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THE CHURCH AND ITS INDIVIDUAL
TEEN-AGERS

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

by

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of individuals. It seeks to coordinate the various activities of the church, to make the work of the young people a unified whole, and to make the work of the church a unified whole.

Since the church's work with individuals is not a new thing, the church, the development of psychology and particularly in recent years have opened a new and vital approach to this field of activity. The latest studies in the area of adolescent psychology have made possible a new approach to the work of the church with teenagers.

In view of these studies, unfortunately, a danger is revealed to the church. It is noted that often so-called "youth" literature and literature written by adult workers and their particular needs are not always reflected. Workers may be inclined to make use of their own experience in the handling and organizational phases of their work, when they fail to see individuals or work in their lives.

¹ *Handbook of Psychology in Education*, by *John W. Gardner*, McGraw-Hill, 1950, p. 24.

² *Handbook of Psychology in Education*, by *John W. Gardner*, McGraw-Hill, 1950, p. 24.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Does the Church Meet the Needs of All Its Teen-agers?

The church by its very nature must deal with individuals. It must bring its message of redemption in Jesus Christ to bear upon the hearts of individuals. It must strengthen its members and help them grow as individuals. And to meet the needs of its young people it must work with them as individuals.

Although the concern with individuals is not a new idea in the church, the great strides of psychology and psychiatry in recent years have created a new and vital interest in this field of activity. Excellent studies in the area of adolescent psychology have made contributions of great benefit to those who work with teen-agers.

In many of these studies, unfortunately, a finger is pointed at the church. It is stated that often so-called "normal" teen-agers are taken for granted by adult workers and their particular needs and problems neglected.¹ Pastors may be inclined to devote more of their time and energy to the homiletical and organizational phases of their work, when they fail to see individuals as ends in themselves.²

¹Rudolph M. Wittenberg, On Call for Youth (New York: Association Press, c.1955), p. x.

²Richard Henry Edwards, A Person-Minded Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1940), p. 134.

Organizations for young people are allowed to become semi-private clubs that are not concerned with attracting and welcoming the large numbers outside their own groups.³ At a time of serious religious disinterest among the nation's youth God is often given a place on the youth program's periphery.⁴ The programs are often characterized by a lack of purpose and challenge to young Christians.⁵

It is hardly a surprise that the church is faced with a lack of participation and the subsequent loss of its young people. In his study of the urban church Murray Leiffer describes the abandonment of the church school by the youngsters who pass the age of thirteen. He finds the cause in the lack of trained and experienced leaders--men in particular--and in the failure of the church to transfer the loyalty of its youth from the church school level to the church as a whole.⁶ August Hollingshead discovered a similar situation in the small midwestern town. He draws the conclusion that while all the protestant pastors were concerned with the loss of their young people, they failed to realize that their churches had not adapted their services to the needs of adolescents. In addition, the pastors by their own attitudes toward adolescent behavior had raised a barrier between themselves and their

³August B. Hollingshead, Elmtown's Youth (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., c.1949), p. 257.

⁴Clarice M. Bowman, Ways Youth Learn (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1952), p. 24.

⁵Ibid., p. 60.

⁶Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1949), pp. 105-106.

young people.⁷ The recently published findings of the Synodical Youth Survey indicate that there are such losses in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.⁸

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has been blessed with a large number of young people who are interested in their Christianity and in the youth programs of their respective congregations. The church as a whole has responded with an equally strong concern in its youth through the official synodical Board for Young People's Work. This board together with the International Walthier League is performing a fine task of providing materials and helps that are geared to the needs of the church's young people. And yet at some point in the procedure there is something missing. There seems to be a failure to apply the program to the needs of all teen-agers on the congregational level.

The problem may be summarized as follows: There appears to be a lack of follow-through with the Walthier League program in some congregations. A program is not provided to meet the needs of every teenager individually. Often there may be a lack of personal contact with adolescents during the most significant years of their development. Youth organizations in a congregation may exist as ends in themselves rather than as means to the goal of meeting individual needs and encouraging individual growth. The total youth program of a parish may be deficient in leadership, personnel, and adequate planning. The result is disinterest and non-participation on the part of a good many

⁷Hollingshead, op. cit., pp. 256-257.

⁸Alfred P. Klausler, "Youth Survey Report," The Lutheran Witness, LXXVI (February 26, 1957), 109.

young people in the church.

Objectives of the Thesis

This problem as it is outlined above could quite accurately describe the situation in many churches regarding their adult members as well as their teen-agers. There are inactive members along the fringe of most parishes that would benefit from greater individual attention. For the purpose of this study, however, the field has been limited to the teen-age membership of high school age. It is the writer's opinion that the need is more acute in the adolescent area and that the proper solution in these critical years will provide a solution for the church as a whole over the years.

The thesis covers four fields as they are brought together in the area of youth work. An initial study was undertaken of sources in adolescent psychology to determine the problems and needs that must be met in individual teen-agers. Further research was devoted to the field of personal counseling with special concern for sources in counseling youth. And finally a short survey was made of sources in group work and administration.

The objectives of the thesis are to discover the needs of the teen-ager that the church must meet and to find a practical program that will maintain contact with each teen-ager to deal with those needs. Of chief concern is the part that the pastor must play in the program of counseling individuals. A large chapter, therefore, is devoted to this task of the pastor. The area of group work with youngsters would furnish the problem for a thesis in itself, so of necessity this chapter covers the

aspects of group work only insofar as they are helpful to the individual teen-ager. The study of administration in youth work is also brief, its purpose being primarily concerned with the enlisting of lay counselors and coordination of the total program.

There is a general feeling that the youth worker should be a professional, that he should have a certain amount of training and experience. This is a natural feeling, and it is one which should be encouraged. However, it is not necessary that the youth worker should be a professional in the sense in which the word is used in the case of a lawyer or a doctor. The youth worker should be a person who is interested in the welfare of the young people and who is willing to devote his time and energy to their help. He should be a person who is able to understand the young people and who is able to help them in their own way. He should be a person who is able to work with the young people and who is able to help them in their own way. He should be a person who is able to work with the young people and who is able to help them in their own way.

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Paul T. Johnson, *Psychology of Youth*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1927, p. 112.

John W. Johnson, *Psychology of Youth*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1927, p. 112.

Joseph W. Johnson, *Psychology of Youth*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1927, p. 112.

CHAPTER II

PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF TODAY'S TEEN-AGER

All Teen-agers Have Problems

Human nature is the source of problems. Paul Johnson attributes this to the freedom of choice and decision that individuals may exercise; and, he concludes, under such conditions it is inevitable that persons have problems.¹ It is here that this study must begin. To assume that anyone, church members and Christians included, is not troubled with problems is a false assumption.² To assume that seemingly normal teen-agers have no difficulties or conflicts is a mistake. Yet that assumption itself is a problem in youth work. When adults neglect the majority of youngsters who keep themselves out of trouble and when they take their normal behavior for granted, they may encourage them to develop symptoms that will bring them the attention they need. Such an attitude neglects the responsibility of adults toward every teen-ager for the understanding and help he needs in his everyday problems of growing up.³

Youth's problems are intensified in today's world. Anxiety is the order of the day in a world situation that threatens to break out into

¹Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1953), p. 15.

²John Sutherland Bonnell, Psychology for Pastor and People (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1940), p. 102.

³Rudolph M. Wittenberg, On Call for Youth (New York: Association Press, c.1955), p. x.

global atomic warfare. One writer characterizes the disturbing signs of the times as follows:

1. Disruption of family units; increased transiency; increased number of divorces; lowered moral idealism.
2. Interruption of youth's usual patterns for life-planning; difficulties as to education, vocation, marriage, and finding a place to live.
3. Economic contradictions; abnormal boom times with money cheap, and purchasing "hogwild"; then unemployment, fear of inflation and depression; growing popularity of get-money-the-easy-way ideas; jackpots, contests, gambling.
4. Accentuation of the sex problem: lowered sex standards; elimination of the external restraints of fear for social disease and fear of pregnancy; returning military personnel with lowered standards; lack of home training; unrestraint in high school crowds.
5. Frustrations, particularly among boys: getting "steamed up for great adventure" but facing ordinariness; hoodlumism on upsurge.
6. Increase in racial and social tensions.
7. Confusion as to ethical standards.
8. Drink rampant--even making inroads among naves on church rolls; wide-spread and psychologically subtle propaganda encouraging drinking; frank promotion through mass communications. Increasing use of narcotics.
9. The world continuously apprehensive over the possible outbreak of its worst war.⁴

This is the normal situation as far as today's young people are concerned, for it is the only world which they have known.⁵

⁴Clarice M. Bowman, Ways Youth Learn (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1952), p. 15.

⁵Ibid., p. 14.

Problems of the Growing Personality

As the average teen-ager reaches adolescence he finds himself in a strange situation, an artificial waiting period between childhood and adulthood. Physically he is entering maturity--psychologically he is held in a "prolonged period of infancy."⁶ The older adolescent in particular is placed into this quandary. His society no longer regards him as a child, but it does not give him the full adult status and function of which he is capable.⁷

Paul Landis makes this distinction between the individual and the person: the individual is "the human being as he is by mental endowment and mental acquisitions"; the person is the individual with "the added attribute of status, that is, the social recognition that has been given him by the groups of which he is a part."⁸ Through the years of adolescence the young individual is searching for his place in a world that bewilders him. Already in his twelfth year he will have reached an advanced stage in the development of the personal goals, ideals, and motivations which will largely determine his reactions to life.⁹ His heredity has long been established and the factors of his early

⁶ Paul H. Landis, Adolescence and Youth (2nd edition; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, c.1952), p. 21.

⁷ August B. Hollingshead, Elmton's Youth (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., c.1949), p. 6.

⁸ Landis, op. cit., p. 11.

⁹ Ibid.

environment have all had their influence on his growing personality.¹⁰ He is now in a stage of transition as he struggles to achieve independence and confidence in himself as a person. And in this search and struggle there arise problems as he finds he is unable to stand by himself successfully. He feels inadequate and insecure.¹¹

Many of these problems center in the matter of morality and conscience. He is becoming aware of differences and contradictions in the moral standards of the world. The youngster discovers that the norm set by his family in the years of his childhood is "old-fashioned" compared with the moral code outside his home.¹² His tender conscience is easily disturbed when he is confronted by situations of moral conflict. Today's teen-ager is growing up in an age that challenges the traditional views of right and wrong and is more concerned with the logical reasons for ethical standards than the law of God. It is an age when parents are generally ineffective in providing the strong moral backbone their children need so badly. In Landis' opinion the average youngster today has faced "more moral alternatives by the time he is twenty years of age than his grandparents faced in a lifetime."¹³ He mentions three underlying influences that create problems in the area of moral decision:

1. Movement is so prominent in our society that most young folk leave the neighborhood and family group early in life.

¹⁰William Samuel Sadler, Piloting Modern Youth (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, c.1931), p. 5.

¹¹Clarence Peters, "The Pastor as Counselor of Youth," published by Concordia Seminary Mimeo, St. Louis (mimeographed), p. 4.

¹²Landis, op. cit., p. 14.

¹³Ibid., p. 141.

2. Change has been so rapid in all phases of experience that well-defined moral standards no longer exist; parents are often so uncertain in matters of the rightness and wrongness of specific acts that their teaching of moral precepts often either is neglected or lacks positiveness.
3. In our society many adolescent youth groups exist in which the codes of the new generation hold sway, there being relatively little chaperonage by adult codes.¹⁴

To add to his confusion the legal system of his society is inconsistent. He is not legally mature as a voter until the age of twenty-one. He may drive an automobile as early as fifteen or sixteen, but in most states he is not sufficiently mature to purchase or serve alcoholic beverages until he is twenty-one. He may be considered mature enough for employment at sixteen, but he cannot marry without his parents' consent until he reaches twenty-one, or eighteen in the case of girls. These restrictions may create serious difficulties for him as he develops a sense of responsibility and desires independence.¹⁵

Problems with Sexual Maturity

It is an aggravating situation for the teen-ager that he is mature in sexual capacity long before society is willing to permit his marriage. He is faced with the dilemma of repressing his desires or violating a strict moral standard. For many young people the dilemma may be solved in a "clandestine complex" which enables them to release sexual tension privately while maintaining their good reputation publicly.¹⁶ This, of course, adds to the feeling of guilt which most adolescents associate

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 141-142.

¹⁵Hollingshead, op. cit., pp. 150-151.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 144.

with sex, and it makes difficult their adjustment to a more mature outlook on the sexual functions in life. Young people as a rule have an inadequate knowledge of sex, especially in its Christian interpretation, and many are troubled with mixed feelings. The mystery and taboo that the American culture makes of sex increases guilt associations in adolescent minds.¹⁷ Most of the sex education the teen-agers receive comes out of their peer groups rather than from adults.¹⁸ This adds to the impression that sex is a secret and wicked pleasure.¹⁹ Some adolescents think that at best sex is only tolerated by God.²⁰ The stimulus of a sex-conscious society increases their doubts and confusion. Lovemaking is a popular national pastime.²¹ Billboards, entertainment, and popular literature take lightly what youngsters know is a violation of moral standards. In some cases sex and its associated guilt feelings may become an uncontrollable force that teen-agers grow to fear. The magnetic attraction of guilt and fear may become fixations in young minds. It may lead to morbid imaginings, self-condemnation, and may be an impetus to masturbation and fornication.²²

¹⁷William E. Hulme, How to Start Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1955), p. 47.

¹⁸Howard Bell, Youth Tell Their Story (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, c.1930), pp. 40-42.

¹⁹Paul Edward Krotzmann, The Problems of Adolescence and Youth (Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1925), p. 47.

²⁰Hulme, op. cit., p. 47.

²¹Landis, op. cit., p. 297.

²²Hulme, op. cit., p. 48.

Problems in Social Adjustments

A serious difficulty arises for the adolescent in the matter of social relationships. As he strives to find his place and status in society, he may find that his place has already been selected for him. Though it is true that barriers of social distinction are not insurmountable in this democratic society, such distinctions do exist and exert strong influences upon the developing personality. In small towns and rural areas definitions of social class are especially significant. August Hollingshead's sociological study of the youth in a typical mid-western town demonstrates the social situation.²³ Almost every person he interviewed acknowledged the organization of the town's social relations around cliques and classes.²⁴ He found that the social behavior of adolescents appeared to be related to the positions their families held in the community's social structure.²⁵ The major foundations for these social distinctions are economic status and ethnic origin. He classified five separate social levels on the basis of wealth. He encountered popular stereotypes for the descendants of the Irish, German, Norwegian, and Polish immigrants who entered the town after it had been established by the original "Americans."²⁶

²³August B. Hollingshead, Midtown's Youth (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., c.1949).

