

1984

## An evaluation of sin for clients who may have a sin problem

Alice Jean Mosch  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©1984 Alice Jean Mosch

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>

---

### Recommended Citation

Mosch, Alice Jean, "An evaluation of sin for clients who may have a sin problem" (1984). *Graduate Research Papers*. 2992.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2992>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

---

## An evaluation of sin for clients who may have a sin problem

### Abstract

The major purpose of the paper is to look at 11 sin 11 and its relationship to counseling. Could some counselees benefit more if their behavior was seen as sinful rather than caused by some psychological illness? According to Daubner (1982), this topic is important because a counselor's style and methodology is influenced by his views on the nature of man, whether he is aware of those views. Every theory of psychology is based on certain presuppositions (Adams, 1972). The good counselor then, should know how his assumptions and values affect his counseling.

AN EVALUATION OF SIN FOR CLIENTS  
WHO MAY HAVE A SIN PROBLEM

---

A Research Paper  
Presented to  
The Department of Educational Administration  
and Counseling  
University of Northern Iowa

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Alice Jean Mosch  
December 1984

This Research Paper by: Alice Jean Mosch  
Entitled: An Evaluation of Sin for Clients  
Who May Have a Sin Problem

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement  
for the Degree of Master of Arts.

11/5/1984  
Date Approved

Robert T. Lembke  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Research Paper

11/5/1984  
Date Received

Robert T. Lembke  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Faculty Adviser

11/6/84  
Date Received

Robert Krajewski  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Head, Department of Educational  
Administration and Counseling

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Definition of Terms.....	1
2. Review of Literature.....	10
Psychopathology.....	10
Judgment.....	14
Punishment.....	17
Legalism.....	19
Ethics.....	21
Guilt.....	25
Psychology.....	28
A Word of Hope and Responsibility.....	31
Religion.....	33
3. Solution, Summary, and Recommendations.....	34
A Solution to Sin.....	34
Summary.....	43
Recommendations.....	45
References.....	49
Appendixes.....	56
A. Figure 1 - Waldman's (1970) theory of the sin- neurotic complex.....	56
B. Figure 2 - Mowrer's (1961, 1964) theory of hidden sin leading to psychopathology..	57

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

The major purpose of the paper is to look at "sin" and its relationship to counseling. Could some counselees benefit more if their behavior was seen as sinful rather than caused by some psychological illness? According to Daubner (1982), this topic is important because a counselor's style and methodology is influenced by his views on the nature of man, whether he is aware of those views. Every theory of psychology is based on certain presuppositions (Adams, 1972). The good counselor then, should know how his assumptions and values affect his counseling.

#### Definition of Terms

Three assumptions must be made before defining sin. First, there is a God who is Holy and Righteous and who desires these qualities in man (Hiltner, 1968). Second, the Bible is a valid source of knowledge and truth. Through the Bibliographical Test, McDowell (1979) proved that the Bible is the most historically reliable book that man has. Third, man is a free moral agent (Hiltner, 1968). Sin can only be understood within the above context. If God did not care about man's morality or if man's behavior were totally determined, there would be no need to write a paper on sin (Hiltner, 1968).

The consensus of many theologians, pastors, psychologists, and counselors is that the essence of all sin is pride or self-sufficiency. Niebuhr (1958) defined the pride that is sinful:

The basic sin of pride does not mean some conscious bit of exaggerated self-esteem, but the general inclination of all men to overestimate their virtues, powers, and achievements. Augustine defined sin as the "perverse desire of height," or as man's regarding himself as his own end, instead of realizing that he is but a part of a total scheme of means and ends (p. 348).

The first recorded sin in the Bible was that of pride. In Genesis 3:5-6, Satan tempted Eve by telling her she would be like God if she ate the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Jabay (1970), a Christian counselor, described man's problem as that of being mispositioned. He has positioned himself in God's place and worships himself rather than the true God.

An aspect of pride is selfishness. Menninger (1973) wrote, "Synonyms for pride are vanity, egocentricity, hubris, arrogance, self-adoration, selfishness, self-love, and narcissism" (p. 135). Agreeing with the above, Henderson (1977) said that sin was "the willful disregard or sacrifice of the welfare of others for the gratification of self" (p. 427). A few well-known Christian theologians acknowledging that pride and selfishness were the essence of sin were Augustine, Calvin, Aquinas and Luther (Fairchild, 1978).

The essence of sin as pride defines what man is inwardly; what his nature is; what he is at the center of his

being. God in Jeremiah 17:9, referred to this center as the heart and saw it as desperately wicked. Some theologians and pastors use "total depravity" to describe man's nature. The problem is that people have misinterpreted this term and have misunderstood what Jesus said about the heart. "Total depravity" does not mean nor was Jesus implying that man is as bad as he can be. Otherwise, there would be no need for counseling. "Total depravity" merely means that each aspect of man fell or was affected by sin, his mind, emotions, and will (Benner, 1981). Man does possess goodness which comes from being made in the Image of God (Packer, 1978). Because God is moral, his creation possesses morality. God said in Romans 2:14-15 that He has placed His laws in man's heart and mind. But even man's religiousity and good works are often imperfect, laced with false humility (pride) and egocentricity. Apart from God and His Word, man's only moral guide, his conscience, also tainted by sin, can lead him to make wrong moral judgments (Anderson, 1976; Barrett, 1975). Narramore (1966) defined the conscience (superego) as "the attitude of an individual toward the moral or social implications of his behavior" (p. 266). One man compared to another may be better but in comparison to God's holiness and perfection, he still misses the perfect standard of God (Hiltner, 1968). Ryrie (1965) defined the sin nature as "the capacity to do all those things (good or bad) that can in no way commend us to God" (p. 1).



Man's sinful nature of pride and selfishness first affects his thoughts or mind and then proceeds outwardly to affect his behavior and feelings (Crabb, 1975). Crabb (1975) saw "the content of the sin nature . . . in the mind" (p. 45). Jesus believed man's sinful thoughts to be as wrong as his acts of sin. He said in Matthew 5:28, " . . . but I say to you, that every one who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." According to Crabb (1975), pride manifests itself in the person thinking that something more than God and His ways are required to meet his needs. Instead, the individual thinks his needs can be better met by his own means. This belief, if dwelt on long enough, may lead to actual breaking of God's moral laws, stealing or murder (Crabb, 1975). "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7). This breaking of God's laws, the Bible calls lawlessness. Biblically, Stott (1971) divided wrongdoing into two categories, both of which assume "the existence of a moral standard" (p. 64). Positively, sin meant "the trespass of a boundary . . . . an act which violates justice" (Stott, 1971, p. 64). I John 3:4 says, "Every one who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." Negatively, sin meant missing the mark or the bullseye (Stott, 1971). James 4:17 says, "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." The latter implies that imperfection or the lack of conformity to God's moral principles is sin

(Barbour, 1930). An example of lawlessness was Eve's prideful disobeying of God's command not to eat fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 3:6). Refusing to help the poor would be an example of failing to obey God's principles on sharing (e.g., Matthew 25:31-46). Examples of sinful feelings are hate, jealousy, worry, etc. (Galatians 5:19-21; Luke 12:29; Titus 3:3).

Sin is actually anything opposite of God's love. Fairlie (1978) defined sin as love that has gone wrong. He went on to say:

(It is characteristic of the intricacy of Christian theology that it should find the cause of sin in the same impulse to love that is also the root of all virtue.) Pride and Envy and Anger are sins of perverted love. The love is directed to a worthy object-- in each case, to oneself -- but it is directed in a false manner. The fault in them is that one imagines that one may gain some good for oneself by causing harm to others. Sloth is placed next as a sin of defective love. The love may be directed to a deserving object, but it is not given in a proper measure. Avarice and Gluttony and Lust are sins of excessive love. The love may again be directed to what in themselves are deserving objects, but it is so excessive that it interrupts, and must in the end destroy, one's capacity to love other objects that are also and perhaps even more deserving (pp. 34-35).

Involved in all these distorted forms of love is selfishness and pride. Even loving something or someone (idolatry) which may appear honorable, actually may develop from some selfish emotional or physical need. Even though a person may act in love, his motives or the intentions for his behavior may be sinful or selfish. According to Hebrews 4:12, God judges man's motives as well as his thoughts and behavior. Since

love is Jesus Christ (I John 4:8) and Jesus is the Word (John 1:1), sin is actually anything less than Christ-like or "contrary to the Character of God" (Ryrie, 1965, p. 1).

