The Theology of Pastoral Care

By David Belgum

WHY is *doing* error taken less seriously than *thinking* or *speaking* error? If a preacher were publicly to deny the doctrine of grace, he would be summarily tried and defrocked. Yet if he obstructs the free flow of grace by hasty reassurance and premature absolution before the parishioner has had a chance to confess fully the nature of his sin or, on the other hand, rejects the penitent with disgust and shock, sending the person away despairing of the love and mercy of God, the church does not discipline the pastor.

Pastoral care provides the parish minister with a tangible check on his theology, for he often discovers embarrassing discrepancies between what he preaches from the pulpit or teaches to his catechetical class and those beliefs he is really ready and willing to act upon—in short, his *real* beliefs. The Communion sermon might go something like this: "God forgives the penitent freely out of his boundless love and unmerited grace. 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.' 'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety and nine who need no repentance.' " After the service an excited and eager informer from the Ladies' Aid inquires solicitously of the preacher if he feels that what has been going on between Mr. X. and young Alice J., one of the older catechumens, is quite right, especially since Mr. X. is a married man and Mrs. X. is expecting a baby any day now. The pastor severely chastises Mrs. Big Mouth for bearing such unthinkable false witness against one of the most dedicated men on the church council. Of course, the acid test comes Monday morning when Mr. X. walks into the pastor's study instead of going to work and says, "Pastor, is it really true what you said in your sermon yesterday, that God can forgive anything?" The preacher-theologian tries to remember whether he used the phrase *simul iustus et peccator* yesterday or the Sunday before. Theology is suddenly going to be vitally important for Mr. X. and his wife and the expected baby who will be baptized in the church a couple months from now, and equally significant for Miss Alice J., and perhaps her parents. How the grace

of God is translated and applied to this ticklish and complex human situation by means of pastoral care can make a far more crucial impression on these souls than many an intellectual statement about the doctrine of grace.

Somehow it has become easier to classify actions as adiaphora than thoughts and words. Perhaps the admonition of St. James is pertinent here: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22).

Theology Demands Expression

Great and moving beliefs cannot be contained in a vacuum or ignored. They must find an outlet, motivate one to some specific service or response.

Prophecy against a proud and self-satisfied people and against social injustice dates back to the early beginning of the people of God as a natural outgrowth of their faith in God. A closely allied expression was an intensive effort to preserve the true faith against all error, idolatry, or dilution.

Witnessing about the good news of the kigdom is highlighted in the early church as the inevitable response to the great theological fact of the resurrection.

Sacramental action in the specific form of Baptism and the Lord's Supper had its Old Testament counterpart in sacrifice and ceremony.

Instruction in order that believers might know ever more fully the God who had revealed himself through Christ is a self-evident demand of theology itself and was early appreciated as a necessity in the experience of the church.

Pastoral care is, among many others, a natural expression of theology. It is the love of God translated into specific help for people under special stress or with particular needs. One quickly senses the interrelatedness of such loving concern with the above sample expressions which theology demands. The greatest prophets were not preaching just for its own sake but because of a love and concern for their people; they were caring for their spiritual welfare. And is not the care of the individual the whole reason for administering the sacraments and the work of evangelism. Whatever is unique about pastoral

care, we must also agree that there is an aspect of it in all the work and activity of the church.

Definition and Terminology

Webster defines care as "charge, oversight, or management, implying responsibility for safety; as under a doctor's *care*. 'The *care* of all the churches,' II Cor. 11:28." (The RSV translates it "anxiety.") Interestingly the Latin term for care is *cura,* meaning medical attendance. Yet one sees that the second definition of cure in the dictionary is "spiritual charge, care of souls; the office of a parish priest or of a curate. . . ." It is understandable that current emphases should stress the cure aspect of pastoral care, but it will be pointed out later that there is a need for a broader definition.

In the Old Testament the term *hesed* is frequently found to describe the kindness, favor, good deeds, mercy, and pity involved in what we would consider pastoral care or concern. It is usually translated as lovingkindness or mercy.

Three New Testament words have a bearing on our understanding this concept. The word *merimna* means care or concern, but it has too much of the aspect of anxiety in it in some verses to be a completely adequate term. Nevertheless, it is used in I Corinthians in comparing believers with members of the Body of Christ: ". . . that the members of the body may have the same care for one another; if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." The word describing how the Good Samaritan cared for the victim by the roadside is *epimeleomai,* yet it is not used very often. The term for shepherding (*poimaino*), literally to tend a flock or herd or lead them to pasture, figuratively to protect, rule, govern, foster, is frequently used of Christ and the ministry.

