

Counselling Connections Across Australia



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From the Editor

Integration of spirituality with counselling practice is one of the cornerstones of the Christian Counsellors Association. Drawing on spirituality requires a willingness to bring self to the counselling process, for self and the spiritual are inextricably intertwined. In a secular world, spirituality is often defined in individual terms – what it means to me, what brings meaning and purpose into my life. Christian spirituality is about self-in-representation – with God and with each other – in the context of the larger story, His story as Selwyn Hughes has put it. For me, spirituality both embraces temporal reality and yet transcends the physical world bringing hope, purpose and the transcendent, eternal perspective to bear upon our daily life.

On a recent trip to Far North Queensland I found myself clambering up an increasingly steep, rocky and slippery path in the Daintree rainforest. Initially I was captivated by the natural loveliness around me – plants, trees, ferns, colourful fungi. Dappled light falling on foliage of vibrant, verdant hues of green. Hearing and at times seeing the sound of water from the Mossman River rushing and bubbling over rocks and foaming around boulders. I experienced a sense of life and vitality.

As the path grew steeper and sunlight penetrated less and moss and mouldering leaves made my way slippery my sense of wellbeing began to ebb. I was scared. Just two things kept me on the path. I began to hum the words of an old hymn which reminded me of the One who accompanies my every step. And I heard the reassuring voice of my husband saying “we’re nearly there” and “step here, it’s easier” as his hand reached out to steady my steps. Tethered from within and without by the security of Steve’s love and God’s presence I emerged into the sunshine feeling as though I stood at the top of the world.

I am not a particularly courageous person (as my story reveals) and yet all counsellors

have a special kind of courage. The courage ‘not to know’, to believe in the other, to hold a safe space which necessitates suspending judgment and relinquishing the desire to take charge and be the expert, to feel with the client without losing self in the process. To tolerate complexity and ambiguity rather than reaching for reductionist philosophies that elevate certainty and sureness.

Maybe courage takes many forms including as we counsel finding the courage to be openly ourselves and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable. The courage to be who you are and the courage to continue on the journey of becoming all you can be. Knowing that for our clients we are (as Steve was for me on that slippery climb) a steadying hand on the journey, not replacing God’s support, but providing evidence of that support and ongoing presence. This is truly our spiritual journey – being ‘as Christ’ to each other on the journey of life.

The authors of the different articles presented in this Journal have also shown courage, courage to put before you their research and opinion on what are potentially contentious subjects – spirituality and sexuality. Who was it said we should avoid conversing on religion, sex and politics? Our National Conference to be held in Sydney on 12th – 14th September 2014 will expand upon the same theme, facilitated by Drs Jack and Judy Balswick (see our review of their most recent book) and Dr Patricia Weerakoon. I look forward to seeing you there.

Dominie Nelson

Editor
Counselling Connections Across Australia



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Apology

Correction to previous edition: Dr Carolyn Russell's (page 14, October 2011) article was erroneously accompanied by Dr Irene Alexander's biographical details. We wish to acknowledge that "Mental Illness and Marriage" was contributed by Dr Carolyn Russell.

Carolyn Russell is a GP who now works only in the arena of promoting mental health rather than as a generalist. She currently works mostly in Marital therapy, and in providing supervision and psychoeducation groups, in a community-based mental health and counselling service in Brisbane. She and her husband work hard at their own marriage, recognising the challenges applied to it everyday.

About Us

Dr Genevieve Milnes

CCAA National President

Psychotherapist and Counsellor, Clinical Psychologist

Dear Christian Counsellors Australia-wide,

Once again I have great pleasure in presenting this Journal to you. In recent years the National Council of CCAA determined that we would produce a National Journal and a National Conference in alternate years.



This year the theme for the Journal has been Sexuality, Spirituality and Selfhood and next year's Conference theme addresses the same topics – see our promotional brief within the Journal. Increasingly clients want to explore their relevance to themselves, their partners and families and to their world. As Christian Counsellors we have the privilege of being invited into the heartbeat of people's lives - share their deepest and most vulnerable selves at the crises of their lives. Thank you for sharing in this mission to Australia, to be available as you are, to be involved in this deep and rewarding work. May you be blessed in all you do and may the grace of God be with you.

Yours in the service of Jesus

Genevieve Milnes
National President CCAA



CCAA National Council September 2013

Rear standing:

Chris Brown, Vic; Rob Salmon, SA;
Neil Harris, NSW; Daniel Bahr, Tas.

Middle standing:

Dominie Nelson, SA; Esther Diplock, Qld;
Sue Johnston, WA; Julie Weeks, Tas; Vale Steele, NSW.

Seated:

John Anderson, Vic; Genevieve Milnes, WA;
Phil Henry, Qld;

CCAA MEMBERSHIP

CCAA provides registration, networking and support for Christian counsellors.

CCAA is an association of State Christian Counselling Associations incorporated in 1998, beginning in Victoria in 1982. CCAA is a member association of PACFA, the Psychotherapy and Counsellors Federation of Australia.

Registration

You may become a Registered Member of CCAA at two levels:

Graduate Members have a Bachelor degree or equivalent in counselling over 3 years, or a Postgraduate qualification in counselling over 2 years. They have completed 50 hours of training supervision related to 200 hours of counselling internship, and met CCAA theological and accountability requirements.

Clinical Members have, in addition, successfully completed 75 hours of supervision related to 750 hours of counselling.

Benefits - Registered Members

Over recent years, a consensus is emerging nationally as to appropriate benchmark standards for professional recognition for counsellors, called the PACFA Training Standards. Being registered by CCAA as a Graduate Member means you have achieved this benchmark of professional recognition.

Graduate and Clinical Members:

- are automatically listed on the PACFA Register at Provisional level (for Graduate Members) or Clinical level (for Clinical Members), at the member's request
- receive a CCAA Membership Certificate they may attach 'CCAA (Grad)' or 'CCAA (Clin)' after their name
- may advertise details on the CCAA 'Find a Counsellor' web page
- may set up their own webpage hosted on the CCAA website
- will have the full support and services of CCAA and PACFA Ethics committees in mediating and resolving complaints

Clinical Members:

- may be eligible to be listed as a CCAA-Accredited Supervisor on the State 'Supervisors' pages

Associate membership:

People who are involved in the counselling field (students and those in ministry) can join the Association as Associates.

Contact us through your state or national office.

CCAA Values, Vision & Mission



Vision

Our vision is professional excellence for Christian counsellors, serving God, the church and the wider community.



Mission

CCAA registers professionally trained Christian and pastoral counsellors and provides professional accountability. It promotes professional development through networking, seminars and conferences.

Specifically, CCAA achieves this by:

- Registering Christian counsellors as Graduate or Clinical Members of CCAA
- Regulating high standards of ongoing professional development, supervision, and accountability to the CCAA Code of Ethics
- Promoting professional development and networking through seminars, workshops, local meetings, and a biennial National Conference, with a focus on integrating faith and practice
- Providing advice and a network of support for Members and Associates of CCAA
- Raising the professional credibility of counsellors through membership of PACFA, the Psychotherapy and Counsellors Federation of Australia, our registering umbrella organisation
- Partnering with the church, pastoral counsellors, people in ministry and educators in Christian counselling, and encouraging members to pursue academic research in areas unique to Christian counselling
- Connecting people of all levels of interest in Christian counselling, through state and national newsletters, the CCAA eNews and the CCAA website



Values

These CCAA Values are the heartbeat of our Vision and Mission:

- Serving Jesus Christ in the world
- Personal and professional integrity and accountability
- Integrating biblical theology and principles with counselling theory and practice
- Inclusiveness, community, networking, partnership, empowerment
- Being a distinctive Christian presence and voice
- Professional competence, excellence and leadership in Christian counselling

PACFA Report 2013

BY ROB SALMON

(BACHELOR OF COUNSELLING, MASTERS OF COUNSELLING)

CCAA REPRESENTATIVE AT PACFA NATIONAL COUNCIL.

CCAA(SA) PRESIDENT, CCAA MEMBERSHIP CHAIR, PACFA EXECUTIVE – TREASURER, PACFA PD CHAIR

For those who are relatively new to the field – you may ask “What is PACFA?” PACFA stands for ‘The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia’, which was commenced after a meeting in 1996 by Counselling and Training Educators who were concerned about the issues arising from the lack of training and education standards of Psychotherapists and Counsellors in Australia. From these beginnings grew PACFA which is made up of the Council. The Council, made up of 2 members from each of the current 31 member association (MAs), meets twice a year to discuss and vote on different aspects of the ongoing process and procedures of PACFA and on its core values of regulation and recognition in our community.



**Psychotherapy & Counselling
Federation of Australia**

PACFA has an elected Board (up to 9 members) who meet along with the CEO, up to 6 times in the year as well as a number of committees who continue to develop and monitor the Federation.

PACFA has the Professional Practice committee who oversee the sub-committees of Register, Training Standards, Ethics, EPAC (Education Program Accreditation Program Committee) and Professional

Practice. The other two committees are Promoting PACFA / MA Interests and Research Committee, the latter also involved in the production of PACJA (The Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia).

The day-to-day running of PACFA is achieved through the relatively small staff at its office in Melbourne under the management of the CEO. The Federation is constantly evolving and growing as it develops ways to regulate and become recognised. Over the years discussions were held with government and one of the areas of probable benefit that became apparent concerned having an overarching register of counsellors and psychotherapists who met a recognised training and practice standards. The two bodies in Australia were PACFA and ACA and after lengthy discussions ARCAP (the Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists) was conceived and born.

ARCAP brings together via a website the register of these bodies.



PACFA continues to make significant inroads in discussions with ministers especially in Canberra. With the benefit of a number of grants the PACFA research

committee continues to look at the effectiveness of therapies in our Australian context as well as overseas. This helps in PACFA's ability to input into reforms and changes within our profession. The CEO has been able to organise a number of submissions to different departments within the Government in the area of health and well-being. PACFA continues to work towards recognition with health funds to see counselling and psychotherapy as a valid claimable health expense for the health and well-being of their clients. In March 2013 the Council went to Canberra, where we held one of our day meetings in Government House and were able to speak to and had presentations from a number of politicians –

a profitable exercise in light of the upcoming election.

