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THE INERRANCY DEBATE AND THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN COUNSELING

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In attempting to side-step the crucial implications of the current inerrancy debate, many evangelicals have tried to suggest that the controversy is nothing more than a semantical battle of terminologies and definitions. In this article, the inerrancy debate is viewed as it affects the role of pastoral counseling. In particular, the author examines the issues of "Christian" feminism and homosexuality, concluding that a weak view of the Scripture will always lead to a weak view of morality. Serious problems result from allowing cultural hermeneutics to redefine clear biblical revelation.

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T HE vast majority of Fundamentalists and Evangelicals alike hold to a belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures in their original autographs as the proper view of biblical inspiration.[1] Most conservatives base their position on the teaching of the Scripture itself and trace the formulation of the plenary-verbal inspiration concept to the crystalization of that position by Warfield and the Princeton theologians of the nineteenth century. To Fundamentalists, the inerrancy of Scripture is ultimately linked to the legitimacy and authority of the

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[1]For apologetic expositions of Biblical inerrancy see S. Custer, *Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, n.d.); N. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979); J. Gerstner, *A Bible Inerrancy Primer* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1965); C. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), and *God, Revelation and Authority*, 4 vols. (Waco: Word Books, 1976); R. Lightner, *The Saviour and the Scriptures: A Case for Biblical Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978); J. W. Montgomery ed., *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974); J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958); C. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), and *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1975); J. R. Rice, *The Bible: Our God-breathed Book* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1969); J. Walvoord, ed., *Inspiration and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); E. J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963).

Bible.[2] We view the Bible as being God-breathed and thus free from error in all its statements and affirmations. However, today there is a debate raging within Evangelical circles regarding the total inerrancy of the Scriptures.[3]

I. THE INERRANCY DEBATE

The recent and explosive evaluation of the left-wing Evangelical capitulation to limited errancy by Harold Lindsell has raised strong objections to the drift away from inerrancy by many whose historical roots go back to the birth of Fundamentalism.[4] In commenting on this drift within Evangelicalism from another perspective, Richard Quebedeaux observes that the old concepts of infallibility and inerrancy are being reinterpreted to the point that a number of Evangelical scholars are saying that the *teaching* of scripture, rather than the text, is without error.[5] Some have gone so far as to recognize and even categorize the marks of cultural conditioning on Scripture.[6] It is the latter issue which has such strong implication in relation to the use of scripture in counseling.

[2] Young, *Thy Word is Truth*, 30, states: "If the Bible is not a trustworthy witness of its own character, we have no assurance that our Christian faith is founded upon Truth." On p. 191 he adds: "It is equally true that if we reject this foundational presupposition of Christianity, we shall arrive at results which are hostile to supernatural Christianity. If one begins with the presuppositions of unbelief, he will end with unbelief's conclusion."

[3] For departures from the inerrancy position, see D. M. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), and J. Rogers, ed., *Biblical Authority* (Waco: Word Books, 1977). The latter is an attempted response to Lindsell. G. T. Sheppard of Union Theological Seminary states, however: "Despite all of (David) Hubbard's argument to the contrary," there is in practice little distinction between his brand of "evangelical" and "neoorthodox": in "Biblical Hermeneutics: The Academic Language of Evangelical Identity," *USQR* 32 (1977) 91.

[4] This argument is also developed by Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 17–40. He raises strong objections to the drift away from inerrancy by left-wing Evangelicals, noting that "Fundamentalists and Evangelicals (both of whom have been traditionally committed to an infallible or inerrant Scripture) have been long noted for their propagation and defense of an infallible Bible" (p. 20).

[5] R. Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) 22; and *The Worldly Evangelicals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978) 84. He describes at length the willingness of left-wing Evangelicals to reexamine the whole issue of the inspiration of the Bible.

[6] This can be seen readily in the contemporary approaches to cultural hermeneutics which hold that Pannenberg has really not successfully answered Lessing and Troeltsch. Cf. F. E. Deist, "The Bible--The Word of God," in W. S. Vorster, ed., *Scripture and the Use of Scripture* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1979) 41–70; H. Albert, "Theorie, Verstehen und Geschichte," *Zeitschrift für allgemeine Wissenschafstheorie* 1 (1970) 3–23; V. Meja, "The Sociology of Knowledge and the Critique of Ideology," *Cultural Hermeneutics* 3 (1975) 57–68.

