

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 18

Volume 18 • Number 3 • July 1994

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews original and selected from
publications worldwide for an international
readership for the purpose of discerning the
obedience of faith*

EDITOR: BRUCE J. NICHOLLS



Published by
PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS

Dr. Ennio Mantovani, a Roman Catholic SVD missionary in Papua New Guinea, is Director of the Melanesia Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Services. [p. 274](#)

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Church

John R. Brinsley

Printed with permission.

With great sensitivity the author shows how the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous often work effectively in a Christian atmosphere despite the fact that many of its members have never entered a church. The author suggests reasons why alcoholics often find the Church the most difficult place in which to find understanding and healing. He suggests how pastors who also suffer from dysfunctional behavioural characteristics, might learn by attending an open meeting of AA! He calls evangelicals to an awakened conscience on this widespread and crippling disease.

Editor

There is today a growing, seemingly secular ministry of healing and restoration to broken, addicted and alienated human lives which challenges my evangelical conscience.

THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Since the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, many groups, each with a different recovery focus, have requested permission to use the Twelve Steps.¹ Examples include ACoA (Adult Children of Alcoholics), [p. 275](#) Alateen (Teenage Members of an Alcoholic Family), Gain-Anon (for compulsive gamblers) and NA (Narcotics Anonymous). George G. Hunter III of Asbury Seminary writes,

If many secular people are addicted and not in control of their lives, then the '12-Step Movement' is here to stay and has a growing future. Indeed, there is evidence that the 12-Step Movement is the 'underground revival of the 1990s,' that more people are now

¹ The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous: (1) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. (2) Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. (3) Made a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. (4) Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. (5) Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. (6) Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. (7) Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. (8) Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. (9) Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. (10) Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. (11) Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. (12) Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

experiencing the empowering grace of God in 12-Step groups than in all of the more visible evangelism programs combined ... Art Glasser contends that 'addiction' is the dominant form that possessive and destructive Evil has taken today in our culture. The Church is called to represent the compassionate power of *Christus Victor* to millions of addiction-possessed people of this generation.²

Bruce Larson, pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington, believes that relational goals for people, supported by a Relational Theology, liberate churches from much parish stagnation and move them from a maintenance to a mission-oriented mentality.³ Also, in a world where the United States has become the largest mission field in the western hemisphere and most of the countries of Europe are almost secular wastelands, relational goals help shape and equip them to be the kind of churches which reach secular people for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bruce Larson sees Alcoholics Anonymous as a fellowship which practises a relational theology that informs the way members love and care for one another in ways that release power, new life and hope for the future. He writes

AA, though doctrinally questionable by Christian standards, is relationally sound. The Church ought to be both! It is tragic that we in the Church are forced to choose between doctrinal soundness and relational soundness.⁴

After articulating what AA and the Church can learn from each other Psychiatrist John White and Pastor Ken Blue comment:

AA members confess their faults to one another, occasionally with, though more usually without, prayer. Christians pray but don't confess to one another. What would happen in the churches if we were to divide up p. 276 in pairs once a month (or even once a year) for Fearless Moral Inventory Sunday?⁵

Have practitioners such as George Hunter, John White, Ken Blue and Bruce Larson who reflect evangelicalism and are committed to reaching unchurched people for Christ, caved in before the onslaught of increasingly popular 12-Step programmes? Are they at ease with the often sloppy theology under-pinning such programmes in which the Lord Jesus Christ is rarely mentioned, and, in which the sovereign-revealing-creator God of the galaxies is diminished to 'a Power greater than ourselves' and 'God as we understand him'? In this scenario has theology been replaced by an integration of sociology, psychology and psychotherapy? Has Christian pastoral theology and praxis been hijacked by another contemporary expression of Gnosticism or another version of New Age Selfism?

Or, is God really in this seemingly 'new thing'? Does such a pastoral challenge to my evangelical conscience merely illustrate Hans Küng's conviction that God 'is at work not

² George G. Hunter, *How to Reach Secular People* Abingdon Press, Third printing 1992, pp. 63f.

