

N E W C R E A T I O N T E A C H I N G M I N I S T R Y

Biblical Counselling



NCTM Correspondence School

Course Number Six

Biblical Counselling

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NCTM Correspondence School Course No. 6.
Biblical Counselling

A Letter to All Students of This Course

Dear Friends,

Greetings to you as you commence this useful Course. It seems appropriate to give you a special welcome, and to encourage you to persist in what is quite a long Course. We believe it is worth persisting, and gathering to yourself those elements of wisdom by which firstly you yourself can be helped and the by which you can lead others to be enriched.

The ‘Self-Questionnaire’ enclosed with our First Lesson may seem a little drastic in the questions it asks us honestly to face, but we believe it can be quite helpful. The prophet Jeremiah said that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt. He asked, ‘Who can know it?’ and his answer was, in effect, ‘God alone.’ This means, of course, that we need a lot of humility in approaching what is really the whole of man, namely his, or her heart. The Israelites understood the heart to be what we today would call the intellect, the will, and the emotions—cognition, volition and the affections.

The value of a course on Biblical Counselling is that it draws its information regarding God, Man and Creation from the Scriptures, and we assume that what we are taught there is authentic. Left to ourselves our thinking would be vastly different. The wisdom contained in the Scriptures has been gathered together over a long period of time and has also stood the test of time. Christians who feel called upon to counsel others not only have a treasure house of profound truth and wisdom, but they can be confident they are not putting forward novel ideas of their own.

We want to wish you every blessing as you begin the Course. It will surely lead you out to issues beyond, even, those it seeks to teach. Do persist then, in covering all its materials and we are sure you will be greatly rewarded.

Yours sincerely,

Self-Questionnaire :

Why Study a Biblical Counselling Course?

A Personal Examination of Motives and Reasons for Taking the Course

It would be good for us, at the beginning of the course, to ask ourselves why we have entered it, or about to enter it. Here are some questions we might ask. When we have asked and answered them we may find we have been greatly benefited

1. Have I thought of what it is that has prompted me to take the course?
2. Do I simply want to help people, and wish to be better equipped to do so?
3. What do I understand by the term 'counselling'? How would I describe it to myself and to others?
4. What usefulness do I see in counselling?
5. Is there really such a thing as *biblical* counselling?
6. What areas does it cover?
7. Am I attracted to counselling because I think it may help me first, and indeed is this my main aim? Do I think that I may be helped myself by helping others?
8. Do I wish to be a counsellor because humanity is fascinating and I would like to have a part in the matter of relationships and the shaping of lives?
9. Does biblical counselling place me as a counsellor in a position of authority or power over the counsellee, and do I visualise myself in such a position? How would such ideas comport with II Corinthians 1:24; I Peter 5:3; Galatians 4:17; II Corinthians 4:5; 11:20?
10. Do I see in the Bible, a ministry of people who are separate, single counsellors? If so, then to what category of ministry do they correspond in the New Testament?
11. How do I see the ministry of counselling in the light of I Peter 2:4–10, and the use of the gifts such as in I Corinthians 12:4–31; Ephesians 4:7–16; I Peter 4:10–11?

12. Do I see myself as going singly to people and ministering out of the biblical knowledge I have, or do I see my ministry as an integral part of the whole body of Christ, myself as helping a person only in the context of that living society? Do I understand the healing (therapeutic) nature of the community of Christ and do I see a necessity to bring the counsellee to the wisdom and love of the church's fellowship?
13. In the light of the questions above which I have asked myself and to which I have given answers, what do I understand as my motivation for undertaking the course? BY what power do I believe I can have a useful ministry?
14. Do I think that (a) the biblical knowledge and perspective that I hope to gain from the course will be a useful thing in itself, and (b) I need this to fully understand the power and efficacy of the gospel of Christ for men and women so that they may be liberated from counsellor-dependence to living a full life?

Biblical Counselling

Assignments for the Whole Course

The Student will need to complete the set of four term assignments in order to receive a certificate.

A completed assignment may be forwarded to the supervisor at the conclusion of each term. If a student has commenced this subject part way through the year, then assignments need to be forwarded at the end of an equivalent period of time.

Introduction to Doing the Assignments

The Course which you are undertaking is a vast one which has drawn upon many resources for its structuring. The use of so many resources is because it is covering material which has not hitherto been put together formally. All the materials given need to be studied closely, and the student should be trying to use these in practical counselling whilst the Course proceeds.

Part I-Lessons 1-10; Cassettes 1-6a

This is an Introduction to the whole subject, seeking to place it in human thinking, both biblical and non-biblical. You are required to listen to the cassettes which have been recorded for these Studies, as they help to interpret the written material. You can realise that Assignment 1 will need a lot of covering and for this reason you will have to extend yourself in doing so.

Part II-Lessons 11-14; Cassettes 6b-9

This section on Biblical Anthropology requires you to read the book *The Meaning and Making of Man*, and this book is packed with relevant material. No non-biblical anthropology course can give the insights your course will give, though they, on the horizontal level, may have a certain value. Again, you will be required to give an extensive coverage in your Assignment on this Part.

Part III-Lessons 15-19; Cassettes 10-14

Part III will cover selected topics from the book *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*. This book is quite practical in helping you to sense the help of Scripture in meeting the needs of Man as set out in the Parts I and II. The matters of anger and tranquillity, wounding and healing, and the action of the conscience on the human person, will require a full answer in your Assignment.

Part IV-Lessons 20-22; Cassettes 15-17

This section will also be from the book *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*. The topics in this Part will again be most practical in their application, and will, again, require close attention. The Assignment will need to be as thorough as in any other Part. Having finished the Course you will realise how widely it covers the whole matter of counselling, the need of sage advice from a wise person, one who has been specially informed by the revelation of God, Man and Creation which the Scripture gives.

Assignments for the Biblical Counselling Course

No Assignment should be less than 3,000 words because of the amount of material which has to be covered. There should, however, be a limit of 6,000 on any Assignment. The title page should have only the name and number of the Part, the name of the Tutor, the name and address of the student. Only one side of each page should be used and each page should be numbered at the top. A margin should be on the left side and pages should be held by a paper clip or a staple.

Part I Assignment (Lessons 1-10)

You should seek to cover the following, briefly:

1. The Introduction to the Course, showing what Counselling is and why we should seek to use it.
2. The reason for drawing our knowledge of wisdom from the Scriptures, showing the difference between biblical and non-biblical sources of knowledge and wisdom.
3. Show how we need to have a true knowledge of God, of Man and of the Creation, in order to be able to have that kind of wisdom which will (i) understand the person who comes to us for help, and (ii) how it is that we can then offer help for the particular stage and situation which that person is in.

Part II Assignment (Lessons 11-14)

1. Describe the nature of Man as God made him in creation, and talk of the image of God; man and woman together; their innocence; their beautiful life; in short, what it was to be an unfallen human being.
2. Try to cover the whole matter of Man in his fallenness; what his separation from God meant in his existence; the problem of his sin and guilt; showing how valuable this knowledge is in meeting a person under the guilt of sin and so living in broken and inadequate relationships with God, with other human beings, as with his/her self.
3. Show how Man in the image of God may be restored from fallenness, how his relationship with the Triune God will enable him to have ontological harmony and renewal of the primal image through the Persons and the work of the Godhead. Discuss briefly the matter of the tension the new person finds in society which surrounds him, and show how he/she can live with it.

Part III Assignment (Lessons 15-19)

1. Cover the whole matter of human anger, and show how a person can be released from that anger and find tranquillity.
2. Discuss the idea of God Himself wounding and healing a person. Introduce the idea of human accountability for human choices, and how healing can come from God.
3. Open up the whole subject of human guilt and the human conscience. Describe the 'forms' of conscience and show how the conscience can be purified and its value for the person relieved of his/her guilt.

Part IV Assignment (Lessons 20-22)

1. Take any *four* of the *six* subjects including 'The Cleansing of the Memories' and 'The Profitable Pursuit of Pleasure' and deal thoroughly with them.
2. Try to evaluate the whole Course on Biblical Counselling and describe how it has been of use in your dealings with other persons.

NCTM Course No. 6, Biblical Counselling

Lesson One

An Introduction to the Course—I

Welcome to the Course

Welcome to the Course on Biblical Counselling. There will be some who have never undertaken such a Course and may find the experience a little strange. Please feel relaxed, and seek to settle in to it. It may take a few Studies to do this, but it should prove eminently worthwhile in the long run. The Series of Studies is, of course, a biblical one. You may or may not know much of what is in the Bible, but that does not matter. As we proceed you will pick up the elements needed.

Our Approach to the Course

We will mainly be referring to the Scriptures for our pattern of counselling. First of all we will explain what we understand by the words ‘biblical’ and ‘counselling’. Then we will determine whether what we might call ‘a system of counselling’ is of recent origin, or whether it has been in operation even from the early days of the church¹. On our way, we will mention the fact that in the past few decades systems have sprung up which are called ‘Christian’ or ‘Biblical’. We will mention some of these, although we will not examine them. Naturally enough we will also be faced with the fact that there are many therapies—at least 260, in fact—which, for want of a better term we will call ‘non-biblical’, not that some of them do not have elements which we would call biblical, but because they see themselves as scientific disciplines. Since these are not our kinds of counselling we will discuss briefly what seem to be their purposes, and if possible make some general evaluations. We will then proceed to tackle our Course directly, i.e. the nature of Biblical Counselling.

¹ Some folk have naively assumed that counselling, as such, has been of recent origin, and that it is almost novel to the church. The Old Testament has much to say about wisdom and counselling, and no less the New Testament. Of course, the scientific disciplines of psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy began to be formulated in the 19th century, and in many ways are still being formulated—so young they are..

One of the things we will discuss is why persons should want to do such a Course. Many theological Seminaries and Bible Colleges incorporate counselling courses in their curricula, and these are generally well attended. We will look at some of the things which motivate people to take such courses.

Of what Value Would Such a Course be?

We think it could be of immense personal value. Obviously some take such courses in order to help others, and some to find help for themselves. It could be that some may find help from the course, and then help also for others. Those who have already done courses may hope to glean a new insight from here and there. For some it will be in hope that they may have a concentrated course which will qualify them to do counselling.

Professional counsellors—psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, social and welfare workers—may feel that such a course is unnecessary. Those trained well under one system of psychology and therapy generally think their particular training is sufficient for all things. Those who specialise in one area—say in logotherapy, reality therapy, primal therapy, psychoanalysis, or family therapy—may wonder what such a course as ours could add to their knowledge and practice. I happen to know that many therapists and social workers have a very limited knowledge of the Scriptures and an even smaller knowledge of theology. This, of course, is no crime or weakness. It is just happens that here is a Course which can enlarge biblical knowledge. Enlarged biblical knowledge can lead to enlarged wisdom, and an expanded ministry of love. In fact, the whole course is to do with both wisdom and love.

Now it is not only counsellors who need to supplement their knowledge of the Scriptures and Christian practice. We all need this expansion—including myself. No one can ever claim that he or she has sufficient knowledge and wisdom. I personally believe that professional counsellors—especially Christian ones—could obtain new material and fresh insights that would greatly enrich their counselling ministries, and even so much so as to surprise and delight them. I am also sure that it would add to their particular system in which they were trained. It would also be a personal benefit.

How Do We Go About the Course?

To begin with we need to determine, personally, which way we want to use the studies. The *first* way is simply to sit and listen, absorbing what we can, not being fazed by what we cannot grasp, and hope that—overall—we will retain something of what we have heard. The *second* way is to read the recommended books as a wider reading programme but without commitment to assignments. The *third* way is to undertake the subject as a special Unit for which a Certificate will be issued. This will require a set of four Term assignments. It can then stand on its own as a Certificate, or be given credit in the Christian Workers' School which we conduct, Brochures of which are available. You can see me regarding the way of study, or the Dean of Students the Rev. Martin Bleby or the Registrar of NCTM Schools Mr. Peter Farmer.

Reading For the Course

At this point materials for the Course will consist of the printed Lesson Notes issued along with audio-cassettes recorded when this Course was given verbally. We will also use of the following books as texts, (i) *The Meaning and Making of Man—Studies in Biblical Anthropology* (G. C. Bingham, NCPI, 1990), and *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man* (G. C. Bingham, NCPI, 1990). There is a reasonably comprehensive reading list (bibliography) in both books, and especially in the latter.

NCTM Course No. 6, Biblical Counselling

Lesson Two

An Introduction to the Course—II

Biblical and Non-Biblical Counselling

I am reluctant to use the term ‘non-biblical counselling’ especially if it is thought to mean that all non-biblical counselling is either unbiblical or anti-biblical. In some cases this may be the case, but much that we meet in biblical counselling may have correspondences in other counselling. Again, I distinguished in the last lecture between what may be called ‘Christian counselling’ and ‘biblical counselling’. There was no intention of disparaging ‘Christian counselling’—much of which has proved effective, but to distinguish between reductionist systems which take a theme such as forgiveness or love, or exhortation and build their systems up from these distinctions. What I seek to do is to take the widest possible view of the Scriptures, and out of a whole theology of God, Man and the creation, build the setting for helpful counselling. That is, when we have a knowledge of God we can then have knowledge of Man¹, and knowledge of the creation, and their unity is the basis on which we derive our principles of theology (study of God) anthropology (study of Man) and cosmology (study of the universe).