It is difficult and perhaps impossible to find in the Scriptures any one term or phrase that would be equivalent to our current usage of pastoral care. Seward Hiltner has proposed the concept of "perspectives"[1] to replace the more rigid categories of pastoral "offices" according to which the work of the ministry was divided into separate and

1 Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York, 1958), Chapter IV, "Perspectives."

rather isolated compartments. "The term 'perspective' suggests that there is a certain point of view in the subject who is performing the viewing or feeling or helping. But it implies also that this subject is not completely described by this slant or point of view."[2]

Pastoral care as a general approach or orientation in theory and practice permeates and is interrelated with other branches of theology as well as other ministerial functions. It would be possible to use pastoral care in the sense of loving pastoral concern for people, in which case it ought not to be absent from any activity of the church. As a motive it should permeate preaching, church administration, the instruction of the young, work with fellowship groups, and all the rest. To paraphrase a passage of Scripture we could say, "We care for others because God first cared for us."

Paul Johnson contrasts pastoral care with public leadership. This is true in a sense because we hesitate to share our most painful hurts or grievous sins in public. When pastoral care has been performed in public, there have sometimes been serious consequences, as in the case of a young couple who had to get married as a result of indiscreet intimacies at a Sunday School picnic. The pastor and father agreed that before they could be married or re-accepted into the fellowship of the congregation, they must confess their sin publicly before the congregation. A series of later pastors, a mental hospital staff, and a private psychoanalyst all agreed that this traumatic experience of public shame was crucial in fixating this woman in her psychoneurotic and hypochondriacal pattern for life. Johnson offers the following definition of pastoral care: "Pastoral care may be defined as a religious ministry to individual persons in dynamic relationships, arising from insight into essential needs and mutual discovery of potentialities for spiritual growth."[3] Those who desire a more explicitly Christian definition will prefer Willibald Demal's definition: "It is the main task of pastoral care to transmit to the human soul the grace of God, to keep and sustain the human soul in this state of grace, and thus to educate the human being 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Eph. 4-13). It is obvious that the degree of success attending this task will be in proportion to the pastor's knowl-

2 Seward Hiltner, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
3 Paul Johnson, *Psychology of Pastoral Care* (New York, 1953), p. 24.

edge of the natural characteristics and particular conditions of the soul entrusted to his care."[4]

Pastoral care is special, added, and individualized help offered to an overwhelmed person in a stressful situation or undergoing a crisis in his life. Needed therefore is a specific and individualized adaptation and application of the Word and will and grace of God over and above that offered through the standard and regular ministries of the church, such as preaching and the administration of the sacraments.

Semantics and the Search for Cognates

Unclear definition of terms has made a host of unnecessary enemies between various disciplines, not least of which has been the shadow boxing between the behavioral sciences and theology. Demal's attitude, quoted above, which shows an appreciation for "knowledge of the natural characteristics and particular conditions of the soul," goes a long way toward furthering co-operation between these two fields.

Often psychotherapists and pastors have discovered how similar their aims were when both had dealt with the same patient. Both have been working toward such goals as reconciliation, "acceptance of the unacceptable" (which, I believe, is Tillich's phrase), freedom from egocentric bondage unto an "abundant life," more adequate interpersonal relationships, etc. On the other hand, many over-zealous and not too profound bridge builders have glibly equated terms that are not truly equivalent. *Redemption* is not identical with therapy, which might or might not be an aspect of redemption in a given case. *Sin* is not necessarily synonymous with neurosis or maladjustment; the better question might be, when is it cause and when is it effect? Catharsis is not always *confession,* which has as a necessary implication repentance and contrition and all that these terms imply, such as responsibility and accountability. *Forgiveness* is more demanding than acceptance, as evidenced by the fact that the psychotherapist has no real equivalent to the church's forms of absolution.

Pastoral care has been able to utilize many of the terms and concepts developed by psychology, sociology, psychiatry, and anthropology in understanding the role of the pastor in connection with Holy Com-

4 Willibald Demal, *Pastoral Psychology in Practice,* translated by Joachim Werner Conway (New York, 1955), p. 6.

munion (particularly when administered to the sick) and the great crises and events of confirmation, marriage, and the funeral. In many ways this has not been a fair dialogue, for the church has not offered its insights specifically and effectively to the workers in the behavioral sciences.

