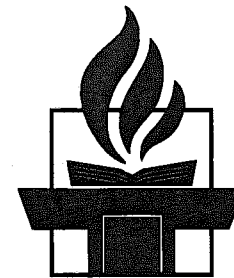


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## *The Cure of Souls; or, Pastoral Counseling: The Insight of John Owen*

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The annals of Christian history witness to a rich heritage of concern and compassion for the troubled. The term that was used to express pastoral care in previous centuries was “the cure of souls”; its more contemporary designation is counseling.<sup>1</sup> The rise of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, with its emphasis on the role of the individual and the importance of the mind or reason as the final arbiter of truth (i.e., a focus on the internal, subjective self rather than imposed external authority such as either the church or the Bible), brought profound changes in the methodology and content of advice-giving. Because it established insight into malevolent motives and their remedy in pre-Christian sources, the emerging movement became a powerful rival to the traditional views offered by pastors.

In the matter of counseling service, there appear to be two crucial and underlying questions. First, an accounting for the person’s plight is important. Here the issue is the discovery or perception of the fountainhead of the client’s or parishioner’s dilemma. What causes a person to manifest certain negative behavioral traits? Second, a perception of the methodology of behavior modification is vital. Here the question is about change and how it is brought to fruition. What is a person capable of doing? How can a person be directed to change?

In the search for answers to these fundamental questions (i.e., the cause of man’s behavior and the mechanism of behavioral modification) a wide variety of solutions have made their way into publication. Secular psychologists, whether they be behaviorists, psychoanalysts, personalists, or transpersonalists, have identified the root of behavioral dysfunction in any variety of external and internal factors. John Watson and B. F. Skinner rejected the role of the

My interest in it [Puritanism] arose in this way—if you will forgive me a word of personal confession and reminiscence. Brought up as I was in what is called the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church, and having become interested in their history, I observed that the leaders of that movement—Daniel Rowland and others—were obviously diligent readers of people called Puritans. They would quote from them, and indeed at times were charged with having preached some of their sermons. That had aroused my general interest. But my real interest arose in 1925 when, in a way that I need not explain now, I happened to read a biography of Richard Baxter which had just appeared. I had read a review of it in the then *British Weekly*, and was so attracted that I bought it. From that time a true and living interest in the Puritans and their works has gripped me, and I am free to confess that my whole ministry has been governed by this. A later element which encouraged this yet more was my discovery of Jonathan Edwards. One cannot read him without being driven back again to the same sources. I am interested in Puritanism because it seems to me to be one of the most useful things any preacher can do. Nothing so encourages a true ministry of the Word because these men were such great exemplars in that respect.

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unconscious as the determinant of behavior to suggest that actions are a function of social influences. Freud, followed by Adler and Jung, argued that the key to behavior patterns was in the realm of the unconscious (i.e., the world of memory). For Carl Rogers, a personalist, the catalyst is the quest for the true, deeper self. In Maslow's transpersonal terminology, it is the human quest for self-realization or self-actualization, a labyrinthine journey into the self. In each case, and the variety of psychological explanations of behavior are myriad, the roots of dysfunction are to be found in external forces that have come upon the client for which he is the involuntary victim; the solution, other than the environmental or statist behaviorism, is in the discovery of the self and one's potential (i.e., self worth, the realization that *I'm OK, You're OK*, to quote a well-known book on Transactional Analysis).<sup>2</sup>

Realizing that the fundamental weakness of secular psychology is unbiblical anthropology (i.e., prevailing humanism), Christian counselors have responded in one of two ways. Segregationalists, to coin a term, like Jay Adams, have argued the insights of secular psychology are not only misleading, but completely useless and destructive. To quote Tertullian's much-used line, "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, the church with the academy, the Christian with the heretic?" Accepting Van Til's sharp dualism between Christ and the world, as well as correctly faulting secularists for errant views of God, creation, and man, Adams stridently rejects psychological insights for an aggressively perceived, Bible-only approach to counseling.<sup>3</sup>

Integrationalist counselors, on the other hand, such as Lawrence Crabb have argued that insights drawn from the social sciences should not be rejected out-of-hand (though extreme caution is warranted) because there is much to be gained from this form of natural revelation.<sup>4</sup> While the use of information derived from the observation of behavior

has been criticized by some Christian counselors,<sup>5</sup> others have embraced some of its interpretative insights and remedies, written various self-insight books, and emerged as well-known biblical counselors.