Some clarifications must be made on the definition of sin. First, sin includes both conscious and ignorant thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Ryrie, 1965) by a rational person who knows the difference between right and wrong (Packer, 1978). God will not judge eternally those who sin ignorantly unless they were once knowledgeable of their sin but ignored it. The Bible indicates in Romans 2:12-16, that God will only judge people after death according to the knowledge they possessed of Him and His Word (McDowell and Stewart, 1980; Luke 12:47-48). However, because of God's moral laws that He cannot change, people do suffer while on earth when they unknowingly sin. Regardless of the circumstances, God's law is that the wages of sin are death of one form or another (Romans 6:23). In addition, God will not judge nonrational people such as children below the age of accountability, demonics, psychotics, or people with irrational behaviors such as agoraphobia or kleptomania (Packer, 1978).

Second, distinctions need to be made between sin, desire, and temptation. In The New Compact Bible Dictionary edited by Bryant (1967), temptation is defined as enticement to evil. Graham in the book edited by Flint (1966), said that the first time a person thinks a particular wrong thought, it is not sin but temptation. However, the moment he starts dwelling on

that wicked thought, then it becomes sin. Because the person could not prevent the temptation, he was not responsible for it; but with God's help, could keep it from becoming sin. In addition, Durham (1982) distinguished sin from desire. He said that all man's basic desires and needs (e.g.'s, the need for love, security, sex, etc.) were good but that they could be fulfilled in sinful ways.

Third, sin as selfishness needs clarifying. Self-esteem or self-respect are not the same as selfishness. A person cannot love others unless he properly loves himself first. The necessity of loving self comes from being made in the Image of God, for God Himself seeks to be happy (Packer, 1978). However, too high or too low of an opinion of self are both prideful. Packer (1978) wrote, "self-love is not sin till it becomes inordinate" (p. 181). The answer is a balanced love toward God, others, and self (Stott, 1975). When a person realizes he was made in the Image of God and that God's Son died in his place for his sins to give him new life and purpose, he should have no problems with self-esteem even when he realizes he is a sinner (Belgum, 1963).

Finally, sin must be differentiated from mental illness. As mentioned before, sin is basically controllable with God's help, yet unChrist-like thoughts, feelings, or acts by a rational human being. Mental illness, on the other hand, will be used in this paper to mean any functional or organic behavioral disorder (Chaplin, 1975) which is not consciously

controllable (Packer, 1978) even with God's help. For example, drug abuse is only a sinful habit if the person and God can break the bondage to drugs. Otherwise, the person's problem has become a physical or psychological illness which requires professional help to solve. Actually, the longer a person practices sin, the less responsible he becomes (Barbour, 1930; Hadfield, 1926). The social drinker at first was able to stop drinking and probably felt that he was wrong for getting drunk occasionally. But, when he could no longer control his drinking, when he became an alcoholic, he was no longer a sinner but a sick individual suffering from a disease. Graham, cited in Flint (1966), said, "A man may not be responsible for his last drink, but he certainly was for the first" (p. 19).

For sin to be a symptom of mental illness or of sin itself, the symptom, to some extent, must be controllable (e.g., negative thinking by the neurotic); whereas, psychological symptoms (anxiety, nightmares, etc.) whether stemming from sin or a psychological problem, occur unintentionally. According to Menninger (1973), the degree of "voluntariness" (p. 186) determines whether the client's problems or symptoms are caused by sin or psychological factors or both. The process of sin becoming illness is that of going from occasional sin to a habit of sin, which is potentially controllable again, to illness, that is totally uncontrollable.

Some other terms that must be defined are as follows:

- (1.) Guilt is the negative feelings toward sin (Narramore, 1966).

(2.) Confession is acknowledgement of "the sins of which one has been guilty" (Bryant, 1967, p. 116).

(3.) Punishment refers to "a penalty imposed on an offender for a crime or wrongdoing" and to punish means "to cause (a person) to undergo pain, loss, or suffering for a wrongdoing" (Guralnik and Friend, 1966, p. 1180).

(4.) Restitution is "1. a giving back to the rightful owner of something that has been lost or taken away; restoration. 2. a making good for loss or damage" (Guralnik and Friend, 1966, p. 1241; e.g., Leviticus 6:4-5).

In Chapter Two, the literature will be reviewed on sin and its relationship to counseling. A solution to sin, a summary of the entire paper, and some recommendations will be offered in Chapter Three.

## Chapter Two

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some positive and negative comments about "sin" will be presented and related to counseling. The chapter will be divided into sections for clarification.

#### Psychopathology

There are two basic theories of how sin could lead to psychopathology. Waldman (1970), the proponent of one theory, saw estrangement or alienation as the underlying cause of neurosis. In his article, he described the sin-neurotic complex. First, the person reacts to his estrangement (caused by social forces such as the technological revolution or possibly sin) with feelings of guilt, isolation, powerlessness, and meaninglessness. These feelings he attempts to cover up with thoughts of self-aggrandizement (the sin of self-sufficiency) through narcissism, selfishness, and individualism. However, the more self-centered he makes his world, the more estranged and insignificant he feels. The latter may lead to despair and depression and the hypocrisy to anxiety and all of these factors to even more guilt and meaninglessness. At this point, the individual then develops neurotic strategies to protect himself from the negative feelings and the contradictions in his life, and to keep himself in control of and at the center of his created world by manipulation of and focus on his symptoms. Basically, neurosis for Waldman (1970), is self-sufficiency in concealed form in a "self-styled world"

(p. 150). See Figure 1 (Appendix A) for a diagram of his theory of the sin-neurotic complex.

The second theory of how sin could lead to psychopathology is that by Mowrer (1961). For him, "hidden guilt" rather than estrangement, is the underlying cause of both neurosis and psychosis. Boisen (1958) wrote, after his recovery from psychosis, that "Functional mental disorder is best understood as an attempt to deal with an intolerable sense of personal failure and guilt" (p. 570).

Guilt always leads to self-punishment according to Osborne (1967), unless the person finds forgiveness. It is as though people need to maintain "moral homeostasis" or have a "built-in sense of justice" said Belgum (1963, p. 55). This sense of justice probably stems from God's Image in man (Packer, 1978).

Mowrer (1961, 1964) believed that these guilt feelings stemmed from a part of the person's personality, his conscience, which condemns him for wrongdoing. A person's conscience could cause him to develop symptoms of mental illness for two reasons: self-punishment and confession. The conscience uses the symptoms to punish the self in payment for his sins and to force the self into a full confession. At the same time, these mental symptoms may be disguised confessions or the conscience in disguised form. Sometimes, though, mental illness continues even after confession. The reason might be that the person does not think he has paid enough for his sins through self-punishment.



To defend against the attempts at confession because of self-punishment by the conscience and fear of rejection, another part of the personality, possibly the ego, uses defense mechanisms (phobias, anxiety, obsessions, etc.) to suppress or repress the conscience. However, the conscience can be repressed for only so long until the strain and anxiety of living a double life of lying and hypocrisy finally reaches an intolerable level where the defenses against the conscience give way and the person experiences a psychotic breakdown. This breakdown involves the conscience overwhelming the ego with anxiety and guilt and with the person's sin and hypocrisy. But psychosis can also develop from continued hypocrisy. The latter is what happened to Tim Wilkins, described by Mowrer (1961). Tim's illness began by his hiding his sin and guilt out of fear of rejection and punishment. He then replaced his true feelings, thoughts, and behavior with a mask of phony social behavior, and withdrew from people. Eventually, he was not able to differentiate between his real self and his phony self. This is the world of schizophrenia. According to R. D. Laing, cited in Sugarman (1974), the self defends against danger and anxiety (the sin of self-sufficiency) by constructing a false self (hypocrisy). The "alienation of duality" (Sugarman, 1974, p. 514) eventually leads to psychopathology where the true self dies (depersonalization).

As implied earlier, Mowrer (1961) did not believe that sin always led to psychopathology. If the person makes up

for his sin through good works, confesses and makes restitution, is punished for his sin, or simply just does not have enough conscience, he probably will not suffer mental illness. See Figure 2 (Appendix B) for a diagram of Mowrer's theory.

Swensen, cited by Belgum (1963), researched Mowrer's theory by hypothesizing that college girls seeking psychological therapy would have "violated moral laws more frequently than normal people coming from the same socio-economic background" (p. 52). The case histories of 25 controls were matched and compared to 25 experimental subjects who had sought psychological therapy at the university clinic. The results supported Mowrer's theory and showed a definite relationship between neurosis and illicit sex. Even in the control group, those girls who had committed immorality had developed significantly more physical symptoms than the other controls.