³ Larson argues that the first relational goal involves a person's relationship to God ... The second relational goal involves a new relationship with our inner selves—characterized by honesty, acceptance and appreciation ... The third relational goal involves a new relationship with the 'significant others' in our lives—characterized by openness, vulnerability and affirmation ... The fourth relational goal involves a new relationship with the world—characterized by identification, involvement and service....

⁴ Bruce Larson and Ralph Osborne, *No Longer Strangers* (Waco: Word Books, 1976) p. 21.

⁵ John White and Ken Blue, *Healing the Wounded* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), p. 177.

only in Christianity but where He wills: in the whole world’?⁶ And, do the words of Jesus, ‘For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of light’ ([Lk. 16:8](#)) throw more light on the reality that God is the source and initiator of *all* healing?

In answering these questions at least four issues need to be addressed: Theological issues, Pastoral issues, Issues of honesty and humility, and Issues concerning credibility and healing.

I. THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Alcohol is described in AA’s ‘Big Book’ as ‘cunning, baffling, and powerful’. This sounds very much like sin! Perhaps this is why Patrick McCormick, a seminal thinker among Roman Catholic moral theologians, has titled his latest book *Sin as Addiction*.⁷ He uses the addiction model for sin because it ‘and its “twelve step” programs offer a more realistic grasp of the process of conversion which repentance from sin involves. The therapeutic approach of the “twelve steps” calls us to enter into open and trusting relationships with God, our neighbour, creation and ourselves.’⁸

A Theology of Addiction in the Light of Relational Goals

From the perspective of self. In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul describes the desperate powerlessness and unmanageability of his life. He states, ‘I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out’ (7.18). Here he gives a plausible biblical under-pinning of Step One of AA’s Twelve Steps—that alcoholics are ‘powerless over alcohol’ and that their ‘lives had become [p. 277](#) unmanageable’. To acknowledge that there are areas of our lives, whether they be ‘acts of sinful nature’ as listed in [Galatians 5:17](#) or specific addictions over which we are powerless is a challenge to our pride and self-sufficiency. Paul continues by saying that these areas of our lives ‘are in conflict with each other so that you do not know what you want’. Admitting our powerlessness, and accepting the unmanageability of our lives involves a very painful and humbling act of surrender. It means admitting that we are in the grip of an addictive process that has rendered us powerless over our behaviour; that our lives will continue to be unmanageable until we renounce our insistence on living by our own will, and come to that place where all we can say is, ‘Nothing in my hand I bring ... helpless come to Thee for grace.’

From the perspective of God. The theological foundations of evangelical Christianity have always rested on the twin pillars of human powerlessness and divine grace, human chaos and divine order, human helplessness and divine enabling. As Richard Mouw notes,

That is what the disease and addiction models are picking up on. At the worst they are secularizing our doctrine of grace. But at best they are expanding, extending the notion of grace to areas we have ignored. It is a move toward the gospel rather than away from it.⁹

To attend a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous is to be immersed in an atmosphere of profound gratitude and often but not always, cigarette smoke! For the Christian alcoholic

⁶ Quoted by Ray S. Anderson, *Theological Foundations for Ministry* (T & T Clark/ Eerdmans, 1979) p. 473.

⁷ Patrick McCormick, *Sin as Addiction*, (New York, Paulist Press, 1989).

⁸ *ibid*, pp. 173f.

⁹ Richard Mouw, in *Christianity Today*, December 9, 1988, p. 41.

some AA meetings can be very frustrating and even boring. At worse, it can be little more than a meeting of mutual navel-gazers, whose concept of fellowship amounts to little more than a soulless celebration of 'drunk-a-logues', and whose Higher Power is no 'higher' than the group consciousness, all of which is not very comforting in the light of Jeremiah's diagnosis of the human condition: 'The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?' ([Jer. 17:9](#))! And yet when AA is 'good AA', it works better than any other form of human fellowship in helping the alcoholic to stay sober and grow in sobriety and serenity. Participants even discover 'a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline' ([2 Tim. 1:7](#)). I find it quite mind-boggling to see the way in which God is at work in AA meetings; in the lives of people who speak with grateful conviction about the power and miracles of God, and yet who would never dream of entering a church.

