic method for pastoral counseling is the "non-directive counseling" approach, or as Rogers terms it in a later book, "client-centered therapy."<sup>14</sup> We find a succinct account of this method in the introduction to Dr. Rogers' earlier book, written by the editors:

It is a technique by means of which human individuals may be taught to adopt as their own those habits of mind and of emotion that will make them able to solve their own problems as they arise. The proper aim of the counselor is the production of a new attitude in the individual being counseled. This attitude should give the client himself increasingly clear insight into his own problems and help him gain in integration in his own personality.<sup>15</sup>

In actual practice, as described in Rogers' twelve steps in a therapeutic process,<sup>16</sup> we discover two basic facts: (1)

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>15</sup>Rogers, op. cit., Introduction by Leonard Carmichael, pp. v-vi.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. pp. 32-45.

The individual must come for help of his own will; he must desire help, realize his need and initiate the therapeutic process;<sup>17</sup> and (2) there is always some degree of direction, however subtle, on the part of the counselor (thus non-directive is a misnomer and does not describe the actual situation).<sup>18</sup> There, is the subtle inference that in the client-centered situation the counselor does not have to direct the interview because the individual has the resources within himself to solve his own problems. We see this thought expressed in both secular and pastoral sources, which adopt the viewpoint of Rogers:

The counselee is seeking self-realization, self-actualization; he is hoping to make his life more complete and satisfying. He has the capacity within himself to do this. Confucius embodied this principle in the saying: "Remember that thou art man and frail and likely to fall. . . but if thou fall, remember that thou art man and have it within thy self to get up." Each person works out his salvation in his own unique way.<sup>19</sup>

The clergyman's task in pastoral work is to assist spiritual forces at work within the individual: forces which are struggling for growth and maturity of the soul. These forces follow laws which are as dependable as are the laws of health within the physical body. In fact we are recognizing that the spiritual and physical affect each other so profoundly that many observers claim they are but different parts of the same whole.<sup>20</sup>

We see in the second quotation, by Russel Dicks that the "spiritual forces" are equated with the psychological structure and

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>18</sup>Strang, op. cit., pp. 113 ff.

<sup>19</sup>Strang, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Dicks, op. cit., p. 13.

that they "follow laws" in the way that the body follows laws of health. In this concept of pastoral counseling, the counselor merely guides the individual towards his "self-realization, self-actualization." Everything is there, in man, with which to work. The counselor assists the "spiritual forces at work within the individual." We shall compare this non-directive acceptance of the individual as he is, with the Christian doctrine of confession of sin and forgiveness through the blood of Christ in the next chapter.

Following the basic suppositions of the non-directive or client-centered approach the modern pastoral counseling movement tends to remove the individual from the area of obedience to external authority. Knubel remarks that in non-directive counseling there must be "no hint of authority, no rebuke, admonition, coercion, argument, explanation, exhortation--or generalization."<sup>21</sup> Corrol Wise shows that this concept has not understood that the inner need of a person is always at bottom moral and religious. Wise says:

The approach we are outlining here will create conflicts in ministers holding the traditional attitude. The question often comes, "Must we never pass judgment?" It is good psychology to answer this question in the negative. . . . The counselor does not pronounce forgiveness nor does he give people forgiveness. . . . The grace of God lies in the real fact that He has created within human personality powers which, if properly used, will result in life . . . through the process of acceptance, clarification, and release. . . . This is a curative, creative, redemptive force inherent in man.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>22</sup>Carroll A. Wise, Pastoral Counseling (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), pp. 82, 97, 99.



We see here a denial of religious authority and of the necessity of speaking of final divine realities. Dicks follows this line of thought:

The old heaven and hell have passed away and the old-fashioned authority of the clergyman with them. . . . For a parishioner to participate in the creative role of God, . . . is to have gained the kingdom of heaven already -- perhaps one should say released the kingdom of heaven within us -- while to fail to develop one's capacities . . . is to accept hell. . . . There is one further thought in this connection that influences our pastoral work: the nature of Christ's death is of relatively little importance so far as the pastor's work is concerned.<sup>23</sup>

X Underlying these words is the exclusion of divine revelation, judgment, authority, and even an opinion that these concepts are destructive of the cure which such counseling aims at.<sup>24</sup>

XX From these two basic attitudes of modern pastoral counseling, the non-directive approach and the absence of authority, we shall try to draw some conclusions on the role of theology, as found in the traditional statements of the Christian faith, in modern counseling concepts. Rogers has developed the idea that intellectual stimuli do not of themselves change behavior generally, and certainly do not change people themselves. He has stated this in his rejection of classical psychoanalysis:

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 its patterning no matter how accurate.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Dicks, op. cit., pp. 9 f.

