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# Clinical pastoral supervision and the theology of Charles Gerkin

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matters. Migliori asks that aspects of Barth's understanding of sin can be brought to bear on the concerns raised by feminism that "sin as pride" is a male-dominated model. Placher offers the models of solidarity, reconciliation, and redemption as alternatives to more arcane metaphors for what Christ accomplishes on the cross. Stroup writes that one way for Western Christianity to re-energize ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue would be to review our commitment to the *filioque* clause and reclaim the autonomy of the Spirit as an expression of God's power. In the final section, Riggs does a good job of spelling out the practical ethical considerations in the formation of congregations as centres of moral discourse in a pluralistic world.

Henry Langknecht  
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### **Clinical Pastoral Supervision and the Theology of Charles Gerkin**

Thomas St. James O'Connor

Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998

152 pages, \$24.95 Paperback

Thomas St. James O'Connor of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary writes a thorough and insightful book for clinical pastoral supervisors and their supervisees. Pastors who have a special interest in the field of clinical pastoral counselling will also find it as an excellent resource. Supervisors will find this a must for their bookshelf.

O'Connor begins with a survey of the literature in the field of clinical pastoral supervision. He follows with a discussion of his research. O'Connor's analysis is exhaustive. Covering 298 articles and four books from the last 20 years on clinical pastoral supervision, O'Connor provides a complete picture. O'Connor's research identifies three basic approaches to supervision: the social science, the hermeneutic and the special interest.

The literature overview and research function as an introduction to the theology of Gerkin. The subsequent two-thirds of the book are devoted to Gerkin's method.

O'Connor's familiarity with Gerkin is evident throughout as he unpacks for us Gerkin's method of *praxis/theory/praxis*. Basically, praxis is seen as the raw experience which comes from the "living human document" with which the supervisee is working in a therapeutic setting. In supervision (according to Gerkin's theology), interpretation of this praxis is drawn from

Christian sources as well as the social sciences and "special interest" disciplines. Gerkin does not invalidate interpretations from other professions. Instead, he interprets them from the hermeneutical framework of "Christian fact". Interpretation and the critical thinking of theology reveal the "theory" present in practice or "praxis". This initial praxis is the working relationship between the supervisee and client. It is also the relationship between supervisee and supervisor. Gerkin adopts from the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer a concept known as the "fusion of horizons". The idea focuses on a meeting of the "horizon of meanings" and narratives that both supervisor and supervisee bring to the supervisory relationship and case studies. O'Connor embraces Gerkin's suggestion of five areas of interpretation of praxis: interpretations from "Christian fact", the social sciences, concrete experience, the narrative hermeneutical quality of supervision, and the "fusion of horizons". Interpretation and the "fusion of horizons" transforms practice or praxis. Therefore, practice moves *to* theory, and then *away* from theory *back* to practice transformed.

O'Connor's book is not a light read. Yet the case studies which O'Connor uses to open and close each chapter do illumine his point. Most interesting is O'Connor's analysis of Gerkin's *own* application of the "fusion of horizons". O'Connor rightly points out that Gerkin fails to employ the method fully. Gerkin's own case studies, O'Connor's research demonstrates, omit the important "fusion of horizons". O'Connor, on the other hand, makes sure to include this important aspect of Gerkin's method in O'Connor's case material. Indeed, in a sense O'Connor "fuses" Gerkin's horizons.

For those who have admired the work of Charles Gerkin, O'Connor's book is a treat. You do have to take the time to peel open the wrapper to get at the treat. Yet, in the end, it is well worth the effort.

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### **The Courage To Teach**

Parker J. Palmer

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998

199 pages, \$30.95

In *To Know As We Are Known/A Spirituality of Education* (1983), Parker J. Palmer presented a spirituality of education in which mind and heart work together in the quest for knowledge. "The search for 'wholesight',