Psychotherapy and Biblical Counselling

Psychotherapy

An excellent essay that explains psychotherapy well is R.J. Corsini’s Introduction to *Current Psychotherapies* by R.J. Corsini and Danny Wedding (Peacock, Itasca,

¹ The use of the term ‘Man’ throughout our studies is not intended to be sexist or discriminatory. It is a generic word for all humankind—the whole race. When the male person is named the word will be ‘man’. Even though modern versions of the Bible in ‘comprehensive language’ (e.g. NRSV) make distinctions, they also lose something of the corporate nature of the human race as a solidary body (cf. Rom. 5:12-21). ‘Male’ and ‘female’ are not intended to be seen as two separate entities, but as one, and each gives the other its fullness, and together are the fullness of ‘Man’.

1989)². One point that Corsini makes is that there is no difference between psychotherapy and counselling. He says (p.2), They are the same qualitatively: they differ only quantitatively. . . there is no difference between counselling and psychotherapy.’ This is a significant point. The Macquarie Dictionary defines psychotherapy as ‘the science or art of curing psychological abnormalities and disorders by psychological techniques’. Such a definition would at first sight seem to exclude psychiatry, defined as ‘the practice or the science of treating mental diseases’, In practice psychiatry has been the domain of doctors, and in England one could not be a psychotherapist without first being a doctor. This was not the case in the USA. Psychiatry has used organic therapies such as surgery (lobotomy), electroconvulsive therapy, and insulin coma therapy. More prevalent today is the use of drugs—chemical therapy, tranquillizing and anti--depressant drugs,—and group therapy. It can be seen that medical doctors are required for such treatments. In practice psychiatrists are generally also psychotherapists, but the reverse is not of course the case. There are certain areas of healing which cannot be treated solely by a psychotherapist.

Speaking of psychotherapies Corsini says there are over 250 recognized therapies. In general they deal with cognition, behaviour and affection. Bloch divides them roughly into insight therapies and behaviour therapies. The ‘Contents’ of Corsini’s book covers psychoanalysis, Adlerian psychotherapy, analytical therapy, person-centred therapy, behaviour therapy, cognitive therapy, existential therapy, transactional analysis, multimodal therapy, Asian psychotherapies, psychodrama and bioenergetic analysis. Bloch adds crisis intervention, marital therapy, sex therapy, family therapy and supportive psychotherapy. These two lists are not exhaustive but they make interesting and useful reading.

Biblical Counselling

As we have said above, biblical counselling seeks to understand the whole of man from the materials given within the Scriptures. This does not mean that he may not use and be helped by the fruits of scientific research. The Book of Ecclesiastes is one that repays close reading. Thought by some readers to be a very pessimistic book, this is not the case. It is a realistic book. Put in modern terms the Preacher is looking at the universe from (i) the horizontal position, and (ii) the horizontal-vertical position. Roughly speaking horizontalists are those who look at ‘everything that is under the sun’ and not beyond such things. Verticalists are those who ignore the horizontal and think only in terms of the supra-mundane and even the supernatural. Sometimes they are called transcendentalists. The Preacher sees that the horizontal when viewed as a thing in itself is hopeless and says, ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity’. For him there is a vertical dimension which alters everything. The universe is horizontal-vertical. So the whole of Man is to fear God and keep His commandments. The Preacher and others (e.g. Job, Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon³ etc.) have a high view of the wisdom of God, and think that Man can be helped by such wisdom. Indeed it is indispensable to him.

² Also very useful is the essay by Jerome D. Frank in Sidney Bloch’s *An Introduction to the Psychotherapies* (O.U.P. , New York, 1986. He speaks of the ‘religio-cultural’, and the “empirical scientific’ therapies that have developed, the first being quite ancient, the second stemming from the mid-18th. century beginning with Mesmer. He points out that both groups equally are well-trained in their systems.

³ The *Wisdom of Solomon* is one of the Wisdom books of the Apocrypha. Whilst it is not canonical it has always been accepted as a book of purity, and as a good commentary, sometimes as an excellent expansion of much of the wisdom we find in the canon of Scripture. Some modern translations include the Apocrypha although they do not claim it to be canonical, e.g. RSV, NRSV and Jerusalem Bible.

Some would see within the whole scope of the Scriptures enough wisdom to help Man in all his needs. Part of that wisdom may well include the use of all the sciences available to Man, not excluding the therapies we have mentioned however deficient some of them may be. In our later studies we will be comparing some of the principles used in psychotherapy which have correspondence with aspects of the Scriptures, e.g. sex, family, parental influence, fatherhood, social groupings, purpose, and the like.

Natural Wisdom and Biblical Wisdom

Here we will have to tread carefully. We must never say that Man lacks intellectual ability, and great manual gifts. When in Romans 1:21-22 we read that mankind ‘became futile in their thinking and their senseless mind was darkened. Claiming to be wise they became fools,’ we must not think that means their intellectual ability was lost or deteriorated. No: it is the *bias* of their thinking which changed, and closed off the truth of things to them. ‘The truth of things’ means the truth of God, Man and the creation. Henceforth Man may well enquire into their nature and what he learns will be knowledge. However it may not be wisdom, even though much knowledge may be accounted by many to be wisdom. The most brilliant scientist can lack wisdom, the peasant can be wise, but, of course the scientist can be wise and the peasant foolish, yet—scientist or peasant—neither can, of himself, be wise with the wisdom of God. The fact is that fallen Man has changed the true theology, anthropology and cosmology into a system without God, not requiring Him. If there is a god, then it is not God as He is. This is humanism, and whilst man can devise a philosophy of the horizontal, and a psychology within the horizontal—and he is driven to do this—he cannot have the wider view, the seeing of all things through the eyes of God which alone constitutes true wisdom.

We would say in conclusion that so far as living in the horizontal is concerned Man can get along well with his knowledge and by it—to a large degree—cope with the problems that confront him. However Man was not made for the horizontal alone although he may well enjoy it. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says,

He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man’s mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

With eternity in his heart man cannot narrow himself down to the horizontal. He is a creature of eternity. This he may never discover through his science, but his heart will have that eternal drive, and he will need wisdom to satisfy it.

Lesson Three

The Scope of the Scriptures

The Scriptures and Other Writings

In our next study we will see that there is a wisdom Man has by which he operates in the world, either apart from the Judaic-Christian Scriptures or by incorporating them in his thinking. Thus all the writings of the world may be study materials for those wishing to understand the nature of Man, and many use such materials where they are available. In this study we are asking ourselves whether, within the scope of the Scriptures, we have sufficient coverage for counselling people. We make the claim that the Scriptures are certainly sufficient for 'Biblical Counselling' as we set it forth in this Course. It may happen, of course, that Biblical counselling will turn out to be a very limited counselling, especially in the eyes of those who use other systems. What we wish to see is what the Scriptures show us much in regard to God, Man and creation, and this will involve some study. In this paper we look at some of the materials which encourage us to use the Scriptures to the full.

We are not giving ourselves to an argument of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. Many scholars and others are caught up in these. We simply take the Scriptures at face value, and use the principle of interpretation that Scripture will open Scriptures to us, and that we can get the sense of them which is necessary for us.

Some Scriptures Which Tell us about The Scriptures

A primary passage is II Timothy 3:14–17,

But as for you [Timothy], continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

This passage tells us Timothy grew up being trained in and by the Scriptures. The young man's mother and grandmother (II Tim. 1:5) were women of faith and the Scriptures although Timothy's father was not a Jew. Timothy had always known the Scriptures. Now he is told they are sacred writings, and instruct him so that he can [has been able to] come to salvation through faith in Christ.

Paul Tells Timothy the Scriptures are Inspired: Others affirm This

These scriptures would be those we call 'the Old Testament'. Paul then says that 'all scripture' is inspired by God. Scholars debate whether this means 'each scripture' or 'every scripture' or 'all scriptures', or any writing that is a scripture is inspired by God. We take the text here as 'all scripture'. 'Inspired' can have the meaning of either 'out-breathed by God', or 'filled with the breath of God', but the idea of insulfation—i.e. breathing into, inflating—is absent. We may speak of human writings as being inspired, but we will have a different meaning. We will probably mean they are different, special, and transcending some other writings. If by 'inspired' we mean 'directly given by God' then that means they are dependable, and of the nature of God. Hence in II Peter 1:20–21 we have,

First of all you must understand this that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God,

which is why the scriptures are called 'living oracles' in Acts 7:38 (cf. I Pet. 4:11; Rom. 3:2), and why the writer of Hebrews says (1:1), 'In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets.' It is also clear from the way Jesus used Scripture that he thought it not only valuable but immutable. He did certain things 'that the scriptures might be fulfilled'¹. The apostles also understood this principle (Acts 1:16; Gal. 4:23–24; I Cor. 10:11; cf. James 2:23; 4:5). Jesus saw all his acts as being in conformity with the Scriptures—Luke 24: 25–27, 44–47,

And he said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. . . Then he said to them, 'These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms should be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written that Christ should suffer and rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'

Paul—in extension of what he says in II Timothy 3:16—says in Romans 4:23—speaking of Abraham's faith—'But the words, "It was reckoned to him," were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also'. In Galatians 3: 8 Paul writes, 'And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.' In Romans 15:4 he says, 'For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.'² In I Corinthians 15:3–4 Paul affirms that 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures'.

¹ See Matthew 26:54, 56; Mark 14:49; Luke 4:21; John 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36, 37.

² Later will need to refer back to this verse in regard to the ministry of counselling.

LESSON THREE— THE SCOPE OF THE SCRIPTURES

At this point we might as well see that Christ thought of his words as the truth which he and heard from God, and so his words were ‘spirit and life’ and as inspired as those of the Old Testament, seeing that he was the very embodiment of the ancient sacred writings. This is a vast subject, beyond the scope of our present paper, but we should read Matthew 24:35; Mark 8:38; 13:31; Luke 21:33; John 1:1–3, 14; 5:24; 8:31; 17:14 to see that the word of the Son was the word of the Father.

There is no doubt, either that the apostles believed they were speaking the word of God—‘that which we have seen and heard we also proclaim unto you’—and indeed to be an apostle was to tell the good news of the Kingdom of God and the salvation of Man. Of Paul’s epistles Peter wrote,

So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things hard in them to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

John the Divine wrote his book as given to him by God, Christ and the Spirit, and gives grave warnings to those who would in any way alter his writings.

So then we may assume that the Scriptures as we have them are breathed out by God are filled with His life-giving breath, and are still words that are ‘spirit and life’. Thus with confidence we can ‘search the Scriptures’ for the riches they can give us. Since God is ‘the only wise God’ and since in ‘in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’, and since the Holy Spirit is ‘the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord’ then the Scriptures written by God and speaking of Him should present us with an enormous treasury of wisdom and knowledge.

Elements of the Word Relating to Counselling

Let us go back to II Timothy 3:14–217,

But as for you [Timothy], continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

We see here the following elements

- (i) instruction for salvation.
- (ii) profitable for teaching.
- (iii) profitable for reproof.
- (iv) profitable for correction
- (v) profitable for training in righteousness.

The end of all these things is that the man of God may be (i) complete, (ii) equipped for every good work. If we look at all these things then we wonder what better elements we could impart in counselling, what better could serve people who are

troubled and what better integration and fulfilment of life could come than from these, i.e. (i) complete, (ii) equipped for every good work. Certainly the Scriptures are rich in those elements required for true counselling.

If we add to that Romans 15:4, 'For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope,' then we can see the word was written for instruction and encouragement for converts, they being assisted by hope—a great dynamic for true living and the substance of true counselling.

Conclusion: The Word We Hear, Read and Tell Should be Good

We shall see—time and again—that Man either eats of the Tree of Life³ or the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. In Eden the primal pair chose *not* to live according to God's word. The woman listened to the word of the serpent, the man listened to the word of his wife. Both denied the true word of God. We have to decide whether we will come to the word in order to help others, or whether we will hear other words and live according to them. There is no suggestion here that Man does not have ability, and perception and can help those in need—even apart from the word of God. The question is, 'How far can Man's wisdom go?' That is the central question.

³ Some scholars see the tree of life as the Cross, since the Cross brings life. In Revelation 22 its 'leaves are for the healing of the nations' (cf. Exek. 47:12). Some see the tree of knowledge of good and evil as the law. Certainly it seemed to promise wisdom—'a tree to be desired to make one wise'.

Lesson Four

Wisdom and Counselling—I

The Nature of Counselling—I

In *The Macquarie Dictionary* the first meaning of ‘counsel’ as a noun is ‘1. advice, opinion, or instruction given in directing the judgement to conduct of another.’ That is the way we use the word in our course. The meaning of ‘wisdom’ in the same dictionary is, ‘1. the quality or state of being wise, knowledge of what is true or right with just judgement as to action; sagacity, prudence, or common sense’. We would say then, that counselling is giving advice out of the wisdom we have. We would first need to be wise enough to give counsel, and then we would have to be wise in the giving of that counsel. In certain kinds of psychotherapy the counsellor seeks to evoke wisdom in the client, or lead to it non-directively, but in the ultimate it is still the giving of advice. Referring to Rogerian counselling Corsini (op, cit. p.2) writes, ‘And when we have a term such as *nondirective counselling*, we have a semantic absurdity if we think about it long enough’.

