

# Recent Literature on Pastoral Care and Counselling

## A Review Article

GREER W. BOYCE

- Counseling: A Modern Emphasis in Religion.* By LESLIE E. MOSHER. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962. Pp. x1, 354. \$6.85.
- The Context of Pastoral Counseling.* By SEWARD HILTNER and LOWELL G. COLSTON. New York-Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961. Pp. 727. \$4.95.
- Casebook in Pastoral Counseling.* Edited by NEWMAN S. CRYER JR. and JOHN MONROE VAYHINGER. New York-Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962. Pp. 320. \$4.50.
- The Pastor and Vocational Counseling.* By CHARLES F. KEMP. St. Louis: The Bethany Press (Toronto: G. R. Welch Co.), 1961. Pp. 190. \$3.50.
- Compassion and Community: An Appraisal of the Church's Changing Role in Social Welfare.* By HASKELL M. MILLER. New York: Association Press, 1961. Pp. xviii, 288. \$3.50.
- The Pastoral Care of Families: Its Theology and Practice.* By WILLIAM E. HULME. New York-Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962. Pp. 208. \$3.80.

THE VOLUME of literature in the field of pastoral care has been increasing rapidly over the past twenty years. The output of books has, in fact, reached torrent proportions. Since pastoral care has to do with those functions of the pastor distinct but not separate from preaching and teaching, the area of concern is broad indeed. Under the stimulus of both the theological revival and (to an even greater degree) the discoveries of the psychological sciences, fresh reflection is being given to the pastor's role and methods as administrator, pastoral visitor, counsellor, family guide, and minister to the aged, the sick, the dying, and the bereaved. A body of special knowledge has developed in each of these areas of pastoral activity, and continues to grow. The first four of the books selected for this review are devoted to that aspect of the pastor's function which for many holds the strongest interest today, namely, pastoral counselling. The remaining two, while not unrelated to counselling in their content, deal with broader concerns of the pastor in pastoral care.

For the pastoral counsellor the main virtue of *Counseling: A Modern Emphasis in Religion*, by Leslie E. Mosher, is that it describes, summarizes, and evaluates the contribution of the psychological sciences to pastoral counselling. This is the aim of the book according to the author's own statement, "to broaden the understandings of the Church-related counselor by

emphasizing the findings of psychology, a scientific study of the behavior of man" (p. vii).

Beginning with a brief survey and discussion of the development of counselling in the Church and of the relation of psychology and religion, the author then sets to work to examine peculiarities of counselling in the religious setting; counselling individuals with personal problems and making decisions; marriage and family problems; and psychoanalytic and client-centred therapy; concluding with a chapter on group therapy. Each chapter is broken up into a series of topics which the author treats briefly. While this mode of presentation of the material gives a somewhat choppy aspect to the book, it does have the advantage, in this type of study, of enabling the reader to put his finger on specific issues and to grasp quickly what the author has to say about them.

Those well-informed in the literature of pastoral counselling will find little that is new in this book. They will be interested, however, in the discussions of where psychology stands at present on a number of important matters, and in the evaluations given by the author of differing opinions within psychological science. The book has greatest merit as a survey-course of psychological insights and techniques in dealing with human beings and their problems, accompanied by discussion of the values in the contribution of psychology for the pastoral counsellor.

Though by intention the book is designed to bring out the wisdom in psychology available to the pastor, the author is clearly aware of the problems and needs peculiar to the religious counsellor, and has wise suggestions to offer with respect to them. The awareness of the duty of the clergyman to go to a person who needs help rather than waiting for that person to come to him is an example of this realistic understanding of the pastor's role (p. 72). The good counsel offered to clergy throughout the book is, in fact, one of its greatest values.

