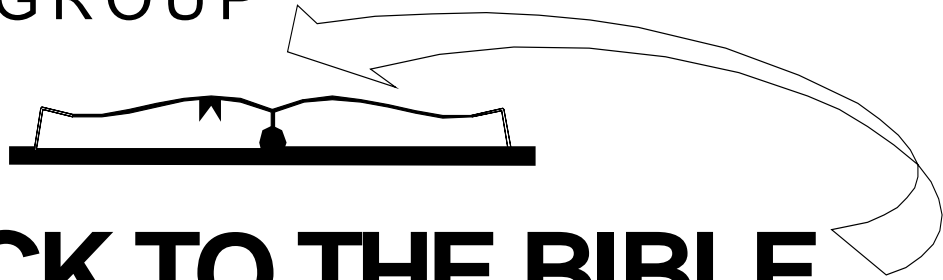


# WORKGROUP



# BACK TO THE BIBLE

Kampen, 25 februari 2007 nr.31

Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

This time you will find a very thick letter at your disposal. Could not you stop writing you may ask? Yes we could, but our letter is a small book and we want to give you the complete version of it. We shall explain why we did it. Our subject of study this year is the balance between psychology and the Bible. While doing this, we found out that this is a comprehensive subject. Therefore we decided to divide it up in three parts, in three different letters. The first letter, the one you are reading now contains the small book by Anita Simpson called: "Improving the Self-Image.....Freedom or Bondage?" Anita, a Danish missionary in Cork describes the actual problems in the Christian psychology and she also gives the biblical answers.(see also the foreword) When you have read and studied the contents of the book, we will provide you in due time with part two of this subject. In this part and also in the third part, we will give you different materials to study and to compare these with the Bible. At the end of part three we make our conclusions. Is there a balance between psychology and the Bible?

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# **IMPROVING THE SELF IMAGE ...**

## **Is it Freedom or Bondage?**

"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him."  
2 Samuel 22:31

written by Anita Simpson in 2002 in Cork Ireland

on internet with her permission by workgroup Back to the Bible, in 2007 Kampen the Netherlands

Scripture quotations are from the New King James (NKJ) version, published by Thomas Nelson Ltd.  
References marked N.I.V. are from the New International Version, published by Hodder and Stoughton.

"You come from the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve", said Aslan, "and that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulder of the greatest emperor on earth."

C.S.Lewis

## FOREWORD

Psychology is a difficult word to pronounce, but also difficult to explain. Still Anita has succeeded in writing about this subject in a clear way. Her experience as a teacher has helped her to explain the subject of psychology in relation to the Bible very thoroughly. She enlightened her subject from different sides without repetition. Through her experiences from working in a church fellowship over the years, she is able to look at the matters critically. In this way she can raise the matter as you will find in the following pages.

As 29 year old Danish girl she married an Englishman, Tony Simpson. They started a mission work in Cork in Ireland. In this town a church was born in which also "problem cases" as converts found refuge. Together with her husband Tony she worked with full dedication in the needed counselling. This was actually her motivation to write the book that is laying before you.

In the meanwhile they raised their family, three sons who are all three married by now. Her inner urge to write kept her busy through her life. In 1996 she translated the live story of a Swedish medical doctor from Swedish into English and made the book: "From Spiritual Powers to Liberating Grace" from Torbjörn Swartling available to the public.(we have a few left)

The age of round about seventy years does not restrain them to work in de vineyard of the Lord. Besides their church work in Cork, they have contact with the International Gipsy Movement. Tony is guestspeaker on their main conference every year. He too writes books. As work group we think about translating his Bible study book "Colossians" into Dutch in the future. About ten years ago we came in contact with this couple and we are encouraged through them since than. Therefore we can recommend the book "Improving the self-image..." Freedom or Bondage" whole-heartedly. Please do not forget to read the appendix.

On behalf of the workgroup Back to the Bible. Pastor Rien van de Kraats.

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## **Chapter 1 CRUCIAL QUESTIONS OF THE JUDGE AND THE CHILD**

A judge approached a new junior solicitor in the courthouse with a brief order: "I want to see you in my office in the lunch-break!"

As the young solicitor nervously approached the door he wondered what he had done wrong. But the reception he got was rather unexpected. As soon as the door closed behind him the judge almost blurted out, "Everybody here sits down with someone, but no one dares to mix with me because I am the judge. I am always alone! Will you please stay and have lunch with me?"

The position of a judge is one of the highest any man could reach. Would it not, therefore, as a matter of course, provide a sense of self-fulfilment? Well, evidently not!

This incident happened years ago, and many changes have come and gone since. But the human heart has not changed much! The search for a sense of security, acceptance and fulfilment is common to mankind, regardless of position in life.

The problem of getting to grips with one's personal identity ('finding yourself') is no respecter of age either. A small child was thinking very hard to solve some of the riddles of life. "Why am I 'me' and not somebody else? But, if I was somebody else, then I would only be another 'me', and I would lose the 'me' that I am! But, what is it to be me, and why?"

Being too young to tell anyone, the child's thoughts went round in circles. These were hard questions indeed for a five-year-old, and for that matter also for a fifty-year-old!

In prosperity as well as in adversity people often have doubts about themselves, fears about not measuring up, about not being accepted, or they have hidden feelings of shame. In religious circles, as well as in the secular world, people struggle with problems about themselves and their identity. Perhaps this is particularly prevalent in the Western world where roles are blurred and less defined than in some other parts of the world.

The problems may be manifested in many different ways, or remain well hidden. But, seeing that they appear to be rather universal, is there any way out?

Both from the secular and Christian circles there is a variety of answers that seem, ultimately, to point in a similar direction. The problem is a poor self-concept, and we need to attain a better self-image!

However, a preoccupation with our self-image can rarely exist for long without some form of resentment appearing to complicate matters. After all, if we believe that we ought to feel good about ourselves, it will usually not be very long before something or someone is a hindrance to this important goal!

The strange mixture of a feeling of importance and inadequacy, frustration or undefined feelings of shame, are often very persistent. Are we then left to manage this troubled self as best we can, or is there any help within reach?

Before we opt for any of the theories or the help of one or more of the many current "experts" in the field, it may be well, first of all, to consider whether they have diagnosed the problem correctly.

A faulty diagnosis of a problem, or a "remedy" based on a wrong conclusion may be very close to where the real answer is to be found. In fact, the two may appear to run almost parallel - yet the final results may be "poles apart". A "cure" that is based on a wrong diagnosis may, conceivably, bring some temporary benefits, but it will not heal the underlying malady. It might even hinder a genuine healing by merely

masking the symptoms. If this is true regarding medicine, how much more so regarding the predicaments of the human soul?

Professor William Kilpatrick, a very highly qualified psychologist, used to adhere to all the most current theories in his field, and to teach them himself, until he began to discover the hollowness of these philosophies and turned to the Christian faith. He mentions the fact that even some secular psychologists are now abandoning the prevalent theories of self-esteem because they consider it "too shallow a concept to be of much help in analysing the human predicament." Kilpatrick notes that, unfortunately, Christians are boarding the sinking ship while certain secular psychologists are disembarking, sensing impending disaster.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the question about a solution still remains. Are the various answers merely using different methods leading to the same goal of self-fulfilment in the end? Or, is it possible that the belief that we need to feel good about ourselves could be keeping us under the tyranny of self? Then, there is also Someone Who has said that there is One Way to Life.

It is the right Way itself that is the all-important matter, and that is what we need to examine.

However, if we happen to have taken a wrong turn, it may be necessary to look at that first in order to be able to retrace our steps and get back to The Way.

## **Chapter 2 GREAT CLAIMS**

The opportunities, challenges, and problems of life can seem daunting and, at times, insurmountable. If something could be found that would help to untangle the problems as well as open the doors of opportunity, it would certainly be a master key to life. Actually, there is one particular quality above any other, which is generally accepted as being such a master key. If we examine the claims that are made, we find that an adequate supply of it will make you able to gain satisfaction in your personal, emotional and social life. The same ingredient will also help you to gain the maximum benefit from your education. Furthermore, it is a fundamental quality if you want to be able to appreciate and relate to other people. It is even the first important requirement if you want to be able to love others. Among many Christians, it is considered to be a necessary step towards enabling you to love God and to reach the full potential He has called you to in life.

Many authorities agree that without this vital ingredient in your spiritual, emotional and social life, you are likely to be trapped in a vicious circle of poor performance, distorted perceptions and unrealistic expectations. And, without this quality, it can be expected that you will be doomed to a miserable life of personal, emotional and social failures. In severe cases, you may end in a state of depression and become suicidal. Some people who are lacking in this important area, may even react with aggression and anti-social behaviour and resort to addictions and crime.<sup>2</sup>

Most of our educational experts, psychologists and counsellors, both secular and Christian, tell us that the vital key to all these areas in life is the all-important quality of SELF-ESTEEM!

This thinking has permeated most areas of our society, and it may be expressed by the taxi driver as well as by the professor. It is being heard so often that it is reckoned, by most people, to be an established fact, at least to some degree.

## **Chapter 3 THE GREAT CHANGE**

If this teaching on self-esteem is true, it has to be of utmost importance to the individual Christian as well as to parents and teachers, pastors and preachers. If the claims are correct, then we might expect Christians to

change some of their efforts accordingly. On this basis they ought to make a priority of trying to foster a strong sense of self-worth in themselves, as well as the people in their care. Actually, such a change is exactly what is in progress, or has already taken place, in a large part of the Christian scene.

Since the latter part of the twentieth century, the language associated with this change has become very common-place. We may frequently read or hear about things like 'feeling good about yourself,' 'coming to a high view of self,' 'getting that somebody feeling,' etc., or we might find posters like 'I know I am Somebody because God don't make Junk!' Regardless of how it is expressed, the common enemy that is being fought is 'low self-esteem' and the emphasis is always on the self. In the Christian church these terms may be mentioned casually by some, while other Christians incorporate both the terminology and the whole of the philosophy into their understanding of truth.

In order to illustrate the profound change that has already taken place, it is worth looking at some typical statements from Christians of past generations on the subject of the self. Later we will compare this with the teaching of a number of contemporary Christians who are representing the more recently accepted views.

### **3.1 Voices from the Past**

Up to the middle of the twentieth century, Christians frequently wrote books on the subject of "helping people to escape from self-love (so they might be able to) experience outgoing and altruistic love of the brethren." One such book continues by saying:

"All these difficulties of yours have their root in the self-esteem of our natures which makes us refuse to be counted altogether sinners.... The Holy Spirit's work in convincing you of sin is to make you dissatisfied with yourself." 3

From the middle of the twentieth century, A.W. Tozer writes about the Biblical Christian:

"His interests have shifted from self to Christ. What he is or is not (in himself) no longer concerns him.... Christ is now where the man's ego was formerly. The man is now Christ-centred instead of self-centred, and he forgets himself in his delighted preoccupation with Christ."4

A pioneer missionary, W. P. Burton, started working among cannibals in the Congo from the early part of the twentieth century, and the results of the work he pioneered read almost like the Acts of the Apostles. He had the following as his motto:

"We are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing. But He Who is with us can do all things."

### **3.2 The More Contemporary Understanding**

In contrast to these words from former generations, contemporary Christians have often incorporated the self-esteem teaching into their thinking and teaching. This has become the much more likely and acceptable way of speaking today. Some have seen this change as one of the most urgent needs of our time. Robert Schuller, one of the foremost champions of this reform among Christians says:

"The classical interpretation of this teaching of Christ on 'bearing our cross' desperately needs reformation.... The cross Christ calls us to bear will be offered as a dream... an inspiring idea that would incarnate itself in a form of ministry that helps the self-esteem impoverished persons to discover their self-worth through salvation and subsequent social service in the Saviour's name."5

Regardless of whether they go as far as the above, many Christians have incorporated the same basic concepts into their thinking. A well-known Christian author, Walter Trobisch, writes the following in a book on the need for self-love:

"Actually, our ability to love God and to love our neighbour is limited by our ability to love ourselves. We cannot love God more than we love our neighbour, and we cannot love our neighbour more than ourselves."6

Some Christian counselling organizations that are actively engaged in training people from various churches to become Christian counsellors use a basic training manual that says:

"One's self-concept begins to develop in early childhood and becomes more elaborated and stable during adolescence and adulthood. Yet the self-concept may become less than optimal as a result of feelings of inferiority... Without such a sense of self-worth, individuals will not only have a miserable life, but will also be unable to reach the potential to which God has called them."<sup>7</sup>

When we compare these latter, quite typical statements of contemporary Christians with the former, equally typical ones, from Christians of past generations, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that a revolutionary change is in progress. Therefore, it is hardly surprising to find that there are Christians in our time who have expressed concern about some of the well-known hymns that use terms like "such a worm as I" and "a wretch like me." They are worried, saying that such expressions "could convey to many people a quite unflattering self-image."<sup>8</sup>

#### **Chapter 4 THE ORIGIN OF THE CHANGE**

Whenever an important change occurs, it may be helpful, perhaps even necessary, to look at its origins in order to evaluate what is taking place. If it is a development that affects people's personal welfare and the way the Christian Gospel is being presented, such an examination could be vitally important.

