# Practical Theology, Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: Methodological and Biblical Considerations

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ABSTRACT. Communities of faith are challenged today to join the contemporary struggle against chemical abuse and dependency in new and exciting ways. Beyond utilizing church basements for Twelve Step meetings and including alcohol and other drugs as topics in teenage religious education, faith communities are being invited to bring their full theological and religious resources to bear on this pressing social problem.

Using contemporary practical-theological method as a way to approach these issues, the author integrates historical, biblical and other sources into a way of thinking about issues of chemical abuse and dependency in a theological frame. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness.<sup>1</sup>

Over the last six years a significant portion of my work as a pastoral psychologist and "clinical theologian" has involved alcohol abuse and

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alcoholism in a moderately-sized, comprehensive, Catholic university. I have worked with individual students and staff, as well as with the university community as a whole, in efforts to confront the rampant abuse of alcohol and other drugs that engulfs far too many American campuses.<sup>3</sup> I have been privileged to counsel and to teach young women and men struggling to face addiction in their lives. I have been forced to think and to work both individually and systemically, and have learned some valuable lessons, working at the crossroads where individuals and wider systems intersect.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout, I have worked as a pastor. I have attempted to help persons "take on the [twin] gods"<sup>5</sup> of alcohol and self-will that dominate their lives, as well as the false, destructive images of self and community that underlie them.<sup>6</sup> I have tried to adopt "listening perspectives" in dealing with individuals and with the university culture that allow the "operational theologies" of both to emerge. I have tried at every step to keep theological ways of thinking and working in active dialogue with experience and with other, more secular ways of hearing, understanding and acting.<sup>7</sup> In conjunction with this work, it has been my privilege to know and consult with a number of persons working in alcohol and other drug prevention across the country.<sup>8</sup>

These associations have convinced me of the need to develop a contemporary practical theology of alcohol abuse, addiction and recovery. This paper attempts to lay groundwork for such an endeavor.

## CONSTRUCTING A PRACTICAL-THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Pastoral clinicians orient and interpret their work and ministry primarily through theological reflection, as the fundamental ground for their pastoral identity, commitments, authorization, and worldview. In the last twenty or so years, as pastoral caregivers have struggled to articulate the meaning of their work as ministry and its relationship to theology, the discipline of practical theology has received new impetus. 10

Pastoral clinicians "living on the bridge" of care bring to bear on complex pastoral problems that face the communities of faith multiple disciplines and languages, multiple foundation texts and lived experiences, what some have called "multiple citizenships" (Schlauch, 1995). Today, however, pastoral clinicians are called upon to lift up the explicitly theological roots and meanings of their work, so that these can be in true dialogue, a "collaborative conversation" with clinical and other contemporary sciences. <sup>11</sup> In this way pastoral clinicians can help the communities

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of faith to make their own unique contribution to addressing contemporary problems.

#### Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

In 1937 the Boston physician Robert Fleming proposed the creation of an Institute for the Study of Alcoholism in which the medical, psychological, anthropological and theological specialist would work cooperatively, bringing "to a common focus, on the manifold problems of alcoholism, his [sic] own special knowledge" (Johnson, 1973, p. 84; emphasis mine). Today, modern physicians, prevention specialists, and government drug control agents are making similar suggestions.

Dr. Herbert Kleber, a Deputy Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP, the "drug czar's" office) under President Bush, called for pastoral involvement in confronting chemical abuse shortly after he took over his duties at ONDCP:

Whether in the suburbs or in the inner city, the drug problem provides an opportunity for the faith community to grapple with the great needs which face us. The fabric of many of our communities, prosperous and poor both, is being severely tested. Spiritual belief and moral vision are in want. The time is ripe for churches and synagogues to act, to re-assert their traditional role in the community. . . . The church cannot shun its serious role in the great spiritual, moral, and community issues of our time, or else we, as a nation, will be in very dire straits. (Kleber, 1989)

But, what precisely is the role, the unique contribution, of Christian faith communities in the contemporary struggle with chemical abuse and addiction?

Many of the major denominations publish educational programs, pastoral guidebooks, and practical strategies to address the prevention of abuse and addiction. Many churches and a variety of Christian and non-Christian congregations already host Twelve Step and other "self-help" meetings. Several communities of faith have addressed policies or instructions to the faithful about the pastoral challenges of abuse and addiction. Yet, there is still an impression that churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship have yet to respond fully and adequately.<sup>12</sup>

In a recent book John Patton (1993) described the abuse of self with alcohol and other drugs as "perhaps the most frequent human problem that confronts the pastor today" (p. 169). Apthorp (1990) in his handbook for clergy and congregations describes chemical dependency as "the greatest

single cause of pastoral problems in the Church." Kleber, in the call to action quoted above (1989), states that "spiritual belief and moral vision are in want" and suggests that the first role of the faith community is to impart both "spiritual guidance" and "moral clarity" (pp. 7-8). He quotes James Q. Wilson, the moral philosopher, in support:

Even now, when the dangers of drug abuse are well understood, many educated people still discuss the drug problem in almost every way except the right way. They talk about the 'costs' of drug use and the 'socioeconomic factors' that shape use. They rarely speak plainly-drug use is wrong because it is immoral, and it is immoral because it enslaves the mind and destroys the soul. (Quoted in Kleber, 1989, p. 8)

This paper suggests that, for the communities of faith to fulfill their proper role and meet the contemporary challenge of a unique contribution to the struggle with chemical abuse and dependency, they must attend to the spiritual, pastoral and theological dimensions of alcohol use and abuse.<sup>14</sup>

Historically, the churches have identified alcohol and other drug use as a pastoral problem. In the 1950s and 1960s, a number of Christian and Jewish leaders collaborated to arrive at a consensus theological position regarding responsible use of alcohol, arguably the most dangerous of the drugs of abuse, and did so despite traditional differences of denominational theology (Ecumenical Council on Alcohol Problems, 1966; National Council of the Churches of Christ, General Board, 1958). A retrieval of this history and theology can help in addressing the contemporary need for a firm and unique religious "voice" in meeting today's call to action. 15 It may also aid in several other important ways.

Exploration and recovery of this history can also help to ground pastoral care with alcohol abusers, addicts and affected others more firmly within Christian theology and pastoral practice. Many of the guidebooks, catechetical strategies, and pastoral instructions published by denominations today utilize the standard "disease" or medical model of alcoholism. While this model has proven its worth as a step forward over the previous moralistic stance of the churches and wider culture, it does have drawbacks. <sup>16</sup> Patton (1993) states the case succinctly:

For pastoral carers, the disease model has an important positive value for church and clergy in that it contradicts the simple blaming of the alcoholic that has been associated with the clergy. The church has tended to split off or scapegoat the addicted person in an effort to simplify and personify evil and to distance itself from it. A major

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advantage of the disease model is that it reduces the church's tendency to objectify evil as external to itself.

On the other hand, the disease model has an important negative value in that it tends to externalize all concern with addiction onto addiction specialists and those recovering from addiction. Such externalization gives undue power to addiction specialists and for-profit hospitals specializing in addiction. It tends to take away any critical capacity that church and clergy may have in relation to the treatment process. (pp. 173-174)

Patton goes on to suggest that, in addition to continued utilization of helpful secular models of addiction, there needs to be a "theological reconstruction" of these problems by pastoral caregivers. This reconstruction, he believes, should be based in a theology of "stewardship" and responsible care (1993, pp. 179-183). Our work below uses these insights.