There are two major weaknesses in the book from this reader's viewpoint. One is that most of the author's suggestions for effective church-counselling—the staff, consulting-room, training of personnel—are applicable only to a large city church with adequate resources to provide all that is required. The author is not unaware of this, but, in presenting what he considers to be the ideal, he courts the danger of seeming to be irrelevant to many pastors and pastoral situations. The greater weakness is, perhaps, the inevitable fruit of the book's strength. Because so broad a subject is dealt with and so many topics touched upon, the treatment of them is almost certain to be shallow in some places. Thus the author raises relevant issues, makes interesting and sound judgments upon them, and then tantalizes the reader by abruptly leaving the matter under discussion. For example, after presenting a strong, excellent statement on the non-directive technique in counselling, the author admits that clergymen, by virtue of their role and aims, may have to deviate from that method at times (pp. 115f.). But he fails to analyze what such deviation means either theoretically or methodologically. In fact it would

seem that the author is committed, as most writers on counselling are these days, to the non-directive method; yet, at the same time, he hints at the values of other methods without clearly interpreting them. In the end, therefore, the book leaves one unsatisfied—but at the same time stimulated to undertake further study and reflection on the matters the author raises. In this way he has achieved his stated aim and provided a worth-while introduction to the wisdom which psychological science has to offer to Church-related counsellors.

Recognition of the value of the insights and techniques of the psychological sciences for the work of the pastor is today generally well established. The question uppermost now is: What is unique in the *pastor's* role as counsellor? What resources, methods, and problems are peculiar to his office? It is this question which underlies *The Context of Pastoral Counseling*, by Seward Hiltner and Lowell Colston. As the title of their book indicates, however, the authors have confined their study to the difference between counselling done in the Church-setting and counselling in the secular context. They define counselling as "an activity or type of helping relationship carried out by several professions, but always in the context of what is unique or distinctive about each profession" (p. 27). It is the uniqueness of the context of the pastor in counselling as the representative of a religious community that the authors set out to examine. Behind this objective, however, lies a still deeper assumption concerning pastoral counselling. This assumption is made explicit in the chapter on "Context and Method" (pp. 43f.), in which the authors define the "phenomenological principle" as that which governs their method in counselling. Crudely expressed, the principle requires that the counsellor deal with each person in his individuality, seeking to understand him and to help him to understand his feelings and motivation without passing judgment upon him or attempting to persuade him to any particular course of action. The method is, in brief, that developed by Carl Rogers, and this chapter is a fresh and interesting articulation of the principles of non-directive or client-centred counselling. It is with this method of counselling *in the context of the Church* that the book deals, though it is not concerned with the method in itself but with its results in pastoral counselling.

In approved scientific manner the authors begin with an hypothesis. It is that "people seeking counseling help from a pastor will tend to progress slightly farther and faster in the same amount of time than they will in another setting. . . ." The proof of this hypothesis is not, however, given much emphasis by the book. Rather, attention is concentrated upon what the authors describe as the four dimensions of the context within which pastoral counselling is done. These dimensions are: the setting or the place where the pastor counsels; the expectation of the "counselee"; the "shift in relationship," that is, the change from a general pastor-parishioner relationship to the more intense but temporary counselling relationship; and the

aims and limitations of pastoral counselling, particularly the fact that in counselling the narrower, more concentrated aim of the relationship must not be confused with those objectives which legitimately belong to the continuous pastor-parishioner relationship. It is these dimensions of context which are the object of study in the book, whose aim is to distinguish between their significance in counselling within the Church and counselling in the secular context.

To investigate this matter of context in pastoral counselling the authors conducted an experiment of which their book is a report. The plan of the experiment is set forth in detail but is too complex to describe fully here. It is sufficient to note that for almost a year and a half counselling was carried on in Bryn Mawr Community Church and the University of Chicago Counseling Center by the one counsellor, Lowell Colston. Mr. Colston is an experienced pastor of the Disciples of Christ and a trained counsellor, and is now assistant professor of pastoral care in Christian Theological Seminary. By counselling in two different contexts, by recording the counselling interviews, and by giving appropriate psychological tests to the "counselees" both before and after counselling, he was able to obtain exact data for this study.

The counselling interviews are used throughout the book. Excerpts from "cases" at both the Church and the University Center are presented with extensive comments and interpretations by the authors. Representative cases, successful cases, and failures are studied in separate chapters. Briefer accounts of other cases are given in Appendix B, while Chapter 7 and Appendix A show the results of the psychological tests.