In addition to professional Christian counselors, theologians have set forth a dizzying array of procedures for dealing with behavioral dysfunction (most are agreed as to the root of man's problem). Unlike secularists, Christian theologians generally have perceived the human dilemma through the lens of Scripture; they often speak, though, of the issue in theological jargon (e.g., Sanctification) rather than use psychological terms. Whether it be a Holiness, Keswick, or Pentecostal model for the Christian life, the emphasis on faith (i.e., you believe it so, simply "trust") is often little more than psychological gymnastics; they often err in being simplistic and reductionistic. As sometimes presented, victory over sin is a matter of following correct procedures with wholehearted trust; inability to obtain the promised results often leads to delusion and despondency. Some such schemes, at least as popularly presented, promise too much, causing a dilemma for the tenderhearted realist, and do not take into account the struggle with sin as an everenduring process, resulting in discouragement for those anticipating a quick fix. All of this can easily lead to an even greater sense of guilt; they simply do not deliver according to their own promises.<sup>6</sup>

In the preface to an edition of John Owen's works, James I. Packer recounted his own struggle with the holiness theory of the victorious life and the haunting failure as a result of his earnest faith in it. As a result, he turned to the saving insight of the biblically oriented wisdom of that master counselor, the chancellor of Oxford University in the seventeenth century, the Puritan divine, John Owen.<sup>7</sup> Packer wrote:

I still think after thirty-five years that Owen did more than anyone else to make me as much of a moral, spiritual, and theological realist as I have so far become. . . . It is not too much at all to say that God used him to save my sanity.<sup>8</sup>

This brief essay is offered with the prayer that those who struggle to maintain their sanity in the battle with sin will find in Owen's description and prescription of the human dilemma a realistic, practical, and workable approach to the task and joy of becoming more Christlike.

### **John Owen and the Human Dilemma**

Owen's major works on the doctrine of the spiritual life (i.e., mankind's Fall and rescue, the sin that is in man and the Redemption that is in Christ) are in the sixth and seventh volumes of his collected works; they include the following four writings: *A Treatise on the Dominion of Sin and Grace*; *Of Temptation: The Nature and Power of It*; *The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Reminders of Indwelling Sin in Believers*; and *On The Mortification of Sin in Believers*.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, three other works provide further insight: *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*; *A Discourse of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer*, and *A Discourse on the Holy Spirit As a Comforter* (the latter two are in the fourth volume of his collected works). These will be analyzed in order to offer Owen's timeless insight into the two questions asked by secular psychologists, Christian counselors, and theologians. What is the fundamental cause of behavioral dysfunction, and how is it corrected?

#### **The Dominion of Sin: The Reality of Brokenness**

Owen's treatise, *The Dominion of Sin and Grace*, is a detailed explanation of Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under

grace."<sup>10</sup> The author's central point is that believers, by their identity with Christ, have been set free from the usurptive, deceitful, universal grip of sin. This, he argues, can be seen by reflecting upon the characteristics of sin's dominion which has an unrelenting vicelike hold on the unbeliever. Dominion is evident when, for example, there is a state or condition of perpetual continuance of evil practices; when there is a consistent attitude of despising warning; when there is a malicious contempt of the ways of God; and when there is a resolute rejection of any means of grace.<sup>11</sup> In brief, "The dominion of sin is present when sin exercises control over the will of a man with no opposition from another principle."<sup>12</sup>

Though sin, says Owen, remains in the believer, never to be eradicated in this life, and its general design is total domination through deceit or force, the saint has experienced the wonderful reality of the end of sin's complete sway. This is evident for several reasons. First, sin is now occasional; though its roots lie deep in the heart, wickedness is now easily discerned. Second, sin is now afflictive; it is a burden (previously, it was a delight) to the soul. Third, the lust or desire that is the cause of sinning is detested by the heart and mind. Sin is an offense to the child of God that gravely disappoints and profoundly wounds.<sup>13</sup>

To illustrate the point Owen makes, the image of a forest might be invoked. Before the Lord's mercy in Redemption a person's life can be characterized as a dense tangle of trees, vines, and underbrush. The ground is completely covered; there are no clearings, and the light never penetrates to the soil. Sin, like a dense jungle, completely dominates the entire landscape of man's being: his intellect, emotion, and will.