In current European theology we are told that truth is "near at hand in the Bible and yet will remain relatively hidden to us."[7] The Bible is "inspired" only in that in its human story we experience the Word of God as God, in a paradoxical manner, "speaks" to us through this volume of human writings.[8] Thus, the ultimate issue of the truth of Scripture rests upon the subjective experience of the believer. The "Word of God" within the Bible becomes a "canon within a canon" and eventually contemporary theologians become reluctant to define *what* biblical content is in fact the "Word of God."[9] This leaves the biblical counselor with no absolute standard by which to minister God's truth to people. Thus, it is not surprising to notice that the word "Scripture" does not even appear in several recent works on "Christian Psychology."[10]

II. COUNSELING AND THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

Have you ever tried to sell or promote something in which you did not really believe? It is a miserable experience! The salesman who has no confidence in his product will reluctantly knock on your door, hoping no one will answer. The same is true of the pastor who has no real confidence in the Bible or his ability to apply its truth to the lives of his people. When the counselee calls for help, he will think up an excuse to avoid answering him, or slip out the side door of the study while his secretary stalls the distressed soul in the outer office.

While engaged in a revival crusade in a large metropolitan city a few years ago, a dejected pastor came to me after a service and said,

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[7] Even the so-called evangelical Dutch theologians Berkouwer, Kuitert, and Van Ruler are now clearly leaning in the same direction as Labuschagne. See Kuitert's *De Realiteit van het Geloof* (Kampen: 1968) 164ff.; and Labuschagne's *Wat zegt de Bijbel in Gods Naam?* (Gravenhage: 1977) 60–65. In each of these writers one readily observes to varying degrees an interesting mixture of rational objectivity and confessional pietism.

[8] Cf. the comments of K. Runia, "The Word of God and the Words of Scripture," *Vox Reformata* 11 (1968) 4–11; J. D. Watts, "The Historical Approach to the Bible: its Development," *RevExp* 71 (1974) 160–67; and F. E. Deist, *Heuristics, Hermeneutics and Authority in the Study of Scripture* (Port Elizabeth, R.S.A.: University of Port Elizabeth, 1979) 1–49.

[9] See the amusing critique by C. Villa-Vicencio in response to B. Engelbrecht's, "The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture" in Vorster, *Scripture*, 108–12, where he sarcastically states: "If we are not able to give some rational articulation to what we mean by "inspiration", "revelation" or "Word of God" within the Bible—then perhaps we ought to drop the concepts altogether . . . For after all, inspiration is possibly no more than a theological-cultural imposition on the scriptures."

[10] See M. A. Jeeves, *Psychology & Christianity: The View Both Ways* (Downers Grove, 1L: Inter-Varsity, 1976); R. L. Koteskey, *Psychology from a Christian Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980); M. J. Sall, *Faith, Psychology and Christian Maturity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.)

"It all seems so empty." "What does?" I asked. He went on to explain that he had visited someone in the hospital that day and after listening to the person's tale of trouble, he replied (holding up his Bible), "God has the answer." He felt like he was deceiving people, merely repeating an empty epithet or a corny cliche. "It just isn't enough," he muttered. "There must be something more I could have said."

"Of course," I responded, "there is much more that you could have said!" What was wrong? He believed the Bible, but he did not use it. "What concepts did you teach her? What verses did you give her? What principles did you develop from the Scripture that applied to her problem?" I asked. Why was he so dejected? Because he had failed as a minister and as a counselor. He lost confidence in his results because he had no method. That woman needed to be reminded of God's sovereignty over sickness and his desire to teach and comfort her during this time (cf. 2 Cor 1:3–7). She needed to see this time as a meaningful, though difficult, experience in her life.[11] She needed truth and he gave her half-truth. The effective Christian counselor cannot merely wave the Bible over people as if it were a magic wand. He must open it and explain and apply its truths to the soul in need.[12]

A. *Thy Word is Truth: Confidence in the Message*

In Harold Lindsell's important and controversial book, *The Battle for the Bible*, he raises the question of the trustworthiness of Scripture. "Is the Bible a reliable guide to religious knowledge?" he asks.[13] If it is, then the minister of God has every reason to hold tenaciously to its truths above the prevalent opinion of his contemporaries.[14] Nearly every major school of thought in philosophy

[11] Even the secular psychiatrist Victor Frankl warns that the counselor not ignore the meaningfulness of human suffering and tragic circumstances. He quotes Dubois as stating, "The only thing that makes us different from a veterinarian is the clientele." See *The Doctor and the Soul*, trans. R. Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) ix.–xxi.