There is no particular disagreement regarding the origin of the current self-esteem concepts, whether among secular or Christian authorities. An Evangelical Christian psychologist and counsellor, Bruce Narramore, puts it very clearly, explaining:

"Under the influence of humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, many of us Christians have begun to see our need for self-love and self-esteem."<sup>9</sup>

The two named psychologists, Rogers and Maslow, were close colleagues and have much in common. Both of them major on the importance of self-development and self-esteem. In today's society, there is a host of self-improvement courses such as 'personal development' etc., which originate, not least, from the theories of Carl Rogers. Abraham Maslow's contribution to current psychological theories and practices is seen specially in his theory of self-actualisation (a state of peak personal fulfilment, achievement and satisfaction). According to Maslow, this peak of self-actualisation depends on a person's basic needs being met first, and in the right progressive order, from the lower, most basic, to the higher, beginning as follows:

1. Physiological needs (food, shelter, etc.)
2. Safety and security needs
3. Love and belongingness needs
4. Self-esteem needs
5. Self-actualisation needs (peak experience and performance)

This list of basic human needs is commonly called "Maslow's Pyramid" (or "the hierarchy of human needs"), and if Maslow's theories are correct, then we have to go through these stages in the right order if we are to be truly fulfilled - and be enabled to love others and to love God! Maslow adapted his theories from Alfred Adler who said that a person can only reach fulfilment and satisfaction (the peak) when his needs for security and 'significance' are met, beginning from similar basic stages.

Maslow's 'self-esteem needs' equal Adler's 'significance needs'. Maslow's self-esteem leads to the peak of 'self-actualisation', corresponding to Adler's 'significance' that leads to the highest state of personal development called "satisfaction through power".

There are other humanistic psychologists who are closely associated with the above, such as Karen Horney and Eric Fromm. Most Christian psychologists are unanimous in recognising their debt to one or more of

these. In addition many refer to Carl Jung and his works as being of foundational importance (though some do caution that Jung made certain mistakes).

The direct sources of the psychologists who formulated today's self-theories go back to European thinkers in the nineteenth century, one of the main ones being Ludvig Feuerbach who wrote "The Essence of Christianity," (strongly anti-Christian), and in turn influenced such people as Carl Marx, Neitzsche, Huxley and Freud.<sup>10</sup>

All of the psychologists and philosophers named here, both ancient and modern, majored on the importance of self, and most Christian psychologists (though not all) make no secret of the fact that they use methods that are built on their theories. Many Christian counsellors, concluding that the theories are 'scientific', incorporate, add or adapt certain Christian concepts into these basic psychological theories in order to arrive at what they term "Christian Psychology", in which self-esteem or "a sense of self-worth" is considered a most vital ingredient.

## **Chapter 5 TRUTH OR DOGMA?**

In Christian circles one may sometimes hear that "all truth is God's truth", indicating that we should accept all truth equally, whether it is Biblical truth or truth from any other quarter, be it medical, scientific, or as, in the case we are dealing with here, 'psychological truth'.

There are, indeed, parts of psychology that are clearly scientific. Psychological findings regarding such matters as sensation, perception, learning theory and common human reactions in specific circumstances can be tested, and are verifiable. These aspects of psychology may be termed the scientific and practical side of psychology, (experimental psychology).

### **5.1 Man's Truth and God's Truth**

As Christians we must, obviously, accept truth as truth regardless of where it comes from. However, we may question whether everything that is considered as truth ought to be called "God's truth," because this might need a more stringent test than we humans are capable of performing. We are, after all, only too familiar with the perceived truths of yesteryear being discarded because of the new discoveries of today! God's eternal truth in the Bible is, however, of a very different order. The Scriptures are complete, and we are told not to add or subtract from the truth of the Word of God.<sup>11</sup> God is eternal, and God's truth is not developing - and, though our understanding of it needs to increase, it is always the same eternal truth.

### **5.2 The Spread of Philosophical Theories**

The psychological ideas about the self belong, however, mainly in the realm of theory, philosophy and religion. Therefore, they must be tested vigorously to see if they qualify as ordinary human truth - before even considering whether they could rightly be called "God's truth".

To begin with, it seems logical to start by testing the immediate foundations of the psychological self-concepts, which brings us to Rogers, Maslow and Jung. Though others could be mentioned, these are outstanding. Rogers and Maslow, though followed by many others, were some of the main popularizers of the self-concepts we are now so familiar with. Their ideas spread in society almost everywhere, not least via new educational strategies based on their theories. The spread of these methods is exerting a strong influence throughout our Western society, and therefore it ought, at least in theory, to be an easy matter to test what the actual effects of this influence have been.

### **5.3 Examining Some Results**

If it is true that the beneficial results of promoting self-esteem are so great then we would expect to see increased personal happiness and fulfilment, as well as an increase in educational standards in the general population. In most of the Western world where these theories have been implemented, we should also expect to see a decrease in personal and psychological problems, as well as a decrease in marriage

breakdowns, crime, addictions and suicides. It is hardly necessary to state that exactly the opposite has happened - what may be less well known is that the undesirable tendencies have generally spread in proportion to the extent to which these psychological theories have been employed in the social and educational sectors.<sup>12</sup>

Referring to events from an earlier century, we might be tempted to ask: Was it low self-esteem that prompted the notorious Napoleon to say: "What are the deaths of a million men to satisfy the ambition of one man such as I?" In any case, the many lesser 'Napoleons' of today do not seem to have become less in perversity because of the army of self-esteem teachers and counsellors that have arrived on the scene of our society in recent years.

Naturally, it may be argued that the increased maladies of our society are entirely due to other factors. Some of the psychologists that have been named may, indeed, also have highlighted certain factors regarding human life that are of genuine value. Nevertheless, it is their theories of the self that are the central concept in all their methods.

There is very little general knowledge of the fact that Rogers and Maslow themselves actually became alarmed by the results of their theories and they were honest enough to acknowledge some of the disastrous consequences. At the start of his career, Rogers had written so enthusiastically about what he calls: "The life-time task of self-discovery." In his latter years, however, he had to acknowledge "the moral fall-out and disappearance of ethics" that had followed the implementation of his methods. Maslow had warned him years earlier about the disastrous results that had followed his own educational experiments, but for a long time Rogers had failed to heed his warnings. He kept on spreading the same ideas after Maslow's death. Eventually, however, Rogers came to the point where he said: "Why did I ever write that crazy plan?"<sup>13</sup>

Professor William Kilpatrick, a qualified psychologist, writes the following comment:

"As with Maslow, Rogers' misgivings were either unknown to his followers or ignored by them."<sup>14</sup>

Even a well-known secular magazine like "Newsweek" has acknowledged that there may be very unwelcome effects of the self-esteem movement, in an article titled: "You're O.K. I'm terrific. Self-esteem Backfires. Unjustified feelings of self-esteem cause aggression." (July 20th 1998, emphasis added).

#### **5.4 Strong Religious Inspiration**

The moral disasters following the self-theories are not the only factors worth noticing. Few people may realise the extent of the religious element inspiring many of the psychologists that originated or spread the theories. Carl Jung's work is acknowledged as "foundational" to modern psychology. Some Christians have concluded that Jung was "close to Christianity" because he made some religious statements. But Jung spoke of SELF as "the God within"! Actually, he was deeply involved in the occult and received much of the inspiration of his work from his spirit guide whom he called Philemon! Maslow spoke of religious, but not Christian "peak experiences" - an outcome of "self-actualisation". And Carl Rogers reported that he had contacted spirits of the dead.<sup>15</sup>

#### **5.5 The Ultimate Test**

It is nevertheless undeniably true, that the human self is in trouble. People are tormented internally with heartaches and trouble and, as Christians, we ought to care deeply and try to help the troubled and needy. However, if we want to help somebody in turmoil, it is important that we do not offer remedies that are based on a wrong diagnosis.

Some Christian counsellors argue that the message of the Gospel supplies the missing element to the theories about the self. Then, when the Gospel is added, they claim everything becomes completed, and the claims that are made about self-esteem will work out right and prove to be true - and Christian!

For Bible-believing Christians, the ultimate test of truth is the written Word of God. The Bible is the only unchangeable and fully reliable authority on moral and spiritual truth related to the human soul. Therefore the vital test for Christians is whether the self-esteem theories are compatible with Scripture.

### **5.6 Which Way Does the Bible Point to?**

The general present-day cry is for people to build up a sense of self-esteem. (The dictionary defines esteem as "to think highly of"). In the Bible we find that Jesus, however, warned people against exalting themselves (Luke 14:11), and so did the Apostle Paul (Romans 12:3). Such Scriptures, when taken at face value, are hard to reconcile with the self-esteem teaching.

Jesus further says that no one can be His disciple unless he is ready to: "Deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." (Luke (9:23-24). The Oxford Dictionary explains denial (among other definitions) as: "disavowal of a person as one's leader." (According to the Amplified New Testament the full original meaning of the Greek word translated 'deny' in this passage is: "Let him deny himself - that is disown himself, forget, lose sight of himself and his own interests, refuse and give up on himself.")

According to these Scriptures, self is not to be our focus, far less 'an esteemed guide' that helps us to be able to love and serve God (provided we acknowledge our worth!) According to the words of Jesus we must, rather, turn our backs on self in order to follow Him at all. The self we need to turn away from may sometimes be our striving, opinionated and esteemed self. On the other hand, it may be our hurt and wounded, or even our despised self. Whatever kind of self may be ours at any given time, Jesus said we should turn our backs on it, and do so daily - that is, make it our continued lifestyle and attitude. Then, and only then, will we be able to truly follow Jesus - and also to say with the Apostle Paul: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20).

The particular Scriptures referred to here definitely point in the opposite direction from the self-esteem theories. There are, however, certain other Scriptures that are used to strongly support them.

## **Chapter 6 AN ADDED COMMANDMENT**

One particular Scripture is being used more than any other in support of the theory that we cannot learn to love God and others UNTIL we learn to love ourselves. The passage is found in the Gospel of Matthew where we read about the Jewish lawyer who asked Jesus:

"Teacher, which is the greatest command in the Law?' Jesus said to him: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:36-40)

The author of a Christian book on the importance of self-love, Walter Trobisch, says that the words, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" is a command to love yourself. He explains it like this: "Self-love is thus the pre-requisite and the criterion for our conduct towards our neighbour." He amplifies it by saying: "Without self-love there can be no love for others.... You cannot love your neighbour, you cannot love God unless you first love yourself."<sup>16</sup>

The same explanation is stressed in the previously mentioned manual used by a Christian counselling organisation for training counsellors. It says: "True self-love makes us more useful to God.... Psychiatric practice bears out Scripture on two important points:

- (1) You cannot truly love others until you learn to love yourself in a healthy way.
- (2) Lack of self-worth is the basis of most psychological problems."<sup>17</sup>

So here we have, not only the two commandments that Jesus mentioned (loving God and loving your neighbour), but another added one: "You must love yourself." Nevertheless, the simple and obvious

meaning of what Jesus said was: "You know how you would like others to treat you, because you care about yourself in a natural way. Think of this in order to understand how to love others." What He says also implies: "It is a general human trait to put self first. Now, extend this to others instead." (The latter principle is also stated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:10). When Jesus says: "Love your neighbour as yourself," the whole point being made is the duty of loving the neighbour and there is no focus on self. On top of this, Jesus specifically says that He was talking about TWO commandments - not three! Finally, Jesus expressly said that to love God was the FIRST of these two.

Here, however, we have certain Christian psychologists and counsellors adding a third commandment - which Jesus never mentioned as being any kind of command! Not only that, but they say that this added command is a condition for fulfilling the two commandments Jesus did mention! In addition to this, they actually REVERSE the Scriptural order by saying that the commandment they have added must come FIRST and the one Jesus Himself said was first they make LAST!