Questions and Answers Involved in Pastoral Care

Questions asked of theology frequently arise from the pastoral care situation. The Church of England hospital chaplains have compiled a provocative little book suggesting some of these questions.[5] There is the problem of suffering and evil; whence its source and power? The crisis of death raises inevitably the question of man's ultimate destiny and personal eschatology. "What is the relation between healing and faith?" asked a group of pastors in a summer clinical pastoral training course.

What shall be a Christian anthropology capable of undergirding pastoral care? Should it be optimistic or pessimistic? The minister in the situation of pastoral care wants to know the practical implications of such theological terms as "total depravity," "predestination," "freedom of the will," and "the new man in Christ."[6] What does Scripture say of man's self-concept, and how much and what kind of self-love is allowed in the passage about loving the Lord with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourself? And is it true that the biblical concept of man places him in community—the people of Israel in the Old Testament dispensation and the fellowship of the New Testament church.

These basic questions should be directed toward theology for metaphysically and logically stated answers that hang together in a coherent whole. They are not the kind of questions that should be directed toward the social and physical sciences.

Questions directed toward the behavioral or social sciences are constantly arising from the practice of pastoral care. An excellent Roman Catholic work in this field sympathetically points out why the church must take cognizance of the contributions of the social sciences.

5 *A Priest's Work in Hospital,* edited by J. Gordon Cox (London, 1955).

6 See an article by Paul W. Pruyser, "Toward a Doctrine of Man in Psychiatry and Theology," *Pastoral Psychology,* Vol. IX, No. 82 (March, 1958), pp. 9-13. Also, David E. Roberts, *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man* (New York, 1950).

"As faithful Catholics, we do not doubt for a moment that grace can accomplish anything and everything. But the priest, as an instrument of God upon earth, must do his best to remove anything that could make the operation of grace more difficult."[7] It is interesting to note that the man who wrote the introduction to this book holds the title of professor of Pastoral Medicine in the University of Vienna. Yes, for an understanding of those many impedimenta that "make the operation of grace more difficult," be they brain tumor, alcoholism, schizophrenia, environmental or genetic factors, emotional, social, or physical influences and pressures, we turn gratefully to the vast researches of cultural anthropology, sociology, social and personal psychology, psychiatry, and other fields of medicine. These are the resources when such questions as the following are asked by the pastor: "What physical and mental endowments does this parishioner have with which to meet his life situation that seems at present too difficult for him?" "What are the latent and obvious causes for this man's behavior (not to be confused with questions about first cause)?" "What are the present stresses against which this man is wrestling—disease, physical handicap, social pressures, fears, both concrete and imagined?"

Why have some churchmen feared these so-called secular sciences in understanding man when they have not hesitated to use archeology, philology, history, comparative literature, and even physics and chemistry to study the Word of God, date old manuscripts, and get a clearer understanding of the meaning of certain passages of Scripture. Think of the scientific fields utilized to prepare a lexicon for the help of exegetical theologians. Yes, it is legitimate to direct many questions from the practice of pastoral care toward the social and behavioral sciences.

Answers come from the other branches of theology, not only citing examples but giving the rationale behind this ministry.

Exegetical Theology is a good place to begin to look for answers because for the Christian ministry it is a basic foundation. Professor Sitler has given a dramatic example of how pastoral care cannot be derived easily or glibly or obviously from an accurate reading of

7 Erwin Ringel and Wenzel Van Lun, *The Priest and the Unconscious,* translated by Meyrick Booth (Westminster, Maryland, 1954), p. 10.

Scripture.[8] He told about a group of professors of Christian Ethics who had adjourned from a discussion meeting for lunch in central Manhattan when suddenly they came upon a man who had just been struck by a taxi. One of their number was quick to lean forward and act on his Christian impulse to follow the example of the Good Samaritan when a native New Yorker restrained him and said it was against the law to move a stricken man, that an ambulance had already been dispatched from Bellevue Hospital with a trained emergency intern to assist the man. Sure enough, while they were still speaking, the sound of the siren drew nearer. In this case it was necessary to translate Scripture from one historical and cultural setting to another, as well as from the Greek to the English language. In fact, this is a principle accepted by all except extreme literalists.

