

PSYCHOPATHY
AND THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGY
OF
CONVERSION

by

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A THESIS

APPROVED:

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PSYCHOPATHY
AND THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGY
OF
CONVERSION

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Purpose

The purpose of this study has been to determine whether or not the psychopath is emotionally capable of the experience known in Southern Baptist theology as conversion. A secondary purpose has been to bring together in one study the related areas of religion and psychopathy. This has not been done in any previous studies.

Method

The method used in the study was: (1) to review the literature which establishes the psychopathic syndrome, focusing on the work of the McCords reported in their book Psychopathy and Delinquency; (2) to review the literature published by Southern Baptist writers as it relates to the Southern Baptist understanding of religious conversion; (3) to present the case studies of four psychopaths who claim to have undergone a conversion experience of the nature described by Southern Baptists; and (4) to set out conclusions based upon the research represented in the literature and the behavior demonstrated in the case studies.

Findings

From the material presented in this study the fol-

1. Because the psychopath feels little or no guilt, he cannot meet the first requirement for conversion as Southern Baptists view it, namely, conviction for sin or feelings of guilt over the awareness that he is a sinner.

2. The psychopath finds faith or trust, as Southern Baptists speak of it, to be rather meaningless because he cannot form a relationship that demonstrates a relationship of depth.

3. Religious conversion implies a change in behavior. This study reveals that although the psychopath may speak of change and even use a religious language, there is no actual change in his behavior.

4. It was observed that the psychopath uses religion as a means to his own selfish ends. The church becomes a tool to be used in his purposeless and aggressive way.

5. The psychopath, in view of the above conclusions, is emotionally incapable of the religious conversion as it is expressed by Southern Baptists.


Approved

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CHAPTER I

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Some time ago Hervey Cleckley came to the conclusion that the psychopath might very well be called the forgotten man of psychiatry.¹ This no longer accurately states the case.

McCord and McCord have noted that although the research is sometimes conflicting it is also rapidly growing.² Hare and Hare have, under a research grant, compiled an extensive bibliography on the topic of psychopathy.³ They include in their work only those materials which appear in English, along with only sample works of the more prolific writers. They omit many articles that are dated, of indirect relevance, or are somewhat inaccessible to most investigators. They also exclude most of the standard textbooks in psychiatry and abnormal psychology. Even with all of these omissions there are still more than 650 entries in the bibliography.

¹Hervey Cleckley, The Mask of Sanity (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Company, 1964, third edition), p. 33.

²William McCord and Joan McCord, Psychopathy and Delinquency (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1956), p. ix.

³Robert D. Hare and Averil S. Hare, "Psychopathic Behavior: A Bibliography," Excerpta Criminologica, VII (July-August, 1967), 365-386.

The obvious interrelatedness is called to our attention as early as 1835 when Dr. J. C. Prichard spoke of "moral insanity" and "moral imbecility" while describing the psychopath.⁶ In 1873 Professor John Ordronaux refused to accept the term "moral insanity" and would argue that "the only disease to which the moral nature is subject is sin."⁷ Theology by its very nature has always been concerned with guilt and morality.

There are other areas that are also interrelated and will be pointed out later in the study. It seems noteworthy, however, even on the basis of the material already presented, that little has been said in the writings of the behavioral scientists regarding the psychopath and his religious interests, particularly since religion is so often associated with values, goals and behavior. Likewise the theologians have remained strangely silent regarding this paradoxical creature. This is peculiar since religion has considered the conscience, guilt and morality its special domain.

In the more than 650 entries cited by Hare and Hare in their bibliography there is no reference whatsoever to

⁶David K. Henderson, Psychopathic States (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1939), p. 10.

⁷John Ordronaux, "Moral Insanity," American Journal of Insanity 29:313, 1873 as quoted by McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 22.

the psychopath and religion.⁸ In the numerous case studies which fill the literature, there are only passing references to religion as for example in Cleckley's case study of Frank.⁹

The present study is an attempt to explore the uncharted area of psychopathy and religion. The special area of religion to be considered is known as conversion. Conversion is that word used in theological circles to note a change, particularly a moral change, that takes place within an individual. This moral change is seen outwardly in altered behavior and is manifested in his new attitude and outlook on life.

This seems an especially appropriate area of study when one considers the psychopath. Psychopathy is considered a behavioral disorder.¹⁰ Therefore, it might be hypothesized that the psychopath would no longer present a problem to the law, the courts, juries, his relatives and the general public if he could experience a religious conversion.

Organization Of The Material

The basic question being explored by this research

⁸Hare and Hare, op. cit.

⁹Cleckley, op. cit. p. 118.

¹⁰Robert M. Lindner, Rebel Without A Cause (New York Grove Press, Inc., 1944), p. 2; Stein, op. cit., p. 85 and McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 35.

is whether or not the psychopath is capable of experiencing conversion. Before this question can be adequately answered, it must be determined what is meant by the terms psychopath and psychopathy along with the meaning of the religious experience called conversion.

Chapter II then will set forth the psychopathic syndrome. It will be primarily a discussion of the previous work of McCord and McCord.¹¹ Based upon the research in the literature of psychopathy, this writer has reason to believe that a more definitive work is not to be found.

Chapter III will deal with the concept of conversion as it is held by the religious denomination known as the Southern Baptist Convention. There are two basic reasons for considering the theology of conversion among Southern Baptists. The first, and most obvious, is for greater accuracy in the conclusions that ultimately will be drawn from this research. It may well be that Samuel Hill is correct when he observes that "even after taking into consideration the obvious variety of denominations, doctrinal positions, and types of congregations, . . . a regional church exists" in the South.¹² Nevertheless, it would be rather

¹¹McCord and McCord, op. cit.

¹²Samuel S. Hill, Jr., Southern Churches in Crisis (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 21.

presumptuous to assume that what is true for one religious denomination in the South is necessarily true in all other denominations of the South. By narrowing the study, only Southern Baptist writers will be considered on the subject of conversion. If every denomination in the South were studied the task of reading the materials on conversion would be insurmountable. Moreover, there are enough differences in denominations in the South that the conclusions reached from the research would of necessity have to be stated in such general terms that they would, for all scientific and clinical purposes, be useless.

The second reason for studying the Southern Baptist theology of conversion is a personal one. It is the religious heritage of this researcher and therefore that segment of the Christian Church with which he is most familiar. Southern Baptists have made a great issue of the importance of conversion, but clinical experience with the psychopathic personality has led to some questions in the mind of this observer as they relate to the very emotional experience to which Southern Baptists refer when they speak of conversion.

Chapter IV will present four case studies of psychopathic personalities. The case studies will be simple narrative accounts of four male psychopaths and the manner in which they functioned with regard to religion and religious conversion.

Chapter V will deal with the findings and conclusions as they are drawn from the literature and the clinical studies. It will be a summary of this study, setting out some of the limitations of the present work and pointing toward some areas that suggest the need for further study.

Of course, objection to the present study could be raised on the grounds that the behavioral scientist should not be interested in examining religious attitudes. It is argued that religion is much too personal and subjective to be a fruitful area of study. The theologian might also object on the grounds that the behavioral scientist can not bring the usual methods of scientific investigation to the study of an individual's religion. The religionist is often suspicious of the motives and the mind set with which the behavioral scientist approaches such a task. Stein is correct when he points out that the two disciplines often regard each other with antipathy.¹³

This writer concurs, however, in the feeling that "religion is a most appropriate area for behavioral science studies."¹⁴ Man is a whole. He cannot be dissected. If man

¹³Stein, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁴James A. Knight, Conscience and Guilt (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), p. 60.

is to be studied, he must be studied in his totality. Anything that has played as prominent a role as religion in the shaping of human history (behavior) cannot be omitted from the investigation of the serious behavioral scientist.

Only the bold researcher, more interested in truth than in his pride, will tramp the ineluctable jungles of ancient ideas for the stuff which sustains life, however entangled in archaic verbiage or hidden by dogmatic undergrowth.¹⁵

A Practical Basis For The Study

When this problem was first undertaken it admittedly grew out of a theoretical question raised in relating psychopathy to the experience of conversion. Upon further study of the problem, however, there are some very practical reasons for undertaking this research.

In the first place, the psychopath is a problem to the general public.¹⁶ If one assumes that the psychopath always ends up in a prison or a mental hospital he is operating upon a false premise.¹⁷ The psychopath is found in every walk of life and in every profession. Psychopathy is not a

¹⁵Stein, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁶Cleckley, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁷Harry Elmer Barnes and Negley K. Teeters, New Horizons in Criminology (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1959), p. 105; and Cleckley, op. cit., p. 37.

problem just for the psychiatrists, the mental hospitals and the prisons.