Over the last few years PACFA has been developing materials promoting the work of our members. A number of brochures have now been produced, and these have been well received and are now out in the community. PACFA's eNews, which is published bimonthly, has proven a reliable resource for the development of the Federation and the highlighting of work achieved. Administration is a constant struggle for the MAs and therefore PACFA is developing a new website which will have a database which will be gradually linked to each of the MAs allowing for a one stop online renewal process. This will reduce the administration time for all concerned, allowing practitioners more time to spend working with our clients.

PACFA has organised a National Conference which is run biannually. In 2014 PACFA has joined with two of the MAs to run a conference, which is anticipated to attract at least 350 participants. PACFA's newest committee – the Professional Development Committee has the conference under its portfolio and is currently working on developing PD applicable to its very diverse membership as well as supporting MAs with their PD.

Both Phil Henry (CCAA Vice-President & CCAA(Qld) President) and myself have been your two representatives from CCAA National Council at the PACFA Council over a number of years. We have both held roles within the board in the years we have been attending and seen PACFA grow and develop into an organisation very committed to the growth of the counselling professional within Australia. We value the support that you as members of CCAA play in this growth.

Check out more details on PACFA and ARCAP on their respective websites.



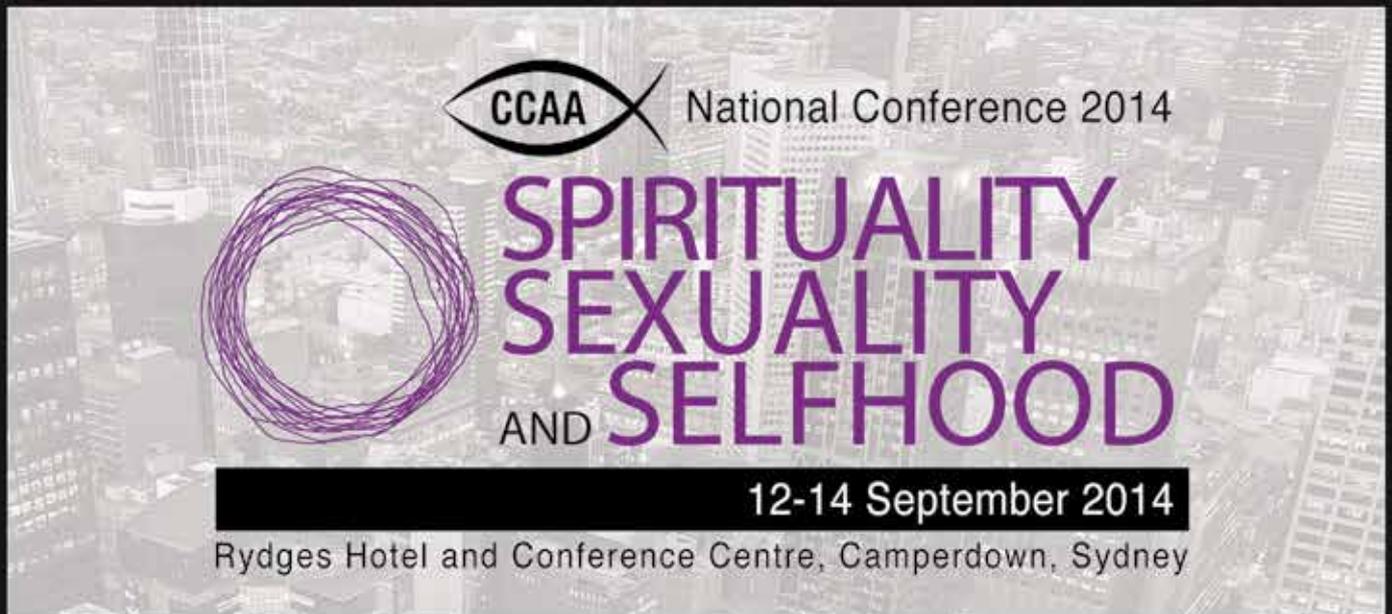
PACFA
www.pacfa.org.au

ARCAP
www.arcapregister.com.au



Save The Date

The CCAA NSW Branch is proud to host the 2014 National Conference



CCAA National Conference 2014

**SPIRITUALITY
SEXUALITY
AND SELFHOOD**

12-14 September 2014
Rydges Hotel and Conference Centre, Camperdown, Sydney

You can look forward to an exciting three days of:

Stimulating educational workshops, lectures and interational sessions. A fantastic range of international and Australian presenters. Motivating speakers who will inspire you in your work. Great conversations and networking opportunities.

Keynote speakers include:



Dr Jack Balswick is a Senior Professor of Sociology and Family Development at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is the author of multiple articles and books and specialises in the areas of gender and sexuality, child and family development, life span development, and cultural and ethnic issues in marital and family therapy.



Dr Judy Balswick is a Senior Professor of Marital and Family Therapy at Fuller Theological Seminary. An accomplished author, Judy's areas of expertise include the integration of therapy and theology, family therapy, human sexuality, family communication, spiritual dimensions of therapeutic practice, family ministry and supervision.



Dr Patricia Weerakoon is an evangelical Christian, medical doctor, sexologist and highly regarded writer and media commentator. As an expert in the areas of sexuality and sexual health, she delivered the prestigious 2012 Smith Lecture on 'Eros, Intimacy & the Mind of God'. She is a senior lecturer at Sydney University and has a private counselling and therapy practice.

The Balswicks will also be delivering a fantastic **Pre-Conference Workshop on Thursday 11 September 2014.**

Location: The 2014 CCAA National Conference will be held at the Rydges Hotel Conference Centre in Camperdown, Sydney. Rydges Camperdown is located within easy walking distance from the famous King Street in Newtown, with its range of boutique fashion stores, myriad restaurants, the Enmore Theatre and Newtown Train Station. The Sydney Fish Markets, Entertainment Centre, Moore Park Precinct and CBD are all within ten minutes of the Conference Centre.

Make sure to mark 12-14 September 2014 in your diary now and stay-tuned for further information!

For more information and updates visit www.ccaa.net.au/conferences.php

A PROFOUND MISUNDERSTANDING

The English language sets us up for one of the most profound errors about relationship with God, and because we think in terms of language we do not see the error. We are concerned that we believe the right things as if at the gates of heaven there is a checklist, ensuring we answer correctly before we are allowed in—like a catechism class. But no, instead the father comes running to welcome us—“At last you’ve come!” He flings his arms around us, saying “Come and see what you’ve never dreamed possible!”

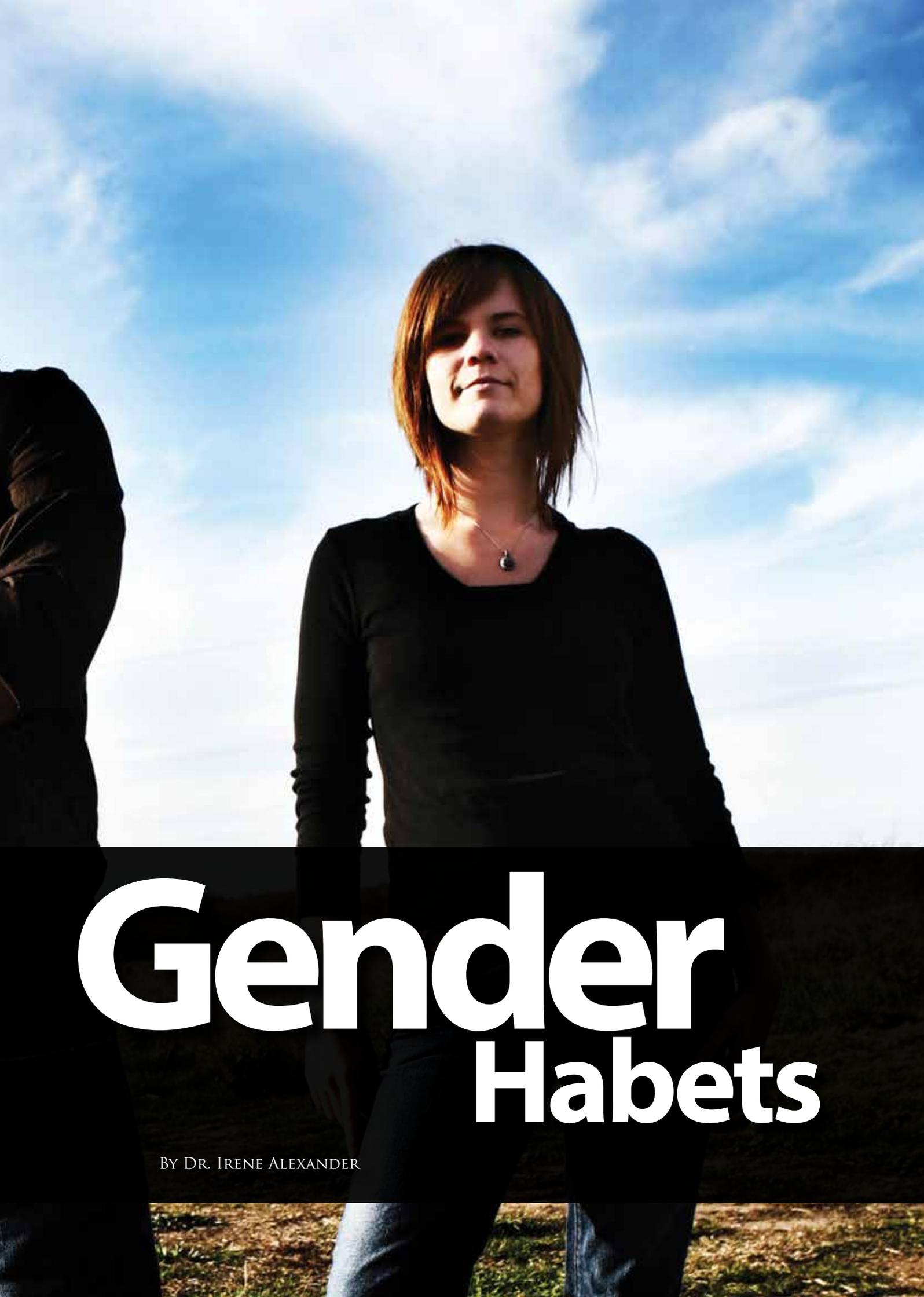
We may ask: doesn’t the Bible show that God might say, “Depart from me, I never knew you”? (Matt 7:23). Here indeed is the key. Does God know me? In English, unlike many other languages, the word “know” has a number of meanings—to know a fact, to know a person, Adam knew his wife Eve. Recently someone asked me if I knew a certain writer—meaning, did I know his books. “Yes,” I said. “Actually I know him.” It’s possible that the man questioning me knew this person’s writing better than I did, could say, as we might of other writers, “Oh yes, I know C. S. Lewis.” But have I ever met him? Do I know him as a friend? Does he know me? This is the point. When I run to the gates of heaven will God say—“Ah, here is my friend”?