[12] A recent statistical survey has shown that people seek a religious counselor because they are looking for spiritual help more than anything else. Cf. E. J. Pasavac and B. M. Hartung, "An Exploration into the Reasons People Choose a Pastoral Counselor Instead of Another Type of Psychotherapist," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 31 (1977) 23–31.

[13] See his defense of inerrant inspiration in *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 18–27.

[14] This position is strikingly presented by R. J. Rushdoony's analysis of the apologetic of Van Til in *By What Standard?* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1958) 19–64, where he applies the story of the emperor's clothes to the nakedness of compromising biblical truth with man's reason.

and psychology rejects the authority of the Bible.[15] Therefore, it is virtually impossible and epistemologically disastrous to attempt a merger between biblical truths and anti-biblical concepts. This is clearly evident among those who have attempted to integrate liberalism and orthodoxy in theology.[16]

The pastor as a Christian counselor stands in a unique position, having been equipped with a manual of instruction. All genuine biblical counseling presupposes the reliability of that book. Apart from the message of God's truth, Charles Ping is right when he refers to religious language as "meaningful nonsense."[17] The minister of that word is more than an integrator of psychology and religion; he is the interpreter and applicator of that word.[18] Therefore, all of his theological studies and their practical application rest upon his view of the Bible.

Edward J. Young raised the issue of the dependability of Scripture and related it to applied theology when he warned: "If, therefore, the Church today takes the wrong turning and finds herself in the land of despair and doubt, she has not harkened to the Guidebook, but has allowed herself to be deceived by signposts with which her enemy has tampered."[19]

[15]Cf. C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University, 1938) presents "phenomenology" as the absolute standard. "Speaking for instance of the motive of the virgin birth, psychology is only concerned with the fact that there is such an idea, but it is not concerned with the question of whether such an idea is true or false in any other sense" (p. 3). See also A. Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion Based on Psychology and History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957) 30–66, who rejects the validity of biblical revelation as a "psychological illusion."

[16]See the excellent discussion of Rowley's, Brunner's, and Niebuhr's approaches to Scripture in J. F. Walvoord, ed., *Inspiration and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 190–252. Carnell's statement is worth remembering: "Neo-Orthodoxy judges the Bible by dialectical insights; orthodoxy judges dialectical insights by the Bible." (p. 252).

[17]C. J. Ping, *Meaningful Nonsense* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966). He argues against all attempts to make "the language of faith" objectively meaningful. Thus, he puts all religious terminology into what Francis Schaeffer likes to call the "upper story" of verification (cf. *Escape From Reason* [Chicago: InterVarsity, 1968], chaps. 2–3).

[18]Cf. the early attempt at this by J. G. McKenzie (*Psychology, Psychotherapy and Evangelism* [New York: Macmillan, 1941]).

[19]E. J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 13–14. For other clear expositions of the doctrines of Scripture as related to inspiration, cf. N. B. Stonehouse and P. Woolley, eds., *The Infallible Word* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1946); C. F. H. Henry, ed., *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958); C. Van Til, *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture* (den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1967); C. H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971); J. W. Montgomery, ed., *God's Inerrant Word* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974).

John Warwick Montgomery has analyzed the modern preacher from the archetype of Rev. Eccles in John Updike's novel, *Rabbit, Run*, where the minister feels deeply the needs of frustrated modern man, but is totally incapable of meeting those needs because he has no authoritative word of judgment or grace to offer him.[20] Certainly such a biblically impoverished ecclesiastic has little real help to offer those with real problems. Thus, the ultimate origin of the erroneous idea that the pastor is not qualified to counsel has arisen from a theological lack of confidence in the power of Scripture. This leaves the so-called minister a victim of professional secular psychologists as his only course of help.[21] The pastor's escape from responsibility is: "See a psychiatrist." The psychiatrist's escape from responsibility is: "See a pharmacist."