²⁴Ibid., p. 82.

²⁵Ibid., p. 9.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 62, 63, 79.

These distinctions create problems of many kinds for the "Elmtown" adolescent. To begin, Hollingshead points out that the existence of such a class system is always denied officially. Such hypocrisy in adults is confusing to youngsters, to say the least. By the time a child is seven years old, he understands that some are rich and others poor. He knows that his family can or cannot afford certain stipulated items. High prestige is enjoyed by the rich, low prestige by the poor.²⁷ Howard Bell describes what he calls "the cycle of economic determinism" and its depressing effect upon young people who find themselves frozen in their social level.²⁸ There are problems for the upper-class adolescents as well. They may be misled by the impression that personal worth is associated with wealth and consider themselves superior. They tend to become anti-social to those of lower classes.²⁹ The teen-agers often carry these class distinctions into the teen-age world that centers around the high school. The selection of a curriculum may be based on the prestige of the college preparatory course or the necessity of a commercial course. Discipline and grades may be influenced by social pressure. Prizes and scholarships may be granted according to parental importance. Extra-curricular dances and parties and even athletic participation may be affected by social distinction. They may be carried over into community or church youth organizations.³⁰

²⁷Ibid., pp. 155-156.

²⁸Bell, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁹Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 94.

³⁰Hollingshead, op. cit., pp. 168-197.

The Teen-ager in His Peer Society

One of the most important social relationships for the adolescent is the peer group with which he is associated. Rudolph Wittenberg speaks of three groups to which he may belong. There is first the "Crowd," the huge mass of youngsters in the local high school and the community in general. To be "in" in this group is of primary importance. He must stay on the right side of this group norm as adults must obey the rule of public opinion. Associated with this group connection are the many fads, dress styles, and slang expressions that are common adolescent phenomena. Secondly, there is his "Interest Group," the scout troop or youth organization in which he shares common activities. The third group is his "Intimate Friendship" circle.³¹

The adolescent needs these groups. They are an essential stabilizing force and security for him as he moves toward personality growth and independence. In them he is able to find acceptance as a person. However, they may be a source of grief to him. To be in or outside the desired group makes a difference. To be first or last among his peers makes a difference not only in status but in his conception of himself.³² To be what one writer calls "fringers" or "isolates" is very damaging to teen-age morale.³³

Gradually the patterns of the smaller groups move from segregated

³¹Wittenberg, op. cit., pp. 203-212.

³²Landis, op. cit., p. 12.

³³Bowman, op. cit., p. 60.

settings to a joining of the sexes and later a dating relationship. Peer groups lose their importance as social relationships enter the realm of engagement and married adulthood. Here the teen-ager may find more problems as he grows toward maturity. Among sixteen year olds dating is the accepted procedure for group activity and acceptance, and the boy or girl without a date is left out.³⁴ Dating brings problems with parents. A teen-ager's financial position may determine the limit of his dating ability. If he dates the wrong person, he may run the risk of social disapproval. The questions of "going steady," petting, self-control, and choosing a life's partner call for very significant decisions and may lead to mental conflict.³⁵

Problems in Family Relationships

A basic problem situation in the family relationship of today's teen-ager is that the home is no longer the stabilizing influence it once was. For a good many adolescents it is hardly more than a boarding house--a place to sleep and eat between various outside activities.³⁶ The parents, too, are caught up in the whirl of outside interests. Fathers bound up in their occupations find it difficult to devote time to their youngsters. The unhappy result may be a breakdown of confidence and communication. Tensions between husband and wife are not uncommon in an unstable home, and young lives are affected. Nothing is

³⁴Hollingshead, op. cit., p. 225.

³⁵Judson T. Landis and Mary G. Landis, Building a Successful Marriage (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., c.1948), p. 67.

³⁶Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 83.

more harmful to a child's morale than the divorce of its parents.³⁷

The situation is particularly acute in the matter of discipline for the growing adolescent. The teen-ager, of course, is certain that he is able to exercise mature judgment. His parents are concerned with his protection.³⁸ The difficult decision parents must make is how much freedom to permit.³⁹ From the point of view of the teen-ager, over-restraint leads to resentment and leniency to a loss of respect for the parents. The rebuke of his parents may bring the adolescent to feel that they dislike him. Hulme reports that over one third of those with whom he counseled came to him with problems that included resentment against one or both parents.⁴⁰ The teen-ager may not realize that his parents have their problems, too, especially in the difficult role of modern parenthood. Many parents do not understand what the responsibility toward their children involves. In delegating their responsibility to the schools, churches, and youth agencies they deny their children a basic life foundation.⁴¹

Problems in the High School

"Without a doubt," says Paul Landis, the high school is "the most important single social institution." It is in the high school situation

³⁷Bonnell, op. cit., pp. 126-129.

³⁸Hollingshead, op. cit., p. 152.

³⁹Landis, Adolescence and Youth, p. 155.

⁴⁰Hulme, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴¹Landis, Adolescence and Youth, pp. 152-153.

that the average teen-ager must learn to adjust himself with his society. There he begins to attempt answers to the problems of life and to think more intently about his future. He develops critical judgment and begins to employ the vocabulary of the adult world. The opinion is advanced by educators that the adolescent must learn adjustment to life and group welfare in the high school, or it will not be done.⁴²

In the high school the teen-ager is faced with special problems of an academic nature. He must study and learn to conform to social regulations. He may have conflicts over teachers, resenting the teacher who shouts his disapproval or the impersonal educator who barely acknowledges his existence.⁴³ The emphasis on competition in athletics or scholarship is painful when he loses in the teen-age world.⁴⁴ To be known as "unpopular" is disastrous.⁴⁵

Difficulties with Future Goals

The problems of personal adjustment often arise as the result of indecision. In choosing his goal for life today's teen-ager is faced with a wide range of choices, and he has difficulty in making a decision. In a democratic society no youth knows what he was born to be. The

⁴²Ibid., pp. 373-374.

⁴³Robert A. Cook, It's Tough to Be a Teen-ager (Wheaton, Ill.: Miracles Unlimited, c.1955), p. 40.

⁴⁴Paul H. Landis, Understanding Teen-agers (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, c.1955), p. 11.

⁴⁵Cook, op. cit., p. 12.

challenge of greatness is offered him, if he is willing to exert the effort.⁴⁶

The high school graduation is the "parting of the ways" for today's adolescent. His choice of college or a job will have a great significance in his future status as an individual.⁴⁷ College training is increasingly a necessity in the world of business and industry. Already many vocational opportunities are limited to those who hold college degrees.⁴⁸

Many young people do not know what they want as a goal for the future and for that reason decide prematurely against higher education. Others attend college with the hope that there they will find a goal. Some who desire to attend college cannot afford it. Motivations may vary in selecting goals for life. A teen-ager may be carried along by the desire to better himself. Another may dream of helping humanity. Some may be seeking an easy way to make a living. The pressure of parents and adults may force a young man or woman into an occupation he or she would not choose for himself. Girls may be torn between goals of marriage or a career.⁴⁹

The adolescent's goals for life may be influenced strongly by his attitude toward money. Because it is the only medium of exchange and the means for obtaining desired objects, it tends to become an end

⁴⁶Landis, Adolescence and Youth, p. 63.

⁴⁷Hollingshead, op. cit., p. 156.

⁴⁸Landis, Adolescence and Youth, p. 333.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 312-315.

rather than a means. The accumulation of wealth may become a life goal in itself.⁵⁰

The armed services play an important role in shaping the lives of young men. With few exceptions they are required to undergo military training. This interruption of life-planning is disturbing. A young man's moral fiber may be weakened by his contacts in strange situations. The depersonalized effect of life without identity in the large mass of men may cause problems of social adjustment.⁵¹

The decisions involved in selecting a life's partner may give rise to further mental conflict. Early marriages for teen-age couples who are not emotionally prepared for married life may lead to special problems.⁵²

Spiritual Problems

In the opinion of psychologist Paul Landis spiritual conflicts are no longer of major importance in adolescent development.⁵³ While this might be the case for American youth in general where there is little real concern for religious issues, the young people who have been trained in Lutheran confirmation classes and parochial schools will have problems of this nature. The picture the psychologists give is important,

⁵⁰ Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Our Young Folks (New York: Harcourt Brace, c.1943), p. 257.

⁵¹ Richard Henry Edwards, A Person-Minded Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1940), p. 23.

⁵² Landis, Adolescence and Youth, pp. 280, 290.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 175.

however, for it shows the spiritual tone of the adolescent world in which the Lutheran teen-ager lives.

Hollingshead states that his "Elmtown" study gradually led him to the impression that to adolescents religion is very much like "wearing clothes or taking a bath." It is something one has to have or do in order to be acceptable in society. Those Hollingshead interviewed seemed to believe that Christianity is the true and only religion, although they rarely understood the distinction between a religion and a denomination. To the vast majority Christianity consists of an amorphous body of beliefs which are bound up in a number of awesome terms: "God," "Jesus," "Christ," "Sin," "Salvation," "Heaven," and "Hell." It is given form in a book that contains all sacred truth. Christianity is built on the Bible and Sunday is "the Lord's Day." One can believe the Bible without ever having read it or understood it--just as long as he knows about the Bible it makes him religious. A person ought to be religious, they said, although "religious" had no specific meaning for them except a vague belief in God confirmed by the assertion that they are Christians or belong to a church. To be labeled a church member is important, for it tells others where one belongs in the complex of denominations. One does not have to worship to be a member. Hollingshead draws the conclusion that religious ideas are "largely negative elements in the life organization of these adolescents."⁵¹

Murray Ross drew the same conclusion from a religious survey of Young Men's Christian Association members. Of these young men less than

⁵¹Hollingshead, op. cit., pp. 244-245.

twenty percent stated that religion was meaningful as a guide for their everyday lives. Ross gives his opinion that if these young men may be said to be in any way representative of the general American population, the foundation of religious ideals is crumbling.⁵⁵

In this age of secularism, inward and vital Christianity is playing an increasingly minor role. While formal religion is on the increase people generally are living as if this life were all and religion only a custom of the past. It is an age of preoccupation with money and the things it can buy. The methods and products of science have outstripped all other truths.⁵⁶ As far as the religious influence of the home is concerned,

today there is about as great likelihood that the adolescent will have been reared under a system which questions all religious creeds and religious beliefs as there is that he will have been reared under a system of religious control.⁵⁷

These statements indicate that there is an enormous deficiency in the life of today's teen-ager, even though he may not be troubled with religious issues. Without God, says Landis, the adolescent lacks the one fixed point from which he must begin so that he can build his life with confidence.⁵⁸ It is strange that Landis, a psychologist who does not give God much credit, should make this statement of the need for God. It would seem to indicate that even such men outside the church

⁵⁵Murray G. Ross, Religious Beliefs of Youth (New York: Association Press, c.1950), p. 119.

⁵⁶Bowman, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵⁷Landis, Adolescence and Youth, p. 173.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 174.

acknowledge the gap which only the church is able to fill.

The teen-ager within the church is beset with his problems, too. He has conflicts as he comes into contact with skepticism in the world of adults. He may have mental difficulties in accepting the Bible with his newly acquired analytical thinking.⁵⁹ Behavior problems may arise as he finds his dogmatic beliefs challenged and the basis of his self-discipline destroyed.⁶⁰ He may not know what the church stands for. To many adolescents it seems to be bound up chiefly with the trivial and inconsequential and not concerned with the great fundamental truths and challenges.⁶¹ The goals of his church may seem to be built around churchmanship rather than Christianity.⁶² His pastor may be more concerned with admonishing problem youngsters than helping them with their problems. And if his church opposes what all his peers are doing, he will find it hard not to follow them.⁶³

Today's Teen-ager Has Needs that the Church Must Fill

Thus far the study has shown today's teen-ager as he is, too old for childhood and not yet an adult. He lives in a strange world of his own with his own cults and practices. Often he shows a wistful desire

⁵⁹ Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 98.

⁶⁰ Landis, Adolescence and Youth, p. 164.

⁶¹ Alfred B. Stearns, The Challenge of Youth (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1923), p. 78.

⁶² Landis, Adolescence and Youth, p. 179.

⁶³ Hollingshead, op. cit., p. 260.

to be accepted by adults--yet just as often he makes such acceptance difficult by his behavior. He often tries to conceal his real feelings and isolate his world from adult intrusion.⁶⁴ But although he may look normal and untroubled, he usually has a weight on his mind. It may be a feeling of inadequacy or guilt or insecurity. It may be simply loneliness or confusion. But no matter who he is he will be troubled by one or more of these inner disturbances during his adolescence. V. R. Edman, President of Wheaton College, summarizes the adolescent's situation in his introduction to It's Tough to be a Teen-ager:

Teen-agers do not understand themselves, and they are sure no one comprehends or really cares for them. They are not little children nor are they mature men and women. They are bewildered by the inner conflicts and complications that arise out of the physical and emotional changes that are transpiring within themselves. They are in the process of being detached from home with a view to establishing in time a home of their own. In the interval of teen-age years they are inclined to be more concerned about belonging to the gang, or conforming to the pattern of what "everybody else does," than of remaining a part of home, Sunday School and church. It is tough to be a teen-ager. . . .⁶⁵

He needs understanding as he faces his adolescent world. He needs to "belong"--to have acceptance among his peers and recognition of his status as a person in his own right. He needs love and affection. He needs friendship in a casual world that is not conducive to firm friendships. The church can supply these needs.

He needs help in forming his goals and values for life. He needs security--a stabilizing foundation as he gropes toward independence in the world. The church can supply that.

⁶⁴Downman, op. cit., p. 47.

⁶⁵Cook, op. cit., p. 9.

Above all he needs God. He needs an unshakable faith in a God who cares, a God to whom he can turn. He needs the God who has forgiven his sin on a skull-shaped hill. The church can supply that need. And if the church will concentrate its efforts on its youth to satisfy their life needs, it can become indispensable for its teen-age members.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Nevin C. Harner, Youth Work in the Church (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, c.1947), p. 27.