#### **The Indwelling of Sin: An Ever-Present Reality**

While the Bible suggests that the dominion of sin has

been utterly crushed, the same book and human experience attest to the believer's continual struggle with sin. Owen in his treatise, *The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevailing of the Reminders of Indwelling Sin in Believers* grapples with Paul's statement in Romans 7:21: "I find then the principle of sin in me." He attempts to deal with the apparent contradiction of sin's defeat and, yet, its ongoing activity. In essence, the universal hold of sin endures. Sinclair Ferguson, one of the few scholars who have intensely studied Owen, has stated, "The nature of sin does not change in regeneration or sanctification, but its status in us is radically attired."<sup>14</sup> Owen is quite explicit, "Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, "the man that understands the evil of his own heart, how vile it is, is the only useful, fruitful, and solid believing and obedient person."<sup>16</sup>

To return to the illustration of the dense forest, Owen argues that the dominion of sin no longer exists for the believer, not because the forest has been completely cleared, but because many of the trees and some of the underbrush have been destroyed. The totality of sin's hold has been broken because the grip of its power over all the trees has been decidedly reduced. Some areas (i.e., trees) where sin reigned without any influence to the contrary no longer exist. The forest is still present, but there are now clearings, or areas, where trees have been uprooted and the tangle of vines removed. To express it another way, in God's mighty act of Redemption His renovating, revivifying grace removed some of the towering trees in our lives. Among some of the trees the growth has been retarded by pruning; others remain untouched by grace. In it all, however, sin no longer controls our totality.

That "men harbor spirit devouring lusts in their bosoms, that lie as worms, at the root of their obedience, and corrode and weaken it day by day"<sup>17</sup> is Owen's description of

the reality of indwelling sin. Since the mind is the arena of spiritual battle ("the principle that sin is present in me") we can prove how the rational faculty deals with sin. First, the mind reflects on sin in generalities, not on sin in terms of specifics; it is the idea of wickedness, not my own act of wickedness. It, therefore, is able to dismiss the gravity of sin through deceit. Second, the mind enjoys secret sins while simultaneously attempting to glorify God in other ways. Third, the mind can become so engaged in activities that it is often unaware of sin's danger; that is, sin literally catches us by surprise. Fourth, sin causes the mind to become slothful, unwilling, weak, ineffective, and unable to fight off discouragement.<sup>18</sup> In the same treatise Owen makes the comment that "where it (sin) is least felt, it is most powerful."<sup>19</sup>

#### **The Temptation to Sin: The Constancy of Outward Solicitation**

The potency of evil in the believer can be seen in Owen's analysis of the mechanics of falling into sin. To Owen sin is such a common fact of life that temptation, its instrumental cause, became the focus of a treatise. *Of Temptation: The Nature and Power of It* is an exposition of Matthew 26:41: "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation." Man may be displeased with sin, but often disposed to temptation; until he fears temptation he will never have victory over its results. Owen offers the perceptive inquiry, "how (can) a man . . . know when he is entered into temptation?"<sup>20</sup> It occurs when lust and solicitation meet with occasions and opportunities for its provocation. Finally, says Owen, a person may know that he has entered into temptation when there is the discovery that the duties of the Christian life are performed with no satisfaction or joy.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the fact of outward or external sollicita-

tions which frequently find fertile soil for sin's growth, there are times when temptations arise within the believer; these seasons require careful scrutiny. "There are sundry seasons wherein an hour of temptation is commonly at hand, and will unavoidably seize upon the soul, unless it be delivered by mercy in the use of watchfulness."<sup>22</sup> Owen enumerates four such seasons: times of unusual outward prosperity ("prosperity and temptation go together"<sup>23</sup>), times of spiritual coldness and periods of formality in duties, times of great spiritual success ("men cheat their souls with their own fancies"), and times of self-confidence, as in Peter's affirmation, "I will not deny Thee."<sup>24</sup>

That Scripture warns the believer of the need for constant watchfulness is an incontrovertible evidence of the reality of indwelling sin. To Owen, if sin is not an ever-present possibility, the Bible's warning to be watchful is ludicrous.

