

Growth into Manhood: Resuming the Journey, by Alan Medinger

Reviewed by Gregory Dickson, Ph.D.

"Can a 30-, 40- or 50-year-old man go back and retrace his steps? Can you go back and live your childhood all over again—doing it "right" this time?" asks author Alan Medinger. Religious faith will provide support for the process, but more yet will be required of a man, he says, because "God does not heal our immaturity."

Alan Medinger offers direction, challenge, and encouragement to men who desire to grow beyond unwanted homoerotic attractions in his new book, *Growth Into Manhood*. Written in a straightforward, reader-friendly manner, Medinger's work promotes a deeper understanding of male homosexuality along with practical suggestions to guide the reader as he "resumes the journey" toward a full embrace of his true masculine identity.

"A man growing into manhood does not do it alone," the book explains. "He needs encouragers, models, and friends." These words set the tone for the pages that follow.

Alan Medinger is one of the best-known and respected leaders in Christian ministry to homosexual strugglers. In addition to sharing his own personal experiences, he describes the circumstances so commonly reported by the men he has counseled: a struggle with self-identity, and a resulting failure to achieve a stable, internal sense of equality with one's peers. He illustrates some of the ways in which the symptoms may be manifested in adulthood, while clarifying that this is an individual process which differs with each man.

Medinger's observations are congruent with the clinical experience of most reorientation therapists. In order to be effective, therapy must rely on understanding how the individual boy (and later man) has interpreted and acted upon the circumstances he experienced during his developmental years. Even though each individual's experience and healing process is undoubtedly unique, we see many of the same patterns: the tendency to doubt self, and to fear failure and the rejection of others; the development of a passive approach to life, with the acquisition of various self-defeating behaviors. All of the above fall within a broad cluster of commonly noted symptoms.

While the author does not directly focus on a discussion of psychological dynamics, the clinician reading this work

will easily note the underlying psychological themes related to separation/individuation, core beliefs, unconscious defenses, unresolved anger, failure to develop an internal locus of control, and the development of a false/adaptive self.

Medinger describes a double-binding, self-defeating situation. The developing boy has an inherent need to grow into a cohesive sense of adult masculinity. However due to his developmental experiences--which most often include difficulty in detaching from mother, attaching to father, and joining his peers as an equal--he may then reject that which he most fervently wants and needs. The resulting sense of frustration often leads to a perpetually diminished sense of confidence, personal power, and peer connection, along with yet a greater striving to escape that bind. And so the boy compensates through same-sex attraction.

The author provides a straightforward challenge to men who have gone, as he dubs it, "AWOL" from the journey toward manhood. He emphasizes the importance of an internal motivation toward maturity, rather than one which may be dictated by society--either by those with an anti-homosexual agenda, or by those who relay a politically correct message that says his gender confusion is part of his authentic identity.

Medinger's incorporation of his personal conversion experience and Christian faith into the message may limit the book's appeal to those who do not share similar beliefs or who have not had a similar life-changing experience. However the discerning reader, regardless of personal spiritual posture, will likely glean helpful information and therapeutic insight from this insightful resource.

Growth into Manhood is published by WaterBrook Press for \$12.99 softcover, and can be ordered through Regeneration Ministries (telephone 410-661-0284). ■