It can also be argued that a theological "reconstruction" or retrieval will help to recover an explicitly pastoral approach, not only to addiction, but also to alcohol abuse, a needed area of pastoral focus. As others have pointed out, many of the social, family and personal problems that come to pastoral attention around alcohol involve abuse, not full-blown addiction. In both secondary and higher education, for example, it is the abuse of alcohol and other drugs by students that is the major concern. Yet, many church groups are virtually silent on this phenomenon, often referred to as "problem drinking." 17

In providing a more pastoral viewpoint, beyond the prior "moralistic" or current "medicalized" models of alcohol misuse, a pastoral perspective may also be able to formulate some stance on sin, responsibility and forgiveness, as well as on the "attitude" of pastoral caregivers, <sup>18</sup> in relation to alcohol and those affected by it. A reconstructed practical theology of alcohol use and abuse will move beyond the old moralism and the current medicalized models; it will have both a biblical and a moral sensibility. This may make a real contribution to the ongoing cultural debate regarding alcohol abuse and alcoholism, <sup>19</sup> as well as providing some real help to those engaged in the practice of pastoral care.

Pastoral caregivers are encouraged to use a "listening perspectives" approach in practicing effective pastoral care and counseling (Jordan, 1986; Morgan, 1995; Schlauch, 1995; see also Shalanski, 1991). This approach allows the "operational theology" of clients to emerge so that the pastoral clinician can obtain a clearer grasp of the situation and develop a pastoral diagnosis and treatment plan. This approach can be enhanced, however, if the pastoral clinician already has a well-articulated practical theology of alcohol use and abuse that is grounded in biblical

and other normative religious sources. As the pastoral caregiver listens to sufferers, s/he may be helped by allowing theological metaphors, stories, and ways of thinking to interact with the narratives and meaning-making of clients (Jordan, 1986; Schlauch, 1995). The pastor will be enabled to employ a "critical" theological listening perspective. That is, in a "collaborative conversation" among client narratives, normative theological perspectives, and secular-scientific modes of understanding, pastoral care may move toward unique pastoral diagnosing, goal-setting, treatment planning, and transformative care (Schlauch, 1995). Having a practical theological template that is relevant to alcohol use and abuse is important in this endeavor.

Taking the time to articulate and use a practical theology of this particular human problem, namely alcohol misuse, honors the spiritual dimensions of abuse, addiction, and recovery. These dimensions are being explored in the contemporary scientific and recovery literatures (Carroll, 1993; Corrington, 1989; Morgan, 1992, 1995) and will need an organizing theological framework for a rich and complete understanding. Such a frame will keep normative Judaeo-Christian religious values and texts in conversation with more contemporary and partial formulations.

In these six ways a contemporary practical theology of alcohol use, abuse and recovery is needed.<sup>20</sup>

#### A WAY FORWARD

In the formation of a practical theology for ministry the issue of "method" is a critical one.<sup>21</sup> Browning's work (1991) is representative of current discussions, which suggest moving from "thick" description of concrete pastoral practice and problems encountered in ministry toward "strategic" or "transformative" practice. This movement from description to practice is mediated, however, by a "critical" or dialogic encounter with normative Christian themes (Morgan, 1997), "texts" (Browning, 1991), or "stories" (Patton, 1993) that are grounded in biblical, historic and systematic sources, as well as with more contemporary secular-scientific models of interpretation (Browning, 1991).<sup>23</sup>

What *normative* sources, texts and metaphors can be brought to bear in formulating a practical theology of alcohol abuse, addiction and recovery? In order to lay the groundwork for a contemporary practical theology of alcohol abuse, addiction and recovery, this paper will explore a broad *biblical* view of alcohol use and misuse, identifying relevant guidelines, themes, metaphors and stories, as these emerge from the biblical sources and are used by faith communities.

First, we will describe the basic biblical *norms* regarding use and abuse of alcohol, utilizing the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Second, a wider *context* for such use will be explored, using biblical sources and interpretation as well as some ecumenical formulations by pastoral theologians and church leaders. Third, some newer ways of *theologizing* about the contemporary alcohol and drug situation will be explored through the use of biblical metaphors, stories, and pastoral instructions. Fourth, some *implications* of this approach for guiding church action and for formulating a practical theology of abuse and addiction will be laid out.<sup>24</sup>

## 1. Biblical Norms on the Use and Abuse of Alcohol

Among the mainline Christian denominations, a working consensus was reached some time ago regarding a biblical perspective on the use and abuse of beverage alcohol. This "consensus" is summarized below.<sup>25</sup>

First, in the Hebrew Bible the production, commerce and consumption of wine is described as an accepted fact of life. Wine was/is a gift of God, a joyous symbol that can "gladden" life (Ps 104.14-15; Amos 9.13-14; Joel 2.24 & 3.18) and a normal part of Israel's cultic rituals. "Wine was, in short, an accepted part of Israel's daily life and religious observance" (Hewitt, 1980, 13).

However, the Old Testament biblical writers were aware of the potential for misuse of wine and strong drink, and were sensitive to the dangers inherent in abuse. The forthright condemnation of excessive drinking and of those who partake in it is clear and pervasive in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 9.20ff; Gen 19.20-38; Proverbs 20.1; Proverbs 23.29-35; Sirach 31.25-31; Is 5.11-12; Hosea 4.11). Leaders (e.g., kings, priests, prophets) who abuse are the objects of special admonition (Is 56.11-12; Hosea 7.5; Is 28.7; Lv 10.8-9; Ez 44.21). And, while abstinence is not advocated as a general rule anywhere in the Bible, particular groups which practice it voluntarily are praised (Hewitt, 1980; Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1986). The Nazarites (Numbers 6.2-4; Judges 13.5-7) and Rechabites (Jer 35), as well as John the Baptist (Mt 11.18), come to mind.

Thus in the Hebrew Bible alcohol is viewed as a common fact of life, moderation is the norm for acceptable use, excessive use is condemned, and voluntary abstinence is praised (Presbyterian Church, 1986; see also North Conway Institute, 1967).

Wine drunk in season and temperately is rejoicing of heart and gladness of soul.

Wine drunk to *excess* is bitterness of soul, with provocation and stumbling. (Ecclesiasticus 31.28-29; quoted in Hewitt, 1980)

Second, the New Testament reflects this basic biblical attitude (Hewitt, 1980). Jesus' own practice indicates approval of the moderate use of wine (Jn 2.1-11; Mk 14.23-25; Mt 26.29). Paul prescribes wine in small amounts for medicinal purposes (I Tim 5.23). They both accept alcohol as a fact of life.