It is only possible to treat the Word of God in this way if we approach the Scriptures with pre-conceived ideas and impose these on the Word of God. Christians have rightly concluded that the ultimate 'height' any human being can experience is to know God. (Jesus said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17:3). The problem arises when people, probably quite sincerely, accept "the hierarchy of human needs" as being somehow 'scientifically correct'. Having done so, they, quite logically, conclude that this order of meeting the 'needs' is therefore a necessary foundation if we are to know and to love God. If we assume that the psychological theories of Adler and Maslow are correct, then, inevitably, we are led to believe that we must concentrate mainly on the lower needs leading on to the stage of 'self-esteem' (Maslow) and 'significance' (Adler). These in turn are to lead us to the highest stage of 'self-actualisation' where we reach our full potential and true fulfilment. (Adler calls this stage "satisfaction through power" - rather food for thought about his view of 'significance'!!) We are not saying that some of the secular psychologists have no valid points to offer regarding the understanding of human beings. Neither are we implying that the Bible is indifferent to people's problems on the basic or 'lower levels' - indeed, Jesus had compassion on people and healed them, and He fed the crowds on two specific occasions. But, when the priorities of Jesus Himself are turned upside down, then it leads to very strange conclusions that ought to make us more than cautious. We are not questioning the sincerity of Christians who have accepted the psychological theories of self-love. But, regardless of sincerity, it is a serious matter if it leads to adding or taking away from the Word of God.

We live in a culture that has reduced the concept of God to people's own version of 'god': their perception, emotional experience, 'the god within,' the 'divine spark,' etc. But to the extent that our culture is misguided in its understanding of God it will also be misguided in its understanding of people who are made in His image.

## **Chapter 7 VARIETIES AND MIXED CONCEPTS**

It is important to re-emphasize that there are aspects of psychology which are not necessarily incompatible with the Scriptures. There are, indeed, well researched and verifiable facts about human perceptions and reactions. Such psychological insight is, in itself, neutral, and may be used for good - or otherwise! It can provide understanding that may be employed to help people - or it may be used to flatter, manipulate and control! It is, therefore, too simplistic merely to say that psychology is "good" - or, that it is "bad".

Counselling that makes use of certain knowledge of what makes human beings 'tick' is in the category of enlightened common sense, whether secular or Christian. Some secular counselling, e.g., for people with addictions, may be in this category. Clients may be made to face up to the truth about themselves - at times almost brutally - in order to make them face reality so they can be motivated and encouraged to change their behaviour. Such counselling, a cognitive approach, has been of benefit to many people on a general human level.

## **7.1 Varieties of Principles**

There are some Biblical counsellors as well as some psychologists who refrain from using any of the philosophical theories of psychology - particularly the self-esteem theories, including Maslow's 'hierarchy of human needs'. Unfortunately, however, the term 'Biblical Counselling' does not necessarily indicate whether a counsellor is, in actual fact, relying on Scriptural principles alone, or whether the methods employed include some, or most, of the psychological philosophies.

Certain Christian psychologists and counsellors may counsel mainly from a good practical common sense point of view, adhering basically to Christian principles. They may, indeed, have much to offer, yet, at the same time they may accept the self-esteem theories, either fully or in part - though only employing these in certain aspects of their counselling. It is also possible to find some good counsellors in this category who consistently and rightly say that the ultimate goal must be "to become more like Jesus" - rather than merely solving problems, let alone finding self-fulfilment.

Then there are counsellors who merely use some of the psychological terminology. What they are saying could actually be expressed by other words, such as confidence, courage, assurance, trust, etc. Such words are Scriptural and do not, in themselves, lead to the unhealthy and introspective self-orientation that is an almost unavoidable by-product of the many self-terms.

Some Christian psychologists and counsellors, including a well-known family psychologist whose work has been of tremendous benefit, not only in America, but in many parts of the world, seem to be a mixture of these categories. However, the parts of their methods that are based on the self-esteem theories are suspect, from a Scriptural point of view, and the related psychological terminology is unfortunate and can be misleading.

## **7.2 Conflicting Authority Sources**

The main part of most current psychology is, however, not concerned primarily with facts about human nature and reactions, but rather with theories and philosophies - extending even into the religious sphere. The self-love, self-esteem theories are somewhere at the very centre of most of them - (these theories are also a central part of Hindu, New Age and Gnostic philosophies!)

Though there are good exceptions, many Christian counselling books and training materials build quite solidly on these psychological theories. In order to make it 'Christian Psychology' or 'Christian Counselling', an amount of Scripture and basic Christian principles are added. We have no intention of questioning the sincerity of anyone. Some counsellors are, indeed, deeply concerned about helping people that are plagued with tormenting emotions and maladjustments, and they may make valiant efforts to uphold Christian principles in spite of their acceptance of some confusing and contradictory theories.

However, human problems need both God's diagnosis and God's solutions. The seemingly unquestioned acceptance of the self-esteem theories and 'the hierarchy of human needs' have at times resulted in some desperate attempts to reconcile two entirely different and conflicting authority sources: The Bible and philosophies of psychology that have originated in pagan thoughts! (See appendix.) This has resulted in a confusion of ideas - and sometimes even a confusion of language where words are used in, both their normal, actual meaning, but also in a way that is totally different or conflicting.

## **7.3 New Definition of Sin!**

New words and definitions include a new definition of sin! It has actually been said that it is "a sin for a Christian to be walking around with low self-esteem" (because of all the negative effects this is reckoned to produce), particularly the assumed fact that a 'lack of self-love' makes it impossible to love your fellow man.

One of the strongest self-esteem advocates, Robert Schuller, has written a book called "Self-Esteem. The New Reformation," which has been sent free to a quarter of a million pastors and seminary and college teachers in America. In this book the author writes about what he calls sin:

"The most serious sin is the one that causes me to say: 'I am unworthy, and I may have no claim to divine son-ship if you examine me at my worst!' For once a person believes he is an 'unworthy sinner', it is doubtful if he can really, honestly accept the saving grace God offers in Jesus Christ."18

This author must have forgotten the words of Him Who said that He did not come to save the righteous, but sinners! (Matthew 9:13)

According to the above concept, the man who wrote that he considered himself "unworthy to be called an apostle" and said he was "the chief of sinners" must have put himself outside the pail completely! But Paul the apostle, who wrote this, knew what salvation and grace were really about, and that they were nothing to do with what he was or what he could do - he realised that they were entirely gifts of God so that no one could boast in himself. (Ephesians 2:8-10 and I Timothy 1:15).

#### **7.4 Circular Reasoning**

It is certainly true that neglect, abuse and other deprivations, particularly in childhood years, can have awful and long-lasting effects on people. However, many of the self-esteem advocates make your capacity for self-love depend on whether or not you, yourself, have received the love and security you need. In the words of Bruce Narramore:

"If no one loves us, how will we ever know our value and significance? If we are to have that attitude towards ourselves, we must be esteemed and valued. This means we can never have a positive self-image apart from other people."19

But, if this is true, then we are, indeed, in an impossible predicament because our relationship to God, and to our fellowmen, would depend on people and situations over which we may have no control - such as a deprived and loveless childhood. In the words of some counsellors, this leaves us with an empty 'reservoir of love', and that may be a hindrance even to receiving the Gospel! If such ideas were true, we would expect that those who were more privileged in life would have a greater chance of receiving the Gospel of Christ than those who have suffered abuse and many other deprivations. However, the opposite is so often the case!

#### **7.5 "Humility" Dressed in Pride, Or Pride Dressed in "Humility"?**

Some Christians who attempt to reconcile certain Christian concepts with their basic psychological views have actually said that what they call 'a healthy pride' is humility!! The Christian Association for Psychological Studies writes:

"From what we know of the components of positive self-esteem, humility is the Biblical counterpart, not pride."20

Schuller says:

"Real self-esteem is real humility, healthy pride and honest humility are the same human qualities - just different sides of the same coin."21

Someone who has obviously absorbed this type of idea writes:

"Having a healthy self-esteem and being assertive is ... pride in being God's adopted child. It is humility in being called and chosen by God."22

Whereas it is certainly true that being a child of God should give us confidence, confidence is not the same as self-esteem (thinking highly of oneself). The confidence that results from being a child of God does not depend on 'feeling good about yourself', but it is flowing from trust in God and His love and care. In other words, this confidence is anchored in something outside of and above self.

The Christian Association for Psychological Studies continues by saying:

"Humility and positive self-esteem are not based upon self-negation or 'emptying of oneself'. They are based upon affirmation of God's regard for us."<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the writers of the above were so immersed in their preconceived psychological ideas that they forgot to read about the humility of Him Who "emptied Himself" to the point of dying on the cross - Him Whom we are told to follow! (Philippians 2:5-8 - NKJ marg., & Gk).

### **7.6 "The Cross Will Sanctify the Ego-Trip" !**

The author of the most popular book on self-esteem, Schuller, says:

"Don't worry about humility. The easiest job God has to do is to keep you and me humble. God's biggest job is to make us believe that we are somebody... Remember, if your pride is rooted in your divine call, your humility is assured. The cross will sanctify your ego-trip."<sup>24</sup>

Here, at least, we have a clear, though perhaps an unintended statement, of where it may all lead to - an ego-trip!

The Bible, however, does not attempt to 'sanctify' anyone's ego-trip! On the contrary, it warns repeatedly about pride, including pride in being a Christian, or pride in one's position in the church. It says that God "resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."<sup>25</sup>

### **7.7 A Caricature of Forgiveness**

Believing that we must have a good self-image can be a risky business! It is inevitable that something or someone will soon become a hindrance to feeling good about ourselves. Resentment is likely to follow (though, as Christians we probably give it other names!). But, resentment is destructive to the person who harbours it, not only spiritually and emotionally, but sometimes physically and mentally.

Resentment may be predominantly or even entirely caused by the person's own idea about their 'rights', their needs or their perceived position, and it may at times have little or no relation to any wrong actions of others. Whatever may be the cause of it, it works spiritual havoc. It may also destabilize the blood-pressure and at times even the general mental balance.

Christian counsellors, rightly, tell such a person that they must forgive. However, a certain idea of 'forgiveness' has developed where the focus and the whole aim of this 'forgiveness' appears to be to make the person themselves feel better! Certain Christian counsellors may urge the person that they need to forgive because they have a 'right' as children of God to be free from bitterness and hatred. But, this would be a 'forgiveness' that is merely for the benefit of self! 'Forgiving' in order to make myself feel good - or cure my high blood pressure - is a caricature of true Christian forgiveness!

We are sinners in need of God's forgiveness - more than anyone else could ever need ours! God commands us to forgive, and we need to forgive in order to get right with God, because unforgiveness is a sin against God - as well as against another person.

Jesus spoke about the need to deal with our own faults first in order to "see clearly" regarding anyone else's (Matthew 7:3-5).

If 'forgiving' is for our own benefit and focussed on our own need to feel good, then we are not 'seeing clearly' - it may even lead us further away from reality!

Neither is true forgiveness a matter of making excuses for wrong and trying to persuade ourselves that it was 'not too bad after all'. Forgiveness does not mean that we must now make ourselves feel happy about someone who persists in wrongdoing and cannot be trusted - let alone that we must now condone what they do or have done.

True Christian forgiveness is to acknowledge sin as sin and then forgive - for Christ's sake! It is to keep a readiness to forgive and an attitude of love - regardless of how people may respond to us.

### **7.8 Self-Love Wrapped in Gospel Truth!**

Many Christian counsellors who are eager to present the Gospel as the answer to man's problems nevertheless proceed from the foregone conclusion that self-esteem is the most essential component in just about every area of life. They may teach Christian moral principles quite correctly, and they may present the message of the cross of Christ faithfully - up to the point where something is added. Then the additions - the psychological presuppositions - too easily become the main focus. Some say that man lost his 'significance' at the Fall, and by accepting the Gospel and becoming a child of God his 'significance' is restored. In this way the Gospel is being used rather as a kind of means to an end in man's striving to reach the goal of 'significance'! (See appendix.)

Perhaps the self-esteem teaching is most dangerous of all when it is wrapped in Gospel truth - the wrapping may conceal the fact that there is something at the centre that is alien to the Gospel!

## **Chapter 8 WORTH AND WORTHLESSNESS**

When God had created the world and all living things including man, He said that it was "very good". Indeed, even after the Fall, "the heavens declare the glory of God". The smallest plant or moving creature is truly marvellous. In spite of all the advances of science and technology, scientists are still unable to make a tiny blade of grass, let alone a common bird like a sparrow. What is more remarkable is that no scientist can make even one of its feathers!

### **8.1 God As Father of All**

The fact that man is created directly by God means that God is, in a general and real sense, the Father of all men. The apostle Paul referred to this, saying to the people of Athens: "We are His offspring." (Acts 17:28). Even though mankind has gone astray from the Father and has become what the Scriptures call "children of the devil" (John 8:44), the devil never gave life to men - he only corrupted it. God never failed as a Father, though man threw away his son-ship at the Fall and needs to have it restored in order to become a true child of God.