It has been said, “The Word became flesh, but we evangelicals have made him the Word again.” God became a man not so we could read and write books about him, but so we could run into his arms, saying, “I’m home!” Jesus came to show us the Father (John 14:7), to model that relationship. He demonstrated how to relate to God as Abba-Father, so we could relate to God like that too.

Around the topic of gender, relational rather than academic knowing is all-important. If we discuss God and gender as though we are talking about facts and ideas only, we miss the whole point. “God and gender” is about me—who I am, my gender, my sexuality and what those mean to me—and about God, who God is, the quality of God’s relationships including gender and sexuality. And—most importantly—how God and I relate, given that I am female, heterosexual, and this is part of my core sense of who I am.

The following explores some images of God and some experiences relating to these. But first, some groundwork in terms of “masculine and feminine ways of knowing,” epistemic maturity, and some psychological understanding of the development of our images of God—and therefore relationship with God.





Gender Habets

BY DR. IRENE ALEXANDER

WAYS OF KNOWING

I suggest that the issue of “gender and relationship with God” requires that we reflect carefully on ways of knowing, and our sense of self as gendered beings. For many of us our core awareness of self seems to relate to our gender. Our experience of God is often profoundly affected by our gender, our experience of the meaning of our gender, and our sexuality. While we may be able to discuss these ideas intellectually, it is not until we reflect personally on our experience and self-image, that we will engage honestly.

One of the purposes of our education system is to teach students how to think and this, in turn, depends on an understanding of epistemology, or epistemics, to use a more psychological, interdisciplinary term. Rational thought, scientific method, objective analysis, rules of evidence, presuppositions are all part of a system of knowledge. But so is intuition, revelation, experience, and empathy. While the academic world has chosen to privilege rational thought and scientific method, the church has also kept alive the value of revelatory knowing. A postmodern shift has allowed the revaluing of intuition, experience, and personal interpretation. In the space of a lifetime, acceptable academic epistemology has changed and ways of knowing can now, respectably, include personal experience, as long as it is carefully contextualised and owned.

Not only has there been a philosophical shift over the last fifty years, there has been unfolding understanding of the developmental process of ways of knowing across the lifespan. A 1960–1970s Harvard study, reported by William Perry, described a pathway of epistemic positions based on the changes university students make as they are taught the disciplines of academic thought¹. It is worth understanding these positions to lay a foundation for recognising possible ways of knowing as relational or intellectual, as developmental, or dependent on worldview. A Christian worldview necessarily changes one’s perspective on ways of knowing, thus allowing different perceptions of the possibilities and positions described.

Perry described a number of positions summarised here to four. The first position, that of older children—and many less mature Christians—is termed Dualism, because of the basic duality perceived as we-right/good versus other-wrong/bad. The next major position, Multiplicity, expresses an “egocentric personalism.” This is the stance of many non-religious people, a position in which, if there is uncertainty, one person’s opinion is just as right

as anyone else’s. Many people remain in either of these two positions for all of their lives. However secondary schools, and universities in particular, teach students to reassess their understanding and evaluation of knowledge and authority, to examine their own thinking, to compare knowledge claims through rules of evidence, and to recognise theories as models rather than “truth.” This leads to a position of Contextual Relativism, in which the students come to perceive all knowledge and values as contextual and relativistic. The final position in this scheme is one of ongoing, unfolding action in which the knower is both committed and tentative, in a continuing dialectical process, having moved from a received belief to a creative faith. Perry uses the term “faith” here, not in a religious sense, but in the recognition that we do not “know” with certainty.

WOMEN’S WAYS OF KNOWING

In the 1980s a further study was published, from which a major finding has relevance for Christians, and for the present topic. The researchers called their book, *Women’s Ways of Knowing*² as the interviewees were women. They found similar positions as Perry’s (1981) Harvard study, but there were important differences. They reported on the learning that is necessary for students to shift from Multiplicity (everyone’s opinion is as good as everyone else’s) to Contextual Relativism. The Harvard study had mentioned the academic disciplines of argument, evidence, and scientific method. The women’s study introduced a new perspective.

The authors called the shift into academic knowing reported by Perry as Procedural, (because students learn a rigorous procedure) and Separate Knowing (because the process involves separating “knowing” from my “self,” learning to be objective, rational, assessing evidence). This they termed a more masculine way of knowing because these researchers discovered that women use a different procedure. As a woman, a Christian, and a counsellor, I found their “feminine” Procedural Knowing rather fascinating. They call it Connected Knowing. It is much more like relational knowing—knowing “from the inside” rather than “from the outside.”

Many women experience Separate Knowing arguments as attack, because their knowledge and their “self” are connected, not able to be separated. Sometimes this is interpreted to mean that a woman has not learned the skills of the Procedural Separate Knowing game. Frequently women prefer Connected Knowing which is just as procedural, just as rigorous—but relational. Connected Knowing is taught in counselling training—

¹ W. G. Perry, “Cognitive and Ethical Growth: The Making of Meaning.” In *The Modern American College*, edited by A. W. Chickering (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1981).

² M. F. Belenky, B. M. Clinchy, N. R. Goldberger, and J. M. Tarule, *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Develo*

to both men and women—as a way to listen and to know: the “Believing game.”³

When I listen to a counsellee, I need to be able to suspend my judgement, my perceptions, my advice, even my disbelief. I need to learn how to hear the person “from the inside,” understand their experience from inside them. I have to be able to listen to my own intuition and reactions but know they are my subjective reactions. I am listening to the other person with empathy, and listening to myself, and knowing which is which. Carl Rogers, the influential humanist therapist describes the process like this: “To sense the client’s private world as if it were your own, but without ever losing the ‘as if’ quality—that is empathy, and this seems essential to therapy. To sense the clients, anger, fear, or confusion, as if it were your own fear, anger or confusion but without getting bound up in it.”⁴

I am explaining this in some detail because I am wanting to point out that this more commonly “feminine” way of knowing is a relational knowing but is also rigorous and

challenging, no less “academic” than Separate Knowing. No less “academic” in rigour, only less academic in being more to do with an awareness of feeling than a head process. This way of knowing has thus become more acceptable, more validated in the academic world. Christians hopefully, with our greater understanding of relational knowing and spiritual perception, have been able to recognise it as a valid epistemic process.

KNOWING AND GENDER

As is common in psychological studies which explore “masculine” and “feminine,” the disclaimer is that not all men use “masculine” ways of knowing, and women “feminine” ways of knowing. Most people use both. But it can help us make sense of experience to find the broad stroke differences; as well as to recognise the different ways of knowing in our own repertoire, and our attitudes towards them. In fact, the most mature position epistemically, is the position of being able to use numbers of different ways of knowing, and being able to evaluate which is most appropriate for the task at hand.

Perry considered the most mature position to be one of “faith” and “commitment”—not Christian terms in his context. Rather they are a recognition that all our knowing has elements of faith—there is uncertainty, theorising,

3 Elbow uses this term to teach critique of literature. P. Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

4 Rogers (1957) cited in J. Rowan, and M. Jacobs, *The Therapist’s Use of Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

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and subjective contextualisation in everything, but to live in this world we need to make choices, this is our commitment to a worldview, to a way of understanding.

The proposition of this paper is that appropriate knowing concerning God and gender, must include Connected Knowing, experiential reflection, a willingness to be self-aware, and to explore our childhood and adult experiences. This involves self-awareness around our own gender experiences as well as our evolving images of God, as well as the dimensions of our relationship.

IMAGES OF GOD

In *The Birth of the Living God*⁵ Ana-Marie Rizzuto explores people's understanding of God—their images of God. She claims that our images of God have a primary experiential base. Church attendees may be able to describe what they have been taught God is like—a “God concept”—as in Dualistic or Multiplistic Knowing or, if they have been educated in this way—in Procedural knowing terms. However their relational knowing, their experiential grasp, their image of God, is very likely to be different. By interviewing adults about their images of God through their lives, Rizzuto confirmed the theory that our image of God is initially based and deeply rooted in our childhood experiences of those around us, especially our parents. Over time however, these representations of God may change, especially during times of crisis.

Rizzuto's exploration of our changing images of God reminds me of the spiritual director's ever-present question: Who is God for you now? As I have engaged in spiritual direction over a number of years my director's gentle probing has helped me see where my relationship with God and my image of God is changing—or needs to change. Rizzuto says: “The process of continuous reshaping of the God representation is delicate.” Indeed this is my experience: that only in a context of great respect for my experience and my relationship with God, am I able to be open, and willing to change.

An exploration of God and gender is in the territory of Connected Knowing and of faith rather than in the theology of Separate Knowing. To use Cantwell Smith's definition:⁶ “Faith is the internal attitude of trust with which each person or community responds to the demands of life.” “Faith is one's existential engagement with what one knows to be true or good.” “Since it is an engagement, to know faith authentically is to become oneself involved . . . This is *fides quaerens intellectum*,

faith in pursuit of self-understanding.”⁷ Exploring God with awareness of our gender is necessarily a Connected Knowing process, beginning with our relationship with God, our experience of God—and working out from there. How then are we to relate to God as gendered beings?

If each of us were asked to answer the question, “Is God male?” most of us would say, No. The question that follows is more difficult: “What is he then?”

The fact that the God of the Old Testament is aniconic suggests that male God images and female Goddess images are not appropriate. Yet metaphors of God are male and female—the father who carried me (Deut 1:31), the mother who dandled me on her hip (Isa 49:15–16; 66:12–13), the she bear who protected me as one of her cubs (Hos 13:8), the midwife who brought me forth from the womb (Ps 22:9–10), the warrior who protected me (Exod 15:3), the lover who wooed me (Song).

