

THE ROAD BROADLY TRAVELED

Scott Peck's book, *The Road Less Traveled*, has had enormous popularity, even in the Christian community. His title has an appeal and reminds Christians of the words of Jesus:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and **narrow the road** that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13, 14)

But is Peck really talking about this narrow road of Jesus Christ?

The front cover has a subtitle that could be equally appealing to Christians: "A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth." Each of the three items listed is important to every Christian. Love is fundamental to the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Traditional values" spells welcome relief in a culture of "new morality" and other attacks on traditional values that are based on biblical teachings. Every Christian wants to grow spiritually. Nevertheless, we cannot assume compatibility with Christianity. "Love" has definitions ranging from "I love chocolate pie" to lust to the true love of God, demonstrated in sending Christ to die for us "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8). Traditional values could mean a system of morality that has no links to the redemptive power of Christ. "Spiritual growth" has been made popular by such mushrooming cultural movements as codependency, 12-step groups, and the New Age movement, which do not acknowledge the Lordship of Christ nor recognize the reality of other (demonic) "spirits." We must view this book with discernment, regardless of the outward appeal of the cover.

There are a couple of major themes apparent in the book that we need to note before delving into a detailed critique. The author is a psychiatrist, and he makes a forceful appeal to psychotherapy as an avenue of spiritual growth. Some of his ideas appear on the surface as a welcome change from traditional psychoanalysis. For example, he heralds love as the major factor in the success of counseling. Surely this is superior to the artificial, anti-Christian "professional detachment" characteristic of therapists. Still, we must examine his case more deeply to determine whether his brand of love fits the descriptions of the New Testament teachings on the matter. Peck claims initially to be eclectic in his psychological viewpoint. He says he does not belong to any particular school of psychology. His writings do indeed reveal a mixture. There are elements of

Freud and Jung in his descriptions of the nature of man and the root causes of his most basic problems. He takes a deterministic stance in this regard. From there he jumps to challenging his readers with the goal to **become God!** His views are highly New Age, holding more in common with Hinduism and Buddhism than biblical Christianity. It is not easy to see the leap between Peck's deterministic view of man's problems and his call to "become God," which is the second major theme of the book. We will spend considerable time reviewing Peck's religious perspective with its accompanying heresies.

There are several major questions addressed by every system of thought that seeks to understand, explain, and change the behaviors and attitudes of man. These same questions are also addressed by the truth of God's Word, and they will be a helpful outline as we seek to unravel Scott Peck's teachings:

1. Who is man? What is his basic nature?
2. What is man's fundamental problem?
3. How can he be changed, and who is the agent for that change?
4. What is the goal in this process of change?

Who is Man? Is he good? Is he God?

Peck's basic view of man is extremely optimistic, as he claims that man's nature is basically good but corrupted by poor parenting experiences. He sees man as autonomous and capable of responsible action. Referring to both Freud and Jung, however, he claims that approximately 95% of the mind is unconscious. He departs from the negativism of Freud and cites Jung's reference to the "wisdom of the unconscious," which he says is allied with the therapist in bringing about self-knowledge and self-revelation. He also quotes Jung's term "collective unconscious," believing that the wisdom of our ancestors is inherited and already contained in our minds. He distorts a familiar hymn line, "I once was lost, but now am found," and claims that a person is "reborn" through psychotherapy. Moving even further into blatant heresy, he says that "our unconscious is God - God within us. We were part of God all along." He states "that it is hardly a heretical concept, being in essence the same as the Christian concept of the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit which resides in us all." In Peck's theology, the individual is the "conscious," God is the "collective unconscious," and the interface between them is the "personal unconscious."

The Holy Spirit *does not* "reside in us all," but *only* in those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior:

"We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. **If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God**, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:13-16)

"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.'" (John 3:5, 6)

"'And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.'" (John 14:16, 17)

"You, however, are controlled not by the flesh but by the Spirit, **if** the Spirit of God lives in you. And **if** anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." (Romans 8:9)

"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

"He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Corinthians 1:22)

Not every person can claim that the Holy Spirit resides in his heart, but only those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Lord.