CHAPTER III

PASTORAL COUNSELING FOR TODAY'S TEEN-AGER

The Pastor as Counselor of Youth

The purpose of pastoral counseling is, of course, to meet the needs of individuals. Like Jesus Himself the pastor will never want to lose sight of the fact that in each problem situation the individual is the key.¹ The previous chapter established the situation with which the pastor will have to deal in his work with young people--the fact that every teen-age member of his parish is likely to have doubts and conflicts of one kind or another. Therefore, the pastor who is concerned with his youth will want to provide for them individually. He will want to be the sympathetic and understanding friend they need so urgently.

Certain characteristics and personality traits are quite essential for the pastoral counselor. He himself must have a healthy mind and moral stature.² His should be a well-adjusted personality. His own faith in his Savior must be the kind that inspires others. He should have a thorough understanding of the art of counseling.³ He must have a good insight into his own problems, and for those problems he should have experienced the power of rebirth and release from their destructive

¹John Sutherland Bormell, Psychology for Pastor and People (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1946), p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 41

³Ibid., p. 172.

emotions.⁴ Furthermore, he should know himself well enough in his own weakness and sin so that he will not fall to the temptation of moral pride when others reveal particularly revolting sins of the flesh.⁵

His attitude toward others must be outgoing, showing them a friendship that is sincere. He should know how to love people for what they are and accept them as they are without harsh judgment.⁶ Sympathy and understanding are necessary elements in his attitude.⁷ His bearing is always one of hope and confidence as he works with individuals, for he himself has experienced the power of the spiritual resources he has to offer.⁸

He must have a profound respect for other people and a concern for their interests. To be a successful counselor with teen-agers his interest in them should be great enough that he is willing to discuss problems in Algebra and Latin grammar with them as well as matters of spiritual importance.⁹

The pastor's role as counselor is bound up in the meaning of the word "pastor." Paul Johnson finds in the etymology of the word his

⁴William E. Hulme, How to Start Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1955), pp. 16-17.

⁵Bonnell, op. cit., p. 46.

⁶Russel L. Dicks, Pastoral Work and Personal Counseling (Revised edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1949), p. 5.

⁷Bonnell, op. cit., p. 42.

⁸Ibid., p. 49.

⁹Paul Edward Kretzmann, The Problems of Adolescence and Youth (Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1925), p. 40.

definition of a pastor as "a religious leader who understands and individually cares for his people, to whom they return for the health of their souls."¹⁰ Richard Edwards describes the apparently opposite characteristics which must be united in the pastoral counselor:

1. Approachability and reserve, so as to be an open-hearted, wide-eared listener, but also a deep well, not a babbling brook.
2. Objectivity and at the same time subjectivity, in the sense of a full-flowing life of his own.
3. Disinterestedness [sic] and concern; the counselor's focus of interest is in the other person; and his chief concern, therefore, is that help be given rather than that he be the one to give it. . . .
4. Sensitivity and robustness.
5. Insight and accurate observation.
6. Patience and resourceful action.
7. A knowledge of life as it is and a sense of the sacredness of personality.¹¹

His role as counselor with his teen-agers is challenging and it must be recognized for what it is. Rudolph Wittenberg speaks of the importance of distinguishing this counseling role from other adult roles in relationships with young people. It is decidedly different from the role of parent, teacher, or supervisor. Confusions and misunderstandings may arise if the pastor does not follow the role determined by the function in each particular instance.¹²

¹⁰Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1953), p. 21.

¹¹Richard Henry Edwards, A Person-Minded Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1940), p. 141.

¹²Rudolph M. Wittenberg, On Call for Youth (New York: Association Press, c.1955), pp. 150-151.

As counselor the pastor's role must begin by accepting the counselee before him as he is. He must use every means at his disposal to let the person know that his attitude toward him will not change nor his affection diminish as a result of a confession of sins. The counselor must retain his respect for the counselee.¹³

The pastoral counselor should be aware of his own motivations in youth work. He must be mature enough to understand his own self-interest and the satisfactions he receives in helping teen-agers.¹⁴ He must realize his limitations in the art of counseling.¹⁵ He should know where to turn with his own problems. Up to a certain degree his wife or a wise layman can be a good listener as he unloads his burdens. To another pastor--preferably one older and more experienced--he can go with deeper problems. It is very important that he counsels often with God in his private prayer and maintains a rich devotional life.¹⁶

For his work of counseling the pastor has resources that are for the most part beyond the reach of modern psychiatry. On his side are the spiritual forces that have changed lives for nineteen centuries. His concern is more than simply the release of emotional tension--his aim is to lead men and women into the more abundant life through Jesus Christ. It is in Christ's atonement that the individual finds power to unify his personality. In becoming reconciled to God through Christ his sense of

¹³Donnell, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁴Wittenberg, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁵C. Morris, Counseling with Young People (New York: Association Press, c.1954), p. 64.

¹⁶Hulme, op. cit., p. 111.

self-respect is raised. In the Gospel he can find strength for his efforts toward building a nobler character.¹⁷ The teen-ager who is insecure will find in Christianity the stability he needs, a purpose he can trust, and a foundation with which he can identify himself.¹⁸

The Person-centered Approach to Counseling

Personal counseling has been defined in many ways. Johnson describes it as "a responsive relationship arising from expressed need to work through difficulties by means of emotional understanding and growing responsibility."¹⁹ Seward Hiltner states that it is an activity rather than a profession, a process over a length of time in which the pastor helps a person to help himself under certain conditions.²⁰ The purpose of counseling is to understand persons in their life situations, to aid them in understanding themselves, and to help them organize themselves for their own fullest growth and usefulness.²¹ The responsibility is given to the counselee for his own growth, because personal growth is more important than any single problem.²²

Hiltner lists the following principles for a healthy counseling

¹⁷Bonnell, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁸Halme, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁹Johnson, op. cit., p. 73.

²⁰Seward Hiltner, Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1949), pp. 80, 95.

²¹Edwards, op. cit., p. 138.

²²Johnson, op. cit., p. 19.

situation:

1. The parishioner senses that something is wrong, and at least in a measure that the difficulty may be seen within himself.
2. Counseling proceeds by understanding, and not by agreement or disagreement.
3. Counseling is usually helping another person to help himself, not doing something for him.
4. Counseling involves clarification on ethical issues, but not coercion.
5. The counseling situation involves real respect for the parishioner, and does not proceed through use of a bag of tricks.
6. The situations that give occasion for counseling are viewed by the counselor, and eventually by the parishioner, not only as difficulties to be overcome but also as opportunities for growth and development.²³

The various approaches to counseling in use today are described by Hiltner with their advantages and disadvantages. The "social-adjustment view" holds to the theory that all maladjustments are the result of social failures. Therapy is applied to social inadequacy by helping the individual change his unsatisfactory life patterns. Its difficulty arises when a counselor acknowledges no other source of mental conflict. It tends to take a superficial view of human nature. The "inner-release view" had its beginning with Freud. This treatment proceeds through a search for subconscious drives and frustrations that are sources of problems. The well-known term "psychoanalysis" applies to this therapy that uncovers these repressed feelings within an individual and helps him find release. The "objective-ethical view" is concerned with denial

²³Hiltner, op. cit., pp. 20-25. Hiltner italicizes these statements.

of necessary personality needs. If in an individual's culture certain personality needs are denied him, the struggle to release and express them is understood in terms of the inevitable revolt of human nature against that which has denied the fulfillment of its basic needs. The "Christian-theological view" is in an advantageous position. This view understands the theological basis for principles of all the other views. The Christian counselor is able to make use of the good features of the other views without becoming committed to their disadvantages. He can employ the significant aspects of social conflict as an aid in understanding an individual's problem. Not only can he listen to a person as he releases his inner problems and guilts in confession, but he can also apply the healing message of forgiveness in Christ. He can give that person the power of the Holy Spirit in remaking his life.²⁴

The Non-directive Method in Counseling

To understand the non-directive method it is helpful to compare it with another by contrast, the directive method. As a directive counselor the pastor assumes responsibility for the situation and actively guides a person to the solution of his problem. In a non-directive situation the pastor assists the counselee to a realization of his own responsibility by clarifying the issues and allowing him to arrive at the solution by himself, and in that sense the method is "non-directive." The role of the pastor, however, is not so passive as the term would imply, for it requires his guidance through intelligent response. Johnson proposes the

²⁴Ibid., pp. 26-32.

term "responsive counseling" as a more accurate designation.²⁵

Carl Rogers, one of today's leaders in the field of non-directive psychiatry, states that the individual and not the problem is the center of attention. The goal is greater independence on the part of the individual rather than the hope that he will grow if the counselor assists in solving the problem. The aim is not so much to solve a particular problem as it is to have a person grow toward the ability to cope with this present problem and later problems as well.²⁶

The responsibility assumed by a person in counseling is most important. For the counselee it is the "most essential of all possibilities for decisive change in terms of growth."²⁷ The following principles apply to this location of responsibility in the counseling process:

- (1) Attention must be focused on the counselee's situation and his own feelings about it--the counselor's comments should not distract him from the real issue;²⁸
- (2) The individual must feel free to express his destructive emotions of guilt, fear, and resentment--he should have the assurance of attentive listening on the part of the counselor;²⁹
- (3) The process develops through the pastor's real understanding of the individual's feelings in the situation and through the pastor's communication of that understanding to the individual;
- (4) The pastor assists by clarifying the elements of conflicting feelings as they emerge and their relation to the individual;
- (5) The individual should feel a special kind of freedom as well as certain limitations, as he accepts the pastor's task of helping him to help himself;
- (6) The process should include,

²⁵Johnson, op. cit., p. 100.

²⁶Carl R. Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy (New York: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1942), p. 28; quoted by Murray G. Ross, Religious Beliefs of Youth (New York: Association Press, c.1950), p. 198.

²⁷Johnson, op. cit., p. 97.

²⁸Hiltner, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁹Hulme, op. cit., p. 22.

on one or more appropriate occasions, help in the consolidation of the insights and clarifications that have been gained.³⁰

The Procedure in Non-directive Pastoral Counseling

Murray Ross suggests the procedure of Carl Rogers for helping young people in a counseling situation. He adapts the process as Rogers outlines it in his work, Counseling and Psychotherapy.

1. The individual comes for help.
2. The helping situation is defined. The client is made aware from the outset that his counselor does not have the answers, but that the counseling situation provides a place where he can work out his own solution with assistance.
3. The counselor encourages the client to express his feelings freely about the problem. His attitude is friendly, interested, and receptive. He makes his client aware that the hour is set aside for him.
4. The counselor accepts, recognizes, and clarifies the client's negative feelings. He should be prepared to respond to the feelings that lie behind what the client says, rather than to its intellectual content.
5. When the negative feelings have been expressed they are followed by expressions of positive impulses which make for growth. This positive expression is one of the most certain and predictable phases of the entire process.
6. The counselor accepts these positive expressions without praise or blame. He recognizes them as no more or less a fact than the negative feelings previously expressed.
7. This insight--the understanding and acceptance of himself--is the next most important aspect of the whole process. It provides a basis on which the individual can go ahead to new levels of understanding.
8. With this process of insight there is a process that clarifies the possible decisions and courses of action. Here the counselor helps to clarify the different choices that the individual can make. He must recognize the

³⁰Hiltner, op. cit., pp. 47-54.

feelings of fear and lack of courage that the individual is experiencing.

9. The client begins minute, but highly significant positive actions, as he begins to reorganize his life in a more wholesome direction.
10. The remaining steps lead to a more complete and accurate understanding of himself and to an increase of integrated positive action by the individual. Gradually he should feel a diminishing need for the counselor's help and realize that the relationship must end.³¹

Techniques in Pastoral Counseling

The establishment of rapport, the satisfying relationship between two persons, is an essential part of counseling. This positive relationship of good will, friendliness, and mutual confidence is rated by Russel Dicks as "the most important factor in bringing about healing and in gaining a feeling of emotional security."³² This relationship arises out of the pastor's loving concern for the individual before him, and it must be bound up in his entire approach to his people.³³ According to Dicks,

This capacity to permit and assist another personality to be expressive, and therefore creative, is more than the matter of technique. It turns upon the counselor's deep respect for persons, upon his experience with life, upon the health of his own ego, upon the deep soul, the very self and its development and condition. It has little to do with what one knows and probably little with what one believes; but it has a great deal to do with how one acts in relation to his beliefs.³⁴

³¹Ross, op. cit., pp. 199-201.

³²Dicks, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

³³Clarence Peters, "The Pastor as Counselor of Youth," published by Concordia Seminary Mimeo, St. Louis (mimeographed), p. 13.

³⁴Dicks, op. cit., p. 36.

Listening in itself is a valuable technique in the counseling process. Few experiences can give an individual more reassurance than to find someone who is willing to sit with him and listen to his problems with sympathy and understanding. Having found such a friend who seeks to understand his viewpoint he begins to change his feelings about the hostility of the world in general. Verbalizing helps the individual to clarify his own thoughts and look at his problems more objectively. He can observe them from an impersonal perspective.³⁵ The counselor must give his counsellee his undivided attention; his thoughts cannot wander.³⁶ He should listen receptively and try to place himself in the position of the troubled individual, so that he is able to direct his remarks to the real feelings of that person.³⁷

Empathy is tied to the intimate personal relationship of the pastor and his counsellee. John Sutherland Bonnell speaks of the difficulty in defining empathy. He indicates that it is established "when a willingness to help needs a willingness to be helped." He describes it further as a subtle sixth sense, an awareness of what is within another person and the ability to enter into sympathetic understanding with him.³⁸ Wittenberg speaks of empathy as the ability to sense the right moment when a person is about to want help.³⁹ To achieve empathy the pastor

³⁵Bonnell, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁶Johnson, op. cit., p. 263.

³⁷Bonnell, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

³⁸Ibid., p. 57-59.