### **John Owen and the Human Solution**

Secular psychologists, who suggest that the locus of the human dilemma is one or another form of victimization (i.e., environmental and involuntary), have sought to establish the remedy in personal insight and self-determination. Integrationalist psychologists have generally sought to use the insights of their secular counterparts and go beyond natural theology, both in the description of the human condition and its amelioration; they have attempted to combine the insights and benefits of both spheres. Christian theologians have intended, at least as evidenced in the major schemes of Sanctification, to exclude emotional, environmental factors for rational, "objective" explanations and solutions.

In the tradition of Puritan Calvinism, Owen deposited the solution to indwelling sin in human voluntarism (he is clearly no advocate of a victimization theory; the human

dilemma is a product of a historic choice [i.e., in Adam] and daily choices). For Owen, like his English contemporaries, the remedy for sin's dominion has a single cause: it is an act of God the Spirit. The solution to indwelling sin is two-fold: there is a divine work and a human response. Sinclair Ferguson has succinctly summarized the point as follows: "As in the inauguration of the new life, there is the act of regeneration, producing the *exercise* of God-given faith, so in sanctification, there is the *work* of grace, producing the exercise of duty, and the response of obedience."<sup>25</sup> Owen states the point this way:

Sanctification is an immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers, purifying and cleansing of their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, renewing in them the image of God, and thereby enabling them, from a spiritual and habitual principle of grace, to yield obedience unto God, according unto the tenor and terms of the new covenant, by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Or more briefly: It is the universal renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit unto the image of God through Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>

While the objective cure for sin's destruction is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ applied through the grace of God and bestowed by the Holy Spirit, the subjective cure is the Spirit's work in the redeemed, calling them into daily obedience. The latter ministry of God's Spirit is the focus, the progressive diminution of the power of indwelling sin. This work is described by the Puritans as twofold, according to James I. Packer: "Sanctification has a double aspect. Its positive side is *vivification*, the growing and maturing of the new man; its negative side is *mortification*, the weakening and killing of the old man."<sup>27</sup> Though the focus of this paper is upon the latter aspect of Sanctification, a

brief notice of facets of the former will be delineated.

### **Vivification: The Renewal of the Believer**

According to Owen there is a variety of acts conducive to spiritual progress. Perhaps a point of beginning is his work, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*; it capsulizes numerous important points. The treatise pivots around the text of Romans 8:6: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace." For Owen the sphere of Sanctification is the mind, while the end of it is renewed affections. Central to the duty of being spiritually minded is a constancy of reflection on God Himself.<sup>28</sup> When the mind is filled with such delight or relish for the Great Being, the affections are spiritual,<sup>29</sup> opposite preoccupations of the mind are either earthly worries or vain imaginations. The means for the promotion of spiritual mindedness and heavenly affections are several. There is prayer. Says Owen, "One principle end of it (prayer) is to excite, stir up, and draw forth, the principle of grace, of faith and of love in the heart, unto a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things, with affections suitable unto them."<sup>30</sup>

The corporate aspects of positive steps to diminish the grip of indwelling sin (i.e., the fruit of the flesh) are crucial to Owen also. In fact, the duties of the saint to the church and its ordinances are vital. For example, of the importance of hearing the Word of God proclaimed, he writes:

Such a means is the *preaching of the Word itself*. It is observed concerning many in the gospel, that they heard it willingly, received it with joy, and did many things gladly, upon the preaching of it; and we see the same thing exemplified in multitudes every day. But none of these things can be without many thoughts in the minds of such persons about the spiritual things of the word; for they are the

affects of such thoughts, and, being wrought in the mind of men, will produce more of the same nature. . . .<sup>31</sup>