The Bible itself claims to be a divine message from God. It is not "the" truth; it is truth! All truth may not be in the Bible, but all that is in the Bible is true. The Bible itself is the standard of what is in fact true.[22] Jesus himself prayed, "Sanctify them through thy word: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).[23] He proclaimed that his words were not his own, "but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24). The psalmist sang, "The words of the Lord are pure words as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps 12:6). The Apostle Paul wrote: ". . . but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess 2:13). That the Scriptures claim to be, and that Jesus Christ believed them to be, the infallible revelation of God is a matter beyond dispute.[24]

The Bible is indispensable in our knowledge of God and of his will. Young urged: "A return to the Bible is the greatest need of our day . . . unless the church is willing to hear the Word of God, she will soon cease to be the church of the living God."[25]

[20]See, "Biblical Inerrancy: What Is at Stake?" in *God's Inerrant Word*, 15. Montgomery's crisp analyses of contemporary theology gets beyond the theoretical to the practical and are most helpful.

[21]See the interesting comments of J. I. Packer in the Foreward to E. Hindson, ed., *Introduction to Puritan Theolgoy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 13; he refers to the confused pastor "who has no better remedy than to refer them to a psychiatrist!"

[22]Otherwise, the standard of truth is nothing more than a constantly varying tradition of men (e.g., cf. F. F. Bruce and E. G. Rupp, eds., *Holy Book and Holy Tradition* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968]).

[23]See discussion of Jesus' use of OT Scripture in R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1971), esp. chap. 5.

[24]Cf. Lindsell's quotation of Kirsopp Lake, who admits that the liberals have departed from the traditional view of the church, not the fundamentalists. "The Bible and the *coropus theologicum* of the church is on the fundamentalist side" (*Battle for the Bible*, 19). Even an honest liberal has to admit that the Bible clearly claims to be the Word of God.

[25]Young, *Thy Word is Truth*, 273.

B.   Thy Word Works: Confidence in Counseling

If the Bible is the inspired word of God, then it will prove to be so in that it fulfills its claims and promises. I once sat next to a young college student on a flight from Indianapolis to Detroit. We began talking about religion and the Bible. After listening to the claims of Scripture, he asked, "But how do you know for sure that the Bible is true?" I explained that if he took a course in chemistry and the textbook claimed that the mixture of two chemicals would produce a certain result, he could only prove that for certain by personal experimentation. "How could you know the book was correct?" I asked. "When I did what it said," he replied, "it would work." "That is exactly how you can know that the Bible is true," I announced. "When you do what it says, it works!"

The Bible, I further explained, tells me about a Person who can change my life by faith in him alone. When I did what the Book said, I experienced exactly what it claimed I would: the assurance of eternal life and the forgiveness of sin.

Not only does the Bible claim to prepare men for heaven but for life on earth as well. The significance of the Sermon on the Mount is that it is a spiritual message designed to equip man to live on earth. This is also emphasized in the well-known passage from Paul: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:16–17). The "man of God" in the context is the minister of God's word. He has been fully equipped by that word to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct the people of God. The Christian counselor must operate in the confidence that the Bible works because it is truth.

It is exactly in this regard that Jay Adams has challenged self-styled "Christian counseling" which wants the Bible as a "tack-on" to its ideas, but not as the sole foundation of its methodology. It is with complete confidence that God has designed the Scriptures to speak to the inner emotional and spiritual needs of man that this article has been prepared to apply a specific body of Scripture to those needs through the means of nouthetic counseling.

For Adams, the use of Scripture in counseling involves an interaction of five essential factors:[26]

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[26] J. Adams, *The Use of the Scriptures in Counseling* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1975) 17ff. This book represents his fullest explanation and defense of scriptural counseling. No wonder he quotes Mowrer's now famous quip: "Has evangelical religion sold its birthright for a mess of psychological pottage?" See *The Crisis in Psychology and Religion* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961) 60.