Does Jesus being the image of the invisible God make God male? No, humans have to be one sex or the other. Does the fact the Jesus calls God Father make God male? No, we understand that this is an image also. Jesus is showing us a way of relating, demonstrating the possibility of intimacy. Describing God in words is less possible than demonstrating how to relate to such a God—one who relates to us in love and intimacy, concern and compassion.

In both the Old and New Testaments metaphors for God abound. It would seem that the prohibition of concrete images is more about limiting God, than forbidding mental images. Humans think in images, in metaphors. A forbidding of metaphors or mental images would cause us to think of God as an amorphous mass, a force, an impersonal energy. If we are to live in relationship with God—as the Bible and, even more so, Jesus, clearly invite us to do—we will have images, human images, anthropomorphic images, and animals (the lion, the lamb, being under your wings, a hen gathering her chicks, a dove). Images are not wrong, they are just limited. If I only think of God as the Lion of Judah, I miss seeing the Lamb. If I only see God as the parent of a small child, I miss seeing God as one who calls me to adulthood. If I only see God as male I miss seeing her as female.

What does that pronoun “her” do to my thinking? Why is it so much less acceptable for most of us than “him”? We have grown up with God and male pronouns. We are used to male images of God. They are not wrong—just limited. God is so much more than we can ever imagine. We are so afraid to imagine amiss. As if God were not

5 A. Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 210.

6 W. Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (San Francisco: Harper, 1978).

7 W. Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief: The Difference Between Them*. (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998).



constantly interacting with us to reveal the reality of who God truly is. God is more concerned than we are, that we are in relationship, that we know God as God is, relationally, experientially. We have to decide whether it is “unbiblical” to call God “her”; that is, “unbiblical” in the sense that it goes against what the Bible actually means.

GOD AS FATHER

Each of the images of God is a picture of a relationship. Each invites a response from us, an ability to relate to God in the way that image implies. Although God as Father is present in the Old Testament, Jesus relating to him as Daddy must have been challenging to many of his hearers—as it challenges many of us today. Creator God yes, even Loving God, possibly even Father God—but Daddy? A Daddy who picks me up, and kisses my face. A Daddy who lifts me by my outstretched arms and throws me in the air, catching me with laughter. Such an image demands a response of trust from me, a relationship in which I am loved and held—calling forth a response of love and receptivity from me.

When I was a child my father was a nurturing father to me, holding me and telling me stories, so coming to God as Father, as Daddy, was not difficult for me. But I have met many people for whom it has been difficult. Terri’s father was alcoholic. When she lived with us for a time and saw my husband interacting with our little children, she was struck by the reality of what a loving father looked like. She began to be able to relate to God as Daddy for the first time. Another woman, Jan was sexually abused by her father from as far back as she could remember. When he died her Sunday School teacher took her under his wing—and sexually abused her as well. Needless to say her ability to relate to God as Father was badly affected.

Most of us did not have experiences as bad as Terri and Jan’s. Happily most of us had “good enough” parents,⁸ good enough in the sense that they were human, they made mistakes, but their hearts were for us. Nevertheless many of us still have reservations about letting God get as close as a loving, playful Daddy might want. What is our hesitation? We may cite the formal church experiences of our childhood. We may explain our preference for a more “respectful” relationship with God. The reality is that our reservations are less likely to be “philosophical” than psychological. Our distancing is more likely to be about some residual hurts from

childhood. Jesus modelled for us a relationship with a God who he called Daddy. If we are unable to enjoy the intimacy of a relationship like that, it is likely that some left-over childhood hurts or hindrances remain.

Remembering childhood experiences of our fathers may help us to recognise whether there is unresolved hurt or distancing from a father figure. A child’s tender heart is easily hurt but God can bring healing in the present as we bring the reality of the pain of that memory into the present. Many people find healing for childhood experiences as they have their own children. As I notice my own overflowing love for my child I can be present to



the experience of love—and dare to believe that this is also God’s love for me. Many men who have experienced hurt from their own fathers have been able to revisit the love of the Father, in their own experience of being a father, and discovering from the inside the overwhelming love of a daddy for his child. This is true Connected Knowing—knowing from within a relationship.

The experience of receiving the love of God as a loving father is pivotal for many people in their relationship with God. Recently I spoke to Sue who had completed a six month experiential training program. The second week of the training was teaching—and then ministry—

⁸ D. W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Hogarth, 1965).

about “the Father-heart of God.” “It was essential for the rest of the program to have meaning for me,” Sue told me. “Discovering God’s love for me in that way meant I could go on to understand the other teaching and so to minister to the children we then visited.” Over and over I have seen people healed in this way. It is the experience of this relational knowing which changes the perspectives of our intellectual knowing. People are thus enabled to touch other people with God’s love. Bruce Thompson, counsellor and long term missionary, explains that a revelation of God’s Father-heart is foundational to the rebuilding of our lives in response to, and in relationship with God.⁹

Our relationships with our own fathers become a window through which we view “fatherhood.” If that experience is destructive, the window is distorted, and our perception of fatherhood and intellectual conceptions are consequently distorted. Our relationships with authority figures will be shaped by early experience. Our default expectations of male authority figures will be that they are distant, critical, emotionally absent, etc. unless we experience powerfully different relationships, or receive healing. These experiences will carry over to our

relationship with God the Father unless we consciously re-pattern our thinking and emotional reactions.

Traditionally we have thought that if we teach of a loving Father God people will believe this as truth. It is only more recently that psychology has demonstrated that we unconsciously bring childhood images and overlay these on to other teaching. Occasionally someone meeting God for the first time will know that he is a loving caring Father—in contrast to their own experience of an abusive or absent father, but this tends to be the exception, or, even then, the childhood experiential relationship is the default position that surfaces at times of stress, for example when God seems to be absent or a crisis happens. Then the person finds they have to work through the childhood reactions hidden under the surface of a seemingly healthy relationship with a good God.

Implicit in our perceptions of God as father will be our reactions to that relationship with regard to our gender. If I was able to relate to my father well as his little girl, it is fairly easy for me to imagine myself climbing on to God’s lap and receiving his love. If however he did not know how to relate to me as a teenager or a young woman it is harder for me to relate to a male father God as a young woman, aware of my sexuality and my own developing sense of the world. If a boy was disciplined harshly by his father it is harder for him to come to the presence of God without that underlying expectation of a male to male criticism, some sense of himself not measuring up as a male or a man.

Some people might find psychological insights around these ideas to be pathologizing, feeling as though they cannot escape the inevitable negatives of growing up in a fallen world. The good news is that facing our fallenness, bringing our wounds into the healing presence of God, of a truly loving father, brings healing—a real “person-to-person” relationship and the ensuing humility of being a loved child of God, an heir of the kingdom, a co-heir with my brothers and sisters.

GOD AS LOVER

What of other images of God? The Song of Solomon has challenged Christians through the centuries with its explicit metaphors and lover-beloved relationship. Here gender becomes starker. As a woman it is easy for me to identify with the Shunammite—the beloved. It has been a healing experience over the years to identify with her and to allow the words of the lover, to be God’s words to me. “You are all fair my love; Arise my love, my fair one and come away. How beautiful you are my darling, how beautiful you are.” To receive the love of God the Lover until I can respond, “I am dark but comely; his banner over me is love, I am sick with love” (Song 1:5, 15; 2:4,



10; 4:1; 5:8). I cannot—and need not—separate my womanhood from the relationship. I am the beloved. My Lover's love is for me. I am wooed and held, and wed. I am made whole. His love for me gives me a rich sense of self which includes my femininity and my sexuality.

Relating to God in Jesus calls me into the imagery of a relationship of one human with another. This may be experientially different for a man than for a woman. If I am a man imagining

myself in Palestine during Jesus' lifetime, I can relate to Jesus as a man who calls me into life, into ministry, into responsibility. Or, as a woman I identify with the women who followed Jesus. I can put myself into Martha's story, into her sister Mary, or into the other Mary—of Magdalene. As a woman I imagine journeying as Mary Magdalene did through the Gospel stories. Catching his eye after a healing, exchanging a look, or a conversation after some particularly challenging interaction. I imagine myself by the tomb in Joseph of Arimathea's garden; the wrenching sobs of a woman who has lost the man who meant everything to her. And then he is there with her—and her world lurches into another form. She is in his arms, never to let him go. Gently he holds her, and tenderly tells her she does not need to cling to him, he is not yet "going to the father," disappearing from her grasp.

This placing of ourselves into a Gospel story is one of the ways to receive healing, to be transformed by our God. It follows the Ignatian method of imagining ourselves present.¹⁰ I identify with one of the characters and imagine what it would be like to be there. What do I see, hear, smell, feel? What is the experience like for me? How does Jesus respond to me? What is it like to be in his presence? The story of the woman at the well illustrates this process.

I see him sitting there. In the shade, still, watching.

I become conscious of my self. My body. I swing it a little.

I lower my bucket and glance at him. He meets my look and asks for a drink.

There is something in his eyes. Some promise of such richness.

Forbidden of course. But worth pursuing.

The old longing in my heart.

The longing for someone who would meet me. The real me. Fully.

There is no man, I know. But I still hope.

And make the play for it. "Who are you a Jew who would ask?"

10 For more information on this meditation practice see S. Pritchard, The Lost Art of Meditation: Deepening Your Prayer Life (Milton Keynes: Scripture Union, 2003).

Flirt a bit. Draw him on. Engage him.

I take him my bucket and pour water into his hands. He thanks me and drinks.

I watch him. In his look is such a self-containment. Such a wholeness.

I know he will not be tempted by me. Is not. Yet he is not afraid to give.

He responds to me and lets the playacting fall ignored.

He drinks and says, "If you knew who I was you'd ask me for a drink."

I'm asking; oh, I am asking. But how to meet that look?

So I continue my act.

"Well give it to me so I wouldn't have to come here and draw water."

Draw him along. Keep him talking.

And on one level I'm not acting. I want this life he has in his eyes. I want to know how to get it. And I'm free for the taking if he'd only have me. Which he won't, of course. Because if he's as great as he seems he'll see my brokenness and not want me.

And he does—"Go and call your husband."