There is also the necessity of an emotional and intellectual striving in the Scriptures, the oft-neglected art of meditation and memorization. "Whosoever shall sincerely engage in this duty," says Owen, "and shall abide constant therein, he will make such a refreshing progress in his apprehension of heavenly things as he will be greatly satisfied withal."<sup>32</sup> In a moving passage Owen wrote:

Think much of *him who unto us is the life and centre of all the glory of heaven*; this is, Christ himself. . . . Our hope is that ere long we shall be with him; and if so, it is certainly our wisdom and duty to be here with him as much as we can.<sup>33</sup>

### **Mortification: The Death of Sin in the Believer**

Returning to the forest image for the purpose of understanding Owen's views on the human condition is, perhaps, instructive. The dense impenetrable forest of huge trees and entangling underbrush has been broken forever; the dominion of sin, its universal power without any ameliorating influences, has been ended. There are now clearings in the jungle; some of the trees (i.e., sins) have been entirely uprooted and some of the other trees have been to varying degrees pruned. This new condition is the state of the believer in indwelling sin (i.e., sin remains, but it is no longer all-pervasive). The goal of the spiritual life is that of continuing the work of clearing the forest, opening ever-enlarged clearings, and discovering new trees to uproot (if uprooting is not possible, the goal should be to remove as many branches and cut away as much undergrowth as possible). The negative activity of putting to death sin in the forest is what Owens calls mortification. It is as much a

duty as the work of vivification. It is in this area that the compatibility of integrationist psychology with Owen's biblical view of the solution to the human dilemma can be evaluated. To set the issues before the reader Owen's treatise *On the Mortification of Sin in Believers* will be analyzed; it is an exposition of Romans 8:13: "If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the flesh you will live." Of crucial importance to Owen is that the reader grasp the significance of the phrase "by the Spirit," because mortification is His work; it is God's work to break up the stony heart through the gift of Christ granted by the Spirit.<sup>34</sup> Though a work of God, it is also a duty of each believer. "He doth not so work our mortification in us as not to keep it still an act of our obedience," says Owen.<sup>35</sup>

*The believer's responsibility toward indwelling sin.* Owen argues that the life-goal of the Christian is to weaken and root out the remnants of sin's dominion. There is a variety of reasons for this endeavor. First, sin is always present in us and toward us (i.e., the external ravages of the Evil One are an ever-present fact). "When sin," writes Owen, "lets us alone we may let sin alone; but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still, so ought our contrivances against it to be vigorous at all times. . . ."<sup>36</sup> Second, sin, if left alone, becomes progressively active, causing the inner man to atrophy.<sup>37</sup> And, third, the Spirit has been granted to the believer for the purpose of putting to death the deeds of the flesh.

Not to be daily employing the Spirit and new nature for the mortifying of sin, is to neglect that excellent succor which God hath given us against our greatest enemy. . . . Not to daily mortify sin, is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace and love of God, who hath furnished us with a principle of doing it.<sup>38</sup>

*The qualifications for the mortification of sin.* Owen was a realist in his teaching concerning indwelling sin; he refused to offer promises about the outcome of duties that were contrary to experience and Scripture. He strenuously argued, for example, that sin, while it can be weakened and some forms of wickedness uprooted, cannot be utterly killed or destroyed ("it is not in this life to be expected"<sup>39</sup>). Further, mortification is not simply the presence of a quiet, sedate demeanor. In the context of a stern warning, he states:

Some men have an advantage by their natural constitution so far as that they are not exposed to such violence of unruly passions and tumultuous affections as many others are. Let now these men cultivate and improve their natural frame and temper by discipline, consideration, and prudence, and they may seem to themselves and others very mortified men, when, perhaps, their lusts are a standing sink of all abominations.<sup>40</sup>

Mortifying sin is, also, not simply the creation of a diversion or cover-up; it is not the hiding of evil with other positive qualities. Owen observes that "men in old age do not usually persist in pursuit of youthful lusts, although they have never been mortified of any of them."<sup>41</sup> Finally, he suggests that uprooting sin is not simply an occasional conquest; the fact of sin's reoccurrence is ample evidence that it has not been mortified.