Mowrer (1961) quoted several other studies in his book, The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion, that supported his theory. Hock & Polatin found in their study of the writings of some borderline schizophrenics, preoccupation with sexual perversions. Standal and Corsini discussed Joan, a paranoid schizophrenic, who previously had had incestual relations with her father. In addition, Stekel found in his study that patients who were allowed to express their sexual impulses freely became ill but improved during abstinence. Improvement occurred, Stekel believed, because the conscience was at peace.

Believing that sin can lead to mental illness does not mean that psychological factors cannot. An example of the former is the previously mentioned Tim Wilkins (a pseudonym), who wrote of how his own sin, guilt, and fear led him to experience paranoid schizophrenia. On the other hand, Philip Vaswig's experience of schizophrenia was caused by unconscious fear stemming from an earthquake (Vaswig, 1977). Even though the symptoms of schizophrenia were similar in both cases, the causes were very different. In the one case, the cause was hidden sin; in the other, unconscious fear. There are psychological laws that if broken do lead to psychological illness. Menninger (1973) asked

Would we withhold all censure from a psychiatrist who is giving psychotherapy for neurotic symptoms of sleeplessness or sexual inhibition to a man involved in rascality and wickedness of notable degree? . . . . do we not repeat the error if we ignore appropriate help available for some individuals whose sins are greater than their symptoms (p. 49)?

Depending on the person, sin or psychological factors or both could cause a psychological disorder. The goal is to not judge the mentally ill nor to excuse the sinner (Menninger, 1973) but to give appropriate treatment after an accurate diagnosis has been made.

#### Judgment

In Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, edited by Guralnik and Friend (1966), judgment or to judge means "to form an idea or opinion about (any matter)"; "to criticize or censure"; "power of comparing and deciding";

"understanding" (p. 792). According to White (1977), sin can be a judgmental or an offensive term. This criticism is true to some extent depending on how the judgments are made and used. When they are made by self-righteous individuals, are prejudicial, or lead to condemnation or rejection, these judgments are in no way supported by the Bible nor should be a part of counseling. Psychological labels though, can be judgmental too as described above (White, 1977). The word itself is probably not as important as the counselor. Does he tend to be prejudiced: favoring or rejecting some people but not others. Kilpatrick (1983) added that to "'judge not" means we are not to judge a man's inner state. It does not mean we are not to judge his acts' (p. 85).

All counselors make judgments which are necessary to some extent for diagnostic purposes. For example, they may consider their clients either sinners or sick. White (1977) believed that Jesus Christ offered the best example of how to judge or diagnose sin. His judgments were realistic (based on fact) yet compassionate. When the woman caught in adultery was being stoned to death by her accusers, Jesus stopped them and said, ". . . He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Then Jesus said to the woman, ". . . Neither [italics added] do I condemn [italics added] you; go your way; from now on sin no more" (John 8:11). Jesus agreed that the woman had sinned (realism) but there was no sting in his use of the

word sin. He did not reject or condemn her but instead forgave her and left her with joy and hope (compassion) (White, 1977). In Matthew 23:1-36, with the so-called religious Pharisees, Jesus confronted them with their hypocrisy and sin because they were unwilling to admit it unlike the woman caught in adultery.

When a client comes in for counseling, the first responsibility of the counselor should be to help the client deal with his immediate pain and to concentrate on the relationship between them. Jesus did this when he healed the man first and then, confronted him with his sin (John 5:5-14). Tournier (1954) said, "The patient who comes to him does not want a sermon or an exhortation to repentance, but help in his suffering" (p. 195). The counselor must never be like Job's friends who said, "who ever perished being innocent?" (Job 4:7, Tournier, 1954). For one thing, it is very likely that the counselor would lose his client if he was confronted immediately with his sin, a situation with which he might not be ready or able to cope. Second, any quick judgments that sin was the problem could be wrong because the counselor did not know his client well enough. His problems might be caused by sin or psychological or physiological factors or any combination of factors. If the counselor's judgment of sin were wrong, his opinion could lead the client to experience unnecessary guilt and suffering (Tournier, 1954).

The counselor might also need to judge himself first to

avoid misjudging his client. He must determine whether his opinions about the client were based on objective facts or were only projections of his own sins and weaknesses or attempts to uplift his own ego. The safest way to avoid misjudging a client would be to get him to admit his problems on his own. The counselor could help him open up by sharing some of his own weaknesses first. However, with clients who are good at avoiding, consciously or unconsciously, the truth, the counselor would need to confront them as Jesus did the Pharisees. Confrontation, though, must always be in love said Paul in Ephesians 4:15, "speaking the truth in love." This confrontation should occur in later sessions so that the judgments are based on more information and when the relationship between client and counselor is stronger.

Finally, the counselor's judgments should never lead him to reject, criticize, or condemn a client for his sin. Osborne (1967) believed that no one ever changes in response to negative criticism. Instead, condemnation tends to cement an individual into his sin. People tend to behave according to how they believe people perceive them (labelling theory). Counselors must learn to love the sinner but hate his sin according to Jay Adams, cited in Carter (1975). If hateful feelings do arise in a relationship, they should be aired and dealt with.

#### Punishment

Menninger (1973) believed that some counselors disliked sin because it implied answerability, penalty, and atonement.

When punishment for sin is carried too far by self-righteous individuals, it becomes difficult to tell who the real sinners are (Menninger, 1973). The above is why the word, "sin", in many instances has been replaced with sickness (Hiltner, 1972; Menninger, 1973).

Punishment, according to Miller (1975), is anything, whether it is something positive withdrawn or something negative applied, that follows a response and reduces its frequency. Examples of negative punishment might be a spanking, an added assignment, or a lecture. Examples of punishment being something positive withdrawn are withdrawing T. V. or dating privileges, not getting supper, or reducing one's pay.

Punishment can be too severe and should not be a part of counseling when it leads to hate and bitterness toward the punisher (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21) and guilt and despair without behavioral changes in the punished (Hiltner, 1972). However, no punishment at all can be just as destructive. The Bible says spare the rod and spoil the child (Proverbs 13:24). Loving someone requires that he be disciplined but not too harshly. The answer is balance between the two extremes mentioned above. For punishment to be effective, yet compassionate, it must be done in love with the aim of restoring the person (Northridge, 1938) and done in proportion to the degree of sin (Romans 2:6; II Corinthians 5:10).

According to Boisen (1958), self-punishment (mental symptoms or guilt), within limits, is actually an attempt at

cure. When the person believes that he has paid enough for his sins in mental suffering, then he gets well. Boisen (1958) went on to say that experience has shown that individuals who blame themselves, such as depressives, have a much better recovery rate than those who blame others, such as paranoid schizophrenics. Self-punishment (mental symptoms) can actually force the client to make a confession or to change his behavior. Since people have a sort of "built-in sense of justice" (Belgum, 1963, p. 55), without punishment for sin, they continue to feel guilty and lack self-respect.

#### Legalism

Another criticism of sin is that it can lead to legalism, perfectionism, and/or authoritarianism. Dollar (1983) defined legalism as follows:

. . . as the tendency to reduce Christianity to a set of rules rather than a personal relationship with Christ . . . Standards alone are not legalism. Legalism is making standards a gauge of spirituality. Legalism says, "Keep the rules and you will be spiritual." That is Phariseeism (p. 13).

Implied from the above are the ideas of someone trying to please others and trying to be good enough in his own strength through "will power". Legalism is actually a form of bondage. Shelly and John (1983) wrote:

. . . legalism, . . . a feeling of being driven or of having no enjoyment, repressing sexuality and emotions, and emphasizing obedience only out of fear rather than joy. Such persons can never do enough to please themselves or God. They live in bondage to doing more and working harder (p. 65).

Hiltner (1972) believed that the dynamics behind legalism and perfectionism were very similar. In the former, people



emphasize the forms of sin; whereas, in the latter they regard all sin as equally bad. Authoritarianism is an authority figure giving someone a list of do's and don't's to follow. The focus here will be on legalism.

According to Jabay (1970), one reason legalism should not be a part of counseling is that legalism only makes the client more aware of his imperfections. This awareness could cause unnecessary guilt, which could lead to despair (Jabay, 1970). When the client does make a mistake, instead of admitting it, he is more likely to hide it under the masks of self-righteousness and a judgmental attitude and to become defensive. This behavior results in divided, superficial relationships and later could develop into neuroticism for fear of making another mistake.

Second, legalism not only strengthens the original sin but also tends to stir up new desires that could be fulfilled in sinful ways (Barclay, 1975). Romans 7:8 said, "But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead."