What is happening then in this phenomenon called AA? How does it help us to understand addiction from God's perspective? I believe that what we are seeing, again and again in AA, is a re-enactment with many variations, of the parable of the Prodigal Son ([Lk. 15:11-32](#)). 'Virtually all the basic spiritual dynamics of alcoholism are present in the events and relationships of this story.'¹⁰ The sadness is that the [p. 278](#) Church is often the most difficult place for alcoholics to find understanding and healing. The Church often acts like the offended 'older brother' in the parable, while AA acts more like the gracious 'waiting father.'

When confronted by such brokenness and integrity in the prodigal, God, the Divine Physician who initiates all brokenness and honest repentance, responds with such an outpouring of his grace, that the prodigal can rejoice in being 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven'.

From the perspective of significant others. The alcoholic intuitively manipulates significant other people such as spouse, children, parents, friends, pastor, doctor, workmates to help ease his or her progression down the track of addiction. Are there biblical principles which address both the self-centredness of the alcoholic and the misguided collusion of the co-dependents? Paul's exhortations in [Galatians 6:1-5](#) provide such principles. The key lies in the apparent contradiction between 'Carry each other's burdens' (v. [2](#)) and 'each one should carry his own load' (v. [5](#)). In fact there is no contradiction, because the Greek word for burden is different: *baros* (v. [2](#)) meaning a weight or heavy load, and *phorton* (v. [5](#)) being 'a common term for a man's pack' (Lightfoot). We are exhorted to bear one another's 'burdens' which are too heavy for one person to bear alone. But there is one burden which we cannot share:

indeed we do not need to, because it is a pack light enough for every man to carry himself and that is our responsibility to God on the day of judgement. On that day you cannot carry my pack and I cannot carry yours. 'Each man will have to bear his own load.'¹¹

In applying these biblical principles to the mutual responsibilities of both the alcoholic and the significant other people in the alcoholic's life, it is appropriate to expect:

(i) That significant other people should help carry the alcoholic's burden—not by condoning the alcoholic's behaviour, nor by offering either sympathy or the co-dependent's crutches, but by initiating intervention procedures and making available the necessary tools for recovery, such as medical aid, therapy, the fellowship of AA, the Twelve Step programme, a Church Addiction Support Group.

¹⁰ Vernon E. Johnson, *I'll Quit Tomorrow* (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1980) p. 116.

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, (London, Inter-Varsity Press, 1968) pp. 150f.

(ii) That the alcoholic must 'carry his own load' of personal responsibility. That is, the alcoholic must accept full responsibility for his or her own recovery. This can be achieved when the alcoholic feels comfortable and at ease with the self-diagnosis of alcoholism, and is unconditionally committed to following the steps of recovery.

II. PASTORAL ISSUES

The basic reason why the Church is often the hardest place for the alcoholic to get help is because both the Church and the alcoholic share many of the same dysfunctional behavioural characteristics. The main difference between the two is that while the recovering alcoholic is **P.279** getting better, the Church does not even know that it is sick. As we were leaving a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, one of those present, a committed Christian and faithful church-attender, said to me, 'John, this is where people are getting better, not in the Church. The Church is full of angry people.' I was deeply saddened because I knew that for both of us 'getting better' meant being 'restored and healed' as well as being 'ransomed and forgiven', and I wondered and later wept about whether or not the Church, my Church which I deeply love, is really the kind of fellowship where 'broken and alienated human lives' discover 'liberating and healing power'.¹²

Most dysfunctional ramifies, whether they are nuclear families, extended families, church families or clearly dysfunctional (e.g. alcoholic or violent), function on the basis of unwritten laws: Don't feel, Don't trust, Don't talk about the family secrets. Family members are programmed into roles in order for the addiction (e.g. drugs, alcohol, workaholism, helping others at the expense of one's own health and sanity) to function. Such roles are those of the addict, the enabler, the hero, the scapegoat, the lost child, the mascot, and so on.