There are many who feel that psychopathy can be effectively treated if it is detected early enough.¹⁸ If this is so, and the evidence indicates that it is, then the church could, with a better understanding of the problem, serve as an effective agency in the detection of and hence the prevention of psychopathy.

Should this sound a bit unrealistic, it must be kept in mind that there is little being done for the psychopath because there are no agencies in the average community to meet his needs. This is as true today as it was when Cleckley observed it more than 25 years ago.¹⁹ The church, because of its attempt to minister to families could possibly become a resource for establishing the kind of community (family) that is essential for the normal development of personality and character.

In the historical context of World War II Lindner could say that "Psychopathy is more wide spread than ever before in the history of our civilization."²⁰ But even more

¹⁸L. C. Webber, "Working With A Psychopath," Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 47:721, July, 1952; August Aichorn, Wayward Youth (London: Putnam, 1936); Stein, op. cit., p. 107; McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 123ff.

¹⁹Cleckley, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

²⁰Lindner, op. cit., p. 15.

recently Stein has commented on the "Sociopathic drift of our culture."²¹ The church is just one of many agencies needed to cope with the problem.

Another pragmatic reason for underscoring the need of the present study focuses on the role of the pastoral counselor. The psychopath is but one of the many kinds of problems the contemporary minister must recognize if he is to minister effectively. Psychopathy is not the problem of just the chaplains in the prisons and the mental hospitals. In fact, it was while receiving clinical pastoral education within a correctional setting that this writer suddenly became aware of the broader dimensions of the problem.

Closely related to the above is the need for those who minister within institutions such as prisons and mental hospitals to focus on the problem. The prison chaplain for instance ministers daily to those diagnosed as "psychopathic personality," but there has been nothing written to relate the chaplain's ministry to this type of personality.

Summary

This chapter has set forth the problem to be considered in this study--the problem of psychopathy as it relates to the Southern Baptist theology of conversion. It has pointed out

²¹Stein, op. cit., p. 23.

that the literature pertaining to psychopathy has nothing to say about the syndrome as it is manifested in religious symbols and language. Conversely, Southern Baptist theology has almost nothing to say about the conversion of the person who feels little or no guilt.

The study has grown out of a theoretical question raised when trying to relate the psychopathic syndrome as it is spelled out in the literature to the theology of conversion which, by its very nature, pertains to changed behavior. Clinical experience gave rise to the working hypothesis of this paper. That hypothesis stated simply is that the psychopath is emotionally incapable of the experience known in Southern Baptist theology as conversion.

This chapter has also pointed out the procedure used for the study: a survey of the relevant printed materials, a study of the living documents, and the conclusions drawn from each. Also included in this introductory chapter has been what is considered a few of the practical justifications for the undertaking of this study. Having done so, it is time now to turn to the task of examining the literature.

CHAPTER II

THE PSYCHOPATHIC SYNDROME

It is no easy task to define or classify the psychopath. This fact has led to much of the confusion in attempting to deal with the psychopath in the courts, hospitals and prisons.¹ Nearly any textbook on abnormal psychology will list most of the traits contained in the psychopathic syndrome. However, the study that seems most relevant to this thesis is the work by McCord and McCord.²

What follows is an examination of the psychopathic syndrome as it is set forth by the McCords. While it would be an interesting pursuit, no effort is made to establish the etiology of the syndrome. The etiology of psychopathy does not fall within the scope of the task at hand.

The psychopath is "variously defined."³ The McCords, however, are convinced that in spite of the differences of opinion that exist between social scientists, there is a common core of psychopathy with which most would agree.

¹Hervey Cleckley, The Mask of Sanity (4th ed.; St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Company, 1964), p. 404.

²William McCord and Joan McCord, Psychopathy and Delinquency (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1956), pp. 1-19.

³Edward V. Stein, Guilt: Theory and Therapy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 85.

The psychopath is an asocial, aggressive, highly impulsive person, who feels little or no guilt and is unable to form lasting bonds of affection with other human beings/italics in original/.⁴

Each of the traits in the above definition are carefully examined by the McCords.

Asociality

Asociality is, of course, that element of psychopathy that underscores the socially disruptive behavior of the psychopath. His behavior may range from the writing of hot checks to cold and brutal murder as in the cases of Richard Eugene Hickock and Perry Smith.⁵ There are some who feel that it is this characteristic, more than any other, that defines psychopathy. In fact, Stein feels that "sociopathic personality" is a more precise term to use simply because it considers more seriously the "anti-social reactions."⁶

The McCords correctly point out that to emphasize social maladjustment to the exclusion of other criteria is to actually lump so many social deviants into one catagory that

⁴McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵Truman Capote, In Cold Blood, (New York: The New American Library Inc., 1965).

⁶Stein, op. cit., p. 85.

the real differences are lost.⁷ Stein for instance includes alcoholics and drug addicts as one of the subdivisions of sociopathic personalities.⁸ It is this use of antisocial behavior as the major diagnostic criterion that more than likely accounts for the unusually high estimates of psychopathy.⁹

All deviant behavior cannot be interpreted as psychopathy and therefore any understanding of psychopathy "must look beyond asociality."¹⁰

Impulsiveness

The McCords note that the psychopath has the same desires as other men. Unlike other persons, however, the psychopath demands immediate fulfillment of his desires.¹¹ This makes for one who is highly impulsive, which is indeed an understatement.

The postponement of pleasure has been learned by the normal child by about the time he is two years of age. The psychopath never really learns this. The child learns to

⁷McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 17.

⁸Stein, op. cit., p. 85.

⁹McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹Ibid.

compromise with his environment as he learns to consider the needs of others as well as his own; but the psychopath refuses to concern himself with the needs or feelings of others.

While most people are guilty of occasionally acting impulsively and deliberately ignoring their responsibilities the psychopath makes it a way of life. "His life seems an erratic series of unconnected acts, first leading one way, then another."¹² What naturally follows is a kind of aimlessness or lack of purpose. The psychopath has no long range goals. This, by the way, makes therapy that is goal-oriented somewhat futile.

Stein concludes that the "social defectiveness of the psychopath is most evident in his impulsiveness, his lack of control."¹³ This, however, fails to tell the whole story. This cannot be the sole criterion for the diagnostician any more than can asociality alone, but it is indeed correct to say that the "triggering mechanism" on the psychopath's impulsiveness "is very delicate and easily tripped."¹⁴

¹²Ibid., p. 8.

¹³Stein, op. cit., p. 99.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 100.

Aggressiveness

The psychopath's impulsiveness and asociality are expressed most often in what the McCords term "brutal aggression."¹⁵ This is why Lindner called the psychopath "the embryonic Storm-Trooper."¹⁶

It is important to notice that the McCords use the term "asocial" rather than "antisocial" to describe the psychopath's expression of aggression. The latter implies a kind of behavior which is the result of inner conflict or anxiety. It grows out of an inner compulsion. On the other hand, the former term implies that the processes of socialization have not even taken place. The psychopath's aggression does not stem from inner conflict, anxiety or compulsion. Rather, he has no inhibitions. He acts on impulse and is narcissistic. The processes of socialization have never "taken" with him.¹⁷

Aggressiveness, then, cannot be the sole test in determining psychopathy. If aggressiveness were the single criterion by which one could arrive at the diagnosis of psychopathy it would be impossible to distinguish between the

¹⁵McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁶Robert M. Lindner, Rebel Without A Cause (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1944), p. 16.

¹⁷John W. Drakeford, Integrity Therapy (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967), p. 103.

with guilt and literally seeks punishment."²³ For Lindner the clue to this almost paradoxical situation lay in the unresolved Oedipus situation. Stein observes

It is possible that the antisocial sociopath as pure form does not exist and that it is only lack of patience or perception in the observer that enables him to classify a person as totally devoid of super-ego or guilt feelings/italics in original/.²⁴

He quickly adds, however, that for the psychopath

the feeling of guilt anxiety as it occurs in most people is nearly absent or distorted so much that it seems absent to the observer.²⁵

Albert Ellis feels that under the "facade of psychopathic bravado" there are feelings of guilt and of low self-esteem. Underlying the behavior of the psychopath is guilt and anxiety.²⁶

Suffice it to say, however, that for all practical purposes the psychopath suffers from a deficiency of guilt. It is this which, for the McCords, "distinguishes him from other cultural deviants."²⁷ He does not feel guilt.

To say that the psychopath does not feel guilt is

²³Lindner, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁴Stein, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

²⁵Ibid., p. 92.

²⁶Albert Ellis, "Rational Psychotherapy," Experiments In Behaviour Therapy, H. H. Eysenck (ed), (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1964) p. 309.