According to Dollar (1983), the response to legalism must not be license but obedience only to God's absolutes. The extremes of too little freedom (legalism) or too much only hurt people's lives (Shelly and John, 1983). For problems that are not clearly right or wrong, the person must restrict his liberty voluntarily "out of love for others (Rom. 14:3,4)" (Dollar, 1983, pp. 15, 41). Carter (1980)

said that the client must learn to concentrate not on man-made rules but on his relationship to Jesus Christ. However, if the motive for the client's obedience to those absolutes is to earn his salvation or to be better than others, or to please them, he would still be acting legalistic (Dollar, 1983). Bloesch (1981) believed that man could never do enough to earn his salvation because it comes only through the finished work of Christ on the cross. No one can be better than anyone else in God's eyes because all people have sinned and fall short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Instead, the client must accept his tendencies to sin rather than condemn himself each time he fails. Dollar (1983) stated that God wants people to obey His laws only out of love for Himself rather than out of fear or duty. Then obedience becomes a privilege not a burden. Carter (1980) wrote

Thus, the appeal to specific action is based on our positional identity with Christ, that is, the believer's actions ought to flow consequently from his or her identity. We act morally out of our identity, not in order to have an identity (p. 48).

In addition, God promises to help the client obey His laws so that they do not become a burden (Dollar, 1983). Finally, the client must see that no matter how hard he tries he can never please anyone all the time (so why try?).

#### Ethics

According to Menninger (1973), Freud disliked sin because it was based on a moral code. He believed that severe child rearing led to repressions that caused neurosis. Relative

morality is probably only a reaction against the opposite extreme of legalism. Freud was right for standing against legalistic morality, but psychologists like Belgum (1963), Mowrer (1961, 1964), and Boisen (1958), all believe that permissiveness can lead also to psychopathology. In the previous section, the response of too little freedom or legalism was discussed. Next, the issue of relative ethics or too much freedom will be explored in relationship to sin.

To some extent, relative morality does prevent hypocrisy and condemnation from sin. But, moral relativism can lead the client to act irresponsibly (Belgum, 1963) and to excuse his behavior. Because no absolute truths exist, a client may feel he can make any decision he wants to as long as it is in his best interests, regardless of how it affects society or other people. However, "permissiveness has a peculiar way of backfiring because we still do discriminate in practice" said Belgum (1963, p. 45). As the Bible says, ". . . and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). Counselors should consider long-term consequences to any behavior they advise for a client.

Counselors must be careful in helping clients achieve their rights. As Belgum (1963) said, "Counselees who have relied on self-interest have seldom gone beyond it" (p. 42). They must learn to love themselves so that they can love others, but this is different than self-absorption that leads only to broken relationships and loneliness. Actually, the impulse-

guided life creates needs for self-respect and self-love rather than the self-regulated life according to Geuras (1980).

According to Belgum (1963), without absolutes, a person's life is not really much different than that of an animal. This may explain why so many people today have poor self-images and experience self-contempt and self-rejection. Clients need goals to challenge them to use their full potential which can give them great joy and self-respect (Belgum, 1963).

Belgum (1963) believed that without moral absolutes, a person's life goes adrift like a boat without an anchor. He finds it difficult to judge how he should behave, whether he has a problem, and if he does, how he should feel about it. There is little guilt if there are no rights and wrongs, and the person who does not experience guilt or disappointment cannot experience great joy. Rather, he experiences mediocre feelings of self-satisfaction that lead only to pessimism and despair (Belgum, 1963).

For Whitehead (1982), history has shown what ugly, cruel things man is capable of when he makes "self" the final authority on right and wrong rather than God. One example he used was the criminal justice system in the United States. This system was founded on the Constitution, which is limited government under the rule of law. The Supreme Court is suppose to be under the law not above it. In 1803 Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall said, "The government of the United States, . . . has been emphatically termed a government of laws and

not men" (Whitehead, 1982, p. 21). However, all this has changed over the past few years. Today, Supreme Court Justices are making their own laws according to their own belief systems. They are acting in accordance with what Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes said in 1907, "the Constitution is what the judges say it is" (Whitehead, 1982, p. 20). But these laws created by man are allowing for abortion, suicide, and infanticide (Whitehead, 1982). Without form, Crabb (1975) said that there could be no freedom, only chaos. Without absolutes, man cannot judge how far he should go: first, there is abortion, then euthanasia, next, genocide as it was in Germany in the 1930's (Schaeffer and Koop, 1979). Without absolutes, everyone soon ends up with no "rights". The counselor who tells the client that it is O.K. if he commits adultery is not thinking about the rights of his wife or children or about his own rights to self-respect and love (Geuras, 1980).

Sin, on the other hand, implies that the person believes in God and His laws. This lessens the burden for the person of having to write his own moral code. Sin also suggests that man is responsible for right and wrong actions in his life. According to Matthew 22:37-40, God's laws are laws of love. When a person loves and obeys God, then he can truly love others and himself (Flint, 1966). By following God's laws, the client also finds purpose and meaning (Carl Rogers, cited in Curran, 1969) and thus feels self-love and self-respect (Geuras, 1980) because he is behaving like a human being specially created by God.

As with legalism, the answer to morality, Shelly and John (1983) believed, is balance between freedom and restraint. Within the limits of God's moral absolutes, individualism, spontaneity, and creativity can exist.

### Guilt

Another criticism of sin is that it causes unnecessary guilt. Freud, cited in Minirth and Meier (1978), saw all guilt as evil. Being a determinist, he did not think man was responsible for any of his behavior.

First, true guilt must be differentiated from false guilt. When "sin" is used to mean the breaking of God's moral absolutes, then sin causes true and necessary guilt (Narramore, 1966). The latter serves as a warning that a problem exists (Curran, 1969). True guilt is actually an attempt at cure by forcing the client to confess and change which relieve the negative feelings (Hiltner, 1972). Guilt can also act as a protective device by preventing the person from making the same sins or mistakes again (Curran, 1969).

On the other hand, false guilt is not concerned 'simply with some overt guilty act, but with all that registers on the inner self as guilt: Shame, inferiority, feelings of rejection and worthlessness, together with thoughts, desires, and impulses which we feel are "bad"' (Osborne, 1967, p. 100). According to Narramore (1966), false guilt is generated when parents overcriticize and punish their children "for actions that have nothing to do with the transgression of God's laws"

(p. 107). He went on to say that

When children grow up in an environment that causes serious feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, they begin to react to frustrations and conflicts in an intropunitive manner. They blame themselves for all difficulties and create serious feelings of guilt and depression. (Narramore, 1966, p. 107).

Sin is being misused when it causes excessive guilt without changed behavior. Two possible causes of excessive guilt are the religious practice of continual private confession of sin (Barbour, 1930) and the similar psychological approach of gaining insights both without behavioral changes or restitution (Mowrer, 1961). The above two deal only temporarily with guilt. Without behavioral changes, the client will sin again and again which only heightens his guilt further until possibly he becomes quite self-destructive or neurotic. People have a "built-in sense of justice" (Belgum, 1963, p. 55) that must be met through punishment or else they continue to feel guilty.

Unnecessary guilt can also be caused from a misunderstanding of what is sin. An example is legalism. Jesus does not want people experiencing guilt from petty little man-made rules, but only when they break God's moral absolutes (Dollar, 1983).

Another possible misunderstanding of sin might stem from Paul's teachings on the "flesh". According to Barclay (1975), the word "flesh" in Romans did not refer only to the body. Paul said, "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you

are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:12-13). The "flesh" here was not "a physical thing but spiritual" (Barclay, 1975, p. 102). Flesh meant "sinful human nature, apart from Christ, everything that attaches a man to the world instead of to God" (Barclay, 1975, p. 102). In Galatians 5:19-21, when Paul talks about the works of the flesh, he includes the sins of idolatry, strife, jealousy, factions, etc. along with the "bodily and the sexual sins" (Barclay, 1975, p. 102). Some people believe that Jesus saw all enjoyment of sex or sensuality as sinful. According to the Apostle Paul, though, God created man a sexual being and does not want people experiencing guilt over enjoyment of sex or sensuality within marriage (I Corinthians 7:3-5), only outside of it (Deuteronomy 5:18).

Sin can also lead to unnecessary guilt when sin is not confessed and changed, but instead, is defended against through guilt from a different source. Rather than expressing the real guilt from a particular act, more guilt from trivial mistakes or errors is created to protect the individual from the real source of his guilt (Hiltner, 1972). Examples of the above are the scrupulous and the obsessive-compulsive person. The latter, for example, may develop guilt about touching anything dirty. To rid himself of this guilt, he might become a compulsive hand-washer. He uses his obsessive



guilt to distract his attention away from his real guilt, for example, of committing adultery (Hiltner, 1972). According to Hiltner (1972), obsessive and scrupulous guilt are so destructive because they conceal rather than reveal the real source of a person's problems and because they intensify the individual's feelings of guilt.

