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Christ and the Counsellors

RUSSELL PARKER

We live in an age when, according to all the statistics, there is a virtual stampede of people to the doors of the counsellors. Never before has there been a time when so many people have clamoured for someone to listen to them. As if in response to this need there has arisen within the last seventy years, an amazing variety of schools of counselling. At the turn of the century Sigmund Freud startled his contemporaries by expounding his views concerning human motivation. Since then, numerous groups have qualified, deviated from and opposed his views.

Interestingly enough, each school claims a correctness of thought and technique and a level of success which authenticates itself above its peers. There being such a scope of ideas on offer, one may well ask what is the message they each proclaim? What are the gospels of hope and healing they preach? To Christians committed to the cure of souls, these are important questions. After all, many of the counselling therapies are derived from philosophies which are divergent from and even hostile to the Christian faith. Therefore, this article is a limited enquiry into the compatibility or otherwise of a number of counselling philosophies and the Christian gospel. The observations are limited to a discussion of the nature and personality of man. It is this subject in fact which is the cornerstone of any practice in counselling, for what we believe about man largely determines how we handle the issue of his needs. Consider for example the comment by J.A.C. Brown, 'Schools of psychology dealing with the total personality claim to be wholly scientific and to have based their theories solely upon hard facts and the results of experiments or dispassionate observations; this is in fact not true since they inevitably begin with a belief about man's essential nature which forms the implicit frame of reference into which their faith and the results of their observations are fitted rather than the reverse as they would have us believe.'¹

As Christians, we are committed to the belief that man has a capacity for communion with a transcendent and personal God and indeed, his make-up is commensurate with this relationship. Thus Christian counselling has as its goal the desire to bring the one in need to draw from such a resourceful relationship and so co-operate in the process of growth in wholeness and holiness. This does not necessarily mean that the Christian rejects out of hand the findings of

the Reformed Presbyterian Church of America. He regards the bulk of secular counselling as being non-Biblical and therefore of no relevant value. Adams has, however, pointed out that by and large pastoral counselling is a function now almost completely within the hands of 'secular priests', the psychiatrist and psychotherapist. It must come as a refreshing alternative then when such a distinguished psychiatrist as O.H. Mower says, 'Has evangelical Christianity sold its birthright for a mess of psychological pottage?'²

Yet the picture today is one of growing co-operation between pastoral and secular care. H.J. Eyseck feels that this is more a reflection of doubts surrounding traditional psychotherapeutic practice. He questions whether such has had any positive effect in helping recovery from neurotic disorder.³ As the whole field of counselling now seems to be standing at a crossroads it is appropriate to ask if the Christian has something distinct to contribute to this urgent ministry. Note the interesting conclusion of Carl Jung on this subject; 'Among all my patients in the second half of my life there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that everyone of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.'⁴ The implications for the Christian gospel are clear.

Jung seems to imply that counselling therapy has come full circle then: for its formative influences were the age of enlightenment and the rise of reductive naturalism. The former rejected the revelatory element of Christendom and made man the sole arbiter of his destiny. The majority of the counsellors jettisoned any need for a transcendent power to aid man in his healing. Eric Fromm for example held in distaste all religions as he regarded them as forms of authoritarianism. 'Such', he says, 'removes man's struggle for self-responsibility out of his hands and to a cosmic level.'⁵ Freud himself regarded the catalogue of Christian ideas about God as Father to be but the projection of man's need for family love. He said that a person's repressed desires are merely psychoanalytical substitutes for the devils which our forefathers believed could possess human beings.⁶ There was also the philosophy of determinism which held that the workings of the human body must be explained by deterministic principles borrowed from chemistry and biology. Freud applied Darwinian evolutionism to his theories by which he held that there were no separate moral and emotional factors; all were attributed to the biological process of growth. This, coupled with the rise of existentialism and Marxism, created an emphasis in some counsellors, to concentrate on human experience as a homeostasis, a process of being. The now and the immediate had become the important focus. There was no need to consult a transcendent resource. This

internalizing process of the quest for healing and wholeness is characteristic of the modern therapies. Therefore, those involved in pastoral care must examine their understanding of human nature and malady before endorsing in any wholesale manner, the maxims of the modern healers.