³⁹Wittenberg, op. cit., p. 9.

must take an internal view of the person before him rather than the external appearance only. He must put himself in the other's place and see the situation through his eyes.⁴⁰

Hiltner states that "dynamic psychology" is helpful in understanding another person. He gives the following psychological principles which are significant in pastoral counseling:

1. All conduct has meaning. No bit of behavior is merely capricious. . . .
2. The meaning of conduct can be understood only if we look both at conscious awareness and at the deeper levels which influence personality and affect its acts, but which are not ordinarily recognized in consciousness. . . .
3. Personality growth proceeds through the constructive handling of conflict, not through the absence of conflict. . . .
4. Other truths of dynamic psychology. . . . The real person is always more than the specialized aspects of the personality which have been consciously recognized and encouraged. . . . By proceeding on the assumption that the creative dynamic forces which can produce needed change are potentially present within the individual already and do not have to be poured in, the only lasting results are achieved. . . . The most vital question about a person always is: In what fundamental direction is he moving? Is it compromise, concealment, fixation, projection; or is it, however small the achievement be in a quantitative sense, in the direction of growth through constructive dealing with conflict? . . . The meaning of an event in a person's life can never be understood merely from a study of the event itself, but through observation of its relation to his personality as a whole, to his character pattern. . . .⁴¹

Bonnell, too, points to the importance of psychology's contributions. He states plainly that no pastoral counselor will reach complete

⁴⁰Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁴¹Hiltner, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-76. Hiltner italicizes these principles.

effectiveness until he is able to understand the significance of such psychiatric concepts as repression, projection, rationalization, transference, and sublimation, as they apply to his people.⁴² Other psychiatric terms which apply especially to the behavior of adolescents are compensation, evasion, and escapism.⁴³

The technique of response is also very important in pastoral counseling. His remarks and questions must reflect the feelings of the counselee and dare never be just a parroting of his statements.⁴⁴ Asking questions is the most effective way to give people insights into their problems. The counselor's questions, however, are not simply asked at random but are carefully thought out and directed at the counselee's real feelings.⁴⁵ The question "Why?" is often inadequate, and it may be a block against the understanding of real feelings. With young people in particular the "Why?" question indicates that the counselor is not fully aware of the individual's thoughts and feelings, and it erects a barrier to effective counseling.⁴⁶ The value in asking questions is that it gives the counselee the responsibility of answering and explaining, and as he attempts to answer he may advance toward the solution of his difficulties.⁴⁷ Preliminary remarks should be short, for they are important only to the

⁴² Bonnell, op. cit., p. 20.

⁴³ Paul H. Landis, Adolescence and Youth (2nd edition; McGraw-Hill Book Company, c.1952), pp. 118-121.

⁴⁴ Morris, op. cit., p. 72.

⁴⁵ Bonnell, op. cit., p. 68.

⁴⁶ Mittenberg, op. cit., pp. 132, 135.

⁴⁷ Bonnell, op. cit., pp. 69, 71.

degree in which they put the individual at ease and define the situation. These opening remarks should set the permissive atmosphere and inform the counselee that the counselor is sincerely interested and ready to understand.⁴⁸

Confession is significant in the counseling process, for most problem situations will involve burdens that need lifting. Whether personal secrets are morally wrong or not they will tend to produce the effect of sin or guilt. Religious people in particular may be bothered with the sense of sin and the picture of God as a stern judge who knows all they have done wrong. The pastor should encourage his people to come to him with these secret guilts. He should make his sympathetic and uncritical attitude known by his preaching and prayers and casual conversation. By nature of his office as an ambassador of Christ he will have the greatest power of all at his disposal to apply to the needs of his people. To the individual who comes with heavy burdens of guilt he can give the healing message of God's forgiveness in Christ. To the person who knows his sin and need the pastor can apply his personal absolution as God's servant, "called and ordained." The troubled conscience will find the wonderful assurance that God does care and has forgiven.⁴⁹

The reading of the Bible and prayer may be used effectively in applying Christian doctrine to individuals. In each of these techniques the pastor should help the counselee learn to work with them on his own. Often it will be very beneficial to invite the counselee to pray in his

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 103-128.

⁵⁰Bonnell, op. cit., p. 82.

own words. This will be extremely helpful to him in a confessional situation.⁵⁰ Hiltner gives these suggestions for prayer in the counseling process:

1. Like all other prayer, it should be addressed to God and thoroughly consistent with that fact. It should not be, from the pastor's point of view, a way of getting out of tight situations, or a way of getting authority behind points he has failed with in the counseling or pastoral work situation.
2. It should recognize before God the essential spiritual need as recognized and understood by the parishoner himself. . . .
3. To the degree that stress and tension exist, for whatever reason, it should emphasize the free availability from God and His Holy Spirit of the resources of peace, strength, quietness, and fellowship. . . .
4. The parishoner himself should be helped to pray by clarifying in prayer, as explicitly as may be needed, the Christian attitude toward trouble and suffering. . . .
5. The form and content of a prayer should be consistent with the troubled parishoner's tradition and experience in the Christian life. . . .⁵¹

The true pastoral counselor is certain that no real or permanent solution may be found for problems apart from that solution which brings persons into a life-relationship with God. And so he must give his counselee the only adequate answer there is for these bewildering times, a firm faith in the God who has given meaning and purpose to life.⁵²

⁵⁰Bonnell, op. cit., p. 82.

⁵¹Hiltner, op. cit., pp. 192-193. Hiltner italicizes these statements.

⁵²Bonnell, op. cit., pp. 27-34.

Pastoral Counseling Applied to Today's Teen-ager

The counseling program may be applied effectively to today's teen-ager. Just to know there are adults on whom he can depend when he really needs them is one of the most important helps for an adolescent as he grows toward maturity. To know that the pastor will listen to his story and try to understand is a great assurance for the young person with a problem.⁵³ There is no substitute for the opportunity to bring his problems to the light of day before such an adult friend.⁵⁴ He will appreciate the pastor's authority, for often he needs help in doing what he feels right. But he wants more than advice. He wants a friend to whom he can tell his problem.⁵⁵

The purpose of counseling the teen-ager is just that--to allow him to define his own problem and express his own feeling about it. He should be allowed to suggest for himself the possible solutions and decide for himself what he should do.⁵⁶ One writer suggests that today's teen-agers will be able to solve many of their own problems as they tell them to the counselor and thus are able to view them objectively.⁵⁷ So the counselor's goal will be to understand the individual teen-ager, to help him to understand himself, and to help him help himself. C. Morris

⁵³Wittenberg, op. cit., p. 240.

⁵⁴Hulme, op. cit., p. 21.

⁵⁵Wittenberg, op. cit., pp. 160, 171.

⁵⁶Ross, op. cit., pp. 197-198.

⁵⁷Kenneth L. Cober and Esther Stricker, Teaching Seniors (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1940), p. 46.

gives this detailed outline of the counselor's task with young people.

He is to help the young person:

- (1) To accept himself for what he is and what he may become;
- (2) To learn to live with his parents; (3) To get along with members of his own age and sex; (4) To develop happy relations with the opposite sex, as a preface to normal, happy friendships now and marriage later; (5) To learn to get along and experience a feeling of kinship with all people; (6) To become increasingly aware of the world of work and to prepare for an appropriate vocation; (7) To develop an awareness of contemporary social issues and a deep sense of personal responsibility as a significant member of his society and the world community; (8) To lay the foundations for a philosophy of life, including the identity and choice of those values which will govern his future life; (9) To cultivate interests and skills which will provide channels for recreational pursuits through the years.⁵⁸

The task is not an easy one. The pastor must begin by making himself aware of the teen-ager and his problems, to see him as he sees himself. He must be able to understand the external forces that produce maladjustment and emotional difficulties. He must learn to think in terms of adolescent life and behavior.⁵⁹

The task is difficult because the teen-ager finds it hard to trust or confide in anyone.⁶⁰ He is especially suspicious of adults. More than likely the young person who comes to the pastor about his problems will evade the real issue. William Hulme reports that half the young people who seek him out begin with a problem that is not the one for which they felt the need to come.⁶¹ This masking of real feelings is a hazard in counseling youth. The pastor may find himself treating the

⁵⁸Morris, op. cit., p. 32.

⁵⁹Landis, op. cit., p. 29.

⁶⁰Wittenberg, op. cit., p. xiii.

⁶¹Hulme, op. cit., p. 115.

camouflage for the real thing, the symptoms rather than the causes. He must remember that he is dealing with adolescents who have problems and what often appear to be the problems are merely their outward manifestations. What he must treat are the causes.⁶²

Clarice Bowman offers several methods for the adult worker as he tries to discover what the teen-ager is really like and what he is thinking. First, she suggests, the adult should view him as much as possible through the teen-ager's own eyes. The counselor can do this partially by learning the youngster's dominant interests and the groups with which he likes to be associated. He should look at his products, the things he writes, his collections and hobbies, the awards he wins, and the activities in which he participates by choice. He must be alert for the real meaning that underlies what the teen-ager says or does spontaneously. He should not view him as he thinks a teen-ager ought to be but as he is. Secondly, the adult should view them in terms of the common characteristics of all growing persons. He should keep abreast of what is being written about adolescence in the field of psychology and sociology. He should view them thirdly as unique individuals, the products of all their yesterdays. He should be aware of their differences in background, their home environment, sex and race, hobbies, and job interests. No two are alike. They have motives and dreams for the future all their own. Finally, he should view them in the eyes of the Christian faith, the "faith fantastic" that sees in "that redheaded junior high a potential church bishop someday."⁶³

⁶²Clarice M. Bowman, Ways Youth Learn (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1952), pp. 48, 53.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 46-53.

Rudolph Wittenberg gives these suggestions to help the adult counselor recognize problem situations in adolescence:

1. Adolescence is a time of inner and outer disturbance, and anything is possible. We have no clearcut criteria of what is normal and not normal at this time.
2. No single piece of behavior can be considered, by itself, but needs to be seen as part of a young person's total behavior.
3. Your personal observation of somebody's behavior might be a reaction to you; his behavior might be very different with another teacher, counselor, friend, neighbor. Your own observation is bound to be limited and insufficient.
4. Your past experience from your own adolescence or your experience with other young people is no guideline or any kind of help with the specific young man or woman before you now. Don't think that because something was right or worked for you or for Bill's son that it therefore could also work for the youngster before you now.
5. After sufficient and continued observation of enough details and in many different situations you might form certain impressions. Don't give them a label or a scientific name, but jot them down and look at them again. If unusual-seeming traits are continuous and of an extreme nature a specialist should be consulted.
6. Very passive and markedly withdrawn behavior in all areas should be watched; it is less obvious than very aggressive behavior, but can mean more deep-seated trouble.
7. Repetition of infantile behavior in an exaggerated form is not unusual at this time; rather, the intensity and the frequency need to be observed. Some temper tantrums, some crying, giggling, overeating, overtalking, oversensitivity, fantasy, rediscovery of the genital organs and masturbation, sexual games, hostility--all these can be expected to some degree without any concern. If there is a great deal of this and if extreme behavior occurs very frequently we should think of deeper and not merely passing disturbances.⁶⁴

⁶⁴Wittenberg, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

Recognizing Symptomatic Behavior in Today's Teen-ager

Throughout his book Wittenberg characterizes in great detail the symptomatic behavior and attitudes that may point to emotional disturbance in the adolescent. The attitude, "I'm no good"--the individual seems to resent praise for his gifts and achievements--appears to be a fairly common feeling among adolescents. It indicates a state of conflict over what they are and what they would like to be. It shows that a teen-ager is unhappy and that he needs warmth and understanding. He needs to be accepted for his feeling of being "no good," rather than to be contradicted and reassured that he is all right. The real reasons for this attitude are hard to find. The youngster himself may not know the source. The best help he can receive is to have his negative feelings accepted for what they are without adult probing. If it is possible the counselor may assist him in clarifying his reasons.⁶⁵

The "I don't care" attitude can be either meaningless or a distress signal of a serious disorder. That youngster who wants to withdraw his concern from the world around him is a sick person. If it is a sign of discouragement, he needs warmth and acceptance from his counselor. If it is an attitude of defiance, the counselor should try to understand it and the feelings that underlie it without returning a hostility of his own.⁶⁶

"I have no date" can mean serious difficulties when the teen-ager

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-8.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 17-36.

must have a date in order to "belong" in his social group. These pains are very real to the adolescent, for in his process of maturation he wants to feel like a young man or woman. The most effective approach to him in this situation is through his groups, for when he is in this type of mental anxiety he feels he can be understood only by his peers. Again the counselor should try to accept the typical behavior and find the individual behind the attitude. He should not read his own meaning into the phrase and take it for granted that he does understand.⁶⁷

The feeling, "I know I should, but. . . ." indicates a conflict between what the teen-ager knows he should do but does not wish to do at the moment. This is typical adolescent behavior and should not cause great concern to parents or counselor. At this age "like to do" and "have to do" are two separate items, and teen-agers often postpone things.⁶⁸

When teen-agers seem to say, "I know what I can't do," it may be a plea for help. At times parents and adults in general give a teen-ager too much encouragement to undertake things he is unable to handle. The more he is urged and pushed, the greater will be his anxiety. When adults merely reassure him that he can do it, they close the opportunity to give him the help he requires. Often children are given the impression that they must produce in order to be accepted--that their acceptance is conditioned by their ability to do things and win honors. The teen-ager needs to be accepted for his limitations as well as his abilities.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 39, 42-46.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 65, 67, 74, 77.

"I want to be left alone" may be a reflection of his need for privacy, the universal adolescent desire to place more distance between himself and his family as he grows up. In many cases he wants to avoid his feelings about his parents. He is afraid to love them as before, for now love includes sexual feelings that he never knew as a child. Even though mother is still "mother" she is a woman. Father is a male. The teen-ager may have anxious thoughts and emotional conflicts about such feelings. This desire for privacy may also represent the call for the inner peace which he desires but cannot find in his world, and this lack may make it a difficult and painful age for him. The cause of this attitude lies more within himself than in the behavior of his parents or leaders. Adults, however, may make things still more difficult by forcing the issue when they themselves think that they are letting him down and feel guilty. A great help in this situation is to talk straight about the real issues. Adults should recognize this need for privacy and should not deny it. When it persists or is exaggerated, however, or when it starts earlier and lasts longer, professional help should be considered.⁷⁰

When the youngster says, "I'm in love," it should be remembered that this is a universal expression among adolescents and may have a variety of meanings. It may signify that the teen-ager no longer considers himself a child. It may mean that an adolescent girl now feels herself on as high a level of achievement as her girl friend or married sister. To one it may mean the key to all happiness, an event more precious than high grades or going to college. It may be an expression of independence.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 84, 86, 87, 89, 93, 95, 96, 101.

