Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED PHILOSOPHY OF STUDENT COUNSELING IN

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

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INTRODUCTION

I am a member of the Religious Interests Committee at Newbold College. During Spring quarter 1994 a very rigorous survey was conducted on our campus by this committee to ascertain students' perceived needs. Topping the list were the need for professional counseling services and peer counseling services.

This paper hypothesizes that prior to the teaching of any counseling courses or the establishment of any type of counseling service on campus there ought to be in existence a well-articulated philosophy in harmony with the theology of the church and the mission statement of the institution.

This paper does not seek to regulate the practice of all Seventh-day Adventists who practice counseling. Neither does it seek to impose a model of counseling on Seventh-day Adventist counselors in Adventist institutions of higher learning. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to offer a philosophy of counseling that will guide both those who teach and those who practice counseling in Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities.

I. COUNSELING AND CHRISTIANITY

Towards a Christian Philosophy

A Christian campus constantly lives in tension, struggling to hold on to its traditions while embracing contemporary discoveries. The prevailing situation is that where counseling is practised in a Christian context one finds heavy reliance on secular theories and humanistic philosophies propelled by different and often opposing worldviews.

Higher education counseling is in an advanced stage in the United States, a developed stage in Britain, and a developing stage in Europe. Britain offers certificate and diploma courses in counseling, with various shades of expense and corresponding degrees of quality; within Europe counseling is dominated by medical models (Lane, 1993).

Counselors, therefore, arrive at the educational institution from a variety of backgrounds. The interview panel frequently includes persons with little or no counseling background; and persons are hired, ready to dispense their form of therapy with little discussion of philosophical background or practical orientation. The great danger lies in according too much significance to anyone with a hint of counseling certification.

How does a Seventh-day Adventist college ensure unity in its counseling team? What does a Seventh-day Adventist counseling team accept as essential qualifications? Is a counseling certificate and a baptismal certificate all that is necessary? I suggest that even Seventh-day Adventists counselors need to be aware of philosophical and cultural baggage that may mitigate against successful counseling.

As modern counseling has its origins in humanistic psychology, it is this emphasis which has been propagated by counselors in state and independent colleges alike. While the current buzz word 'spirituality' is freely incorporated into counseling programs on secular campuses, counseling as taught and practised on Christian college campuses often protests including the language of biblical faith. This paper maintains that the teaching, training and practice of counseling should be congruent with the aims and philosophies of the institution.

COUNSELING AND SPIRITUALITY

The main focus of the 1993 Association of Student Counseling Annual Conference was spirituality. Workshops covered topics such as dream sharing, Zen Buddhism, and the place of spirituality in the work of the counselor. The workshop which I attended involved us being invited to bring along our very own icon and share what it meant to us. I witnessed grown men with tears holding up a key and talking about how it symbolised a spiritual revolution in their lives. There were others who held up a postcard

of a glorious stained glass window or a blazing sunset and spoke about the depth of significance therein. Still another spoke of her affinity to dolphins (!), how she would commune with them and how she experienced tremendous spiritual therapy as a result. One participant (myself) suggested that the personal spirituality of the counselor ought not be a major focus of college counseling in a secular setting. 'On the contrary,' was the reply, 'to deny your spirituality is akin to denying your sexuality.' I stated that if they left their personal belief systems outside of the counseling office then I would be happy for my daughter to be counseled by them. 'Oh no,' they said. 'We are made up of body mind and spirit and we owe our clients our total being...' Towards the end of the conference I sat with two persons and noticed that they, like me, had ordered a vegetarian meal. Overhearing them talking about spirituality I asked what was their belief system. Their proud reply left me without a response: "We're into paganism."

The issues are as follows: to what extent is our personal spiritual viewpoint significant and to what extent should our personal spiritual viewpoint be allowed to influence the teaching and practice of counseling on a Christian campus? Seventh-day Adventist students going for counseling on secular campuses are counseled by individuals covered by codes of ethics which discourage the language of biblical faith but allow pagans and dolphin-communicators to practice freely. I maintain that we need not be apologetic or defensive about a spiritual component being an essential part of counseling on a Christian campus, as counselors in secular settings are quite forthright in declaring their 'spirituality.'