Even the most depraved of men are made in the image of God and we should never look at them with contempt. Our Saviour treated even the woman who had had five husbands with courtesy - and He wept over those who rejected Him when He wept over the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

### **8.2 The Image of God**

The fact that man is created in the image of God means that man alone, above all other living creatures has been given a personality with God-like faculties. He has the ability to know himself and how he is related to God and to the world around him, and he has been given a mind and a will. When God breathed the breath of life into man - in distinction from the animals - part of man became indestructible (Genesis 2:7). This God-given part of man, his personality, will remain forever - whether he is saved or lost. This fact alone gives tremendous value to each and every human being. Therefore, we should never despise or selfishly use another person because, regardless of their sinfulness, they still bear the image of their Creator.

There is a moral aspect to the image of God. That is, there are God-like faculties in man such as reason (mind and intellect), desires (feelings and affections), the will (by which we make choices and decisions), and the conscience (the sense of right and wrong). However, since the Fall, not one of man's moral faculties remains totally pure. Nevertheless, the moral faculties are not obliterated - otherwise, man would have no conscience!

### **8.3 Damaged Faculties**

Even after the Fall in the Garden of Eden, God still puts a higher value on man than on any of His other creatures (e.g. Genesis 9:3-6). Man did not lose his special place in God's creation at the Fall - nor lose 'his significance' as some claim. What he lost was his fellowship with God and his purity of heart. When man severed his relationship with God, the faculties that enabled him to relate to his fellow men became damaged in the process. Though some of the qualities of being made in the image of God remained, every part of man's being became tainted and damaged by sin.

As far as satisfying the holiness and righteousness of God is concerned, man lost his ethical and moral worth. He lost it by choosing to assert himself and to seek self-determination and self-fulfilment rather than to live in total dependence on God.

Francis Schaeffer explains man and the state of man like this:

"Unlike the evolutionary concept of an impersonal beginning plus time plus chance, the Bible gives an account of man's origin as a finite person, made in God's image, that is, like God. We see then how man can have personality and dignity, and value... All people are unique because they are made in the image of God. The Bible tells us also, however, that man is flawed. We see this to be the case both within ourselves and in our societies throughout the world. People are noble and people are cruel, people have heights of moral achievement and depths of moral depravity.

"This is not simply an enigma, nor is it explained in terms of 'the animal in man'. The Bible explains how man is flawed, without destroying the uniqueness and dignity of man. Man is evil and experiences the results of evil, not because man is non-man but because man is fallen and thus is abnormal."<sup>26</sup>

Though the ability of fallen man to reflect the image of his Creator is marred and broken, yet he did not cease to be distinct from all other created beings. God put a higher value on the life of human beings and said: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God He made man." (Genesis 9:6). Here alone is the true basis for the value of every human being.

Modern man does not see the human race as fallen but exalts the self as the foundation for a person's value. Yet in exalting self, man has failed to find a solid basis for his own significance - hence people may accept abortion and other ways of devaluing life. By contrast, in the Bible's teaching, man is fallen, but nevertheless significant because of his origin. Though people are lost - separated from God, alienated from themselves, from their fellow human beings and even separated from nature - they have not become animals or machines. They are still human beings. In the Bible we see that even fallen man, from Adam and Eve and Cain onwards, are capable of communicating with God.

#### **8.4 Constitutional and Ethical Value**

When dealing with the value of man, there are some important distinctions. First, there is the fact of man's worth as a creature made in the image of God (his constitutional value). On the other hand, there is man in his moral standing before a holy and righteous God (his ethical value). If we fail to make an adequate distinction between these two aspects, confusion of logic as well as spiritual and moral confusion may arise.

The self-esteem advocates, have exalted man's worth and dignity to an extreme degree, even to the point of saying that Christ paid the supreme price on the cross because of man's great value!<sup>27</sup> Other Christian adherents of the self-esteem theories do take care to say that it was not because of anything good in us that Christ gave His life for us. But then they generally go on to say that this work of Christ is to be the foundation for our sense of self-worth. In this way, the Gospel of Christ can easily be used merely as the stepping-stone to the real end in view - self-esteem!

In contrast to this, a well-known Christian writer, Jay Adams, who opposes the self-esteem movement, has written much that is of great value on the subject. He exposes the unscriptural ideas of the self-esteem adherents very ably when dealing with the issues on a straightforward basis. However, in order to maintain the truth that man and his efforts are worthless as far as satisfying the holiness of God is concerned, this writer, amazingly, goes to the strange extreme of saying that man is of no value to God, but only to his

fellowmen! He actually says this when trying to explain the words of Jesus: "You are of more value than many sparrows" and "of how much more value is a man than a sheep?" Theological speculations and a rigid either-or-mentality seem to have led to a breakdown in logic and a failure to look at the obvious and simple meaning of the context.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, the failure to make an adequate distinction between man's value as a creature made in the image of God (his constitutional value), and his moral value as a hopelessly lost sinner (his moral and ethical value), may render much otherwise excellent material counter-productive. To deny man's constitutional value as a creature of God, in order to maintain his ethical worthlessness as a sinner, is to set up a false and misleading antithesis. The ethical undeservingness does not do away with the constitutional value. Rather, it underlines the tragedy of man's fallen condition.

### **8.5 Christ and Man's Value**

Reading the Gospels we see clearly that Jesus treated people as being of value. We need to realise that He did so genuinely. Even the prodigal son was valued by his father, though the son came to see himself as unworthy, when he "came to himself", because, morally, that was what he truly was (Luke 15:11-32). (The term 'came to himself' is an interesting comment on the subject of a right view of self!)

When the Pharisees objected to Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus said that just as He Himself had valued the man enough to help him, so they too would consider even a sheep worth rescuing on a Sabbath, and He added: "of how much more value is a man than a sheep" (Matthew 12:12). A little earlier Jesus had said to His chosen disciples: "You are worth more than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:31) But here He addresses the Pharisees and clearly applies His words, not to any particular kind of person, but simply to any human being without distinction.

It is true that Jesus paid the highest possible price for our redemption. However the Bible's emphasis is that Jesus paid this great price because of our great sin (Romans 5:6-10). The important point is that whatever our value as creatures of God, it is God Who gave us this value because He chose to do so. This is hardly a cause for a feeling of self-importance because the credit for it belongs to God and not to us.

God gives human life true value. Therefore, when man decides to disregard God and choose his own values and makes his own choices, he sooner or later ends up devaluing himself, and life becomes cheap. This is seen in a general lowering of moral standards - not least when a thing like abortion becomes 'acceptable' and regarded merely as a matter of 'choice'. Martin Lloyd-Jones said:

"It is remarkable to note how it invariably happens that when man sets out to exalt himself, he always ends by lowering himself and insulting himself."<sup>29</sup>

### **8.6 Human Attempts to Satisfy God's Holiness**

The very best that man can produce can never satisfy the righteousness of God. Therefore the Bible says, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). The people of the Bible who trusted in God recognised the fact that, as far as any ability to satisfy God's righteousness is concerned, man and his efforts are worthless.

John the Baptist spoke about himself in relation to Christ saying: "He must increase and I must decrease" (John 3:30). He considered himself unworthy to loosen the sandal strap for Jesus. The centurion said about himself that he was unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof. On hearing this Jesus said that he had great faith - not 'low self-esteem'!! (Matthew 8:8-10).

The apostle Paul saw himself as an empty-handed sinner before a righteous and holy God. Though Paul had more to commend himself than most people in his day, he said: "In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing". He told how he had been brought low by trials in order that he should not trust in himself. And when telling about the most troublesome aspect of his trials, he said that God Himself had answered his pleadings for deliverance by saying: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in

weakness." Therefore, Paul added: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (Romans 7:18 and II Corinthians 12:7-10).

Nevertheless, Paul was also quite able to be realistic about himself, and he mentions that his works were not behind those of the great apostles. Simultaneously, he also calls himself "the least of all the apostles"! He says he was "not worthy to be called an apostle", and in his later writings he calls himself "the chief of sinners" (II Corinthians 11:5; I Corinthians 15:9 and I Timothy 1:15). All this hardly amounts to Paul having a strong sense of self-worth! On the contrary, when Paul looked at himself he saw himself as a weak and unworthy sinner who continually had to depend on God for everything. Paul's great strength was that he remained in this attitude.

At the foot of the cross, when we are face to face with our own helplessness and sinfulness, and with the holiness and sacrifice of Jesus, we all need to confess with the hymn-writer "my own worthlessness".<sup>30</sup>

## **8.7 Humility**

One of the most well known Christian writers of the 20th Century, C.S. Lewis writes:

"He (God) and you are two things of such a kind that if you really get into touch with Him you will, in fact, be humble - delightfully humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all the silly nonsense about your own dignity that has made you restless and unhappy all your life."<sup>31</sup>

This sentiment is fully consistent with a Scriptural view of self. Rightly viewed, it is actually a great relief not to need a good self-image! Being able, instead, to rely on the unmerited grace of God Who remains the same whether we feel up or down is something that gives true confidence. True humility is total dependence on God - and when we truly see Who He is and who we are, humility is also the only thing that is consistent with being realistic!

When the Old Testament prophet Isaiah saw the holiness of God, he cried out, "Woe is me for I am ruined!" (Isaiah 6, N.I.V.). Could it be that the excessive preoccupation of many Christians with getting their needs met, their hurts healed and building up their self-images has something to do with the fact that we have lost sight of the holiness of God?

## **Chapter 9 HELP IN NEED**

It is certainly true that there is a problem with the human self. The current psychological diagnosis in general says that most of man's problems with himself are caused by 'low self-esteem'. While this idea cannot be sustained either on practical or on Scriptural grounds, it is nevertheless true that the problem may at times manifest itself in severe discouragement, even self-contempt. However, merely diagnosing this as 'low self-esteem' and prescribing 'a stronger sense of self-worth' is a shallow diagnosis and tends to lead in a wrong direction - and having a certain amount of the Gospel tagged on to the prescription does not alter that direction.

### **9.1 The Power of Terminology**

The question of a right terminology is not merely a question of 'splitting hairs'. Indeed, terminology and choice of words affect the concepts that are produced in people's minds - and therefore, eventually, their conduct. George Orwell, the author of the famous novel, "1984" knew that! He coined the term "Newspeak" about the change of terminology that was gradually being introduced into society in order to change the way people were thinking.

The Bible speaks about people who were "harassed and helpless as sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36, N.I.V.). (Most psychologists would doubtless have said that they had 'a poor sense of self-worth'.) Jesus had compassion on these people. He helped them and encouraged them with His acts of love. But

though He cared for their human problems, He did not direct their attention to feeling better about themselves, rather, He focused their attention away from self and toward Himself.

Many of the things psychologists list as things that are causing low self-esteem may be well worth considering, but, rightly, they might fit better in the category of things that cause discouragement. Doubtless, most of us know people whose whole personalities, even in relation to the practical areas of life, seem to be crippled by a sense of severe discouragement about themselves. Some Christian counsellors rightly mention that certain actions ought to be avoided, particularly when dealing with children. The Bible warns parents against provoking their children to discouragement and frustration by harshness, constant criticism and excessive demands (Ephesians 6:4). This important point shows the need for encouragement and understanding in order to promote a healthy development of children. At the present time, however, caution is at least equally needed against discouraging parents! The 'expert's' list of psychological do's and don'ts has grown out of all proportion. This list has become so involved that it may present conditions that are unattainable in this life. Such ideas - often in the form of heavy propaganda in society - may discourage parents to the point where they lose all confidence to control and take the proper charge of their children.

It is certainly true that some people may remain adversely affected throughout life as a result of various influences and conditions in childhood. Nevertheless, it would be quite wrong to point to these consequences as though they were inevitable! Even in the secular world there are many examples of people who have overcome almost every type of handicap, including emotional ones. Surely as Christians we ought to expect even more, seeing the Gospel of Christ offers new life to "the harassed and helpless."

People who are severely discouraged about themselves may need our help and encouragement in order to 'get out of themselves'. But, encouragement that is consistent with Scripture is not directed toward self - the very thing that is the biggest problem for such people is that they are already preoccupied with themselves to an extreme and unhealthy extent, though it is in a negative way.

## **9.2 Renewing the Mind**

The Bible says that one of the ways we are to be changed is by the renewing of our mind - we need to change our way of thinking by learning to replace our own human thoughts with the truth of the Word of God (Romans 12:2). However, this must be more than merely indoctrinating ourselves (or others) by using the Word of God as though it were some kind of formula. It is quite possible to produce a mental conformity by 'programming' the mind, and thereby also producing some change of behaviour. But outward conformity can be contrary to the inner reality - and it can, at times, co-exist with suppressed inner resentment. Something that is produced by mere indoctrination is likely to increase the inner tension in the long run.