²⁷McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 11.

not to say that he does not know what society expects from him. Quite the contrary is true. He knows what the rules of society are, but he refuses to play by the game. It is this fact which creates the confusion in the courts of law regarding legal sanity and responsibility.²⁸ This was the case of the trial of Kansas killer Richard Eugene Hickock. The psychiatrist reported "although he professes usual moral standards he seems obviously uninfluenced by them in his actions."²⁹

It is this phenomenon that led Stein to conclude that the psychopath's problem "lies focally in the orectic area."³⁰ He notes that this is

evidenced by his ability to articulate the very code he violates. Intellectually he often knows what society expects of him and can even feign guilt over its violation. He passes paper and pencil tests concerning the mores with efficiency and can quote the law to the policeman.³¹

It is this to which Cleckley calls attention when he uses the term "semantic dementia."³² It is somewhat un-

²⁸Cleckley, op. cit., p. 514ff.

²⁹Capote, op. cit., p. 331.

³⁰Stein, op. cit., p. 94.

³¹Ibid., pp. 94-95.

³²Cleckley, op. cit., p. 412ff.

fortunate that because he uses the term "semantic" some have interpreted him to mean a deficiency in the understanding of speech.³³ In reality he was pointing out that there seems to be no obvious connection between the psychopath's theoretical thinking and his irrational behavior.

Lovelessness

Closely related to the psychopath's inability to feel guilt is his inability to form a genuine bond of affection.

He seems cold and compassionless. He treats people as he does objects; as a means for his own pleasure. Though he may form fleeting attachments, these lack emotional depth and tenderness, and frequently end abruptly in aggressive explosions.³⁴

Lauretta Bender noted this inability to love in her children at Bellview. She felt that "the primary defect" in the psychopathic children with whom she worked was "an inability to identify themselves in a relationship with other people."³⁵

Stein makes the very pointed observation

³³Ibid., pp. 7-8.

³⁴McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁵Lauretta Bender, "Psychopathic Behavior Disorders In Children," Handbook of Correctional Psychology, Robert M. Lindner and Robert V. Seliger, eds., (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), p. 374.

It is on the fulcrum of identification that the socialization process most crucially turns. As Bernard Diamond put it, "When there is no identification, we are all sociopathic."³⁶

It is this trait that the McCords call a "warped capacity for love."³⁷ Because rapport is so essential to the process of psychotherapy, working with the psychopath is extremely difficult simply because it is so difficult to establish a meaningful relationship which can become the therapeutic relationship.³⁸ There is ample evidence, however, that in some instances therapists have succeeded in the establishment of rapport with the psychopath.³⁹

One might be a bit presumptuous to make the dogmatic assertion that the psychopath is totally incapable of love; but it is quite safe to state that he has a "severely blunted capacity for affection."⁴⁰ And it is this lovelessness that

³⁶Stein, op. cit., p. 65.

³⁷McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁸James A. Knight, Conscience and Guilt (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), p. 153; and Hervey Cleckley, "The Psychopath Viewed Practically" Handbook of Correctional Psychology, Robert M. Lindner and Robert V. Seliger, eds., (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), p. 400.

³⁹McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 13; and Albert Ellis, "Rational Psychotherapy," Experiments In Behaviour Therapy, H. H. Eysenck (ed) op. cit., p. 309.

⁴⁰McCord and McCord, op. cit., p. 13.

sets him apart as a uniquely isolated individual."⁴¹

Summary

It may be true that there is diagnostic confusion regarding the psychopathic syndrome. It is the assumption of this chapter, however, that a "distinct psychopathic syndrome" does indeed exist. This assumption rests upon the definitive work and ensuing conclusion reached by the McCords.⁴²

The psychopathic syndrome in a single paragraph is stated by the McCords as follows:

The psychopath is asocial. His conduct often brings him into conflict with society. The psychopath is driven by primitive desires and an exaggerated craving for excitement. In his self-centered search for pleasure, he ignores restrictions of his culture. The psychopath is highly impulsive. He is a man for whom the moment is a segment of time detached from all others. His actions are unplanned and guided by his whims. The psychopath is aggressive. He has learned few socialized ways of coping with frustration. The psychopath feels little, if any, guilt. He can commit the most appalling acts, yet view them without remorse. The psychopath has a warped capacity for love. His emotional relationships, when they exist, are meager, fleeting, and designed to satisfy his own desires. These last two traits, guiltlessness and lovelessness, conspicuously mark the psychopath as different from other men.⁴³

⁴¹Ibid., p. 14.

⁴²Ibid., p. 36.

⁴³Ibid., p. 14.

CHAPTER III

THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGY OF CONVERSION

This chapter will discuss the Southern Baptist theology of conversion as it is expressed by Southern Baptist writers. There is no attempt to make a critique of Southern Baptists and their theology. It is simply an examination of their literature and a report of the findings.

There are two major divisions to this chapter. Before examining the concept of conversion, it seems the logical thing to find out who the Baptists are. After an introduction to the people, then the subject of conversion, as they view it, will be undertaken.

Who Are Southern Baptists?

It should be noted from the very outset that Southern Baptists are only one of more than 40 Baptist bodies in the United States.¹ Southern Baptists currently number about 11.4 million.² This makes them one of the largest religious denominations in America.

¹Robert G. Torbet, A History of the Baptists (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1950), p. 501.

²Clifton J. Allen, Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1969), p. 117.

Baptists came from what is known in church history as the Radical Wing of the sixteenth century reformation.³ The background and heritage of Baptists in America is, for the most part, British.⁴ It does not fall within the scope of this work, however, to consider the early expansion, growth, dissension or persecution of these people. Let it be sufficient to say that Baptists, in the early years of expansion and growth on this continent, often disagreed, but they were able to work together. The right to dissent was a principle that was carefully guarded.⁵

In the latter part of the eighteenth century and early portion of the nineteenth, there was much dissension and strife among religious bodies in America. Baptists were no exception.⁶ During this time there were bitter controversies among Baptists over such matters as Unitarianism, Bible Societies, and even the Masons. According to Vedder,

. . .the most bitter controversy of all, certainly that which left behind it the deepest scars and most permanent alienation was that which arose over the question of slavery.⁷

³Torbet, op. cit., p. 35.

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

⁵Ibid., p. 272.

⁶H. C. Vedder, A Short History of the Baptists (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), p. 344.

⁷Ibid., p. 344.

Alliance was formed.¹³ The purpose of the Alliance was to unite Baptists throughout the world.¹⁴

In spite of being a part of the Baptist World Alliance, it might be suspected from the foregoing that Southern Baptists could be considered somewhat provincial as the regional adjective "Southern" would imply.¹⁵ It must be kept in mind throughout this chapter that only Southern Baptists are being considered and they are only a small portion of the whole family of Baptists. Baptist churches in the South have tended to be more conservative and orthodox (while feeling that they are anything but creedal) than have the Baptist churches of the North.¹⁶ While they have tended to be more conservative than some branches of the Baptist family, they have been more progressive than others. For instance, in 1902 a group of Baptists known as Landmarkists withdrew from Southern Baptists because they disagreed with many of the methods in missions and because of the theological issue of ecclesiasticism.¹⁷

This is a very inadequate historical survey of the

¹³Robert A. Baker, A Summary of Christian History (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 369.

¹⁴Torbet, op. cit., p. 188.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 460.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 447ff.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 458.

people known as Southern Baptists, but it will perhaps serve as a rather general introduction and give the reader some preparation for understanding the context within which the concept of religious conversion is being studied.

The Southern Baptist Understanding Of Conversion

Baptists have long emphasized the need for conversion. For Southern Baptists conversion refers to an outward change in behavior. This outward change is an expression of an inner reorientation to life.¹⁸ Or to express it in the theological language,

the term conversion usually refers to the outward act of the changed man which is the manifestation of the inner change in his soul. A converted man is one in whom the grace of God has wrought a spiritual change.¹⁹

Although he is speaking of Southern religion in general, Hill also speaks as a Southern Baptist who is critical of his own religion when he states that two evangelical ideas have been intensely emphasized in the South: "The conversion experience is necessary; it is possible."²⁰ According to his

¹⁸H. H. Hobbs, What Baptist Believe (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1964), p. 97.

¹⁹E. Y. Mullins, The Christian Religion In Its Doctrinal Expression (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1917), p. 377.

²⁰Samuel S. Hill Jr., Southern Churches In Crisis (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 61.

widely held idea, one would not question, as does the present research, whether or not the experience of conversion is an emotional impossibility for some individuals. To correctly understand conversion in the thinking of Southern Baptists, there is a need to examine what is meant by the "inward change" as well as the "outward change"--or conversion.