Man as the Bible sees him

'What is man that thou are mindful of him, and the son of man that thou shouldst care for him?'⁷ Here the Psalmist questions his own existence in the context of a transcendent and personal God who not only cares for him but wishes to maintain a relationship with him. Hence the thrust of the Biblical picture is never to give a picture of man alone but of him in relationship with his God. It is only in the context of God's saving purposes for man that his true status may be gauged. The Biblical writers concur with the general view that the essence of man's sinfulness is that he has broken his relationship with God and become self-centred. Adrift of this essential relationship, he is lost and sick at heart. The Genesis accounts of creation present four relationships upon which man's behaviour is modelled and motivated.

(a) **His relationship to God:** Genesis 1:26; 2:7 ('our image ... our likeness').

From the very beginning of his existence, man's relationship to God is the core and ground of his nature and not a later addition to his humanity. There is much discussion as to whether the terms 'image' and 'likeness' refer to his bodily form or his spiritual nature. Certainly the term for image in the Old Testament is used almost entirely of physical or material representation. It is used to describe the great stone image of Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel; also Genesis 5:3 states that Adam gave birth to Seth who was 'in his own image'? However, by the time of the New Testament the term was also used of more spiritual qualities. Jesus is described as the image of the invisible God and by comparing 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Colossians 1:15 it transpires that fallen humanity will recover his own true image through the redemptive work of Jesus.

Modern scholarship has viewed the terms image and likeness as referring to man's rationality and moral awareness and, as such, says Carey, they are what separates man from the animals.⁸ Helmut Thieleke underlines this thought when he speaks of the solidarity of the sixth day when both man and the rest of the animal world were created but homo-sapiens is distinctive through sharing in the Spirit of God himself. Man owes his very nature to the act of God initiating a fellowship relationship with him. The product of God's initiative is the creation of a living soul; man. It is only man who has the breath of God within him as a constituent element of his nature.

Hence, man does not possess a soul (*nephesh*), but is a soul. The term itself is all encompassing and can be understood as 'living being' or even as 'person' according to E.C. Blackman.⁹ As person there are also physical and mental dimensions which cannot be divided or separated from each other: man is a psycho-physical unity. And as a unity he is mortal; his only hope is the grace of God on which he is totally dependent. Carey points out that man is set apart from the rest of creation by virtue of his rationality and ability to freely communicate with God. Without God he cannot live; a bid for autonomy would be an act of suicide. Therefore the self-determinism advocated by some counsellors is radically opposed to the Biblical picture of man being fulfilled through dependence upon God's love and sustaining spirit.

(b) His relationship to the animal world: Genesis 1:26, 28; 2:19–20.

Genesis reveals that man is of the same ilk as the rest of the animal world, yet he is to exercise lordship over them. Psalm 104.20–24 pictures man as living alongside the rest of creation as a member of it. At night the beasts of the forest go out in search of food; but when daylight dawns they return and 'man goes forth to his work'. Like the animals, man has the similar command to go forth and to increase and multiply.

The command which they do not share is man's calling to lordship. Jeeves says that this command is given in conjunction with his relation with God, that of being God's vice-regent upon earth.¹⁰ This is not dictatorship but stewardship. Unfortunately, man not only lost his lordship over the animals at his fall, but also over himself. In place of the harmony of Eden there is the struggle for survival with the animal world as well as the inter-personal rivalries which led to a death like Abel's, (Genesis 4:9).

Carey goes on to list seven categories which distinguish man within and from animal creation: (a) the development of language; (b) his inventiveness and skill; (c) his religious interests and his fear of death; (d) culture; (e) man's symbolic and conceptual thought; (f) literature; (g) awareness of moral laws which transcend one's existence.¹¹ Also Pannenberg says that man has a world whilst each species of animal is limited to an environment that is fixed by heredity. Man is not so limited. When something like an environment appears in the case of man it involves things established by his culture and not inherited limits.¹² Such a view contrasts sharply with the behaviourism of B.F. Skinner who says that the whole of man's life is predetermined by his make-up and environment. For Pannenberg, openness to change, in man, and to adapt, is due to his inescapable relationship to God and is what gives him his unique nature.

(c) His relationship to nature/earth: Genesis 1:29; 2:15, 16; 3:17–19.

One of the consequences of the fall was that the earth itself became affected by the curse of disobedience. The theme is continued in the

New Testament where Paul speaks of a day when the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay.¹³ So it seems that there is an integral relationship between man and nature. The world, though evolving, evolves within a state of balance and at the fulcrum is the stewardship of man: by acting irresponsibly we tip the scales downward.