But I'll try for a little longer. "I have no husband." Take me. I'm free.

I'll give you all I've got for what you've got.

I'm yours for the taking and I'll give it all for that life you have in your eyes.

He knows what I mean. He looks at me deeply. He doesn't draw back from me.

The promise is there in his hands. If only.

He looks at me, and without judgement, still holding out the promise he says—

"You're right you've had five husbands and the one you now live with is not your husband."

Statement—I know you.

So he knows my brokenness and my need. He sees through me.

And wonder of wonders he does not draw back. Oh, if only I could have this man.

Indeed he would be living water to my soul.

I do not know how to get him. He plays a game I do not know.

Try another tack. Keep him in reach a little longer.

"Sir I can see you're a prophet."

Well something—you're something to do with what my inner heart longs for.

¹⁰ For more information on this meditation practice see S. Pritchard, The Lost Art of Meditation: Deepening Your Prayer Life (Milton Keynes: Scripture Union, 2003).



Talk about that. Tell me the Answers—tell me something I can feed on for a while.

He talks and I do not hear him. I watch his lips and his eyes and know that I long for something that is beyond my reach: physically, spiritually. I am one who longs for spiritual answers but cannot attain to them—who would even believe I wanted them.

I give myself physically to receive whatever life I can get.

But this man, he knows something, he is in touch with the Real. It's not hard to see that. And he takes me seriously. He talks to me as if I was someone who was real too.

He's not sidetracked by my banter.

He looks into my eyes and my spirit is drawn to him.

I dare to let him see my real longing. "I believe in the Messiah." I want to know him.

"I am he," he says.

I am stunned yet believing in the same instant. I stare at him, my bucket forgotten. The men coming up behind me ignored. If anyone could be, it's him.

He looks into my eyes. Gentleness and truth. Promise of life forever. Living water. It really could be true.

I am caught in his look. Caught by the promise. Known for who I am, yet free to come.

I meet his look. My heart is held. Held yet free.

For once I can give my heart. Yet freely.

My whole being says Yes.

When I wrote this story I identified with this woman using her sexuality to reach out to Jesus, to flirt with him—he must have noticed that this is what she was doing! Yet he accepted her—and responded to the deeper need she was expressing—the need of her yearning heart for intimacy, for spirit-to-spirit connection. And, further, he identified himself as the Messiah to her—something he

did to only a few—and only those who were ready to hear. As I identify with her, and place myself in the story, so I receive healing from a God who knows my sexuality, my longing—and accepts both. Here is a God who knows me at my most vulnerable, the reality of my gender, the reality of my sexuality, the depth of my need—and responds to me, to all these parts of me, and is known by me in return. Engaging with the stories in this way allows me to know God experientially.

GOD AS LOVER—MEN'S RESPONSES

For women, the relationship with God as lover is straightforward in terms of my feminine to God as masculine, but how are men to respond to this image? There are several possibilities.

If we see the images of God as being less about the image-object and more about the nature of the relationship, then we identify with the intimacy, the heightened self-awareness, the depth of longing. The metaphors communicate to us not so much God as male Lover but rather my relationship with God can be as intimate, as enlivening, as erotic, as a Lover-beloved relationship.

C. S. Lewis suggests that we are all "female" in response to God.¹¹ That is, God is the great Masculine, ever the initiator, the Protector, the Lion—and his church is his bride. We are all responders to his masculine, receptive to his active, loved in response to his loving. As a woman it is easy for me to accept this, and some men are able to make this step, while others find it more difficult. James Nelson explains,

Our male biology will not change, and it will continue to give a different cast to both our sexuality and our spirituality from that which women's bodies give to theirs . . . it seems related to the desire to penetrate and to explore the mystery of otherness, a desire important to human fulfilment. At the same time, this needs balance through the development of a more receptive and vulnerable male sexuality that will form the grounding for a more receptive and vulnerable masculine spirituality.¹²

John of the Cross gives us a beautiful example of this receptive and vulnerable masculine spirituality in his Dark Night of the Soul. He talks of the beloved finding her Lover, of his head upon her breast. He allows himself to identify with the beloved in response to the Lover, utilising the feminine pronoun. And from his language and imagery it is clear that he experienced God's presence in this interchange profoundly.

Oh guiding night!

O night more lovely than the dawn!

O night that has united

The Lover with His beloved,

Transforming the beloved in her Lover.¹³

Another Christian mystic who clearly experienced intimacy with God was Julian of Norwich, the thirteenth-century English spiritual mentor, who easily moved between genders in her descriptions of the Trinity. "Also the almighty truth of the Trinity is our Father. For he made us and keeps us in him. And the deep wisdom of

¹¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 44. "Our role must be always that of patient to agent, female to male, mirror to light, echo to voice."

¹² J. B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 43.

¹³ John of the Cross, "The Dark Night." In *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, translated by K. Kavanaugh (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979).



the Trinity is our Mother, in whom we be all enclosed, and the high goodness of the Trinity is our Lord, and in him we are closed, and he is in us. All mighty, all wisdom, and all goodness; one God, one Lord, and one goodness.¹⁴

Julian does not try and explain how God is feminine and masculine—she simply uses the image of Jesus as mother, mixing the genders as though they are indeed only images, and the coming to God, the quality of the relationship is the whole point. Other mystics through the centuries have done similarly—not letting the compartments of the human mind hinder them from coming into God’s presence, knowing God relationally, intimately.

Another perspective on God as lover is gained from men who have been confronted with their own sexuality, and homosexuality. Some people may find it difficult to accept that homosexual men can engage with this imagery—indeed to fear their own responses because of this association. Homosexual friends have told me of the power of identifying Jesus as Lover, accepting them in their maleness and their sexuality—and wooing them to deep intimacy, their relationship with God deepened by their experiencing of God in this way.

For many men both these perspectives are problematic. Nelson explains that for some, these ideas seem to imply that a man has to let go his masculinity. “Furthermore, a male God penetrates us. But to be penetrated by anyone or anything, even God, amounts to being womanized. It seems tantamount to a man’s degradation, literally loss of grade or status.”¹⁵ The poet William Everson was able to face that possibility by seeing beyond the “annulling” to the transformation, “Annul me in my manhood, Lord, and Make me woman-sexed and weak, if by that total transformation I might know Thee more.”¹⁶ The challenge for men is to be able to come into the presence of God, bringing with them their masculinity and their sexuality, and finding the intimacy of the Lover.

In answer to my questioning a friend about this, he told me:

Firstly, I am a man, husband, father, son, brother of Christ, disciple of Christ, man among men and brother to/of many, and there is a “homo-erotic” aspect to this (although I’ve chosen not to enter into a homosexual experience with anyone). I seek to explore and penetrate the mystery, spiritually and sexually. My spiritual modus operandi reflects my sexual design. However, secondly,

there is another side to me that says I surrender, I am receptive, penetrate me, take me. I am learning to wait for the mystery (sometimes) rather than always be out there hunting it down! And then, thirdly, there are times when the question of gender all but disappears in favour of simple shared humanity. Not that I become neutered, or anyone else for that matter, but at times it ceases to matter.¹⁷

Some men sidestep this imagery—or come as close to it as they can—by seeing God as brother, as friend, as mate, as comrade. They can identify with Jesus’ disciples and imagine walking with him along the shores of Galilee or the streets of Nazareth—in the deep intimate conversation of close friends. This is powerful imagery. It is not the same as a Lover-beloved intimacy but it can be powerfully healing and inspiring.

Whatever our image of God is - we are the complement of that image - the opposite and corresponding partner in the relationship. If Jesus is Friend, I am friend to him—not servant, not bond-slave. “I came not to be served but to serve” (Mark: 10:45). “I no longer call you servants . . . I call you friends” (John 15:15). It is God himself who elevates us to this relationship of equals—who calls us to be mature men and women of faith, co-heirs of the kingdom. Finding how to come to God with the intimacy of a lover, a true partner with him is a deeply liberating and healing experience.

GOD AS MOTHER

For many of us, because of our gender, our sexuality, our various experiences, engaging with God as Lover may be challenging—even though clearly biblical. What of discovering the God who is also Mother to us? Again our gender, our childhood experiences, our beliefs about the



feminine, will help or hinder our relating to God in this

¹⁴ Julian of Norwich, *Showing of Love*. These quotations are found on the Westminster website: <http://www.umilta.net/westmins.html>.

¹⁵ Nelson, *The Intimate Connection*, 45.

¹⁶ W. Everson, *Earth Poetry* (Berkeley: Oyez, 1980).

¹⁷ Personal communication with Noel Giblett.

way, and will influence our theological perspectives.

If we have had difficulty with our mothers or other female authority figures, then feminine images are difficult; even as the male images are difficult for those who have struggled in their relationship with their father. Or it may be that we simply have never realised that a feminine image of God is orthodox. Or, if we are catholic, we may have been taught to pray to Mary as the acceptable female image, instead of finding God as Mother.

Julian of Norwich seems to be able to respond to God very easily as Father, Mother, Lover. Many of us have not found it so easy. Many women, like me, have somehow absorbed society's devaluing of women, and so devalued our own feminine. For many of us it was easier to imagine God as Father, or to come to Jesus as Lover. Personally for me it felt as though a feminine representation of God was more likely to condemn. I realised this most specifically when I saw my

own criticism of myself as a mother. In the course of some profound retreat work I wrote to God, deliberately choosing to accept God as Mother, and articulated what came:

And so then I come, Mother God to you—fallen human mother that I am—and say here I am, as you know me to be, naked and not covering myself—coming as a very human mother—to you, the only Divine Mother, the only Perfect One—the one who comes in such humility that you kneel at my feet, and hold me to your breast, that I may feel your heart beat, and know your love outpoured for me, forever outpoured, forever giving, forever in travail, forever in self-giving. This is my God, the One who weeps in self-giving Love.

I have found that my image of God influences the way I can relate—just as my images of different people influence the way I relate to them. Coming to God as Mother enabled me to experience myself as feminine in the presence of God's feminine. This is not the same as saying that God is goddess. It is acknowledging the feminine in God as we acknowledge the masculine, the Lover, the Protector, the Nurturer. Bringing particular struggles I have to God as Mother allows me to experience those difficulties in a different way.