*The method for the mortification of sin.* In an oft-repeated Puritan phrase, the praxis of mortification is "the heart of the matter," the essence of Sanctification. The dysfunction of man, according to Owen, is vastly different than the dilemma proposed by secular psychologists; it is voluntary choice that has resulted in the corruption of the very core of man's being (i.e., the heart) and all his subsequent



actions (since acts spring from man's inner being). The remedy, as one would expect, is also radically different from the secularists; it is not to be found in a pity-party of the helpless victim seeking restoration and adjudication, but comes only when man as a responsible, culpable agent recognizes his own guilt and seeks forgiveness.

Owen says that the believer must recognize sin for all its terrible potential, meditate upon its destructive power, and load one's conscience with the heavy weight of its guilt as the first step in mortifying sin. He wrote, "Get a clear and abiding sense upon thy mind and conscience of the guilt, danger, and evil of that sin wherewith thou art perplexed."<sup>42</sup> This advice stands in stark contrast to Thomas Harris' *I'm OK, You're OK*, but not distant from Lawrence Crabb's integrationist approach in *Inside Out*.<sup>43</sup> In the latter work the author, though he uses psychological terminology to express his views, roots man's dilemma in his relationship to the biblical Adam and his unsuccessful attempt to devise self-protective behavioral patterns that, being wicked, merely worsen his plight.<sup>44</sup> Owen and Crabb, it seems, view man as a culpable agent of his own destruction, not simply a victim of others' crimes. To both writers, external factors can contribute to behavioral dysfunction, but voluntary choices have resulted in unbiblical, isolationistic, corrective methodologies that only contribute to man's alienation and trauma.<sup>45</sup>

Owen also suggests that a careful analysis should be made to determine whether sin does not have a deeper cause than its external manifestation. He writes, "Consider whether the distemper with which thou art perplexed be not rooted in thy *nature*, and cherished, fomented, and heightened from the constitution."<sup>46</sup> Describing the carelessness of people, he suggests, "This is the folly of some men; they set themselves with all earnestness and diligence against the appearing eruption of lust, but, leaving the prin-

*ciple and root untouched, perhaps unsearched out, they make but little or no progress in this work of mortification" (italics mine).*<sup>47</sup> Or, again, "The root must be dealt with, the nature of the tree changed, or no good fruit will be brought forth."<sup>48</sup> Here Owen suggests that a particular manifestation of sin may have a deeper root. If that root is not dealt with through painstaking analysis, its manifestation will never be defeated. "That thou art peculiarly inclined unto any sinful distemper is but a peculiar breaking out of original lust in thy nature, which should peculiarly abase and humble thee."<sup>49</sup>

This sentiment is capsulized in one of Jonathan Edwards's famous personal resolutions. The Puritan divine, pastor, philosopher, and evangelist wrote, "Resolved, whenever I do any conspicuously evil action, to trace it back, till I come to the original cause; and then both carefully endeavor to do so no more and to fight and pray with all my might against the original of it."<sup>50</sup> In Crabb's psychologized terminology it is a stripping away of the self-protective barriers that people erect to hide their fallenness from exposure, only to further expose their fallenness by adding layers of insulative defense mechanisms that obscure the deep problem that must be resolved.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, Owen would have us react quickly and decisively against sin, not minimizing its wickedness or neglecting the potential for destruction ("Rise mightily against the *first actings* of thy distemper, its first conceptions; suffer it not to get the least ground."<sup>52</sup>). The believer must become an astute observer of the occasions wherein he is vulnerable to sinning and carefully endeavor to avoid them. Says Owen, "Consider what ways, what companies, what opportunities, what studies, what businesses, what conditions, have at any time given, or do usually give, advantages to thy distempers, and set thyself heedfully against them all."<sup>53</sup> Though Owen has several more points (this is only the

briefest summary), he concludes the discussion by arguing that the saint must carefully keep before him the wonder, the majesty, the kindness of God, ever mindful of his vileness.<sup>54</sup>