<sup>24</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>25</sup>Rogers, op. cit., pp. 26f.

But more far-reaching effects in pastoral counseling are felt from Roger's rejection of the intellectual approach in preference to the approach through emotion. Thus he attempts to discredit the imparting of knowledge. He states it thus:

The newer therapy endeavors to work as directly as possible in the realm of feeling and emotion rather than attempting to achieve emotional reorganization through an intellectual approach.<sup>26</sup>

We can see truth in this statement, and we too attempt to reach the "whole man" in our counseling with the individual. But in Rogers there is an implied mistrust of intellectual clarification and explanation in itself. Thus in the field of religion, the counselor would not, if he followed Rogers' pattern, speak prophetically the Word of God, but rather draw upon the emotional resources of the individual's experience and not impose any external ideas upon him. We turn to Dicks and Hiltner for their own understanding of this concept that the emphasis in counseling should lie upon the emotional rather than the rational understanding. This becomes in some pastoral counseling a denial of the prophetic message, a disavowal of the traditional tenets of faith, and an attempt to build an experience theology working from the person's individual resources.

Religion had its rise in man's efforts to establish a satisfactory and satisfying relationship with the world in which he lived. . . . It is late in the history of religion that man is religious because he gains satisfaction through being religious, when love of God displaces fear of God. Only out of suffering is deep love born.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 28f.

<sup>27</sup>Dicks, op. cit., p. 17.

No explanation is made for the illogical connection of the last sentence with its preceding sentence. Hiltner works inductively, giving religious labels to ordinary psychological phenomena and equating his counseling with the work of the Holy Spirit, acting immediately!

When the pastor sees positive potentialities emerging from a hitherto confused and divided personality, he identifies their source as the operation of the Holy Spirit or of Divine grace. He has a metaphysic, a conception of the structure of the universe in which he can place his operational understanding of human personality.<sup>28</sup>

These comments tend to show a supposed transcendence over traditional theology and a replacement of the creeds of the Church with a potpourri of philosophical concepts embellished with psychological terms.

Although we must criticize some very basic aspects of the modern pastoral counseling aims and goals, we must also recognize positive contributions of modern psychology to the art of pastoral counseling in the fuller and deeper understanding of the workings of the human mind which has developed since Freud. Knubel wisely comments: "Counsel is darkened when the pastor shuts his eyes to the science of psychology and the psychologist shuts his eyes to God."<sup>29</sup> Within the whole field of pastoral counseling we find a new understanding of behavior, personality, social relations, and the depth of the feeling of personal guilt, which is helpful, even necessary, for effective personal

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<sup>28</sup>Hiltner, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>29</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 21.

counseling. Thus Göte Bergsten sums up our feelings on this necessity for seeing the two aspects of pastoral counseling -- the foundation of basic Christian theology as the mainspring for our approach to individuals, and the deeper understanding of psychology to help us achieve our spiritual goals:

There is an intimate and necessary connection between the spiritual and the psychological care of souls. . . . The mind and the body are the instruments through which the soul manifests itself in Time. Therefore the care of souls cannot be practised in the deepest sense if either the spiritual or the psychological aspect of man's nature is emphasized or cultivated at the expense of the other.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Bergsten, op. cit., p. 31.