Generally it means a reassurance for doubts about one's identity. When adolescents are in love the situation is exciting and not quite rational for them, and it is very important that parents and adult leaders keep the lines of communication open to them. They need the influence of calm and normal outsiders. The adults do not have to feel that in order to show understanding they must approve of everything the youngsters do. But on the other hand, a hostile attitude on the part of adults will drive young lovers away. The adolescents need adults for inner and outer protection in this situation. To drive them away may be a tragedy. The adults can better understand the situation after they have given recognition to their own feelings of jealousy over the "loss" of their child.⁷¹

The Scope of Pastoral Counseling with Youth

There are situations in which the pastor should recognize his limitations. He should not attempt to diagnose mental or physical ills, for he would be guilty of meddling in a profession for which he has not been trained. Even the experience of clinical training would make him no more than a third or fourth rate physician.⁷² Hulme mentions several situations in which the pastor should discontinue counseling and seek professional assistance. In the case of an individual who seems to show no insight or improvement after several counseling sessions the pastor should look for help. If there is no response after what the pastor and counslee consider a sufficient trial, it may indicate that the problems are too deep for the pastor to uncover. Some persons may have

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 102-124.

⁷²Bonnell, op. cit., p. 2.

deteriorated mentally to such a degree that the pastor will be unable to help them. A prolonged period of despondency should indicate to the pastor that professional services are required.⁷³

Situations may arise when the pastor will be called upon to continue extended counseling with an individual. If the counselee strongly resists the idea of another counselor or if there is none available, the pastor may feel justified to go on--but only when he is certain that the counseling has done no harm and that he is experienced enough to notice when the situation is beyond his control or training.⁷⁴

The pastor will refer most serious cases to a competent psychologist or psychiatrist. He should know one or more such men who have a degree and are fully accredited.⁷⁵ In addition, the therapist should be a man who will respect the counselee's Christian faith and treat religion positively.⁷⁶ Church or social welfare agencies may also be equipped to assist the pastor. It is very important that the pastor continue to work with the counselee for his spiritual health when he goes under psychiatric care.⁷⁷

The pastor should be acquainted with his community resources. Most workers will welcome him as a fellow public servant, and usually they will be happy to assist him with problems he is unable to solve alone. He should know such people as the local high school principal, hospital

⁷³Malme, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

⁷⁴Hiltner, op. cit., p. 91.

⁷⁵Morris, op. cit., p. 107.

⁷⁶Hiltner, op. cit., p. 104.

⁷⁷Malme, op. cit., p. 147.

superintendent, municipal judge, and the police officials in charge of the juvenile court, as well as the social welfare and medical agencies.⁷⁸

One of the problem situations the pastor will face most often is conflict in the home. In dealing with the teen-ager and his parents he must create the right impression by showing that he is capable of objective and sympathetic understanding toward both sides. He should not identify himself with either. He should beware lest he fall into the traditional parental approach and repeat the time-worn words of advice. This approach will only drive youngsters away. He may be thrust into this situation by parents who ask him to speak to an unmanageable youngster. If, however, he shows them he understands the two-sidedness of the situation, the young people will find him refreshingly different. They will feel he understands them when he holds back his own judgment and listens to their side of the story. Parents, too, will benefit from this approach, for they will come to regard him more as their counselor than their ally.⁷⁹

The teen-ager needs to face his own feelings about his parents before he will be able to cope with his problem. As he talks it over with his pastor he will grow to understand not only his own role but also his parents' role in the clashes, and learn to forgive himself and his parents. The parents also should understand the situation as it concerns their youngster--that his behavior may be only a symptom of his need for their love and acceptance. Because they are emotionally

⁷⁸Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1949), p. 186.

⁷⁹Hulse, op. cit., pp. 49-51.

involved they find it difficult to be patient with their child, and the pastor can give them much help. In his unique position he can help both parents and youngsters by supplying the patient understanding that they need to turn their hearts toward one another.⁸⁰

The pastor should devote his efforts toward helping parents understand their own role and responsibilities toward their children. They are to be counselors to their children. They need to learn how to spend time with children, how to understand their needs, and how to act as wise and understanding friends.⁸¹ They should know how to give their youngsters all the love and affection they need rather than what they deserve. They should realize that the best teaching they can give their children is their own example.⁸² They should learn to cooperate with their children as they expect them to cooperate, and show an interest in their activities and problems. Above all they should establish a bond of love and trust, based on their common faith in Jesus Christ, so that the children feel free to come to them at any time with their joys and troubles.⁸³

Teen-agers of high school age will frequently come to the pastor for vocational guidance, or at least they will come to hear his approval of their plans. Since future plans are of such strong interest to teen-agers the pastor may use them as an effective opening for conversation.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Donnell, op. cit., p. 132.

⁸² Paul H. Landis, Understanding Teenagers (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, c.1955), p. 32.

⁸³ Kretzmann, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

It will often carry into a discussion of life work, schooling, and perhaps boy-girl problems, because these things are involved in life-planning.⁸⁴ The pastor should be aware of the factors and motives that underlie vocational choices. And he should learn something about the decisions the teen-ager will have to make. He can obtain information from advisors in the local high school or vocational guidance agencies. He may also learn about various occupations and professions from union officials or the men he knows in these vocations. His goal, of course, is not to choose for the youngster, but to help him make the best and most God-pleasing decision. In the case of strong doubts about a vocation, he will achieve the best results by working with the local vocational guidance agency.⁸⁵

In the vocational guidance situation with individuals the pastor will have the best opportunity for the recruitment of young men and women for ministerial and teaching professions in the church. Again, he must not decide for them nor place undue pressure upon them to choose a vocation in the church. If they are qualified and interested, however, it would not be wrong for him to encourage them toward this goal. He should be on the alert for individuals who are:

- (1) Spiritually dominated and dedicated;
- (2) Physically energetic and vital;
- (3) Mentally healthy;
- (4) Emotionally mature;
- (5) Academically competent with above average scholastic ability and achievement;
- (6) Effective in work habits and study;
- (7) Socially competent;
- (8) Economically dependable;
- (9) Wholesome in character: increasingly integrated and self-disciplined;
- (10) Concerned about persons;
- (11) Able to lead;

⁸⁴Dicks, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁸⁵From notes taken in class in "567 Youth Work," Leonhard C. Wuerffel, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1957.

(12) Administratively apt.⁸⁶

It is essential that the pastor be prepared for pre-marital counseling even for his teen-age members. There is an increasing trend toward early marriage and teen-agers may come to him for pre-marriage counseling. Parents who feel hesitant about teaching their children the facts of life may seek the pastor's help. In these situations the pastor should not have it known that he is a "sex-counselor." It is much to be preferred that individuals be sent to a competent physician for information about the sexual aspects of marriage. The pastor should direct his instruction toward a wholesome attitude about love and sex. He should be concerned with the spiritual aspects of marriage, the personal relationships that are affected by the Gospel, and the foundation for a Christian home.⁸⁷ The church may provide education in sex and marriage for its teen-agers, calling in a doctor to speak to groups of boys and a nurse to girls.⁸⁸

As the pastor approaches pre-marital counseling, self-cleansing is a necessary first step. He must bring his own secret lusts and guilts to God for forgiveness. The pastor should take the role of a loving parent, yet even more permissive and less emotionally involved than a normal father. It is not his duty to judge or demand perfection according to rigid standards. In this spirit he should seek to anticipate the emotional adjustments needed in marriage. He may find check lists helpful

⁸⁶The Church's Quest for Talented Persons: Student Recruitment for the Church Professions," materials of the Institute on Synodical Affairs, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, January 29 through February 1, 1957, (mimeographed).

⁸⁷Classroom notes, "567 Youth Work."

⁸⁸Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 53.

or simply allow the young people to speak freely about their chief concerns. He should respond to their feelings with understanding. He must not force his own ideas upon them. Sermons on family life are not appropriate in these situations. There should be a dynamic forward movement together in the productive counseling relationship. It may be beneficial to schedule several sessions with the couple with one after the honeymoon. The relationship should continue through the pastor's subsequent visiting program.⁸⁹

The problem of mixed marriages may be averted to some extent by discussions with individuals or groups before they find themselves romantically involved with youngsters of another denomination.⁹⁰

In all the pastor's counseling relationships with teen-agers there should be an education toward the Christian philosophy of life. Though it may never be explicitly expressed as such this training will be bound up in the entire relationship and in the pastor's own philosophy of life as well. It is the life that is based on Christ crucified that is the only ground for true morality and growth.⁹¹ The training should involve a strengthening and correcting of attitudes toward God--understanding who He is and what the Christian faith really means. It should help the individual's feelings toward himself so that he recognizes his sin and weakness and relates himself to the forgiveness God offers him in Jesus Christ. It should lead him to the right attitude toward other people

⁸⁹ Johnson, op. cit., pp. 139-143.

⁹⁰ Martin Hegland, Problems of Young Christians (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1932), p. 75.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 107.

and a true evaluation of the material things of life.⁹² The teen-ager has to learn that life is more than jobs and enjoyment.⁹³ He needs the permanent satisfaction that can come only by acknowledging God's plan for his life and entrusting himself to God's care.⁹⁴

When the teen-ager comes to the pastor with problems of a spiritual nature or doubts about the Christian instruction he has received, the pastor must be tolerant and understanding. More is required in this situation than a quick dismissal of his doubts with an intellectual answer. He should help the teen-ager find his own answers. He should direct him to the source and help him arrive at his own conclusions.⁹⁵ All too often the individual may not know how to use his Bible, and the pastor should not assume that he does.⁹⁶ Bonnell suggests the following procedure for self-instruction in his pamphlet, How to Read the Bible:

First, commence with a book of the Bible and continue to read in small installments until you have completed it. For the purpose we have in mind, the Psalms and the New Testament will be found most helpful. The beginner could do no better than commence with the Gospel of St. Luke, reading it through to the end. . . .

Second, keep on reading until you come to a verse that you can feel is God's "marching orders" for the day. Don't be afraid to mark your Bible. Underline that verse and let it search every area of your life. Carry it with you through the day. Recall it frequently to your mind. . . .

⁹²Cober, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

⁹³Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Our Young Folks (New York: Harcourt Brace, c.1943), p. 245.

⁹⁴Hegland, op. cit., p. 81.

⁹⁵Cober, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

⁹⁶Bonnell, op. cit., p. 105.

Third, mark the place where you have finished reading and commence with the next verse the following day. It may be advisable for you to tarry on the one verse for several days or even a week until the full implication of its teaching has been brought to bear upon your life. . . .

Fourth, always preface your reading by a brief prayer that God's Holy Spirit will bring the truth of His Word to bear upon your heart. As you open the Bible to read from the place where you had left off the previous day, ask yourself this question: "What is God's message for me today?" . . .

Fifth, when you have allowed God's message of the morning to search your heart, a prayer of thanksgiving for an accession of spiritual strength or a prayer of confession and penitence for your mistakes and failures will well up within you. Receive and accept God's promise: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Make every day a day of new beginnings and of fresh consecration to the service of God. Having sought and found God's forgiveness for the wrongs of the past, turn your back resolutely on these failures and face the new life which, by the grace of God, is opening before you.

Sixth, it will often be found helpful to vary your daily reading by using a modern translation of the New Testament. . . .

Seventh, be sure to keep inviolate this period for the daily reading of the Bible. It is especially important that no single exception be allowed to occur until the practise has been firmly established. . . .⁹⁷

The pastor should take the opportunity to counsel with high school graduates who are preparing to attend a distant college or university. They should be made aware of the advantages and responsibilities they will have as college students. The pastor should encourage them to study toward future positions of service or leadership in the church as laymen. It is of great importance that they be told of the temptations they will encounter to let their Christian life slip in the rush of campus activities. If they have no information concerning a Lutheran church or chapel

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 191-196.

at the campus, they should be informed and urged to continue their worship and church life there. The pastor should contact the student pastor or chaplain in advance and send information about the students to the offices of the Synodical Commission on College and University Work.⁹⁸

Young men about to enter military service need counseling as well. The pastor should advise them about the chaplain and how they can take advantage of his services. They should be aware of the social adjustments they will have to make with new companions of every background and the special problems they will encounter in military life. The pastor is responsible for the information that the Armed Services Commission should have about men in the service, and he should contact them immediately. It is essential that the home congregation keep in touch with the men while they are away.⁹⁹

The pastor may use the counseling situation to enlist teen-agers in the program of the congregation. Certain individuals may need encouragement to participate in the Malther League and Bible Class. They should be appealed to as mature and responsible members to serve the Lord with the talents He has given them.¹⁰⁰ There should be opportunities for them to serve in the congregation's real work--such areas as personal

⁹⁸"Commission on College and University Work," materials of the Institute on Synodical Affairs, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, January 29 through February 1, 1957, (mimeographed).

⁹⁹"Young People Away from Home (in the Military)," materials of the Institute on Synodical Affairs, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, January 29 through February 1, 1957, (mimeographed).

¹⁰⁰Allen S. Ellsworth, editor, At Work with Young Adults (New York: Association Press, c.1950), p. 107.

evangelism, the choirs, ushering, and the like.¹⁰¹ Individuals should be encouraged to undergo training for leadership in congregational teacher-training classes, Walther League workshops, Lutheran Service Volunteer Schools, and summer camps.

The Counseling Program in its Practical Aspects

When the pastor begins a counseling program he will not find his congregation in a rush toward his office. He will find that one of his problems is educating them to come. People are out of the habit of coming to their pastor with problems. He is no longer the most educated man in the community. Furthermore, people are ashamed of their problems.¹⁰² Many hesitate to come for fear that he will not understand and will take offense. They want to avoid a judgmental and authoritarian approach to their problems.¹⁰³ The pastor, therefore, must work in his total ministry to remove these barriers. In the pulpit where his people see him most often he must avoid the temptation to sound like a man of unchallenged authority and finality. He should not preach as if he had no ability to understand two sides of a problem. His sermons must show an attitude of awareness and understanding rather than a belief that Christians have no problems.¹⁰⁴ Each sermon in itself should invite his

¹⁰¹ William H. Hillmer, et al., Enlisting and Training Kingdom Workers, published under the auspices of the Committee on Enlisting and Training the Laity, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (St. Louis: n.d.), pp. 81-86.