Non-biblical counselling, then is giving advice and direction out of the wisdom of the therapist and his—or her—therapeutic system. All systems are called in question. There is often strong controversy between therapy systems, i.e. the wisdom of one—or more—is called in question by the other—or others. With 260 different systems this will be natural enough. Said in the most gracious way, there could be 260 different facets or modes of working in regard to the problem of living that human beings experience. Doubtless adherents and practitioners of any given therapy would consider that system to be one of wisdom¹. In our last paper we sought to distinguish between the

¹ We have to face the fact that some psychotherapists such as Jeffrey Masson have abandoned psychotherapy as delusive and non-productive. His books *Against Therapy* (Fontana 1990), *The Final Analysis* (Harper Collins, 1991) are an attack on all forms of psychotherapy. Hans Eysenck has published a number of books corrective of psychotherapy, and has especially attacked Freud and Psycho-analysis his latest book being *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (Penguin, 1986). Psychiatrists such as Karl Menninger—*Whatever Became of Sin?*—(Bantam, 1978), Thomas Szasz—*The Myth of Psychotherapy*—(Doubleday, 1978) are some of the anti-psychiatrists. Anti-psychologists are also many, such as Paul Vitz—*The Cult of Self-worship*—(Eerdmans, 1979) and W. K. Kilpatrick—*The Seduction of Psychology*—(Thomas Nelson, 1983). The strong differences between schools of psycho-therapy warn us not only against partisanship, but to the fact that schools of psychotherapy are many, are subject to change, and flourish in certain environments at certain times, but wane as do fashions in other areas. All of these things point to the need for true wisdom.

wisdom of God and the wisdom of Man. We said that Man's wisdom must have its limits by reason of two things, (i) biblically speaking, Man has a bias against God, and so omits from his research the wisdom of God. For him it is a non-thing, and is irrelevant, (ii) on any count man's wisdom is limited by his finiteness²—if we may use that term. He is not competent enough to rationalise and utilise the knowledge that he is accumulating in his various scientific disciplines. Valuable as this knowledge is to Man often misuses it, even sometimes without intending to do so.

Biblical Counselling Based Entirely upon Biblical Wisdom

As we have said we do not place biblical wisdom over and against human wisdom, for biblical wisdom may advise us to utilise what we call 'human wisdom', seeing that God is Creator, that He is truth, and that all reality has its origin, being and goal; in Him. Even so we are saying there is a biblical wisdom which arises from the whole of the Scriptures. It is not just 'a canon within the canon' but is the sum of the whole canon and its essential thrust. Some may not agree with what I say, but they must first enquire as to whether there is an *ethos* and a system which is innate to Holy Writ. If so, then we must not introduce into it, or read back into it, that which is not biblical, nor may we debate about it by things that are extra-biblical.

For example, we have within the Scriptures the doctrine of predestination. The moment we abstract it from the Scriptures and begin to rationalise it—to defend or attack it—then we are no longer seeing it or understanding it in its biblical perspective. The old Reformed hermeneutic of Scripture explaining Scripture still stands, even if we have to spend more time searching out *what it really says*. So then, we need to be fully acquainted with the Scriptures in order to know biblical wisdom. Whilst the counselling will then be within the perimeters of Scripture—i.e. be working within those limits—yet it may well be on the whole, that this will generally provide sufficient wisdom by which to counsel others.

It should be remembered that whilst some non-biblical counsellors feel free to take the best that is offering in a number of therapies, that generally those who espouse one system believe it is sufficient for successful therapy. In fact there are many indications that various therapeutic systems—such as Scientology—are now becoming religions in themselves. They have their own 'gospel', and their therapy works some kind of salvation. These systems have now been abandoned as being scientific, i.e. holding only to what is verifiable, and have moved out into that they would call extra-sensory and psychical areas³. We saw in Jerome B. Frank's essay in Sidney Bloch's *An Introduction to the Psychotherapies* that he spoke of 'religio-cultural' systems as against 'empirical scientific' therapies. It seems that latter are moving in some cases to become the former. When psychology formulates a gospel, when psychotherapies become salvific religious systems, then is the time to examine the claims of such

² I personally prefer the term 'creatureliness' which is a qualitative term as against 'finiteness' which is a quantitative term. We really cannot measure humanity. Man's protest against his so-called 'finiteness' is really a protest against his creaturely limitations, yet within creaturehood are marvellous powers and possibilities.

³ Of course, as religio-cultural systems they insist that what they do is true science, and that true science takes into account that which is not empirically verifiable.

systems, and make comparison with basic Christianity. Each system is simply one of the ‘religio-cultural’ systems and must be subject to examination, as such.

What is Biblical Wisdom?

This is quite a question to ask. The simple answer must be that biblical wisdom is what we arrive at when we know the Scriptures very well, and, of course, know the God of the Bible. If we were to know God as a human being can, and if we were to understand Man and his universe, and if we had humility enough to let this knowledge⁴ work out through us, then undoubtedly we would know something of biblical wisdom. S. H. Blank comments⁵ that wisdom is ‘A quality of mind distinguishing the wise man, by virtue of which he is able to live well and both succeed and counsel success; also a quality of itself apart from man, above and beyond man, existing ideally with God and imparting form to creation’. Blank is describing the man who becomes wise, but places wisdom above the man himself. Luther once commented, ‘He who is full of his own truth and wisdom cannot receive the truth and wisdom of God.’ Karl Barth has said, ‘Human wisdom means the art of living.’⁶ He who is wise lives truly. General or human wisdom is the art of living in this world as fully as possible though not necessarily with God. Godly wisdom is the art of living in the knowledge of God, of what Man is, of what creation is, and where Man is going, along with the purposes of God for humanity and the cosmos. God’s wisdom is the outworking of His love in the processes of history⁷ until Man and the creation are glorified and Man participates fully in the Divine nature⁸.

Practical wisdom comes to us as we are willingly involved in the processes of the outworking of what has been variously called ‘the purpose of his will’, ‘the mystery’, ‘the mystery of his will’, ‘the counsel of his will’, ‘the mystery of Christ’, ‘the plan of the mystery’, ‘the eternal purpose’, ‘a plan for the fulness of time’, ‘the mystery of God’, ‘the revelation of the mystery’, ‘the mystery of the gospel’, ‘the mystery hidden for generations’, ‘the riches of the glory of this mystery’, ‘the knowledge of God’s mystery,’ the mystery of Christ’, ‘the mystery of the faith’, ‘the mystery of our religion,’ ‘the mystery of the seven stars’ and even ‘the mystery of lawlessness’, and ‘the mystery of the woman’. Also Paul speaks of the apostolic messengers as being ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’, and says in another place, ‘we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God’. In one place he says, ‘Lo! I tell you a mystery,’ and in another that even if one were to ‘understand all mysteries’ and not have love, then he would be as nothing, since love is essential to knowing all mysteries. So then true heart-knowledge of these constitutes what is biblical wisdom, out of which we will

⁴ Raymond Gaita a philosopher wrote in *Quadrant* (May, 1991), ‘We distinguish wisdom from knowledgeableness or expertise. It cannot be acquired from books in the same sense that knowledge can be. There are no encyclopedias of wisdom, and the books which contain wisdom and from which we can gain it, must be read differently from those whose diligent study would make one knowledgeable. One has to bring something quite different to one’s reading. We may achieve that deeper understanding we call wisdom only if we have the depth to receive it, and that depth includes moral and spiritual values of a kind quite different from those virtues which are needed for even the highest academic distinction’.

⁵ *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Abingdon, 1961, Vol. IV, pp. 852–3).

⁶ *Church Dogmatics* (T. & T. Clark, 1976, Vol. II, Part I, p.433).

⁷ This of course covers creation, the fall, covenant, salvation, sanctification and glorification, all of which involve us in those processes called ‘salvation history’.

⁸ At this point simply read I Corinthians 2:9–10; Ephesians 1:3–18; II Peter 1:4 and Revelation chs. 21–22.

have the wherewithal to help those who seek it from us. Of course not every one receives such wisdom when it is presented, and this is why wisdom relates to 'the mystery of God'. It is wisdom that comes primarily by revelation, but revelation must be received in humility.

So then to know God, Man and the universe by what the Scriptures disclose is to have a wisdom which is extremely valuable, and by which we can serve others.

Lesson Five

Wisdom and Counselling—II

The Nature of Biblical Wisdom (Cont.)

Wisdom and Non-Wisdom

We have seen how the Macquarie Dictionary described 'wisdom'. The Oxford Dictionary defines wisdom as 'Being wise, (possession of) experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically or practically; sagacity, prudence, commonsense' In Biblical counselling Biblical wisdom¹ is required. Extra-biblical wisdom stands on its own grounds, and as such can be greatly useful. Both have to fit with the Dictionary definitions. One has the material and ethos provided by the Bible: the other has the material provided either by either by 'religio cultural' or 'empirical scientific'² resources, research and practices.

As we have said, we must first recognise that knowledge *per se* is not necessarily wisdom, although knowledge is always essential to true wisdom. Rom. 1:18-32 (cf. Gen. 3:1-6) shows that Man in rejecting God rejected what wisdom he (Man) already had, and closed the door to true wisdom. Paul says, 'For although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened, Claiming to be wise they

¹ See my general and applicative essay on 'Wisdom for Life' in my *The Wisdom of God and Man* pages 123–131.

² It is interesting to note that in the O.T. there are cases of the religio-cultural systems magico-wisdom meeting up against the wisdom of the servants of God, e.g. Pharaoh's magicians against Moses, and the magician-wise men of Babylon against the wisdom of Daniel. In the N.T. we have the cases of Simon Magus at Samaria, and Elymas the magician in Acts 13:8–12. It could be an interesting matter of research to examine many of the Christian cults and even denominations who have opted for the religio-cultural system and principle and thought it to be biblical. It may also be that the empirical scientific system is often blended with the biblical one—consciously or unconsciously. Certainly today there is the blending of biblical materials with the empirical scientific systems, since innumerable Christians practice extra-biblical therapies, and could not hold a clear dichotomy of the two systems. In the face of this fact there are many attempts at intergrating the two. Some empirical scientific systems have departed from their basic principles and have gone off into non-verifiable sources such as para-sensory systems, or the New Age materials which—when closely examined—have their source in the religio-cultural systems.

became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal Man or birds or animals or reptiles.’ He is saying not only that true wisdom departed, but that the bias of the mind prevented the acquiring of true wisdom.

Linked with this is the temptation to ‘be as God knowing good and evil’. Man now assumes that he can know what is right and what is wrong. He does this as an autonomous being (so called), when to be truly human he must be dependent upon God, i.e. be a creature dependent upon the Creator, a servant of the King, and a son of the Father³. Only in these relationships⁴ can he discover true wisdom. Man's rebellion has placed him in opposition to God's wisdom. This so-called wisdom Paul names as ‘the wisdom of this world’; cf. I Cor. chapters 1 and 2. We must *not* conclude—as we have warned before—that this means all empirical-scientific material is ‘foolishness’ or ‘the wisdom of this world’. Paul in I Corinthians 1 and 2 is speaking about the matters of human relationships with God, and of salvation. So were the apostles to the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8–12), and Paul to King Agrippa and Festus (Acts 26).

The Wisdom of God

In many places true wisdom is alone attributed to ‘the only wise God’ (Jude 25, A.V.). Paul says, ‘O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!’ and asks, ‘Who has been His counsellor?’ Daniel says of God, ‘To whom belongs wisdom and might,’ (Dan. 2:20-23, cf. II Sam. 14:20, Prov. 21:30). So we might multiply these affirmations of Scripture, but we do not need to do so. We speak of God as ‘all-knowing’ i.e. omnipotent, but in one sense God does not know, anything or everything as we would in our minds. It is simply within His knowledge for what He knows is, and is so, by reason of His knowing it. In no sense does God acquire wisdom or knowledge, nor does He cogitate in order to arrive at conclusions.

God is known as wise because He is Creator, ‘O Lord, how manifest are they works! In wisdom thou hast made them all’ (Psalm 104:24). This wisdom is independent of others, ‘Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge and taught him the way of understanding?’ (Isaiah 40:12-14).

Wisdom is Based on God as Creator and His Creation

The whole of creation is based on the wisdom of God. The whole of wisdom is based on the creation of God. The prophet Jeremiah says, ‘It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the earth by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens’ (10:12, cf. 51:15). Included in this is God’s counsel, i.e. His wise will, destined to be fulfilled; so Prov. 16:4, ‘The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of judgement.’ It is really doubtful whether anyone knows what creation is since only the Creator could know that, but we delude ourselves by thinking we do now. It can be said, then, ‘Only he who knows what creation is is truly wise.’ That Man cannot understand it all is clear from various statements in the Scriptures such as, Isaiah 40:26–28; 42:5; Amos 4:13. Isaiah 44:24 shows that God created *alone*—‘I am the Lord who made all things—Who was with me/’ and Ecclesiastes (3:11; cf. Isa. 46:9–10) settles the matter,

³ We do not here go into the theology of Man as creature, son and servant, but they are most significant categories. Of course the three are present as one in the person

⁴ As our course proceeds we will see that biblical counselling has primarily to do with relationality, i.e. the internal and external relationships of the Triune God, Man’s relationships with God and fellow-Man and Man’s relationship with all creatures and elements of creation.