Balance again is important between self-condemnation and self-love. To never feel guilty is the life of the psychopath or sociopath. However, too much guilt, false or unnecessary, can lead to neurosis. The goal is to experience real, necessary guilt from real sin (Narramore, 1966). True guilt should lead to positive behavioral changes that result in the cessation of the negative feelings (Osborne, 1967). Whenever guilt hangs on and on, it is inappropriate (Hiltner, 1972).

#### Psychology

Some psychologists and counselors do not like sin because they believe that it is a value-laden concept that cannot be proven to exist in man (Mowrer, 1961). Instead, they claim that sin is really only mental illness or a symptom of it and that only psychological harm could come from the use of sin (Menninger, 1973). What will be explored next is the proof for, and accuracy of, mental illness and psychology compared to sin.

That sin is nothing but mental illness or a symptom of it, is but an hypothesis that has not been proven. It has

never been shown that all of man's behavior is determined as Skinner and Freud said. More likely the truth is that man's behavior involves both free and determined factors (Durham, 1982). Man can sin and/or be mentally ill (Menninger, 1973).

Second, functional mental illness cannot be directly proven to exist in man anymore so than sin. Instead, both are inferred from behavior and speech (symptoms) and thus both are value-laden concepts. Indirect proofs of sin are guilt and atoning behavior (Menninger, 1973). For example, compulsive hand-washing could be an attempt by a person to cleanse himself of sin as Pilate washed his hands of putting Jesus on the cross (Matthew 27:24; Minirth and Meier, 1978). Behavior is also used to infer mental illness. Szasz (1960), in fact, considered functional mental illness a myth. Many people labelled mentally "ill" have no physical, objective proof of disease in their brain. Adams (1972) and Szasz (1960) believed that these individuals suffered instead from "dis-ease" (from guilt and an outraged conscience) or problems in living. Such psychological terms as the "id, superego, unconscious," etc., cannot be seen but are assumed to exist. Crabb (1975) believed that neither sin nor mental illness could be proven to exist beyond a doubt; both had to be accepted ultimately by faith.

Mental illness is also considered a value-laden concept because psychological problems do differ from one society to the next. Sugerman (1974) said "The psychopathology of

those in society who are different, it would seem, is more a function of the way in which their position is interpreted by that society than their organic or personality structure per se" (p. 505). Two factors, according to Hilgard, Atkinson, and Atkinson (1975), used to define abnormality, are statistical frequency and society's standards.

Sin, when defined by men, is value-laden because it too can vary from one society to another. Some people believe that sin is unscientific because it is not based on objective criteria (Mowrer, 1961). However, according to McDowell and Stewart (1980), the Bible is the "revealed Word of God" (p. 1; II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:21). Men's interpretations of the Bible may change, but the Bible itself never does. On the other hand, the criteria used to define mental illness is determined by men who are influenced by subjective factors.

In fact, every theory of psychology is based on presuppositions (Adams, 1972). Freud's theories on neurosis and psychoanalysis are only educated guesses based on his subjective interpretation of some data. According to Arlow (1984), "Freud himself was quite modest about the therapeutic claims of psychoanalysis (Freud 1937)" (p. 37). The cases psychoanalysis tends to be successful with, said Mowrer (1961), are the "anxiety states and depressions, which tend to be naturally self-limiting and transitory (though often recurrent)" (p. 133). Mowrer (1961) went on to say that there is no clear-cut proof that repression of sex and aggression causes mental

illness. It is more probable that alienation caused by repression is the actual cause of mental illness. In addition, Freud's patients should have led somewhat saintly lives since their mental illness was caused by repression of negative emotions.

On the other hand, Mowrer (1961) in his book The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion, cited several cases of people whose sin and guilt led them to experience mental illness. In some of those cases, confession and renouncing of sin led to a return to mental health. McDowell (1979) also gave examples of people whose lives were reformed when they confessed and renounced their sin for Jesus Christ to live in their hearts.

#### A Word of Hope and Responsibility

Sin is a word of hope and responsibility according to Menninger (1973). Cited in Menninger (1973), Paul Tillich believed that there was no other word with the same effectiveness as the word sin. A strong word or idea brings about radical change.

Sometimes psychological therapy instead of leading toward change, leaves the client feeling hopeless and helpless about change (Fairlie, 1978). A person labelled neurotic, for example, may learn only to blame his family, society, or his unconscious for his problems. This passing of the buck encourages self-pity and paranoia, all of which could lead to heightened hostility and eventually to despair.

However, sin implies that man is responsible for his behavior because he is a free moral agent. If man can choose to sin, then he also has the capacity not to sin (Fairlie, 1978). According to Hiltner (1972), "sin is not a message of doom but one showing where we can take hold, this is not a bad but a good finding. It offers more opportunities for us to exercise freedom and get well" (p. 106). Sin is therefore good news and a sign of hope.

However, if sin is misused, it too can lead to despair. This can happen when sin is misinterpreted to mean "doomed to sin" because of terms like "original sin" or "total depravity", or when sin leads to legalism. "Total depravity" does not mean that man is all bad but rather, that each aspect of man, his intellect, will, and emotions, is flawed (Benner, 1981). Man is inclined to sin, not doomed to sin (Fairlie, 1978). Even though man is born imperfect and always will be, he still possesses "some degree of potential control" (Hiltner, 1972, p. 97) over his behavior. Original sin means that man has inherited this flawedness from his ancestors (Niebuhr, 1958).

Another distortion of sin is that concerning salvation from sin. Some Protestant churches (Calvinistic Protestantism) teach that God's grace is all that is necessary for freedom from sin (Swaggart, 1983). A man is free to sin but not responsible for his salvation (predestination). If a counselor was to believe the above, a lot of his counseling would be useless and many of his clients left to despair. However, the above teachings are not complete nor representative of

all the scriptures on sin and salvation. The Bible does teach that Jesus alone can forgive man of sin (I John 1:7). However, the Bible also teaches that man must work out his own "salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

#### Religion

Finally, sin implies that man is a spiritual being who needs a relationship with God to be whole (Stott, 1971). Counselors who believe that man is a wholistic being realize the importance of looking at spiritual factors along with physical and psychological ones in counseling. According to Packer (1978), even though man sinned, he never lost his position of being made in the Image of God. To be in that Image puts man above the animals and makes him a free, worthwhile individual. On the other hand, some psychological theories teach that man is nothing but an animal or a machine (Crabb, 1975).

God also has a plan or purpose for each life that renounces sin and makes Him Lord and Savior (Proverbs 3:5-6). In addition, a Biblical understanding of sin helps an individual understand why he and others behave the way they do (Sugerman, 1974).

## Chapter 3

### SOLUTION, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A Solution to Sin

The solution to sin will consist of six steps and, though basically Christian, will vary somewhat depending on the beliefs of the counselor and counselee (Belgum, 1963). Throughout these steps, it will be absolutely necessary that the counselor remain very discerning and nonjudgmental. He must try never to confuse psychological problems for sin or vice versa. Christian counselors in particular must refrain from assuming too quickly that a client's problems are all caused by sin. Sometimes, clients cover up major sins with minor ones, and counselors get the mistaken notion that a client's sins are the symptoms of psychological problems. This might be true sometimes but not always. Mowrer (1961) believed that clients confessed to minor sins for attention because the counselor had excused the client's major sins for symptoms. Possibly the client is using these minor sins like defense mechanisms.

The first step the counselor should take in solving sin is to diagnose it. He could gather this information by asking various spiritual questions and/or by using psychological techniques, such as hypnosis, questionnaires, tests, interviews, free association, etc. Belgum (1963) believed that the Ten Commandments could be an effective tool for locating sin. For Crabb (1975), looking at how the client meets his needs would provide lots of diagnostic information. Not only should

the counselor identify the sin; he also needs to look at "why" the person is sinning.

The second step is the client's confession or acknowledgment of specific problems and sins to the counselor. Secular counselors might refer to this step as gaining insights or self-awareness. To foster client openness, the counselor himself must model openness and honesty and be totally loving and accepting of the client. Only then may the client feel safe enough to share his own sins and problems, especially after the counselor has shared some of his own shortcomings.

For confession to be effective, Foster (1978) believed that it must be honest and specific. Confession differs from catharsis, depending on the counselor. In the latter, the client may blame and hate others for his problems. However, the former implies responsibility for sin and guilt and for their solution (Belgum, 1963). The client's confession and acceptance of his sin also helps him to change (Daubner, 1982). Those in Alcoholics Anonymous know the necessity of admitting and accepting their powerlessness over alcohol before they can change (Hiltner, 1968). The opposite of confession - avoidance, defensiveness, and hypocrisy, leads only to more self-hate and less self-control.