Disfunctional behavioural characteristics include low self-esteem, external referenting, difficulty in setting functional boundaries, rescuing others, depression, substance abuse, stress-related physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and psychiatric symptoms, family violence and physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual and intellectual abuse in the family.

If George Hunter is right in claiming that addiction 'is the dominant form that possessive and destructive Evil has taken today in our culture', and because alcoholism impacts one third of New Zealand's population, then one of the first priorities the Church must embrace is to provide recovery programmes for those ensnared by alcoholism and other family dysfunctions. This implies that the Church must first of all be aware of, name, and seek recovery from its own dysfunctions.

Areas of Sickness in the Church

Low self-esteem. The Adult Children of Alcoholics' (Acoa's) unmet needs of childhood for affection and affirmation of self-worth easily get transferred to the pastor. Conversely, the pastor's unmet needs, values, and expectations, past and present, can inadvertently be triggered in working with parishioners. The bottomless pit of clinging, emotional dependence can quickly frustrate and discourage the pastor, who may eventually end up with burn out. If pastors tend to blur their boundaries and they take too much 'care' of others, then they could learn a lot by attending open meetings of AA.

¹² Ray S. Anderson, *A Case Book for Theological Reflection* (Fuller Theological Seminary). See the Introduction.

External referenting. As ACoAs keep looking to others for approval, security, and thus identity, so the unsuspecting pastor can unwittingly reinforce that dysfunctional lack of autonomy by making ethical and spiritual decisions for others.

The pastor whose self-esteem is [p. 280](#) based not on his or her own clear self-assessment but on the approval of others and external standards of personal success soon loses himself or herself in the church institution. The resulting loss of identity, and a growing inability to handle personal criticism and conflict, very quickly catapults the pastor from ministry to a performance-orientated life-style of workaholism.

Difficulty in setting functional boundaries. The dysfunctional family (alcoholic and church) can be either enmeshed or disengaged. Those that are *enmeshed* are so involved in one another's lives that growth is stifled. Because of their difficulty in setting functional boundaries Acoas and pastors develop skills in manipulating people with whom they are enmeshed.

The *disengaged* family functions in isolation. The rules become walls to keep each member in his or her proper place. Feelings in emotionally repressed homes become so chaotic and threatening that members keep emotions stuffed down by busyness, maintaining rigid schedules, and withholding appropriate feelings from co-workers and those to whom they minister. This dysfunction can powerfully militate against the effectiveness of team ministries which, above all, require transparent cooperation and clear communication. Because Acoas were brought up not to talk, they play their cards close to the chest, placate people in conflict, and hide family secrets. The same can happen to a pastor. Some churches place so much emphasis on activity and programming that qualities of warmth, encouragement, and integrity give way to performance as the basis on which we accept and affirm one another. Gradually, members accept the lie that victorious Christian living depends on how well and how often we perform in the church programmes.

When 'salvation by grace through faith' is preached from the pulpit but performance-based acceptance is practised in the church family, confusion abounds, legalism flourishes, and the church family ceases to be therapeutic community in which the sick and hurting find healing and hope.

Control taking. Issues of control and authority are almost always problems for church members living in, or coming from, dysfunctional homes. I once worked in a team ministry with a pastor whose preferred leadership style was always control-taking. Then I learned that he was an Acoa. How easily we pastors can be unwitting catalysts in promoting codependent behaviour in the church family! Because of the often violent and inconsistent use of authority in their alcoholic homes, ACoCs may react angrily even to necessary and legitimate authority and/or structure in the Church. They may also isolate themselves from the pastor, no matter how kind and reasonable is his attitude.

Process addiction. Anne Wilson Schaef states, '*Anything* can be addictive when it becomes so central in one's life that one feels that life is not possible without the substance or the process.'¹³ She divides addictions [p. 281](#) into two major categories: Substance addictions such as alcohol, drugs, nicotine, caffeine and food and process addictions when one becomes hooked on a process such as sex, accumulating money, pornography, gambling, work, religion, worry, television or jogging.