He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end

God's Wisdom is Spiritual, is Moral, is Christ

God's wisdom is moral, and is Christ. In Ephesians 1:3-14 (cf. 3:1-11) Paul shows the plan of God was purposed before time, and God 'accomplishes all things after (according to) the purpose of his own will'. In I Cor. 1:30 Paul says that God 'is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.' Some translators have, 'Christ Jesus whom God made our wisdom—in righteousness, sanctification and redemption.' Christ is God's wisdom.

Col. 1:19 says that in Christ the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and in 2:3 that in Christ 'are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'. In essence Paul is not only saying that all God's wisdom is in Christ, but that Christ is that wisdom of God, i.e. that God has planned salvation through Christ and Christ is the outworking of that salvation. That is why he says Christ is 'your wisdom' meaning that who and what Christ is and does is God's wisdom. In I Cor. 1:17-31 he places this 'foolishness of God' over and against 'the wisdom of this world'. In fact Man is wholly foolish and God wholly wise. What is most apposite for us in the matter of counselling is that the wisdom Paul speaks of in I Corinthians chapters 1 and 2 is expressed in the following terms,

He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.'

Some translations imply that God's wisdom is 'righteousness, sanctification and redemption'. In any case biblical wisdom has to do with these matter of righteousness, sanctification and redemption, and if we were to think upon these lines we would see that they wholly occupy all human beings, everywhere. Empirical-scientific therapists will have to acknowledge these facts if they are to achieve lasting results from their systems. One of the reasons for this is—as we shall see in studies—later—on biblical anthropology—that man is essentially spirit, even if we must think of him as embodied spirit⁵. As such there are elements which extra-biblical anthropology cannot divulge. These are spiritual elements, relating to the moral, and—indeed—relating to the whole of human existence. This 'whole' involves and incorporates things such as 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption' for these are things which Man cannot ignore. If to this list we add Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11 et al and II Timothy 3:15-17, then we see that wisdom flows from Christ and the Scriptures.

When we ask 'How is Christ the wisdom of God?' the question must be answered theologically in terms of I Corinthians 1:17-31, but we cannot here enlarge upon this, except to say that the Cross is both the power of wisdom of God and there is no other power and wisdom known to man which is conclusive in its action—valuable as much of the action of extra-biblical wisdom may be—but it simply emphasises the practical fact that all our wisdom lies in Christ and the Spirit.

⁵ When we say 'embodied spirit' we do not mean man is a spirit in a body. We mean that man is one though body, soul and spirit, so that we do not mean he is *in* a body, but that as body soul and spirit he is a spirit. Theologians debate whether man will ever be out of—or apart from—a body, i.e. he may put off the tent of this body, but instantaneously—at human death—put on the house made with hands in the heavens—the heavenly dwelling—if, in fact, it might not already be forming in his 'inner man' (cf. II Cor. 4:16-5:9).

Wisdom Comes to us Through the Spirit

Whilst Christ is the wisdom of God—and he is—yet knowing that wisdom is a matter of revelation, and God’s revelation is always on the basis of the relationship He chooses to have to us, and to which we choose to respond. As a human being must be born not only of his or her parents, so the same person must be born of the Spirit before being admitted to the mystery of God. It is then Spirit, then who reveals wisdom to us—i.e; the Father and the Son.

In Isaiah 9:5 Messiah is called ‘Wonderful Counsellor’, and in 11:2 it is said of him,

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.’

As we come to examine how we can obtain wisdom it is evident that such can only come from the true Teacher and Master, Christ himself, and this must be obtained through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In order to emphasise the fact that the gospel and all biblical truth is a mystery we repeat a section from our last study,

Practical wisdom comes to us as we are willingly involved in the processes of the outworking of what has been variously called ‘the purpose of his will’, ‘the mystery’, ‘the mystery of his will’, ‘the counsel of his will’, ‘the mystery of Christ’, ‘the plan of the mystery’, ‘the eternal purpose’, ‘a plan for the fulness of time’, ‘the mystery of God’, ‘the revelation of the mystery’, ‘the mystery of the gospel’, ‘the mystery hidden for generations’, ‘the riches of the glory of this mystery’, ‘the knowledge of God’s mystery,’ the mystery of Christ’, ‘the mystery of the faith’, ‘the mystery of our religion,’ ‘the mystery of the seven stars’ and even ‘the mystery of lawlessness’, and ‘the mystery of the woman’. Also Paul speaks of the apostolic messengers as being ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’, and says in another place, ‘we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God’. In one place he says, ‘Lo! I tell you a mystery,’ and in another that even if one were to ‘understand all mysteries’ and not have love, then he would be as nothing, since love is essential to knowing all mysteries. So then true heart-knowledge of these constitutes what is biblical wisdom, out of which we will have the wherewithal to help those who seek it from us. Of course not every one receives such wisdom when it is presented, and this is why wisdom relates to ‘the mystery of God’. It is wisdom that comes primarily by revelation, but revelation must be received in humility.

Lesson Six

Wisdom and Counselling—III

Needing the Wisdom of God and Obtaining It.

By now we must be convinced of three things (i) there is an extra-biblical or non-biblical wisdom which produces its series of therapies—amongst other empirico-scientific disciplines. (i) With it there is religio-cultural wisdom which produces its own systems of psychotherapies, and (iii) there is biblical wisdom which is epitomised in Christ, and summed up in him. Study in these three forms of wisdom may yield many results of which some may be quite beneficial to all three schools of thought. The one thing that we must be convinced of is that biblical wisdom must be obtained. The writer of Proverbs 4:5, 7 (NRSV) urges this,

Get wisdom, get insight, do not
forget, nor turn away . . .
The beginning of wisdom is this:
Get wisdom, and whatever you get,
get insight.

Biblical Wisdom Not Obtained as Other Forms of Wisdom

Knowledge comes from investigation, research, reading, utilising the data banks Man has built up and human experience, experimentation—and so on. Job asks and answers in this regard,

But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
Man does not know the way to it,
and it is not found in the land of the living.
The deep says, 'It is not in me,'
and the sea says 'It is not with me.'
.....
Whence then comes wisdom?
and where is the place of understanding?

God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place
And he said to man,
'Behold, the fear of the Lord,
that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.

The following quotes are from Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10: 15:33—in that order.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
a good understanding have all those who practice it.

The fear of the Lord is the
beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The fear of the Lord is the
beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy
One is insight.

The fear of the Lord is
instruction in wisdom,
and humility goes before honour.

One of the features of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and some of the Psalms is that writers believe they have already received wisdom and they are speaking out of this. Since the fear of the Lord was the beginning of their wisdom—i.e. the receiving of it—so it is the basis for their imparting of wisdom. For example, see Proverbs 2:1–11,

My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
yes, if you cry aloud for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures;
then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth
come knowledge and understanding;
he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
guarding the paths of justice
and preserving the way of his saints.
Then you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, very good path;
for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
discretion will watch over you;
understanding will guard you.

The prayer of Psalm 90:11–12 (cf. Psalm 39:4) combines the point above—prayer—and the point below—fear of the Lord.

Who considers the power of thy anger,
and thy wrath according to the fear of thee?
So teach us to number our days
that we may get a heart¹ of wisdom.

¹ The 1662 Prayer Book had 'that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom'.

LESSON SIX—WISDOM AND COUNSELLING—III

The theme that keeps coming through—as we have seen— is ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,’ so that we may begin in wisdom when we humble our hearts before God. This is surely the act of repentance in the sense of ‘cleanse your hands you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind’ (James 4:8). When we tremble before His word (Isa. 66:2b) then we ‘making our ear attentive to and inclining our heart to understanding’. True fear of the Lord means we keep His commandments and this is the whole of life (Eccles. 12:13). This must mean the *obtaining* of wisdom. Thus Psalm 111:10 has it, ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who practice it.’²

Obedience, then, is the way we come to wisdom and the way wisdom comes to us. In Deuteronomy 4:6 Moses, after telling Israel to keep the commandments, ordinances and statutes of the Lord said,

Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’.

That is why Psalm 19:7 says,

The law of the Lord is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure,
making wise the simple;
he precepts of the Lord are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandments of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes.

and Psalm 119:98 asserts, ‘Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.’ The very *way* of the law, when walked, is God’s wisdom, and it teaches the devotee the *way* of wisdom so that, ‘The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks justice’ (Psa. 37:30).

Willingness³ is always the key to the obtaining of wisdom. Proverbs 22:17 gives the injunction, ‘*Incline* your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and *apply* your mind to my knowledge.’ Again, Proverbs 23:12 says, ‘*Apply* your mind to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.’ Proverbs 16:16 advises, ‘To get wisdom is better than gold; to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.’

We saw (above) that wisdom is learned by godly men and women who pass it on—to or down—to others. Wisdom is taught, but it is primarily taught by God⁴. David in Psalm 51 realised the evil of his own heart, and the need for its purification. *He equated the learning of truth with the acquiring of wisdom*, ‘Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.’ This accords with the New Testament where one is given wisdom in order to know the wisdom of God⁵, i.e. His plan, counsel, will and goal for His creation.⁶ Psalm 49 is called ‘A Psalm of the Sons of Korah’. The speaker’s heart was filled with wisdom for he told his hearers,

² Other versions have ‘A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.’

³ See Psalm 40:8 a psalm of Davit but quoted in Hebrews 10:5–7 of Christ, ‘I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart’.

⁴ All true teaching is by God. Jesus on one occasion quoted Isaiah 54:13 (cf. Jer. 31:31–34) in the words, ‘They shall all be taught by God.’ In the N.T. the Father, the Son and the Spirit are all acclaimed as teachers.

⁵ See Ephesians 1:9–10, 2:17ff.

⁶ See the last paragraph in the previous study—Study 4—and note Romans 12:1–2; Ephesians 5:17.

My mouth shall speak wisdom;
 the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.
 I will incline my ear to a proverb;
 I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre.

In Psalm 37:30 David said,

The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
 and his tongue utters justice,

for he knew that when the heart learns wisdom (Psa. 51:6) then it can teach wisdom (51:10–14).

It is the person who meditates on the nature of God, His creation, His works, His law, His holiness and His love who is truly wise. Psalm 107 is one of the great doxological songs offered to God, and commencing with, ‘O give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his mercy endures for ever!’ It traces the goodness of the Lord in leading Israel through the forty years in the desert, and in their new land constantly repeating the theme of His steadfast love. Meditation and consequent doxology then are what make human beings wise,

Whoever is wise, let him give heed to the things;
 let men consider the steadfast love of the Lord.

We conclude then that wisdom is learned from fear of the Lord—an attitude which will bring about the following; (a) trust in God’s word, (b) dependence upon the Spirit of God to give understanding (c) understanding it, (d) submission to it, (e) knowledge of the will of God, and (f) working out that will which is love, in love.

Biblical Principles Concerning the Obtaining of Wisdom

a) Wisdom is a gift, a charisma.

Often Jesus exercised wisdom and knowledge which seemed supernatural. He knew the woman at the well (in John 4) had had five husbands and was now living outside marriage with another Man. Paul refers to ‘the utterance of wisdom’ and ‘the utterance of knowledge’ (I Cor. 12:8: cf. 13:2). These would be spontaneous, understandings received at a particular point when needed. So to speak, they were ‘*ad hoc* wisdom’.

(b) Wisdom is a gift which can be acquired by asking

In James 3:13-18 the writer describes the lofty nature of God’s wisdom. In 1:5 he says, ‘If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously, and without reproaching, and it will be given him.’ Whilst such wisdom may be given at a point of urgent need the emphasis seems to be that God’s wisdom will be given generally to the one who seeks it. The classic example of this is Solomon’s request to God for wisdom, which is granted to him (see I Kings chapter 3). He asks, ‘That I may discern between good and evil,’ to which God replies, ‘I will give you a wise and discerning mind.’

(c) Wisdom is Gained by Learning and Application

The writer of Ecclesiastes says a number of times, ‘I *applied* my heart to know wisdom.’ The writer of Proverbs urges his listeners to ‘hear wisdom’. It is a self-evident fact that some have ears to hear the wisdom of God and so profit by years of learning,

LESSON SIX—WISDOM AND COUNSELLING—III

acquiring knowledge and thus the gaining of wisdom. Wisdom has been said to be, ‘The way you use the knowledge you have’. As we have said, knowledge *per se* is not wisdom, since ‘Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up’ (I Cor.8:1) True wisdom comes from the personal, i.e. relational, knowing of God. It grows through love, i.e. the use of it for others, as we do the will of God⁷. Paul said, ‘Be wise, knowing the will of the Lord.’ To know the will of the Lord and to do it—that is wisdom.

⁷ I Corinthians 16:14 says, ‘Do everything in love’. I Corinthians 13:1–3 shows that without love nothing has value. God’s nature is love (I John 4:8, 16) and His will and plan are love. Wisdom is simply walking the way of love.

Lesson Seven

Fact and Nature of Counselling

WHAT, THEN, IS BIBLICAL COUNSELLING?