However, when we prayerfully and carefully, and with a willing heart, meditate on the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is also called The Comforter (the One called alongside to help). Jesus Himself had compassion on people in their need. This shows clearly that God does not disregard human feelings, but ministers to people on that level, at the same time as He is applying the truth to their minds. Wrong thoughts that have become habitual thought-patterns can be changed by replacing them with the truth of the Word of God and by discipline of the mind. But mental conformity is not enough - it takes God to change the heart.

## **9.3 Self-Esteem and Despair**

But, we may ask, what about the self-concept of someone who is 'in the gutter', either figuratively or literally? They may be utterly despairing about themselves and both feel and say that their life is meaningless, or that they may as well end it! They have not had any chances in life! They never knew love, and feel that they have no hope or reason for living - they may say about themselves that they are useless and worthless. In actual fact, they may seem to be in such a hopeless state, with no resources whatever, that one might well be tempted to agree with their assessment of themselves. However, in such cases, it might only be like a cruel joke to convey to them that they need to get 'self-esteem' in order to get out of the mess.

This could take away any faint glimmer of hope by focusing on the very thing that makes them despair (self) - instead of bringing hope from an entirely different source.

There is quite an amount of evidence pointing to the fact that it can actually cause people to despair if they believe the current notion that they will never get on in life unless they can muster a sense of self-worth.

That can be like telling somebody to lift themselves by their bootlaces! (See appendix).

#### **9.4 Clinging to Despairing Self!**

Of course, it is right to seek to help and encourage a despairing person who seems to have every reason to be depressed about themselves. We should, indeed, try to impart hope by acts of love, by understanding and practical encouragement, and by telling about The Great Love, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But even a miserable person who says they are hopeless and worthless, usually clings on to self for dear life! The 'right' to do their own thing is often the one thing they are not ready to let go of for anyone - God or man! It is indeed possible for some people to love themselves passionately (their own rights, their own way, etc., etc.) at the same time, as they are deeply dissatisfied with themselves. The Holy Spirit needs to convict them that they are truly helpless and hopeless sinners and morally worthless before God. Only when they are so convicted will they be ready to turn from self to Him Who is The Only Hope.

#### **9.5 Human Solution or New Identity**

The current 'psychological package' keeps mentioning the need for 'constant affirmation', 'healing hurts' and showing 'unconditional love'. This can at times be used in a way that may ignore the righteousness of God and gloss over sin. The term 'unconditional love' is sometimes used by people to mean 'love me whatever I do, but don't oppose or correct me'. Whereas it is certainly true that God's love is undeserved and can never be earned, at the same time, God loves us too much to condone the sin that is ultimately destructive, and the condition for appropriating this Love of God is to turn in repentance from self to God. We are not implying that people do not have deep and complicated problems that may need extensive help and sympathetic Christian counsel and concern. It is a question of a right focus.

A true conversion to Christ and a person's new identity is found, not in a new sense of self-worth, but in a new knowledge of belonging to God, being forgiven and being His child. Real confidence is fundamentally different from a sense of self-esteem. True confidence is found in knowing you are in His hand, and realising that He can never fail! He has accepted you, not because of your worth or anything you are or can become, but because of Jesus and His undeserved love and grace. This is the central truth of the Gospel and it points away from the current self-theories and in exactly the opposite direction. If the soul is to know God, it must forget and lose itself in the process.

### **Chapter 10 THE BURDEN OF SELF**

The Bible never asks us to have self-confidence - only to have faith in God. Though we may sometimes hear that we need to be reconciled to ourselves, the Bible never mentions this as a need, but, rather, that we need to be reconciled to God (Romans 5:10; II Corinthians 5:20). Whereas some say that we need to love ourselves in order to love God - the Bible says that "we love Him because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). However, when we become reconciled to God, we do need to become reconciled to God's dealings with us, and to be willing to trust Him, and also to trust that He can and will enable us to do His will, whatever situation in life we are placed in.

Previous generations spoke quite often about people being 'full of themselves' in relation to people who were overbearing, or just 'too forward', always projecting themselves and having an opinion on everything. Today, this type of behaviour might sometimes approvingly be called 'assertiveness'! It used to be well known that it was a bad thing to be too 'self-conscious' - this would be meant mainly as an unhealthy awareness of oneself causing undue embarrassment in the company of others. But self-consciousness can also manifest itself in being 'too forward'. However, in today's psychological climate we are told that we should be 'self-aware' (usually without any clear definition of what this is supposed to mean!).

#### **10.1 All Chiefs and No Indians!**

It is interesting to note that the Oxford Dictionary lists the old saying: "Self is a bad guide to happiness!" Encouraging people to have self-esteem can very easily amount to encouraging arrogance. Unfortunately, much of the self-esteem teaching that is prevalent in Western society may result in people getting an inflated ego and having an unrealistic view of their own capabilities. One American study of a million high school students showed that 70% rated themselves 'above average' in leadership abilities. The most astonishing result was seen when these same students had to evaluate themselves in their 'ability to get along with others'. Not one single student rated themselves 'below average', but a massive 60% of them thought they were in the top ten percent regarding this social ability! To crown it all, nearly half of these sixty percent thought they were in the top one percent!<sup>32</sup> This reveals an absolutely astonishing 'achievement' as far as a good self-image is concerned! Unfortunately, it says correspondingly less about these students' ability to view themselves with any kind of realism whatsoever! A number of other studies of this nature have given similar results, showing that all the self-esteem teaching appears to have had some effect! However, according to this sort of self-assessment, even the very concept of 'average' becomes totally meaningless.

It is rather remarkable that at the same time as research on students' self-assessments and attitudes show such inflated egos and self-delusion, American psychologists and counsellors, including some Christians, lament that there is "an epidemic of low self-esteem". Their assessment hardly seems to tally with the outcome of studies such as the above! Nevertheless, many people in the rest of the Western world, particularly in educational and social circles, blindly follow suit, demanding the 'necessity' of promoting self-esteem!

## **10.2 A Hollow Confidence**

But perhaps all this apparent self-confidence is only skin-deep after all! Adler's concept of the peak of human experience is significance and 'satisfaction through power'. This seems to have a direct connection with our present day post-modern view, which maintains that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Therefore, when you communicate you are only trying to exert power over another person or group - because, when there is no absolute truth and moral standards everything is only 'a matter of opinions'!

When self-esteem becomes a prominent concern, it often leads to a desire to develop assertiveness. If people are, or learn to be, assertive they certainly appear to be more confident, outwardly at any rate. But it is very likely that a secret fear has also increasingly taken possession of them - a fear of anything or any situation they cannot control! A person may speak as though they are very much 'in charge', and they may be quite confident that they have asserted their position very well and been 'in control'. At the same time they can tend to be quite oblivious of the fact that they may have exerted an intimidating influence over people who are less forward, but who may, nonetheless, resent being overwhelmed.

Apparent outward confidence can, indeed, hide much inward insecurity, especially if people have been taught that they ought to promote themselves and their views in a confident manner (as, e.g., in many educational and social programmes today). But, merely expressing your opinion without having an adequate basis of truth, evidence, reason, or moral standards, must of necessity depend only on assertiveness and self-esteem.

A genuinely confident person does not necessarily need to be assertive! And if and when it may be right to assert anything, it will not be based on subjective feelings or on mere opinions. It must come from something outside ourselves, based firmly on right standards as God has given them in His Written Word. (Or, in more practical human matters, based on evidence, truth, and reason.) What really matters is what, or Who, is it that we place our confidence in?

It is, indeed, a very insecure business to feel that you must assert your opinions without having any certainties of truth! Such a make-believe confidence may help you to function outwardly for a while, and to feel that you are 'in control', but ultimately it can only increase the inner tension. No wonder it may eventually lead some to the psychiatrist's couch!

## **10.3 The Tyranny of Self**

The problems of an 'inferiority complex' have always been well known. Inferiority feelings are generally related to feelings about your abilities and your education, or things like your physical appearance, and not necessarily to the self as such.

But there are many other serious problems with the self. Since man began to pursue his own way instead of living in gratefulness to God, he ceased living in happy self-forgetfulness and lost the innocent joy of life. The apostle Paul gives an account of man's downward spiral of degradation after the Fall and he says that men were "no longer thankful" (Romans 1:18-32). A thankful person is, basically, an emotionally healthy person. But a craving, self-seeking person cannot at the same time be thankful - or satisfied!

The current concentration on self-esteem and self-image makes our view of self such a serious business. Becoming over-sensitive about this very important self of ours makes it hard to laugh at ourselves.

It is no wonder some become tense and stressed - or give up in frustration, and then become preoccupied with themselves in a negative way to the point of utter self-contempt. Whether self-contempt may have been caused by one's own striving and perceived failure, or by being downgraded or abused by others, it seems to manifest itself in similar ways. The usual diagnosis today would be to say that somebody like this suffers from 'a poor self-image', and that the cure is to build up self-esteem. The Oxford Dictionary defines self-hatred as: "hatred of oneself, especially of one's actual self when contrasted with one's imagined self". Some people can actually take a seemingly perverted delight in berating themselves. But this has nothing to do with humility! It is still the person's own self that is dominating them - only it is a self that is lamenting that it is powerless to be what it craves to be! To whatever extent we think we ought to feel important we are under the tyranny of self.

#### **10.4 Freedom!**

Discerning between good and evil is something that is very necessary - the Bible says we should exercise our senses in this area (Hebrews 5:14). Judging is a very different matter - many Christians confuse the two, and are afraid to use discernment. People are scared of appearing 'judgmental' - a very prevalent humanistic term that can be used in a way that is quite intimidating. Therefore, many may refrain even from attempting to discern. We need to realise that a judge is the one who passes the sentence. Though we must learn to discern, only God is wise enough and holy enough to pass the sentence.

However, since the day man fell for the temptation to attempt to become as God, he has constantly tried to take on what is the prerogative of God alone - judging.

We may look at some people with contempt and judge them accordingly - as others, indeed, may do to us! If others have continually passed the judgment on us that we are 'no good', etc., this judgment might lodge in our heart and turn to self-condemnation. Or, our failures to measure up to our own strivings may lead to the same result. Either way, we have endorsed a sentence, but not one that is passed by God, the only fit Judge.

A Christian pastor who has dealt extensively with many seriously disturbed people writes about this problem. He says that whereas it may appear much kinder to say that such people have 'low self-esteem', this term could, in actual fact, be almost brutal.

God can free us from any human judgment and contempt that has lodged in our heart, regardless of the source of it. If we turn away from it (repent), and pray to God for His help, He will cleanse us from it, and from the effects of it.

In contrast, if we opt for the diagnosis of 'low self-esteem', then we have to mobilise our best efforts to build up our sense of self-worth. If we actually do achieve it and gain a better self-image, then we have managed to become somebody - with the result that we are just as self-centred as before!

But, if you receive cleansing from God and His grace frees you from all kinds of judgment and contempt, then you don't become anybody! And you don't need to! Instead, you can forget about yourself while you

worship and delight yourself in the God Who cleansed you. Then you can live the life He created you for - and His grace, and your gratitude to Him, can be the motivating power in your life.<sup>33</sup>

There is certainly a need to be willing for the practical nitty-gritty of discipline in life-including disciplining the mind. But true freedom from the burden of self is only found when the motivating power is of a different order from anything we can possibly produce by self-effort.

## **Chapter 11 THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT**

God's original design for man has not changed - though man has! When God created man in the Garden of Eden, He made the man and the woman to have fellowship with Himself. Man had no particular concerns about himself, because he did not own himself - God did! Man was not able to take any credit for his own abilities, his occupation, his companionship or any of the things he had been given to enjoy - God was the Maker, Giver and Owner of it all.

Even before the Fall, man had to live by the grace of God, because it was God, his Creator, Who had chosen to have fellowship with him - a creature - and being a creature meant that he could not possibly merit this.

Man had no rights - only privileges. The compelling motivation of his life was his gratitude to God, and dependence on Him. In other words, man was truly a worshipper!

### **11.1 The Original Appeal to Self**

Satan's seductive temptation to man was to assert himself independently of God - "You will be like God!" (Genesis 3). This was the original appeal to self and, in the words of a Christian from the past, here "Self had its awful birth and established its throne!"<sup>34</sup> Man chose self-determination, self-assertion, and personal autonomy, and thereby ceased to function according to God's design. Death, and every other evil, have followed this Fall, and every human sin and malfunction of personality is a consequence of this tragic choice. In wanting to be what no creature is able to be, man lost what he could be and was designed to be.