Private confession, such as to a counselor, can be very therapeutic as mentioned above. However, sometimes confession may need to be public. Cited in Mowrer (1961), Tim Wilkins (a pseudonym) asked

What good does it do to confess your past errors to



someone who is going to be as secretive about them as you have been? This, . . . is not the way for a person to achieve social redefinition of personality and true redemption. Just as the offense has been against society -- that is, against the laws of man and God -- so, one might argue, the confession and forgiveness ("acceptance") must be as broad as the sin itself (p. 97).

Mowrer (1961) went on to say that confession without changed behavior and restitution, which are attempts at social reconciliation, only heighten the individual's guilt. In private confessions the person is all too aware of his sin and may feel that he is getting by too easy for it. On the other hand, public confession allows the person to be seen by his significant others as he really is. This authenticity may bring about public rejection (payment for his sin) but also a feeling of self-respect for not being a hypocrite and for making up for his sin through restitution and changes in his behavior. Osborne (1967) said that a man "is not fully 'saved' in the sense of being out of danger, until he is no longer afraid of having anyone know the truth about him" (p. 105). However, if more harm than good would come from such a public confession because of the circumstances, the people involved, etc., then the confession should be avoided (Belgum, 1963). In that situation, the counselor might recommend group therapy to his client. Another advantage of confession to a group is that they could help the client control his sin. Mowrer (1961) wrote

I am increasingly persuaded that will power or self-control is not nearly so much of an individual matter as we sometimes think. Instead, is it not basically

a social phenomenon? Here, in society, is where the norms and values reside, and the person whose life is open to social interaction and influence has the benefit of social supports and sanctions. But the individual who embarks upon a policy of covertness and secrecy does not have this source of strength and soon finds himself the victim of uncontrollable temptation and, as he is likely to experience it, a "weak will" (p. 215).

At all times the counselor must respect the freedom and beliefs of the counselee. The counselor must never manipulate or try to force a confession of sin from the client. If the client chooses not to think of his behavior as sinful, he has that right. Hopefully, though, the client at least would see his behavior (or thoughts or feelings) as wrong or inappropriate. Then the counselor and client could still work on ways for him to change. But, if the client approves of his sin or wrong behavior, then the counselor has an entirely different situation to deal with. First, even though the counselor may disagree with the client about his problem, the counselor must continue to care: to listen, to help the client with any immediate pain, and to help him with any other problems (career, psychological, communication, etc.) that he might have. Second, the counselor must not excuse or explain away the client's sin. This is only a temporary solution. Alleviating symptoms but not the core problem leads only to symptom substitution. If the counselor is sure his diagnosis is correct, the most caring response he could make would be to convince (not manipulate) the client of his sin or, at least, the inappropriateness of his behavior. Whereas manipulation

involves deception; convincing someone would involve honesty and love. The counselor and client might discuss why the client is behaving the way he is, whether his sin or wrong behavior is the most constructive way to meet his needs, what are the long-term consequences to his behavior, how is his behavior affecting others, etc. If the client still refuses to admit his sin or inappropriate behavior and the counselor cannot help him with any other problems, then the counselor should suggest to the client that he go to another counselor. However, the client must know that he could return for help anytime.

After confession, the counselor needs to help his client move on to the third step, repentance. According to Crabb (1975), repentance involves a "change of mind" (p. 104) which includes the person's will and attitude toward sin (Graham, 1953). Crabb (1975) added that repentance is hatred of sin and requires saying "No" to it before the person can definitely change. The use of "No" is such a strong word that it strengthens the person's response. The Apostle Paul referred to the above as the putting off of the "old self" in Ephesians 4:22. Belgum (1963) went on to say that repentance is the person's feeling genuinely sorry for his sin. In John 16:8, the Bible teaches that true repentance can only happen through the moving of the Holy Spirit in the person's life (Graham, 1953). However, in counseling sessions where God is not wanted, hopefully at least the counselor and client could reach a contract where the client commits himself against inappropriate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors but for new ones.

Fourth, it is necessary for the client to receive forgiveness from self, others, and God, and to give forgiveness. Forgiveness is defined in The New Compact Bible Dictionary edited by Bryant (1967), as follows: "Forgiveness is the giving up of resentment or claim to requital on account of an offense. The offense may be a deprivation of a person's property, rights, or honor; or it may be a violation of moral law" (p. 180). However, according to Augsburger (1981), there may be times when it is better not to forgive or to receive it. Those times are when forgiveness is not the true forgiveness found in the Bible but is the distorted forgiveness that is a vice rather than a virtue. Examples of when a person should not forgive nor receive it are when forgiveness "puts you one-up" (p. 8), "is one way" (p. 24), "distorts feelings" (p. 38), "denies that there is anger" (p. 52), and "ends open relationships" (p. 66). Rather, true forgiveness is "the mutual recognition that repentance is genuine . . ." Such forgiveness is the final form of love which results in renewed and reconciled community' (Augsburger, 1981, p. 7). This community is accomplished when people are honest and share their feelings and thoughts and see how both were involved in the wrong done. Sometimes, God's help may be needed for this forgiveness to occur.

The Bible also teaches that a person can receive forgiveness only after he has forgiven others (Matthew 6:14-15). Forgiving others does not mean denying or excusing their misdeeds but trying not to dwell on them (Menninger, 1973) with

God's help. The counselor may need to help the client realize those he needs to forgive. Otherwise, he will remain in bondage to those he hates.

The counselor also needs to reassure the client that if he has genuinely confessed and repented of his sin and asked for God's forgiveness, that God has forgiven him (I John 1:9; II Chronicles 7:14). In fact, Jabay (1979) believed that the counselee did not feel forgiven until someone (a counselor) verbally declared God's forgiveness of his sins to him. (John 20:22-23). The individual then must learn to forgive himself, which he may do through self-understanding and through the love and acceptance of God and the counselor. However, he must experience this forgiveness (self and God's) emotionally and not only intellectually before he believes he has received it (Keysor, 1982). In seeking forgiveness from others, the counselee must confess, repent, change, and if possible, make restitution.

The client has the right at anytime to accept or reject the idea of forgiveness. If he feels uncomfortable about God's forgiveness, the next best thing is for him to at least forgive himself and others and to receive their forgiveness. Only then will he feel free and good enough to start changing. However, to miss God's forgiveness is to truly miss a great moment of joy and peace when a person can feel as though he has been born anew said Belgum (1963).

Repentance leads to the fifth step, the balancing of God's grace and the client's works, that together bring about a new

heart and new, positive thoughts and behaviors in the client. Christenson (1974) said that God changes man by renewing his heart (Psalms 51:10); whereas, man brings about change through renewal of his mind. The latter Paul talked about in Romans 12:2 and involves replacing sinful thoughts with Godly thoughts (Durham, 1982). Crabb (1975) believed that right thinking naturally produced right behavior and feelings. "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7).

For some clients, the Bible might serve as the standard for their thinking and acting. For others, psychological techniques and therapies, such as Rational Emotive Therapy, behavior therapy, etc., used within the limits of Biblical principles, might help the client make these needed changes. Paul referred to these changes by the client as the putting on of the "new self" in Ephesians 4:24.

Whereas man can change to a certain extent how he thinks and acts (extrinsic changes); at the same time, God can begin to change the heart of the man (intrinsic changes), if he wants God in his life, through faith and prayer. Not only could a person act and think kindly, but he could "be" kind (Christenson, 1974). However, God only changes a person's heart after he has confessed and repented of sin, asked for forgiveness, and then surrendered to Christ as Savior and Lord of his life (Christenson, 1974). To surrender to Jesus as the Savior of his life, the person repents and asks Christ into his heart. The Bible refers to this as being "born again" (John 3:3, 5, 7). Then Christ lives inside the person to change

and help him. Surrender to Christ as Lord involves dying daily to self-centeredness and self-rule and instead, living according to God's will as revealed in the Bible (Jabay, 1979). The counselor could help the client surrender by disciplining him according to the Bible. Jabay (1979) said "that until we submit to and confide in someone in the kingdom of God, we are doomed to the tyranny of the self" (pp. 35-36).

For the client who does not want God, the counselor would need to focus on renewal of the mind and the works of the client. Ideally though, lasting change would involve the balancing of both man's and God's efforts.

The sixth step in the solution to sin is the need to make restitution. As mentioned before, restitution means "1. a giving back to the rightful owner of something that has been lost or taken away; restoration. 2. a making good for loss or damage" (Guralnik and Friend, 1966, p. 1241; e.g., Leviticus 6:4-5). The primary benefit of restitution is renewal of community. In addition, restitution allows the client to feel less guilt and more self-respect because he is making up for his sins said Mowrer (1961). Without restitution, the alternative might be self-punishment in the form of mental illness.