Introduction. The Meaning of Counselling

Most people have a reasonable idea of what the word ‘counselling’ means. Generally speaking it means to so assist a person who has problems, or who is in need so that the person is better able to cope with the difficulty and even able to find a solution to it. The meaning of the word ‘counsel’ in the Macquarie Dictionary which most fits our case is ‘1. advice, opinion or instruction given in directing the judgement or conduct of another. . .3. *Archaic.* wisdom, prudence. . . 12.to give counsel of advice’.*The Oxford Shorter Dictionary* has a number of definitions of ‘counsel’ two of which relate to our subject, ‘Advice , direction, as the result of deliberation. The faculty of counselling; judgement; prudence; sagacity.’ Macquarie says a counsellor is one who counsels; an adviser, a legal adviser or ‘a professional psychologist employed by a state education department to advise students on both personal problems’.¹

The word ‘counsel’ is used a lot in the Scriptures. The word used quite prolifically in the O.T. is *etsah*, i.e. counsel or advice. A study of this word in a concordance will repay the time spent. There are other words also but they appear to carry the same meaning. There is the counsel of the godly and the wise, sometimes by one person, sometimes by a group or council. Counsel can be good or wicked and wrong. In Psalm 1:1 the righteous man does not take part in ‘the counsel (*etsah*) of the ungodly’. In Psalm 16:7 it is said, I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.’In Psalm 2:1–2 the nations peoples and kings of the earth ‘take counsel (*yasad*) together against Yahweh and His ‘anointed’. II Samuel chapters 16 and 17 give a picture of two counsellors Ahithophel and Hushai who give different

¹ Some psychotherapists use the American term ‘counselling’ (with one ‘l’) for the professional person who advises regarding vocation, and ‘psychologist’ or ‘psychotherapist’ for one who counsels persons who have need of counsel. It is interesting that much modern psychotherapy seeks not to major on ‘problems’ but on ‘positive ways of living’—it is ‘positivity-centred’].

LESSON SEVEN—FACT AND NATURE OF COUNSELLING

forms of counsel. Sometimes counsel is planning together, either well or evilly. Generally counsel is given by God in which case the word can be a synonym for ‘will’, i.e. God’s will. Wicked counsel is planning or advice which is against God’s will.

Biblical Wisdom Literature

Job, Psalms, and Proverbs highlight the theme of counselling, whilst Ecclesiastes is basically wholly in the form of counselling.. Proverbs gives great emphasis to wisdom and links this with the giving of useful advice. The prophet is one who gives counsel but this by means of the word of God and not his own intrinsic wisdom. Isaiah and Jeremiah speak against human counselling and exalt God’s will and advice. Generally speaking counselling in the Old Testament can be described as ‘that giving of advice and direction out of genuine wisdom which comports with the will of God, and which is for the good of man.’

New Testament Wisdom Literature

In the N.T much the same idea obtains. The main word for its English equivalent (i.e. ‘counsel’) is *boule*, carrying the ideas of ‘counsel’, ‘will’ and ‘purpose’. With it is often the thought of ‘recommending’ (i.e. ‘giving advice and direction’) in which case the stronger word (verb) *symbolleuo* is used. There are two words for ‘counsellor’ namely *symbolouos*, as in Rom. 11:34, ‘who has been His counsellor?’, and *paracletos*, which does not directly have the the idea of ‘giving advice out of wisdom’, although we cannot say that this thought is absent. In John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7 *paracletos* is referred to the Holy Spirit, and also to Christ in John 14:16, and I John 2:1. Paracletos is an advocate or intercessor.

When we come to the verb *parakaleo* the ideas of ‘asking’, ‘requesting’, ‘beseeching’, ‘exhorting’, and ‘comforting;’ are present. The asking and intreating springs from wisdom (real or imagined) on the part of the exhorter or intreater, and effects of exhortation are strengthening, edifying and comforting. Sometimes the thought of ‘warning’ is present (cf. Heb. 3:13).

Linked with *parakaleo* is the verb ‘to admonish’, *noutheteo* (see Rom. 15:14, Col. 3:16, I Thess. 5:12, II Thess. 3:15), and means literally ‘to put in mind’. The noun, ‘admonition’ (*nouthesia*; see I Cor. 10:11, Eph. 6:4, Tit. 3:10). The verb and noun carry some sense of ‘rebuke’ and ‘confront’, and this action operative out of wisdom (real or imagined), that is out of the possession of useful knowledge. Sometimes the words ‘exhort’ and ‘admonish’ are used together, and in some cases other words such as ‘instruct’ ‘train’ and ‘teach’ and linked with them. We can draw the simple conclusion that out of teaching, instructing, admonishing, and exhorting comes that wisdom which can act as an *aide* to us where needed.

We may seek to find exact equivalents in the Scriptures for our modern words, ‘counsel’, ‘counselling’, and ‘counsellor’, but the model or image we have in our minds must not be read back into those words where found in the Scriptures. It is useful to seek to understand them, and bring those insights to the use of the words in our day.

We can say that practical Biblical counselling is ‘that helpful advice and direction given to a person at a certain point of need which comports with, and issues from, the wisdom of God.’ We must note strongly that the wisdom is God’s and the resultant counsel springs from that wisdom, and not from the personal wisdom of the counsellor. In one sense he is passing on what he has first come to know by revelation, which he has established in his understanding and is now being an agent in communicating it

to another or others. How this wisdom is acquired, and the modes of using it will occupy us in this series of studies.

Counselling in the New Testament.

If our description of counselling stands, then (i) what was the nature of counselling as given in the early church, and (ii) who were the counsellors? Whilst our actions today are not rigidly restricted to what happened in the early church, yet the example and pattern of that church is extremely valuable helpful for us to follow.

(i) the nature of counselling in the early church.

We need to be honest and say that counselling as we know it in the modern psychotherapeutic sense was not extant in the early church. In some sense it could not have been, i.e. a professional group of people using scientific disciplines to assist people in their mental illnesses, and aberrations, seeking to bring them to human wholeness.

Counselling—the giving of advice, direction and prescriptive living—came through generally in the life of the church, for,

- (a) *the fellowship of the Christian community* (cf. Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35, 8:4-8, 11:19-30) was a warm and healthy one, filled with care and compassion,
- (b) *the word of the Gospel not only saved people, but liberated them in a radical way* (Acts 13:38-39, I Cor. 6:0-11, Tit. 2:11-14, 3:5-7, II Cor 5:16-17, etc.).
- (c) *this state of the church was aided and enhanced by what are called ‘the variety of gifts’, ‘the varieties of service’, ‘the variety of workings’* (I Cor 12:4-7). These are called ‘the manifestations of the Spirit’ and are ‘for the common good’.

We need also to see that the Christian community was a proclaiming community. I Thess. 1:5-10 exemplifies the pattern and life of an early church, which was healthy in every way because it related outwardly to the world whilst inwardly it had a ‘work of faith, labour of love, and steadfastness of hope’. The Epistles of the N.T. along with Revelation chapters 2 and 3 make it clear that the early church had many troubles as time passed, as teaching became confused, and as human egos sought to satisfy their ambitions. The problems we face now they also faced then. Even so the nature of the true church has always remained the same, albeit greatly beleaguered and deficient from time to time.

What is often missed by us moderns is the life and place of worship in the N.T. church. Paul’s remedial teaching in I Corinthians chs. 10-14 is helpful to study in detail. See also Phil. 3:3; John 4:20-24; Ephes. 2:11-12; I Pet. 2:4-10; I Cor., 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3: 16; Heb. 13:15-16 and Rom. 12:1-2 for positive teaching on the nature of the worshipping community. In the context of worship communities kept themselves healthy. Note in I Tim. 5:1-16 (cf. Ephes. 5: 21 -6:9) that relationships were maintained on a healthy familial basis, and social concern was evident.

(ii) counsellors in the N.T. church.

If we trace the use of words such as ‘counsel’, ‘exhort’, ‘comfort’, ‘beseech’, ‘admonish’, ‘rebuke’, ‘edify’ - in both their nounal and verbal forms - then we will see that

(a) the congregation was well-taught in the nature of the Gospel and Christian community living (cf. Acts 2:42) so that they understood themselves to live under ‘great grace’, and ‘the word of His grace’, and ‘the Gospel of grace’, and to be led personally and corporately by the Holy Spirit in all that they did, and (b) that there was mutuality of teaching, exhortation, encouragement, and the like (cf. Eph. 5: 19, Col. 3:16, Heb. 3:13: 10:24, I Cor. 14:26f.).

The church had an order of ministries, all of which worked to mutuality of help, encouragement, and growth in maturity (cf. Ephes. 4:7-16, I Cor. 12:28, cf. I Pet. 4:10-11). It also has structured leadership, i.e. elders who led and directed the congregation. Eldership should be looked at in detail, for if we can speak of ‘counselling’ in something like our modern order then such would have come from the elders. See I Tim. 3:1-6, 5:17-19, Tit. 1:5-9, I Pet. 5:1-5, I Thess. 5:12, Heb. 13:7, 17. Elders had the ministry of teaching, and may well be the pastor-teachers of Eph. 4:11. The ministry of deacons is an *aide* to the elders, and support to the needy. See I Tim. 3:8-13. Greatly helpful to women were older women who taught and helped younger women (Tit. 2:3-5).

The great emphasis given to teaching, especially in the pastoral letters, tells us that the church was well-taught. Where well taught there seemed to be little need for counselling as we know it today. The congregation saw that ‘the word of His grace’ was able to ‘build them up’. It is to this Word that we need to have more recourse. Passages such as I Tim. 4:11-15, II Tim. 4:1-5, Tit. 2:11-14 underline the need for correct teaching.

We need also to see that there were many false teachers in and around the early churches. Letters such as Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and the Pastoral Letters show us that Paul’s teaching had to be remedial against Judaising, gnosticism, docetism, asceticism, and occultism. John’s letter warns against gnosticism, and false spirits who teach as antichrists. II Peter and Jude and Titus show how antinomianism has gripped some churches, and false pneumatic phenomena threatened to undermine basic ethical life. Thus negatively we see the need of teaching. If we were to probe the proneness of some Christians to doctrinal deviations and practice we might find a basic misunderstanding of the Gospel with deliberate elements in it.

Summing up on pastoral counselling in the early church we may arrive at the conclusion that healthy Christian living was connected with strong teaching, and a living and caring community. True personal health derives from these two elements.

Lesson Eight

The Knowledge of God the Basis of all Wisdom for Counselling—I

The Need for True Knowledge so as to obtain Wisdom

True wisdom must spring from true knowledge. True knowledge must encompass God, Man and creation. To know God is necessary in order to know Man and creation. Doubtless we have both biblical and non-biblical sources for research source material. All empirico-scientific materials may prove very useful. At the same time God is Spirit, and this nature of God is beyond empirico-scientific research. As we will see, truly knowing Man depends upon truly knowing God and His creation. Thus we develop—biblically speaking—authentic and true theology, anthropology and cosmology—all of which are necessary to true wisdom.

Knowing God is Truly Knowing and Being Man

Psalms 14 and 53 say,

The fool has said in his heart;
'There is no God.'
They are corrupt doing abominable iniquity;
there is none that does good.
God looks down from heaven
upon the sons of men
to see if there are any that are wise,
that seek after God.
They have all fallen away;
they are all alike depraved;
there is none that does good,
no, not one.

Atheism in biblical thinking is no intellectual category—human beings are not atheists by cogitation, but by will—but it is a moral category. Man—as fallen—does not wish to know God. The best exposition of this is Romans 1:18–32 (see v.19–25, 28 especially).

We will see that Man as unfallen, or as redeemed, does want to know God. Because Man is in the image of God there must be a functional, existential drive to truly know God.

The need to know God is that Man¹ cannot know himself apart from God since (i) he made in the image of God, and (ii) he is not truly Man apart from God. We say that Man has an ontological drive to know the One by whom he was created. As a fallen creature he will be driven by the image of God within him, but at the same time be repelled by the moral confrontation this brings. Thus, ‘God looks down from heaven upon the sons of men to see *if there are any that are wise, that seek after God*’—for wisdom lies in knowing God. Only when we seek after God are we wise.

Knowing God as God, i.e. as Humans Can Know God

We will see that Man as a creature cannot know the Creator absolutely, his creaturehood preventing that, but he can know God relationally—as creature to the Creator. His true way of knowing God is by union with Him—that creational union given to him at the beginning. Man as fallen does not desire union (see Psalms 14 and 53; Rom. 1:19ff.). Even so God reveals Himself. We take it as axiomatic that He has revealed Himself in history. We see below the media of Revelation.

Media of Revelation²

- (a) *Creation*. Romans 1:19–20; Psalm 19:1–6; cf. I Timothy. 4:4; 6:17; Ecclesiastes 3:11. Note that the Scriptures tell us God created all things, e.g. Genesis 1:1–31.
- (b) *Providence*. Matthew 5:45; Psalm 104:14–23; Matthew 6:26, 28; Acts 14:17.
- (c) *The Scriptures*. II Timothy 3:14–17: cf. Psalm 119 where ‘law’, ‘word’, ‘precept’, ‘commandment’ are synonyms. The Word of God is creative (Gen. 1:2; Psa. 33:6–7; 148:5) and fruitful (Isa. 55:10–11).
- (d) *History³*, i.e. the Acts of God. by the God who acts (See following section ‘the Living God’). God is the God who controls all events of all history (Isa. 46:8–11; 48:3–13). Daniel 4:36–37; Ezekiel 39: 28f.; Psalms 105; 106; 107; John 5:17.
- (e) *Prophets and Prophecy*. Luke 24:25ff. The prophet is the voice of God, cf. Exodus 6:28–7:2; Amos 3:7–8; Revelation 19:10; II Peter 1:21. Prophecy is the word of God, Jeremiah 23:29.
- (f) *Dreams and Visions*. These are linked with prophecy, Numbers 12:6; Jeremiah 23:28–30; Acts 2:17ff.
- (g) *Jesus Christ the Son*. Matthew 11:27; John 1:14, 18; 3:35 Colossians 1:15.