The authors take pains to demonstrate that their experiment was well conceived and conducted, and the reader feels assured of this. The question to be asked is: What is the result of it? The result is, on the whole, a book that will repay careful study by the pastor. The authors' hope that pastors will receive help from the recorded interviews, the records of the tests, and the authors' own interpretative analyses should be fulfilled. From these materials comes a wealth of helpful insights into the various kinds of problems people have and the meaning that lies behind the way people articulate their problems. But with respect to the main purpose of the book, the study of the context of pastoral counselling, the results are somewhat disappointing.

For one thing, the results of the experiment, summed up in Chapter 8, are for the most part far from exciting and certainly not a "unique contribution to the pastor's understanding" (p. 199). It is true that the authors stress one very important consequence of their study. They have shown that people coming for counselling to pastors do not expect an authoritarian answer to their problems any more than do those who go to professional "scientific" counsellors. In fact there is evidence that it is to the scientists that people look for authoritarian and even "magical" solutions to their difficulties. But a number of the other "contributions" from this study are less novel. For instance, the authors comment:

... the most important contribution made by Mrs. Merz's story is its demonstration that a sincere yearning for religious truth, confused and full of doubt as it may be, may nevertheless serve as the avenue or channel leading to a reconsideration of the self in all dimensions of its relationship—to itself, to other people, and to God (p. 200).

Surely the best Christian theology has been saying this for centuries and indeed has found in the idea here expressed both the basis and the result of Christian witness. Nor does theology need scientific confirmation of this fact in order to be sure of its truth.

Moreover, while this study does gather together and thrust on our attention a number of insights concerning the context within which the pastor counsels, it seems to this reader that many will find some of their most urgent concerns left unexamined. For example, early in the book the authors dismiss the matter of the pastor's use of his particular resources—the Bible, sacraments, prayer, etc.—as at most of only secondary concern in their study. They do so on the slim excuse that these resources belong to the priesthood of all believers and are not the exclusive property of the pastor. But this is surely not the point. At worst, pastors feel under pressure to use these religious resources in counselling because otherwise a pastor may be untrue to his faith. At best, pastors want to know how to minister these resources most effectively in counselling. It may be asked: Is it not in the peculiar religious resources ministered through a pastor that pastoral counselling is truly unique, and through them that people find the true dimension for self-understanding and for meeting their difficulties? Many may want to ask further: Did the fact that the counsellor was a Christian pastor make *any* difference in the counselling and did it not affect his method of counselling in any way? The answer to these and other questions may lie in the materials so painstakingly gathered by these authors, and, if so, we should like to hear further from them.

By its very nature, *Casebook in Pastoral Counseling*, by Cryer and Vahinger, does not lend itself to detailed review. Its content consists of fifty-six problems presented by pastors to the "Counseling Clinic" which appeared as a feature in *The Pastor*, *The New Christian Advocate*, and *The Christian Advocate*, over a period of several years. Each problem is presented in the following manner. After a brief introduction by the authors indicating the kind of problem to be dealt with, a verbatim account of the interview with the person is given by the pastor either from memory or from his notes. In most instances the pastor himself then raises questions about the problem or his handling of it. There follows a brief analysis of the situation, a critique of the pastor's understanding of the issue or of his methods, and frequently an interpretation of the dynamics of personality involved. These comments are made by one or two representatives from a panel of twenty-two experts, most of whom will be known to anyone familiar with the literature of psychology and pastoral counselling.

Though the records of the interviews are obviously not as exact as those

given in *The Context of Pastoral Counseling*, they are realistic, and, one feels, truly indicate how each pastor counselled. Most pastors will see themselves all too plainly in many of the interviews—which, of course, makes the critical comments all the more valuable to anyone ready to examine his own work. In addition the book has the merit of offering real pastoral problems in a wide variety of common critical areas of pastoral care: personal religious and Church problems; grief, suffering, and death; marriage and divorce; adolescence; mental illness; and so on. Each of the twelve chapters deals with one such area, and contains five or six case-examples. Nor are the interviews all “success-stories.” On the contrary there is abundant evidence of the fumbling, uncertainty, and error which are part of the daily experience of any pastor, and this makes the book the more useful to the pastor seeking to discover his mistakes and to improve his practice.