## CHAPTER VII

### A COMPARISON OF JESUS' COUNSELING METHODS AND THE MODERN

#### CONCEPTS OF PASTORAL COUNSELING

In order to understand more clearly the relationship between the counseling attitudes and techniques of Jesus compared with those expressed by modern pastoral counselors who have left the pale of the traditional Christian faith, we shall compare the two in their agreement and disagreement concerning the fundamental articles of Christian belief. This chapter will compare the attitudes and methods developed from basic concepts of: (1) God; (2) Man; (3) Sin; (4) Atonement; and (5) the Christian Life. In addition to the work done by pastoral counselors whose techniques have been developed from a basically secular source, other modern authors will be referred to as a guide toward the synthesis of Jesus' concepts of counseling. Three authors have been especially helpful in developing counseling concepts which take both the message of God in Christ and the concepts of modern psychology seriously. They are: Wayne E. Oates,<sup>1</sup> Frederick Knubel,<sup>2</sup> and Göte Bergsten.<sup>3</sup> To

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<sup>1</sup>Wayne Oates, Anxiety in Christian Experience (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954).

<sup>2</sup>Frederick R. Knubel, Pastoral Counseling (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952).

<sup>3</sup>Göte Bergsten, Pastoral Psychology (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1951).

these authors we shall refer frequently for their understanding of pastoral care in opposition to the secular concepts of authors quoted in the previous chapter.

### God

In the conversations of Jesus with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman the Lord explains some basic concepts of God. God is spirit (John 4:24). He must be worshiped in spirit and truth (4:24). His action among men is the establishment of His Kingdom (3:3,5). God works through His Holy Spirit (3:5-6,8). He is revealed by the Son of Man who descended from heaven (3:13). God expresses His action in the role of Messiah (4:25-6). God is revealed as Father (4:21,3). Atonement is God's work in Christ (3:14).

Within this revelation the Christian pastor works and counsels. The pastor is representative of Christ and preaches His message. Knubel points out the futility of ignoring this revelation:

The greatest danger, however, is that the pastor shall limit himself within the restrictions of scientific methodology which by definition casts out any hint of divine intervention, religious autonomy, or sacred revelation.<sup>4</sup>

The success of the pastoral counseling interview dare not depend only upon the resources of the pastor or the client. The personalities of either can inhibit the action of God. The effective application of the Gospel message of God's love in Christ

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<sup>4</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 4.

must be the power for rebuilding personalities. When it comes to giving guidance for a Christian life, it must be Christ that leads the way and gives the power, not merely the inner thoughts of the human soul.<sup>5</sup> This we posit over against the theory that the individual has the resources within himself which can effect his salvation. Jesus in His counseling methods presented the prophetic word of God's wrath and His mercy towards mankind's helplessness.

In Dicks' statement that "Friendliness, affection, love are the characteristics of God as Jesus described Him"<sup>6</sup> we find a truth with which we must confront those who find in God's message a legalistic measuring rod for the morals and life of Christians. But we reject the weakness of this pronouncement as inadequate in the light of Jesus' demands for repentance and submission to the ruling of God in one's life. Gates presents a fuller picture of God and His reaction upon sinful men:

The character of God is manifested in the anxious response of man in His presence as he eagerly awaits the reconciliation which proceeds forth from the mind of God in Christ.

The pastoral counselor must present the full revelation of God in his dealing with clients. Thus Jesus condemned the false belief of the Samaritan woman (4:22). Jesus was permissive in His attitude towards the woman in that He accepted the sinful

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>Dicks, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>Gates, op. cit., p. 134.

woman with an attitude of warm response to her problem and her lack of understanding. But His love is firm and centered in the fulfillment of His mission. It does not aim at "denoting an atmosphere which permits and condones virtually everything."<sup>8</sup> God is recognized as the authority. The counselor's authority is conditioned by his obedience to the ultimate reality which is God.

#### Man

Jesus described His mission in the words of Luke 19:10: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost." Man is described as having at his heart that which is opposed to God (Matt. 15:19). In Jesus' counseling with Nicodemus He revealed that a new birth must occur, not by entering once again into the physical womb, but by being "born again of water and the Spirit" (3:5). This is a condition for realizing God's rule in one's life. That which is born of flesh remains on a fleshly level (3:6). Man in his natural state does not receive God's revelation (3:11).

We must therefore reject the advice of Ruth Strang:

The counselor's philosophy and attitude of respect for people and his genuine faith in their ability to use the resources within themselves determine to a large extent his successful use of techniques.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Henry L. Lieske, "Principles of Counseling," Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. XXIV, No. 10 (October, 1953), 725.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth Strang, Counseling Techniques in College and Secondary School (Revised edition; New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), p. 7.