James Nelson, in his examination of what it means to be aware of his maleness in God's presence, explains the ambivalence many men experience when facing the possibility of God as mother. "To embrace the 'feminine' in God is to embrace the promise of that deep nurturing presence and immanence that we so need. But it also raises our unconscious anger at the mother who abandoned us and pushed us out into a man's world where the clues and expectations about our own deepest

meanings were hard to find. It is all very confusing in the heart of a man's heart."¹⁸

Each of us is on a journey of awareness of what it means to be gendered, and what that means in the presence of God who we experience through our own lived reality.

THE ONGOING JOURNEY

For some of us, the idea of changing an image of God, or the nature of our relationship with God, is challenging. We find it difficult to admit that our previous ideas may have been limited. Or we misinterpret the idea that God is unchanging, to think that therefore my image of God must be unchanging. Research in epistemic development has shown that the position of most maturity is a position which admits not knowing, which admits that faith is engagement with God in an ongoing developing relationship. Anselm's "faith seeking understanding" is true in this context of God-image, and God-relationship maybe more than any other. I seek your face oh God—and as I seek your face I come to know you little by little. To use C. S. Lewis's revelation, we cannot know God face to face, till we have faces.¹⁹ It is the unfolding of my self-knowledge, and my relational knowing which will lead me to intimate face-to-face relationship. It is a seeking which, in Rizzuto's phrase, "demands exquisite attention to the experience of the [person]."²⁰ May we each find the God who pays such exquisite attention to each one of us.



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¹⁸ Nelson, *The Intimate Connection*, 45

¹⁹ C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1980).

²⁰ Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God*, 211



Empirical Science, Faith and the Language of Psychosexuality

BY JOHN COURT

For practising counsellors, one of the most difficult areas today is that which is concerned with sexuality. Changing views in society, expectations about what is acceptable, and personal struggles within relationships mean that counsellors can expect sexual issues to present quite often. This can lead to ethical dilemmas arising from competing values and the potential for claims of unprofessional conduct from clients or family who may disagree with the counsellor's approach.

The hazards of such uncertainty in a time of rapid change are multiplied for Christian counsellors who take their faith seriously enough to espouse moral values that may be at odds with the secular society within which they work. Over the last fifty years there has been a swathe of changes in attitudes within society, so that what might once have been normative can no longer be assumed. While Australia set out with a strongly Christian influence in all areas of life, we have seen a shift to becoming a multi-cultural, multi-religious society predominantly guided by secular values. While this has affected attitudes and values in many areas, many of them refreshing and invigorating, it has also left clients with a great deal of uncertainty around sexual practices. Many have largely lost the categories of right or wrong in their relationships, living instead out of pragmatic presuppositions about what they see as in their own best interest.

Difficult issues over the last fifty years have included the advent of contraception, the rise in premarital sex, increasing divorce rates, and the scandals of child sexual abuse. Among the more contentious areas is the debate over homosexuality that has been developing over the last thirty years. The effectiveness of activism is such that society has become polarised, appearing to be for or against, with little scope for nuances. This creates tension in churches as well as wider society and it has now become very difficult even to discuss alternative views. We could do better by putting this area of sexuality into the broader realm of psychosexuality, considering all forms of sexual expression from a moral perspective, as this minimises the us-them hostilities and causes us

to look at heterosexual practices with the same set of principles. This paper will focus in summary form on three issues that produce some of these polarities, drawing on other places where the themes have been given more extended commentary.

LANGUAGE

A major problem rarely discussed is the word **homosexuality**. This came into our language as an early attempt at diagnosis of disorders (Krafft-Ebing, 1886). Unfortunately the term has two distinct meanings, as dictionaries show, e.g. "sexual desire or behavior directed toward a person or persons of one's own sex". (Merriam-Webster online dictionary).

These are two quite different concepts (desire and behaviour), and the one does not have to presuppose the other. To use the term without distinguishing the meaning intended is to invite confusion and polarisation.

To avoid this problem and the stigma arising from the label, many alternatives came forward over the 20th century. The language has shifted from early moral evaluations towards descriptions that evolved from theories. From "sexual perversion" and "sexual deviation" through to "sexual preference" and "sexual orientation". Each carries assumptions that underlie the shifts. (See Court and Whitehead, 1996).

Homosexual is used as a noun and as an adjective. For the noun, one might "be a homosexual" or as an adjective "have a homosexual preference" or "engage in homosexual behaviour". Perhaps it is unsurprising that this terminology is fading. There has not been a single word that conveys the differences between orientation and action.

As a noun, many have supposed that a homosexual can somehow be easily recognised as such, but this is a fallacy. Such stereotyping is a strong basis for stigmatising, and quite unwarranted. There are many pathways to a point where a person might identify as homosexual (Court, 1973). There is no one cause, and certainly no

single genetic basis. Whatever a person's psychosexual orientation, the Christian needs to accept that person as loved by God, and a fellow-traveller in life.

The currently preferred terminology is the word **gay**, a term that by its extensive usage has now taken over the space previously occupied by homosexual, and treated as synonymous. This term also raises conceptual issues since it is more than a word. It carries a meta-message, based on the traditional meanings of happy and cheerful. Clearly this is not just a synonym. It is used as an affirmation of status and a repudiation of stigma. Rekers (1982) asserts that "the emerging definition of gay and lesbian is different from that of homosexual. The term gay, like the term black, chicano and woman, connotes a value system... Gay is proud, angry, open, visible, political, healthy..." The gay movement has embraced the term as it so usefully asserts that there is nothing wrong with being homosexual, and claims equality with others. A pro-gay web-site has capitalised on the word, using the initials to affirm "Good-as-You" as a statement of equality. This word has, however, also fallen foul of stigmatising views, in that gay is now not only a personal affirmation, but also used by others as a form of abuse, especially in schools, to the point that this has been recognised as an example of bullying (http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/bullying_sexual_orientation.page).

Homophobia is another recent term which is readily attached to anyone who disagrees with the stated aims of gay activists. More generally phobias are disorders associated with pathological fear. While it may well be that some people are afraid of homosexuals, or afraid of homosexual inclinations within themselves, it is an unwarranted claim that all those who take a stand against gay activists' demands are motivated by fear. Christians are often branded with this term, when they seek to voice a moral view based on biblical teaching that ironically arise not from fear but from concern.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Professional counsellors' views are strongly influenced by empirical scientific evidence both for understanding and determining how to respond to clients. This is a highly controversial area because the science itself is convoluted, often politically shaped, and based on evidence that has serious problems. The most influential contributor to a scientific understanding of sexuality, and especially homosexuality, was Alfred Kinsey with his colleagues through their two volumes on human sexuality (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin & Gebhard, 1953). In spite of enormous criticism of their conclusions from the very first, they gained traction in the public arena, and continue to be cited as credible in debates today, even though better

and more recent evidence can be shown to discount many of the assertions advanced in the Kinsey Reports. (e.g. Painton, 1993; Muir, 1998)

There is space here only to allude to more detailed sources for further reading, and to identify a couple of the more frequently cited errors in the scientific literature. Most people have heard that "10% of the population is homosexual", and Kinsey is the claimed source. In reality he never claimed this. He did claim to find that 10% of adult males in his survey were predominantly homosexual for a period of three years at some time in their lives. He did not make a case for life-long homosexuality, readily acknowledging that people can choose. He noted the incidence among women was roughly half that for males, as many have since confirmed, but with figures like 4% and 2%. Kinsey's co-authors have since distanced themselves from the original claims (Reisman, Eichel, Muir and Court, 1990) and recognised the fallacy of combining reports about orientation with reports of behaviour into a composite index, the so-called Kinsey Scale.

Paul Gebhard, a Kinsey colleague, expressed his regrets later in life in a teaching video (One in Ten. Manhattan Center Studios, 1993), stating, inter alia, that "I was never very happy about that". Of the 10% claim he noted that the age range sampled was not truly adult, but 16-55 (though his colleague Clarence Tripp asserts that puberty was the criterion, so many of 13 and over were included). Gebhard concludes regretfully "I am sorry that figure (10%) was seized upon" because the selection criteria applied "make the figure almost meaningless". (see also Hobbs & Lambert, 1948). Kinsey's avowed purpose was to normalise the range of sexual behaviours and argued for bisexuality as the norm, rather than heterosexuality. This was not a scientific observation but a moral conviction from one who claimed to be a pure scientist. De Cecco (1990) quotes Kinsey's co-author Gagnon saying that the Kinsey Scale "represented an ideological commitment of the Kinsey authors to win popular acceptance of homosexuality..."(p.383)

The other major sources of error that have gained traction more recently are that there is a genetic basis for orientation, and that there are differences in the brain structure of homosexuals. Several researchers made such claims in the 1980s. They have not been substantiated and the original work has been shown to be flawed. (Court and Whitehead, 1996; Muir, 1996; Whitehead and Whitehead, 1999). Most authors now favour a multi-factorial basis for psychosexual choices.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

This too is an area of contention with opinions varying according to one's exegesis of key passages of Scripture.



A traditional understanding, embraced by Jews and Muslims as well as Christians is that homosexual acts are contrary to God's creation design and purpose. In recent years various scholars have offered other interpretations shaped by current theological formulations and understandings of how scripture is to be understood. Clearly there needs to be a humble approach to the text as well as to those who have a differing viewpoint from one's own.

A critical issue for Christians, though not for secularists, is the distinction noted above between orientation and behaviour. It is the long established distinction between loving the sinner and hating the sin. Biblical sources do not condemn the homosexual person, male or female. We ought therefore to be open and accepting in our relationships with them. It is active homosexual practices that receive attention in both the Old and New Testaments. Hence debates about acceptance of homosexuals or homosexual clergy will merely polarise unless we make clear the distinction between what Schmidt calls Act and Orientation (Schmidt, 1995, 1996). There is no real difference in biblical teaching between the moral position on homosexual behaviour and that on heterosexual adultery or fornication, even though the churches have typically taken an accommodating view in the recent past.

The Christian can play a part in expressing views in this area while realising that the state may well adopt a different position based on secular values. We should

not attempt to impose our moral beliefs on our secular colleagues, but we do have a responsibility to share with them the moral insights that have been brought to us. It should be possible to do this without encountering a barrage of scorn, though this may not always be the case.