Nevertheless, Jesus himself condemned drunkenness (Lk 21.34) and Paul is clear about the dangers of it. In the well-known parable, Jesus contrasts the Christian attitude of wise stewardship (Mt 24.45-51; Lk 12.42-46) with the unfaithful steward who "loses himself" in egoism or in "corruption of natural needs" through drunkenness and association with drunkards (Preisker, 1985). This vice also appears in several of Paul's lists of common sins to be avoided (Rom 13.11-14; I Cor 6.10 and 11.17-22; Gal 5.21; Eph 5.18). Drunkenness could exclude one from the Kingdom of God in Paul's view (I Cor 6.10) and drunkards were to be avoided, even "excommunicated" from the early Christian community, along with idolaters (I Cor 5.11). In addition, the "pastoral" letters specifically warn against alcoholic excess among Christian leaders (I Tim 3.3; Titus 1.7; I Tim 3.8).

Hewitt (1980) summarizes the New Testament view in this way:

Jesus and the early Church could accept the use of wine as a food item as well as an ingredient in religious and social celebration. At the same time, and without exception, excessive drinking and drunkenness was condemned. (p. 17)

In passing, it may be useful to summarize the "consensus" that was grounded in this basic biblical perspective on the use and abuse of alcohol. Building on the biblical view, and utilizing insights from the Thomistic tradition in philosophy and the pastoral-clinical work of Clinebell (1968), Ford (1961) and others, several interfaith and interdisciplinary groups forged agreement on a basic "rule of thumb" regarding alcohol use (see North Conway Institute, 1967 and 1977). In a famous quote from The Ecumenical Council on Alcohol Programs, or TECAP (1966), this agreement is seen to focus around the virtue of "sobriety":

It is urgent that churchmen and others concerned with human needs and the moral foundations of our society endeavor to create a more responsible public attitude toward drinking.

We believe that we may all unite on the ground of the virtue of

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sobriety. This can be practiced in two ways. One is by total abstinence from beverage alcohol for religious motives. The other is by true moderation in the use of alcohol, also for religious motives. On this common ground the virtue of sobriety may be practiced both by abstainers as well as by those who drink moderately.

Although differences of conscientious conviction in relation to certain current drinking customs exist among us, the area of our agreement with regard to drunkenness and alcoholism is sufficiently large and significant as to enable us to unite our best efforts for the alleviation and ultimate solution of these alcohol-related problems. (Ecumenical Council on Alcohol Programs, 1966, 24; quoted in North Conway Institute, 1967)

### 2. A Wider Biblical Context

Patton (1993) reminds us that the Bible, beyond providing Old and New Testament textual evidence or norms for conduct regarding a particular religious issue, also offers "empowering [theological] themes" that can be normative for grounding and interpreting Christian living, themes that are to be expressed in and through the pastoral care we give. One example of this use of biblical theology involves the use of alcohol. What biblical themes surround alcohol use?

Alcohol is used in a context. The ultimate context for human decision and action in biblical terms is the essential goodness of all created things, of creation as a whole (Gn 1 and Ps 104; see also, Hewitt, 1980; Presbyterian Church, 1986). God intends that all human beings live in harmonious relationship with creation (Kopas, 1994; Patton, 1993); all of God's created gifts, indeed creation as a whole, are to be approached through rightly ordered relationships. The biblical-theological term for this balance of healthy and right relationships to God, to self, and to others, the harmonious inter-relationship of all creation is *Shalom* (Presbyterian Church, 1986, 32).

In this context human persons are entrusted with the care of creation and are to act as "responsible stewards" of this gift of God (Patton, 1993; Presbyterian Church, 1986, 33). For the Christian, faithful stewardship of God's world means "an exercise of loving care and concern, done in the freedom we have in Jesus Christ" (Presbyterian Church, 1986, 33). Patton (1993) suggests that this "care is what makes the human being human" and that caring is the "moral virtue necessary for reducing alienation and guiding moral action" (p. 17). This is the true biblical view of the creation narratives, Patton believes; humans are to exercise caring relationship

toward the whole of creation. The cooperation of human and divine care, that is "responsible stewardship," maintains creation's *Shalom*.

Failure of stewardship, consequently, consists in a "denial of responsible relationship and failure to carry out one's given task"; it is to become, like Adam and Eve, "estranged from a proper relationship to their Creator and the creation" (Patton, 1993, 162). Humans are understood as capable of such abuse; *Shalom* can be injured or destroyed by misuse of God's creation. "Shalom is destroyed in the human scene when God's creatures harm themselves, harm neighbors, injure the community, or engage in activities that break or block communication with God" (Presbyterian Church, 1986, 32; see also Patton, 1993).

In our own day, *Shalom* is threatened by the misuse of alcohol and other drugs:

From any perspective, drunkenness, driving while intoxicated, and all the other destructive results of alcohol abuse and intoxication can be clearly labeled for what they are-failure to live up to God's intention for creation, failure to exercise good stewardship, behaviors which endanger society, sinfulness, a destruction of Shalom. (Presbyterian Church, 1986, 34)

For the biblical writers "wine . . . was seen as good because it was part of a larger good, [namely] the created world declared 'good' by its creator" (Hewitt, 1980, 22). And consequently, its moderate use was accepted. Nevertheless, these writers understood that the misuse of wine could have serious consequences. "Drug use to the extent that it damages one's body, or the body of another, is incompatible with a responsible stewardship of life or an affirmation of the goodness of creation" (Hewitt, 1980, 23).<sup>27</sup>

Part of good stewardship for creation is understanding that each creature has its own nature. When used as God intends, that is, when use is rightly ordered, the creature brings beneficial results; however, when used incorrectly, its effect can be disruptive. This means that wise stewards of God's creation understand the nature of the substances they use and their impact on self, others, and the rest of the created order. Thus, human beings, intended by God to be responsible stewards, were given intelligence and freedom in order to understand the nature and uses of creation, and to choose the path of wise stewardship.

These notions bring us to the crucial contextual principle of the essential dignity of human beings made "in the image of God" (Gn 1.26-27 and 9.6). The Judaeo-Christian tradition affirms that persons have inherent worth and dignity before God, that persons are called into fullness of life and deepening relationship with God. Patton states that the notion of

imago Dei, that divine image that is basic to each human person as created by God, is not a substance or entity but rather a relation that specifies the peculiarly human vocation of responsible caring for creation and one another. Through images such as "stewardship" and "shepherding," Patton suggests, the biblical authors highlight these notions of relationship, care and responsibility that are inherent in human creation. In this context Patton sees alcohol and other drug abuse as the denial of responsible relationship, as resistance to the God-image within (1993, 162).

Kopas (1994), in constructing a theological anthropology that utilizes developmental and feminist resources, highlights this dynamic and relational aspect of the human God-image. She speaks of the human call to communion with God and creation as rooted in the imago Dei. 28 From this vantage point she is able to develop a notion of sin as "rejection of our relation" to Creator and creation (1994, 187). Sin is the "violation of a personal bond" with God, a denial of creaturely identity and responsible relationship within an interdependent world. It creates and utilizes distorted relations to God, to creation, to others and to the self that are most clearly seen in their effects on these very relationships. These distortions threaten the Shalom that guides and nurtures creation.