1. A biblical understanding of the counselee's problem, from . . .
2. A clear understanding of the Holy Spirit's *telos* in scriptural passages appropriate to both the problem and the solution, and . . .
3. A meeting of man's problem and God's full solution in counseling, according to . . .
4. The formulation of a biblical plan of action, leading toward . . .
5. Commitment to scriptural action by the counselee.

Nouthetic counseling requires a prior knowledge of Scripture on the part of the counselor. He must be "thoroughly furnished" in order to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct the counselee. It is the fear that the Bible does not have the answer to the problem that forces many pastoral couselors to abandon it in favor of some other approach. This practice must be stopped before the pastoral counselor finds himself adrift in a maelstrom of conflict and confusion.

Most non-Christian and non-biblical counseling errs on the very first point of Adams's scheme. It fails to understand the counselee's problem biblically and hence is able neither to diagnose it adequately nor to treat if effectively. The basic understanding of man is essential to one's personality theory and method of therapy. Thus, the use of Scripture in nouthetic counseling could just as easily be called "Bible therapy"!

As the counselor studies the principles of the Bible, the Holy Spirit is building a reserve bank of divine truth from which he may draw during the counseling process. The counselee also has the opportunity to learn from these truths himself as he studies and applies his "homework" assignment in Scripture.

Nouthetic counseling is really Christian or biblical counseling. Adams has emphasized the word "nouthetic" simply to distinguish a system of biblically oriented counseling in contrast to semi-secularized, quasi-christianized, so-called Christian counseling.[27] Nouthetic counseling takes seriously the biblical commands to "admonish," "teach," "exhort," "reprove," "correct," "instruct." The Greek word νουθήσις focuses upon confrontation of the client by the counselor, with the aim of bringing about repentant change of behavior. The fundamental

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[27]See his comments in *What About Nouthetic Counseling?* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976) 1–6. he notes, for example, that the term νουθησία is strictly Pauline, whereas the Johannine vocabulary is παρακλῆτος.

[28]This issue has been popularized by P. K. Jewett (*Man as Male and Female* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975]); L. Scanzoni and N. Hardesty (*All We're Meant To Be* [Waco: Word, 1975]); and V. Mollenkott, (*Women, Men, and the Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1977]). However, its methodology rests upon the neo-orthodox concept of cultural hermeneutics, i.e., the messages of the Bible were culturally-conditioned by the human experience and cultural reactions of the writers of scripture. For background, see K. Wolff, "Introduction to Fifty Years of 'Sociology of Knowledge'," *Cultural Hermeneutics* 3 (1975) 1–5.

purpose of nouthetic confrontation is to effect personality and character change by the power of the Holy Spirit using the inspired Word of God to speak through the counselor to the counselee. Nouthetic counseling is an applied confrontation with the inspired truths and principles of Scripture.

III. COUNSELING AND CULTURAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

Probably the most crucial issue of the inerrancy debate relating to the area of Christian counseling is the attempt of the so-called "Biblical Feminists" to discount the implications of scriptural statements regarding the male-female relationship as it is defined in the Bible.[28] Thus, the "Biblical feminists" encourage a hermeneutic of "deculturization," arguing that one cannot "absolutize the culture in which the Bible was written."[29] Hence, the "cultural contamination" of the biblical writers leaves their statements open to reinterpretation in light of a different culture which exists today. That which is judged to be culturally conditioned is then rejected as "not binding" on today's believer.[30]

A. Cultural Discrepancies

While Jewett affirms the "inspiration" of Scripture, he definitely allows for some discrepancy between God's eternal "Word" and the words of the biblical writers.[31] In wrestling with the apparent contradictions between what he views as the biblical view of women and St. Paul's emphasis upon female submission, Jewett concludes that Paul's human limitations dominate in the passages that teach female subordination.[32]

In her evaluation of their position Susan Foh states:

> To summarize, the biblical feminists see irreconcilable contradictions in the Bible's teaching on women. These contradictions are resolved by acknowledging that the Bible reflects human limitations. The culture in biblical times was patriarchal, and the men who wrote the Bible were inextricably influenced by their culture . . . Therefore, the biblical feminists reason, we must remove cultural elements from the Bible to recover God's truth; we must deculturize the Bible.[33]

[29]Mollenkott, Women, Men, and the Bible, 92.
[30]Scanzoni and Hardesty, All We're Meant to Be, 19.
[31]Jewett, Man as Male and Female, 133–35.
[32]Ibid., 135.
[33]See the excellent biblical evaluation of Susan Foh, Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 7. She has undoubtedly provided the most thorough biblical study of the feminist issue yet written. She rests her case upon a genuine appreciation of the inerrant statements of the Scripture.