Paul Wilkins (1993, p. 31), a British Association for Counselling (BAC) counselor declares unashamedly: "My focus is humanistic (though it also includes transpersonal and spiritual dimensions)." Peter Thomas (1991, p. 143), also with BAC,

claims to practice eclecticism: "My worldview is that people are basically OK." Nirava

Kavya (1993, p. 103) is a psychotherapist and BAC counselor. After observing mediums

at work in a counseling session she wrote:

> As I observed it so far, spiritualism offers counselling in a supportive setting. The client is at risk of false interpretation from the medium. However each week a different medium attends and the community which arranges these open sessions witnesses everything, and offers a group of concerned friendly and 'normal' persons. This is an advantage not offered by private one-to-one counselling.
>
> Whether it is founded on truth (that spirits really do commune through the medium) is perhaps not so important. I am sure the mediums I watched were sincere, there was no intention to deceive and no particular profit made.

Worldviews such as these are easily accepted in to the counseling profession,

yet a Biblical perspective on counseling finds difficult acceptance even in Christian circles.

While refraining from the imposition of any one therapeutic model, the following comments

by Crabb (1975, p. 21) are relevant for the counseling predicament on Seventh-day Adventist

campuses where individuals are trained in any number of schools of thought: "The obvious

need in the field of counseling is a clearly stated unity within which there is room for

diversity."

Human Potential, Human Sinfulness

I will briefly address the issue of marital and premarital counseling inasmuch

as counseling on Seventh-day Adventist campuses frequently involves issues concerning

relationships. Preventive therapy has included the Marriage

Encounter/Enrichment/Commitment Seminars as well as Adventist Engaged Encounter, a

premarital counseling weekend. These programs have originated in schools of thought

outside of the Adventist, and in some cases, Christian community.

Elder (1979, p. 674) does not believe that Christian counseling can adopt these

worldviews. He asserts that humankind is basically sinful, having profound impact on our

freedom of choice to change. Concerning the Christians adopting the Marriage Encounter phenomenon of marriage counseling, Elder states:

> There ought to be a rethinking of what can and should lie behind such a movement. The motto of marriage encounter (and 100 other Gestalt-type self-help groups) that "feelings are neither good nor bad; they just are" is too pat, too easy. Phrases like this are directly related to the family of "I'm OK, You're OK," and the problem in marriage seems to me more often to be "I'm not OK and neither is my spouse." In the eyes of God, we are not OK - else why bother with the whole salvation-through-Christ scheme?

Thus one of the main issues in counseling in a Christian context is the awareness of sin. Christians do not have a doctrine which believes that good lies dormant within every person and if we just tap in to our internal resources we will discover solutions. Counseling in a Christian context begins with the premise that we were born with a bent to sin, all of our good deeds are like filthy rags, and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Counseling on Adventist campuses must address the balance of human potential and human sinfulness. The particularly Christian aspect of their marital and premarital counseling programs must be prominent. Elder (1979, p. 673) reports on his experience of the Catholic parent program Marriage Encounter:

> The horizontal dimension between people seems to have been well thought out; improved marriages are the proof of that. But the theological dimension does not seem to have been sufficiently developed. At no time during the weekend did I hear any reference to Paul's treatment of marriage. . . . Somehow the cutting edge of Christian commitment (Matt. 10:36, "A man's foes will be those of his own household") never comes to light.

A distinct Christian worldview needs to pervade the counselling program.

Much of nondirective counseling emphasizes getting in touch with feelings and originates in a particular school of psychology. Whether the psychotherapy of Gestalt or the 'psychotheology' of Father John Powell of Loyola University, Adventist counseling must examine its psychological underpinning. Elder (1979, p. 673) states that counselling in a Christian context is based on completely different principles from secular philosophies:

> In the marriage encounter movement as it exists in the churches the world is

informing the church about what marriage and true relationship should be and not vice versa. Knowledge gleaned from secular, basically Freudian, psychologists is taken to the church in a neat package so that a thin veneer of theological justification can be applied to what is essentially a secular humanistic viewpoint, no more, no less.

