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The Client-Centered Counselor in the Pastoral Setting

Joseph Roland Armshaw

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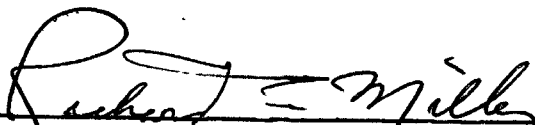
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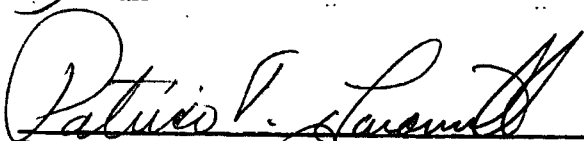
We, the undersigned, members of the examining committee, certify that Joseph R. Armshaw has met all the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with major in Counseling.

Further, we have examined him on this date and have determined that he has demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of his field of specialization and that his thesis is satisfactory in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date: May 2, 1975

THE CLIENT-CENTERED COUNSELOR IN THE PASTORAL SETTING

by

Joseph Roland Armshaw, C.S.S.R., B. A.

Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Pedagogical Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas of the Permian Basin

May 1975

THE CLIENT-CENTERED COUNSELOR IN THE PASTORAL SETTING

by

Joseph Roland Armshaw

A B S T R A C T

A role conflict exists for the priest in the contemporary catholic church. He must act as an official minister of an authoritarian church in his spiritual role and at the same time as a counselor that meets the needs of his parishioners in his secular role. Therefore, "How authoritarian must he be?" and "How permissive can he be?" It is proposed in this study that the modern catholic priest can find an answer to this dilemma when he applies Rogers' client-centered counseling theory to his pastoral role.

Rogers' theory is based on the dignity, worth, and trustworthiness of the individual. These basic assumptions are consistent with contemporary catholic philosophy. Rogers emphasizes subjectiveness; this is similar to the catholic position that the subjective element is the framework of reference regarding a person's ethics. In catholic terms, the priest-counselor is involved with helping a person develop his God-given capabilities to the fullest. In Rogerian terms, the priest is facilitating the client's self-actualizing tendencies. The client-centered counselor's intervention

permits the client to be free for growth and development in the manner of the pastoral counselor's insistence on the importance of man's free will. Therefore, the two positions are consistent with one another.

A review of the pertinent literature demonstrates that clergymen counselors are as competent as secular counselors. Moreover, the authoritarian stereotype given to pastoral counselors is not supported by actual data. The question remains, however, can pastoral counselors function as ministers of an authoritarian church and yet be accepting of people in the human condition? According to Rogers a client-centered counselor must demonstrate nonpossessive love for anyone who needs his help. For the catholic priest this does not mean abandonment of his role as an official minister of the church. Consequently, a pastoral counselor, within the framework of client-centered counseling, can resurrect temporal life inside a person and assist him in becoming fully functioning.