Alcohol and drug misuse, besides wounding creation through unwise stewardship, also threatens the principles of essential human dignity, creaturely identity, and the human imaging of God in several other ways. Howard Clinebell (1968), perhaps the best known pastoral-clinical theologian to address alcohol and other drug abuse, suggests four ways in which the dignity and worth of human persons are assaulted by the abuse of alcohol and other drugs.<sup>29</sup>

First, the legitimate use of alcohol and other drugs to reduce tension can become distorted into a "substitute for coping with the problems and challenges of living" (Clinebell, 1968, 11). The building of full personhood and development of character involves meeting the challenges of life without such substitutes.

Second, that which is most distinctively human, namely powers of "rationality, awareness, consciousness, and ethical sensitivity," can be impaired, temporarily or even more chronically. Under the influence of alcohol, humans can revert to more degraded forms of relating, becoming less than fully human and wounding the essential dignity of their creation. Clinebell suggests that this is the core of the moral issue around the use and abuse of chemicals.<sup>30</sup>

Third, relationships, family and community are central to human growth and wholeness; right relationships, particularly among persons, are essential to *Shalom*. This is implied in the two great commandments of

love for God and neighbor. The very capacity for relating can be crippled, however, by the misuse of alcohol and other drugs (see Clinebell, 1965). Clinebell describes it this way:

... personhood can find its true fulfillment and continuing wholeness only in genuine relationships, i.e., relationships which strengthen mutual trust, integrity, self-esteem, cooperation, intimacy, mutual nurturing, and affection. Generally speaking, chronic drug dependency not only fails to strengthen these qualities in relationships, but it also tends to foster their opposites—mutual distrust, dishonesty, self-rejection, and self-centeredness. (Clinebell, 1968, 13-14)

The fourth way in which alcohol and other drugs can distort the *imago Dei* in persons and the *Shalom* in creation is through their replacement of God as a "higher power" in one's life. This is a form of idolatry (Clinebell, 1968, 14).<sup>31</sup> In another publication Clinebell (1965) suggests that one of the causes of alcoholism is "the abortive attempt to satisfy religious needs by a non-religious means"; in this sense alcohol and its misuse becomes a substitute, pseudo-religious experience (1965, 9). It becomes an idol.<sup>32</sup>

Father John C. Ford, S.J., perhaps the best known Roman Catholic scholar to advocate for a pastoral approach to alcohol abuse and addiction, writing from the perspective of Thomistic philosophy and moral theology, echoes these same themes, speaking of good stewardship of the gifts of God and of human dignity, as well as describing the role of idolatry in alcohol abuse and addiction. For Ford, the use of reason is God's greatest gift to humankind and depriving oneself of its use is a great evil. To degrade or extinguish the use of reason degrades the person and human dignity; alcohol and other drugs have the power to accomplish this task.<sup>33</sup> His work echoes the biblical injunctions against drunken excess: "... habitual, voluntary drunkenness is seriously sinful and excludes from the kingdom of Heaven" (1961, 83).

Echoing the notion of human relationship to creation and the use of creatures as wise stewards, Ford (1961) refers to the famous *Principle and Foundation* from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*:

Man [sic] (Several older texts cited in this article are time-conditioned and use grammatical conventions that seem out-of-date now. The use of masculine pronouns here and elsewhere in the text are not meant to be exclusive. Where it has seemed appropriate, the designation [sic], in a particular place or at the beginning of a lengthy quote, indicates the author's concern for inclusion.) was created to praise,

reverence, and serve God, Our Lord, and thereby save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake, and to help him in the following out of the end for which he was created. Hence it follows that man should make use of creatures so far as they help him toward this end . . .

Beverage alcohol is one of those 'other things on the face of the earth,' a creature which man [sic] should make use of so far as it helps him, and withdraw from so far as it hinders him in his journey back to God. It is not one of those things that is in itself forbidden to the liberty of our free will, such as stealing or lying. . . . But since it is a creature extremely attractive to sense appetite, it is dangerous.

Men become easily attracted to such creatures and run the risk of fastening their hearts upon them,<sup>34</sup> sometimes even preferring the creature to the will of the Creator. Such preference is sin. It means following animal instincts instead of acting like a human being. (pp. 50-51)

William Barry (1993), writing from the tradition of spiritual direction and Ignatian spirituality, picks up these themes of persons created for relationship (*imago Dei*), the "rightly ordered" use of creatures, and the role of human resistance to, or rejection of, communion with God and others in formulating a theological anthropology. In his view "disorder" or distorted relating is part of the resistance in the human heart to union with God. Not infrequently, as he sees it, the mechanism of this resistance is to give in to "inordinate attachments" or disordered relations to creatures (money, reputation, family, substances). At the extreme, in which persons literally "hand themselves over" to a false or disordered relationship, is addiction.<sup>35</sup>

Summing up the wider biblical context, then: Human persons are created for communion with God and for relating to creation as responsible stewards. They are to live care-fully toward creation, others, and self. This fosters *Shalom*. The capacity for relationship and for the rational and right use of creatures is the core of the *imago Dei* that is inherent in each person.

However, persons are capable of distorted relating and of the misuse of creation, leading them to wound the God-image within and the Shalom of God's creation. One way in which this may happen is through the abuse of alcohol and other drugs; another is through the extreme of addictive relating. The effects of this "disorder" or "sin" are seen in degradation of the

person, distorted relationships with others, destructive uses of created gifts, and idolatry.

#### 3. Biblical Narratives and Theology

The task of practical theology is to reflect on questions that arise from pastoral practice within concrete situations of faith and life.<sup>36</sup> Biblical metaphors and narratives, as well as other sources of Christian interpretation, can help to identify and frame ecclesial problems, allowing for processes of prayer, discernment, and theological exploration to interpenetrate with other forms of interpretation, so that all the dimensions of a problem-and the unique pastoral dimensions of that problem-can be seen, and strategies proposed.<sup>37</sup>

Guider (1995) makes several intriguing suggestions about the utility of such an approach, <sup>38</sup> As a source of theological reflection, biblical and other normative Christian texts can help us to explore diverse dimensions of understanding by giving free reign to the religious imagination. This can help to identify the uniquely pastoral dimensions of a "problem," as well as aiding in an ongoing re-interpretation and re-definition of a "problem," as the individual or communal understanding of scripture deepens. As a model for understanding, biblical narrative and metaphors can compete with experience-based, more personalized metaphors that may influence the perspective of client and/or pastoral caregiver, and may need correction through critical and collaborative reflection.<sup>39</sup> As a dramatic portrayal of a pressing problem faced in ministry, biblical and normative ways of imaging may help to locate the larger presenting problem as a pastoral one and allow it to compete for attention within the ecclesial arena. Experience indicates that religious leaders and denominational efforts may be able to provide pastoral focus only to a few problems at a time. Over the long term, other problems inevitably press for attention. Strong biblical and theological images that help to shape a timely pastoral response in an important area, like chemical abuse and addiction, may also be the catalyst for sustained pastoral focus and ongoing action in the face of other important issues.