The world's philosophy of marriage can always inform the church's, but it can never replace it (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14, 15; Rom. 12:2, Phillips).

COUNSELING AND WORLD VIEWS

Many definitions of counseling have been proffered, but perhaps one of the most holistic is the following definition by Dudley (1981, p. 16):

Counseling is the process by which one person helps another in an accepting non-threatening relationship to grow toward his fullest potential for successful and satisfying living both in this world and in the world to come.

This definition allows counseling scope to develop a Christian world view.

Christianity and a World View

A world view may be defined as a system of symbols that integrates and synthesizes experiences in order to provide the meaning of existence (Pattison, 1977). Walsh and Middleton (p. 151) suggest that a monocultural approach negates the biblical world view and thus they

do not offer here *the* Christian response, but rather *a* Christian cultural response. The Christian cultural response is the response of the whole church.

The African American experience provides perhaps the most helpful example of a Christian world view that incorporates counseling and pastoral care. It demonstrates that the concept of a world view has more than academic significance for at its most basic level it is a matter of survival. Wimberly (1979, p. 24) states:

A theological worldview was one of the most important community resources for sustaining during slavery... that not only gave meaning to the slave's existence but also provided the efficacious power that sustained the slave in a hostile environment.

· White (1966, p. 42) validates this world view and urges: "Those who study the history of the Israelites should also consider the history of the slaves in America, who have suffered."

Whereas the Israelites found it difficult to sing the Lord's song in a strange land (Ps 137:4), music was an intricate part of their world view and provided incomparable therapy to the African American slaves. Wimberly (ibid., pp. 25-26) comments:

> The Negro spirituals reflected much of the slaves' world view... Their world view provided not only sustaining power for individual persons, but also the glue that held the caring community together.

Music, therefore, cannot be separated from their experience. Rosado (1990, p. 17), points out that an African American audience differs from their white counterparts "in their **entire experience**, and not merely in the expressive manner of their singing." Lincoln and Mamiya (1990, p. 17) assert a Christian perspective singular to African Americans:

> The religious dimension of black churches is found in the black sacred cosmos, a unique Afro-Christian worldview that was forged among black people from both the African and the Euro-American traditions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Thus a knowledge of this distinct Christian world view will informs the counselor's care. The Christian world view espoused by oppressed peoples must be allowed to enrich the whole church. Lartey (1991, p. 98) states:

> In many places a close examination of the training on offer and the style adopted reveals an attachment to psychotherapies developed by dead, white, European or American men. Do we ever adopt patterns adopt patterns and forms reflective of Eastern European, Eastern Orthodox, Asian, Latin American, Caribbean or African female or male thinking or lifestyle?

Hood (1990, p. 110) concludes:

> As the Christian faith grows in Third World cultures more and more and stagnates in those Euro-American cultures having charge of its doctrinal guardianship, the critical issue of culture and the grammar of faith takes on new dimensions. . . . The deeper issue is whether God and ways of thinking of God are so bound to Graeco-Roman metaphysical worldviews about divinity and methods of thinking that God must remain Greek.

Culture and a World View

Differing family systems theories condition the type of pastoral care an institution will provide. Much of Western counselling practices find no parallel in countries where the family is more integrated. This heightens the need for counseling on a pluralistic campus to be aware of other cultural world views, values and practices. What works one place will not necessarily work in all places. Christian social scientists have acknowledged the need for a broader platform in the formulation of interpersonal relations. Mace and Mace (1960, p. 278) state, "There is so much we need to learn from each other that we ought to be working in this field together."

Aceves and King (1978, p. 234) react against an individualistic worldview: "Few societies view marriage as Americans often view it--as a private matter between two people. Marriage creates important bonds between individuals and also between kin groups, in most societies." Mbiti (1973, p. 44) concurs: "Marriage is not just an affair of two individuals alone. . . . You do not just marry one man or one woman." Mbiti includes not only spouse but relatives, friends, work associates and club or church members.