¹ We keep in mind the generic use of ‘Man’ for all mankind and particularly for ‘man-woman’ as a one-flesh entity. In our text we will use ‘man’ for the male, and ‘woman’ for the female.

² See *The Knowledge of God* pp.23–54. *The Things We Firmly Believe* pp. 6–10.

³ Note: History as we see it is not necessarily the same as it is set forth in the Scriptures where it is primarily ‘salvation history’ which is not just a history of salvation but history *that is* salvation.

- (vii) *The Holy Spirit*. John 14:16; 16:7–11; I Corinthians 2:10f.; Acts 1:8. *All prophecy is by the Spirit*. I Pet. 1:10; II Pet. 1:21).
- (viii) *The Church, the People of God* (Exodus 19:5–6, cf. Acts 7:38; I Peter 2:9–10).
- (viii) *The Law and Conscience*. We have seen above that the Law is the voice of God. In Romans 3:19–20 Paul links revelation of God’s righteousness and conviction of it by the law. Romans 2:12–16 links law and conscience. Even so, the voice of conscience, of itself, is no reliable guide, nor is it, of itself, a revelator.
- (ix) *The Names of God*. The name of a person constitutes the character, personality, position, authority and belong of that one⁴. For God to give Himself names throughout Scripture is to reveal, by each, something of Himself. The Hebrew word ‘el’ was simply ‘God’ or ‘god’—a term to cover any God. When used it is generally qualified by something to show He is not any god, e.g. Deuteronomy 5:9, ‘I the LORD (*Yahweh*) thy God (*Elohim*) am a jealous God (*el*)’. Again *El Shaddai* = ‘God Almighty’. *Eloah* is a similar term used for God or a god as an object of worship. A good view of these names can be obtained by looking at a Concordance which transliterates the names under the general word ‘God’. Some names are, *Elyon* or *El Elyon*, ‘the most high God’ (cf. Numb. 24:16; Psa. 7:17); *Elohim*, a plural for of *el* but treated as [an intensified] singular for God (cf. Numb. 23:19); *Yahweh*, often translated ‘the LORD’ (cf., is strictly speaking the only name of God, thought by many to mean ‘He Who is’ (cf. Exod. 3:15). Compound names are used such as *Yahweh Elohim* ‘the LORD God’; *Yahweh Jireh* ‘the Lord provides’; *Yahweh shalom* ‘the Lord is peace’; *Yahweh Nissi* ‘the Lord is my banner’; *Yahweh tsidkenu* ‘the Lord our righteousness’; *Yahweh Shammah* ‘the Lord is there’. Strictly speaking these latter compounds are not names of God, but comments on His nature.
- (x) *The Living God*. In ‘(iii)’—above—we spoke of *History* being one of the elements which reveals God. We said that history is really the purposive acts of God⁵, i.e. ‘His story’. We would have no knowledge of God if He had not acted, and if He were not to continue to act. The statement ‘Who was, and is, and is to come’ means more than that he has been, and will be, present at all stages of times. It means He has acted throughout time, although Himself not caught into time.

The term ‘the living God’ does not mean ‘God Who is alive’ as against ‘God who is dead’, for God is not alive but is Life Himself (Its self)! He is ‘the fountain of living waters’ (Jer. 2:13). He ‘breathed into Man the breath of life and Man became a living being’ (Gen. 2:7). The Prophets often said, ‘As the Lord liveth,’ meaning this was the most substantial thing they could say. Life continually poured out to Man from ‘the fountain of living waters. Such life was composed of ‘the issues of life’ (Prov. 4:23), the issues being these very elements of God Himself such as truth, righteousness, goodness, holiness and love.

Even so, the term ‘the living God’ was much used to denote ‘the God who acts’. Israel was always remembering the acts of God in covenant promises to the fathers, in

⁴ For a fuller description of ‘the Names’ see *The Knowledge of God*, pages 51–54. For the significance of names in the Scriptures see J. Van Allmen’s *Vocabulary of the Bible* (London, 1966, pp.278–3000. This set of articles substantiates our claim that names reveal the person, place, etc.

⁵ See *The Knowledge of God*, pages 55–63, Out of print is R.T. Frances’ *The Living God* (no details) which is worth looking out for—second-hand.

the deliverance from Egypt in the events of the wilderness, and in the establishment of Israel in Canaan. John 5:17 tells us that God always works. Examples of this in the Old Testament are Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; I Samuel 17:26; Daniel 6:19–27; Jeremiah 10:10 whilst in the New Testament examples are Matthew 16:16; 26:63; I Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22.

The living God is the Who lives life, sustains life, and so acts that His plan and purpose is fulfilled and He, Himself, is revealed. In John 6:57 He is ‘the living Father by whom the Son lives and gives life’. In I Timothy 3:15 the church is the church of ‘the living God’. He is also the God Who judges, and acts in judgement where there is sin. Hence in Hebrews 3:12 it is a terrible thing to ‘fall away from the living God’; in 10:31 it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, whilst in 12:22 the ultimate holy city is ‘the city of the living God’.

The Biblically Revealed God⁶

Knowledge is Personal and Relational; not only Cerebral

When we say ‘the biblically revealed God’ we include in that the theological categories which have been derived from the Scriptures. Even then, we have to distinguish between relational-existential knowledge of God, and a knowledge which is noetic—i.e. of the mind—which lacks intimate relationship with God. In pursuit of this see the following references, Jeremiah 9:23–24; John 17:3; I John 5:11–12, 20; Galatians 4:8–9; I Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 4:6; cf. Matthew 7:21–23. These Scriptures reveal the fact that there is no true knowledge of God apart from union with Him.

God is Himself as the Triune God

At this point we need to see that the doctrine of the Triune God emerges from Scripture, even though not mentioned literally. Assuming, for the moment, that the Triune God is the God of the Scriptures we are faced with the fact of plurality within the Godhead, and that this plurality will be found in Man who is the image of God⁷. We must keep this in mind for our later consideration of Man.

God’s tri-unity has strong relational implications, but before we deal with these let us deal briefly with God in His being as Creator, Redeemer, and ultimate Glorifier of all things. Without taking up all the implications of God as Creator we find both Old Testament and New Testament indications that God created as One—as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Without going into the matter of Man’s redemption we also find that God is shown as Redeemer in His being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Finally the consummating matter of the glorification of all things—including elect Man—will be by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This means that Father, Son and Spirit work together as One.

⁶ Students are referred back to the 1991 ‘Theology of God’ notes (NCPI, pp. 1–36). See also *The Things We Firmly Believe* (NCPI, 1986, pp.33–71, Section, ‘The Doctrine of God’). See also Bible Dictionaries, Theological Dictionaries and Biblical Encyclopedias.

⁷ We need to read articles in theological Dictionaries and Encyclopedias to obtain the formal theology of the Trinity. Here—in our notes—we are assuming the validity of speaking of the Triune God as a biblical validity, however much theologians may differ in their expositions of it. For bibliographies see various articles as also *The Things We Firmly Believe* pages 314–316.

In our next study we will endeavour to understand *the unity of the Godhead*—a doctrine which has deep significance for the nature of Man, and especially for him as a relational creature and race. Eventually we will see that sociality and relationality are at the heart of all biblical counselling since they are the heart of what it is to be human.

Lesson Nine

The Knowledge of God the Basis of all Wisdom for Counselling—II

The Fact and Nature of the Unity of the Godhead

We must first note that if the Godhead has innate plurality and yet constitutes absolute unity then these facts have deep significance for our study of Man. Man being in the image of God must reflect these elements of plurality-in-unity, plurality and unity together. This must be for us the basis of all true anthropology: anthropology is seated in theology—the nature of God—and all divisions of anthropology studied empirico-scientifically ought not to miss this fact.¹ We will proceed, then, to look at what we would claim to be the biblical view of God’s unity.

We see the proclamation of Moses regarding the unity of God in Deuteronomy 4:35. 39; 6:4, ‘To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other beside him . . . know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart that the Lord God is in the heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other,’ ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.’ In the New Testament Jesus quotes the latter reference (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:29–30; Luke 10:27), and from such Deuteronomic references Paul says ‘an idol has no real existence,’ and ‘there is no God but one’ (I Cor. 8:5). The statement of Exodus 3:14, ‘God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” ’, affirms that unity. When we want to know the substantial Being of that One then the revelation that we have is *a spoken one*. By this we mean the word of God is the revelation of God Himself. No one arrives at a view of God by his own contemplation or discursive thinking. God says many things regarding Himself but covenantally Exodus 34:6–7 is perhaps the most comprehensive, given as it was to Moses as the revelation of His glory

¹ Theology was once called ‘the queen of sciences’. Was it merely a quirk of history that allowed that statement, or is essentially so?

The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.'

This revelation follows the many revelations of God to the patriarchs, and is made within the covenant with Israel, given by God through Moses. It is on the basis of His unity and the non-ontological nature of the devised gods (idols, lords) that Israel lives in and by the unity of God. It is that unity Israel attacked in the desert in the making of the golden calf, and which angered Him,

And the Lord said to Moses, 'Go down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way I commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"'

Moses and the people of Israel had sung—after their deliverance from Egypt and the army of Pharaoh,

Who is like unto thee, O Lord among the gods?
Who is like thee, majestic in holiness,
terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

Later Israel was saying of the golden calf, 'These are our gods, O Israel, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt!' What they failed to realise was the Self-revelation of God by His words and His deeds. Those of us of the new covenant are possessors of this ancient heritage as well as the newer revelation of God through the incarnate Word.

Coming to Understand the Trinity: Being in Communion

It is clear to us through these studies that there are three Persons in one Godhead. What is not as clear is how three Persons can constitute one Godhead, when God to be One must have one centre of consciousness. If there are three centres of consciousness then uniting the three must constitute Tritheism, and if there is one centre of consciousness and what we call 'modes of Godhead' be Father, Son and Spirit then we would appear to have the heresy of Modalism, also known as Sabellianism.

The answer lies in the fact that God is Father. Paul said (I Cor. 8:4–6),

Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol has no real existence,' and that 'there is no God but one.' For although there may be so-called gods in heaven and on earth—as indeed there are many 'gods' and 'lords'—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom all things exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

What we must start with is the fact that 'there is one God, the Father'. As Paul says, 'from whom are all things, and for whom all things exist.' The Son is from the Father. Theologians call this 'the eternal generation of the Son'—a concept difficult for us to conceive since for us generation happens at a point in time. There never was when the Son was not the Son, for it follows that God could never have been Father if there had not always been the Son. The Son has always been because God is Father. Likewise

the Holy Spirit has proceeded from the Father. Some theologians say he has proceeded from the Father and the Son, and some that he has proceeded from the Father, through the Son.

What matters to us is that the three have the one conscious centre of being since God is Father and all generation has come from Him. If we use a human analogy we will not be able to comprehend this, but if we use the word ‘communion’—i.e. ‘communion’ then we will allow for one centre of consciousness since God is love, and yet allow for the Father being the Father, the Son being the Son and the Spirit being the Spirit. God cannot be love and be Father unless the Son is the Son of His love (Col. 1:13) and the Spirit is ‘the Spirit of love’ (Rom. 15:30).

If we hold to what we have said above—that what we know of the Father is what we see via the humanity of Christ—then the high-priestly prayer of John 17 shows us that the Persons have unity by their communion, and communion is utter unity, but not as we account unity—an agreeable form of oneness which is not necessarily utter oneness. Jesus prayed,

I do not pray for these only but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

Before we try to distil the principle of communion from these wonderful words, we must remember that Man as created must have known utter oneness with God, albeit that that oneness had never been tested. Because of the fall—even given in the regeneration of our humanity—utter communion with God does not come naturally. Utter union with God would be full communion. It would mean that likewise we would have utter communion with our fellow believers—the other members of Christ’s body and whilst in principle this is organically and functionally so, we know how easily—and naturally—we tend to withdraw from such inter-surrender of our beings. That is why we limit, in our thinking, even the communion of the three Persons of the Trinity. The Generator of the Son and the Spirit is the Father, and they can never be without generation, never have a mind which is not the Father’s even though they have been given the differentiations of Son and Spirit, and know the differentiation of the Father’s fatherhood.

We say, then that each Person of the Triune Godhead is ‘other-Persons-centred’, i.e. is turned outward to the other members. Even ‘other-Persons-centred’ is not a sufficient term: the three Persons are other-Persons-*Concentred*. This principle is really enunciated in Philippians 2:1–9 where the source of unity was Christ and the Spirit. The Philippians were enjoined, ‘in humility count others better than yourselves’, and ‘Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also² to the interests of others.’ For human beings to have this ‘mind of Christ’ would be for them to have the mind of God, i.e. His wisdom in planning the whole counsel of His will for the good of His creation, and in particular for Man whom He created in His own image.