Scott Peck makes no claim in this book to being a Christian, and his writings reveal an anti-Christian theology. Therefore, we must conclude that he does not understand the things of the Spirit, which are "spiritually discerned."

A great deal of attention is given to "ego boundaries." Peck explains the "terrible two's" of childhood as a child's learning the limits of his own power. (He makes no mention of the sinful

nature which the Bible tells us is present from the time of conception.) Later, he mentions "cathexis," the introduction of something beloved outside of ourselves into ourselves. He speaks of enlarging the self, stretching and thinning those "ego boundaries," as the distinction between self and the world is blurred. Eventually, he claims, there may be achieved a "mystical union" with the entire world. He openly refers to the Hindu belief in the "oneness of all reality" but asserts that ego boundaries must first be hardened before they can be softened. However, after a lifetime of love, the "more lasting mystical ecstasy can be ours." Peck apparently does not see man as a creation, totally separate from his Creator (and separated by sin), but as one who can be merged with all of reality and actually **become God**.

Peck equates religion with worldview, claiming that each of us has a religion regardless of belief in God or the lack of it. This bears a faint resemblance to the fact that we are fundamentally worshiping creatures. We either worship God or we worship created things:

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is forever praised." (Romans 1:25)

The case studies in the book reveal Peck's belief that Christian faith, or any kind of belief in God, is no more important than any other aspect of life. He claims that some mature into a faith, while others mature out of it. Sometimes, he says, faith in God is a "sickness," and other times it is not. He does recommend that therapists pay more attention to their patients' religious beliefs, even those who claim atheism. His comments, which in no way point to the gospel of Jesus Christ, do attest to the basically religious nature of counseling.

To summarize, Peck views man as inherently good, capable of assuming responsibility for his own life, and able to achieve both union and equality with God.

What is Man's Problem?

Scott Peck boldly asserts that:

"Through psychoanalysis it is possible to trace the etiology and development of a neurosis in an individual patient with an exactitude and precision that is seldom matched elsewhere in medicine."

This is a presumptuous statement which is not supported by a shred of research or scientific evidence. Surely if some evidence existed, Peck would have documented his sources. He also claims that we would often expect a "neurosis" of greater severity, considering the intensity of traumas suffered by many persons in therapy.

Poor parenting, specifically abandonment, is cited by Peck as a primary cause of problems in living. He claims that parental failure to fill needs for affection, attention, and care results in "passive dependency" later in life, a fierce attachment to others which is not equivalent to real love. The individual's worldview (religion) and idea of God is, according to Peck, *determined* by family experience. All of this is a rather strange beginning for one who theorizes with such confidence that man can grow into equality with God!

Looking more into adult life, Peck outlines several basic problem patterns. One of the major ones is laziness, along with the unwillingness to delay gratification. He begins the book by quoting Buddha and telling us the rather obvious fact that "life is difficult," but without the hope offered by our Lord to overcome the tribulations of this world. His definition of "neurosis," drawing from Carl Jung, is that it is always a substitute for legitimate suffering. Much later in the book, he proclaims laziness to be equal to original sin, even citing Adam and Eve (an account he believes to be a myth) as the first example. According to Peck, Adam and Eve should have asked God *why* He had commanded them not to eat of the tree. Others, following this original case, "fail to consult or listen to the God within them, the knowledge of rightness which inherently resides within the minds of all mankind. We make this failure because we are lazy." Supposedly, we each have a "sick self," which displays such laziness, and a "healthy self," the "God within." Peck even defines evil as "laziness carried to its ultimate, extraordinary extreme." This, he claims, is inevitable, at least in this stage of "human evolution." Also, real "laziness in the form of our sick self might even be the devil." Although the biblical view will be covered more thoroughly later on, we ought to note the strong scriptural warnings to those who would quarrel with or question God's judgment:

"Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?" (Isaiah 45:9)