Van Leeuwen (1990, p. 12) holds that "it would be an irresponsible Christian who did not listen to her sisters and brothers in other parts of the church universal." The universal church, however, appears as Hebrew thought clothed in Greek or Western culture.

Slater (1968) stresses that in many ways Western man is Greek man, and by extension, Western family is Greek family. The effects of this Western thought on the family are extensive. Vitz (1977, p. 89) asserts, "It is no accident that it was modern industrial society which first reduced the extended family to the nuclear family."

Wakaba (1982, p. 35), writing on the Black Seventh-day Adventist family in South Africa, credits industrialization, Westernization, education, urbanization, and

Christianity with the breakdown of the traditional life. Westernized Christianity has moved the family away from the biblical model, rather than towards it. He maintains: "The African family should not be contrasted with the Western family, in which the latter is held to rotate to the nuclear family. . . . In ancient Israel, marriage would have been classified as 'African' rather than 'Western' (ibid.).

Kaplan, Schwartz, & Markus-Kaplan (1984) contrast Greek and Hebrew models of marriage, the former described as narcissistic, the latter covenantal. Walsh and Middleton (1984, p. 149-150) state:

> In terms of its covenantal relationship with God, the Western world is now experiencing the covenantal curses which disobedience calls forth. We are in a period of judgment... there is still time to repent.

Ellen White (1966, p. 54) maintains that any Christian cultural response must include both repentance and reparations:

> The American nation owes a debt of love to the colored race, and God has ordained that they should make restitution for the wrong they have done them in the past. Those who have taken no active part in enforcing slavery upon the colored people are not relieved from the responsibility of making special efforts to remove, as far as possible, the sure result of their enslavement.

Madhubuti (1990, p. i) states, "We are people who, by and large, have been taught to deny reality as we hurriedly try to fit into somebody else's worldview." Yet Walsh and Middleton (1984, p. 163) assert "The Western world view has run its course. We are now in a period of cultural decline." They add (p. 167): "We know that this culture, with its lifestyle and world view, is bankrupt." Counselling that denies the cultural world views of other cultures is at best myopic and at worst insensitive. Indeed, Cassidy (1991, p. 15) reports that the term 'minority' is itself questionable: "Blacks and hispanics should no longer be labelled 'minorities', but 'part of the world's majorities'."

The impact of this on Christian thought and practice cannot be overlooked. Effective counselling practised in a Christian context will include patterns of thought and practice affected by, but in no sense identical to, that of the dominant culture. Elder's (1979, p. 674) Marriage Encounter experience led him to declare, "We can be sure that the appeal is not a general one for people of all races and creeds." Sensitive and sustained enquiry should be made by Christian counsellors to determine the needs and practices of other cultures in order for the counseling program to be more inclusive in its appeal.

Lartey (1991, p. 98) muses, "Perhaps for other groups in western society, particularly people originating from non-western contexts, other types of helping approaches might be more useful." He poses four questions which may inform counseling on Seventh-day Adventist campuses of higher learning:

1. How representative of multi-cultural Britain is the counselling that is practised? (Are we sensitive to other cultural world views on our campuses?)

2. How representative of multi-faith Britain is the counseling that is practised? (Are we sensitive to other belief systems on our campuses?)

3. How representative, and therefore diverse, are the counseling approaches adopted?

4. How prepared are we to question fundamental assumptions about the nature and practice of counseling?

I suggest that any counseling program which claims to be Christian must take seriously its theological heritage which comprised believers from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5), who "were together and had everything in common" (Acts 2:44) because they believed that God had "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).

PROPOSAL FOR SDA CONTEXTS

Ellen G White and Counseling: The Dilemma

The dilemma is found in quotations apparently warning against counseling, and then others seemingly advocating it:

> We are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else.. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God will know after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue (1940, p. 668).