Among the possible ethical stances one might take, Biggar advocates that

For some, the distinctive Christian ethos is the property of a confessing community: i.e a community which shares specifically Christian beliefs and practices. The church here is held to be a quite discrete society, whose primary duty is to perform a prophetic ministry by representing the kingdom of God more or less indirectly in itself, its ethos and its institutions. (p.230)

The Christian counsellor also has to face many ethical dilemmas in relation to those who present with homosexual concerns- fears of alienation, bullying, and other kinds of discrimination, as well as personal struggles with their own moral framework. They will ask hard questions like "Is change possible?" having heard often enough that the answer is no. There are plenty of sources that will enable an answer of yes, and offer a direction of hope. (e.g.Dallas, 1996: Satinover, 1996: Hill, 2002). However, the ethical standards in health care professions currently insist that it is unethical to assist clients to change their sexual orientation, even with their consent. Counsellors need to respect this, even in the



face of evidence that help and change are possible. We are in a time of change and this will continue. Others will not seek change, but to understand their homosexual feelings, learn to deal with them healthily, and to get clarity on what the Bible actually teaches. The counsellor can make a significant contribution here, and assist in overcoming self-doubt, lowered self-worth, and false guilt, especially reassuring that homosexual orientation is not of itself a sin.

Whether in the counselling room or the church, our stance needs to be one of acceptance of the person and inclusiveness, even when we are constrained to assert the same biblical principles that apply to heterosexual behaviours outside of marriage. When it comes to church, all are welcome, even when we see a moral issue deserving attention. When it comes to leadership in the church, moral issues do need to affect decisions, just as they do when it comes to marriage. For a good theologically-based, and well-argued case for decisions in church life based on biblical principles, see Dunnam and Malony (2003).

FINAL REFLECTION

For the secular counsellor, the issues surrounding psychosexuality can be pursued within the framework of legislation, ethical decision making and scientific evidence. For the Christian counsellor it is more complex. Distinguishing *orientation* and *behaviour* is an important starting point, and these two need to be separated out as distinct from each other like two dimensions. This is equally true for heterosexual clients dealing with matters like divorce or adultery. They will lead to conclusions comparable to those of the secular counsellor. However, as soon as we insert a third, *moral* dimension of thinking (right and wrong), we incorporate concepts that are not addressed by the scientific research literature, and yet deserve thoughtful attention. This is true whether we are addressing homosexual or heterosexual issues. (Court and Johnston, 1978). Having a moral framework in one's counselling does make a difference.

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The Development of Self, Parenting and the Wiring of the Brain

BY PETER MILNES PH.D & GENEVIEVE MILNES PH.D

The Scriptures consistently links the thought processes with the way in which the Self is made:

“As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.”¹

This linkage between the thought processes and the way the Self is created needs to be understood by professional Psychotherapists and Counsellors. This article will describe the initial development of the brain, the impact of early environmental influences on “wiring” the brain and discuss the possibilities of “rewiring” the brain. Since parents are the principal early environmental influence on a child, we will examine the effect of four “parenting styles”² on the way in which the brain is developed and ultimately how the Self is made. In contrast to earlier theories that genetics and early development “hardwire”

¹ Proverbs 23:7 KJV – apologies for the reference to gender – the Scriptures mean both male and female.

² Baumrind, D (1991) Effective parenting during early adolescent transition, in A Cowan and E.M. Hetherington (eds), *Family Transitions*, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, New Jersey; Baumrind D. (1996). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. *Child Development*, 37(4), 887-907.

the brain, recent research has shown that learning and therapy in later life can “rewire” the brain³. So, therapists should be encouraged to engage in therapeutic strategies that assist people in the redevelopment of the Self later in life.

EARLY PHYSIOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRAIN

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made”⁴

During foetal development, neurons migrate to form the various parts of the brain and the basic structure is intact by birth and then rapidly grows for three years at which point it has reached almost 90% of its adult size⁵. During the first three years the brain’s initial “wiring” is laid down (in much the same way as electricians lay down the initial cables in a new house) from the “bottom up”⁶ – from the most primitive to the higher functions:

The first areas to develop are the *brainstem* and *midbrain* that regulate the autonomic functions such as breathing, heart-rate, motor co-ordination and arousal⁷ – the basic processes of survival.

Above the brain stem is the limbic system which includes the *hippocampus*, *cingulated gyrus* and *amygdala* (that govern the basic drives of sex, aggression, regulation of emotions and impulse) and the *basal ganglia* that organizes and integrates information about thoughts, feelings and behaviour. The last part of the brain to develop is the *cerebral cortex* which undertakes the complex operations of reasoning and creativity and is comprised of two hemispheres that have specialized functions – the *left hemisphere* (dominant in most right handed people) is involved in processing verbal information, linear forms of logic such as reading and mathematics; while the *right hemisphere* “specializes in visual and holistic processing such as spatial and social perception.”⁸ The *cerebral cortex* is divided into a further four areas (lobes)⁹:

- **Occipital Lobe** - Visual processing
- **Parietal Lobes** - Perception of sensory information such as pain, pressure, touch, and movement of the body
- **Temporal Lobes** - Memory, auditory perception and facial recognition
- **Frontal Lobes** - Executive functions such as planning, problem solving, decision-making and organization.

Perry¹⁰ has represented the development of the brain diagrammatically:

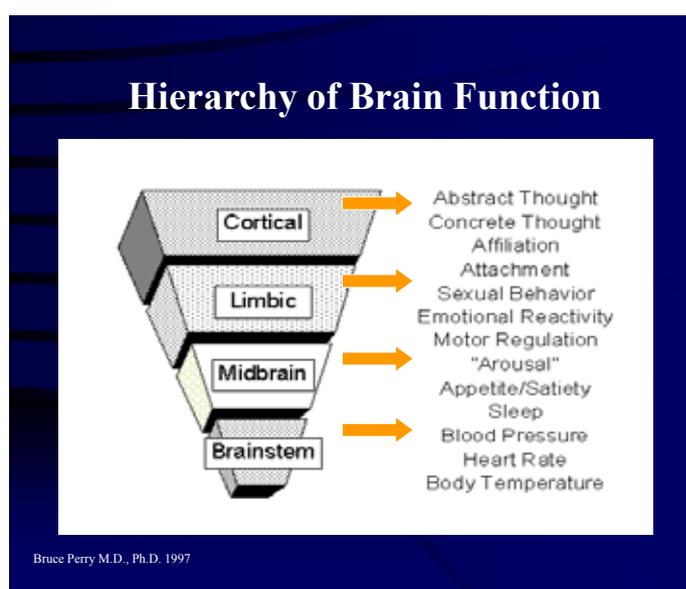


Figure 1: Perry's Diagram Showing Hierarchy of Brain Function

From this diagram you can see that after birth, the growth stimulated in each region provides the foundation for further learning. During the first three years of life there is a remarkable production of synapses to reach approximately 1,000 trillion. This over-production of synapses allows the child to lay down the “wiring” that automates the survival instincts and leaves enough room to engage in the development of higher processes such as learning to talk¹¹. From the earliest moments of life, the brain begins to carve out the thought processes that determine the makeup of the Self. This is done by “pruning” the excess number of synapses. There are two vital periods of pruning – just prior to birth and the second period that begins at birth and lasts until

3 Garland, E.L. & Howard, M.O. (2009) Neuroplasticity, Psychosocial Genomics, and the Biopsychosocial Paradigm in the 21st Century. *Health and Social Work*, Vol.34 (3):191-199.

4 Psalm 139:14KJV– apologies for the reference to gender – the Scriptures mean both male and female.

5 Perry, B.D. (2000). *Traumatized children: How childhood trauma influences brain development*. http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/trau_CAMI.asp.

6 Perry, B.D., Pollard, R., Blakely, T., Baker, W. & Vigilante, D. (1995). *Childhood trauma, the neurobiology of adaptation and “use-dependent” development of the brain: How “states” become “traits”*. http://www.childtrauma.org/states_traits.htm.

7 Kerig, P.K., Ludlow, A. & Wenar, C. (2012) *Developmental Psychopathology 6th ed.* McGraw-Hill Educational, London, p.38.

8 Kerig, P.K., Ludlow, A. & Wenar, C. (2012) *Developmental Psychopathology 6th ed.* McGraw-Hill Educational, London, p.39

9 Kerig, P.K., Ludlow, A. & Wenar, C. (2012) *Developmental Psychopathology*

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10 Perry, B.D. (1997). *Incubated in terror: Neurodevelopmental factors in the ‘cycle of violence’*. <http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/incubated.asp>.

11 Greenough, W.T., Black, J.E. & Wallace, C.S. (1987). Experience and brain development. *Child Development*, 58, 539-559.

the late teens¹² by which time half of our synapses have been discarded to leave us with about 500 trillion which accompany us for the remainder of life¹³.

Another way the brain is physiologically affected is the development of a *myelin sheath*¹⁴ that surrounds the axon of nerve cells in a manner similar to insulating wires and increases the speed and efficiency of information transmission between areas of "grey matter"¹⁵. Myelination of the neurons begins at puberty in the more primitive parts of the brain and progresses to the more advanced functions¹⁶. Since the initial wiring has already been laid down in our early years, myelination increases the structural strength of the wiring that has already been laid down:

It is now clear that what a child experiences in the first few years of life largely determines how his brain will develop and how he will interact with the world throughout his life.¹⁷

While genetics may predispose us to develop our thought processes and our Selves in certain ways, our environment *from birth* has a significant impact on the way our brains are developed and organized. The shape of who we become¹⁸ is made during the vulnerable years of our initial wiring.

"Our brains are sculpted by our early experiences. Maltreatment is a chisel that shapes a brain to contend with strife, but at the cost of deep, enduring wounds."¹⁹

Repeated experiences during the early developmental years become neuronal pathways or "memories" that contain our impressions of our world in an "organizing structure" for easy retrieval²⁰.

¹² Kerig, P.K., Ludlow, A. & Wenar, C. (2012) *Developmental Psychopathology 6th ed.* McGraw-Hill Educational, London, p.39

¹³ Shore, R. (1997). *Rethinking the brain*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

¹⁴ The *myelin sheath* is composed of formaldehyde and gives a whitish appearance to the "white matter".