In listing dependent and needy people, Holy Scripture includes the stranger and his need of hospitality and care (Gen. 18:2-5 and Jer. 9:2). The lost wanderer of the desert sands was helpless without the concern of some man fortunate enough to have a tent, food, and water. His need of these basic elements was so similar to that of sheep that it was quite natural for the figure of the shepherd to be applied to those caring for the people of God. All travel was hazardous, and no shepherd knew when he might need just such help to save his own life. Care and guidance of children was as obvious as the special care needed for the little lambs in the flock. We see this in many references to the fatherless.

Although religious leaders were to be concerned for the welfare of the people of Israel, a great deal of what we would today call pastoral care was not done by professional people but was rather taken care of within the family and tribal structure. Prophets spoke out mainly to correct economic and social oppression. Let us consider, as just one example, the care of the aged, which is becoming acute in our own generation. In Ps. 71 we read a rather pathetic plea: "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent." This prayer is addressed to God, but perhaps also to the children who are now in their strength of maturity, no longer dependent on the aged and weakening parents. Perhaps there is some lurking

8 An illustration used by Joseph Sitler in a sermon in Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, May 5, 1958, on the occasion of the dedication of the headquarters of the Lutheran Welfare Society of Minnesota.

fear that children will not remember the Fourth Commandment or fail to practice it in this crucial time. In Prov. 20 we read: "The glory of young men is their strength, but the beauty of old men is their gray hairs." Joseph, long before the commandment about parent-child relations was formally stated, was deeply concerned for his old father and provided for his latter years. Pastoral care must translate these answers from Scripture into the mid-twentieth century situation of scattered families, broken families, rapid mobility and migratory laboring groups, urban efficiency apartments, periods of recession or unemployment, technological and cultural changes.

Jesus made his pastoral care of people as the Good Shepherd very specific and direct. He instituted the laying of hands on the sick (Mark 16:18), and in sending out the seventy he instructed them, "Heal the sick that are therein, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you' " (Luke 10:9). The care of Peter for those in need was so effective that "the people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed" (Acts 5:16). There is much we can learn from Scripture, not only about what pastoral care is and how it should be carried out, but also what the rightful responsibility of other than religious professionals (such as parents, children, fellow believers, etc.) should be.

Historical Theology provides yet another kind of answer for the questions of pastoral care as it unfolds and makes available the experiences and traditions of the church for two thousand years. If church history teaches us anything, it should be to be leary of fads and extremes which have unbalanced the total mission of the church. Thus this discipline will guard us from over-exaggerating pastoral care in this day of enthusiastic acceptance of healing, counseling, and psychotherapy. Those who have lived through the Religious Education fervor of the 1920's will recognize the danger of such panaceas and narrow-mindedness.

During the Middle Ages numerous monastic orders and lay brotherhoods rendered pastoral care to the sick and needy, the distressed and troubled. In that cultural setting there was not so much competition for the privilege of doing welfare and health work, counseling, and guidance as there is today, when special associations have been formed to serve each category of need, whether it be cerebral

palsy and tuberculosis or the mentally ill and mentally retarded. We must remember that in the Middle Ages the church was the chief source of care.

Many changes came with the Reformation, since it accompanied as well as caused a general upheaval in the structure of society. New ideas about the relationship between church and state and about the obligation of the church to society made radical changes in the welfare and health work of the church as well as in the understanding and practice of pastoral care.

Historical perspective is needed by those performing pastoral care. The missionary movements, the coming and going of various theological emphases and ecclesiastical practices, as well as the background of the local parish and its synod must all be understood and kept in mind by the pastor in his work with individuals as well as in the rest of his ministry.

Systematic Theology provides pastoral care with the necessary over-all framework within which to function. Without the guide lines and correctives of such a comprehensive framework, pastoral care can become merely another group of techniques and expediencies to achieve the "good adjustment" of man to himself—in short, anthropocentric.

William Whyte gives us a devastating picture of the church of suburbia to which his "organization man" belongs. He quotes Pastor Leinberger's view that the goal of the church is human relations pure and simple.

> I think this is the basic need—the need to belong to a group. You find this fellowship in a church better than anywhere else. And it is contagious. In a community like Park Forest, when young people see how many other people are going to church regularly, they feel they ought to. Another need is that of counseling. Young people want a place to take their problems and someone to talk to about them. Put all these things together and you get what we're after—a sense of community. We pick out the more useful parts of the doctrine to that end.[9]

How desperately this pastor and church need some of the doctrines of the church which stress the eternal perspective. I cannot vouch for the musical or literary merit of the hymn in question, but it is doubtful

9 William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York, 1956), pp. 406, 407.

if this church ever sings the one that begins, "I'm but a pilgrim here; heaven is my home."