Ellen White warns against placing blind confidence in human counselors:

> Continuing His instruction to His disciples, Jesus said, "Beware of men." They were not to put implicit confidence in those who knew not God, and open to them their counsels... God is dishonored and the gospel is betrayed when His servants depend on the counsel of men who are not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (1940, p. 354).

We may see in this a call to caution when referring church members to non-Christian counselors or agencies. Ellen White does, however, see wisdom in counseling with Christians.

> Those who disrespect the minister of God will not accept his counsel and they refuse to be helped by any of God's appointed instrumentalities. They have determined that they will go to God alone for help; but while they have this spirit, God does not give them the help they desire (1893, p. 87).

While recognizing that counseling had not yet developed in to the science which it is today, the following summary statement appears to balance the human and divine equation:

> While it is our privilege to counsel together, we must be sure, in every matter, to counsel with God, for He will never mislead us. We are not to make flesh our arm. If we do, depending chiefly upon human help, human guidance, unbelief will steal in, and our faith will die (1944, p. 487).

Thus counseling practised by Seventh-day Adventists in a Christian context does not see a choice between prayer/Scripture and human counselors. It will attempt to balance divine aid with human guidance; it will not select one and omit the other.

Peer Counselling

The goal of peer counseling is to equip persons to be effective carers in an uncaring world. The literature would suggest that this is one of the greatest needs of our society. Collins (1976) reports on a survey of research carried out on what he called "lay helpers":

> The conclusions of this psychological survey were startling. When lay counselors, with or without training, were compared with professionals it was discovered that "the patients of lay counselors do as well or better than the patients of professional counsellors."

Chu and Trotter (1974, p. 5) state:

> It is clear that out of the tens of millions of individuals whom the National Institute of Mental Health officials and others estimate needs psychiatric care, only a tiny minority suffer from problems that most authorities would agree constitute mental disease.

Peer counseling, therefore, seeks to remove the awe from the helping professions, and can be taught on our campuses. The danger is that the focus becomes unhealthily exclusive, directed to a closed community. Webber (1979, p. 89) cautions:

> Our inevitable concentric concern for our own people and our own needs cries out to be transformed into an ex-centric commitment, a concern for those whose need around us are obvious and urgent.. Yet how easy it is for us to delude ourselves into thinking we are caring for others when we maintain our basic institutional self-centeredness.

Peer counseling ought not be introverted, focusing simply on the needs of an elite community. When practised in the broader community, however, it must be devoid of both paternalism and proselytism. Peer counsellors aim to serve a larger need. Webber (ibid., p.94) states:

> They will not be for the sake of getting new members or winning converts or taking scalps for Christ. Simply, we live in the style of our Lord: where there is hunger - seeking to feed, where there is sickness -- seeking to heal, where there is loneliness -- offering our love without any ulterior motive.

Integration versus Eclecticism

Miller (1991, pp. 113-114) offers four models to summarize the relation between psychology and theology:

1. The 'Against' Model
   Psychology and theology are mutually exclusive and, in most cases, mutually antagonistic. Revelationists such as Jay Adams (1970) and Larry Crabb (1975, 1977) reject the theories of empiricists such as Sigmund Freud and B. F. Skinner.

2. The 'Of' Model
   Psychology is used to explain what it believes religion has failed to explain satisfactorily. Human beings are born neither good nor bad but they develop as they interact with their environment.

3. The Parallel Model
   Psychology and theology are separate but equal. They seek the same answers by traveling different routes. In this model theology usually finds itself in a second cousin relationship to psychology.

4. The Integrated Model
   Psychology and theology exist to serve one another as mutual partners in the pursuit of knowledge with the understanding that all academic disciplines handled honestly lead to the Creator.

I am proposing that Seventh-day Adventist counseling in a Christian context espouse the integrated model. Waverley Institute for Christian Counselling (Surrey, England) have identified six major helping stances emerging from the 'counseling explosion':

1. The anti-Christian counselor
   This person is overtly opposed to the Bible and Christianity both in counseling practice and in the personal life of the client.