Thus, the "Biblical Feminists" actually carry Barth's exposition of Eph 5:21–33 even further than he intended by advocating a total reversability of male/female roles.[34] The more liberal "Christian Feminists" go further yet, denying the legitimacy of any sexual identity and advocating a non-divine, fallible Christ.[35]

In the realm of Christian counseling, such an approach to the authority and meaning of Scripture becomes ludicrous. The Biblical statements may be flatly rejected as being propositional and may be reinterpreted solely in the light of one's contemporary culture. Thus, *culture*, not the Scripture, becomes the ultimate authority in one's life. However, a sound exegesis of biblical passages reveals just the opposite! The Scripture consistently speaks *against* the culture of its day.[36] Therefore, it is tragic to see the unwitting capitulation of writers such as Helen Beard who adopt Jewett's reasoning as an excuse for "elevating" women beyond the "limitations of culturally-conditioned" Scripture in order to free them for a more "positive ministry."[37]

An honest study of the Scripture would never raise such issues as marital role reversal or the ordination of women. These have arisen within certain Christian circles only because they are related to issues in the wider secular culture. The Church has always stood uniquely in her non-conformity to culture. She has had to place revelation over culture in order to determine God's sure word of direction in moral and ethical issues. Like the first-century church, we dare not base our Christian ethics upon a fallible contemporary culture but upon the unchanging principles of God's inerrant word.

B. Moral Discrepancies

The legality and non-legality of specific sexual acts is currently a very controversial topic. In every era there have been conservative people who held traditional beliefs about the dignity of the family. Based upon the heritage of the Judaeo-Christian ethic, they have believed that forms of sexual activity which violate the monogamous male/female relationship are injurious to the health of society and, therefore, should be declared unlawful.

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[34]See Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 83.

[35]See the extreme comments of Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973) 69–70.

[36]Jesus' statements about various Jewish customs alone are ample testimony (e.g., possessions, the religious establishment, marriage, divorce, sabbath observance, etc.).

[37]See H. Beard, *Women in Ministry Today* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1980) 127–55. She especially commends the ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman and Mother Teresa.

Whereas adultery is now looked upon by many as an "unfortunate disloyalty," it is called an act of *sin* in the Bible (1 Cor 6:18). Homosexuality is equally condemned in both the OT and NT (Deut 23:17; Rom 1:26–28). Incest was prohibited by the Law of Moses (Lev 20:11–17) and denounced by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor 5:1–5).

1. Biblical Ethics Vs. Natural Ethics

To biblically committed people the ultimate issue in ethics is that of revealed ethics as opposed to natural ethics. Thus, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews acknowledge a common ethic based upon theism (belief in God). The Judaeo-Christian theistic ethic finds its basis in the OT and NT scriptures. Cornelius Van Til clarifies this matter, stating: "What we mean is that the Old and the New Testaments together contain the special revelation of God to the sinner, without which we could have not true ethical interpretation of life at all."[38]

Likewise, the theist's view of the function of law is based upon the legal-ethical commands of God as revealed to the writers of Scripture. Russell Kirk notes that even Plato argued that the achievement of justice could not be gained by following nature (as some sophits had declared); rather, it could be found only by obeying the νόμος (law).[39] The question is, whose law? Are we to acknowledge the laws of God as revealed in Scripture or the general consensus of society?

The maintenance of any society depends upon the conscious holding to a enforcing of some form of law. The function of law is essential to any society's stability and perpetuity. Jewish and Christian concepts of law go back to the self-revelation of God to man. "Thou shalt not" is the basis of divine law from the opening chapters of the Bible. It is reinforced in the commands of Moses which governed every aspect of Jewish life and in the teachings of Jesus who urged his followers: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19–20). Thus, human consent to any matter is irrelevant if it does not bear the sanction of God's approval.