It is at this point that the integrationist Crabb, though otherwise helpful, might be criticized. Two major emphases in Owen, perhaps three, are less apparent in Crabb's writings. First, the richly deep explanation of the everpresent sinfulness of man by Owen is simply lacking in the popular presentation of the integrationist. Second, the elevation of the beauty, majesty, and compassion of the awesome God in Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit is not given adequate attention. Though it may be assumed in his writings, it is simply not there. And, third, in contrast to Owen's minute attention to explaining various texts of Scripture with depth of insight and clarity, Crabb's use of the Scriptures is often forced, if not inaccurate.<sup>55</sup> While he does seem to grasp the essence of man's dysfunctionality and offer accurate procedures for its amelioration, his writings lack the richness of the Puritan's insight into the character of God and the Scriptures.

What would be Owen's evaluation of contemporary explanations of the human dilemma and its resolution? To the secular psychologists, from Freud to Rogers and Maslow, there is no important ground of continuity; secularist remedies emerge from a bankrupt system, superficial in its estimate of man and wanting for meaningful solutions. While the vocabulary is different for Lawrence Crabb, to the chagrin of Jay Adams, there is some compatibility with Owen. The human dilemma, its remedy, and the methodology of change bear similarities; there is a qualitative correspondence, but also a lack of the majestic richness of Owenite theology, a superficiality in the integrationist that is also detected in some Sanctification theories of church theologians. Owen's devastating critique of human inability,

its ineptitude, is difficult for secular culture and enculturated Christianity to accept oft-times, but the beauty of Owen's God is wonderfully attractive. To gain even a passing glimpse of His beauty, like the momentary passing of clouds that enshroud a majestic peak of a mountain range, is to see reality and embrace joy. Mankind's only hope and encouragement are paradoxically to see God's grace in Christ and having been plunged into the depth of human vileness. With resolve Owen would have Christians say with Jonathan Edwards, the Owenite, "Never to give over, nor in the least to slacken my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be."<sup>56</sup>

#### Endnotes

- 1 The history of pastoral care has been summarized in two particularly useful volumes: John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), and William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964).
- 2 I am dependent on Roger F. Hurdin's excellent volume, *The Tree of Healing: Psychological and Biblical Foundations for Counseling and Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), for an analysis of the various approaches to counseling.
- 3 Jay E. Adams's approach is referred to as Nouthetic Counseling, and is clearly set forth in his 1973 book, *Competent to Counsel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House).

Adams, however, tends to be one-sided in his biblical approach; that is, he has reduced to a formula what the biblical revelation has left less rigid and simple. Simply stated, the Bible is more complex in its remedy for the struggling saint's dilemmas than Adams's perspective implies. For Adams, the key to unlocking a person's

problems are confrontation and verbal. He overemphasizes the necessity of the human element of the counselor to the point (seemingly) of de-emphasizing the necessity of the Spirit of God to work change in the heart. My point is, that while I am certain he embraces the biblical notion of the importance of the Holy Spirit, it is not evident in his biblical description of Nouthetical Counseling (see esp. 41-64).

- 4 Hurding, *The Tree of Healing*, 243-74.
- 5 The most strident criticism of Integrationalism counseling approaches by Segregationalist counselors can be seen in the writings of Martin and Deidre Bobgan. Martin Bobgan is an educational psychologist who expressed his antipathy for much of general Christian counseling in their book *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 1979). A summary of their counselling approach can be found in Hurding, *The Tree of Healing*, 291-92. Their most bombastic criticism of their peers is found in the following volumes: *Psychoheresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity* (Santa Barbara, California: East Gate Publishers, 1987), and *Prophets of Psychoheresy I* (Santa Barbara, California: East Gate Publishers, 1989).
- 6 A rehearsal of the various views of Sanctification has been set forth in James I. Packer's recent volume, *Keep In Step with the Spirit* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1984). A recent poignant criticism of the holiness-oriented notion of Sanctification is found in Douglas W. Frank's *Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 167-231.