The Inward Change

The term Southern Baptists have given to the inner re-orientation of life is the word "regeneration."²¹

Regeneration is the result of the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon man's spirit. In it the penitent believer receives a new nature. There is a radical change in the aim and purpose of life. The advent of a new set of motives, and a moral and spiritual renewal of the will /italics not in the original/. In the scripture the change of nature is described as the "new birth" or the "new creation."²²

For Southern Baptists this experience of regeneration is absolutely necessary if a person is to consider himself a part of the Christian faith.²³ Theologians of Southern Baptist persuasion make it absolutely clear that two elements are needed to bring a person this inward experience: repentance

²¹Mullins, op. cit., p. 52.

²²Ibid.

²³T. G. David, Saved And Certain (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), p. 21ff.

and faith.²⁴ These two terms must be examined a little further.

Repentance. Strictly defined, the word repent comes from a Greek word which means "sorrow before sin."²⁵ It means that one turns from sin to God; it is an inward change of mind and attitude. The attitude of Baptists has not changed from when Bow wrote "Baptists believe, not only in the importance, but the absolute necessity of repentance."²⁶

At this point the element of guilt enters the picture and becomes an intricate part of total experience of conversion. Repentance involves an awareness of guilt.²⁷ It is often referred to as being under the conviction of sin. "Conviction of sin . . . is the state of being sensible of guilt."²⁸ Perhaps the whole problem with which the present research deals becomes clearer when it is pointed out that this "consciousness of sin," which is accompanied in varying degrees by a sense of

²⁴Mullins, op. cit., p. 377 and Hobbs, op. cit., p. 98.

²⁵Hobbs, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁶J. G. Bow, What Baptists Believe And Why They Believe It (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, date unavailable), p. 11.

²⁷Ibid., p. 12.

²⁸Robert B. Howell, The Way Of Salvation (Charleston: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1849), p. 95.

ill desert and guilt, is for Baptists "the point of contact" between the individual and God.²⁹ Southard states this succinctly.

At the threshold of a man's awareness of God is the conscience. A conscience is so crucial to Christian growth that some people say "Let your conscience be your guide."³⁰

In commenting on the matter of "conviction" Hobbs goes so far as to say "Apart from this experience there can be no salvation from sin."³¹

What this means at the practical level is that Southern Baptists, in order to bring about the conversion experience, employ a methodology that attempts to create within people an anxiety over their guilt. It becomes necessary for the missionary to show the potential convert the "seriousness of his condition."³² Therefore, the one who would be converted is told of his sin, of judgment and hell so that guilt anxiety is produced.³³ Since there can be no genuine religious conversion without conviction for sin, it is concluded that "the

²⁹Mullins, op. cit., p. 51.

³⁰Samuel Southard, Conversion And Christian Character (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1965) p. 22.

³¹Hobbs, op. cit., p. 93.

³²Austin Crouch, The Plan of Salvation (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), p. 21.

³³Ibid., p. 12.

deeper and more real the conviction, the deeper and more abiding are the fruits of the religious experience.³⁴ The methodology includes using the Bible to "convince" the unconverted of his sin and hence produce guilt.³⁵ Along with the Bible there are other "agencies" that bring about conviction, such as prayer, sermons, fellowship and personal appeal.³⁶

Faith. The second essential ingredient of the inward experience (regeneration) which creates the outward experience (conversion) is faith.

Southern Baptists see faith as "trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and surrender to him as Lord."³⁷ This trust implies a mystical yet vital relationship with Jesus Christ.³⁸ There can be no true repentance apart from this faith.³⁹ Perhaps Mullins states as concisely as any one the relational

³⁴P. E. Burroughs, How To Win To Christ (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1934), pp. 74-75.

³⁵Ibid., p. 77.

³⁶L. R. Scarborough, With Christ After The Lost (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952), p. 162ff.

³⁷W. T. Conner, The Gospel of Redemption (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945), p. 200.

³⁸Ibid., p. 150.

³⁹Clyde J. Turner, Soul Winning Doctrines (Nashville: Convention Press, Revised Edition, 1955), p. 40.

nature of the Baptist concept of faith. He says, "Faith is the bond of union between man and God, which brings not only new life and new power, but new knowledge."⁴⁰

The Outward Experience

In an earlier section of this chapter the outward expression of the religious experience called conversion was mentioned. It is this outward experience that is technically called conversion. It refers to the outward change in an individual's style of life. This change is the effect of repentance and faith.⁴¹

It can readily be seen that Southern Baptists believe the inward experience described above produces a very visible and marked change in the behavior of the religious convert. He "becomes a new creature."⁴² For Baptists the word conversion does not necessarily mean a highly emotional or mystical experience, but it definitely "refers to a change in the manner of one's life."⁴³

⁴⁰Mullins, op. cit., p. 34.

⁴¹Hobbs, op. cit., p. 97.

⁴²Turner, op. cit., p. 16.

⁴³Findley B. Edge, A Quest For Vitality In Religion (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1963), p. 184.

A Further Word As To The Role Of Guilt

A further word, albeit very brief, must be added regarding the role of guilt and trust in the religious experience of Southern Baptists. It must be kept in mind that conversion for Baptists is but "the initial stage in a lifelong process."⁴⁴ In Baptist theology, conversion is the experience by which a person enters the Christian life. It is assumed that the new life will need to be developed.⁴⁵ This is the manner in which one matures in his religious faith. The conditions of growth are the same as those by which a person is converted: repentance and faith.⁴⁶ This surely means, as Southard notes, that "an appropriate stirring of conscience is a guide to Christian character."⁴⁷

The implication of conversion is that the converted person will then become a part of the Christian community known as the church. A basic quality of this Christian community is to be love. Love in turn expresses itself in harmonious relationships with others within the religious

⁴⁴Mullins, op. cit., p. 53.

⁴⁵Conner, op. cit., p. 258ff.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁷Southard, op. cit., p. 52.

community.⁴⁸

While the present work considers primarily the psychopath and the possibility of him having a religious conversion as it is advocated by Southern Baptists, it is important that the matters of religious growth and church membership be noted in passing. The importance of mentioning this will be readily observed in the case studies presented in Chapter IV.

Summary

This chapter has introduced by means of a brief historical survey the Christian denomination called the Southern Baptist Convention and has reviewed the materials of Southern Baptist writers pertaining to their concept of conversion.

It has been noted that conversion, as it is viewed by Southern Baptists, is an outward change in the behavior and life style of a person that has resulted from an inner reorientation to life. The importance of guilt and trust in this process of reorientation have been particularly underscored.

In order to better prepare the reader for the behavior

⁴⁸Joseph F. Green, Faith To Grow On (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), p. 107.

described in the case studies of the psychopaths in this work, special attention has been called to what Southern Baptists expect of a person after his conversion. The next chapter will present case studies of psychopathic behavior as it relates to the Southern Baptist theology of conversion.

CHAPTER IV

CLINICAL CASE STUDIES

It is customary to review the literature related to one's subject when doing thesis research. Chapter two of the present work considered the psychopathic syndrome as it has been established in the literature of the behavioral scientists. Chapter three explored the documents that have been produced by Southern Baptist theologians on the subject of conversion. This chapter is given to the clinical case studies.

The purpose of the present chapter is to present clinical materials demonstrating the manner in which the psychopath functions within a religious framework. All of the case studies presented relate to the Christian conversion experience as viewed by Southern Baptists and the psychopath's behavior as it proceeds out of the religious symbols.

The persons in these case studies are protected by the use of pseudonyms. In each instance there will be a brief introduction stating the sources for the material contained in the case histories. The introduction will be followed by a social history and a review of the individuals involvement with and use of religion.

Because of this researcher's personal involvement with the subjects whose case histories are being presented,

the use of the first person will be used to some extent in this chapter.

Peter

Peter is a 33 year old male serving a life sentence in the Texas Department of Corrections for murder. The material from which this study comes is from two sources. The first source is, of course, Peter's prison record. The second source is personal observations as Peter participated in group counseling.

Social History

Peter was born in the state of New York. He was the second child in a family of one sister, two brothers and two half sisters. When he was still very young his parents were divorced. His mother died when he was only seven.

Even though both of Peter's parents remarried, after their divorce he was placed in an orphanage. Apparently, there were very poor family relationships. Peter remembers his father as being very harsh, even cruel. Peter states that when he was about six years of age, his father struck him in the head with a hammer. A steel plate had to be placed in his head. Prison medical records verify that there is a steel plate in his skull.

While at the orphanage Peter was sent to one of the

local schools. His father through a regular court commitment, eventually had him admitted to a state school for teachable mental defectives. On the Revised Stanford-Binet he was given an I.Q. of 76. He escaped once from the school and because of his inability to conform to the rules was placed on convalescent status in care of foster parents.