It is incredible how the mind of man can distort and redefine the truths clearly stated in the Bible about the fall of man--his sin, his disobedience to God, and the inevitable consequences. Another modern writer (John Bradshaw) sees "toxic shame" as the culprit in the Garden. These two authors, and others, are certainly creative, but deceptive and unable to discern spiritual truth. The real seriousness of these teachings, however, is in their failure to acknowledge the only hope for mankind to be delivered from the wrath of God--the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another troublesome area is responsibility. This discussion undoubtedly is part of the reason this book appeals to Christians, who would welcome a change from the purely Freudian view that man is ruled by unconscious motives beyond his control. Peck claims that "neurotics," including all children, assume too much responsibility, always claiming "I should," and maintaining a low self-image. (It is not clear how a person capable of obtaining "godhood" could assume too much responsibility.) Those with a "character disorder," on the other hand, assume too little, claiming "I can't." A related problem is the giving away of authority over one's own life to others, something Peck titles "escape from freedom." Toward the end of the book, he claims that "resistance to grace" (no connection to the Christian term, but one uniquely redefined by Peck) takes place because we do not want to assume the power and responsibility that we should have. That power and responsibility, however, is not that which is rightly delegated by God, but the "growing toward godhood."

Peck recommends a "dedication to reality" (which must be distinguished from God's truth) and cites "clinging to an outmoded view of reality" as a symptom of "mental illness." "Mental health," on the other hand, invites a stringent self-examination and total honesty (the truth as we know it) at all costs. He does believe that we must sometimes withhold the truth from others in order to protect them. The "root of mental illness," Peck asserts, is the lies we have been told and the lies we have told ourselves. In this dedication to reality, Peck lists a series of desires and attitudes that must be given up:

"The state of infancy, in which no external demands need be responded to

The fantasy of omnipotence

The desire for total (including sexual) possession of one's parent(s)

The dependency of childhood
Distorted images of one's parents
The omnipotentiality of adolescence
The 'freedom' of uncommitment
The agility of youth
The sexual attractiveness and/or potency of youth
The fantasy of immortality
Authority over one's children
Various forms of temporal power
The independence of physical health
And, ultimately, the self and life itself." (p. 71-72)

The inclusion of "the fantasy of immortality" reveals Peck's ignorance or rejection of the reality of eternal life, either with our Lord or forever separated from Him. The "fantasy of omnipotence" is an odd one since Peck believes man to be capable of becoming equal with God. Clearly, Peck does not embrace the God of the Bible.

Finally, as already noted, Peck sees the belief in God as *sometimes* being a sickness. One of the psychiatric cases he discusses at length had its "successful" conclusion in the patient's rejection of her childhood Christian faith. While her ideas of Christianity were clearly a distortion of biblical truth, we can hardly call such an outcome "successful" in the eyes of God.

Peck's definition of man's fundamental problem bears some faint resemblance to certain biblical truths. However, it is highly distorted, and as we will examine in the next section, his system offers no real hope.

Change...or Chains?

Peck imposes the full responsibility on his patient for both his own condition and its cure. He speaks of self-discipline and

self-care, claiming further that an attitude of "I am a valuable person" is essential to mental health. He supposes that many individuals have "never dared to truly take their destiny into their own hands," and he expresses a disdain for hand-me-down values and parental approval. Total selfhood--psychological independence and unique individuality--are needed for spiritual growth, according to this author. Such assumption of responsibility may be a welcome relief from the fatalistic, deterministic views purported by Freud, but it places a burden on *self* that no human can bear. As we will review more fully, the individual must of course repent and acknowledge responsibility for personal sin, but the real power for change comes only through total dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit. People are not so autonomous and independent as they might hope to presume, but are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness (Romans 6).