(d) Relationship to Mankind: Genesis 2:18, 23

Man's relationship with his fellow creatures is motivated by his creator who wishes his fulfilment. Yet divorced from God, mankind is on the road to self-dehumanisation. His social equilibrium fragments and so man is adrift from his fellow man. It is no small surprise that within the existential schools of counselling there is a great emphasis upon each person becoming aware of his own being in existence, and the need for authentic community. Modern society seems to be recovering from its wilderness wanderings of imposed self-dependency.

Therefore at the heart of the Genesis records has been a description of man whose relationships with his world rests properly upon a functioning relationship with God. It is this relationship which sets man apart so clearly from the rest of the animal creation; a factor which the majority of counselling disciplines discount.

Before continuing further it is necessary to say that the scriptures do not attempt to give a clinical definition of man. Space does not permit a full discussion of anthropological terms but it is interesting to note the role of spirit in man's nature. In both testaments the word means breath or wind as well as referring to the divine being. In the creation narratives it is God's own breath or wind which gives man his call to existence. The Old Testament also uses the term to refer to man's inner disposition; of jealousy (Numbers 5:14), sorrow (1 Samuel 1:15) and passion (Haggai 1:14), to name a few. In the New Testament the term is used almost exclusively of the Christian and his openness to God. So from this brief resumé we can see that humanity is separated from animal kind by the activity of Spirit and that this activity signifies accessibility of the divine being to engage in relation with man. Such constitutes mankind's unique and distinctive nature.

In order to complete this section on the Biblical picture of man we shall examine briefly the person of Jesus and how he understood mankind.

The Life and Ministry of Jesus

The incarnation itself underlines the essential 'worthness' of man's physical nature. Let us note particularly Jesus's use of family terminology to describe his relationship with God; i.e. 'abba' or father. Robinson says that the whole idea of the family is the unifying concept of the Synoptic's doctrine of human nature.¹⁴ It is this relationship to God as father that needs to be restored in man and

Jesus says that he is the perfect son and can introduce his disciples to a similar relationship with God's fatherhood that he enjoys. However, something has gone distinctly wrong among men: he has fallen into sin. Hence the ministry of redemption and the call to repentance. Sin has brought a corruption within human nature which has ushered in also the fear of death. Therefore the Gospel proclaims that Jesus has come to destroy the power of death (John 11:25) and introduce the redeemed to a fellowship with Himself: such a fellowship is within the community of the Church. So the fulfilment of man's relationship with man is through the vehicle of fellowship with God (cf. 1 John 1:3). Edwin Starbuck found from his research that it was clear that an immediate result of conversion is to call a person out of himself and into an active sympathy with his world.¹⁵

Mankind's fulfilment and wholeness, according to the Biblical picture, is two-directional: upwards, with God and horizontally, with his fellow man. However, sin has shattered both interests and so in the midst of such chaos, God is at work through the proclamation of the gospel to bring mankind back into the family of man and the family of God. There is no doubt in the minds of the majority that society is in a predicament. However, all are not agreed about the path to deliverance. We shall now look at man and his deliverance as some of the counsellors see him.

A cautionary note should be sounded here that any attempt to make a precise comparison between Biblical and psychodynamical models of man is fraught with difficulties. Malcolm Jeeves says that the terms may be similar but they aren't exchangeable. He illustrates this by showing how guilt may be a symptom of anxiety to the psychologist and yet be the convicting work of the Holy Spirit to the Christian.¹⁶

(a) Psychoanalysis. This school of counselling is synonymous with the person of Sigmund Freud. He studied medicine at the university of Vienna, before which, writes T.F. Graham, he researched the theories of Goethe and Darwin.¹⁷ In the latter Freud saw an iconoclast who broke with the axioms of Descartes, denied the dualism between a realm of human decision and a realm of animal impulse and so eliminated, as he saw it, one of the discontinuities in nature which had been elevated to a lofty position by theology. Freud was also of the school of Helmholtz which had a strong aversion to anything that smacked of mysticism or emotionalism. Their axiom was, 'no other forces (exist) than the common physical, chemical ones active within the organism'.¹⁸