2. The non-Christian counselor
   This person is not a Christian, but holds no brief against Christianity. S/he does not prevent clients from joyfully espousing their faith.

3. The 'Christianized' counselor
   Such a person has no systematic theology of counseling, rather distributes texts rather freely and rather randomly.

4. The secular counselor who is a Christian
   This is the person who separates personal Christian piety from professional psychological practice.

5. The Christian counselor
   Such a person is a committed Christian whose basic aim is to draw others toward spiritual maturity, and bases his/her approach on Scripture alone.

6. The integrated Christian counselor
   This is a Christian psychologist or psychiatrist who seeks to integrate the best principles of psychology with those of Scripture and attempts to help people toward better mental health by an integration of both.

I would suggest that Seventh-day Adventists counseling in a Christian context may see themselves best in Number 6. (The current tendency is to favor Number 4.) Absence of a clearly defined theology of counseling has led to an eclectic philosophy resulting in somewhat patchwork goals. Clinebell (1984, p. 18), referring to growth groups, makes this relevant remark:

> The issue is how to develop an **integrated eclecticism** that utilizes insights and methods from a variety of sources coherently and in ways that maximize the unique personality resources of the practitioner. The difficulty that stems from just assembling therapeutic components from different sources is that this approach usually produces a kind of **hash eclecticism** - a theory from here, a technique from there - with no integrating structure, no internally consistent core of assumptions about the nature, process, and goals of therapeutic change.

College counseling cannot afford to be negligent in the area of its philosophy. The college counselling team must agree on its goals, philosophy, and areas of specialty among the counselors. If Adventism professes a distinctive philosophy of interpersonal relationships, then a reflection of this difference must appear in its counseling programs. If counseling in the Adventist context is to reflect the church's theology, then it must be more articulate and less eclectic in its area of uniqueness. The Seventh-day Adventist chaplaincy has now recognized the need to be more discriminating in its selection of training courses, in order to be more in touch with our theological base. Vernon (1993, p.30) states:

If a direct, practical, Bible-based atmosphere is vanishing from existing chaplaincy programs, we as a people need to reexamine our use of these programs. We need to weigh the gains and losses they offer on an eternal scale. Our students, the shepherds and healers of tomorrow's flock, may learn marvelous skills of listening, communicating, empathizing, and relating to those from other faiths; but if in the process they lose the wonder, awe, and trust of the Word of God, then we have lost everything. It is time to bring Seventh-day Adventist chaplaincy training back into communion with the life-and-death issues of a biblical gospel.

Conclusion

The call is for counseling in Adventist institutions of higher learning to be guided by a world view which is both theologically sound and culturally relevant. I therefore recommend:

1. SDA institutions of higher learning recognise the value of peer counselling while including in the team a counsellor who is not a teacher at the institution.

2. College counseling team include a SDA qualified in psychotherapy, a SDA qualified in psychology, and a SDA qualified in chaplaincy, biblical or pastoral counseling, in order that clients receive professional treatment. The inclusion of personnel will be governed by the family systems which comprise the institution, i.e. the more international the institution the more necessary to include persons not from the dominant culture.

3. Counselors in SDA institutions of higher learning take a course in pastoral counselling in order to be familiar with other than humanistic therapies. Such a course would cover subjects such as biblical counseling and its role as well as peer counseling and its role.

4. Counselors in SDA institutions of higher learning undergo a course that will confront their prejudices and challenge their world views. In Britain, the National Coalition Building Association offers an approach which "is itself modelled on the work of the United States organisation, the National Coalition Building Institute, which works with groups throughout the world" (Carpenter, 1991, p 43).

5. While secular philosophies must inform and enrich counseling on SDA campuses, counselors will be selected whose primary commitment is to the philosophy of the church rather than a loyalty to a certain school of thought.

6. Regular collaboration between counselors to ensure consistency of practice while maintaining confidentiality.

7. Recognition of the need for regular supervision from persons who will enrich the counselor in a SDA setting and not erode the principles for which the institution stands.

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