Inevitably a book covering so wide a field will not be equally meritorious in all its parts. The critical comments by the experts are not always helpful, and in places the reader will strongly disagree with them. But the authors offer their work as a textbook for pastors seeking to help themselves in improving their pastoral counselling and for teachers training students in counselling. For these purposes the book is to be highly recommended. One comment demands quotation: “Sometimes we make it very difficult for God to use us in helping our people” (p. 294). Every sensitive pastor will agree sadly with that! We must be grateful to these authors, who have given us a book which can contribute much to helping pastors to be better vessels of God’s healing grace to persons in need.

One of the obvious but important facts rightly stressed by all writers in the field of pastoral counselling is that the pastor, unlike other professional counsellors, cannot select an area of specialization in counselling. Personal problems, adolescent problems, marriage and family problems, all varieties of human difficulties come to him. When necessary and possible, the pastor should, of course, refer persons to special sources of help, but even in making such referral, the pastor has to have some knowledge of a great variety of types of need and of what is required to meet each type. Charles F. Kemp, therefore, renders a valuable service to pastors in his little book, *The Pastor and Vocational Counseling*. While acknowledging that his brief work is only an introduction to the subject, he is right in maintaining that it is the only full treatment in print of the pastor’s responsibility in guiding people in the choice of their life-work.

After an introduction, which convincingly summarizes the importance of choosing one’s vocation wisely, the author divides his study of vocational guidance into two parts. Part I presents a compact and illuminating survey and evaluation of the principles and techniques now followed in vocational guidance. Underlying the presentation of the data is the thesis that vocational counselling is counselling of the whole person. It is not simply a matter of determining aptitudes or supplying occupational information. The emotional stability and needs of the person are of prime concern in vocational

counselling also. Part II directs attention to the role of the pastor in guiding people in their choice of vocation. Adhering to the sane principle that one should not try to do what others can do better, the author urges pastors to make use of technically trained vocational counsellors. Yet there are elements in vocational guidance which are the pastor's peculiar responsibility. One of these elements is, of course, the counselling of persons who are considering same form of life-work in and through the Church. But in any choice of vocation the dimension of the meaning of life, proximate and ultimate, is central and is too often ignored. In our culture, prone to be satisfied with superficial values, the pastor's representation of this deeper dimension to persons struggling to decide upon their vocation is essential.

The book concludes with three appendices. The first gives a summary of the history of vocational guidance which is spelled out more fully in Chapter II. The second presents, without comment, a collection of quotations from eminent theologians on the themes of vocation and of man's work. Appendix III lists general and particular sources of referral for pastors confronted with problems of vocational guidance. A good bibliography is supplied.

As readers of his other books will know, Charles Kemp writes clearly and forcefully. His material is well organized, and his presentation of important principles in numbered points makes his book an excellent instrument of teaching and learning. It is not possible in a review to demonstrate the wealth of wise counsel and insight that is packed into so slim a volume. It is, however, the judgment of this reader that any pastor will greatly improve his guidance of people in this most important matter of vocation by digesting this book.

One of the difficulties for Canadians in reading in the field of counselling and pastoral care is that nearly all of the books are written in the United States. While this does not detract from the general value of the books, certain matters, such as lists of resources for referral and opportunities for special training, are inapplicable to Canadian readers. In nearly all of the books reviewed here these problems arise, but they are most apparent in *Compassion and Community*, by Haskell M. Miller. The book was written as a study authorized by the Board of Social and Economic Relations of the Methodist Church in the United States, and for its preparation the Board appointed a special committee. The general mandate of the committee was to inquire into the relation of the Church to social welfare agencies and to discover the responsibility of the Church in this area today. Naturally, therefore, much of the material deals with the situation in the United States. There is nonetheless a great deal that is of universal value, and more that can readily be translated for the situation in our own society.

The book is, on the whole, an informed examination of the traditional place of social welfare in the work of the Church, of the rise of secular social work using the tools of scientific psychology and sociology, of the reaction of the Church to this new social force, and of the demands now being made upon both Church and social welfare agencies. The author calls for co-

operation rather than competition, and concludes by setting forth twenty-two responsibilities which must be faced by the Church in this field. Questions and suggestions for further action at the end of each chapter make the book an excellent study-text.