¹⁰² Hulme, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

¹⁰³ Johnson, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁰⁴ Hulme, op. cit., p. 13.

listeners to come to grips with their problems.¹⁰⁵

Often a counseling situation will arise in the pastoral call. Some estimate that sixty to eighty percent of all pastoral counseling is carried out in the calling ministry.¹⁰⁶ The call may be an incentive toward further counseling if people find the pastor interested and receptive. The pastor who is ill at ease and makes people uncomfortable in conversation, however, may discourage his people and they will not come to him. In the congregation's organizational life and in every contact of the pastor with his people the pastor's own attitude will encourage the counseling program, if he is patient in aggravating situations and works to build up interpersonal relationships.¹⁰⁷

There are occasions when the pastor may make specific references to his counseling and point out its purpose and value. Hulme suggests that such an invitation should: express his sincere desire to be of service; show his understanding of the feelings people have when they are troubled; explain the benefits in terms people can understand from their own experience; testify to the resources of religion that enable him to be more than a listener; assure them of acceptance and of the confidential nature of counseling; tell them how to make the practical arrangements for an interview. He gives this example:

As your pastor I would like to be of service to you in any way that I can. If you feel you are having any difficulties that are causing you concern--if you feel the need to talk to somebody--you are more than welcome to come and see me.

¹⁰⁵Honnell, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰⁶Hulme, op. cit., p. 78.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 14.

Most of us have problems at some time or another that seem a little more than we can handle by ourselves. It often helps if we can just talk to someone. If we keep our problems to ourselves there is danger that we may keep them. This is because our feelings get mixed up in our problems and our thinking becomes confused so that we cannot see the forest for the trees. When we talk our problems over with one whom we can trust, we bring them out from inside us. We get it off our chest and experience a feeling of relief. Then, because our problem has been set on the table, as it were, we can see it more objectively and can more intelligently work out our solution.

There is a tremendous power in our Christian faith to help us in our difficulties. We may, however, need guidance to know how to lay hold on this power and find our answers. You will be accepted as you are, and all that is told to me will be held in the strictest confidence. If you wonder if I will think your problem is important, remember this: if it is important to you, it is important, and it will be important to me. Call me or see me at any time for an appointment. My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from two to five P.M. and Wednesday from seven to ten P.M. in the church office.¹⁰⁸

After a sermon on personal problems the pastor may announce his invitation like this:

If any of you have some problem on your heart which you would like to talk over with your pastor privately, simply see me after the service or at any time and we will make an appointment. I would be very happy to serve you in this capacity, because I believe that it is in talking our problems over with one whom we can trust that we find our answers.¹⁰⁹

Information concerning the counseling program may be given in Sunday bulletins or parish newspapers. At the informal gatherings of organizations and young people's societies the invitation may be given in a more informative manner.¹¹⁰ When the pastor leads topic discussions

¹⁰⁸Ibid., pp. 23-24.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 25.

in the youth groups, he may provide an impetus toward counseling. Topics related to sex conflicts and marriage will lead to the teen-agers' enlightenment and stimulate them to bring their own personal situations to him. These topic discussions can be an important prelude to pre-marital planning with the pastor and counseling throughout later life. Topics concerning problems with parents may be more difficult for the pastor to discuss with a youth group, because he is pastor of the parents also. But he can show he understands parental conflicts and the teen-age point of view as he speaks about other problems, and thereby encourage them to bring parental difficulties to him.¹¹¹ Once the counseling program gets under way it should move rapidly, because the best advertisements are satisfied counselees who send others to the pastor.¹¹²

Occasionally in pastoral calling or casual contacts with individuals the alert pastor will notice distress signals of problem situations. Members may report problems of their friends. The pastor will have to tread cautiously. Hiltner states four principles for the "precounseling situation."

1. Help is offered in such a way that it may be as easily refused as accepted. We cannot be sure that a person really needs or is ready for counseling. Anything that is done to make the counseling serve in his eyes as a club over his head, or to augment his feelings of guilt, makes that much less likely his ever turning to this kind of help. . . . If there are any strings attached to the offer of help, if it cannot be refused as easily and with as little sense of guilt as it can be accepted, then the pastoral counseling situation has been made less likely.
2. The incorrect expectations which the parishioner is reasonably sure to have of the nature of counseling help are, as

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 48.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 27.

occasion warrants, explicitly denied. . . . This is definition of the counseling relationship in advance of the development of the parishioner's attitudes to the point where that relationship can be established. It therefore defines in advance as a means toward creating that relationship--if the parishioner needs it. The "if" is important, too.

3. Once the pastor's role in the situation has been defined to the parishioner as well as possible, the pastor is content to wait. . . .
4. The pastor is alert to evidences of the desire for help, but he does not exploit them. . . .¹¹³

One very fine suggestion for initiating the counseling program with the young people is the scheduled interview. Dicks refers to the work of Reverend Granger Westberg, who sent out invitations by card to all his Sunday School children and high school youngsters regularly every six months. He began with the seven year old children and worked up to the students of his denomination in a local college. He began the program with announcements from the pulpit and in the church bulletin that cards would be sent to the youngsters to invite them to his study. The purpose was explained as an opportunity for the pastor to become better acquainted with them individually. Further announcements were made through the Sunday School and youth societies. This invitation was sent out:

Dear George:

Your pastor would like you to stop in at the church study for a friendly visit on Wednesday, April 6, at 4:30 P.M. If you happen to be with a friend at the time feel free to bring him or her with you. If you cannot come at the time indicated, kindly telephone number 27 for a later appointment.

Sincerely,
Granger E. Westberg, Pastor¹¹⁴

¹¹³Hiltner, op. cit., pp. 133-134. Hiltner italicizes these principles

¹¹⁴Dicks, op. cit., p. 126.

The card was mimeographed with the italicized items written in. This form has the advantage that it is impersonal and that everyone receives the same card. It also is a time-saver.¹¹⁵

Hulme suggests a similar program of scheduled interviews with each young person once a year. He, too, advises the pastor to use the impersonal card invitation rather than personal contact, for the individual teen-ager will be more likely to come when he knows others are visiting the pastor too. He offers a simpler invitation:

Dear John:

This is an invitation to come to my office at the church at 3:30 P.M. on Wednesday, so that we may have a visit together.

If this is not convenient for you, would you contact me prior to the time to arrange for another appointment.

Sincerely yours,
Your Pastor (signature)¹¹⁶

Hulme suggests another plan to help the pastor as counselor of his young people. He may invite small groups of the teen-agers to the parsonage for informal discussion and refreshments. While this lacks the personal relationship of an interview, it is less artificial and gives the youngsters a good opportunity to talk with their pastor in a conversational way. It may encourage them to continue the conversation in private. The informal situation helps to strengthen the rapport so that the individual is less hesitant to make an appointment. The invitation for these informal group sessions is better given in person, for if the young person knows others are involved he will feel less obligated to

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 125-126.

¹¹⁶Hulme, op. cit., p. 43.

come. A selection of possible times will help him avoid conflicting engagements, and it will place upon him a further obligation to come since he has had his say in choosing the time.¹¹⁷

The social hour that follows the young people's meeting will provide the pastor with opportunities to meet personally with his teenagers. When the group is broken into smaller groups of conversation he can circulate among them and speak privately with several individuals. Since the whole group is absorbed in conversation there will be a certain measure of privacy. He will attempt to acquaint himself more intimately with individuals, to learn their interests and concerns. If there has been a stimulating discussion previously, its subject will easily come up in the conversation. Individuals may even draw him aside.¹¹⁸

The interview with individual teen-agers requires skillful handling on the pastor's part. The scheduled interview is, of course, prearranged and often must begin on an artificial note. Since the pastor has initiated the interview he feels anxious for its success, and he may find that he is talking too much to overcome the preliminary stiffness. The pastor should prepare himself for each interview by giving thought to the individual, what he is like and what his interests are. Any previous records he may have will be very helpful. He will usually have to open the interview himself, but he should continue his remarks only until it begins to move along under its own momentum. When he finds he is able to pattern his

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 45.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 49.

conversation according to the principles of counseling he is succeeding in his purpose. If the teen-ager has a problem the interview may become a real counseling situation. Even when it appears that no problems are present the interview has made substantial progress toward the time when there will be problems.¹¹⁹

There may be problems for the pastor. He will be psychologically prepared for a social interview and not a counseling session. For that reason he may resist clues and indications of adolescent disturbances in order to maintain the social feeling. A contrasting problem will arise if the pastor probes for symptoms. The teen-ager in this case may become suspicious and place himself on the defensive. The pastor can best proceed by allowing the interview to be its own guide. He must not try subconsciously to control it.¹²⁰

There are several items in the matter of the mechanics of the program which will be helpful for the pastor. He should consider the initial interview exploratory in all cases and schedule follow-up sessions. If the problem has any depth, it cannot be solved in one sitting.¹²¹ Only in rare exceptions should the interview exceed one hour. This limitation protects the counselor in the event that he must seek the help of a physician or psychiatrist for a puzzling situation.¹²² It is best not to look directly at the counsellee if he is nervous, especially

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 44.

¹²⁰Ibid., pp. 44-45.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 39.

¹²²Bonnell, op. cit., p. 66.

in the case of an embarrassing confession.¹²³ Counseling should be carried on in a room that will insure privacy. A room with four walls is a necessity, for the slightest doubt of privacy will keep people away. Furnishings of the room should be marked by complete simplicity, so that the counselee will not be distracted. A desk and two ordinary chairs are all the furniture necessary. One or two inspirational pictures may be hung, such as Hoffman's "Christ in Gethsemane."¹²⁴ The church is to be preferred to the parsonage for a place of counseling. If it is possible the room should be arranged so that the counselee is not exposed when the door is opened. Sometimes it helps very much to ask the congregation to provide a special room, not only for the sake of the room but for the congregation as well. If they have invested money into the counseling program they will be more aware of its importance. The pastor's wife may be consulted in furnishing the room, for more than likely her taste and judgment will be better than his. The posting of regular counseling hours will keep the congregation reminded of the program. It will help them realize that their pastor expects them to come and that they are not the only members with problems.¹²⁵

It is very important to keep notes and records of interviews. Many pastors fail to keep records of their pastoral work because of the confidential nature of the information they receive, and because they do not realize the importance of records. Dicks speaks of three types of notes

¹²³Ibid., p. 92.

¹²⁴Bonnell, op. cit., p. 86, 93.

¹²⁵Hulme, op. cit., pp. 30-35.

that may be important in various phases of the pastor's work. The verbatim record of all that was said in an interview is not only a good discipline but also provides the pastor with a valuable source of information for later study about the emotions and feelings of the counselee. Summary records are simply lists of facts that were discussed in the interview with little direct quotation. Later study of these notes will not reveal the emotions and conflicts of the counselee beyond those factors the pastor noted at the time. The third type is simply a list of the persons interviewed and visited with no information of the nature of the discussion. These notes are important only in that they show the pastor how much counseling he does and reminds him to call upon certain people he would like to overlook. An important use of these records is in the pastor's evaluation of his counseling.¹²⁶ Notes should be written soon after the completion of the interview.

In order to keep matters confidential the pastor should use a coded system of numbers for his files. The material for each individual is filed under a number--the pastor holding the only index. The files should not fall into the hands of anyone, including his pastoral successor. They should be destroyed when he leaves. Particularly grave misdoings should not be recorded at all.¹²⁷ Morris suggests a code for observations of teen-age behavior in the youth organizations: "x" the individual primarily responsible in moving the group's decision; "o" he unsuccessfully tried to move the group; "x" negative, he would not go

¹²⁶Dicks, op. cit., pp. 77-79.

¹²⁷Bonnell, op. cit., p. 91.

along with the group but was angry and sulked; "s" a special item concerning the individual important enough to record; "a" the individual absent.¹²⁸ The pastor might adapt a similar system for his own use.

Additional information may be included in the file, such as birthday, questions the individual has raised, responsibilities he has taken or refused, his general attitude, attitude of others toward him, information on his home and background, and names of his close associates.¹²⁹

Pitfalls for the Pastor in Counseling with the Teen-ager

Because of the pastor's training and experience as a public speaker he may have difficulties in becoming the patient listener a counselor must be.¹³⁰ The new concept of the pastor as leader of a democratic organization has largely supplanted the older view of the pastor as "patriarchal lord of his people." Hulme points out the dangers of the new "jolly despot" approach: the pastor may become infatuated with his position of leader; he tends to be the promoter of fellowship and happiness in the Christian group; his motives would seem to stem from his need to hold the center of attention; he may associate leadership with loudness and dominate the group. This approach does not succeed in the counseling situation where he must shift to a position of relative unimportance and give up the lead to the counselee.¹³¹

There is a pitfall in youth work for the pastor who attempts to

¹²⁸Morris, op. cit., p. 49.

¹²⁹Bowman, op. cit., p. 46.

¹³⁰Bonnell, op. cit., p. 53.

¹³¹Hulme, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

draw so near the level of his teen-agers that he identifies himself with them. This approach will not only cause him to lose their respect but will discourage them when they need to come to him for help. It is true that they want him to understand their level, but they do not want him to be on their level. The opposite approach is equally dangerous. A negative and critical attitude toward teenage behavior will drive the youngsters away.¹³²

Generalizations can be a pitfall to the pastor. Wittenberg cites the example of young men who "like sports." One, he says, may be extremely concerned about athletic success because he doubts his masculinity. Another may be active in sports because he is insecure and lonely, and he is able to lose himself and his problems in the physical activity. Stereotypes are equally misleading. Wittenberg lists seven false assumptions that are easy pitfalls for the counselor:

- (1) That certain disturbing single events in childhood have a lasting effect on life development;
- (2) That superior academic achievement has something to do with healthy development;
- (3) That nonparticipation means the same as isolation;
- (4) That rebellion means independence or inner disturbance;
- (5) That "understanding" is the same as excusing behavior;
- (6) That being firm is the same as being nasty;
- (7) That being kind is the same as being weak. . . .¹³³

Wittenberg speaks of two mistaken attitudes counselors may take with youngsters. The "you are doomed" counselor sees evil in everything and is certain to operate with false assumptions similar to those above. The "you are perfectly okay" attitude works on the principle that boys will be boys and will outgrow their problems. Since he is sure that everyone

¹³²Ibid., pp. 51-52.