Peck cites discipline as important to spiritual growth. He says that if you wish to avoid pain and suffering, you won't achieve higher levels of consciousness or "spiritual evolution." His writing in the section "renunciation and rebirth" indicates that we should pay more attention to reincarnation. Death provides life with its meaning, and the giving up of self results in the joy of life. This principle, he claims, is the secret of *all* religion: "Buddha and Christ were not different men. The suffering of Christ letting go on the cross and the joy of Buddha letting go under the bo tree are one." Note here the use (and abuse!) of Christian terms such as renunciation, rebirth, joy, and giving up of self. Peck's usage of these words has nothing whatsoever to do with the Christian's death of the old self, the rebirth only possible through receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, or the joy that He gives. Reincarnation has no part in Christianity, as man is "appointed once to die, and then to face the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Discipline is a key concept in the ongoing sanctification of the Christian, but it is based on God's eternal commands, and self-discipline is specifically listed as a fruit which grows out of walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:23).

Love is discussed at great length, and it is an important concept in Peck's views of how man can change. Here again is something that sounds "Christian" but is unrelated to any biblical teaching. Peck supposes that no one has arrived at a satisfactory definition of love (apparently he hasn't read 1 Corinthians 13 or the book of 1 John), but his own unique definition is "to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." Here are some of Peck's beliefs about the nature and purpose of love:

Love provides the motive and energy for discipline.

Love is an act of the will, an intention plus an action. "We do not have to love. We choose to love."

Love is basically self-seeking (in direct opposition to 1 Corinthians 13:5):

"To love humans means to love myself as well as you."

"We are incapable of loving another unless we love ourselves."

"The act of loving is an act of self-evolution even when the purpose of the act is someone else's growth."
Self-love and love of others are "indistinguishable."

"Self-sacrifice" is a misconception of love, because such "sacrifice" is really to maintain our own image or moral superiority.

Love is selfish and unselfish. We only do something because it fulfills one of *our* needs. It fills and enlarges the *self*.

In summary: "The more I nurture the spiritual growth of others, the more my own spiritual growth is nurtured. I am a totally selfish human being. I never do something for somebody else but that I do it for myself."

Love is an action rather than a feeling, and may even be toward someone we dislike.

Love is a form of work and a form of courage. It takes work to give attention and to listen.

Love is disciplined. We are not enslaved to our feelings, but our feelings are *our* slaves.

We have a "godlike" power in choosing who we will love. We cannot love too many people and thus spread ourselves too thin.

Love is separateness, maintaining the distinction between self and others. Peck quotes Kahil Gibran to support his viewpoint, and is apparently uninformed regarding the unity in the body of Christ.

Love is essential in psychotherapy, in spite of the traditional view that the therapist must be aloof and detached. Peck claims that the loving nonprofessional may do as well as the professional. Furthermore, psychotherapy can be practiced by everyone as men and women "strive for God." Within his discussion of the importance of human involvement, Peck notes that he would have sexual relations with a patient *if* it would help that person (although, as of writing the book, he had never found that to be the case).

Love is a reverence, an awe for another person, not merely a sexual hunger. It is a mystery which requires *religion*.

Commitment is the cornerstone of psychotherapy, and of any genuinely loving relationship. Peck tells his patients, "You're here to do what you want to do, when you want to do it."

Love includes the risk of confrontation, and exercise of power with humility. "Love compels us to play God with full consciousness of the enormity of the fact that that is just what we are doing. With this consciousness the loving person assumes the responsibility of attempting to be God and not to carelessly play God, to fulfill God's will without mistake. We arrive, then at yet another paradox: only out of the humility of love can humans *dare to be God*." (emphasis added)

Romantic love is the temporary "collapse of ego boundaries." This, he says, is a "genetically determined instinctual component of mating behavior."

While everyone has dependency needs, dependence is not equivalent to love.

Love includes the risk of loss. Peck claims that courage is not the absence of fear, but acting in spite of fear. He mentions the fear of death (but not a word about eternal life), and says that death gives us "wise counsel" to make the most of life.

There is a great deal here that must be confronted and examined biblically. That will be reserved for an in-depth critique after we have reviewed all of Peck's teachings.