² Some translations omit this ‘also’, since the ‘not only’ covers this thought (cf. *RSV* and *NRSV*)

Communion is Love and Unity

When we speak about fellowship which is the same word as communion—*koinonia*—we think of people coming together, and seeking to one. When we talk about unity we think of separate entities coming together and seeking to be one. With God this is not the case. The Son has always been in the Father, and the Spirit in the Father and the Son and in that way they are one. Their communion does not come out of a voluntary union which then becomes communion. They have ever been one: they have ever been love: they have ever been in communion. We have no earthly analogue that parallels this Divine communion. In order that we might know God, God has set out in His wisdom to bring us to communion with one another and with Himself. To do this He planned to reveal Himself. He planned to reveal the inner communion of the three Persons. How, then would it possible for us to know this? Why are we even, at this point in time, speaking about such a thing? The answer must be that God has revealed it, and primarily in the incarnation of His only Son.

I do not pray for these only but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

Whilst we take this as a statement of fact we wish to see how this principle worked out through the incarnation of Christ. It happens this way: The Son in his humanity so related to the Father, that as we see this relationship we see the communion of the two, especially as we see how the Father related to the Son in his humanity. If we try to get behind this relationship with and from the man Christ Jesus—the Son of God—then we will strike great difficulty. That is, if we are trying to work through some metaphysical scheme to get an understanding of the three Persons being one in communion, then we will find ourselves baffled. We must see all we see from the Son living out his human life in relationship with the Father, and what will come to us will be humanly understandable—at least noetically—even if we find it incredible and miss understanding it at the personal relational level.

Conclusion as to the Unity of God

We see, now that the unity of the Triune God is part of biblical teaching. For our purposes in Biblical Counselling we see that—creationally speaking—the unity of God presupposes the unity of Man, both as a person, and as a race. Thus unity may be seen to be indispensable to personal and corporate human living. It indicates that much relational, functional and emotional disharmony with consequent deep problems may—indeed will surely—result from Man denying in any way his creational being. On the other hand the discovery and experience of unity and harmony will result in both healing and growth within the human person. This would seem to lead us to the very heart and nature of God as love, and love must prove to be the basis of true counselling and consequent rich results where the heart and mind of the counsels are inclined towards it, and transformed by it.

NCTM Course No. 6, Biblical Counselling

Lesson Ten

***The Knowledge of God the Basis
of all Wisdom for Counselling—III***

The Place of Hierarchy in Biblical Counselling

Sooner or later we will face the problems that human beings have with authority, and it is essential we understand that authority is perhaps the more powerful confrontation for our humanity—whichever way we may look at it. Either authority is a fact of human living—i.e. is ontological—or it is not. Some have said that authority-orders have been made necessary by the fall of Man and are not ontological but provisional. Our difficulty is that we cannot view the matter dispassionately and in detachment, since we are so involved.³ If—as our proposition is—that rightly understood, the order of the Trinity is hierarchical, then it will mean that Man who is made in the image of God reflects the internal nature of God, and will be involved in an hierarchical order with God, and—it would seem to follow—with all humanity (cf. I Cor. 11:3). It may well be that no one, ontologically speaking, lives outside of hierarchy, in which case our understanding of theology, anthropology and cosmology must be greatly determined by our knowledge of hierarchy. So we must first look at the hierarchical order of the Triune Godhead.

The Hierarchical Order of the Triune Godhead

If we can grasp the fact of superordination and subordination in the Godhead, and if we can understand it adequately, then we will be able to proceed with our understanding of the divine relationship of the three Persons in the one-subject conscious Trinity, and this will be of immense importance to us as the people of God. It is not curiosity which drives us to understand the Godhead, but necessity so we will know our humanity as it has been created in God's image. What we must keep firmly in mind is

³ Students are recommended to read the whole section on Authority and Hierarchy in *All Things Are Yours* (NCPI, 1992). Our present study is not adequate to tackle the largest of human problems.

that there has always be an *order* in the Divine Community, i.e. the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our ideas of order or hierarchy are tainted with views which come from our human [sinful] fallenness, i.e. think that any order in which there may be precedence of one over another is to be rejected. The word 'priest' is *hierus*, the temple *hieron*, the high priest *arkierus*—from *arke* and *hierus*—and so a hierarchy is a *sacred* order in which something comes down from the level above. It comes down in order to assist those below it. In Greece the priest was called a hierophant and as such was an official expounder of mysteries or revelations, these being known as hierophanies. Whilst today we use the term hierarchy to denote any entity which contains orders of persons, usually of a functional nature, yet if we lose its sacred connotation we lose a true view of hierarchy.

Whilst, for the moment are subject is primarily the Godhead, yet hierarchy—if it is the order of the Godhead—must be the order for Man made in the image of God. We have seen that the relationships between the Three Persons and their Unity as One God would be unknowable for us were it not for the revelation God has given us, and especially in and by His Son and through His Spirit. It is an extraordinary thing that human beings are permitted, let alone moved personally by God, to view these relationships. Then it is even more extraordinary that through the gift of adoption—following the liberating action of the atonement—that human beings are reconciled fully by God, to Himself made one with Him since their lives are hidden with Christ in Him. Thus the powerful truth of the Triune God dwelling in the persons of His people, and they dwelling in the Triune Godhead. Via the *imago dei* resultant relationships must emerge and they are the only true relationships human beings can know since they derive from and comport with the law of Christ—the true law of God. Of course the reality of Divine love (*agape*) is the great power by which true relationships obtain (I John 4:11,12,19). What we must keep in mind is that these relationships do not come as prescriptions. They are not legal requirements or even specified roles although they often appear to be. They issue from the archetype of the Godhead. They are also linked with the principle of hierarchy. Speaking of the *imago Dei* Thieliicke (op. cit. p.155) says,

It is characteristic that the various references to the divine likeness in Genesis (1:26; 5:1; 9:6; cf. also Wis. 2:23; Sir. 17:3⁴) do not give statements of ontological content but restrict themselves to these hierarchical relations, to the position of man in the total cosmos. This is true even of a verse like Genesis 5:1, where the concept of the divine likeness is, as it were a preamble to the first genealogy in the Bible, the one that ends with Noah.

Ontological Hierarchy-Divine and Human

When we talk about ontological hierarchy we must keep in mind that the division of the Trinity into two categories—ontological and economic—is not satisfactory. God is not subsistent without being *actuusus*. We must keep in mind the corresponding actional nature of the *imago Dei*. We now take one or two hierarchies that came into being at creation. In Genesis 1:14–18, i.e. the hierarchy of sun and moon, and Man's rule over creation. As man was to rule over all living creatures, so each of these was to

⁴ Wisdom 2:23 says, 'For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity'. Sirach 17:1–4 says, 'The Lord created man out of the earth, and turned him back to it again. He gave to men a few days, a limited time, but granted them authority over the things upon the earth. He endowed them with strength like his own, and placed them in his own image. He placed the fear of them in all living beings, and granted them dominion over beasts and birds'.

rule—the sun by day and the moon by night. What was the place and effect of these hierarchs? The answer is: they had a task to perform—a vocational task of goodness—to give light, and to mark out days and nights. There is also the sense that they were to keep creation within the prescribed boundaries of their rule. If the creation of man and woman in hierarchical order were such, then the order would have been purely with a view to ruling creation for its own good, and presumably, for God’s glory (cf. Psa. 8:3ff.; Psa. 19:1ff.). It is difficult to escape this principle as we read the text. Linked with this is the whole matter of the creation being subjected to futility through the fall of man and—in particular—the curse upon the earth. The rehabilitation of the sons of God into ‘the liberty of the glory’ will also rehabilitate the creation: hence man’s hierarchical authority must have been meant only for good (Gen. 1:31).

If there is a Divine hierarchy, and there is a human hierarchy then each can be considered, but we do have a hierarchy that involves both God and man in I Corinthians 11:3, and this should be helpful in establishing the principle of hierarchy, ‘But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.’ The order is interesting. It starts with Christ and ends with God. It is not stated as a descending order even though it can be seen that way. Why is it set out in this way? Because Paul is talking of the order of a man and his wife. The man does not stand alone as superordinate to the wife. He stands under Christ, and this alters matters considerably. If he were standing alone in his headship then the wife would be immediately and only subject to him and his approach would be conditioned by his autonomous headship. As Christ is his head his effective headship is of his Lord. Likewise Christ is not standing outside the Father in exercising his Lordship of the man. The wife is not outside her husband since Man is man and woman—a unitive entity—face-to-face. Both are standing together *in the imago Dei* and *as the imago Dei*—as active in vocation fulfilling the will of God, being—as one—purposive.

The True Nature of Hierarchy

In human most hierarchies are not of the sacred kind. They do not exist in *communion*, i.e. love and unity. They are often devised by Man, are political, utilitarian, used for commercial purposes and the word ‘communion’ is foreign. Thus man-wife, parent-children, employer-employee hierarchies—to name only a few—are utilitarian, functional structures. *True hierarchy is a relation-functional entity of love whose members are in communion, i.e. in love and unity, and who are purposive in that they are about doing that will which is wisdom i.e. the outworking of love.* If we see the Persons of the Godhead in this way, and understand what has been called the *perichoresis-circumincessio*⁵—i.e. the interpenetration of the three Persons, and the circulatory movement of their giving to one another, especially out of their differentiations—then we begin to see the true nature of the Triune Godhead⁶.

⁵ The *perichoresis-circumincessio* is a theological way of talking about the inter-communion of the three Persons of the Triune Godhead. Obviously it has its weaknesses in that it speaks of the Persons giving and receiving from each other, when in fact this is a presupposition of pure *communion*. However it helps us, on the human level, to know how to go about communion, providing we do not see communion as a technique rather than a relational state, a being of entity.

⁶ In another place, later, we will have occasion to see that everything is in an hierarchical order. As with the Divine Family—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—so with the family on earth from the father, mother, and children in descending order of age. So too in all society. We will see that as hierarchy is Divine love so that divine love is intended to move through the earthly orders, and give them their correct place and function. To be shown, I believe, that there is no free-lance love. Love is commanded—love to God, to parents, to one another, one’s

Conclusion: The Significance of Hierarchy For Biblical Counselling

We see that if hierarchy is ontological, then the deepest problems of Man may be found (i) in his rebellion against hierarchy in general, and the hierarchies in which he is involved, in particular. This will mean we need to understand hierarchy fully so as to help the counsellee. It will mean we also must have come to understand, accept, and live positively within such hierarchical orders. We remind ourselves that hierarchy is present in the creation *before* the fall of Man (cf. Genesis 1:14–15), but then it was present in God before He made man in His own image. We must certainly come to terms in understanding this great principle of hierarchy or our anthropology will be missing an important dimension.

neighbours and even one's enemies. Love cannot truly subsist in an equalitarian structure—if such could ever be devised in practice. It is the order of the Godhead, and so of all humanity, and of the creation. We find that what we call 'nature' is hierarchical in its orders.

Lessons Eleven to Twenty Three

**From the Books *The Meaning and Making of Man,*
The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man and
*If we Say We Have No Sin***

Details of the Lessons as Drawn from the Books and expounded on the Cassettes

Instructions Concerning the Use of the Books and the Cassettes

The Student will not have note before him or her but will have the three books named above. Lessons 1–10 (above) are on Cassettes 1 to 6(a). Lessons 11–23 are on Cassettes 6(b) to 18. The Student will need to have the named textbook opened at the required page in order to follow the Study. In order to fulfil a particular Lesson the whole cassette needs to be followed along with the reading.

Note: Lesson 23 has no accompanying Cassette but Notes will have been forward to you.

Lesson 11. Pages 1–6. *Man the Created—1.* Pages 1–6. Cassette 6(b).

Lesson 12. Pages 7–17. *Man the Created—2&3.* Cassette 7.

Lesson 13. Pages 18–32. *Man in Falleness and Guilt—1&2.* Cassette 8.

Lesson 14. Pages 33–40. *Man in Falleness and Guilt—3.* Pages 41–100 Overview of Various Elements of Man. Cassette 9.

Lessons 14 to 23

From **the Books** *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man* and *If We Say We Have No Sin*

Lesson 15. Pages 42–47. *Release and Fulfilment in His Fatherhood*. Cassette 10(a)
Page 48. *Introduction to Losing Anger and Finding Tranquillity*. Cassette 10(b).

Lesson 16. Pages 49–59. *Losing Anger and Finding Tranquillity*. Cassette 11.

Lesson 17. Pages 60–69. *How Then Shall We Heal?* Cassette 12.

Lesson 18: Pages 69–72. *Problems we Meet in Seeking to heal*. Cassette 13(a). Pages 104–109. *Conscience in Crisis and Comfort—1*. Cassette 13(b).

Lesson 19. Pages 104–112. *Conscience in Crisis and Comfort—2&3*. Cassette 14.

Lesson 20. Pages 132–142 *The Cleansing of the Memories*. Cassette 15 (a). *If We Say We Have No Sin* from the booklet *If We Say That We Have No Sin*. Cassette 15 (b).

Lesson 21. Pages 201–212. *Life For the Listless*. Cassette 16 (a). Pages 218–224. *The Profitable Pursuit of Pleasure*. Cassette 16(b).

Lesson 22. Pages 225–231. *Saints and Sinners in Stress and Severity*. Cassette 17(a). Pages 306–313. *The Healing of Indwelling*. Cassette 17(b).

Lesson 23. Study notes for this Lesson, but no cassette. It is a review of the former Studies and a bird's eye view of the entire material we have put forward for Biblical Counselling.

