

In Nomine Jesu
Rev. Stephen H. Funck

Chaplain Correctional Institutions
3107 Louise Avenue
Baltimore MD 21214
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May 22, 1995

President Roy A. Maack
LCMS - SED
Box 10405
Alexandria, Va. 22310

Dear Bishop Roy,

I met with Guy Mehl today about his recommendation I not serve as a parish pastor. We discussed the reasons, evidence etc. When I said I was going to meet with a Dr. Aaron Noonburg here about this further, Mehl thought that was an excellent idea and also stated that Dr. Noonburg might completely disagree with his - Mehl's opinion and recommendation.

I left with several questions. Where do I rank among clergy in relating emotionally? Maybe not at the 50%ile - average, but am I at the bottom fourth, bottom 5%? Mr. Mehl did not want to touch the issue. But there are all kinds of men in ministry. I certainly have known a number far worse than I, in my opinion for whatever it is worth. Why am I so defective, all the rest must take precedence?

Driving back and mulling over the illustrations and descriptions of evidence of my "problem" it struck me that not so long ago many of those features would have been described in other words and called strengths. Self control, slow to judgement, intellectual rigor, deeply principled, forgiving, accepting, inner peace, strength of character, some are even listed as fruits of the spirit in Paul's epistles. I wonder, no I know, what kind of clergy and what kind of church are the result when those characteristics are considered defective and worth eliminating.

Mr. Mehl was disturbed that I was not angry and hurt by his recommendation to you that I was unfit for ministry. I wonder if he enjoys being god, secure over the feeble wails of those he controlled in his wisdom for their good, the good of all.

In His Service,

Stephen H. Funck



Soli Deo Gloria

Baltimore City Detention Center
401 East Eager Street Baltimore MD 21201
A ministry endorsed by
The Southeastern District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

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May 26, 1995

President Roy A. Maack
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Box 10405
Alexandria, Va. 22310

Dear Bishop Roy,

When Lynne read my prior letter to you about my visit with Mr. Mehl, she wondered how Mr. Mehl could term: "Self control, slow to judgement, intellectual rigor, deeply principled, forgiving, accepting, inner peace, strength of character" problems. When I explained, she could understand but I am sure you were puzzled too. That is why I am writing the following.

I had written Mr Mehl: "The questions I have are technical. What should have I said instead? How does one make good emotional contact? How does one use one's own emotions to relate easily to others? I am not well aware of exactly what those common expectations are and in detail how to fulfill them. If you would have the time I would appreciate meeting with you and/or the psychologist and hear, as precisely and in as much detail, exactly what I need to say and how I need to act to use my emotions to interact with other people. "

When we talked, Mr. Mehl gave a number of illustrations and examples how and why I make people, including him, uncomfortable. Following are the items that proved to him my inability in relating emotionally.

I make people uncomfortable by approaching matters on the basis of logic and fact. That is threatening to people who just know what they want and do not want to have their feelings and wants thwarted. My broad base of knowledge, desire to understand all about an issue and logical examination of the various implications gets in their way of getting and doing what they want.

I make people uncomfortable the same way, by approaching matters on the basis of principles. Especially if they are insecure that what they want is proper, they do not want to hear expressed or implied in my speech that there are principles. That threatens them with judgement, that they might be found wrong. There is little worse to many people than to think what they think and want might be called wrong. They feel, those who operate on a basis of values are, in effect, judges and obviously can not relate to them emotionally.

Many want to interact with people who are emotionally oriented to them. They want to be friends without being held up to evaluation, fact or principles. People who are solution oriented like myself, confuse the issue as far as they are concerned. Their goal is a good time and friendship. They don't like those who see problems, want them solved, expect change in things, in them. They want to go on with what is important and ignore what to them are unpleasant issues, messy details.

Mr. Mehl was personally uncomfortable by my calmness. He knew, I knew he had recommended I never serve as a parish minister and that I knew he knew that was extremely important to me, that I had a deep sense of divine call. He expected me to be angry, bitter, I suppose like the others he had so demolished. He did not know how to deal with me. Implied was that he was comfortable and confident in his ability to handle those who had come back angry. I was at peace when I had been attacked. He felt that proof that I was incapable of relating emotionally. He could not relate to me emotionally. He was sure other ministers would also be unable.