Several biblical narratives have been used by denominational leaders and clinical theologians in describing the misuse of alcohol and the process of healing recovery. Earlier we saw that the story contrasting just and unjust stewards (Mt 24.45-51; Lk 12.42-46) has been used by scholars and pastors to speak of human responsibility and the dangers of alcohol misuse (Hewitt, 1980; North Conway Institute, 1977; Patton, 1993). Apthorp (1991) refers to the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11) as a metaphor for alcoholic recovery. Albers (1982) examines the dynamics of recovery in relation to

the conversion of St. Paul, as does Lininger (1993). May (1988), in his classic text on addiction and spirituality, refers both to the story of the "prodigal son" and to the desert sojourn of the Hebrews in Exodus. Works (1977) utilizes three biblical stories to speak of alcohol abuse and addiction: the Unjust Steward, the Prodigal Son, and the Good Samaritan. This last story is used often by Pope John Paul II in a variety of pastoral statements referring to alcohol and other drug abuse (John Paul II, 1991; see Morgan, 1997).

It seems that pastoral leaders and clinical theologians have gravitated toward a select group of biblical narratives as ways of describing alcohol misuse and defining it as a pastoral or ecclesial issue. These are the church's "canon within the canon" relative to alcohol misuse, addiction and recovery; these narratives seem to have a special power of attraction for pastoral caregivers in relation to this "situation" that challenges the church (Schlauch, 1995). 40 They express a kind of prayerful discernment and diagnosis from the church in relation to this pastoral problem.

What do these stories reveal? Comparison of two such stories—the Good Samaritan (Lk 10.29-37) and the Prodigal Son–(Lk 15.11-32) suggest important elements for formulating a practical theology. We will illustrate this use of biblical narrative by touching on a few of these elements briefly. (See Table 1.)

Several themes emerge from these stories, themes that can shape pastoral understanding, attitudes and actual care. First, a theme of essential dignity that can be lost is common to both narratives. In each story there is the portrayal of someone who has dignity because of who he is: the youngest "son" and the person on a journey, who in this story is "neighbor." Yet, the story speaks of the plight that befalls each one: the neighbor is "stripped" and "beaten," and left "half-dead"; the son longs to eat the food of swine and is "dying from hunger." Both are isolated and alone.

Second, each story portrays a path of recovery or return. The neighbor is finally aided by another, namely the Samaritan who exercises a ministry of "caring outreach" and in a gesture of solidarity places the neighbor on his own horse and brings him back to a place of human habitation. The son, we are told, "comes to his senses" and returns to his father's house where he is met with "welcoming reception" (embraces, kisses, clothing) by an eager father and re-inclusion in the family circle. Whether by a path of outreach or conversion, whether through the agency of wise outsiders who already know their "solidarity" or through a process of gradual-sometimes painful-awakening, recovery includes return to community from isolation.

Third, each story concludes with a lesson for appropriate attitudes and

TABLE 1

SAMARITAN	ELEMENTS	PRODIGAL
"Who is my neighbor?"	CONTEXT	"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."
Beaten/half-dead; comatose	SITUATION	Dire need; trapped; dying; dehumanized (e.g., pig's food)
Isolated; passed by (judgment on others and religious pros)	PERSONAL STATE	Isolated; alone with pigs; "nobody gives him anything"
Aided by another who goes extra mile; recipient of care	RECOVERY	Comes to senses and returns to family/table fellowship; continues to learn by receiving
Solidarity	PASTORAL ATTITUDE	Inclusion
Caring Outreach	PASTORAL RESPONSE	Welcoming Reception
Exemplary behavior and warning about attitudes (priests, etc.)	LESSONS	Exemplary behavior and warning about attitudes (older brother)

behavior. The context for the Samaritan story is the question, "who is my neighbor"; the story ends with the injunction, "Go and do likewise." Acting as the Samaritan does, and not as those who "passed by," is offered to the hearers as a norm for conduct. The context for the Prodigal Son story is a complaint by the Pharisees and Scribes about Jesus' practice of welcoming sinners with table-fellowship. It ends with the sad story of the elder son, who chooses to remain aloof and excluded from family celebration and fellowship because of a lack of welcome and forgiveness. It emphasizes the attitude of the father as the proper way to react to contrition and is Jesus' response as to why he conducts himself as he does.

It is interesting to note that many recovering alcoholics personally identify with the story of the Prodigal Son; they see in their own "story" of addiction and recovery the elements of lost dignity, of their need for forgiveness and welcome, of their desire to reach out to others. This story

of alcoholic recovery and its visioning by recovering persons has been labelled a narrative of "degradation to transformation" (Morgan, 1992). Many also identify with the Good Samaritan, although the reaction of one modern pastor, John Paul II, is perhaps more telling for the church's ministry:<sup>41</sup>

Very often, when thinking of the victims of drugs and alcohol-generally young people, though their spread among adults is a source of growing concern—I am led to recall the man in the Gospel parable who, when assaulted by criminals, was robbed and left half dead along the road to Jericho. In fact, these, too, strike me as people 'on a journey' who are searching for something in which to believe in order to live; they instead run up against the merchants of death, who assault them with the allurement of illusory freedoms and false prospects for happiness. These victims are men and women who, unfortunately, find themselves robbed of the most precious values, profoundly wounded in body and in spirit, violated in the depth of their consciences and offended in their dignity as persons.

... Today, too, as in the Gospel parable, Good Samaritans are not lacking who, with personal sacrifice and sometimes at a risk to themselves, are able to "become the neighbor" of those in difficulty. (1991, p. 8)

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

In examining biblical norms for alcohol use, a wider context for such use, and guiding narratives that have been associated with pastoral concern for abusers, a coherent theological picture emerges. We have explored the dimensions of this picture above. As a way to conclude, some final reflections on the practical implications of this picture for ministry may be in order.

First, in relationship to the church's *proclamation*, while abstinence from alcohol use is certainly allowed in the biblical view, it seems clear that there is a solid biblical basis for tolerance of moderate alcohol use and for dis-approbation of abuse, rooted both in biblical norms and in a wider theology of stewardship and rightly ordered use of created gifts. The place of a creation spirituality (*Shalom*), a modern view of theological anthropology (*imago Dei*), and the role of rightly-ordered, balanced living, 42 including the virtue of sobriety, is recovered in this perspective.

The abuse of alcohol-including the most extreme form and consequence of abuse, namely alcoholism-is a disordered behavior. While it has

been useful to adopt a "disease" model for addiction, a more contemporary focus on the "disorder" of abuse as well as addiction may be more appropriate. Such a focus would adopt a view of abuse as "disordered" and sinful, to be excluded from Christian living, as Paul suggested. This focus could also provide a needed corrective to the one-sided presentation of addiction as a simple medical matter, creating a legitimate "place at the table" for ministry to the addicted and the role of such spiritual practices as moral inventory, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation (see Patton, 1993).

Second, the biblical view revives an important element in the church's stance, and the clinical theologian's attitude, toward abusers and alcoholics. The wider biblical context states that ALL human persons resist or deny the full blessing and dignity of their creation. Each person, as sinful, rejects the call to communion with God and the role of steward toward creation; each struggles with egoism and idolatry. Yet, the form this struggle takes is variable. Alcohol and other drug misuse is only one form for such resistance. Consequently, as several denominational statements suggest, the appropriate pastoral stance is solidarity with abusers and alcoholics, as well as with those who are affected by them.