Lesson Twenty Three

A Summary of our Biblical Counselling Course

If we wish to have a bird's eye view of the Course we have completed then we should use the following, final Lesson.

(i) **Firstly** we must know (a) *the nature of God*, (b) *the nature of man*, and (c) *the nature of creation*. Because of the Fall of man we then need biblically to understand God, man, sin and salvation. We need to understand *the present state* of any given counsellee we are seeking to help. Only in the light of these doctrines can we understand man effectively. I suggest the use of my *The Things We Firmly Believe* (NCPI), which covers all these areas. In other words the counsellor has to be something of a theologian. Secular therapists can understand Man psychologically, and that is greatly helpful. Since they do not treat him as having soul and spirit they cannot go as far as we can. In this short Paper we cannot cover the theology required. We will assume the knowledge of God and proceed to Man. An extended treatment is given in my *I, The Man!* (NCPI).

(ii) **Secondly** we must know how to bring the revelation of God's love and liberation to human beings who—by fallenness, life and experience have a distorted view of God whether unconverted or converted, whether spiritually lethargic or energetic, whether without hope or with hope. The revelation of God's love will alone heal those in need of our help. We will first proceed to knowing a person in all of his—or her—states

The Doctrine of Created Man

(a) Man in Innocence

What we know is that (i) man was created in the image of God, i.e. everything that God is, man is like that, but anything that God is, man is none of that; thus man reflects God, (ii) man was created to be useful and purposeful, hence the mandate of Gen. 1:28 (cf. Gen 9:1-7, Psalm 8:3-8, I Cor. 11:7), linked with Gen. 2:15, 'The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden to till it and to keep it.' Man has his identity (we will call it here 'creational identity'). He is a son (child) of the Father (Luke 3:38, Acts 17:28, cf. Jer. 2:26-27), a creature of the

Creator, and a servant of the King of the universe. These three things are 'dependence' categories, i.e. man cannot live in them apart from God. When he lives them fully he finds emotional and relational fullness and satisfaction, i.e. he is fulfilled in his affinity with God as 'deep calls unto deep'.

Man not only had (has) vertical relationship with God but horizontal relationship with his fellow-humanity. The male and female constitute one humanity, i.e. human unity. There are not two races - one male, one female. The two constitute 'one flesh' i.e. 'one humanity'. Humanity is this a male-female entity, and not a male-and-female thing. Man as created must be understood in the husband-wife, father-mother, parents-children, brother-brother, sister complex. Any break in any of this will constitute a fractured situation. Man is a moral-spiritual social creature, finding his fullness in family. Man is always moving towards God's given goal. Man is not fully man until he is glorified. Thus he lives in genuine hope. The future is one of promise whatever the present may be.

(b) The Doctrine of Fallen Man—Under Guilt, and in Creation

The temptation set before the woman was, 'You shall be as God, knowing good and evil'. This meant (i) that man would (could) become autonomous, having high authority, and (ii) that he would know - of himself - the difference between good and evil, i.e. that his evaluations would be authentic. Fallen humanity is sure it is able to discern good and evil correctly. This is the source of much strife. Gen. 3:1-6 and Rom. 1:18-32 show the results of man's bid for independence. Man lost his integrity and has attacked God's. His chief evil lies in his idolatry.

Since everything is created, sustained and maintained in Him it holds that to alienate oneself from God brings tragic consequences. We cannot realise what these are until we see that creation is functional. When God made all things He saw they were 'very good', i.e. functionally good and harmonious, each having its own purpose (Gen. 1:31, Eccles., 3:11, Prov. 16:4).

By the fall man became awry, disoriented, dislocated, dysfunctional, at odds with God, creation and himself. He suffered not only depravity but 'deprivity', i.e. he has deprived himself of joy and peace, because he, via his will, is at variance with the true order of things. He is thus the victim of his own conscience. Hence his emotional starvation, his vocational awryness, and his inability to enjoy sonship, creaturehood and servanthood in relation to God the Father, Creator and King.

In understanding fallen man we must also see him in thrall to Satan and evil powers. The 'whole world lies in the evil one' (I John 5:19), and is under his bondage (Ephes 2:1-3, Heb, 2:14-15). Man by reason of his guilt is never free. His imagined autonomy is a delusive lie. Man cannot be free-standing, but he seeks to be so. All of this tells us the state of man, his anguish and his suffering. Lest we pity him we must realise that he hates God, and is hostile towards Him. See Rom. 1:30, 5:10, Col. 1:21). He also hates his fellow man (Titus 3:3). If we do not see man's depravity, and at the same time the fact that he was made in the image of God we cannot help him or ourselves.

(c) The Doctrine of Redeemed Man: Out of Guilt

Fallen man is saved and justified by grace, and not, primarily, by faith (Rom. 3:24, 5:17, Eph. 2:8-10). He is given the gifts of repentance (Acts 5:32, 11:18), faith (Eph. 2:8, Phil 1:29), forgiveness (Acts 2:38, 13:38-39), justification (Rom. 3:24, 5:17), cleansing (Heb. 9:14), sonship (Gal. 4:4-6, Rom. 8:15),

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love (Rom. 5:5), eternal life (John 3:14, 16, 36, II Tim. 1:10), holiness (I Cor. 6:11) and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5, Acts 2:28). This redemption is based on the complete work of Christ in his earthly obedience, death, resurrection and ascension. It is communicated and applied by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-15, Rom. 8:2, II Cor. 3:17) in what is called 'the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit' (Tit. 3:5). This makes fallen man a 'new creation', so that 'old things have passed away, behold *they* have become new' (II Cor. 5:17). Man is 'washed, sanctified and justified' and this 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God' (I Cor. 6:11).

All man's sins are forgiven; he is wholly justified: he is placed amongst God's true people (sanctified); his sins or 'dead works' are completely cleansed (Heb. 9:14, cf. 1:3, 1:22). God in forgiving him remembers his sins no more (Jer. 31:31-34, cf. Heb. 10:11-22, especially verses 17 and 18). This person has become a son of God (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6, John 1:12-13), a member of the family of God, a member of Christ's Body, i.e. the church. He has been born anew by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, walks and lives in the Spirit, knowing true prayer, worship, fellowship, service and the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel. He thus has true identity. His social being is fulfilled in the context of the true family, body and Christian community. Ideally speaking he is not without personal inner problems and the sicknesses and disturbances which once derived from guilt and an accusing conscience.

(d) The Doctrine of Sanctified Man: The Battle for Holiness

The redeemed man lives in sanctification (I Cor. 6:11, Rom. 6:15-23, Ephes 5:1-14, Gal. 5:16-18, 22-26, I Pet. 1:14ff.). He is not - of himself - perfect. See Romans 1:13-25. He is in a spiritual battle (Ephes. 6:10-18) He faces the powers of darkness. Hence the Christian life is one of persecution and suffering. See II Cor. 10:3, 4:7-15, II Thess. 1:5, etc. The redeemed man has a sensitive conscience and is open to accusation (Rev. 12:10 f.). He 'feels' things, and can come under heaviness of spirit. His failure may depress him. And so on. We need to understand his holiness conflicts, especially where grace is not fully understood, and the new man seeks to accomplish things in his own power (cf. I Cor. 15:10, II Cor. 12: 1-10).

(e) The Doctrine of Man Glorified: Man Teleological

I Cor. 2:6-10 tells of God's wisdom which was ordained for our glorification. Man is a creature destined by God to reach full sonship, and that glorification of his being which he does not have in this world and creation. 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God', must mean that this physical being must be transformed. In Phil. 3:21 Paul tells us that 'He shall change this body of our humiliation that it may be made like his body of glory'. This means that Man moves towards his ultimate fullness of being. In this sense he is always 'becoming'. This fact is of great importance and affects him deeply. Fallen and unredeemed Man is in misery because he cannot sense vocational fullness. Man redeemed and in holiness is enriched by his progress towards final maturity, but can be troubled when he seems not to achieve fullness in his vocation. If the counsellor does not understand man-in-becoming, he may make many errors in judgement, advice and direction. What is more if believing Man is not shown the teleological outcome of his present being, i.e. to have total fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to see Him face to face,

to be partakers of the Divine nature in that Man will be inducted into the mystery of the Triune Godhead, and he like Him, then the present dynamic of hope will be virtually absent.

The textbook for the above theological and functional understanding of Man is *The Meaning and Making of Man—Studies in Theological Anthropology* (NCPI, 1990, 3rd Printing, 1992). The other textbooks which follows our principles of biblical counselling, and especially for applying our knowledge of God, of Man and of Creation are *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*. (NCPI, 1990), and *If We Say That We Have No Sin* (NCPI, 1987).

A Personal, Practical Way of Biblical Counselling

We come now to the way in which I seek to counsel a person. The student must keep in mind (i) I have a considerable knowledge of the Scriptures and human nature, (ii) I should seek never to counsel a person if possible unless (a) he—or she—is at the end of his/her tether and know they cannot help themselves, (b) unless that one trusts me to be able to help him/her. For these reasons do not go out to counsel just anyone, do not apply to people to help them: have them apply to you. There is, of course, a relation which we all have to any and every one who is in need, and so we should give help where it is truly needed, but conclusive counselling rarely happens in these situations. We mean that folk should be at the end of their tether, close to repentance, and so open to hear what we have to say.

- (a) Never treat the person as a ‘counselee’ or ‘client’ but as a true person, a fellow-creature in his or her own right, that is, see that other person as made in the image of God, or as being in the image of God..
- (b) Never see yourself as a counsellor, a director, a person of brilliance or exceptional and relevant wisdom, but rather as a person who has been granted a certain amount of wisdom, but who is as much in need of grace for redemption, renewal and vocation as the counselee would be.
- (c) Be relaxed together as two persons, seated similarly and talking together. It is mutual friendship which is the proper environment for conversation and help.
- (d) Listen well, seeing what is told as *symptoms* of the deeper *cause/s* of personal disturbance, and keep in mind the nature of human beings as we have seen them in our early theological section. It is not necessary to know everything about a person’s past. There is a limit to the need to listen, which should be sensed, otherwise the person will be lost in the telling of his person and problems, and will not be looking for the healing of them.
- (e) Know that your primary work is to change the view of God that the person has to that of seeing that God is love. If there is no change in the image of God that the person had held, then no change in the person will take place, since this image exists probably from birth. Our point here is immensely significant. Reasoning will not change one’s image of God. Only the power of the Word of God under the utterance of the Spirit can effect this radical change. If the counsellor has not experienced this he—or she—will not be able to communicate it.

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- (f) This change in image only be done through the revelation of the Cross. ‘Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God’ (I Cor. 1:24). The person must be captured by the word of the Cross (I Cor. 1:18) or nothing will happen. The word of the Cross, which is the power of God, is said to be a scandal to the religious and foolishness to the intellectual, hence comprehending the Cross must be the miracle the Word and the Spirit effect in the listener. The Son must be seen to be showing the Father in His love: this love must be known through total forgiveness, complete cleansing, justification from guilt, the becoming a son or child of God, transforming grace—and so on.
- (vg) When the person comes to see the full love of God then all relationships will change with the love that floods the heart by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). It is then that forgiveness from God brings forgiveness and love to others. The ‘change of mind’ (repentance) comes with the new view of the Cross. Repentance and faith are both gifts of God.
- (h) This change in the persons needs to be substantiated by undergirding all that has been taught by means of other reading materials, continued personal teaching where that is possible, recourse to the pastors and elders of the person and bringing that person as far as possible into a climate or environment which will further help to establish him or her.
- (i) The change means the person should be directed to the kind of fellowship which holds with such views as we have indicated in these notes, and opportunity should be made for the new counsellee to participate in the life of freedom and grace.

Note: the points raised immediately above are not just one way of counselling, but constitute the way. Certainly much help can be gained on the horizontal level of offering help, but the dynamic change needed to change other elements in the life of the will not be forthcoming apart from ‘the word of the Cross’.

Conclusion To The Principles of ‘Biblical Counselling’

There are many systems of non-biblical counselling—some 265 to be precise. These are arrived at by what we call the empirico-scientific system of research. They are valuable for what we might call ‘horizontal’ research. They certainly have a measure of success in their treatments. The problems of Man which we call ‘moral’ and ‘spiritual’ can only be understood through the revelation of Man which we find in Scripture. These have to do with sin, guilt, the broken relationships humanity has with God, the creation, his fellow-creatures and himself. All useful research by the empirico-scientific method is not to be ignored. Much of it should be helpful to supplement and even reinforce Biblical Counselling. There are also psychiatrists and psychotherapies who write against psychology, psychotherapy and psychiatry. I have included a few in the Bibliography below with other books which help us to understand the variety of psychotherapies. Lastly I have included a number of my books which are of practical use in Biblical counselling. A fuller Bibliography is contained in *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*.

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(iv) ***Some practical helpful books by Geoffrey Bingham.*** N.B. All are published by New Creation Publications Inc. *The Cleansing of the Memories; If We Say That We Have no Sin; I Love the Father,; Oh Father! Our Father! ; Man is—What?; I, The Man; Man of Dust: Man of Glory; Practical Christian Counselling; The Wounding and the Healing; God's Glory: Man's Sexuality; Man, Woman & Sexuality, The Meaning and Making of Man; The Wisdom of God & the Healing of Man.; The Conscience—Conquering or Conquered?*

Note: For a wider Reading List see the Bibliographies of *The Meaning and Making of Man* and *The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man*.