¹³³Wittenberg, op. cit., pp. 144-156.

has difficulties, he is not too concerned.¹³⁴

A serious problem in working with the teen-ager arises when the counselor attempts to push him into a semi-adulthood which looks good but is not solidly founded. If his independence is not real, he may continue for many years in an adolescent way of life. The counselor must help the adolescent move away from him and stand on his own to achieve real independence. In some instances this may be painful. It requires the most mature type of love on the part of a counselor or parent.¹³⁵

Unintentional moralizing is a real hazard in preliminary counseling. While it may be natural for the pastor to moralize because of his ethical background, it clearly defeats the greater purpose in counseling.¹³⁶

The pastor may have problems in his own home, and these family problems lead to a loss of respect for himself. When he feels he must have an ideal family, appearances become the chief concern and motives lose importance. His children especially suffer in this atmosphere of subtle phariseeism. The pastor may be overcritical of his own family as the result of his high ideals. He must recognize the fact that his family is no different than other families. He should learn to enjoy his children as they are without overprotection. One of the greatest helps he can give his family is to share more of his time with them.¹³⁷

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid., pp. 233-234.

¹³⁶Hiltner, op. cit., p. 49.

¹³⁷Malme, op. cit., pp. 126-131.

Growth in Counseling

Commenting on counseling in general Bonnell advises that the counselor must be willing to go through stern disciplines of mind and heart and avail himself of every opportunity for training.¹³⁸ Hulme urges the counselor to establish systematic study habits, concentrating on the reading of significant works in the field. If it is possible he should take advantage of opportunities for clinical training.¹³⁹

The pastor should also grow in his ability through the evaluation of his own counseling relationships. Hulme advises typewritten file cards that summarize the more significant data and the responses that were revealing in the process and progress of the counseling.¹⁴⁰

In evaluating his counseling the pastor should exercise mature self-understanding in criticizing his own role. He should recognize his

"insatiable hunger for self-esteem that distort his relationships with other people. . . . He too is a historical person who has lived through the excruciating experiences of growing up in a hungry world of possessive demands and hostile rejections. He also has been deprived of love, coerced by stern parents and authorities, pushed aside by lusty sibling rivals and competitors, felt the "righteous indignation" of flaming disapproval and the resistance of sullen disdain. His own unmet needs continue to load his attitudes with subtle demands and unconscious tendencies to exploit other persons for his own satisfaction, even when he may be quite unaware of doing so."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸Bonnell, op. cit., p. 173.

¹³⁹Hulme, op. cit., p. 121. The pastor may obtain information about clinical workshops from: Institute of Pastoral Care, Inc., Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Mass., or Council for Clinical Training, Inc., 2 E. 103rd Street, New York 29, N. Y.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 119-121.

¹⁴¹Johnson, op. cit., p. 264.

Hiltner lists ten questions of which these are helpful for the pastor's self-evaluation:

1. To what extent am I interested in seeing that people get help as against my interest in their being helped by me or my profession?
2. To what extent am I interested that people get help when they need it as against my convincing them they do or may need my help or that of my profession?
3. In interpreting my counseling to what extent do I define it as broadly as my convictions tell me it is relevant and at the same time acknowledge fairly what the public in part falsely believes it to be?
4. To what extent do I know and acknowledge the differences and similarities between counseling and precounseling work and clarify them fairly to the public? . . .
6. To what extent have I disclaimed what counseling cannot do as clearly as I have affirmed what counseling can do? . . .
8. To what extent have I given a fair interpretation of the work of other counselors, describing differences as well as similarities?
9. To what extent have I followed an eductive¹⁴² approach in my precounseling work as well as in my counseling itself? . . . ¹⁴³

¹⁴² Eductive means drawing more and more of the solution out of the creative potentialities of the person who needs help.

¹⁴³ Hiltner, op. cit., p. 183.

CHAPTER IV

MEETING THE NEEDS OF TODAY'S TEEN-AGER IN THE CHURCH GROUP

The Individual Teen-ager in the Group

People form groups for the satisfaction of basic needs and continue in these groups only so long as their needs are satisfied.¹ It was noted in chapter two that the individual teen-ager has strong social needs as he moves away from his close family ties and out into the world. He wants to belong and he wants acceptance. The associations with whatever groups he may join will have very much to do with his behavior, attitudes, values, and his conception of himself.² The church is able to do him a real service by providing a group or groups to answer his social needs and strengthen his development.

The church group should be geared to the individual teen-ager in order to accomplish its purpose, for it is the individual who must benefit by the program. The training he receives in the group can have the same wholesome effect upon him as the therapy of personal counseling, for it employs the same philosophy, insights, and techniques that are used in work with individuals. He may receive increased self-understanding and find direction for his life as he learns the meaning of Christian faith in the group situation. Threats to himself and conflicts

¹Thomas Gordon, Group-Centered Leadership (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, c.1955), p. 54.

²Murray G. Ross, Religious Beliefs of Youth (New York: Association Press, c.1950), p. 209.

are reduced in the warm feeling of his group. He has opportunity to give expression to his real feelings and release unhealthy negative emotions.

Murray Ross states that the realization of satisfying relationships in the group may be one of the major goals of all personal therapy.³

Concern for the individual must therefore be the primary objective of the church youth group. Allen Ellsworth builds his entire list of objectives for group work around individual needs:

1. To help young people meet the need for fellowship and to find the sense of being "accepted" in some group.
2. To help young people understand the world in which they live, the work opportunities, cultural resources, emerging forces, social problems, machinery of social control.
3. To help them understand themselves and plan sensibly for their own lives.
4. To help them continue their education and fit it to their growing needs.
5. To help them to play and to learn to play as adults.
6. To help them develop a Christian outlook on life.
7. To offer opportunities to do something concrete to help make a better world.⁴

The Group-centered Approach

As in pastoral counseling the approach to group work should place the greater emphasis on the group and its individuals rather than on the leader. The weakness of the traditional leader-centered approach lies in the group's dependence upon the leader and the lack of growth in the group

³Ibid., pp. 201-210.

⁴Allen S. Ellsworth, editor, At Work with Young Adults (New York: Association Press, c.1950), pp. 29-30.

or its individual members as a result.⁵ Johnson offers a fine definition of the leadership that is involved in this approach:

Genuine leadership is a channel for the group to discover and express its own needs and interests. This we recognize as the democratic way of living and working together. Democracy is the fruit of Christian roots, such as the infinite worth of every person and the golden rule. . . . Yet in spite of our theories and professions we hesitate to practise Christian democracy in all of the relationships of life. It takes more time to start at the beginning and more patience to listen to the faltering ideas of others in the groping process of group discussion and group decision. It takes more confidence to trust others to decide as well for themselves as we would want to decide for them from our point of view. Group fellowship is a growth of mutual appreciation and interdependence which is available only to those who are ready to invest themselves in the risks and frustrations of group responsibility by taking one at a time and all together the steps that draw persons together in search of values to share in common.⁶

In this approach the group's purpose and function becomes very important. Nothing can succeed better in developing a sense of group-mindedness among individuals of divergent character than real unity of purpose and joint activity.⁷

To place too great an emphasis on title and office-holding may be a drawback for real group activity. The same may be said for strict adherence to formal procedure. The emphasis should be toward helping the individual young people to understand one another and to appreciate the mutual give and take of group action.⁸ In the ideal group every

⁵Gordon, op. cit., p. 1.

⁶Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1953), p. 62.

⁷Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Our Young Folks (New York: Harcourt Brace, c.1943), p. 281.

⁸Clarice M. Bowman, Ways Youth Learn (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1952), p. 61.

member participates in the actual leadership by expressing opinions and sharing decisions. Special short-term committees should have rotating memberships that include each member of the group at one time or another. The training of peer leadership in the group is essential.

The group-centered approach must be carried over into the administration of the group's activities. The leadership of the group is primarily the responsibility of its own elected leaders. The administration suggested by the Walther League is sound, following the usual order of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and including chairmen for Christian growth, membership, Wheat Ridge seals, and the Walther League Messenger. These officers are not to be dictators, but coordinators and co-planners with the whole group. The decisions are not theirs to make in executive meetings but belong to the entire society.⁹

The Function of Adult Counselors in the Youth Group

The importance of adult counselors in the youth program is well stated by Wittenberg:

The role that group leaders play in shaping the future of society cannot possibly be overestimated. Since the group provides for the individual the sense of social reality, the kind of experience he will get in the group will determine to a very large degree the way in which he looks on the world around him. Except for the family group, the voluntary association, of which we are the leaders, is the most important factor in the life of the growing individual. Because individual and group experience depends greatly on the way we lead our clubs, the future hinges on understanding of ourselves,

⁹What's Your Job?, a pamphlet published by the Walther League, Chicago, Illinois.

of them, and of the group process.¹⁰

The counselor's duties fall into two categories, those toward the young people as individuals and those toward the group.¹¹ Even though personal counseling is the pastor's responsibility, the youth counselor may take upon himself a share of this work with individuals. He should be able to recognize the symptoms of inner tension and give Christ-centered guidance. He should be a good listener. Cases that exceed his experience as a layman he will have to refer to the pastor; but a good many problems in vocational choice, family situations, spiritual doubts, social tensions, relations with friends of the opposite sex, and school work can be solved with his help. By his own attitude toward life and marriage he will exert a good influence on adolescents as they search for their own place in life. He should endeavor to become better acquainted with the teen-agers to discover what their real interests are and what they are really like.¹² Above all he should be a radiant example of Christian faith, so that by his own faith he inspires his young friends to find the significance of such faith for their own lives.

In the program of the group the counselor plays a very positive role in a negative way.

"Broadly speaking, a counselor must help young people see their fullest possibilities in Christ. He ought to keep before them high goals and high ideals. He should make them responsible for their decisions and hold them to those

¹⁰Rudolph M. Wittenberg, How To Help People (New York: Association Press, c.1953), p. 64.

¹¹Dorothy M. Roberts, Leadership of Teen-age Groups (New York: Association Press, c.1950), p. 79.

¹²Bowman, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

decisions. Negatively, he must avoid making decisions for them.¹³

The responsibility for supervision will be largely in his hands. In each group he will represent the congregation and show its interest in the youth activities. His leadership will take its form largely in guiding and suggesting as he helps the young people plan and carry out their program. In all the meetings of boards and special committees and of the whole group itself he will be on hand to help in planning worship activities, topics, recreation, athletic events, outings, and refreshments. His function and responsibility will be to help the group deal effectively with its own problems.¹⁴

His most important function must be to raise the spiritual emphasis of the program to the foreground and maintain it at a high level. Worship activities are not worship until a real contact is made with God through Jesus Christ by the individual young people.¹⁵ Topic discussions and learning situations should give a good spiritual insight into the meaning of Christian faith and its bearing on the problems of life. He will encourage missionary outreach to other young people who are in spiritual darkness. In all the various work and play activities he will help the teen-agers find the spiritual significance of the group's oneness in Christ.¹⁶

¹³ You for Youth, a pamphlet published by the Walther League through the cooperation of the Student Service Commission and the Board for Young People's Work, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

¹⁴ Roberts, op. cit., p. 187.

¹⁵ Alfred P. Klausler, Growth in Worship (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956), pp. 13-15.

¹⁶ What's Your Job?, a pamphlet published by the Walther League, Chicago, Illinois.

Adult counselors have important duties in organizations other than Christian fellowship groups and Bible classes. The Christian program of Scouting is not realized fully until the troops and packs have become Christian in purpose and provide opportunity for devotion. Much depends on the adult leaders to reach this goal. Coaches for the athletic program of the congregation should exert an important influence toward the spiritual growth of young players.

Confidence is an important attribute of the counselor. He must have confidence in himself and particularly in the God who gives him strength. He should have confidence in the teen-agers themselves and be willing to delegate responsibility according to their abilities. His own spirit of ease and friendliness should help set the tone of the group.¹⁷ Much of the detailed material in chapter three applies to the group counselor as well as to the pastor.¹⁸

He should also function as coordinator of group discussion and a resource person. His task is to help the group define the problems to be met and find a realistic basis of operation. Occasionally he may stimulate appreciation for issues to which the group is not sensitive.¹⁹ He should be experienced or willing to gain experience in the use of various methods for group study. Methods such as buzz groups, workshop, role-playing, debate, forum, panel, and the like are excellent for youth groups.²⁰

¹⁷Bowman, op. cit., pp. 54, 60.

¹⁸Supra, pp. 25ff.

¹⁹Ross, op. cit., p. 212.

²⁰For descriptions of these and other methods cf. Karl S. Rudisill, Methods for Workers with Adults (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publishing House, c.1948).

Clarice Bowman suggests the following questions for the adult leader's self-evaluation:

1. Am I growing religiously? . . .
2. Am I growing in my understanding of young people, and especially of that age with which I am privileged to work? . . .
3. Am I growing in my understanding of the Bible, in my zest for continued Bible study, and in my personal exemplification of the Bible message in my daily living? . . .
4. Am I growing in my understanding of better methods, and in my skill and confidence in using them?²¹

The Group Program Geared to Individual Needs

Teen-agers must feel a strong sense of achievement in their program, for they can find themselves in their group only when they lose themselves individually in an important job. The failure to provide a significant program accounts for a general inefficiency in many youth groups.²² The young people must be given the feeling that the church is their church. Their program should not simply duplicate activities they enjoy in school but provide a spiritual experience that inspires and challenges them.²³ An understanding of purpose is necessary. The program should never be thought of as an end in itself but as a means toward a goal.²⁴ The purpose of the program is to help individuals on their way to mature Christian adulthood. The purpose is education,

²¹Bowman, op. cit., pp. 167-171.

²²Ibid., p. 60.

²³Kenneth L. Cober and Esther Stricker, Teaching Seniors (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1940), pp. 61-62.

²⁴Wittenberg, op. cit., pp. 27ff.

training teen-agers to think clearly and to bring the power of Christian faith to bear upon their problems. The purpose is growth in two-dimensional living--toward God and their neighbor. The purpose is to create a "sustaining fellowship" of teen-agers who have been joined to Jesus Christ and bear each other up in a deeper fellowship of the spirit.²⁵

The need is a program that will fit the interests of all the teen-agers of the church, in order to help them realize that purpose in their lives.

The formation of such a program involves definite planning for continuity, depth, and a variety in content and method. There should be a balance among the various facets. The program must be planned by adults and teen-agers together, in committees and in the action of the whole group.²⁶ The program should be planned to use every means available to give each teen-ager a place.