Ending his section on love, Peck questions why some persons transcend a childhood devoid of love, even without psychotherapy, and why others fail in psychotherapy. He doesn't stop to question the validity of psychotherapy itself, its assumptions or values, but launches into a lengthy section on grace. Again, we are faced with Christian terminology that holds nothing in common with true biblical teachings.

Peck begins his discussion of grace with the familiar hymn, "Amazing Grace," and there is where any resemblance to Christianity begins and ends. Here is the definition Peck offers for grace:

1. It nurtures human life and spiritual growth.
2. It cannot be fully explained by natural law or science.
3. It is a routine, "common phenomenon," which is not really so "amazing."
4. It is outside of conscious will and decision making.
5. It is a "force" that we don't understand which fosters mental health.

Peck's unique concept of grace is rooted in his idea of the "miracle of the unconscious." He questions whether it is the unconscious of the individual, or beyond those individual bounds. He asks whether it emanates down from an external God to man, or out from "the God within the center of man's being." Peck claims that humans need to "locate" things, even God and grace, but he prefers not to think in terms of entities--the conscious is partially permeable to the unconscious, and the unconscious is partially permeable to the "mind without." He uses physical evolution as a model for the "spiritual evolution" of the individual. Both, he claims, are miraculous and "shouldn't happen." Nowhere does he credit an independent Creator apart from man. Nor does he make even a passing reference to God's grace, His forgiveness of sin, demonstrated on the cross of Christ. It is unfortunate that he borrows the word "grace" to promote his decidedly New Age viewpoint. Since man is incapable of equality with God, Peck's beliefs about the process of change offer only despair, not hope.

Goals or False Gods?

We have examined Scott Peck's view of the nature of man, his opinion as to what is wrong, and his methods for change. There is huge theological error in all of this, but the heresy becomes most apparent in the goals Peck claims to be attainable for man:

In a section entitled "The Alpha and the Omega," he says that "God wants us to become Himself (or Herself or Itself). We are growing toward godhood. God is the goal of evolution."

In some of his concluding remarks, regarding "The Evolution of Consciousness," he states: "I have said that the ultimate goal of spiritual growth is for the individual to become as one with God. It is to know God. Since the unconscious is God all along, we may further define the goal of spiritual growth to be the attainment of godhood by the conscious self.

It is for the individual to become totally, wholly God. Does this mean that the goal is for the conscious to merge with the unconscious, so that all is unconsciousness? Hardly. We now come to the point of it all. The point is to become God while preserving consciousness. If the bud of consciousness that grows from the rhizome of the unconscious God can become itself God, then God will have assumed a new life form. This is the meaning of our individual existence.

We are born that we might become, as a conscious individual, a new life form of God."

Peck also supposes that man can attain "spiritual power," which he defines as the capacity to make decisions with maximum awareness--consciousness. He claims that there is a humility and a joy in this, knowing the power is not our own but the expression of a much greater power. How he reconciles his definition with the goal to become equal to God...we cannot explain in any rational manner. Becoming "totally, wholly God" is the very opposite of humility and the recognition of a greater power, which Peck does not identify as the God of the Bible.

Earlier we saw Peck's distorted definition of grace. He says that grace must be chosen, and it must be earned. He claims that the human race is in the process of an "evolutionary leap," and that the universe as we know it is probably a single stepping stone into the Kingdom of God.

Along the way of achieving Peck's goal of "becoming God," he asserts that we *must* reject the religion of our parents (whatever it might be), replacing it with the "religion of science." His goal is for the person to go from religious "superstition" to scientific skepticism, and then (maybe) eventually to genuine religious reality.