### **11.2 A Damaged Personality**

When man rebelled against God by seeking things for himself independently of God, he severed his relationship with God. As a consequence of being alienated from God, the faculties enabling him to have fellowship with other human beings were also damaged, and his ability to relate to others became stunted. Man became alienated, even from his own God-given individual identity. Consequently, man has been striving to be something or someone other than who and what he is, ever since. In order to retain whatever kind of self-concept has become his own particular refuge, man may be prepared to go to almost any length of self-deception.

### **11.3 Man in Hiding**

Man's consciousness of some of the effects of sin did not produce repentance from sin, but rather hiding from it. Man was hiding from God, and from the true facts about himself - as mankind has been doing since that day! He was also hiding behind his own defences, an art he has been developing ever since! To varying degrees, he has lost his sense of reality about himself. The human mind is capable of rationalising almost anything. So great is its capacity for self-deception that it is quite possible for us even to be blind to our own insincerity!

### **11.4 A Favourite Hiding Place**

The habit of blaming something or someone for one's own sin and wrong choices was born in the Garden of Eden - and since that day this ability has flourished. We tend to excuse our wrong doing, saying we were 'driven to it', provoked by people or circumstances, etc. - anything to 'get off the hook!' The tendency to blame often possesses people to an extent that they cannot face any crisis in life without thinking that somebody has to be at fault. They seem to feel insecure if they cannot find someone to blame - regardless of whether this is realistic or not! Resentment and anger against anything or any situation that is not the way we want it to be, motivates the compulsion to blame. Sometimes this becomes so ingrained that the person's perception of facts becomes distorted till they lose touch with reality, and serious mental instabilities may

follow. Today, we have a whole generation that tends to blame their failures on their parents - often aided by 'professionals'! If nothing else will do, we can always blame 'society', or our particular lot in life. Secretly, or unwittingly, this often amounts to blaming God, Who has not seen fit to put us in better circumstances. As one of the consequences, anger, resentment and self-pity are born - and 'hurts' are nourished rather than healed.

### **11.5 The Idol of Power**

When man wanted to become like God, he wanted to have something for himself that belongs to God alone - power! Seeking self-determination and self-assertion, he wanted power for his own gratification. Man might want the power that goes with wealth - or, the worship of power may express itself in ruthlessness and cruel domination of other people. However, there are also much more 'refined' and subtle ways of doing it - even friendships, acts of kindness and doing good towards others can eventually be a way to gain power over them. The Bible says that "power belongs to God," (Psalm 62:11). Whenever we fall for the temptation to selfishly use the power that is attached to any position we may be in, then we are taking something for self that belongs to God.

But, first and foremost, from the king to the pauper, man wants to have a power over himself that should be God's alone. This is seen even in the most miserable 'misfits,' who may be in this sad condition, either because of their own choices, or on account of tragic misfortunes beyond their control. Though they feel that life is not worth living, nevertheless, they cling to their 'right' to do their own thing, rather than handing themselves over to God, and recognising that He alone has the right of ownership over anyone's life - and that He alone can make even such a life as theirs fit into His great purpose.

### **11.6 The Idol of Honour**

Closely related to the craving for power is the search for honour. Man wants to have credit for himself, even with God. He may seek the kind of honour that comes from gaining position and the applause of others. Or, he may seek the honour that comes from parading his good deeds - like the Pharisees did. But it also even, be the subtle desire to be seen by others as 'being humble'! Human self-seeking and pride has a thousand different disguises. We are hopelessly trapped in the craving to be somebody or something that will give us credit for ourselves. The Bible says that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). The only escape from this self-seeking is a daily turning away from the deceitfulness of self in total dependence on the undeserved grace of God.

C.S. Lewis writes about this problem saying:

"As Bunyan says, describing his first illusory conversion, " I thought there was not a man in England that pleased God better than I."

"Beaten out of this we next offer our own humility to God's admiration. Surely He'll like that? Or if not that, our clear-sighted and humble recognition that we still lack humility.

"Thus, depth beneath depth and subtlety within subtlety, there remains some lingering idea of our own, our very own, attractiveness.

"It is easy to acknowledge, but impossible to realise for long, that we are mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright, is wholly derived from the sun that shines upon us.

"Surely we must have a little - however little - native luminosity? Surely we can't be quite creatures....?"

"This pretence that we have anything of our own - has kept us from being happy."<sup>35</sup>

This truth ought not to be thought of as a hopeless put-down, but rather as a relief. If God loves us because we deserve it in some way or other, then we could change, lose our appeal, and lose His love. But the truth is that He loves us because He is love and He never changes. Therefore, we can rest securely in His love and let this love motivate our love for Him. "We love Him because He first loved us" (I John 4:19).

## 11.7 Our Rights

When natural desires are elevated to demands and when the enjoyment of God-given privileges is exchanged for craving 'our rights' - selfishness, strife and arrogance follow. As far as human relationships are concerned, people do have certain rights. The Bible, however, emphasizes the need to respect other people's rights rather than being too concerned about our own!

The apostle Paul mentioned that there were certain rights he could legitimately have made use of, even as a servant of Christ, but which he had freely given up for the sake of the Gospel. At other times he did make use of his rights - also for the sake of the Gospel (I Corinthians 9:4-12; Acts 16:37-39 and 22:25-29).

In our relationship to God, however, we can have absolutely no rights. He alone has the right to our lives and to allow what He will for His own purpose. His promises of help in time of need and any other blessings, are all given by a grace we could never deserve.

When even our legitimate human rights are truly surrendered to God, then we can be ready to 'go the second mile' without doing it as 'a martyr' and feeling used. Rather, we can do it confidently without fear and "as unto the Lord" (I Peter 3:6; Colossians 3:17).

Then, at other times, if we ought to make use of our rights, we can do this too "as unto the Lord", without an attitude of asserting ourselves and 'standing on our dignity'. Surrendering our rights to God and being ready to let go of them is not the same as trying to please people all the time - which is, rather, an outcome of what the Bible calls "the fear of man".

The point to remember is that we are called to follow Him Who gave up all His rights and privileges in order to come into this world, even to the point of suffering a cruel death, in order to save us.

## 11.8 The Fear of Man

There are many ways of letting ourselves be controlled by other people: Trying to measure up to people's expectations, looking for their approval and praise, looking for position, being afraid of looking foolish, fearing to be different, as well as fear of ridicule and rejection. At times we might even fear success, in case it brings expectations we are afraid we cannot live up to! Or, we might be afraid to refuse anyone's request when we ought to decline, in case we lose the good impression they have of us - or we might fear to lose our own good feelings about ourselves!

Among teenagers - and often beyond that age - this fear may be called 'peer-pressure'. Depending on the form it takes, it might be called 'people-pleasing' or being 'over-ambitious'. A more recent 'in' term is 'co-dependency'. The Bible calls it "the fear of man" and says that "it brings a snare", (Proverbs 29:25). To whatever extent, our feelings and actions are determined by other people, from the past or the present, we are controlled by them. In other words, people are big and God is small in our lives.<sup>36</sup>

An overemphasis on 'our needs' - such as needs for love, acceptance or 'affirmation' - without which we are, supposedly, not able to function - has led to even more empty, fragile and depressed individuals. It makes us dependent on what we think we need - and who we think we need it from. This dependency may be seen both in somebody who withdraws in depression as well as in someone who explodes in anger or is consumed with resentment - someone else is allowed to be the controlling factor in their lives. The advertising industry thrives on creating a sense of need in people who had no previous desire to buy certain products - then they might not feel good any more if they don't get them!

The fear of God, (awe, respect, reverence, love, obedience), is the Bible's antidote to the fear of man. The Bible says about some people who were governed by the fear of people's rejection that "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). Jesus said, "How can you believe who receive honour from one another and do not seek the honour that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). He also said that "what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God" (Luke 16:15). Finally, the apostle Paul said: "Do I seek to please men? If I still pleased men I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10).

### **11.9 Desires Turn to Cravings**

We need to respect God's choice, His ownership and His plan - also regarding His creation of ourselves. Man can mass produce - or even clone! Only God can make individuality and personality. Man was not made to compare himself with other men, but to relate directly to God and live in thankfulness to Him.

When God made man He made him with natural desires. He gave him food to satisfy his physical need, and the capacity to enjoy it, and He gave him beauty to enjoy as well. God did not create man to be idle, but gave him purposeful occupation. Man was created with a desire for close fellowship, first of all with God Himself, and after that for human companionship.

It is possible for desires to be satisfied to a certain extent, but lusts and cravings can never be satisfied. Since the Fall, man's natural and innocent desires became damaged or perverted, and, to varying degrees, they became lusts and cravings, or demands for rights - with resulting frustrations, resentments, self-pity and self-deceit.

God gave man a desire for the close companionship of marriage, and included within this framework a desire for sex - it is quite superfluous to mention that this drive has become perverted. Natural desires for food and drink often become gluttony, and other addictions may follow. A desire for meaningful occupation can also become totally compulsive, as in the case of a 'workaholic'. God designed man to have a sense of purpose - this tends to become a craving to feel important. (Though seemingly similar, the two things are very different. Purpose is focused on something outside self, while feeling important is introspective, and focused on self.) Instead of a sense of purpose, man may be driven in a compulsive and endless pursuit of an ever-elusive goal of self-fulfilment. Almost anything of genuine importance, including the care for family and children, may be sacrificed because of this seeking for a sense of self-fulfilment.

### **11.10 A Victim of Self**

There is only a very short step between the ambitions of self, and self-condemnation. The law we are striving to fulfil, whether God's law, other people's, or our own, stimulates our striving regarding what we must be or become. But, an ambition that originates from self is also limited by self. If it appears to be fulfilled, pride may increase - but so, very often, does fear - fear of losing the position that has been attained. Any real or perceived failure can quickly bring a sense of degradation and self-condemnation. There may be other conflicting emotions arising, such as man's in-built rebellion against any restrictions. What may have started as striving for an ideal may be overpowered by a rebellion against the demands this brings. The apostle Paul wrote about man's plight when left to his own struggles with self: "What I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practise, but what I hate, that I do" (Romans 7:15). Paul calls this "the law of sin". Ambition for self may produce self-destructive rebellion - it is like trying to drive a car with both the brakes and the accelerator on!

### **11.11 The Insufficient Idol**

When ambitions fail, sooner or later, self-contempt and condemnation are likely to follow. Outward circumstances may have contributed to feelings of self-condemnation, and the longing to become something by oneself may remain only in its negative form - self-contempt! Whatever form it takes, self is a very insufficient idol to lean on and trust in. The good news is that we do not need to depend on self. True and lasting confidence does not come from anything that dents as easily as self-esteem!

The saying: "When all else fails read the maker's instructions" is a comment on man's inclination to do things his own way. The apostle included The Maker's instructions for the only way man can function rightly. He describes the hopeless struggles of self and concludes with the cry: "O, wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Giving the answer, he says: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24-25). Then he goes on in the whole next chapter, (Romans 8), telling of the power of this deliverance, which is the Holy Spirit of God working within the believer, relying, not on anything at all of self (the flesh), but on the love and power and grace of God. This is of a totally different order to anything we can produce by our own efforts.

## **Chapter 12 TRUE CONFIDENCE**

One of the faculties of the human personality is that we are able to be conscious of ourselves - a fact we cannot escape, even if we wished to do so.

The apostle Paul spoke about having a right view of self when he said: "Through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith," (Romans 12:3). So, even though there is absolutely nothing in Scripture to support the idea that we should seek to increase our self-esteem, or help others to do so, God does want us to think of ourselves realistically! It is no more right or realistic for somebody to make a point of belittling themselves in every area of life than for someone to think that they can manage everything, and tell everybody else what to do! Actually, the one extreme may be just as self-centred as the other!

The apostle Paul said: "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). The context makes it clear that Paul is not saying that he is invincible and all-powerful to do anything he wants, but rather that he knows he can face any situation and, by the grace of God, be enabled to do whatever God wants him to do.

### **12.1 Gifts or Merit?**

Human gifts and abilities are to be rightly used and appreciated as gifts of God, whether they are the gifts other people have or our own abilities. We need to have a healthy acceptance of the way God made us and where He put us, rather than having a high opinion of ourselves - there is an ongoing risk of that bubble bursting very easily and quickly anyway!