Important parts of the program are topic and problem discussions, held in an atmosphere of frankness and friendship.²⁷ The Walther League Manual suggests that a series of well-defined topics should cover every problem which may face the individual during the years of adolescence and early life. These discussions are to create attitudes and lead to definite conclusions rather than just the learning of facts.²⁸ The value in this type of education lies in its source--the individual learns from his peers in open discussion.

²⁵Bowman, op. cit., pp. 23-25.

²⁶Roy Sorenson and Hadley S. Dimock, Designing Education in Values (New York: Association Press, c.1955), p. 48.

²⁷Bowman, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁸Walther League Manual (Chicago: Walther League, 1935), pp. 138-139.

It is helpful to vary the problems under discussion. Problems likely to cut deep into the emotions should alternate with those less disturbing.²⁹ Topics should be planned in units, each a "journey of growth" for the young individual. The units should lead to problem-solving experiences, a gathering and interpretation of information, or deeper appreciation of things spiritually significant. The topics or problems under consideration should be meaningful for the teen-ager in his present life, so that he will have opportunity to translate the learning into living immediately. In planning the topic schedule it is helpful to hear suggestions of the teen-agers themselves. Various methods may be used to sound them out--check lists, question boxes, or an open forum. The teen-agers will enjoy the opportunity to think over their problems, and the process in itself is beneficial as it helps them crystallize their feelings.³⁰ The problems that they will suggest for discussion will be the typical problems of the teen-ager in one form or another. Hulme lists the types of problems that will be beneficial and interesting to them in discussion: problems of emotional instability, social difficulties, problems over sex and courtship, family difficulties, problems in religion, adjustment to the atomic age, and vocational decisions. The pastor may be called upon to lead some discussions in these areas as a stimulus to his counseling program.³¹

The program must include opportunities for real worship, worship

²⁹Sorenson, op. cit., p. 128.

³⁰Rowman, op. cit., pp. 64-85.

³¹William B. Hulme, How to Start Counseling (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, c.1955), pp. 116-117.

that focuses on Jesus Christ and brings individual teen-agers into an intimate communion with Him. Klausler mentions three wholesome results of worship in the teen-age group: it builds up the sense of group strength, melts away the jagged edges present in almost every group, and enlarges the concept of God.³² The teen-ager is sensitive to an atmosphere of worship.³³ He needs a time to get away from the noise and rush that fills his days and to remove himself from the artificiality of life in a self-centered world. He needs a time for spiritual refreshment and the healing reality of a period in deeper fellowship with God and his fellow young people.³⁴

Undoubtedly the youngsters will need training in the art of worship. A good beginning for such training is the meaning of worship and prayer. Young hearts should be brought to understand the naturalness of communion with God and His accessibility at all times. The worship program should concentrate on participation by all members of the group. Formal worship may give way at times to simple voluntary contributions of the group, stressing sincerity of expression rather than recitation or reading.³⁵ Variety in the worship forms is an excellent way to avoid the monotony of stereotyped opening and closing ceremonies.³⁶ The experience of worship is in itself a valuable method of instruction. It is one way of

³² Klausler, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5.

³³ Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³⁴ Bowman, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

³⁶ For a large selection of worship forms for youth cf. Alfred P. Klausler, *Growth in Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1956).

acquiring certainty in matters of faith.³⁷ As an activity of learning it can open the eyes, touch the heart with compassion for others, convict an individual of sin, and bring about the changes that accompany learning. And besides there is a plus element--the part God plays in worship. And, as Clarice Bowman concludes:

The more naturally and freely and confidently young persons learn to worship God amidst their work and play together, the more likely they will be to carry that spirit into their everyday living. Their devotional lives will be strengthened, almost without their consciously knowing it.³⁸

The program should include a missionary outreach of personal evangelism. After training in the methods and inspiration through the message of the cross, the young people should be given specific opportunities to visit teen-age prospects or to take part in the organized evangelism program of the congregation. They should be encouraged to witness where they are--among friends at home and school. Special group projects of evangelism may be undertaken, such as canvassing, visiting shut-ins, and distributing tracts.³⁹ Not only will the teen-agers be performing a service for the Lord, but they themselves will benefit from the experience of witnessing.

Social and physical recreation are necessary elements of the group program. One of their most important functions is to help the teen-agers realize they are whole persons and that they must carry over into social activities the attitudes and standards they have developed in the serious

³⁷Ibid., p. 15.

³⁸Bowman, op. cit., p. 121.

³⁹Our Witness, a pamphlet published by the Walther League, Chicago, Illinois.

side of the program.⁴⁰ Refreshments are of vital concern to the teenager. There are advantages and disadvantages in the matter of sports and athletic teams. Major sports are expensive and restrict the number of participants. These activities, however, may attract some individuals who will turn out for no other activity. Minor sports or intramural participation in major sports help the group get better acquainted and provide good sources of recreation. For inter-church competition in major sports it is important that a committee be formed to establish rules and policies. The purpose of the program must be to reflect credit upon the participants and upon the church. Violations of Christian principles cannot be permitted, and the athletic program should not be allowed to compete or interfere with any other program of the society or the church.⁴¹

Counselors and planning committees of the program may find printed materials quite helpful. The helps printed by the Walther League and Youth Board of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod are very useful. Materials of other sources concerning methods and activities are often very good. But no printed materials can make up for a lack of preparation on the part of adult counselors or youth leaders.⁴²

Evaluating the Group Program

It is very important that the group evaluate its program systematically at least once a year. Clarice Bowman suggests the following procedure:

⁴⁰Roberts, op. cit., p. 177.

⁴¹Walther League Manual, pp. 256-257.

⁴²Bowman, op. cit., p. 75.

Every so often, perhaps, in any church group--from the smallest class in a country church to a big departmental organization--the members and workers should sit down together and ask themselves, "Are we being a fellowship? Are we allowing cliques to cause some individuals to feel frozen out? Are we welcoming newcomers and seeing to it that everyone feels thoroughly at ease regardless of the kind of clothes he wears or the kind of car his parents drive? Are we learning to work together thoughtfully, caring more about doing a job well than about who gets the credit, or who gets to go to a conference off somewhere? Do we pass around responsibilities, or tend to spotlight a few outstanding capable ones? Are we drawing in the more timid and shy members and finding activities in which they would be interested and can have the fun of using their talents, too?"⁴⁴

⁴³Downman, op. cit., p. 62.

CHAPTER V

COORDINATING THE TOTAL YOUTH PROGRAM IN THE CHURCH

Enlisting and Training Youth Counselors

Even in smaller congregations a number of consecrated lay youth counselors is necessary to maintain an active and efficient youth program. The pastor is often too busy to attend the regular meetings of the youth groups, much less to devote time to the many board and committee meetings.¹ It is important that the congregation is officially represented at all these meetings--especially those of the Scouting and athletic groups which are not spiritual by nature. Lay counselors may also give the pastor welcome assistance in his work with individual teen-agers.

Qualifications for lay counselors are chiefly these two, consecration and interest. Such adults--a man or woman or married couple--should be mature, consecrated servants of Christ who can inspire youngsters with their confident Christianity.² They must be interested in young people as they are, sensitive to their needs and problems and aspirations.³ Other important qualifications are patience, love, and affection for young people, and the Christ-motivated attitudes of helpfulness and cooperation.

¹What's Your Job?, a pamphlet published by the Walther League, Chicago, Illinois.

²Clarice M. Bowman, Ways Youth Learn (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1952), p. 25.

³Ibid., p. 83.

Counselors should be willing to undergo training and supervision in order to do the best job.⁴ Personal training under the pastor is very important. Equally important are the experiences of a counselors' retreat or workshop. Courses in youth work and group leadership offered by local adult educational agencies are very helpful. The congregation should make available a library of materials for the counselors in their work. Additional training may be received "on-the-job" through experience and in the mutual discussion and problem-solving at regular meetings of a youth committee.

In almost every congregation there are adults who will qualify for the position of counselor. Many congregations take service polls or questionnaires to uncover the hidden talents of their people. The pastor may sound out individuals to find their interests and enlist them in the youth program. One wrong approach, however, is to plead with persons to become counselors and give them the impression that the work is not difficult or time-consuming.⁵ A few may offer their services if the need is publicized. The Walther League Manual suggests using older young people as helpers with the younger societies to share the responsibility for the program and provide a contact between the junior and senior groups.⁶

⁴Roy Sorenson and Hadley S. Dimock, Designing Education in Values (New York: Association Press, c.1955), p. 159.

⁵Dorothy M. Roberts, Leadership of Teen-age Groups (New York: Association Press, c.1950), p. 76.

⁶Walther League Manual (Chicago: Walther League, 1935), pp. 120-121.

The Function of the Youth Committee

The chief function of a youth committee will be to coordinate the youth program of the congregation as a whole and give it the attention it deserves in the thinking and planning of the congregation. The committee should include all the counselors and adult leaders of Waltham League societies, Scout troops, Cubs, Brownies, teachers of Bible classes for young people, and the coaches of athletic teams under the congregation's sponsorship. Other interested laymen may be appointed to the committee as advisors or may attend to receive training. The pastor and teachers of the church staff are ex officio members of the committee.⁷

In its regular meetings the youth committee will function as a study group to continue the training of leaders and counselors in the principles of youth work. Through the discussion of problems they will help one another to grow in ability and experience. The committee will consider the needs of the youth organizations and study the use of facilities. They will evaluate the program as it progresses from month to month, especially in regard to the spiritual emphasis that is so essential.⁸

The committee should function as a coordinating agency to plan and map out the direction of the youth program as a whole. The group may set matters of policy for meeting times and the schedule of events in the available room space. The committee should work together to

⁷ Bowman, op. cit., p. 38.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

strengthen the fundamental purpose of the total program, namely, to lead young individuals closer to Christ and help them develop as members of His kingdom.⁹

The committee should also function as representative of the youth program to the congregation. The committee members should each be a spokesman for the program among friends and fellow members of the congregation. Together they will prepare monthly reports for congregational meetings and voters' assemblies. The committee will make recommendations to the congregation for better facilities, the purchase of helpful books, or any matters that require the congregation's decision. In turn the committee will serve as the congregation's official representative to the youth program in all its phases. They will report the decisions and desires of the congregation to the young people. They will be responsible to the congregation for the youth program.¹⁰

Other functions of the youth committee include: the maintaining of interest in the contributions the young people make to congregational life; providing of leadership for the youth program; and encouraging the congregation's financial assistance to enable participation in the larger events of the national youth organization.¹¹

⁹Ibid., pp. 39-40.

¹⁰"The Youth Representative and the Youth Committee," unpublished resolution adopted by Trinity Lutheran Congregation, Stockton, California, 1956, in possession of the writer (mimeographed).

¹¹William Graumann, The Congregational Youth Committee, a reprint of a paper which Pastor Graumann presented to the Lutheran Youth Conference in St. Louis, January, 1951, published under the auspices of the Board for Young People's Work, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

The Youth Committee in the Congregation's Administration

There are several practical ways to form the youth committee. It may be organized as a subcommittee under the Board of Education with a member of that Board as chairman. It may be established as an independent committee which reports directly to the congregation. In this position the committee should be on the same level of importance as the committees for education, evangelism, finance, stewardship, and the like. There it would be given the attention it deserves in the foreground of parish planning.¹²

The chairman of the youth committee may be placed into office in various ways, depending on the local custom. Where the youth committee is part of the Board of Education he may be elected or appointed from the membership of that Board. In the preferable position of an independent congregational committee or board for youth work the chairman may be elected by the congregation as an elder, chairman, or director--depending upon the terminology employed. As an elected officer he will receive the full support and confidence of the congregation, and the importance of his office will raise the congregation's outlook on the youth program.¹³

The length of the chairman's term of office and that of the adult counselors will depend on local practise. Ideally the term should be for three or four years--long enough to learn the work successfully

¹²Ibid.

¹³Notes taken in class in "469 Parish Administration," Alfred O. Fuerbringer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1956.

but not so long that it brings staleness. The nominators or nominating committee must be careful that only men who are qualified and interested are placed on the slate for this office.¹⁴

The full responsibility for the youth program will be given to this chairman, which he will delegate in part to each of the counselors. He will work with the counselors and preside at youth committee meetings. Usually he will present the monthly report on youth work to the congregation. He should visit each youth organization periodically to offer suggestions and assistance to the counselors. He should not, however, be asked to serve in the additional capacity of counselor or leader of an organization. He will, of course, work very closely with the pastor.

The Professional Youth Worker

The larger parish that can afford to hire an additional staff member will find the services of a professional youth worker very beneficial. The professional worker is able to serve well in the group activities and in the coordination of the entire youth program. He may also be called upon to assist in the work of counseling individual teen-agers, depending upon his ability and experience. Ellsworth mentions several qualifications for professional secretaries in the Young Men's Christian Association, a position which might compare to the youth worker in a congregation. The secretary should be between twenty and fifty years of age, preferably a man and married. He should be able to understand and aid young people, and know how to train adult leaders. He should have

¹⁴Weldon Crossland, Better Leaders for Your Church (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1955), p. 22.

an aptitude for counseling. The educational requirements for the professional secretary are a minimum of thirty hours in the fields of religious leadership, guidance, group work, administration, and community organization. He must be a college graduate.¹⁵ Several colleges and universities have instituted programs to train professional youth workers, among them Valparaiso University at Valparaiso, Indiana.

¹⁵Allen S. Ellsworth, editor, At Work with Young Adults (New York: Association Press, c.1950), pp. 103-104.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's teen-ager has problems and needs with which the church must deal on an individual basis if it is to fulfill its obligation to its youth. Where the pastor takes a deep personal interest in every teen-ager in his congregation and makes himself available for counseling, the church will receive lasting benefits. Not only will the young people have help when they need it most, but they will be better adjusted church members as adults. The counseling program itself will profit as the teen-agers mature into an adult generation that knows the value of pastoral counseling. And the church will have maintained its contact with them all during their most trying years.

Although the church's group program cannot be expected to reach all the young people, it should be geared to help those who participate. In the group activities as well as in personal counseling the attention is focused upon the growth of the individual. The entire youth program that is planned to provide activities for as many individuals as possible will give the teen-agers a place in their church, and it will bring them into experiences which lay the foundation for successful Christian living.

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