His foster parents were good to him and showed him love. He got along rather well while living on a farm with them. However, upon one occasion when he felt everyone was against him he set the barn on fire. Consequently, he was arrested and charged with arson. He was sentenced as a youthful offender and entered the Reception Center at Elmira, New York. He was 18 years of age at the time.

From the Reception Center he was transferred to the Woodburne Correctional Institution. Here he created numerous disturbances. He was charged with possession of a knife, and was transferred to another institution. His behavior there was essentially the same. He was finally transferred to a state hospital for observation.

Records from these institutions are interesting reading. They present a somewhat confusing picture. This is further indication of the difficulties in diagnosing psychopathy. For instance, in the pre-sentence examination conducted before he was sent to the Reception Center it was

reported that he was of borderline intelligence, that he was very dangerous and that he was able to stand trial because he was not in a state of imbecility or insanity that would render him incapable of making his defense.

After sentencing and at the Reception Center he was given a diagnosis of "Psychopathic Personality with Pathologic Emotionality, Schizoid Personality, Emotional Instability." During this time he told of the enjoyment he received from killing small animals.

The examination at Woodburne reveals an "inability to relate to people. . . affect at times is completely inappropriate."

At the state hospital the diagnosis is bewildering and even amusing. The official diagnosis reads "Psychosis with Psychopathic Personality, Episodes of Emotional Instability with Schizoid features." After only three months a Certificate of Recovery was issued. The condition of discharge -- "recovered." Peter was then returned to the correctional institution to complete his sentence.

After his release, Peter began to travel. He wandered across the United States and Mexico. By the time he was arrested in Texas for his present offense at the age of 24, he had a record of 12 arrests ranging from New York to California, from Arizona and Nevada to Texas. His offenses ranged from vagrancy to carrying a concealed weapon and suspicion of

robbery.

It is difficult to know of Peter's behavior during this time. Much of his criminal activity consists only of his say-so. His records reveal that he has a tendency to talk a great deal and in the process there is much fabrication of the truth. Peter's present offense is the murder of the man in a west Texas community who had hired him to work on his ranch. Peter decided that he needed more money so he told the girl he had taken to live with him of his plans to kill his employer, the employer's family and brother. This would have been a total of five murders. He might have been successful in his plan had not the girl with whom he was living in a common-law arrangement (his previous marriage to a girl in Mexico had not been officially terminated) refused to bring him a second gun when his first gun jammed after killing his employer.

Peter fled to Mexico but the Federal Bureau of Investigation issued a fugitive warrant. He was arrested almost a month later in Guadalajara and returned to Texas to stand trial for murder. He was convicted and sentenced to life.

The psychiatrist who examined him before his trial reported his findings.

It is my opinion that (the subject) has a low normal intelligence, that he has a schizoid personality, and that he will not benefit from experience . . . it is my opinion that he will not benefit from

psychiatric treatment. It is further my opinion that at the time of the commission of the crime in question and at the time of my examination (he) knew the difference between right and wrong and that he knew the natural and probable consequences of his acts.

Upon his reception into the Texas Department of Corrections the prison psychologist made the following evaluation:

Adolescent type of constitutional psychopath on an unstable explosive personality profile complicated by marked hostility and aggression when aroused. . . subject is not mentally ill, but is socially ill and dangerous to society. In short inmate kills. . .and has no guilt feelings about his behavior. This is in common with all constitutional psychopaths. . .inmate is a cold unstable immature psychopathic killer who acts on impulse.

After five years of incarceration the following evaluation was made by another prison psychologist.

This inmate has a psychopathic personality, and is very unstable emotionally and socially . . .lacks values and has no identification with societies [sic] standards. . .with a weapon he would kill anyone whom he believes is against him without any feelings of guilt.

In light of the preceding it might be safe to say that Peter's psychopathy was due to both rejection (although there is reported a fair relationship with the foster parents) and brain damage.¹

¹William McCord and Joan McCord, Psychopathy And Delinquency (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1965), p. 69.

Religious Experience

Peter states that he was brought up within the Catholic faith. However, upon his arrival at the Texas Department of Corrections, he had started attending religious services led by a Southern Baptist Chaplain. He also began to participate in the Sunday School which was modeled after the Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School program and also used literature printed by the Southern Baptist Convention. It was during this time, according to Peter, that he decided he needed to change. So he turned to religion and "saw the light."

The first encounter I had with Peter was when I was assigned by my supervisor to the maximum security unit on which Peter was incarcerated. Peter had been asking to take part in group counseling. The group leader, against his better judgment, permitted him to become a group member. When I was assigned to the unit, my responsibilities included assuming the role of group leader.

I observed Peter in the group for a period of approximately six months before he was transferred to another unit for disciplinary reasons. During this time he had a tendency to dominate the group. He enjoyed the attention he got when he related his escapades to the other group members. Consequently, he tended to relate exaggerated stories about his trips to South America to hunt in the jungles of the Amazon

(which cannot be verified by the records), of how he had been hired to kill, and even how inmates had hired him to maim them in the fields so they would not have to work.

In one of the group sessions he began talking about how much he was getting from the Sunday School program and the worship services on the unit. As with most of his confabulation there seemed to be almost no feelings of any depth. He was confronted by one of his fellow group members with the question "Do you think you could ever kill anyone again?" With candor, but with shallow and inappropriate feeling he assured the group that he could, but that he did not want to. In fact, he assured them that to kill some people would be doing God a favor as well as humanity.

When questioned as to what he meant by doing God a favor, he related how he had been hired to kill the brother of the man who had employed him. He told of doing the job and when he returned to get his money he asked his employer "How do you want yours?" The man inquired as to the meaning of Peter's statement. Peter told the man that he was asking whether or not he wanted to get shot in the back or from the front. The man began to run, at least as Peter relates the story, and Peter then shot the man in the back. His rationalization was "any man that would hire me to kill his own brother doesn't deserve to live. I did God a favor by killing him."

The story may only be a fabrication but it was told with little feeling. Peter constantly left the group members frustrated. This was because he could not relate to them at the level of genuine feelings. There was no emotional involvement.

On numerous occasions I would attempt to get him to express his feelings about the matters he brought forth for discussion, but he seemed to have no strong feelings about anything. The strongest feelings he ever revealed were feelings of anger toward some of the prison guards.

When Peter would begin to talk about how he could kill and how happy he was with a gun in his hand, some of the group members would confront him about the inconsistency of his statements in light of his religious pronouncements. He would seem unaffected. The group would relate their frustration and anger to him.

While Peter could talk about what he had learned in Sunday School that week, it seemed to make no difference at all in how he behaved. One of the more angry group members, chided him that his religion meant nothing to him, "Why, for the right price, I bet you'd be willing to kill Mr. Kemp." Peter denied that he would kill me, but he did so with such a flat emotional response that I was not in the least bit comforted by his denial.

Because of disciplinary action Peter was transferred

to another maximum security unit. He soon began to lose interest in his Baptist faith and when I last talked with him he was thinking about getting to know more about Judaism.

Paul

Paul is a 30 year old white male who served less than five years on a fifteen year sentence in the Texas Department of Corrections for rape. He is of medium height, dark-complexioned and exceptionally handsome. The source of the material for this case study is the same as in the case of Peter.

Social History

Paul was born in Ohio and was the youngest in a family of four brothers. The report of the institutional sociologist reveals little about his family relationships. However, personal interviews revealed that his mother was somewhat over-protective. Paul was her youngest and perceived as her baby. She found it difficult to let him grow up. On the other hand, the father while not overly demanding, was difficult to please. He was kind but usually critical.

Paul had a rather normal childhood (although the institutional sociologist reports that his home stability is poor) but when he was in his early teens he injured his head after diving into a swimming pool. He had a severe concus-

sion. Until he committed the offense that took him to the Texas Department of Corrections his major offenses had been drunk and disorderly conduct and fighting.

After quitting high school, Paul decided he would join the Air Force. He served approximately one year and then was given a general discharge under honorable conditions due to unsuitability to military service. When he left the Air Force he began to move about across the country, first going to California and trying his hand at odd jobs. He returned to Ohio long enough to marry and then moved back to California taking his wife with him. From California he moved to Texas, Arkansas, back to Ohio, to Florida, Kentucky, back to Ohio and finally back to Texas where he was living at the time of his crime. All of this moving took place in a span of four years. In the meantime his wife had given birth to two daughters.

For the most part Paul has a pleasing personality and wins friends easily. Letters from former employers state that he was intelligent, hardworking and ambitious. It seems strange, however, that he never stayed with any one job for any length of time.