Patton (1993) suggests that the previous "moralism" toward, and perhaps even the modern "medicalization" of, addiction is an attempt by the churches to split-off or scapegoat addicts as "other," that is, as objectifications of external evil (pp. 173-174). Perhaps pastoral caregivers, too, are susceptible to such a distancing attitude. However, adopting a stance of inclusion and solidarity in the common struggle of humanity, along with the sense that the struggle in this practical case has taken alcoholic form, allows for abusers and addicts to be "one of us." Such an attitude can facilitate a pastoral response of "caring outreach" and "welcoming reception," as seen in the gospel narratives of the Prodigal Son and Good Samaritan. The role of these stories and others like them for preaching, education, and prayerful discernment in regard to the pastoral care of abuse and addiction is yet to be fully explored.

Third, in terms of actual pastoral care, the biblical view suggests the powerful role of "redemptive fellowship" (Apthorp, 1990; Johnson, 1973; NCC General Board, 1958). Here is a clear indication of a unique role for faith communities in meeting today's call to action, mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

Building a redemptive community is an ongoing process that takes more than an annual chemical-education program. It is a ministry of "raising the consciousness" of the congregation. It is a matter not only of teaching people how to care but of providing them with the

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basis for caring. As long as there are people who feel that Jellinek's disease or drug addiction is a depravity, as long as there are parishioners who insist that the drunkard or the druggie is a sinful degenerate responsible for his own troubles and should be cast adrift, the very essence of reconciling love is negated. Our most successful means of revealing that God cares and that we care is to be an example of openness and compassion grounded not in personal opinion but in biblical theology. Because people are looking for a foundation on which to build their lives, because they are searching for guidelines, we have the opportunity to provide a theological foundation for caring that can change people's attitudes and beliefs. Just as there are positive attitudes that help a practitioner address chemical dependency, so are there biblical principles that help the minister convey the nonjudgmental attitudes so necessary to the establishment of a redemptive community. (Apthorp, 1990, p. 182)

#### **CONCLUSION**

Chemical abuse and dependency are serious challenges in today's world. Few families are unaffected. Many individual lives are deformed. Alcohol and other drug abuse threaten the cohesive fabric of all those communities on which society and culture depend (for example, family). Faith communities are not exempt.

While affected by this modern day "scourge," communities of faith are also called upon to contribute their unique resources to the struggle. Reflecting theologically on these issues and responding pastorally to affected individuals, families and communities is a significant part of this contribution. In the process churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship may also become more of what they are called to be, namely, "redemptive fellowships" of believers in solidarity with wounded sisters and brothers.

#### NOTES

- 1. Tillich, P. (1948). The shaking of the foundations. New York, NY: Charles Scribners' Sons.
- 2. For the purposes of this article, it may be useful to remember that Merle Jordan often refers to the role of the pastoral psychologist as that of "clinical theologian" (Jordan, 1986), while Schlauch (1995) emphasizes the important clinical role of "theologizing" by using the term "theologian of care."

- 3. The abuse of alcohol and other drugs on college campuses is both alarming and widespread. See Wechsler et al. (1995) and Willimon and Naylor (1995).
- 4. For helpful explorations of the interplay of these domains and their dynamics from a pastoral viewpoint, see Furniss' exploration of the individual-society nexus in *The social context of pastoral care: Defining the life situation* (1995) and Graham's examination of the psycho-systemic perspective in *Care of persons, care of world* (1992). Clinebell (1992) speaks of the need to integrate the individual and the systemic in pastoral work; my view of alcohol abuse and addiction on U.S. college campuses is informed by his description of "spiritual and value pathologies" that require psychological and theological perspectives for healing.
- 5. The clinical-theological notions in this paragraph-namely, "taking on the gods," use of clinical "listening perspectives," and "operational theology"-will be familiar to the reader through Merle Jordan's major book (1986), Taking on the gods: The task of the pastoral counselor.
- 6. Jordan (1986) speaks of "twin" or "double idolatry" as the mirrored images of a psychic idol (false ultimate authority) and a distorted self. In alcohol abuse and alcoholism the god is in the bottle, and its mirror image is a willful/shame-filled self, sometimes described as "his majesty, the baby" (see Morgan, 1992).
- 7. This dialogue of experience, theological perspectives, and secular-scientific ways of thinking is similar to the method of practical theology proposed by Browning (1991) and others. This method grounds the work of the present paper. Some concrete results of this work can be seen in the reports of the President's Task Force on Alcohol Abuse, University of Scranton, available under the title Building a community that matters (1993). See also my own exploration of this method in reference to pastoral instructions on chemical abuse and dependency from the American Catholic bishops (Morgan, 1997).
- 8. Some of those whom I have had the privilege to speak or correspond with at length include: Dr. Herbert Kleber, Judge Reggie Walton, Ms. Kay Coles James and Atty. John Littel of the Office of National Drug Control Policy; Drs. Gail Milgram, David Berenson, and Alan Berkowitz in the scholarly community; Pastors David Works, John Hancock, John Soleau, Roger Svendsen, and Trish Merrill among others involved in prevention from the faith community. I am grateful to each for his/her contribution to my thinking about issues in this paper.
- 9. Schlauch (1995) states: "Theology can thus be considered integral to the identity of the pastoral clinician and to the praxis of pastoral clinical care. Theology—as language, reflection, and theory—informs our understanding of who we are and what we do" (p. 17).
- 10. Poling and Miller (1985) were exemplars among those calling for this "revival" of practical theology as a discipline. A number of texts that represent this movement include: Browning (1991), Gerkin (1984, 1991), Groome (1987), Jordan (1986), Patton (1983, 1990, 1993), Schlauch (1995), and Whitehead and Whitehead (1981).
- 11. Retrieving a sense of the explicitly pastoral and theological ground of their work has been a critical element in this movement among pastoral clinicians. Many have learned anew the importance of exploring the connections between

practice and theology; of continuing to delve into one's own life, experience, and implicit ("operational") theologies, as these ground and shape one's care; of prayerfully exploring the depths of one's caring with the help of Scripture and normative religious texts and metaphors so that deeper meanings can be illuminated; of engaging in communal, ecumenical, and interdisciplinary dialogue about the understandings and emerging meanings that shape, and are shaped by, pastoral-clinical work (Jordan, 1986; Patton, 1990, 1993; Schlauch, 1995).