Early in his theorizing Freud distinguished between the conscious and unconscious mind. He later renamed the unconscious the 'id' and understood it to be part of man concerned with the discharge of basic drives, energy and tension. (They were the inherited instincts which Freud related to biological functions). The conscious mind became

known as the 'ego' and regulated one's interaction with the environment. He added to this the 'superego' which encapsulated and represented the moral demands and the judgements of right and wrong. Freud also used two other terms: 'sexual' to describe one's drive for life and 'thanatos' to describe man's capability for destruction. Freud's human scenario is one in which the ego is locked in a continual struggle with the id in order to maintain a balance between pleasure and what is publicly acceptable. The ego maintains this balance through 'displacement' by means of repression, dreams, jokes or by projecting aggression onto an object removed from the problem. On top of this struggle is the superego, the conscience whose moral authority binds us all. It derives its power from shaping influences of early childhood.

For Freud, man has the inner drive to satisfy repressed childhood desires. These are largely sexual and to some extent centre upon the mother figure. However, says Freud, such desires are unacceptable to society and in the background hovers the threat of a disapproving and hostile father figure who for Freud encapsulated the role of both religious and moral censures. It was this struggle in the heart of man which was responsible for his emotional illnesses.¹⁹

Not all of Freud's followers have agreed with his emphasis of man's behaviour being virtually determined by biological instincts. One group explored infantile experiences (Jung; Melanie Klein; Ernest Jones) and another paid greater attention to the individual's social and cultural background (Eric Fromm; Harry Stock Sullivan). Frank Lake in his 'magnum opus', *Clinical Theology*, says that neurotic anxiety was the echo of the pain of long lost relationships. In short, the neo-Freudians pursue two basic sources to provide the beginnings of the healing process. First, infantile experiences as revealed through the re-appropriation of early memory traces or even re-living one's birth experiences; generally popularised under the term Primal Therapy. Secondly, the development of positive caring relationships, initially promoted within the context of the counsellor and the counselled.

As witnessed by Frank Lake's writings, there has been a number of attempts to combine psychoanalysis with Christian beliefs. R.S. Lee uses traditional Freudian language to describe the moral deficiencies in man. He says that the morally dubious drives are but the remainder of childhood egoism.²⁰ Presumably he suggests education as the cure for immorality. He says that the Devil is but the projection of this inner stress and man needs but to accept himself in order to be truly forgiven. Feelings of guilt and unworthiness are not the sign that something is wrong but are in fact evidences of a development in moral conscience. Jay Adams brings a Biblical objection to this trend of thought when he says that instead of understanding immorality as an illness one should be responding to

guilt in terms of repentance and forgiveness. Also, whilst not subscribing to mediaeval imagery of the Devil nor assuming that all emotional stress is as a result of the evil one, it is also undermining of Biblical truth to understand Satan and temptation as the personification of anxiety as does Lee, Tournier and Carol Wise, to name a few.

Harry Guntrip describes the Pauline language of flesh against spirit as being a conflict between an immature infantile unconscious and the more realistic and socially—morally—and spiritually—mature ego.²¹ The solution was wholeness through divine love. However, there is no real case to be made from Pauline theology that the flesh is some kind of separate entity which is unconscious in its drive. It represents the weaker element within the unity of man which is representative of man devoid of spiritual illumination and therefore prone to sin. Guntrip in fact substitutes for Pauline thought a tension between fear and love which he sees as a necessary process of integration. Yet this implies that the key to integration lies with man's will. Paul in his mature years had already said, 'The good that I want to do, I don't; the evil I don't want to do, that I do'. (Romans 7:15, 16).

In conclusion then, one of the main criticisms of psychoanalysis from the Christian perspective is its emphasis upon biological determinism. Freud offered no salvation for man's dilemma; the responsibility for the problem lay in the past. Rejection of the past and a bid for autonomy was the right course to take but more than that could not be offered. As Christians we can appreciate the issue of man's inner struggle to find himself but far from interpreting this in terms of biological determinism, we understand it as man adrift from his moorings in God through his sinfulness.

Learning Theory (Behaviourism)

'Behavioural psychology fits in particularly with the tendency to see human behaviour in the model of the machines: as systems which have signals fed into them and other signals are given out.'²² Descartes popularised the doctrine of 'man as machine'. He said that apparent spontaneous actions were caused by external things called 'stimuli'. Here was the beginning of the famous 'stimulus-response' clause of behaviourism which in modern parlance is called 'reflex'.