I was calm because I was at peace inside. I was trying to understand, to hear precisely. Maybe what he said was correct and he would tell me ways I could become a better person. I had not deduced from the report he sent you that he counted me unfit for ministry, that information came from you by phone saying that was the advice Mehl gave you by phone. I did not know what had been said between you. Why should I have been angry when it would make me look foolish and keep me from learning, from developing an effective solution for the future.

I was puzzled by Mehl's report and recommendation. The report overall was highly complimentary except for the point on relating emotionally. I knew he must have had some powerful reasons for his evaluation but I could not see in it what those reasons were. He said I had problems relating emotionally to people, yet in my experience I have received much positive feedback on that very issue. It was certainly not because of a lack of compassion, of acceptance of people as they are in their situations. I find understanding people fascinating. When you truly understand people, seldom do you find one who chose evil over good. Usually they see themselves choosing the better of two goods or lessor of two evils, if they see they had a choice at all.

I had the impression that Mr. Mehl's rejection of my fitness was rather intensified because of my accepting attitude. I have know others for whom to say and have them know I meant "I understand" was terrifying. They did not understand themselves very well and suspected they had good reasons for not wanting to. To be truly accepted for what they were and be understood made them feel naked with their secret shame exposed to my view. If I were a caricature conservative, bible pounding, flag draped, Fundy, I doubt if he would have considered such a threat.

Mr. Mehl said something that truly concerns me for the whole church. He said, with the sophisticated systems seminaries have now I would not likely be certified anywhere. That was a general statement concerning the operating professional standards in his field for psychological evaluations of ministers and seminarians. What is cause for rejection traditionally was termed good character. The idea I get is that what would appear to be acceptable would be a man who would make a good camp chaplain for the guards at Auschwitz. He would comfort them to bear any of the unwarranted pain dumped on them by the camp residents and their situation.

It is well known there are two major irreconcilable camps in Psychology. The caricature of the one is the Psychologist comforting and excusing the serial rapist, murderer, etc. The caricature of the other is the Psychologist comforting and defending the family of the murdered, the woman agonized, giving testimony for the prosecution. The phrase - blaming the victim and excusing the perpetrator - is a good summary of the idea. Those who practice each standard are diametrically opposed and at war with those on the other side.

It is obvious which side Mr Mehl is on. He takes that position with conviction and uses his power to eliminate all representatives of the opposite side. He said plainly that he reports to the denominations for elimination from ministry every person he sees with my character traits. He said we would be fit for other positions, for example teaching, but must not be in parishes. When I spoke of the Gospel of Love and the church's task accepting individuals, using the strengths of each while recognizing each has limitations, Mr Mehl responded that the Law requires the Church to act in judgment and remove those not fit for ministry. I suppose he is one of those who would consider Jesus of the New Testament unchristian.

He is correct, people like me are lighting rods for conflict in parishes and in denominations, with those who are opposed to accountability, those who want their way without opposition, those who want clergy to follow without resistance. There are those who feel the task of the minister is to spread oil on troubled water, to focus on keeping the peace without seeking solutions or examining the roots of problems. In the short term that may keep the lid on, but the problems continue to fester, deepen, become entrenched, perhaps beyond solution.

That standard in parishes results in many hurt by words and actions of others, given only soft words, or brushed off. Those victimized are made to feel they are at fault. Many become disenchanted with their minister hoping that the next will set things straight. Churches loose

members, selectively, men with high standards quickest. , parishes become dominated by women and men who find the situation to their advantage ie since they are able to do what they want without hindrance.

The parish may call itself a big happy family but it is a sham. In actuality, it is dysfunctional with some freely causing pain, while others weep in the corners. Though church programs will be popular as window dressing, it will not be a place where real growth occurs. Activities are the proof of the Christian spirit.

That standard in denominations and seminaries results in selecting clergy who are unwilling to rock the boat and value peace at any price. Things may seem very comfortable, but those clergy have nothing to prevent them from seeking personal advantage anyway that seems attractive. Going along with whatever sexual partner is available. Placing self over any other need. Seeking position by any effective means. Using "issues" as rally points for friends. A denomination or seminary filled with men without high character is a very nasty place.