His wife, after five years of marriage left him. They were living in Ohio at the time. After the separation and divorce Paul moved back to Texas and had been in Texas for

The diagnosis as reported by the psychiatrist was "without psychosis: Passive-aggressive personality, aggressive type."

Two years later Paul was interviewed by a counseling psychologist for an evaluation to be given to the Parole Board. The ambiguity of diagnosis is seen in the report:

Acute emotional insecurity. . .intertwined paranoid ideations. . .Anxiety is pervasively moderate. . .
Bright normal mental ability. Highly deferent and inapt at making decisions.

Religious Experience

Apparently Paul was supposed to have had a conversion experience in a Methodist church when he was about 16 years of age. All indications are that this experience is very similiar to what Southern Baptists expect.

After his initial religious experience, Paul developed an interest in becoming an evangelist or minister. His mother is a very religious person and encouraged him (and still does) to pursue a career in the ministry. Even after his marriage he was the minister for a small rural Methodist church in Ohio.

When Paul arrived at the Texas Department of Corrections, he immediately threw himself into every program that would earn him extra points on the Point Incentive Program² which would in turn aid his chance of parole.

²The Texas Department of Corrections has created a system of points to encourage inmates to participate in

When I first met Paul he had been assigned and re-assigned to three different units of the Texas Department of Corrections. On each unit he had managed to manipulate himself into a place of prestige. He would not be on a unit very long until he had become the Secretary of the Alcoholics Anonymous group. He would work very closely with the chaplain until the chaplain would make him the Superintendent of the Sunday School program.

Such was the situation when I first met Paul. He was the Secretary of the Alcoholics Anonymous group that my supervisor had assigned to me. I soon experienced him to be bright, full of ideas on how to make the Alcoholics Anonymous group more effective and also how to make the group serve his own purposes.

It was soon after I met Paul that I discovered the chaplain had asked him to serve as Superintendent of the Sunday School which, incidentally, was structured on the order of the Sunday School program of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was also a member of the counseling group that had been formed out of the Alcoholics Anonymous group. This meant that Paul had moved into a position to pretty well run the Alcoholics

activities that would contribute to his rehabilitation. Points are given for the inmate's attitude and work, as well as for participation in religious activities, group counseling, the education program and Alcoholics Anonymous. The Parole Board takes notice of this evaluation when the inmate is being considered for parole.

Anonymous and religious programs on that unit.

Through a conference with the chaplain Paul learned that I had served as a Baptist minister. He was soon coming to me to ask religious questions. He had enrolled in Bible courses offered by the Southern Baptist Convention and indicated that he was considering entering the Baptist ministry.

In an individual interview with Paul, following a group counseling session, he let me know that he was in group counseling not so much because he had a problem, but because he wanted to see the technique I used in working with groups. He indicated that he wanted to learn more about group dynamics so he could be more effective in working with his Sunday School teachers.

In one of the group counseling sessions, a rather aware participant confronted Paul with his lack of feeling and participation. He accused him of playing a role and using both religion and Alcoholics Anonymous for selfish purposes. Paul admitted that he was using both programs to help make parole but that it was all right because he was helping so many of the other inmates. The group members were not particularly impressed by his altruistic spirit.

Only recently I received a letter from Paul stating that he had been paroled. He had served a little over four years of prison time.

David

David is a 22 year old white male who has been in and out of trouble for most of his life. While he has been arrested on numerous occasions, he has never received a prison sentence.

The information contained in this case study is derived from personal experience and involvement with the subject and his family.

Social History

David was born in a small city in Southeast Texas. He is the eldest of three children. His sister is three years younger than he is and a brother is nine years younger.

David's family environment was unstable from the very beginning. His father was a rough, harsh individual who drank a great deal. He would often yell at the children and slap them, particularly David. The mother was a whinning over-protective mother. When the father was extremely cruel, she would wait until he was gone and be especially kind to the children but always as a sufferer.

The parents obtained a divorce when David was approximately ten years old. As David grew into early adolescence his mother was unable to control him. He ran with a gang of boys known for truancy, vandalism, theft and drinking sprees.

David was often expelled from school but his mother always managed to get him readmitted. When he was arrested by the local police and the local judge was threatening to send him to a reform school, she managed to turn on tears and relate her suffering to the judge. Time and again she managed to keep David from being sent to a reform school.

At the age of sixteen David was playing with his eight year old brother at their home. It was summer and the brother had his shirt off. As a game David pulled his pocket knife. He held his brother and put the knife against the boy's bare stomach. David kept dragging the knife across his brother's stomach in a threatening manner. The youngster was terrified and began to cry. David continued this macabre game until the mother heard the cries and came upstairs to squelch the sport. David thought it was very funny that his little brother carried on so. He seemed totally unmoved by his brother's fear.

David would occasionally go to visit his father who had long since moved away. The mother would allow this only because she felt she could no longer handle David or because he needed the firm hand of his father. When David was 17 years old he was visiting his father and helping him in his machine shop. They were working on an automobile together. They began to argue. In the course of the argument David's father called him a son-of-a-bitch. David hit his father. David was extremely

large for his age. At 17 he was six feet four inches tall but the blow hardly phased his father. The father, however, was so angry he knocked David completely across the shop and unconscious with a single punch. When David regained consciousness he was told to leave. He has not seen his father since that time.

Every attempt to help David has proved futile. He was expelled from school as a sophomore and school officials told his mother that they would not permit him to enter school again. He was sent to a private Baptist school in another state but he refused to stay for very long. He has drifted from place to place always returning home for awhile usually to get some money out of his mother and then he is off again. Upon one occasion he was arrested in another state and served a six month jail sentence. But he has always managed to avoid receiving a prison sentence.

Religious Experience

When David was about 10 years of age he was attending a Baptist encampment. During a "preaching service" in which the evangelist managed to manipulate several youngsters into making "decisions for Christ," David was "saved." He returned home, told of his "conversion" and was baptized. He was a member of the church when I came to serve as minister.

I first became aware of David when my wife related to me

his behavior in a Sunday night youth group where she served as a sponsor. Throughout the discussion period David played with a large pocket knife. As he was leaving, he acted as though he were going to stab some of the boys in the group. My wife corrected him. He immediately whirled and pointed the knife at her. She managed to stare him down. He shrugged, gave a smirk and walked out without saying a word. He was 14 at the time.

Little time had passed before David's mother had come to my office regarding some trouble she was having with him. He had slipped out and taken the car at night without her permission. He did not have an operator's license and had wrecked her car. I made several suggestions but it became apparent that she wanted sympathy and was unwilling to take any advice I might offer. From that time on I attempted to become a friend to David, but try as I might, the relationship was shallow and superficial. I could never get very close to him.

In a three year period David's mother was in my office many times and her calls were even more frequent. Always she would whine and eventually break into tears, but she would manage to find an excuse for David's behavior. Her favorite statement seemed to be "I know David's a good boy, he's just running around with a bunch of wild boys." As the opportunity would present itself I would suggest that she get psychiatric

help for David but she refused to hear.

One evening she called in tears and told me that David was in jail. I told her I would visit with him. Arriving at the county jail I found the sheriff less than happy about the situation. When I told him I would like to see David, he began, "Well, we've got him this time. We're going to throw the book at him. We're going to wait until he's 17 (which was only about four months away) and then we're going to try him as an adult. He's just like his dad. He was born bad."

The sheriff led me to David's cell and as I sat down in the cell to talk with David, he seemed totally unconcerned. He showed no guilt and expressed no overt anxiety. His emotional response was shallow and unconvincing. Somehow his mother managed to scrape together enough money to hire a lawyer who was able to get David on probation.

It was during this time that I had written a paper on psychopathy. I asked his mother to read the paper. After she had completed the reading I once again suggested professional help. This time she willingly co-operated. When David was tested by a psychologist in a large psychiatric center the diagnosis supported my clinical observations. The psychologist indicated that he was not willing to say that David was psychopathic because he was still young. As long as he was under 25 years of age perhaps his personality would not be so rigid that

he would be beyond treatment.³ He added that if David had the same personality profile at age 25 he would be very pessimistic about the outcome.

The psychologist used his influence to get David enrolled at an out of state Baptist Academy. Things went well for a few weeks but David refused to stay at the school, and refused to follow through on any kind of treatment. His psychopathic behavior has persisted to the present.

Elmer

In his monumental work on psychopathy Cleckley shows the behavior of the psychopath as it is manifested in various professions.⁴ He misses a good thing, however, when he fails to include an Elmer Gantry.⁵ Although he mentions in passing that "Frank" is an ordained minister of "a small religious sect noted for vigorous evangelical fervor" he fails to show the psychopathic behavior of one who has chosen the ministry as his vocation.⁶ For obvious reasons the Baptist minister

³L. C. Webber, "Working With A Psychopath" Journal of Abnormal Psychology XLVII (July, 1952), p. 721. and McCord

⁴Hervey Cleckley, The Mask of Sanity (fourth ed.; St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Company, 1964), p. 201ff.