Finally, new behavior and restitution are proofs that confession and repentance were genuine (Belgum, 1963). If the person was not able to change, probably the core to his problems was not discovered. Then the counselor would have to start over with diagnosis of the client's real problem.

### Summary

The major purpose of the paper was to look at the positive and negative qualities of sin and its relationship to counseling. The topic was important because a view of the nature of man influences counseling style and methodology.

Sin was defined as thoughts that are essentially prideful and/or selfish but manifest themselves outwardly in the form of lawlessness. Put simply, sin was imperfection or anything opposite love or contrary to the character of God, who is love. To call man sinful did not imply that he could not do good but only that he was inclined toward the wrong. Whereas sin involved conscious or ignorant acts by a rational human being; mental illness involved involuntary behaviors.

According to some helping professionals, hidden sin sometimes led to psychopathology. Waldman (1970) and Mowrer (1961, 1964) believed that sin caused guilt and anxiety that both led to hypocrisy and alienation and consequently more anxiety which all were defended against through neurotic or psychotic symptoms or strategies. For Mowrer (1961), psychosis could also occur when the person's defenses gave way to the truth of his sin and hypocrisy or when the guilt and anxiety became too great. Waldman (1970) saw estrangement as the underlying cause of this process; whereas, for Mowrer (1961), guilt was the cause.

Sin was shown to be as valid a concept as many psychological terms that counselors use. Sin could be defined



from objective criteria (the Bible) and could be inferred from specific atoning behaviors.

Even some of the criticisms of sin, when reevaluated, became positive attributes of sin. For example, one criticism of sin was that it caused guilt and answerability. This criticism is understandable when sin causes severe punishment or either false or unnecessary guilt. But guilt and punishment that are in proportion to the degree of sin and that lead to behavioral changes, are actually attempts at cure. Another criticism was that sin is a judgmental or an offensive term. This criticism is also valid when the judgments lead to condemnation or rejection of the client. But judgments that are based on fact and lead to compassion are necessary to the counselor for diagnostic purposes. Only misuse or misunderstandings about sin, such as legalism, severe punishment, harsh judgments, and unnecessary or false guilt caused clients psychological harm. When sin was defined and understood completely and accurately according to the Bible, sin, confessed and renounced, led to reformed lives. Other positive comments about sin were that it gave hope, made man responsible, was a strong word, was based on moral absolutes that resulted in true freedom for man, created a need for others, and finally, created a need for God.

The solution to sin presented in the paper was basically Christian but did allow for psychological theory and techniques based on Biblical principles. The solution involved six steps: diagnosis, confession, repentance, forgiveness,

change through grace and works, and restitution. In diagnosis, the counselor found the client's problem through information gathered from interviews, questionnaires, tests, etc. Before change was possible, the client had to accept and confess either privately or publicly his sin and next, repent which involved changing his mind or attitude against sin. Then, the client had to give and receive forgiveness to feel free and good enough to change. Finally, change itself involved the balancing of God's grace and the works of the client. God filled the outer forms of love, kindness, gentleness, etc. that the client built. Sometimes, though, in order to restore relationships and lessen the guilt, the client had to make up for his sin or make restitution. The results of all these steps were that the person felt more self-respect and less guilt; he thought and behaved more positively and responsibly; and his conscience was at peace.

#### Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made from this study on sin. First, a lot more research of all kinds needs to be done in both psychology and religion to understand more fully the relationships and differences between them. To do the research, pastors and counselors would need to work more closely and open-mindedly with each other. Ideally, more and more of the research should be conducted by people qualified in both areas of study. In addition, sin and concepts related to it such as forgiveness, confession, grace, etc., must be operationally defined. Then, specific studies could be done on differentiating

sin from mental illness for diagnostic purposes, on the process of sin leading to psychopathology, and on solutions to sin. Christians must not fear research nor see it as doubting God. God wants Christians to test and use their faith (James 2:26, " . . . faith without works is dead."). The church itself could be a useful setting for some of this research.

One study suggested by Mowrer (1961), that looked at sin and mental illness, was that of comparing the case histories of penitentiary inmates, psychosomatic patients, and mental hospital patients. He believed that the case histories of these three groups would differ little from each other. This would suggest that sin played a role in all three groups.

Second, since religion and psychology are related, a goal for pastors and counselors should be a model of counseling representative of both fields (Carlson, 1976). Cited in Menninger (1973), Dr. Philip Rieff believed that a "therapeutic ethic" (p. 215) should be created that would lie between "unambiguous release" (p. 215) and a strict moral code. However, for this model to be meaningful and orderly, it would need to be built on a unified basis. According to Crabb (1975), that basis can be only the Bible. With form, there can be true freedom; but without form, there is only randomness and chaos that leave students confused and bewildered. The above does not imply that secular psychology is worthless but that secular insights are more meaningful if built on the Bible. Crabb (1975) said it well, "There is simply no hope for achieving meaningful diversity . . . until a unity has been established" (p. 22).

Third, to help counselors and pastors work together, counseling programs should include classes in Biblical counseling; and Bible colleges, classes in psychology and counseling. One of the required courses should be that on the "Nature of Man". If students are to be consistent in their theory and methodology, they need to know the answers to the basic questions about man. First, though, a common language system would need to be developed so that meaningful, clear rapport could occur between pastors and counselors. Jeeves (1976) believed that many of the conflicts between these two groups are actually only language conflicts.

Finally, counseling departments need professors with training in psychology, counseling, and religion. Too often an individual sides with either religion or psychology because he got burnt by one or the other. What is needed in the colleges are people who do not "react" in hate or anger but "act" earnestly in seeking the truth about the relationships between these two fields of study. Then, these truths must be taught to students in an understandable, practical language. Seminaries and Bible colleges need to teach the doctrines of sin, works, grace, forgiveness, etc., in completeness and in accuracy from the Bible yet in modern terminology (Mowrer, 1961). When sin is understood and taught as mentioned above, then counselors could help their clients with sin problems, and people in general would be less likely to develop maladjusted lives from distorted uses of the concept.

In summary, what is needed for the future is caring, honest people who are willing to learn, experiment, and work together for truth about the relationships between psychology and religion and other fields of knowledge (Menninger, 1973). Since people are wholistic beings, these answers would benefit the most people.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, J. E. (1972). The big umbrella: And other essays and addresses on Christian Counseling. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Anderson, N. (1976). Issues of life & death. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Arlow, J. A. (1984). Psychoanalysis. In R. J. Corsini (Ed.), Current psychotherapies (3rd ed. pp. 14-55). Itasca, IL: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.
- Augsburger, D. (1981). Caring enough to forgive; caring enough to not forgive: True forgiveness, false forgiveness. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Barbour, C. E. (1930). Sin and the new psychology. New York: The Abingdon Press.
- Barclay, W. (1975). The daily study Bible series: The letter to the Romans (rev. ed.). Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press.
- Barrett, R. (1975). Let your conscience have a guide. HIS: Monthly magazine of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 35(4), 29-30.
- Belgum, D. (1963). Guilt: Where psychology and religion meet. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Benner, D. G. (1981). Psychotherapies: Stalking their spiritual side. Christianity Today, 25(21), 32-34.
- Bloesch, D. G. (1981). Faith & its counterfeits. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Boisen, A. T. (1958). Religious experience and psychological conflict. The American Psychologist, 13(10), 568-570.

- Bryant, T. A. (Ed.). (1967). The new compact Bible Dictionary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Carlson, D. E. (1976). Jesus' style of relating: The search for a Biblical view of counseling. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 4(3), 181-192.
- Carter, J. D. (1975). Adams' theory of Nouthetic Counseling. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 3(3), 143-155.
- Carter, J. D. (1980). Towards a Biblical model of counseling. Journal of Psychology and Theology, 8(1), 45-52.
- Chaplin, J. P. (1975). Dictionary of psychology (rev. ed.). New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.
- Christenson, L. (1974). The renewed mind: A unique guide to becoming the kind of person you really want to be. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc.
- Crabb, L. J., Jr. (1975). Basic principles of Biblical Counseling: "Meeting counseling needs through the local church." Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Curran, C. A. (1969). Religious values in counseling & psychotherapy. New York: Sheed and Ward.
- Daubner, E. V. (1982). Deified, depraved, denied, or deprived: Moral nature and counseling. Counseling and Values, 26(3), 180-202.