This attitude follows the Rogers' theory that a permissive relationship "allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of his new orientation."<sup>10</sup> Against this Jesus stated the remarkable and profound phrase, "You must be born again" (3:7). Jesus struck at the root of man's sin: how can you speak good, when you are evil?" (Matt. 12:34). The radical sense of evil which lies at the heart of man perverts his every action and leads him away from God's command of obedience. The optimistic belief that man's heart is not evil and that solution to his problems may be drawn from that source is not acceptable in the light of Jesus' demands for total rebirth.

But psychological study has revealed some positive insights into man's makeup which are helpful in our study of pastoral counseling and which are followed in the Lord's example. Rogers stated, "This newer therapy places greater stress upon the emotional elements, the feeling aspects of the situation, than upon the intellectual aspects."<sup>11</sup> Thus the counselor must look beyond the words of the counselee and try to find the emotional state, the inner longings, the thoughts which are too difficult to speak. Jesus turned the conversation with the Samaritan woman from an intellectual discussion to a very personal application (4:16, 21-4). Since the writings of Freud, backed

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<sup>10</sup> Carl Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942), p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

up with innumerable case studies, it has become evident that most maladjustments are not failures of knowing, but are rooted in the realm of the feelings and emotions.<sup>12</sup> Thus the counselor must catch the feeling underlying the words which the client speaks. We have seen how Jesus apparently breaks off a train of conversation to strike at a need that is deeper (3:3; 4:10). Jesus knew the heart of man (2:25). He thus approached a counseling situation with an aim to treat the "whole man," not merely to exercise his intellect. Jesus demanded decision, committal of renunciation.

#### Atonement

Knubel describes clearly the conflict between an evangelical and a secularistic, or at best heretical, approach to pastoral counseling:

Justification is God for us. Sanctification is God within us. Both are necessary. But before God can be felt as within us, he must be felt as for us. The pastoral counseling movement, in rejecting the first thereby vitiates the second, upon which nevertheless it bases everything. What is most deeply needed by any person in mental or spiritual trouble is not first of all the feeling that God is within him, but first of all the feeling that God is for him in Christ, even in his worst condition and in his deepest guilt.<sup>13</sup>

The revelation of God justifying man and removing his guilt of sin is given in the cross of Christ. Thus Jesus revealed to Nicodemus that "the Son of man must be lifted up" (3:14). This "God for" concept is found lacking in much modern literature on

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<sup>12</sup>Lieske, op. cit., p. 722.

<sup>13</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 38.

pastoral counseling. This lack is seen clearly in Dicks' book:

The nature of Christ's death is of relatively little importance so far as the pastor's work is concerned. That is, it was not necessary for Jesus to have been murdered by religious zealots and mercenary soldiers for me as a pastor to be helpful to a girl who has become pregnant out of wedlock, and who is upon the point of committing suicide because of guilt feelings. However the fact that Christ lived and taught and died the kind of death He did may well be responsible, at least partially, for the fact that I care whether a girl commits suicide or not.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that men with liberal theological background have been the pioneers of the pastoral counseling movement has expressed itself in such words as these and thus shows the shallow understanding of the Christian Gospel which they profess to hold.

#### Sin

In the history of pastoral care we find that the Christian Church of the middle ages used the confessional as its main means of pastoral counseling. The individual in the exercise of confession was to consciously reveal his sins and receive forgiveness from the confessor. With the forsaking of the confessional in the post-Reformation churches confession has become both more formal and more personal. Public confession became a part of the sacred service of the liturgical churches. And personal counseling as a part of the pastor's Seelsorge became a channel for the exercise of the Office of Keys in the normal parish situation.

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<sup>14</sup>Dicks, op. cit., p. 10.