Besides being a mine of information and thought-provoking in its discussion of the relations of Church and social work personnel, this book reminds us of the Church's role as a redemptive community, both to those within its membership and to those outside in the secular world. One reads the book with the growing conviction that, if the Church needs the scientific skill of the trained social worker, social work needs the dimension of depth in the Church's understanding of what destroys and what constitutes true community. The author's plea for co-operation rather than conflict, and his proposals for such co-operative effort, have, therefore, a genuine urgency in them.

Among the perils in the modern development of pastoral care are a tendency to individualism through concentration upon the counselling relationship, and a tendency to increasing specialization of the pastoral functions partly because of the rapidly growing store of knowledge concerning each of these functions. *The Pastoral Care of Families*, by William E. Hulme, endeavours to counter both of these tendencies by viewing pastoral care as a ministry, not only to isolated individuals, but to families; and not only to particular urgent needs, but to persons over the total span of the life-process. The result is a fresh study of the pastor's work that gives a sense of unity to pastoral care.

In addition, the book has the great merit of restoring the meaning of the word "theology" to pastoral theology. The author realizes that, while in modern times pastoral care had to be opened to the knowledge and wisdom to be derived from the psychological and sociological sciences, the result has been that pastoral theology has in effect become pastoral psychology. We must beware, however, of swinging to the opposite extreme in reaction. What has to be done is "to incorporate these insights of science into a fundamentally theological motif" (p. 11). Though recognizing that much work has still to be done "before a fully developed pastoral theology emerges" (p. 15), the author has made a worthy contribution towards this objective in this book.

He accomplishes his task, first of all, by examining the pastor's function in counselling and caring for his people from the perspective of the various stages in life's process. Beginning with marriage, he then goes on to parenthood and the needs of children and youth. From there it is, in his scheme, a logical step to the problems of middle age and old age. The pastor appears in the book, then, as pastor to persons in their deepest relationships at every stage of their developing lives.

Within this total structure, Hulme discusses each of these epochs of life in two ways. First he reflects theologically upon a particular epoch, for example, marriage. In doing so he draws together smoothly psychological



wisdom and Christian theology, adhering faithfully to the principle expressed in his introductory chapter that "the growing edge of pastoral theology is . . . gospel-based reflection upon the function [of the pastor] itself" (p. 15). Then, having set down the fundamental theological motif or "deposit," he goes on in the chapter immediately following to draw out the implications of this motif for pastoral practice. In these "practical" chapters, knowledge of the elementary techniques of preaching, teaching, and pastoral care are assumed, and the author simply draws together specific principles for the guidance of the pastor in exercising his ministry in the light of the theological understanding given.

The values in this book for the pastor can scarcely be overestimated. The chief value we have already indicated, namely, that it bases pastoral care on theology, without denying or ignoring the wisdom derived from the psychological sciences. But in addition one may note such elements as its realism and honesty in dealing with specific issues. The treatment of parent-child relationships, for instance, is unmarred by the sentimentality and false idealism—Christian or humanistic—which often befogs the discussion of such matters. Regarding the concept of love in 1 Cor. 13 and its bearing upon the family, he writes: "The contrast between what goes on between the family members and this description of what should go on may be enough to send us into despair" (p. 105). Yet the author's solution to this despair is not a denial or minimizing of the judgment upon ordinary family life implicit in Paul's teaching, but a stress on deeper apprehension of what is meant by sanctification through the struggle of dealing with our failures.

This book contains innumerable important insights, often expressed in memorable phrases, such as: "The pastor often confuses church loyalty with sanctification" (p. 94); "We have succeeded in drawing our children to Jesus but have alienated them from God" (p. 111).

While readers will discover weak sections in the book—pastoral visitation, for example, receives only brief and inadequate treatment in a book dealing with the care of families—the *Pastoral Care of Families* provides a sound instrument for the pastor's understanding, evaluation, and improvement of his pastoral ministry.