[38]Cornelius Van Til;, *Christian Theistic Ethics* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974) 15. Van Til discusses at length the epistomological presuppositions of theistic ethics arguing that the "objective" morality of the idealist is at the bottom as subjective as the "subjective" morality of the pragmatist!

[39]See the discussion of Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (La Salle: Open Courts, 1974) chap. 1. He traces the origin of all American ethical law to the concept of ultimate truth, without which, he argues, there can be no consistent legal system. Cf. also the excellent study of biblical ethics by John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964). He observes that the proper study of Christian ethics is not merely an empirical survey of Christian behavior but rather the delineation of an ethical manner of life based upon Biblical revelation.

2. "Christian" Homosexuality and the Bible

In both liberal and evangelical circles the issue of homosexuals demanding sanction by the church has become a volatile issue.[40] In some denominations, homosexuals have even demanded acceptance into ordination of the professional clergy.[41] Some have gone so far as to use the contextualization of culture as an argument for reinterpreting the Biblical statements about homosexuality as merely reflecting an overt heterosexual bias against homosexuals.[42] One author argues that Paul's restrictions regarding homosexuals in Romans 1 are based upon a pro-Roman (anti-Greek) cultural disposition and not the heart of a loving God.[43] Thus, apostolic "opinions" are neither applicable to nor infallible for today's society. Hudson argues:

1. Man did not fully understand or comprehend the "sexual nature" of man before or during the time of Paul's apostolic ministry.
2. Homosexuality was a forbidden practice of the Jews, and so traditionally held by Christians as well.
3. Prior to Paul's conversion he was a member of the Pharisees . . . which oriented his thinking about "right and wrong" practices for conduct.
4. Jesus did not speak on the subject of homosexuality.
5. Therefore, Paul was in *error* when he made culturally-conditioned statements about homosexuals without any clear revelation from God.[44]

The basis of this type of reasoning denies the legitimate inspiration of Scripture and the inerrancy of its statements on moral issues. The implications for Christian counseling are overwhelming. Since counseling involves the interpretation and application of the scriptures to moral and ethical issues, it is of vital importance that one's doctrine

[40]For surveys of the issue, see G. L. Bahnsen, *Homosexuality: A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978); R. F. Lovelace, *Homosexuality and the Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1978); T. La Haye, *The Unhappy Gays* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1978); P. Morris, *Shadow of Sodom* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1978); J. White, *Eros Defiled: the Christian and Sexual Sin* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1978).

[41]See the discussion of homosexuality and church polity in D. Williams, *The Bond that Breaks: Will Homosexuality Split the Church?* (Los Angeles: BIM, 1978).

[42]The most thorough representative of this approach is Billy Hudson, *Christian Homosexuality* (North Hollywood, CA: Now Library, 1975). He argues extensively that God is "gay," that Christianity and homosexuality are compatible," that homosexuality is a predetermined fate in life.

[43]See the statements of D. S. Baily, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, 1955), and J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1976) 95ff.

[44]Hudson, *Christian Homosexuality*, 166–67.

of inerrant inspiration form the basis of his approach to counseling. If the Bible is not really the Word of God, then propositional revelation is not binding upon the Church. Thus, every generation could subjectively interpret for itself what Biblical concepts it would accept as legitimate for its culture.

The Bible is the basis of all Christian ministry.[45] Its doctrines form the standard of conduct for the Church. With these as his foundation, the pastoral counselor must reprove, correct, and instruct (2 Tim 3:16). The time has come for an avalanche of biblical materials for use in counseling. It is time the pastor equipped with the inerrant Word of God began using it with confidence to the glory of God and the benefit of his congregation.

[45]On the biblical basis of the Christian counseling ministry, see L. Crabb. *Principles of Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); *Effective Biblical Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) 147–48; and W. O. Ward, *The Bible in Counseling* (Chicago: Moody, 1977) 22–24; J. Adams, "Counseling and Special Revelation," in *More Than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling*, 16–37; C. Narramore, "The Use of the Scripture in Counseling," in *The Psychology of Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973) 237–73; and to a lesser degree G. Collins, "The Church and Counseling," in *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Waco: Word, 1980) 13–21