The late Professor David E. Roberts wrestled with the relationship between doctrine and care. His approach is to be preferred far above the one held by the pastor of suburbia.

> Since every one faces theological questions in one way or another, how he decides them will have a profound bearing upon his interpretation of the meaning of the psychological facts. Our normative criteria concerning what is good and bad for man, both psychologically and ethically, cannot be divorced from our world-views concerning "man's place in the cosmos."[10]

So we see that pastoral care cannot operate apart from the other branches of theology any more than can homiletics or catechetics or their tangible expressions in preaching and Christian education.

Answers are also provided by the behavioral and social sciences. The Roman Catholic study already mentioned presents a wholesome attitude toward the contributions of psychotherapy to the practice of pastoral care. The authors say, "In the care of souls, we can employ not only the means provided by faith, but also those offered us by nature."[11] And David Roberts wrote: "The task of formulating a theological interpretation of man must be tackled afresh in each generation, and what one attempts to say from a Christian perspective can hardly be related effectively to the thought of this generation if it ignores or fails to comprehend the recent contributions which have been made to a 'science of man.' "[12] Thus to many present-day church members the insights into personality gained from psychoanalysis have made the doctrine of original sin much easier to understand. Also the case studies and researches of psychology have shown the usefulness of the church's practice of confession.

Hiltner cites an example from A. A. which shows how the nature of grace can become more meaningful once it has been demonstrated in a personal relationship. "Condemnation the alcoholic had had in plenty; and perhaps from his wife and friends, love. But he had never experienced the two together in this form. One who understands the process thoroughly and from the inside, so that one literally can not

10 *Op. cit.*, p. 146.
11 *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
12 *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

be fooled by any rationalization whatever, nevertheless will get up at two A.M., drag the alcoholic out of a bar, render the physical care necessary to start the dehydrating process, at the expense of any other obligation whatever. Here is inexorable judgment along with almost unlimited concern. . . ."[13] A theological student once said that he had been helped to experience and believe in forgiveness and in the doctrine of grace through pastoral counseling which he underwent and through the experience of providing pastoral care for hospital patients in a clinical pastoral training program. This in no way is meant to assert that this experience (either giving or receiving pastoral care) validated the doctrine of grace; but it helped him to see its relevance in a unique and personal way which had not been possible for him through intellectual channels alone.

The foregoing has been intended to show the questions and answers involved in pastoral care and how a continuous dialogue goes on between theology in its various branches and the behavioral and social sciences, and, further, how they meet in the theory and practice of pastoral care.

Pastoral Care as Expediter Stands in the Middle

Since theology has often been called the queen of the sciences, perhaps we might draw an analogy from the physical sciences to illustrate the relationship between theology and pastoral care. In the General Electric Company there is quite a distance functionally between the theoretical physicist doing his research in the laboratory and the end of the assembly line where the finished product is ready for the use and enjoyment of the customer. Somewhere in between is the production engineer who facilitates the process of turning the abstract idea into a concrete product. He is a multi-discipline specialist (if that is not too gruesome a contradiction in terms), a co-ordinator, synthesizer, and expediter.

Naturally this expediter knows some physics and chemistry, though often surely not so much as the researcher in the laboratory. He is somewhat acquainted with mechanical engineering, architecture, and design in order to lay out a workable assembly line. He will con-

13 Seward Hiltner, "What We Get and Give in Pastoral Care. What We Get: II. Theological Understanding," *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. V (March, 1954), pp. 23, 24.

sult with time study and efficiency experts and draw on the broad experience of heating and lighting engineers. He has done his job well if the radio comes off the assembly line according to specifications and in keeping with the original theory, and also attractively packaged in a crush-proof corrugated box.

He will not be praised by his boss for having made ingenious innovations without at least checking with the laboratory and original blueprints or the administration. He will certainly be deposed from the stewardship of his position if he manages to produce can openers, or even electric shavers, on the radio assembly line, no matter how superior those can openers or electric shavers might be.