It was experiments by Ivan Sechenov (1829–1904) upon animal behaviour which formed the basis of the learning theory. He became convinced that mental activity was purely a physiological phenomenon. His findings he also extended to humans. 'Man's highest, artistic and intellectual achievements can be seen as associations ... effected through a series of contacts between consecutive reflexes.'²³ He maintained that all reflexes were established at birth through the infant's response to food sources. Thoughts were also included in his category of reflexes. Sechenov introduced the 'ego' as an aspect of

man which accounts for his belief in behaviour as being independent of reflexes. Yet he doesn't account for how this 'spanner in the works' came into being. He concluded that abnormal or deviant behaviour was due to misdirected or confused associations.

Other pioneers of the movement were J.B. Watson (1875–1958) and the more well known Pavlov. The latter experimented upon stimulating salivation in dogs at the sound of a bell which signalled the imminent gift of food. Pushed beyond their limits, the dogs broke down and became agitated. It was this discovery which led him to apply his research to human psychology and the ability to stimulate neurosis through excessive excitation or inhibition. It was but a short step from here to the infamous brain-washing techniques of certain repressive dictatorships.

Watson, on the other hand, experimented with rats similar to Pavlov, and transferred his findings to the human species without any amendment. Bry says that this whole trend of development was an inevitable concomitant of the evolution of the physical sciences which had freed themselves from mentalistic and religious ideas.²⁴ Watson ultimately denied the existence of the mind, hereditary mental traits and instincts. All was reflex and with the proper re-conditioning, the appropriate modification could be achieved.

Perhaps the best-known representative of this school is B.F. Skinner and his theories of Operant Conditioning. He began research with the behaviour of pigeons and applied his results to human behaviour. In the semi-novel, *Walden Two*, he explains his theory; 'now, if it is in our power to create any of the situations which a person likes or to remove one he doesn't like, we can control his behaviour. When he behaves as we want him to behave, we simply create a situation he likes, or remove one he doesn't. As a result, the probability that he will behave that way again goes up, which is what we want.'²⁵ Emotions for Skinner are merely a state of strength or weakness in one or more response. 'Jealousy ... has served its purpose in the evolution of man; we've no further use for it ... it energizes one to attack a frustrating condition. The impulse and the added energy are an advantage.'²⁶ Skinner would go further and advocate a form of conditioned society. The logical consequences of the theory suggest something on the scale of Orwell's 'controlled' regime reflected in his book *1984*.

Learning therapy focusses on the observable symptoms of a person's problems and tends to separate the problem from the person. As the problem is never regarded as part of the whole self, the therapist is given licence to attack it aggressively. There is therefore a tendency in such somatic therapy to reduce morality, psychology and even political dilemmas to an organic base. The Biblical view of man, whilst not wishing to separate him entirely from the animal world, does speak of him as transcending his world. He is

more than flesh, he is also spirit. This fact alone should make one think twice before endorsing psychosurgery. Whilst Carey compares such with the removal of a thyroid,²⁷ William Sargant relates the case of a Salvation Army Officer who, after undergoing a leucotomy, was now not only freed from the fear of sinning against the Holy Spirit, but also no longer believed in the Spirit's existence.²⁸ Therefore, to treat man as an organism comprising a series of stimuli and response is to do despite to the wonder of his creation and to reduce his religious capacity to a process in biological evolution.

Existential Counselling

Existential psychotherapy originated in the early part of the twentieth century and had its roots in the philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology as well as being influenced by the emphasis upon the individual in the theories of Adler and Rank. Lying behind the process itself are the ideas of Soren Kierkegaard. He maintained that man is not a ready-made being, he will become what he makes of himself and nothing more. He is free to make vital choices and so construct himself. To pass from inauthentic existence (tyranny of the crowd) to authentic existence (being responsible for self) entails, he says, existential anxiety.²⁹

The stress was upon existence. 'We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards ... he will be what he makes of himself.' (Sartre). True humanity was full self-authentication and self-awareness. Death was seen as a threat to existence and so there was the exhortation to live in the reality of the 'now'. The existential perspective emphasised knowledge by participation; feelings were the all important monitor reflecting the sense of being-in-relatedness to the world. In fact, society is very much regarded as that element which alienates mankind from his own self-fulfilment. One can compare this with the Marxian idea of the alienation of the individual by an elitist society. However, there is a certain amount of unreality attached to these views as it is not really practical to understand individual existence without accepting the genuine context of a community for which he is partially responsible.