Another goal in Peck's writing is the giving up of some of the "old self" in psychotherapy. However, this has nothing whatsoever to do with the death to self pictured in Romans 6, the

putting off of the old self and putting on the nature and qualities of Christ. Much the opposite, *it is becoming God.*

Some of Peck's writing is confusing and difficult to follow logically, but the main point here is that Peck has brazenly assumed that man can attain equality with God, because his unconscious is already God. This has a familiar ring, echoing the aspirations of Satan before his fall from heaven:

"How you have fallen from heaven, o morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.'" (Isaiah 14:12-15)

"'You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'" (Ezekiel 28:12-19)

This is lengthy, but it is important to see clearly that Peck's assertions lead down the road to destruction, the road traveled by the enemy of our souls. Such arrogance is also characteristic of the Antichrist, and we ought to shudder as we consider the source of this kind of writing:

"He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."
(2 Thessalonians 2:4)

New Psychology, New Testament, or New Age?

Having now studied Scott Peck's misguided views regarding the nature of man, his problems, his goals and methods of achieving them, we will examine the biblical answers to these same questions, and also critique some of Peck's specific teachings in more detail.

Peck has taken a view of man's nature that assumes an inherent divinity, even the ability to become God. The Bible is clear in its statement that while man was originally created in the image of God, his nature, since the fall of Adam and Eve, is sinful *from birth*:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...' (Genesis 1:26a)

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5)

"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.'" (Romans 3:10, 11)

Man has no chance either to attain equality with God, to become God, or to achieve a "mystical union" with God. God is the Creator, and man forever one of His creatures. We are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), being conformed to His image. Romans 8:29, and numerous verses quoted earlier, show that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us when we receive Christ as Lord. However, that is vastly different from the "oneness" promoted by New Age and Hindu teachings, which require no repentance and no conversion to Christ.

In describing man's problems, Peck speaks about poor parenting and abandonment, laziness, aversion to suffering, forsaking of responsibility, and outmoded views of reality. Each of these specific areas needs to be discussed in more depth.

God is indeed concerned for those who have suffered abuse or abandonment at the hands of parents or others:

"You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; You encourage them, and You listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more." (Psalm 10:17, 18)

"Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me." (Psalm 27:10)

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling." (Psalm 68:5)

However, we are people who *respond* to the sins of others, either sinfully or righteously. Regardless of parenting or the lack of it, we are objects of God's wrath apart from the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. One of the very real, biblically defined problems of man is his objective need to be delivered from the wrath of God:

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--His eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Romans 1:18-20)

"Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him?"
(Romans 5:9)

The Bible speaks extensively to laziness and the requirement of God that we labor. However, the problem of Adam and Eve is not laziness, but the questioning of God's wisdom and subsequent disobedience to His direct commands--in other words, sin. The devil, and the evil he perpetrates, is not our "sick self," but a real being who was once an angel and fell from heaven because of aspirations remarkably similar to those Scott Peck asserts in this book--to enthrone himself on a level with the Almighty God.

Peck speaks a great deal of legitimate suffering. So does the Bible, though in much different terms. We are called to suffer for the cause of Christ, but are also assured of His presence and peace to sustain us, knowing that those trials are used of God to strengthen our faith and conform us to the image of His Son:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."
(James 1:2-4)

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." (1 Peter 1:6, 7)

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."
(Romans 8:18)

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

This book has a strong call to responsibility which undoubtedly accounts in some measure for its appeal to Christians. God does indeed call us to responsibility--to work, to serve Him, to go out into the world and "make disciples of all nations." He tells us that those who will not work are not to eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). However, God does *not* call us to assume equality with Him, or to presume that we can fulfill *His* responsibilities. It is only by complete reliance on His enabling power that we even begin to fulfill our rightful, God-given responsibilities. Apart from Jesus Christ, we can do *nothing*. God is in sovereign control of the heavens and the earth. In Him we live and move and have our being. There is no biblical call to assume "godhood."

Peck's "dedication to reality" sounds noble and appealing, but he fails to in any way equate his "reality" with the truth of God's Word. Jesus had a lot to say about truth, which is His Word, and the freedom that comes to us when we know the truth:

"To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who

sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'" (John 8:31-36)

We are set free from the bondage of sin by knowing the truth of God's Word and living in relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the **Truth**, and the Life. This is not equivalent to one's own individual definition of or knowledge of "reality."