- 12. One pastoral counselor (Apthorp, 1990) states directly that, while there is "no question there has been an ecumenical expression of the Church's concern" historically regarding chemical abuse and addiction, nevertheless "the religious sectors' influence, regrettably, has been inconsequential" (p. 177).
- 13. Recent public policy discussions about the "drug war" by General McCaffrey, the new "czar," and others continue to echo the theme of a need for spiritual and moral vision. On *Meet the Press* (Sunday, April 28, 1996) Gen. McCaffrey, Senators Biden and Hatch, and Congressmen Rangel and Zeliff spoke eloquently to this point.
- 14. A number of writers in the field of addiction and prevention echo similar themes about the church's role. The Rev. David Hancock, a Presbyterian pastor and President of Prevention of Alcohol Problems, Inc. in Minnesota, believes that "if the church is going to help people know the truth about alcohol so that they can make wise decisions about its use and nonuse, it should not be afraid to offer some suggestions, some principles or guidelines. . . . [The church must] help its people examine some of the ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of alcohol and drug use" (1984). Apthorp believes that parishioners "need us to interpret the issues of chemical use, misuse, and abuse in light of theology that has a practical application to their lives" (1990, p. 18). Kellerman (1980), describing alcohol abuse and alcoholism as "the largest single pastoral problem," states: "The Priest, the Pastor and the Rabbi have the real answers for those who suffer from alcoholism, if they learn how to apply their basic knowledge and training to the family and to the members of the Church or Temple" (p. 3).
- 15. This article suggests that the "unique" contribution of the churches involves the development and proclamation of an approach to alcohol use and abuse that is identifiably pastoral. A fully pastoral or practical theology, constructed in dialogue with experience, normative religious sources, and secular-scientific models of understanding, is in a position to engage collaboratively in addressing the contemporary challenges and call to action outlined here. Such a practical theology will be both interfaith and interdisciplinary, but it will also be identifiably pastoral.
- 16. Johnson (1973) presents a detailed account of the involvement of the churches in the social construction of alcohol abuse and alcoholism, beginning with the Puritan colonies. His work describes the evolution and use of various "models" of alcoholism, viz. moralistic, medicalized, etc. For other historical accounts of church involvement, and the mutual shaping of alcohol ideology between church and culture, see Bainton (1945), Conley and Sorenson (1971),

Hancock (1982), Keller (1984), Morgan (1996), and the North Conway Institute (1967).

- 17. For several discussions of "problem drinking," see Apthorp (1990), Ford (1961), National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (1973), North Conway Institute (1977, 1986), Plaut (1967), Wood (1979). It should be noted that much of the difficulty involving high school and college age drinking and drug use fits within the paradigm of *abuse* rather than addiction (see Willimon & Naylor, 1995).
- 18. "Attitude" here has to do with the pastoral-clinical stance of caregivers toward those they serve. It functions as "a gyroscope or lens through which a person guides and shapes his [sic] characteristic way of experiencing" (Schlauch, 1995, 77). The clinician expresses her personality, history, education and training, commitments, and primary beliefs in the pastoral-clinical attitude; it is an essential element in the clinician's quality of presence and in the healing process. As Schlauch (1995) states: "Healing is occasioned when a suffering person experiences the clinician's commitment, acceptance, hope, as those virtues are present in who and how they are—in their pastoral clinical attitude" (p. 103).

Addressing one's pastoral-clinical attitude is important in dealing with abusers, addicts and affected others. ALL pastoral caregivers bring implicit theologies, experiences and root metaphors to the pastoral task (Patton, 1990); many bring potentially unhelpful viewpoints to their care with alcohol mis-users (Hancock, 1984, 1982). Helping caregivers to examine their own attitudes and guiding metaphors, their guiding "presumptions" within a larger, Christian and biblically-based perspective is an important, potentially corrective, undertaking (Lininger, 1993).

- 19. Perhaps the clearest statement of the utility of the "medical" or disease model of alcoholism is given in Drew (1986). Some flavor of the current discussions, which challenge the value of this model and search for greater personal responsibility for abusive behavior, can be gathered by reading Peele (1989).
- 20. A recent and important contribution to theological reflection on the experience of alcoholism and recovery is Linda Mercadante's (1996) Victims and sinners: Spiritual roots of addiction and recovery.
- 21. Regarding important texts for an understanding of the current discussion around "method" in pastoral counseling and practical theology see Browning (1991), Gerkin (1984), Graham (1992), Patton (1990), and Poling and Miller (1985). For a Roman Catholic perspective on this discussion see Groome (1987), Guider (1995), Morgan (1997), and Whitehead and Whitehead (1981).
- 22. Where Browning speaks of "strategic" action, Couture (1991) uses the notion of "transformative practice" as the goal of pastoral-theological method. Others have called this "God-praxis" (Chung, 1990) or "prophetic pastoral practice" (Gerkin, 1991).
- 23. An examination of this "practice-theory-practice" (Browning, 1991) or "instrumental" (Gelpi, 1994) methodological structure, as an elucidation of the method suggested by Vatican II in its phrase "reading the signs of the times," is given in Morgan (1997).

- 24. From a Catholic theological viewpoint, such an inquiry is one way to respond to the call of Vatican Council II, that is, "scrutinizing the signs of the times [in this instance, abuse and addiction] and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." See Morgan (1997).
- 25. For scholarly and ecclesiastical statements regarding this "consensus," see Hewitt (1980), Merrill (1994), the North Conway Institute (1967), Preisker (1985), Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (1986), Svendsen (1987a and b).
- 26. The TECAP Statement (1965), one of the more ecumenical statements on the subject of alcohol use and misuse, states this succinctly:

God's gifts to man [sic] put him under obligation to use them responsibly. They are means for his fulfillment and for the realization of responsible community. Man is a steward of the creation in his own body and is called to be a loving neighbor among neighbors. He has not only a natural self-love and a love and dislike of others, but he has duties to self and to others under God. The right use of alcohol must therefore be placed in the context of God's gracious gifts, the conservation and enhancement of his creation, the functions and vocation of man, his moral and spiritual growth, and his ministry to his fellow man and to society. Such a context requires personal and social discipline. (Quoted in North Conway Institute, 1967, p. 24)

# 27. The Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. states the matter succinctly:

The consumption of alcohol is not itself a sinful act. Drinking of wine is described without condemnation throughout the Bible. Alcohol abuse, however-the use of alcohol in a manner that invokes harm or the risk of harm to oneself or others-is sinful in its violation of Shalom. Intoxication is uniformly condemned in the Scriptures as a misuse of alcohol that damages one's relationship to God, to others, and to society. (1986, p. 34)

- 28. Others from within the pastoral care traditions of the churches have made similar observations. See Jordan (1986), Wilfred Daim (1963), and Thomas Merton (1984). For a study of a Catholic theological anthropology, based in the *imago Dei* and the call to communion with God and relationship to others, and elaborating the dangers posed by alcohol and drug abuse, see Morgan (1997). Pope John Paul II is very clear that the abuse of alcohol and other drugs is a spiritual issue; they "frustrate the person precisely in his or her capacity for communion and self-giving" (1991, p. 8).
- 29. Clinebell's thesis here is well-known and is also summarized in Hewitt (1980). However, Clinebell's approach to this line of discussion, regarding the essential dignity of persons and the relation to a "moral" stance regarding use and abuse of alcohol, is important to remember. He quotes Fr. John C. Ford, S.J., professor of Catholic moral and pastoral theology, as saying, "One must never approach an alcoholic on the basis of what is usually called 'morality'." Then, Clinebell comments:

Anyone who has dealt in an insightful manner with even one alcoholic can vouch for the validity of this statement. From a practical standpoint, to

moralize with an alcoholic is the ultimate in counseling futility.

However, it is essential that a minister be clear in his [sic] own mind as to what the ethical problems are in alcoholism. This is not simply an exercise in the theory of ethics, but has definite practical implications. For whether an individual is aware of it or not, his relationship with alcoholics will be influenced by what he believes in his heart concerning this basic question. (Clinebell, 1968, 167)

- 30. Clinebell echoes Ford (1961) here, who writes from within the Roman Catholic community and in concert with the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. In What about your drinking? (1961), Ford gives the fundamental moral argument against drunkenness:
  - ... a man [sic] deliberately and without necessity deprives himself of the use of reason, to a greater or lesser degree, by drunkenness. This use of reason is the greatest gift of God to man, and it is the mark that distinguishes man from the rest of visible creation. To extinguish deliberately and violently or dim notably the light of reason is a kind of self-mutilation.