The argument for selecting out men like myself, I expect, is based on practical reasons. It is true we can be difficult. We are persistent, principled, undefeated by human opposition. We are uncontrollable. When we are wrong and sometimes we are, we cause problems. It would appear to select "good time charlies" might be a better choice. They just bring along a different set of problems. Nothing is built by straw. Brick is more difficult, but it will stand. A "good time charlie" never works for a cause, is never be around when needed. While impossible to control by force, men of high principle are always open to evidence, logic, reason, to change. They are not without emotion rather they delight when emotion is congruent with the reality.

This is a long report and analysis partially because I know I am the first person the SED sent for evaluation by Mr. Mehl. The SED had no way of determining by what standard and under what principles his Center operates. He would never report the information here in any clear fashion. Rather he would explain it as he sees it, believes it. In a similar fashion those who for psychological principles blame the victim and excuse the perpetrator don't explain it that way. When you finish listening to them, they make their position sound so reasonable, wise and loving. "They are encouraging the person to take ownership of their situation." Properly done that turns helpless victims into ones with authority and power for their future. It is evil when it holds them responsible for being attacked in the first place, for the hurtful actions of another. Personally most of the people I have met who refused to admit there ever was an innocent victim were ministers. How tragic, how unscriptural!

I was very surprised when I met with Mr. Mehl. He had reported about me: "He does not use his emotions to interact with other people. . . . he does not pay much attention to the feelings of others. . . . there is no place in his schema for relating emotionally to others. . . . He does not make good emotional contact with others, and does not use his own emotions in relating easily and spontaneously to others." I had displayed a wide range of emotions in my interviews with him: delight, anger, pride, bitterness, frustration, peace. He well knew, how emotionally expressive I am and that I value the emotional expressions of others, positive and negative.

From his report, I supposed I had a communication problem with others. I know sometimes there are problems but everyone seems to have some. My eyes are crossed, that kills eye contact which interferes with some people. I was not expecting the sort of answers to my questions that Mr. Mehl gave. Afterward I understood why he said it would be very hard to change if at all with years of psychotherapy, and that another therapist might disagree with his evaluation and recommendation. When he said I had a problem relating to others emotionally, it was code - euphemism - for something quite different. He was amused you did not realize the meaning of that code and had to phone him to ask. His other clients know those phrases meant the man is unfit for ministry. Abortionists help women with problems. Of course they mean those words and that is really how they see their work. To Mr. Mehl, I really do have a defective personality and am truthfully unfit for Christian ministry.

I think this information and evaluation will be useful to you. I would encourage you to take a deeper look. Not only of Mr. Mehl, but take special note, he claimed to be in accord with the

operative standards of his field in churches and seminaries. I expect the ELCA Bishops who use his service do not really understand what he means by his language. You might share this when you meet with them. They may want to take a deeper look also. Words do not necessarily mean what they first seem. The old Quaker was shocked by the mail order "Peacemaker", he got from Mr. Colt.

I feel I was fortunate to ask the right questions so that Mr. Mehl spoke the way he did. If I had spoken in a different manner, I am sure he would have guarded his words, concealing his meaning. It is similar to trying to understand the language in the conflict between the Liberals and Conservatives. The same words can have diametrically opposite meanings.

You asked if you could share Mr. Mehl's evaluation of me with others and I agreed. Now I ask this letter be also shared with whom ever has been or will be given that evaluation. Because this letter about his work involves an issue that is critical to the broader church, I am sending copies to the President of Synod, Dr. Barry, and also to Christianity Today, Lutheran Forum and Christian News. Hopefully they may find a way to give this issue wider exposure. Clearly, many pastors and candidates in many denominations have been given similar evaluations for the same reasons by other evaluators. They have been told they are unfit for the parish ministry. Many have no idea why that judgment was made. They have been deeply hurt. Many I am sure have been deeply puzzled, having sought to live and uphold the high standards of the calling of Christ, perhaps having received much encouragement for the ministry because of their warm Christian compassion. I hope this will help bring them the comfort and peace they deserve.

In the service of Christ,

send copy to Noonberg & Davis

Stephen H. Funck



Soli Deo Gloria

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