Just as faulty electronic equipment in a television camera can make of no effect a part of the enormous effort of the church's evangelism program, so psychotic, neurotic, or psychosomatic bottlenecks might make less effective the channels whereby grace is intended to be bestowed upon a needy soul. Thus when Holy Communion seems not to be working its proper and gracious blessing in some person, it becomes the task of pastoral care to deal with the impediment, whether by personal confession and absolution, pastoral counseling, group methods, or by calling in some specialist to aid, be he family physician, social worker, or psychotherapist.

Just as the repair of the equipment in the case of the faulty camera is not an end in itself but a means to the larger goal of communicating the Gospel to millions of people over television, just so the therapy of the handicapped person mentioned above has the ultimate end of his freedom to respond to the grace which now has unhindered flow.

Pastoral care must be seen against the background of the basic doctrines of the church concerning the work of Christ, the nature of man, the function and responsibility of the church, the cause and effect of sin, God's creative activity and providence, the relationship between the Sanctifier and the communion of saints, and the work of the ministry of reconciliation.

On the other hand, pastoral care, if it is to be carried out with good stewardship of time and energy, must be alert to and utilize all helpful insight into man's social relations and emotional nature, whether that information be gleaned from anthropology or sociology, psychology or psychiatry, the physical, biological, or social sciences.

Toward a Broader Concept of Pastoral Care

"Feed my sheep," said Jesus to Peter. This would suggest that pastoral care is not limited to healing. Yet in the past decade there has been strong emphasis on pastoral care as healing, as is indicated by a plethora of articles on its relationship with psychiatry, counseling, and therapy of various sorts. Since Jesus used the term "feed," we shall not be stretching a point to make an analogy with the modern dietitian, our professional feeder. The dietitian in the hospital can rightly be thought of as a therapist when she provides special diets for diabetic, post-operative, and heart patients. But we say that the dietitian in the public school cafeteria across the street, who plans hot lunches for one thousand pupils, is providing nutrition, not therapy. Yet one is no less a dietitian than the other. The work of the pastor in caring for the sheep of God's flock includes the daily nurture of the ninety-and-nine as well as the care of the one who is broken and bruised.

"The care of all the churches" (II Cor. 11:28) is a phrase that indicates that pastoral care is not limited to the individual case in a one-to-one relationship. Gibson Winter feels that pastoral care is too often thought of as synonymous with counseling with individuals.[14] This exaggerates the isolation and individualism which is already too much a part of our American culture. There has been a growing awareness of this problem, which is being counter-balanced by an emphasis on group work and group dynamics. The author knows of several churches which have added social workers to their staff especially to supplement the pastoral care of the minister by making the fellowship life of the church more fruitful and creative. We know that many people can be helped in groups who have not responded to the one-to-one relationship in counseling.

Pastoral Care is the work of the whole church. It is not limited to the clergy. Only because not everyone can have certain competence or time to devote to the work of pastoral care, we designate a pastor to be especially available; but this ought not remove from other members of Christ's body the admonition to "bear one another's burdens."[15]

In Old Testament times concern for the general welfare of people

14 Gibson Winter, "Pastoral Counseling *or* Pastoral Care," *Pastoral Psychology,* Vol. 8, No. 71, Feb. 1957, pages 16-24.

15 See Suzanne de Dietrich, *The Witnessing Community* (Philadelphia, 1958), Chapter III: "God Sets Apart a People."

was incumbent upon the heads of families, and widely distributed so that actually all persons were to show mercy and hospitality to the widow and the fatherless and the stranger in their midst. In biblical as well as medieval times, much of what we call pastoral care today was done within the home or among nearby relatives. Consider the function of the sponsors or godparents a century ago before family ties became so loosened and social mobility so accelerated. The godparents would quite naturally adopt the orphan in case of the death of the parents, and the whole process of care would take place within the fellowship of the local church. Now it has become a complex social service procedure calling for specialized training and a wide acquaintance with the legal requirements and community resources. There have been some benefits from this development, but it should be noted that it represents depersonalization. The modern Christian can hire specialists to love his neighbor on his behalf, and this can include the pastor as well as the other "helping professions."

A timid, shy spinster was committed to a mental hospital after having attempted suicide. During the eight months of her hospitalization, ten or twelve men and women from her church took turns calling on her. The pastor was quite sure that their concern and love for her had been at least as helpful to her and perhaps more so than his own pastoral calls. They had shared her burden in a spontaneous way and had accepted her in love.