Not only is Peck deceived in his understanding of man's nature and basic problems, he is thoroughly confused in his definitions of the important elements of change, such as love, discipline, and grace. He places full responsibility on man for his own change, which is clearly opposed to Scripture. Man must, of course, repent before God with a broken heart and godly sorrow, acknowledge his disobedience, and confess his sin in order to receive God's forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). However, the power for godly change comes only through the work of the Holy Spirit after conversion to Christ:

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." (Philippians 2:12, 13)

"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being."
(Ephesians 3:16)

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever!"
(Ephesians 3:20, 21)

Other Christians are also a part of this process, as we admonish, rebuke, counsel, encourage, and love one another (Colossians 3:16 and others). Christianity does not promote isolation or individualism as do some modern psychologists. People are not so independent as they might arrogantly assume, but are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness:

"Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)

Peck's discussion of discipline, which truly is a key to maturing in Christ, does not include the discipline of our Heavenly Father, who treats us as His own sons and daughters:

"And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons." Hebrews 12:5-7

Discipline is also to be practiced faithfully in the church body (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5), and self-discipline grows in the life of one who walks closely with Christ. All of this godly discipline is founded on the eternal laws of God and has the goal of conforming us to the image of Christ, that we might live lives that are pleasing to Him.

Peck's lengthy discussion of love needs to be compared with the definitions offered in the New Testament:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."
(1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:10, 11)

Love is a command of God, not a free choice as psychologists so often presume. In response to His love, we are commanded to love Him with our whole hearts, and to love others as much as we already inherently love ourselves. We do not have "godlike" power to pick and choose the objects of our love. We must love, if we are truly children of God.

Peck does make one comment that is very close to biblical truth when he states that love is an action--an action that can be taken even for the benefit of an enemy. It is love for one's enemies that distinguishes Christians from pagans (Matthew 5:43-

48), and love is expressed in the actions listed earlier in 1 Corinthians 13, not merely by way of warm fuzzy feelings.

The importance of love in psychotherapy is discussed extensively. It appears on the surface as a welcome relief to the traditional detachment of the therapist, which has no model in Scripture. He even talks about the risk of confrontation in a manner that at first sounds similar to teachings about restoration of a fallen brother:

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."
(Galatians 6:1, 2)

Contrary to such loving confrontation, however, is Peck's expression of "commitment" to his patients in telling them that they are there to do whatever they wish, whenever they wish to do it--in therapy with him. Furthermore, he claims that in confronting others we are becoming God. He does not acknowledge that we do so only on the authority of Scripture, fulfilling God-given roles in the lives of others. We must indeed counsel one another in love for the Lord and others, in a real relationship of love and commitment--not for financial gain, and not in a "professional" or "expert" role, although the pastor does have a special authority and ordination delegated to him by God.

Separateness (of the one who loves from the one being loved) is another aspect of love that Peck teaches. He fails to reconcile this with his theories of "mystical union" promoted elsewhere, and he also fails to understand the bond of unity in the body of Christ:

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope, when you were called--one Lord, one faith, on baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."
(Ephesians 4:1-6)

The idea of separation is closely tied to the major error in Peck's idea of love, and that is his view that love is basically self-seeking. Peck has no understanding of God's love demonstrated

on the cross while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8). Love is the very opposite of self-seeking, and is biblically defined as **not** self-seeking (1 Corinthians 13:5). The call of Christ's love is to deny self for His sake (Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). **Nothing** is to be done out of selfish ambition--surely this includes the love of others:

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."
(Philippians 2:3)

We must reject Peck's view of love as the very antithesis of biblical love, remembering that one who does not know Christ as Savior has no ability to love or to comprehend the love of God:

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:7, 8)

Peck's section on "grace" begins, unfortunately, with the well-known hymn "Amazing Grace." This is unfortunate because his subsequent definition of grace is so far removed from biblical truth that there is no resemblance whatsoever. These words from Ephesians show us the truth about God's grace:

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."
(Ephesians 1:7, 8)

"Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:3b-9)

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