

Further, Finger demurs on “Murphy, Ellis, Kraus, and Yoder . . . regard[ing] the powers’ redemption as a mission task” (308). According to Finger, only Col. 1:20 considers the powers redeemable (313); he himself is pessimistic about it (314). In dealing with the biblical “principalities and powers” passages, Finger could have found important resources in Hendrik Berkhof (*Christ and the Powers*, 1962, 1977) and in Yoder’s treatment of “Christ and Power” (*The Politics of Jesus*, ch. 8.). In view of the importance he places on the “missional dimension,” I wonder why Mennonite and other-denominational missiologists are so sparsely represented in his discussion. Examples might include Jacob Loewen, Donald Jacobs, Hans Kasdorf, Lois Barrett, James Krabill, David Bosch, Andrew Walls, and C. René Padilla.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the Anabaptist-descended churches and indeed the world family of churches are in the author’s debt for presenting in one volume this wide-ranging, substantive, biblical, historical, constructive theology. I expect it will generate rich ecumenical dialogue for some time to come.

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Daniel Schipani, *The Way of Wisdom in Pastoral Counseling*. Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2003.

The Way of Wisdom in Pastoral Counseling is a carefully argued, thoroughly documented book offering a biblical and theological model that addresses what the author sees as two primary problems facing the field. The first is “a sense of incompetence on the part of many pastoral caregivers in the face of pastoral counseling clinical specialization and professional certification” (4). The second is a “lack of congruence and continuity between pastoral counseling and other ministry arts, especially teaching, preaching, mentoring, and spiritual guidance” (4-5). Schipani attributes these problems to the predominance of the clinical-medical model concerned with “curing” pathology, and the existentialist-anthropological paradigm “with autonomy and self realization as its primary goals” (7). His model reconnects pastoral counseling to its ecclesial foundation and identifies the minister as the normative pastoral counselor.

Schipani proposes the biblical motif of *wisdom* in the context of the *reign of God* as an overarching metaphor for pastoral counseling, and suggests *wisdom in the light of God* as a guiding principle. Jesus, he states, models the one who most fully embodies the wisdom of God. The wisdom tradition illuminates fundamental existential questions such as “How shall we live in conformity with the normative culture?” and “How shall we fashion together the kind of world that pleases God?”(39) Wisdom in the light of God provides a framework for counseling that offers guidance to live wisely, discernment between cultural wisdom and God’s alternative wisdom, perspectives on wholeness and holiness, and reflections that connect human experience to the faith tradition. Setting wisdom in the context of the reign of God keeps in focus “the ultimate normative culture in which God’s dream for the world is being realized and will be fully realized beyond history”(39). Concern for peace, justice, ethics, transformation, right living, salvation, and liberation are all contained within an understanding of that reign.

The author likens pastoral counselors to biblical sages, the practical theologians of the Hebrew wisdom tradition. They both reflected on the tradition and kept its meaning “practical and life-oriented”(42). While acknowledging the value of psychology and other human sciences, Schipani recalls counseling to its roots in the biblical tradition and calls for “awakening, nurturing, and developing people’s moral and spiritual intelligence”(54).

This book raises several questions. One of the primary theological and philosophical questions underlying counseling is, How do people change? Do they change in the presence and context of an enhancing, liberating, and affirming relationship, or through transforming negative cognitions to more realistic beliefs and views? Schipani cautions against a “relational model” with its connection to Rogerian and psychoanalytic approaches to psychotherapy (95-96), and promotes a cognitive approach that assists people to develop and live into a new vision of reality for themselves and their world.

But surely our theology is inherently relational. That we are created in the image of God is a relational affirmation; the Christian affirmation is that we most fully know ourselves in relation to God through Christ. And while Jesus was a teacher of wisdom, his approach to ministry was relational. I suggest that pastoral counselors not promote one approach as more theologically grounded than another, but instead ask which one best suits the needs of the care receiver.

This concern leads to my second question. Schipani rightly notes that a relational model has greater potential to create conditions for boundary violations, including sexual misconduct, and requires engagement with psychological mechanisms such as transference, counter-transference, projection, and resistance. This is beyond the training of most congregational pastors, whose focus is more short-term and problem focused (96). But can't we affirm both their invaluable counseling, and that of those with specialized training to work with care receivers who may respond to a more long-term, depth, relational approach?¹

This then leads to my third question. Couldn't the role of "specialized pastoral counselor" be seen as a missional activity done on behalf of the church, and the counselor be seen as a missionary? Just as contemporary missionaries use the tools and training of anthropology, sociology, linguistics, cultural studies, and social psychology in addition to Biblical studies in order to be a "presence" or witness, so a pastoral counselor uses psychological tools, among others, to provide a ministry of care and witness to persons on the edges psychologically or ecclesiologically, or both. And just as a missionary is commissioned by the church and accountable to it, can't the work of a specialized counselor be blessed in the same way?²

In this volume Schipani wrestles with important questions. He moves beyond challenging what was the predominant pastoral counseling paradigm to offer a thoughtfully constructed biblical and theological framework with guidelines for this work. It is a significant contribution that will be most useful for pastors and pastoral students who engage in time-limited, solution-focused pastoral counseling interventions.

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Notes

¹ Self-psychology, Object Relations, and more recently Intersubjectivity, are all relational models of psychotherapy that offer an alternative to the existentialist-anthropological paradigm.

² The idea of Specialized Pastoral Counseling as a missional activity was first raised with me by John Hershberger in a personal conversation. It is more fully developed in Brian Grant's *A Theology of Pastoral Psychotherapy* (Haworth Press, 2001).