⁵Sinclair Lewis, Elmer Gantry (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1927).

⁶Cleckley, op. cit., p. 118.

reputation as a fighter and was known for being rather "wild."

Religious Experience

It was as an adult that Elmer had a "life changing conversion experience." He was still working in the oil fields and by this time he was married and had a family. Soon after his conversion Elmer indicated that he was "called to preach the gospel."

He began to preach as he was given opportunity and finished his college education while serving as pastor of a small rural Baptist congregation. He felt that he should continue his education and receive seminary training. He left his family on the church field while he attended seminary during the week. On the weekends he would return to his church and family.

During this time Elmer became sexually involved with two or three women in his congregation and also with various women in the city where the seminary was located. He would often talk about his sexual conquests. His roommates were dumbfounded that he could talk about such experiences without demonstrating any guilt anxiety regarding his behavior. One of his roommates finally confronted him with the question "How can you look those women in the eye when you preach to them on Sunday?" His answer, which contained adequate theology but inappropriate affect and feeling was "It isn't

easy until you know that God forgives you."

Elmer's behavior eventually reached the disciplinary committee of the seminary and he was brought before the committee for examination. He admitted his guilt and was on the verge of being dismissed from the seminary. However, tears of repentance and a recommendation from a faculty member who was a friend gave him a second chance. He became much more careful about telling of his exploits.

During seminary he seldom studied, but he had a way of remembering enough facts to pass examinations. He often borrowed the notes of others to study and relied upon their work to get him through. Because of his ability to speak fluently he could do any man's sermon justice. That is precisely how he prepared his sermons. His sermon preparation consisted of borrowing the sermons of friends and roommates and adding them to his repertoire.

After graduation from seminary he settled into a growing pastorate located in a small city. The same congregation had supported him through school. Now he could devote full time to his parish work. What this meant was more time for hunting and fishing. His family was as neglected as before. He continued his ways with the women in the church.

As the small church grew there was a need for a part time church secretary. A young married college student volunteered to serve in this capacity. Her husband concurred

that this would be a gift to the church. Elmer eventually became involved with her. The young secretary told her husband of the affair and told him that she was seeking a divorce. Of course, Elmer had no intentions of leaving his wife and marrying the young secretary. The angry husband picked up a pistol and marched to Elmer's office at the church. Elmer in his charming persuasive manner related how the young man had encouraged his wife to work as the church secretary. This had thrown the secretary and pastor together. They were not really at fault. Eventually, the distraught husband said "You're right, brother Elmer, it's my fault for throwing you two together and I apologize for the way I've acted."

Elmer made the most of the generosity of the church's deacons and the prestige of his position. He would charge clothes at the local clothing stores with no intention of paying. He knew that the deacons would not let the church be embarrassed by the debts and would pay the debts themselves rather than let the church be scandalized. He ran up debts with medical doctors, dentists and optomologists. The bills followed him wherever he went.

When the church built a new parsonage, Elmer bought new furniture for the house. Within a few months he was called to a larger church in one of the suburbs of a large city and again completely refurnished their new home leaving

his father-in-law the responsibility of paying for the furniture purchased shortly before moving.

In his new charge his irresponsible behavior continued, but his ingratiating charm kept the people happy. They were convinced he was indeed God's man for them and while they knew he had some faults they also knew that they were nothing serious.

It was while he was serving as pastor of this congregation that I first met Elmer. He greeted me with a smile, a sweet syrupy platitude and a firm handshake. I could not put my finger on my feelings at that moment, but later upon recollection I decided that the greeting had seemed somehow insincere. As I came to know him better I discovered that it was indeed the lack of feeling in his greeting. The words were right, but there were no appropriate feelings accompanying the words.

By all the traditional standards of success Elmer was a successful pastor. So successful, in fact, that one of the largest churches in that metropolitan area asked him to come as their pastor. He decided to accept their invitation.

Elmer continued not only to have affairs with women in his new parish, but he occasionally returned to his former one and renewed acquaintances with the female members. It was not long, however, until Elmer was called to a meeting of the deacons of his new church. There they confronted him with the

signed statements of two of the women of the church, admitting that they had been involved in sexual relationships with the pastor. He was asked what he intended to do. He gave them his resignation effective that night. During this time he showed no guilt over his behavior. He did show some anxiety, but it was because he had been exposed not because he was experiencing guilt over the manner in which he had used people. Elmer left the ministry and went to another state. At the last report he had become a traveling salesman. Prior to this he had spent 15 years as a Southern Baptist minister.

This case study did not present documentation from psychological instruments as in the three previous cases. I have relied upon clinical judgment. The McCords have noted

The next decades will probably produce adequate tests of guilt and rational ability, but until that development clinical judgment must carry the burden in diagnosis.⁷

From the manner in which Elmer showed little or no guilt and the marked inability to relate in depth to persons I am confident in concluding that Elmer manifests the psychopathic syndrome.

Summary

This chapter has presented in narrative form four studies of psychopaths relating their psychopathy to their religious behavior. The clinical material has demonstrated

⁷McCord and McCord, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

the manner in which these individuals manifest their psychopathy. In each case guilt is feigned but there is no evidence of a genuine guilt anxiety. The relationships that are mentioned demonstrate a lovelessness and hence lack depth. They view people as objects to be used. Each person can speak the language of religion and can relate a conversion experience but it is obvious that there is no change in behavior. The behavior remains aggressive, impulsive and asocial. No attempt has been made to draw any conclusions. That task has been reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the introductory chapter the purpose of this final chapter is to make a summary statement regarding the methodology used in this study, to set forth the conclusions of this research, to mention its limitations and suggest some areas for further study.

The Methodology

This study has examined the possibility of religious conversion for the psychopath from the theological perspective of the Southern Baptist Convention. The working hypothesis, based initially upon a theoretical question in the mind of the writer, has been that the psychopath is emotionally incapable of the experience known in Southern Baptist theology as conversion.

The method of testing the hypothesis is very simple. It was determined that first one must know who the psychopath really is. Consequently, the psychopathic syndrome was established based primarily upon the excellent work of the McCords. This is reported in detail in Chapter II. In order to determine the meaning of conversion as it is expressed by Southern Baptists the literature of Baptist writers was examined in Chapter III. The next step was to examine the

actual behavior of psychopathic persons who claimed to have experienced a religious conversion. Chapter IV records the clinical case studies of four male psychopaths who professed the Southern Baptist faith. From this method has come the findings related in the remainder of this chapter.

Conclusions

Certain conclusions have come from the study of the literature related to the psychopathic syndrome and of the Southern Baptist theology of conversion. Essential to the conclusions reached by this researcher are the case studies. Without the case studies the conclusions arrived at would be too theoretical to justify the effort expended in going through the literature.

The basic conclusion is that the research tends to support the working hypothesis of this thesis: the psychopath is emotionally incapable of the experience known in Southern Baptist theology as conversion.

This is not to make a theological pronouncement of any kind. The purpose of this work has not been to offer a critique of Southern Baptist theology. It has simply been an attempt to observe as a behavioral scientist that experience called conversion as it is defined by Baptist writers and as it relates to the psychopath.

In reality, there is an indication that Baptist theolo-

gians are coming to a more realistic understanding of the problems of guilt and psychopathy. For example, Brister would speak of "the complexity of guilt."¹ He emphasizes that the pastor must come to grips with it more realistically than in the past.

Drakeford, a Southern Baptist theologian and professor, even attempts to deal with the problem of psychopathy itself.² He is the first Southern Baptist to deal directly with the psychopath. However, he relates the problem of psychopathy to the practice of integrity therapy and does not deal with the problem in theological terms at all. There is also some question about the examples he has chosen to present as psychopaths. He chose a group of drug addicts as being representatives of the problem of psychopathy. In view of the work of the McCords it is doubtful that Drakeford has chosen an adequate sampling.³ It is interesting to note that the Baptist theologians who are attempting to view in a more enlightened manner the problems related to guilt are those who are relating the studies of the behavioral sciences to the study of theology. These theologians generally teach in seminaries and specialize

¹C. W. Brister, Pastoral Care In The Church (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 234.

²John W. Drakeford, Integrity Therapy (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967), p. 66.

³William McCord and Joan McCord, Psychopathy And Delinquency (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1956), p. 35.

in the practical fields of pastoral care and religious psychology.

While this work makes no judgment of theology, it does not deny the possibility that the psychopath is capable of a change in behavior due to an experience that might indeed be called a conversion experience, if conversion is used to define a change in behavior. It is not, however, the experience defined by Southern Baptists.