Christians do not believe that man is master and owner of his own body and mind, to do with as he pleases. He is a *steward*, who is obliged by the terms of his stewardship to take care of his own health as the gift of God, to respect the integrity of his physical members as the property of God, and, above all, to preserve intact his own reason, lest he destroy within himself the image of God. . . . Man is not at liberty to do as he likes with his own life, his own health, and his own reason. It is not permissible for a human being to make himself incapable of acting like a human being. (Ford, 1961, 79-80)

#### 31. Apthorp (1990) states these themes succinctly:

From a theological perspective, the disease concept makes it clear that the dependent's primary relationship is with the chemical, not with God, not with his own body, mind, and spirit, and not with family and friends. Neither personal and social obligations nor work responsibilities take priority over his dependence on alcohol. It is the insidious illness that separates the victim from every aspect of his personhood and potential. As man [sic] is created in the image of God, with an opportunity to actualize that image in the fulfillment of his God-given potential, it is the nature of Jellinek's disease that such an opportunity is undermined by the use of alcohol. Though the dependent may try to exercise control over whether or not he drinks, he has no control over the harmful effects that separate him from God, self, and others. (1990, pp. 73-74)

32. Two of the best known, contemporary writers on addiction from a psychospiritual perspective also use this language of idolatry. M. Scott Peck (1993, 1995), in speaking of addiction as a "sacred disease," sees this idolatry both as destructive and as a potentially helpful "yearning" that can lead one to God, once the direction of the addict's personal spiritual journey is corrected. Gerald May (1988), however, is both more eloquent about the notions of human dignity,

relationship, attachment and idolatry, and equally direct about the spiritual potential that can lie within our addictions:

While repression stifles desire, addiction attaches desire, bonds and enslaves the energy of desire to certain specific behaviors, things or people. These objects of attachment then become preoccupations and obsessions; they come to rule our lives. . . .

Moreover, our addictions are our own worst enemies. They enslave us with chains that are of our own making and yet that, paradoxically, are virtually beyond our control. Addiction also makes idolaters of us all, because it forces us to worship these objects of attachment, thereby preventing us from truly, freely loving God and one another. . . Addiction, then, is at once an inherent part of our nature and an antagonist of our nature. It is the absolute enemy of human freedom, the antipathy of love. Yet, in still another paradox, our addictions can lead us to a deep appreciation of grace. They can bring us to our knees. (pp. 3-4)

33. Here Ford is following the traditional Thomistic view of alcohol use and its relation to the "humanum." Writing in *What about your drinking?* (1961), Ford gives the fundamental moral reason against drunkenness:

... a man [sic] deliberately and without necessity deprives himself of the use of reason, to a greater or lesser degree, by drunkenness. This use of reason is the greatest gift of God to man, and it is the mark that distinguishes man from the rest of visible creation. To extinguish deliberately and violently or dim notably the light of reason is a kind of self-mutilation.

Christians do not believe that man is master and owner of his own body and mind, to do with as he pleases. He is a *steward*, who is obliged by the terms of his stewardship to take care of his own health as the gift of God, to respect the integrity of his physical members as the property of God, and, above all, to preserve intact his own reason, lest he destroy within himself the image of God. . . . Man is not at liberty to do as he likes with his own life, his own health, and his own reason. It is not permissible for a human being to make himself incapable of acting like a human being. (Ford, 1961, 79-80)

For Thomas (Summa Theologia, II, ii, q. 149, art. 2) alcohol had a unique ability to threaten reason and so its use is governed by a special virtue related to temperance, viz. "sobriety." In the use of all drugs, and basing his approach on the same principle, Ford cobbled together the term pharmacosophrosyne, the "virtue of the right use of drugs" or "drug sense." For discussion of Thomas' and Ford's viewpoints, see Ford, 1959 and 1961.

34. This is the root meaning of the term "addiction," that is, a handing over of one's self, a "fastening" or "devotion" of the heart to another person or object (See Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language). It is this "fastening of the heart" to a creature and the preference of created things to God's own will that is the lived definition of idolatry (Clinebell, 1968; Daim, 1963; Jordan, 1986).

Jordan's major work (1986), entitled *Taking on the gods: The task of the pastoral counselor*, was the thematic underpinning of the conference at which this paper was first presented: "Taking on the gods': A Conference in Honor of Merle R. Jordan." Boston University and The Danielsen Institute, May 11-12 1996. Boston, MA.

35. Here is another way to conceptualize the notion of *idolatry* from the work of Daim, Jordan and others, namely, the addictive process of absolutizing ordinary attachments.

36. One important element in this reflection is the engagement between the "situation" or "problem" encountered in practice and multiple sources of defining or interpreting the situation that are available to the pastoral actor/practical theologian. Through a mutually informing engagement between situation and sources, the goal is (a) clearer grasp of the pastoral or spiritual nature of the situation, that is, a fully "pastoral diagnosis," (b) a deeper understanding of the meanings and implications of the situation, as a pastoral or ecclesial problem, and the challenges it presents, and (c) better guidance for pastoral practice. This is the essence of the practice-theory-practice method of practical theology (Morgan, 1997).

37. Whitehead (1987, in Mudge & Poling) and others speak of a "correlational method" for practical theology in which there is imaginative interplay among the Christian traditions, cultural information, and personal or communal pastoral experience.

38. Speaking from the context of a Latin American liberation theology paradigm in which the Exodus narrative has contributed to "the emergence of a transformative ecclesial vision" (p. 22), Guider's view of practical theology, alluding to the work of Rahner, is instructive:

... practical theology begins where the social sciences conclude. Understood as 'that theological discipline which is concerned with the church's self-actualization here and now-both that which is and that which ought to be,' practical theology seeks to use theology to illumine a 'particular situation in which the church must realize itself in all of its dimensions'. (1995)

39. It is important for counselors and pastoral theologians to be reflective, critically and imaginatively, both about the metaphors we use and operate from, as well as about the experiences that undergird them. These metaphors can liberate our imaginations or bind and narrow them. Ongoing reflection about actual pastoral-clinical practice may help to reveal and explore these metaphors. See Patton (1990) for a methodology of examining these personalized, experience-based metaphors.

40. Whitehead (1987), referring to Tracy, refers to the "working canon" used by pastoral caregivers or faith communities.

41. See also John Paul's homily (1986) at the Italian Solidarity Center for the rehabilitation of drug addicts for his connection of the Samaritan story and the ministry of caring.

42. Here is a role for a Christian spirituality of right behavior, namely virtue

theory, in a full theological anthropology. Ford (1961) reminds us of its importance, in the context of relationship to God and our creation as human;

'Practicing virtue' seems like a rather old-fashioned and pious phrase, but the word virtuous originally meant 'befitting a man' [sic]. It remains true today that the only way we can act like human beings, the only way we can reach the goal that God has set for us, is by practicing virtue. (p. 49)

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