Two articles that compare Owen's view to both Holiness and Keswick interpretations are insightful. See Peter Golding, "Owen on the Mortification of Sin: 1,"

- Banner of Truth* 321 (June 1990), 13-16, and "Owen on the Mortification of Sin: 2," *Banner of Truth* 322 (July 1990), 20-24.
- 7 For a biography of John Owen see: Peter Toon, *God's Swordsman: The Life and Work of John Owen* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973). Owen has been called the "Calvin of England" and the "Atlas and Patriarch of Puritanism" (Allen C. Guelzo, "John Owen, Puritan Pacesetter," *Christianity Today* 20/21 May 1976), 14-16).
  - 8 James I. Packer, *Introduction to Sin and Temptation, The Challenge to Personal Godliness* by John Owen. Abridged and edited by James M. Houston (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1983), xxix.
- In another place the same author noted that Owen "lived in an age of giants, and I think he over-tops them all" (quoted in Guelzo, "John Owen," 14).
- 9 William H. Goold, ed., *The Works of John Owen* (1850-53 reprint. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987).
  - 10 Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Version.
  - 11 Works of John Owen 7:517-22, 534-42.
  - 12 Ibid., 7: 518.
  - 13 Ibid., 7: 522-24.
  - 14 Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 125-26.
  - 15 *Works of John Owen*, 6:177.
  - 16 Ibid., 6: 201.
  - 17 Ibid., 6: 162.
  - 18 Ibid., 6: 189-60.
  - 19 Ibid., 6: 159.
  - 20 Ibid., 6: 119.
  - 21 Ibid., 6: 117-22.

- 22 Ibid., 6: 127.  
 23 Ibid.  
 24 Ibid., 6: 130.  
 25 Ferguson, John Owen, 55.  
 26 *The Works of John Owen*, 3: 386.  
 27 James I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1990), 199.  
 28 Works of John Owen, 7: 351-52.  
 29 Ibid., 7: 298.  
 30 Ibid., 7: 284.  
 31 Ibid., 7: 282.  
 32 Ibid., 7: 319.  
 33 Ibid., 7: 344.  
 34 Ibid., 6: 18-19.  
 35 Ibid., 6: 20.  
 36 Ibid., 6: 11.  
 37 Ibid., 6: 12.  
 38 Ibid., 6: 13.  
 39 Ibid., 6: 25.  
 40 Ibid.  
 41 Ibid., 6: 26.  
 42 Ibid., 6: 51.  
 43 Larry Crabb, *Inside Out* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Nav Press, 1988). I have chosen to derive my interpretation from this text rather than his previous books (*Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975], *Effective Biblical Counseling* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977], *The Marriage Builder* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982], and *Understanding People* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987]) because it is the most recent of his works at my disposal.

A forceful criticism of Crabb's approach, which is not

- shared by this writer, is in Bobgan, *Prophets of Psychoheresy I*, 107-220.  
 44 Crabb, *Inside Out*, 14, 16, 19, 30-32, 39, 69, 72, 115-16, 131-32, 155-56, 182-85, 194-200.  
 45 Ibid., 201-18.  
 46 *Works of John Owen*, 6: 60.  
 47 Ibid., 6: 30.  
 48 Ibid., 6: 36.  
 49 Ibid., 6: 60.  
 50 Jonathan Edwards, "Resolutions" in *Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards* by Sereno E. Dwight in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (1834 reprint. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 1:xxi.  
 51 Crabb, *Inside Out*, 23-37, 51-57, 116-29.  
 52 *Works of John Owen*, 6: 62.  
 53 Ibid.  
 54 Ibid., 63-70.  
 55 At a recent conference Crabb suggested that Adam and Eve's sin was to question, doubt, and reject God as being good because He withheld something beneficial from them. Crabb is reading a psychological motive into the couple's decision that is simply not stated in Scripture. The Bible indicates that Satan's appeal to Eve was to greed and pride ("you shall be as God"); the biblical account gives us no clue that they doubted God's essential goodness for His one restriction. The error of the primitive couple was their desire to be as God; they did not doubt God's goodness. To assert this is to claim that they wanted to be as evil as God; they did not see a defect in God, they wanted to be as good as God ("Devotional," Center for Christian Leadership Seminar, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, October 22-23, 1992).  
 56 Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, 1:xxii.

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