Existential counselling begins with a belief of total commitment between therapist and patient. Biswanger for example says that the patient is not a subject but an existential partner.³¹ So therapy proceeds 'not merely by showing the patient where, when and to what extent he has failed to realise the fullness of his humanity but tries to make him experience this as radically as possible.'³² Perhaps the best known school in this field is that known as Gestalt therapy which originated with the work of Fritz Perls, Ralph Hefferline and Paul Goodman. One of its fundamental principles is 'holism' which says that all nature is a unified and cohesive whole, there is no such

thing as a mind separating a body. It sees a similarity between mental and physical processes. Perls based much of his ideas of human activity upon observations of nature; he noted what he called, the principle of 'organismic self-regulation'.³³ Growth is achieved by creative adjustment of the organism acting in unity. In becoming aware of his self and living in the fulfilment of such is called a 'gestalt' or 'whole'.

The needs of the individual was to reclaim all of himself, warts and all. Perls encourages us to be free functioning; neurotic behaviour is the loss of this: 'anxiety as an emotion, is the dread of one's own daring'.³⁴ He attempts to explain the loss of free-functioning in terms of an epidemic in men which makes him go against his own grain. However, he doesn't explain the nature or origin of this epidemic. But for Perls, the question why is futile as he doesn't accept absolutist answers nor metaphysical realities.

Finally, therapy involved asserting one's own worth and giving voice to all attendant feelings in the process. Charles Harris dubbed this procedure as 'quasi-exorcism'.³⁵ The danger with such criteria for therapy is that it is too subjective; there are no laws or rules by which to gauge the effectiveness of therapy: to experience is the goal.

Person-centred counselling

This school is best known through the work of Carl Rogers who maintained that man is only fulfilled in relationship to an accepting other. He quotes his indebtedness for this emphasis to Martin Buber's ideas on 'I-thou' relationships. So in therapy the patient is encouraged to 'be himself' without any exterior manipulation or directing by the counsellor. At the same time the counsellor is to adapt the personal disciplines of empathy, non-possessive warmth and genuineness. Rogers believed implicitly in the individual's ability to choose wisely his own destiny when fully in touch with his personal circumstances. This conflicts with the Biblical picture which, whilst appreciating the wonder that is man, nonetheless is not blind to his waywardness. B.F. Skinner surely has a point when he says that there is a kind of omnipotence and optimism in Roger's work whereby any problem is solvable if man has the will.³⁶ But has he?

Rogers did not accept the idea of moral absolutism. Violence he regarded largely as the final response of a frustrated man in seeking a meaningful goal. He has the same liberality when discussing sex. 'Each (marriage) partner will grant to the other more living space for outside interests ... satellite relationships outside the marriage which may or may not involve sexual intercourse ... are to be valued for themselves'.³⁷ Jealousy is dismissed as bad cultural conditioning. In this respect, a Christian counsellor would have to disagree in favour of God's revealed will and moral principles for mankind to live by.

Incidentally, there is nothing very 'non-directive' about this kind of arbitrary advice!

Rogers does reject the ethical 'ought' from the individual's motivation. He quotes Jesus's words of not judging one another, as support. Paul Vitz sees the influence of Feuerbach on this aspect of Rogers' philosophy of man. In his book 'The Essence of Christianity', Feuerbach internalized the religious element in man. 'Man's God is nothing other than the deified essence of man.'³⁸ The sinful disposition was rejected as an outmoded idea. Man was quite capable of organising his own destiny. Vitz quotes as other influences upon Rogers' 'selfist' philosophy, those of Fosdick and Norman Vincent Peale who popularised the idea of self-realisation.³⁹

Doubtless, one is very grateful to Rogers for his emphasis upon the 'prizing' of the individual and his non-judgemental approach to care. Acceptance is a fundamental principle to well-being. However, he too easily associates acceptance with condoning. Whilst the Christian would refrain from judging his fellow man, there is still the call to repentance. Also, Rogers' emphasis upon the omnipotence of the self, comes dangerously close to idolatry. Compare the parody of Barry Stevens, an associate of Rogers: 'In the beginning I was one person knowing nothing but my own experience. Then I was told things and became two people ... In the beginning was I and I was good.'⁴⁰

Finally, Rogers is also associated with the popularizing of 'encounter' groups which he claimed as a new social intervention. However, there are similarities here with the classic Christian class meeting of early Methodism and the contemporary house-fellowship groups. Thomas Oden regards Rogers' groups as a demythologized and secularized adaptation of the former. The self-exploration and discovery are paralleled with the Christian expressions of confession, thanksgiving and commitment. Oden concludes that in the encounter group one has in fact an incognite expression of 'Koinonia'.