When the church as an institution or organization becomes obsessed with one thing which is so central in the life of the leaders that life is not possible without it, then it has

¹³ Anne Wilson Schaef and Diane Fassel, *The Addictive Organisation* (Why we overwork, cover up, pick up the pieces, please the boss and perpetuate sick organizations) San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988.

become an addiction. Christian leaders can become centred on the Church as a rewarding or punishing institution rather than upon God.

III. ISSUES OF HONESTY AND HUMILITY

The New Testament describes the Church as a healing community in which prisoners find freedom, the blind receive sight, the oppressed experience release, the burdened recover rest and the despairing find hope. And yet the Church is often the hardest place of all for an alcoholic to find help and healing. Also, whereas some see alcoholism as a disease requiring healing, others see it as a sinful behavioural problem requiring discipline and/or punishment. During the past forty years genetic research and studies into the socio-economic and psychological dynamics of both dysfunctional and healthy family systems have focused and intensified the debate concerning alcoholism as a sin or as a disease. My own conviction is that alcoholism is a disease which involves sinful choices and sinful behaviour.

One fact about the Church in New Zealand that challenges the reality of our humility and honesty is that its influence upon the culture of Aotearoa New Zealand is very minimal. A realistic insight into the New Zealand condition comes from Felix Donnelly, a Roman Catholic priest, lecturer in sociology in Auckland's Medical School and founder of the Youthlink Trust for disturbed teenagers. He writes,

The new clerics to whom people go for solace or encouragement, or for guidance as to what they should do, are doctors, lawyers, psychologists and similar professionals working in the area of human suffering and need.¹⁴

In 1959 every pastor in New Zealand received a copy of the booklet, *Alcoholism: a Guide for the Clergy* by the Rev. Joseph Kellerman. The author begins by quoting the statement adopted by the General Board of the National Council of Churches in New York, February 26, 1958:

Alcoholics are persons in need of diagnosis, understanding, guidance and treatment. They are especially in need of pastoral care and the divine love which the church can bring them. There need be no condoning of their behaviour, but neither should a church permit its antagonism to alcohol to prevent its offering an effective ministry to alcoholics and their families. Ministers and churches should not be content merely to direct alcoholics to treatment centres.

He concludes his study by commenting:

The vital question is not whether to p. 282 drink or not to drink, but whether the ministers of our churches will assume leadership with sufficient courage and strength to help resolve the problems of the disease of alcoholism, or whether they will continue to try to escape from this responsibility as completely as the alcoholic escapes his responsibilities of life by use of the bottle.

Christian alcoholics face special problems. Because of the widely-shared attitude of moral condemnation in the Church towards alcoholism, Christian alcoholics experience more intense guilt feelings about their addiction than other people. As James Balmer says,

¹⁴ Felix Donnelly, *The World Upside Down* (New Zealand, Penguin Books, 1988) p. 57.

Because the Christian's church environment disapproves so strongly of alcohol abuse, he or she will often hide the problem with even greater determination than a non-Christian.¹⁵

Thus, the road to recovery for Christian alcoholics is made just that more difficult. At the heart of this pastoral problem is, I believe, a fundamental theological issue which can be described as a Pelagian philosophy of ministry in which the imperatives of the Christian ethic are emphasized and the indicatives of biblical theology ignored to such an extent that we end up with a new legalism, a boring moralizing, a humanistic 'works' religion.

Where charismatic renewal lacks agape love, it tends to emphasize law and power to the exclusion of grace. It takes us from Mt Sinai to Pentecost and bypasses Calvary.

Derek Tidball writes,

Every congregation has within it those who are burdened with sin and guilt. There are those who have engaged in dishonest acts, those who have committed adultery, those struggling with homosexuality, those who feel deserted because of a marriage failure or who are angry or violent, those who feel worthless and depressed. The agonies come in all shapes and sizes. For them, the Davids of our churches, it is vital not only that we preach a message of grace but that we experience relationships of grace within the fellowship of the church. Non-threatening, non-judgemental honesty must be the prevailing atmosphere. At the same time discipline must not be forsaken and a concern for holiness must be maintained, for only as it is will many have the courage to face the sin and the failure instead of trying to hide from it.¹⁶

The extent to which we as the Church are truly the Body of Christ through which he, by his Spirit, continues to minister to the sick, lame, weary, the captives and the poor, that will be the extent to which we will be channels of God's grace to the alcoholics and drug addicts, the sick and unemployed, the rejected and abused, the broken and alienated human lives.