With the growth of psychological understanding of the human mind in our modern world, an increased interest in the fruits of confession has developed. Confession is looked at as a method of catharsis--a cleansing of the mind of guilt feelings. Rogers expresses this concept:

We have learned that catharsis not only frees the individual from those conscious fears and guilt feelings of which he is aware, but that, continued, it can bring to light more deeply buried attitudes which also exert their influence on behavior.<sup>15</sup>

The basis for this catharsis has become, however, not a plea for forgiveness to an offended God, but an acting out of guilt feelings by means of psychotherapy and other psychiatric techniques. Thus Rogers says, "The whole technique of play therapy is based on the fundamental principles of catharsis."<sup>16</sup> For those denying the Christian belief that only through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ is man's sin forgiven, confession must rely on the "curative, creative, redemptive force inherent in man."<sup>17</sup> Pure, scientific psychology must exclude such concepts as sin and judgment. We find this attitude in those professing to advise Christian pastors. Bergsten correctly states:

The need for confession has a psychological basis, but Christian confession should be considered as a purely religious act. . . . the Christian confession is concerned exclusively with sin and the sinner's relation to God.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Rogers, op. cit., p. 21f.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Wise, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>18</sup>Bergsten, op. cit., p. 74.

Any denial of the fundamentally religious nature of forgiveness is a surrender to the secular psychological axiom that the aim of counseling has nothing to do with the removal of guilt, but only with the relief of guilt feelings, and that salvation is exactly equivalent to a feeling of health and forgiveness.<sup>19</sup> But the Christian pastor who gives guidance and counseling is in the service of a supernatural reality, God, a vital power. Not only does he speak in general of spiritual laws, but he represents the Lawmaker. Thus the counselor is involved, is responsible, in the counseling interview. He speaks of sin with the realization that unforgiven sin is demnable. He speaks of forgiveness with the assurance of Jesus' promise that "whoever believes in Him may have eternal life" (3:15).

#### Christian Life

The source of Christian living is found in the words of Jesus which we have studied. It is found in the new birth by water and the Spirit, it is sustained by the indwelling Christ who supplies living water that springs up in a repentant heart welling up to eternal life, and it expresses itself by worship of the loving Father in spirit and truth. The pastor must himself be personally aware of the spiritual reality of his message. The Lord should not have to say to us as He did to Nicodemus, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this?"

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<sup>19</sup>Knubel, op. cit., p. 39.

(3:10). As pastoral counselor the Christian minister must learn from His Lord the sensitivity towards the individual needs of each parishioner who seeks guidance. He can never allow himself to become "problem centered" and thereby lose sight of the personality he is dealing with. Rather he looks to Jesus for the source and maintenance of divine power and he regards each individual he counsels as one who is in need of the redemptive love of Christ; and that message of reconciliation is applied to the individual personality in a way that he can best understand and apply himself. A good insight has been given by

Bergsten:

A spiritual adviser must aim at guiding his confidants in such a manner that their knowledge of spiritual things is not theoretical but practical and immediate: based upon personal experience of and familiarity with the spiritual realities. He must, in fact, help a person to act in a manner that is in harmony with his eternal destiny.<sup>20</sup>

This counseling toward Christian living must be directed toward active fellowship with the Church and the Word and Sacraments.

Thus Bergsten wisely advises:

When a spiritual adviser is dealing with a Christian or religious enquirer, his most important task is to give the confidant the guidance that will enable him to understand and appropriate the means of Grace in the Christian Church.<sup>21</sup>

We briefly summarize our findings and conclusions. In the examples of Jesus' counseling with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman we saw counseling that was at the same time client-centered

<sup>20</sup> Bergsten, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

and God-centered. Jesus was sensitive to the individuals with whom He spoke; but He was also aware of His mission to reveal the will of God in redeeming the world, and He pointed His clients to a realization of that mission and its relevance for their lives. Jesus was not legalistic nor moralistic, yet He pointed out sin and unbelief. He spoke to each person with understanding and broad sympathy. Yet His love was firm, knowing the cost He would pay, and knowing the sin that kept His hearers from fully realizing the depth of His love.

Modern counseling concepts are helpful to the pastoral counselor in evaluating his own counseling techniques. He may be the greatest block in a counseling interview if he has not gained rapport and has not assured the client that his efforts are entirely directed towards the counselee's ultimate good. We criticize modern pastoral counseling when it sacrifices the Christian commission from God for a secular understanding of human life and a perversion of God's message in the Gospel. The evangelical Christian must hold clearly in mind the relationship between psychology and the care of souls. Bergsten pointedly summarizes:

The practice of pastoral psychology becomes arid and finally has nothing to give the penitent if it is divorced from living piety and becomes a substitute for the redemptive message of the Christian Gospel.

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<sup>22</sup>Bergsten, op. cit., pp. 30f.

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