The conclusions reached in this study give consideration to (a) guiltlessness and conviction of sin, (b) lovelessness and faith, (c) a change in character, (d) semantic dementia, and (e) the psychopath in the church.

Guiltlessness and Conviction of Sin

It has been pointed out in Chapter II that one of the distinguishing features of the psychopath is his inability to feel guilt. Chapter III in turn demonstrated that Southern Baptists feel that a person cannot be truly converted except as he is convicted of his sin, that is unless he feels guilty for his behavior. Because the psychopath does not feel guilt over his behavior it logically follows that he is not going to be convicted of his sin regardless of the manipulative method used to convince him that he is indeed a sinner.⁴ Whereas a

⁴L. R. Scarborough, With Christ After The Lost (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952), p. 162ff.

good neurotic might be very concerned about sin, convinced of his need for forgiveness even to the point of being pre-occupied with religion, the psychopath could not care less.

As shown through the case studies, when the psychopath talks the religious language, he is not feeling guilt or a need for religion. He is content to use religion to his own advantage. He is not particularly concerned about religion except when it serves as a means to his own self advantage. Because the psychopath can feel little or no guilt and because feelings of guilt are essential to the Baptist concept of conversion, it is concluded that the psychopath cannot experience conversion as Southern Baptists view it.

Lovelessness and Faith

Closely associated with guilt is love. In fact, "Guilt begins in love, is impossible without love and paradoxically is only cured by love," according to Stein.⁵ The psychopath not only feels little or no guilt, but cannot establish genuine bonds of affection.

Chapter III noted that for Southern Baptists faith is a relational matter. It is commitment to the person in history known as Jesus. It was also pointed out that this is a somewhat mystical relationship, but, nevertheless, it is a

⁵Edward V. Stein, Guilt: Theory and Therapy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 14.

relationship. The question then arises, can the psychopath demonstrate this kind of faith? Can he be that committed to anyone, much less to a person that can be known only in the context of a mystical relationship. The evidence of the case studies in Chapter IV are clear enough in showing the inability of the psychopath to make much of what Baptists call faith. The psychopath cannot form bonds of affection and this is necessary if he is to demonstrate a genuine faith for faith is of a relational nature in Baptist theology.

A Change in Character

If the above conclusions are correct, and there is little evidence that would indicate otherwise, then it means that the change of character which is called conversion does not take place in the psychopath. The chapter calling attention to the Southern Baptist theology of conversion, Chapter III, denoted the visible and marked change that occurs in the behavior of the religious convert. The evidence of the case studies of the psychopath demonstrates rather clearly that although he may go through the outward motions of a conversion, even to the point of becoming a minister, there is no real change in his behavior. This change is an acid test of the genuineness of conversion as far as Baptist theology is concerned. One can only conclude that in the case of the psychopath there has been no inner reorientation of life. It is

something only talked about in a glib, superficial manner.

Semantic Dementia

As noted earlier in this study, it is unfortunate that Cleckley's use of the term "semantic dementia" has been so misunderstood.⁶ While it is indeed correct to note that one cannot determine by this criterion alone the diagnosis of psychopathy, it is safe to say that in the area of religion it is perhaps easier to understand what he means by the term than in any other area.

The case studies demonstrate how the psychopath can talk about guilt, morality, sin, forgiveness and change of behavior without the corresponding feelings. He can talk of guilt without feeling it. He can speak of love without feeling or giving it. As in the case of Elmer, the psychopath can articulate very precisely all of the theological implications of the Baptist idea of conversion and never experience the reality of that about which he speaks.

The Psychopath in the Church

Just as in Chapter III it was necessary to point out what the practical implications of conversion are as they relate to the process of maturing and living in religious community, it is necessary to comment upon it in the conclusions being drawn.

Baptists hold that the truly converted person will live "the life of love."⁷ It becomes the basic quality of the converted life. It is the basic foundation for the behavior of the converted individual and it is "the quality of love exemplified by Jesus Christ."⁸

This is, in actuality, the matter of identification. Baptists would say that the converted person is to become "Christ-like." That is, he is expected to identify with Jesus Christ. Is the psychopath then being asked to do something that is, at least for him, virtually impossible? As Stein has noted, this is one of the essential problems of the psychopath. He cannot identify with others.⁹

The case studies reveal persons who not only are emotionally incapable of experiencing conversion, but also find that what is expected of them once they are converted is also impossible. The life of love can be verbalized by the psychopath, but he does not love. He finds it impossible to live in community and conversely, the community would find it more than a little difficult to relate to him meaningfully and in depth.

⁷Joseph F. Green, Jr., Faith To Grow On (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), p. 99.

⁸Ibid., pp. 100-101.

⁹Stein, op. cit., p. 65.

In each of the case studies, there is no difficulty in seeing how insignificant the church really is for the person whose history is being presented. The psychopath uses the church or ignores it, but he does not, or cannot, find it meaningful or necessary to his existence. The church simply becomes another tool the psychopath can use in his aimless, aggressive way. The psychopath finds that the people of the church are too kind for their own good. They are gullible and therefore easily manipulated and used. Religion is for him an excellent, socially acceptable device that can be used as a lever to move people's defenses away so he can easily take advantage of them. There is no apparent change in the psychopath's attitudes nor in his outlook on life in spite of the fact that he talks about his conversion.

Limitations

There are some obvious limitations to the present work. In the first place the method of research is somewhat less than sophisticated. It would have been much better to have had control groups in which the conversion experiences of the neurotic, the emotionally healthy person and the psychopath could have been studied to determine contrasting values, to establish norms and arrive at some kind of statistical verification of the hypothesis. At the same time, however, clinical

observation and interpretation is still very much a part of the scientific method.

A second limitation closely related to the above is the very subjective nature of the work contained in this thesis. The writer is a Southern Baptist who has both positive and negative feelings about his religious heritage and therefore it is impossible to be entirely objective. Moreover, the researcher was very personally involved with the persons reported in the case studies. The cases were selected in part because of this involvement. While the lack of total objectivity may be a limitation of this work, it might also be one of its strengths. This writer frankly feels that total objectivity is a myth because one always interprets his data through the eyes of his own set of life experiences. There is always a certain amount of subjectivity brought to any problem.

Another limitation that might need mentioning is that which concerns the number of case studies used in the research. Although they were used because it was felt that they are somewhat representative of different kinds of psychopaths, there are only four of them and the question naturally arises, can one be specific in his conclusions if he uses only four men in his study.

It is this writer's feeling, based upon far more than the four subjects presented in this study, that the same material would be uncovered regardless of the number of devoutly religious

psychopaths one might interview. It is, however, a legitimate concern to raise a question about the number of cases reported.

Areas Open To Further Study

As work progressed on the problems contained in this thesis there was a growing awareness of the need of study in some related areas. There are a couple of areas in particular that might make for a fascinating study.

It would be of worth to do a study of the people who insist upon the conversion experience as defined in this study. It would be of some interest for example to test a sufficient sample of these persons and do a comparative study of the personality profiles of these with that of a sampling of psychopaths. The contrast might be enlightening. While it would be almost an impossibility, it would also be of interest to see the personality profiles of those who suggest as the norm for religious experience a conversion experience of the variety previously defined both before and after their conversion experience. The necessary correlative would be personality profiles of psychopaths before and after their conversion. Would there be any significant change in the profile of either and if so how would they compare?

Another area of study that could prove interesting would be related to the Christian minister. In view of the case study of Elmer is it possible that there are ministers

who possess varying degrees of psychopathy? No doubt there are some who do. A series of psychological instruments might be used on a sampling of ministers to determine the degree of psychopathy that might exist in the sampling.

An idea that might bear investigation by those interested in both religion and the behavioral sciences lies in the general area of the treatment of psychopathy. It is sometimes suggested that the most effective therapy for the psychopathic child is to give love when love is not deserved.¹⁰ If this is so, can the church become an ally in treatment by giving love when it is not deserved. For Baptists this situation would be an example of what is known as grace.¹¹ Baptists think of grace as unmerited favor; it is being loved when love is not deserved. If the church is not currently serving in a supportive role what can it do, if anything at all, to help become a part of the reorientation of the psychopathic child's total environment?

Little more need be said by way of conclusion to the present work. While there are many facets to the problem of psychopathy they have not been within the scope of this investigation. It is felt that sufficient evidence has been

¹⁰William McCord and Joan McCord, Psychopathy And Delinquency (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1956), p. 110.

¹¹W. T. Conner, The Gospel Of Redemption (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1945), p. 94.

presented to support the conclusions reached and to justify the initial undertaking of such a venture.

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