- Dollar, T. (1983). An alternative to legalism. Fundamentalist Journal, 2(6), 12-15, 41.
- Durham, C. (1982). Temptation: Help for struggling Christians. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Fairchild, L. (1978). "... as thyself". Journal of Religion and Health, 17(3), 210-214.
- Fairlie, H. (1978). The seven deadly sins today. Washington, DC: New Republic Books.
- Flint, C. R. (Ed.). (1966). The quotable Billy Graham. Anderson, SC: Droke House, Publishers, Inc.
- Foster, R. J. (1978). Celebration of discipline: The path to spiritual growth. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Geuras, D. (1980). Needs, values, and the counselor. Counseling and Values, 25(1), 57-61.
- Graham, B. (1953). Peace with God. New York: Pocket Books.
- Guralnik, D. B. & Friend, J. H. (Eds.). (1966). Webster's new world dictionary of the American language (college ed.). New York: The World Publishing Company.
- Hadfield, J. A. (1926). Psychology and morals: An analysis of character. New York: Robert M. McBride & Company.
- Henderson, J. (1977). Object relations and the psychotherapy of sin. Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal, 22(8), 427-432.
- Hilgard, E. R., Atkinson, R. C., & Atkinson, R. L. (1975). Introduction to psychology (6th ed.). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.



- Hiltner, S. (1968). Christian understanding of sin in the light of medicine and psychiatry. Pastoral Psychology, 19, 45-55.
- Hiltner, S. (1972). Theological dynamics. New York: Abingdon Press.
- Jabay, E. (1970). The God-players: How not to run your life. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Jabay, E. (1979). Precisely how to take care of your self. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International.
- Jeeves, M. A. (1976). Psychology & Christianity: The view both ways. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Keysor, C. W. (1982). Forgiveness is a two-way street. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- Kilpatrick, W. K. (1983). Psychological seduction: The failure of modern psychology. New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- McDowell, J. (1979). Evidence that demands a verdict: Historical evidences for the Christian faith (rev. ed.). San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc.
- McDowell, J., & Stewart, D. (1980). Answers to tough questions skeptics ask about the Christian faith. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc.
- Menninger, K. (1973). Whatever became of sin? New York: Hawthorn Books Inc. Publishers.
- Miller, L. K. (1975). Principles of everyday behavior analysis. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

- Minirth, F. B., & Meier, P. D. (1978). Happiness is a choice: A manual on the symptoms, causes, and cures of depression. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1961). The crisis in psychiatry and religion. Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.
- Mowrer, O. H. (1964). The new group therapy. Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.
- Narramore, C. M. (1966). Encyclopedia of psychological problems. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- New American Standard Bible. (1975). New York: A. J. Holman Company.
- Niebuhr, R. (1958). Sin. In M. Halverson & A. Cohen (Eds.), A handbook of Christian Theology: Definition essays on concepts and movements of thought in contemporary Protestantism (pp. 348-351). New York: Meridian Books, Inc.
- Northridge, W. L. (1938). Psychiatry in pastoral practice. London: Epworth Press.
- Osborne, C. (1967). The art of understanding yourself: An invitation to wholeness - and to life itself! Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- Packer, J. (1978). Conscience, choice and character. In B. Kaye & G. Wenham (Eds.), Law, morality, and the Bible (pp. 168-192). Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Ryrie, C. C. (1965). Bible doctrine II [Study-Graph]. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

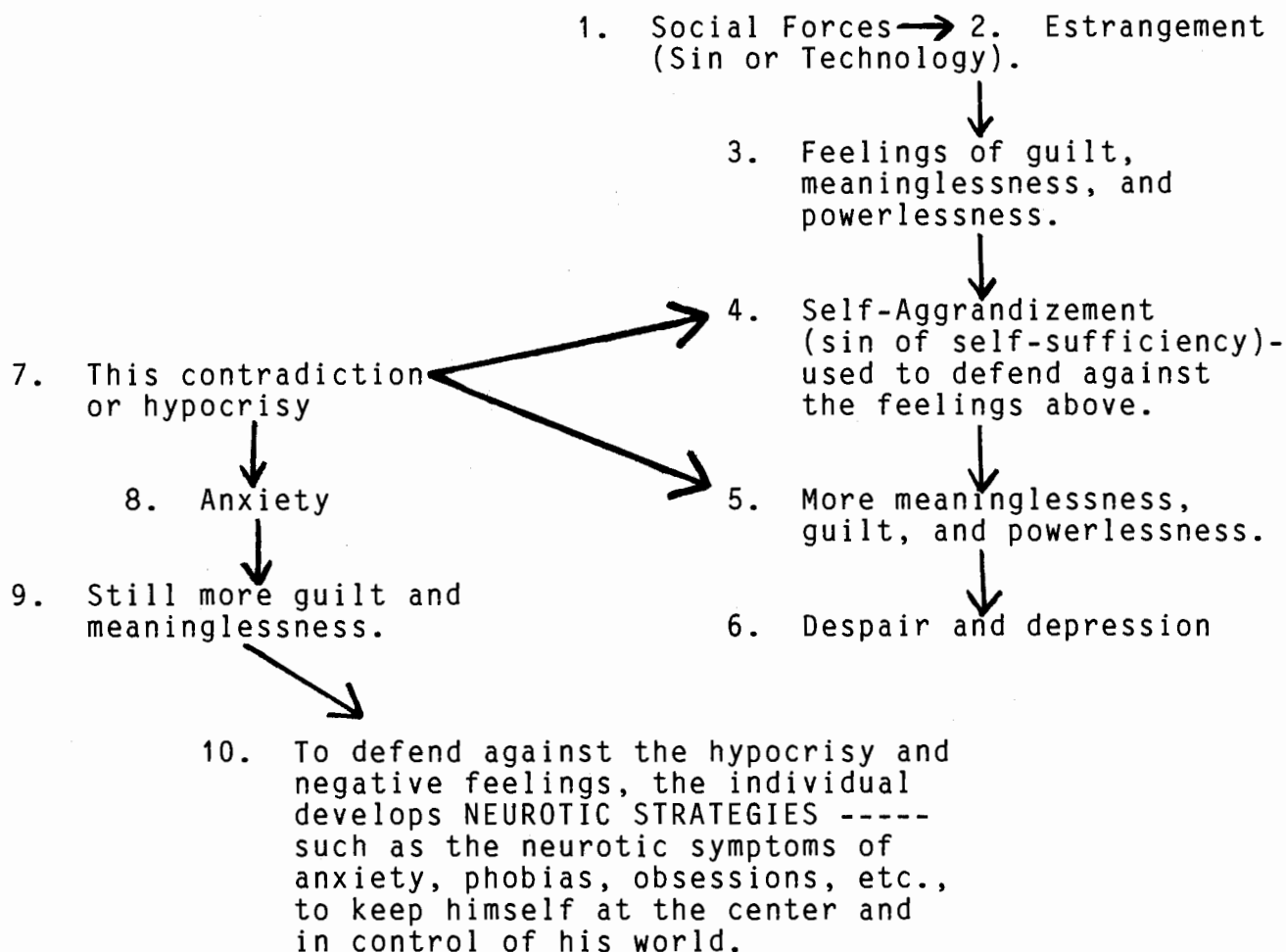
- Schaeffer, F. A., & Koop, C. E. (1979). Whatever happened to the human race? Exposing our rapid yet subtle loss of human rights. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company.
- Shelly, J. A. & John, S. D. (1983). Spiritual dimensions of mental health. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Stott, J. R. W. (1971). Basic Christianity. London: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Stott, J. R. W. (1975). Balanced Christianity. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Sugerman, S. (1974). Sin and madness: A transformation of consciousness. The Psychoanalytic Review, 61(4), 497-516.
- Swaggart, J. (1983). False doctrines in the church today. The Evangelist: The voice of the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries. 15(9), 5-10, 40.
- Szasz, T. S. (1960). The myth of mental illness. American Psychologist, 15, 113-118.
- Tournier, P. (1954). A doctor's casebook: In the light of the Bible. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Vaswig, W. L. (1977). I prayed, He answered. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.
- Waldman, R. D. (1970). The sin-neurotic complex: Perspectives in religion and psychiatry. The Psychoanalytic Review, 57(1), 143-152.

White, J. (1977). Eros defiled: The Christian & sexual sin. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

Whitehead, J. W. (1982). The second American Revolution. Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Co.

## APPENDIX A

Figure 1. Waldman's (1970) theory of the sin-neurotic complex.



According to Waldman (1970),  
neurosis is self-sufficiency  
in concealed form in a "self-  
styled world" (pp. 149-150).

## APPENDIX B

Figure 2. Mowrer's (1961, 1964) theory of hidden sin leading to psychopathology.