Jesus spoke about the way God looks at His children, and the way He Himself looked at His disciples. He said that God, one day, will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" to those who have sought to follow Him faithfully. He also said to His disciples, "I call you no longer servants, but friends" (Matthew 25:21 and John 15:14-15). However, when Jesus spoke about the attitude we ought to have towards ourselves, He said things like "take the lowest seat" and "you shall say 'We are unprofitable servants'" (Luke 14:10 and 17:10). Getting a right balance in these matters is not easy for us as human beings.

We need to be conscious all the time that any advantage or any gift we have, even our very lives, are the gifts of God. The apostle Paul said: "What have you that you have not been given?" (I Corinthians 4:7 and II Corinthians 3:5). There is no contradiction between the two aspects, but whenever we allow our confidence to depend on things like advantages and position, our accomplishments - or even our service to God and man - then we are heading for disappointment and often disaster!

### **12.2 A Heavy Burden**

If we have imbibed the idea that we need to have high self-esteem, (think highly of ourselves), then there are many dangers and troubles attached - even apart from obvious pride. First of all, becoming that serious about self becomes a burden that may be hard to bear.

Thinking that we ought to feel good about ourselves, we may feel that anybody that makes us feel otherwise is infringing on our rights! An almost logical outcome of thinking we have a right to feel good is to feel that we somehow have the right to resent whatever or whoever causes negative feelings! We may complain about 'being made to feel guilty', rather than examine the real reason for our feelings. Any put-downs by other people (whether real or imagined) may be felt excessively or shatter us out of all proportion. In such a situation it would be far healthier to be able to say to ourselves: 'Well, O.K., even if this does not seem to be fair, and even if I am not respected or acknowledged as I think I ought to be, who do I think I am, anyway?' (This is exactly the kind of attitude Jesus said we should have even after "having done everything" Luke 17:10). The important questions that need to be settled right, whether in success or failure, in being

honoured or ignored, are vital. They are things like 'To Whom do I belong? Who do I serve? Is God able to make me what He wants me to be, regardless of myself or other people and circumstances?'

Who are we human beings anyway, that we should be constantly feeling good about ourselves? In order to do so, we would need to be perfect - or else self-deluded! The well known preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones refers to this type of problem, saying:

"To the extent that we are governed by self we are sensitive, and as such we are easily hurt, easily depressed, and discouraged. Self is always watching for insults and slights. It is always hypersensitive.... We tend to be always wondering what people are thinking and saying; and so we become sensitive.... What misery and agony we all endure in life because of this horrible self, and this concern as to what people are thinking! ... He (the apostle Paul) had stopped watching himself and living for himself.... We have to learn to stop worrying about ourselves and our opinion of ourselves...."<sup>37</sup>

### **12.3 A Competent Master**

The good news of the Gospel is that even when we do feel bad about ourselves, we can face the reality of our sins and failures, real as well as imagined, because we can still trust in God, His forgiveness and His love, as well as in His enabling for whatever He wants us to do. Trusting God in this way is the only thing that can give true and lasting confidence - whatever we may feel. Then, our own failures or problems do not need to devastate us in the same way any more! Our confidence is not in ourselves - yet, we can be truly confident about ourselves, because we are in God's hands. We are the workmanship of Him Who Can Never Fail, and we are part of His plan and purpose. And if we are faced with a task that seems too great and daunting, we do not need to ask despairingly, 'Who am I?' but, rather, our questions should be: 'Who is God - and is He able to give me the strength and ability to do His will?' Then, when He is the One who enables me, I don't need a sense of self-esteem, I only need to trust and obey, and worship Him!

### **12.4 Ultimate Confidence**

When I accept the unmerited grace of God by accepting His complete sacrifice for me on Calvary, and when I keep on living in the light of this it makes me conscious that I have nothing - except what God has given me; I am nothing - except what He makes me; I was a lost sinner - until He redeemed me; I am still a helpless sinner without Him. And it gives me Peace - because He took my guilt away - Security, because I have been accepted as His child - Confidence, because He never fails - Gratitude, because all the glory is His.

## **Chapter 13 HUMAN MOTIVATION - UNLIMITED GRACE**

God is a holy and righteous God and totally pure - "In Him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). But, as human beings not one of us can say that we have no darkness in us at all!

If we try to please God because He is worthy of our gratitude, praise and service, then there is also a legitimate joy in this service because it is an act of worship to Him Who alone is worthy. Rightly viewed, any true service to God cannot, ultimately, be a sacrifice on our part. It is rather a privilege that the Almighty God should allow us, fallen and redeemed sinners, to do His will. However, if we try to please God in order to gain a sense of significance, or to get our personal needs met, then it is not really God we are serving, but ourselves! Alas, there is no need to encourage the selfish element in us at all, it is too ready to rear its head, even - or perhaps particularly - in what we may consider as our best moments. We have nothing that we have not been given. Anything good we have is from God - so all the praise must go to Him.

Jesus told us that one day God will say: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21) to those who have trusted and followed Him. If we truly "love Him because He loved us first" and therefore want to serve Him from a grateful heart, there is a real joy and sense of purpose in such a service. Then it is also a legitimate aspiration for us to hope that we will be able to hear His "Well done". This is not because we will become important but because it is our joy to please Him. But when Jesus also said that our own attitude

about ourselves should be "We are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10) - this should make us realise that our works can gain no merit with God.

The famous pioneer missionary to China in the 19th century, Hudson Taylor, put it like this:

"Do you know, I sometimes think that God must have been looking for someone small enough and weak enough for Him to use, so that all the glory might be His, and then He found me."<sup>38</sup>

C.S. Lewis said the following about the essence of the Christian life:

"The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you'll save it. Nothing that you have not given away will ever really be yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead.

"Look for yourself, and you find in the long run only hatred, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."<sup>39</sup>

We read in the Old Testament that, as far as God was concerned, King Saul's good time was "when he was little in his own eyes" (I Samuel 15:17). The Pharisee's self-image was certainly better than that of the tax collector. But Jesus said that it was the tax collector who "went home justified" (Luke 18:9-14). Jesus spoke about the sinful woman who wept out her heart in thankfulness to Him: She loved much, because much was forgiven her. (Luke 7:47) - hardly a picture of high self-esteem, let alone any kind of support for the idea that a sense of self-worth is needed in order to enable anyone to love God!

Alas, the things that can make us feel good about ourselves are so often the very things that can and do lead us astray - or make us act in subtle or underhanded ways. If we seek to help others in order to do them good and encourage them to do what is right, then there is a legitimate God-given joy attached. But, if our motivation is to make ourselves feel good, then we are really using other people in order to please ourselves. The motivation is selfish, even though our actions may be good and done in a nice way!

Likewise, if we attempt to serve God in order to gain some merit with God, or even just to feel satisfied with ourselves, then, our motivation is not really to serve God, but rather to gain something for ourselves.

As fallen human beings we have a perpetual problem with our own motivation. As long as we are in this world, there is always a danger of a selfish element mixing with our best and seemingly most unselfish efforts. This is why the Scriptures say that all our own righteousness is like "filthy rags". Only what is totally pure can satisfy God's righteousness. Therefore, we have no other hope than to turn in faith to the Only One Who was pure enough to make the supreme sacrifice in our place on the Cross of Calvary.

The good-living and religious man, Nicodemus, did not need to be pointed to the Gospel of Christ in order to recognise that Christ's sacrifice 'proved his value', or to get his self-image polished up. No, he needed to be "born again" (John 3:3), that is, get a new life from God that is of a completely different order from anything human virtue or effort can produce.

When we get this new life by trusting in the Cross of Christ, then, as we daily turn from self in order to follow Him, the key to our life is that:

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ that lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

## **APPENDIX**

The Way of Self and Liberation from it.

### **App.1 Notes and quotes**

W.A. Tozer wrote the following:

"It is in this matter of how to deal with man's proud and perverse, and sinful human nature that we discover two positions within the framework of Christianity. One position is that which leans heavily upon the practice of psychology and psychiatry. There are so-called Christian leaders who insist that Jesus came into the world to bring about an adjustment of our ego.... On the other hand, thank God, the Bible plainly says that Jesus Christ came to bring an end to self - not to educate it or polish it!" (A.W. Tozer, "Who Put Jesus on the Cross?" Christian Publications 1975, pp. 124-125.)

The same theme is developed by Dave Hunt who says:

"The average Christian is led to believe that the secret to success exuded by those he admires, is to develop a comparable self-confidence and 'positive' self-image. Frustrated in the attempt, many Christians become unhappy and, at the urging of a friend or recommendation of their pastor, end up in 'counselling', seeking to repair their shattered self-image, which they sincerely believe to be their problem. Many become the unwitting victims of a psychologized Christianity which is so self-orientated that it either compounds the problem or, most destructive of all, produces false cures....

"... a 'new reformation' that psychologizes Christianity has uncovered new interpretations of Scripture never before known in the history of the church, thus bringing Christianity into line with the theories of men such as Rogers and Maslow.... 'Christian Psychology' represent the most dangerous and, at the same time, the most appealing and popular form of modernism ever to have invaded the church." (Dave Hunt, "Beyond Seduction," pp. 116, 117, 130 and 136.)

Gary Almy, M.D., is an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Loyola University School of Medicine and has over 20 years experience in psychiatry. His wife, Carol Tharp Almy, is a medical doctor. They had years of severe personal problems and disturbances, including marriage difficulties, and went through various psychotherapy and recovery programmes (though they, themselves, were professionals!) Eventually they came to a 'dead end' with these things and came to the Christian faith. They write the following:

"Self-esteem and the fear of God cannot be integrated, and a glance at the church of the '90's leaves no doubt as to which of those has been eliminated. It is commonly accepted that people who seek the high positions, rude and arrogant people, as well as disobedient children, all suffer from low self-esteem and are not getting enough love and attention. Parents agonise over how to give their rebellious child more love, more praise, more of anything that will make him feel good about himself. Discipleship groups have become sensitivity training therapy sessions on how to make everyone feel better about themselves. (Teaching or training courses that are named 'Personal Development' are generally based on the same current psychological outlook.)

"We are told to avoid presenting the Gospel until we have 'corrected the father image', gained a person's trust, and given him significance. Our 'gospel' becomes a story of how Jesus offers security and personal worth.

"How utterly silly it all sounds! These ideas are utterly foreign to Scripture, and this should greatly alarm the church." ("Addicted to Recovery" by Gary Almy and Carol Tharp Almy, Harvest House Publishers, 1994, pp. 173-174.)

The secular magazine 'Time' has seen this issue and states in an article called 'The Church Search', (April 5 1993):

"Many of those who have rediscovered churchgoing may ultimately be short-changed, however, if the focus of their faith seems subtly to shift from the glorification of God to the gratification of man."

David Powlison mentions that 'A Christianized Psychology' seems to be a likely candidate as 'the next great heresy' within the Evangelical church, quoted in: "The Facts on Self-Esteem, Psychology and The Recovery Movement" by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, Harvest House Publishers, pp. 29-30.) This is a clear, comprehensive and well-documented booklet on this subject.

## **App.2 Training Courses**

Psychological teaching or training courses (including encounter-type groups), that focus on self-improvement, self-esteem, self-worth, etc., may indeed appear to be of some benefit to the participants, at least in the initial stages. This applies particularly where there is a strong reliance on group-dynamics.

The following quote is from a study of 'sensitivity training':

"They (members of the group) experience a certain liberation and relief, or even a so-called 'conversion'. Nevertheless, it is only a psychological transformation, on the level of the soul and the feelings, binding the members even more closely to the group.... The consequences vary greatly according to the methods used. Some participants feel themselves freed and relieved from old inhibitions and complexes; others are more depressed than before.... Profound changes of personality are indeed produced." ("Eyes Open to Satan's Subtleties," Emile Krémer, Move Press, 247 Newcastle, St. Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, p. 102). (This 'relief from old inhibitions' generally produces more 'liberal' attitude to moral standards, certainly in a general sense.)

The above applies particularly, but not only, to secular humanistic courses (business or social sector, etc.). A certain enthusiasm may be produced and a noticeable 'dependence' often follows, even to the point of people becoming 'addicted' and seemingly not very able to function unless they keep taking further courses. Christians are not immune to all these effects, especially if they do not fully comprehend the philosophies that are basic to the training they may be taking. Even where they do understand a good deal, it takes great effort and courage to withstand the constant pressure to conform. Alas, noticeable personality changes have occurred also in the case of Christians.

Even the 'Christianised' forms of self-improvement teaching may, to varying degrees have similar effects. Participants may refer to a near-conversion-experience, or merely to a sense of personal relief and liberation. They are generally unable to analyse the cause of their feelings of well-being, and they often shrink from any attempt to probe what is the source of their emotions. There seems to be a fear that they might lose their good feelings if anything were to be examined more closely.