Person-centred counselling has brought into prominence the concept of the self as a unified person. The present has been emphasised as the area of concern rather than a too excessive probing of the past. Also it has emphasised that it is man, and he alone who is responsible for who he is and how he is. However, any idea of a fixed moral law is rejected along with the metaphysical realm. This is not necessarily to undermine its worth in the field of counselling but as a Christian, one must disagree with its fundamental principle, that mankind needs no God to achieve perfection and fulfilment in life.

So we can now see that by and large, the counselling schools see modern man's dilemma in terms of him being a victim of external forces. The Biblical picture however, accounts for the predicament of man as the consequences of sinful rebellion against God that Jesus came and made the offer of new life possible through his atoning

death upon the Cross. E.N. Ducker in fact explains how the atonement makes good sense for man's mental health. On the Cross Jesus suffered all the anxiety, rejection, scorn and derision which many a sufferer inflicts upon himself. Put in another way, 'many functional neuroses are indications of a hidden history of serious misconduct; what had not been adequately acknowledged, atoned for, propitiated or otherwise cancelled out.'

Modern psychology has reinterpreted the Biblical story to conform to a belief in man's essential optimism; he is a survivor of the fittest. Goodman argued that Adam and Eve should have gone on to eat from the tree of life and then would have achieved the proper balance of life.⁴⁴ Elsewhere Carol Wise interprets the fall as an upward step from a childish sense of impotence towards a more mature level of life where man related to himself, to others and to God on the basis of love and co-operation.⁴⁵ One can't help but recognise the influence here of not only Darwinianism but also the more recent theological developments of the twentieth century. Schleiermacher for example, regarded sin as the loss of God-consciousness, but there was no implication of punishment attached: F.R. Tennant, that morality was purely a social creation which would adapt and conform according to the evolutionary process. Tillich regarded the fall as representative of the transition from ideality to reality.⁴⁶ An awakening from a primal dream. However, he flies in the face of the Biblical evidence which speaks of the consequences of the fall in terms of an all too real nightmare.

Before drawing up a final conclusion, we should sound a note of caution. While noting the limitation of counselling in its estimates of man's needs, a Christian must not assume that Christian commitment heralds instant wholeness. Neither must one plunge into the Bible for texts for every ill. Note particularly the ideas of Jay Adams in this latter case who summarises all counselling therapy in terms of confrontation and admonition.⁴⁷ Paul Halmos, on the other hand, says that the counsellor cannot just limit himself to his patient's problems but must exercise a kind of faith which will touch under issues affecting the patient's whole orbit of life.⁴⁸ Therefore Christian and counsellor will enter each other's orbits in the course of their ministry.

A useful summary to this discussion is to list five areas of disagreement between humanist psychotherapy and the Christian understanding of man:

(1) The Estimation of the worth and final significance of the human person.

The counselling philosophies speak in terms of efficiency of self reliance and expression; the Biblical picture is one of commitment to a redeemer and restoration of fellowship with God.

(2) **The Christian insistence on the radical need for depth regeneration as the precondition for self-fulfilment.**

(3) **The different concepts of the principle means to human motivation.**

The human action of nature versus the healing action of God.

(4) **Humanistic psychotherapy's view of organised society.**

A plastic medium in which human foresight and planning are decisive.

(5) **The counsellor's hope.**

Rests entirely on what the individual can do for himself.

Therefore a Christian involved in counselling, whilst appreciating the insights which some of the therapies offer, must nevertheless exercise caution regarding the nature of man. He is not just a construct whose emotions are understood solely as reflecting his biological organism. His feelings are intimately related to the relationships he adopts with his creator and fellow man. Because of his sin, he is a unity without harmony until he finds his foundations in God.

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NOTES

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