IV. ISSUES CONCERNING CREDIBILITY AND HEALING

Is there a Christian 'quick cure' for alcoholism? The quick answer is 'Yes' and 'No'—very rarely 'Yes' and nearly always 'NO'.

Yes, some alcoholics have been miraculously and instantly delivered from addiction—probably as many p. 283 as have been instantly cured of cancer, heart disease, or diabetes. God is sovereign. He can heal any disease, in any person, at any time. Our own daughter was healed of a very severe debilitating back problem which left her completely crippled. I can only describe her healing as an example of 'power healing' through prayer, the laying on of hands and anointing with oil.

I am also sure that God's converting power through the pastoral programme of 'Alcoholics Victorious' would bring an unshakeable sobriety to many. But there are very few churches where alcoholism is understood and where such a programme would be given a high priority.

Another area of potential instant healing concerns the demonic, in which a demonic 'spirit of alcoholism' has taken hold of the drinker and has hooked into some specific

¹⁵ James Balmer, 'The Christian Alcoholic' (Ann Arbor, M.I., USA (*Pastoral Renewal*, May 1985, Vol. 9, No. 10), p. 156.

¹⁶ Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherd*, (England, IVP, 1986) pp. 227f.

weakness. Release and recovery from such spiritual bondage may be triggered only by the appropriate exorcism ministry.

On the other hand the incurability of alcoholism can be a stumbling block for some Christians. One recovering alcoholic said to Dr. Spickard:

I move in Full Gospel circles and I believe in healing because I've seen God heal. But whenever I tell my friends I'm a recovering alcoholic, they say that's a 'bad confession'. They try to convince me that I'm not *recovering*, I'm *healed*. Sometimes I'm tempted to believe them and have a little glass of wine—after all, other Christians drink socially, why can't I? Then I remember. I *am* an alcoholic. God has healed me from my burning compulsion for alcohol, but all my life I'm going to be just one drink away from a drunk. These friends mean well, but without knowing it, they pose one of the biggest threats to my sobriety.

If only Christian alcoholics could appreciate that a disciplined commitment to working their recovery programme far from being a denial of God's power to heal is a grace-given expression of 'the perseverance of the saints', thus protecting the alcoholic from being diverted from recovery by unrealistic expectations of instant healing.

CONCLUSION

I rejoice in the effective healing, recovering and restoring ministries of AA and related 12-Step programmes. But where in all this is the Christian Church with the full Gospel of God? Have we forgotten that by its very nature, calling and divine equipping, the Church exists to carry out the ministry of Jesus Christ of revelation and reconciliation through his Word and Spirit. The New Testament describes the Church as a healing community in which prisoners find freedom, the blind receive sight, the oppressed experience release, the burdened discover rest, the despairing find hope.

In Luke chapter fifteen the three classic parables of God's searching and redeeming love expressed through the life and ministry of Jesus challenge us to be seen to be the bearers of the good news of compassion and salvation for the sinner rather than in the role by which we are so often caricatured, one of condemnation and judgement.

The ministry mandate of Jesus ([Lk. 4:17-19](#)) and the Parable of the Good Samaritan ([Lk. 10:25-37](#)) focus the concerns of our ministry on 'broken and alienated human lives'. Can the Church become, and be seen to be, a healing and credible community in which alcoholics and others from sick family systems will 'stand tall' in Christ because they have been 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven'?

The Rev. John Brinsley is a Presbyterian minister in New Zealand with wide pastoral and counselling experience. [p. 285](#)

Book Reviews

NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SURVEY (4TH ED.)

by D. A. Carson

(Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993 Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993 pb. 92 pp.)