### **App.3 Fixed Options, Choices and Assertiveness**

A prevalent method of humanistic mind-conditioning training in relativism (no absolutes) is to present a limited number of options as though no others existed! Then, instead of thinking clearly and with an unfettered mind and conscience, people are taught to choose between the alternatives (called 'decision-making' and 'critical thinking', 'multiple choices', e.g., in many of our educational programmes!)

Training in assertiveness often follows this model by presenting three alternative ways you can handle interpersonal relationships or problems: You can either be passive ('a doormat'), aggressive (losing your temper, name-calling, etc.), or you can be 'assertive' (claiming that this is quite different from being aggressive).

This is presenting only a limited - and therefore false - number of possibilities. From there the training may proceed to caricature the first named alternatives, leaving 'assertiveness' as the only desirable or appropriate option.

Finally, assertiveness is 'whitewashed' by saying it is not aggressive - or even that it will make you more 'attractive', etc. In reality, the assertiveness may amount to nothing other than a more 'sophisticated' and calmer aggressiveness in seeking to enforce one's own way or view.

When people are governed by a desire to stand up for themselves and preserve their self-image communications tends to become a matter of "fighting their own corner" - at the expense of more objective considerations. At best communication may deteriorate to something that is merely "a debate" - where the outcome depends on someone's assertiveness and ability to "score points," rather than on a genuine understanding of the rights or wrongs of the issues involved. (Adler's "significance and satisfaction through power"!)

### **App.4 Theories that Backfire**

The fact that the self-esteem theories have sometimes 'backfired' in very serious ways is quite well documented.

A counsellor at a Christian College, Dan Denk, tells of how one particular counselling case helped him to see the fallacy of the psychology of 'me-ism'. Doug came to see him for counselling as so often before. As

usual he was preoccupied with himself and his shortcomings, and he was feeling down. On previous occasions, Denk, the counsellor, had tried to help him to improve his self-concept. Each time it would work for a short while and then he would be down in the dumps again. Denk describes this particular counselling session:

"This time it struck me how self-absorbed Doug was. He didn't need to be more preoccupied with himself. "Doug," I said, "I don't think your problem is one of poor self-concept at all. I think you are actually quite proud. The reason you feel inadequate and wretched at times is that you are ... just like the rest of us! Why don't you accept who you are and just get on with life? Forget yourself for a while and get interested in other people and their concerns."

"The look on Doug's face changed from surprise to horror, to unbelief... then to a smile! He had never heard advice like that. He certainly didn't expect it from me. But, as we continued to talk, his eyes began to light up and a new freedom came over him - freedom from the slavery of self-concern...." (Quoted in "Beyond Seduction," Dave Hunt, pp. 166-167.)

"Some people have committed suicide, leaving notes saying they did it because they had tried but failed to build up their self-esteem." ("Self-Esteem," Jay Adams, pp. 11-12.)

### **App.5 'Christianised' Self-Centredness**

Some Christian counsellors are teaching Christian truth faithfully in many respects, such as saying that the right way (God's way) is ultimately best for us as human beings, even when it seems the most painful way. One of them, Laurence Crabb, rightly says that it is wrong and sinful thinking to look for a human way out as a better option. In this and other areas, he provides much excellent counselling. The problem arises when he consistently introduces another point of reference than Scriptural truth (seemingly because he fully accepts the theories of Adler and Maslow about 'significance' and 'basic human needs'.)

He says in a book on "Biblical Counselling": "Every person must first reach the goal of personal fulfilment. Until that goal is reached, man is not free to live for something or someone else." (p. 55). (Jesus Christ, however, said: "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all the other things will be added to you"!)

Later on Crabb adds: "In order to enjoy psychological health, people must meet their need for significance." (p. 62). "God designed you with the need to feel important and has provided an exciting way to deeply and fully meet that need.... If you will follow His plan and do what He wants you to do, you will experience the exhilarating sense of being a real somebody...." (p. 64). Emphasis added.

The trouble with the statement, "God designed you with the need to feel important", is that there is not a hint of such a thing in the Scriptures. Certainly, people like the apostle Paul and John the Baptist must have missed it!

The real trouble with these statements is that it leaves the basic selfish motivation intact. It merely 'Christianises' it!

### **App.6 Service In Order to Provide Significance!**

The same counsellor continues by saying: "God has designed the local church as the primary vehicle through which people are to exercise their significance-providing gifts.... As long as pastors do all the work in the local church, they are robbing the people of an opportunity to meet their needs as God intended." (pp. 64-65). Emphasis added.

The Bible certainly makes it clear that there is and should be a place in the local church for everyone to serve God. But something alien to the Bible and the Gospel is introduced when service in the church is presented almost as though the main purpose is to provide significance and thus meet the personal needs of the people themselves!

It is, sadly, very possible for people to serve in the Christian community in a way that appears to work very well - but without their hearts having been changed by God. Following Christ requires a change of motivation from self to Christ!

#### **App.7 Right Thinking - to Meet One's 'Needs'!**

Crabb and other Christian counsellors may write excellent material about promoting right thinking (renewing the mind) in order to conquer various problems. However, some of them also keep using another point of reference that originates, not from the Scriptures, but from Adler and Maslow such as the following quotations:

"In every instance, the wrong thinking will involve the sinful belief that something more than God (and what He chooses to provide) is necessary for meeting one's needs." (p. 50).

It is, of course, true that such thinking is sinful. The problem is that 'meeting one's need' is repeatedly mentioned as though that is the prime goal in view, as in the following:

"(1) What I think has a definite bearing on what I do and on what I feel. (2) There is a true reality which I must be aware of (think about, believe) and behaviourally conform to, if I am to enjoy a sense of personal well-being and effective life. (3) It is possible to believe something untrue and therefore to behave and to feel in ways that will result in my needs not being met." (p. 86).

All of the above has an amount of truth in it. But, unfortunately, if the goal that is in view is 'the satisfaction of our deep personal needs', it does not challenge our sinful selfish motivation.

#### **App.8 An Inadequate View of Sin**

This emphasis may also lead to a rather inadequate view of sin as seen in the following quote from the same author:

"The essence of Satan's temptation was to encourage Eve to say untrue sentences to herself to believe something false: 'My personal needs can be better met, I will be more worthwhile, if I go outside God's circle.' ... As soon as she left the circle of obedience (which her wrong thinking had led her to do), she offended the standards of a holy God Who had claim to her obedience and so experienced the problem of guilt. The problems of resentment, guilt and anxiety seem to be the three central underlying disorders in all personal problems and they exist because we think incorrect thoughts." (All Quotations in the above are from "Basis Principles of Biblical Counselling," Lawrence J. Crabb, Marshall Pickering, pp. 55, 62, 64, 65 and 86.) Emphasis added.

All of this is partly correct, but it provides a very inadequate explanation of sin, to say the least. Resentment, guilt and anxiety are more than 'disorders' that cause personal problems. Resentment and guilt are caused by sin - anxiety may be due to many other factors. The focus in the above is on the person's problems and personal 'needs' - rather than on getting right with God. Human sin is much more than 'wrong thinking' and 'saying wrong sentences to ourselves about how our personal needs can best be met'.

Though wrong thinking is present in sin, sin is first and foremost a question of rebellion against God and the self-seeking of the human heart, and it is not solved by getting the right information (truth) about meeting needs and by believing it, and 'saying the right sentences to yourself'!

There are, alas, many people who do believe and know the truth very well, and recognise that God's way is the best for them. They may also, at the same time, realise that their own way is destroying their lives and making them miserable. Yet, in spite of all this, they still cling on to self by following their own way.

The problem is that to whatever extent the focus is on 'meeting my needs', the selfish motivation remains - even if outward behaviour and personal problems may have been solved on a certain level by adjusting to better thinking.

#### **App.9 The True Gospel - or the Way of Self?**

I may do the right thing and seem to follow the way of the Gospel, but if I continue to do it merely because I know it is the best or the only way to meet my personal needs, then it is not really the Gospel of Christ I have embraced. It is rather the way of self - the way on which Jesus said that no one could be His disciple!

**Anita Simpson, Cork Ireland, 2002**

#### NOTES

1. "Psychological Seduction," William Kilpatrick, (Arthur James Ltd., London 1983), p.86.
2. Compiled (partly verbatim) from numerous sources of popular psychology, both Christian and secular.
3. "Beyond Egoism," in Religion and Human Behaviour, Wesner Fallow (New York: Association Press), pp. 27 & 171.
4. "Man: The Dwelling Place of God," A.W. Tozer (Christian Publications, 1966) p. 72.
5. Robert Schuller, "Self-Esteem: The New Reformation," (Word 1982) pp. 22, 117-119.
6. Walter Trobisch: "Love Yourself," (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press 1976), p. 11.
7. "Introduction to Psychology and Counselling," by Paul D. Meier, Frank B. Minirth, Frank B. Wichern, Donald E. Ratcliff, (Bakers Books 1995), p.139. Emphasis added.
8. Anthony A. Hoekema, "The Christian Looks at Himself", (Grand Rapids: Erdmans 1975), p.16.
9. Bruce Narramore: "You're Someone Special", (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p.22.
10. See Paul Vitz: "Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship", (Erdmans 2nd Edition, 1994), p.96.
11. Revelation 22:18-19
12. "Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong," William Kilpatrick, (Simon and Schuster) p. 45. Paul Vitz, a qualified psychologist, mentions a 250% increase in studies among college youth during 20 years saying: "The modern self is intrinsically self-destructive," Paul Vitz: "Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship" (Erdmans, 1st edition, 1977) p.126. Reader's Digest article: "Crime's Spectre Haunts Europe," (April 1994) is among numerous other reports, articles, and statistics dealing with the rise of crime and other human and social ills.
13. William Kilpatrick: "Why Johnny Can't..." pp.34-37.
14. Ibid, p.37.
15. William Kilpatrick: "Psychological Seduction," (Arthur James Ltd, London, 1983), pp.86, 99. Also, "Beyond Seduction," Dave Hunt (Harvest House Publishers, 1987), pp.113 & 209.
16. "Love Yourself," Walter Trobisch (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1976), p.11.
17. "Introduction to Psychology and Counselling," Meier, Minirth, Wichern and Ratcliff, p.143.
18. Robert Schuller: "Self-Esteem," p.9
19. Bruce Narramore: "You're Someone Special," (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p.167. Emphasis added
20. Craig W. Ellison: "Self-Esteem," (Southwestern Press, 1976), p.6.
21. Schuller: "Self-Esteem," p.174.
22. Letter defending self-esteem and assertiveness training in "Fellowship Link" (The Quarterly Newsletter of the Association of Irish Evangelical Churches, January 1998).
23. Ellison, p.6
24. Schuller, "Self-Esteem," pp. 57 & 74. Emphasis added.
25. I Peter 5:5-6; Romans 11:20-21; Galatians 6:3; II Corinthians 12:11 ("even though I am nothing"); I Corinthians 10:12; I Corinthians 1:26-31
26. Francis A. Schaeffer: "Whatever Happened to the Human Race?" (Marshall Morgan and Scott), pp.125-126.
27. William Kirvin says, "It is as if Christ had said: 'You are of such worth to me that I am going to die; even experience hell so that you might be adopted as my brothers and sisters.'" "Biblical Concepts for Christian Counselling," (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1984), p.107.
28. Jay E. Adams: "The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, Self-Image." (Harvest House Publishers, 1986), pp. 84-85. Matthew 10:31 and 12:12.
29. "The Plight of Man and the Power of God," D. Martin Lloyd-Jones (Pickering and English Ltd., 1966), p.32.
30. From the hymn, "Beneath the Cross of Jesus" (Elizabeth Clephane, 1830-69).
31. "Mere Christianity," C.S. Lewis, (McMillan, 1952), p.111.
32. Quoted in "Self-Esteem," Adams, pp.114-115.
33. "Befriande Nåd," ("Liberating Grace,") from Swedish, Sven Reichmann (Inter Skrift, 1988), pp.173-174.
34. "The Power of the Spirit," William Law, ed. Dave Hunt, (Christian Literature Crusade, 1971), pp.143 & 148.
35. C.S. Lewis, "The Four Loves," (Fount Paperbacks, 1982), pp.119-120.
36. See "When People are Big and God is Small - Overcoming Peer-Pressure, Co-Dependency and The Fear of Man." Edward T. Welch (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1997).
37. "The Christian Warfare," D.M. Lloyd-Jones, (The Banner of Truth Trust), pp.337, 338 & 343. Emphasis added
38. "Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret," Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor, (Whitaker House, 1996), p.314.
39. "Mere Christianity," C.S. Lewis (McMillan, 1952), p.171.