¹⁵ The "grey matter" is composed of the denser neuronal cell bodies.

¹⁶ Steinberg, L. (2010) A behavioural scientist looks at the science of adolescent brain development. *Brain and Cognition*, 72, 160-164 suggests that the late pruning of the higher mental functions (such as planning, decision-making, organization and weighing alternatives) mean that risky and illogical behaviour associated with the "storm and stress of adolescence may be derived from this biological process".

¹⁷ Ounce of Prevention Fund. (1996). *Starting smart: How early experiences affect brain development*. Chicago, IL: Ounce of Prevention

¹⁸ Shore, R. (1997). *Rethinking the brain*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

¹⁹ Teicher, M.D. (2000). Wounds that time won't heal: The neurobiology of child abuse. *Dana Forum on brain science*, 2(4), 67.

²⁰ Perry, B.D. (1999). *Memories of fear: How the brain stores and retrieves physiologic states, feelings, behaviours and thoughts from traumatic events*. <http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/memories.asp>.

PARENTING STYLES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.²¹

Perry²² noted that even though all infants have the capacity and genetic predisposition to form strong attachments to their primary caregivers, unresponsive or threatening caregivers disrupt the process and this may disrupt the child's later ability to form healthy relationships. Children do not just "get over" neglect and abuse because their brains adapt to negative environments and this diminishes their true emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social potential²³. Our examination of the development of Self needs to focus on the environment created by parents and the impact that this has on the way in which the brain is wired. A highly influential typology was developed by Diane Baumrind²⁴ in the 1990s using two independent dimensions - *warmth* and *control* - to produce four quadrants: *authoritarian* (high on structure/low on warmth), *indulgent permissive* (high on warmth/low on structure), *authoritative* (high on structure/high on warmth) and *neglectful* (low on structure/low on warmth):

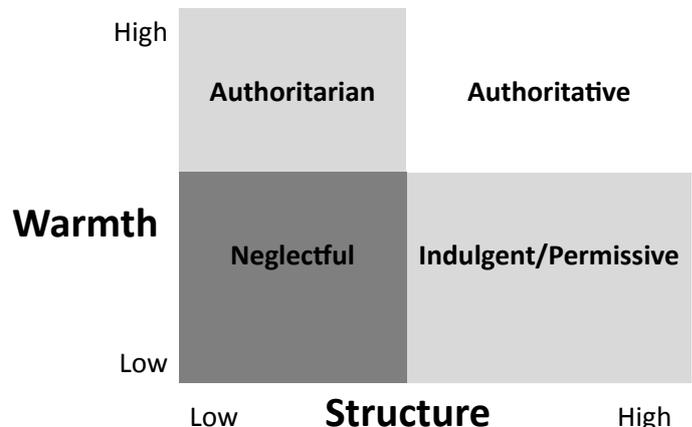


Figure 2: Baumrind's Typology of Parenting

²¹ Proverbs 22:6 KJV— apologies for the reference to gender – the Scriptures mean both male and female.

²² Perry, B.D. (2001). Violence and childhood: *How persisting fear can alter the developing child's brain*. http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/Vio_child.asp.

²³ Perry, B.D., Pollard, R., Blakely, T., Baker, W. & Vigilante, D. (1995). *Childhood trauma, the neurobiology of adaptation and "use-dependent" development of the brain: How "states" become "traits"* http://www.childtrauma.org/states_traits.htm.

²⁴ Baumrind, D (1991) Effective parenting during early adolescent transition, in A Cowan and E.M.Hetherington (eds), *Family Transitions*, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, New Jersey; Baumrind D. (1996). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. *Child Development*, 37(4), 887-907.

Each quadrant is as follows:

Neglectful parenting: indifferent, unconcerned, uninvolved and self-centred parenting that becomes the breeding ground for antisocial behaviour²⁵. In response to the extremes of this lax, *neglectful* and self-centred parenting style, children become impulsive and moody - lacking goals, and engaging in truancy and substance abuse.

Authoritarian: characterised by demanding, controlling and unreasoning, punitive and rejecting discipline. ("Do as I say because I said so.") In response to extremes of this *traumatic* parenting style, children become aggressive, uncooperative, fearful of punishment and low on initiative, self-esteem and competence with peers²⁶.

Indulgent/Permissive: undemanding, child-centred and emotionally enmeshed ("You can do anything") but manipulative and self-centred parenting. In response to this *neglectful* and *traumatic* parenting style, the children become spoiled, dependent, irresponsible, aggressive, entitled and unhappy.

Authoritative: sets standards of mature behaviour and expects the child to comply but remains highly involved, consistent, loving, communicative and willing to listen. In response to this *positive* parenting style, children tend to become self-reliant, self-controlled, secure, popular and inquisitive²⁷.

Now we may have all experienced each of these quadrants in our childhood development. Even within one family, there will be a differentiation in the child's perceptions of the parenting styles. It is also obvious that these quadrants represent sliding scales from mild to extreme. For our purposes we will describe the effects of the *extremes* of these parenting styles on the way in which the brain is formed and the Self is made.

NEGLECTFUL PARENTING

Intentional, unintentional or circumstantial parental *neglect* means that the child is denied the nurturing warmth and structuring assistance that they need during the wiring of the brain. **Perry has represented the effect of neglect on the brain development of a child in diagrammatic form**²⁸:

25 Kerig, P.K., Ludlow, A. & Wenar, C. (2012) *Developmental Psychopathology* 6th ed. McGraw-Hill Educational, London, p.70.

26 Kerig, P.K., Ludlow, A. & Wenar, C. (2012) *Developmental Psychopathology* 6th ed. McGraw-Hill Educational, London, p.70.

27 Kerig, P.K., Ludlow, A. & Wenar, C. (2012) *Developmental Psychopathology* 6th ed. McGraw-Hill Educational, London, p.70.

28 Perry, B.D. (1997). *Incubated in terror: Neurodevelopmental factors in the 'cycle of violence'*. <http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/incubated.asp>.

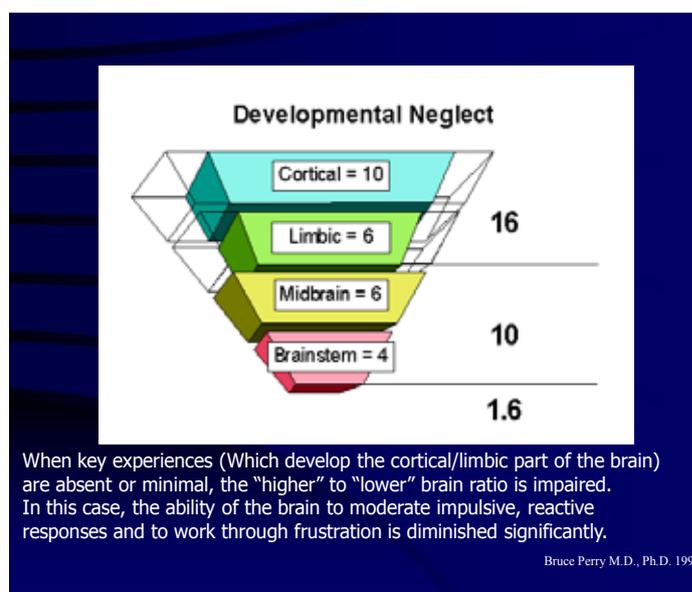


Figure 3: Perry's Diagram Showing the Effects of Developmental Neglect

You can see from the diagram that the *cortical areas* (that control abstract and concrete thought) and *limbic areas* (that control affiliation and attachment, sexual behaviour and emotional reactivity) are diminished by neglect. We have noted three areas where research has indicated that neglectful parenting has affected the development of the brain – inadequate attachment, malnutrition and lack of stimulation:

Inadequate Attachment. It is incredibly important during the first years of life that a healthy attachment is made with parents. As we have seen, without it the lower-brain responses can become too dominant and the upper-brain cognitive regulating structures do not develop properly. As a result the child may be less able to control their emotions or be aware of the emotions of others²⁹. Their "social cognition" becomes impaired and their social interactions may become stressful. The neglected child finds it difficult to incorporate new situations because they lack strong internal representation or memories of how to respond³⁰. Similarly, absence of parental kindness may result in the child not knowing how to show kindness as an adult³¹. Without adequate stimulation, comfort, and affection, children develop Reactive Attachment Disorder³².

29 Kraemer, G.W. (1992). A psychobiological theory of attachment. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 15(3), 493-511.

30 Kraemer, G.W. (1992). A psychobiological theory of attachment. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 15(3), 493-511.

31 Greenough, W.T., Black, J.E. & Wallace, C.S. (1987). Experience and brain development. *Child Development*, 58, 539-559.

32 The Parent Network for the Post Institutionalized Child. (Spring, 1999). *Overview of the post-institutionalized child*. The Post, 1. www.pnpic.org/news2.htm.

leading to otherwise smart children being diagnosed with learning disabilities³³.

Malnutrition. The brains of neglected children who suffer malnutrition in their early years experience slower passage of electrical impulses in the brain³⁴ and their brain growth is stunted which causes cognitive, social, and long-term behavioural deficits³⁵.

Lack of Stimulation. Genetically normal children deprived of stimulation in the domains that structure language, touch, and social interaction³⁶ may develop permanent intellectual disadvantage³⁷. For example, **neglected children may experience delays in language development because they do not have the face-to-face repetitions of sounds and so lack brain circuitry required for the formation of sounds, words and sentences**³⁸.

The effect of early parental neglect adversely affects the development of the brain and ultimately the way in which the Self is formed – lacking social and mental abilities that they would have, had they received appropriate nurture and structure.

AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING

Strongly authoritarian parents who approach parenting based on religion but without empathy may cause childhood *trauma*. The less empathic and the more critical a parent, the more likely the child is to suffer from mental, emotional, physical and psychological trauma because the parent does not “care” for the child”. In an extreme authoritarian parenting style, the parents may even vent their own feelings and frustrations onto the child or mask their lack of empathy behind “instruction” which may sound good but is really harsh and judgmental. Authoritarian parents tend to expect failure from their children – criticizing, withholding encouragement, emphasizing punishment and lacking any warmth. The effects of an extremely harsh authoritarian parenting style devoid of empathy can be represented by **Perry’s**

diagram of developmental trauma³⁹:

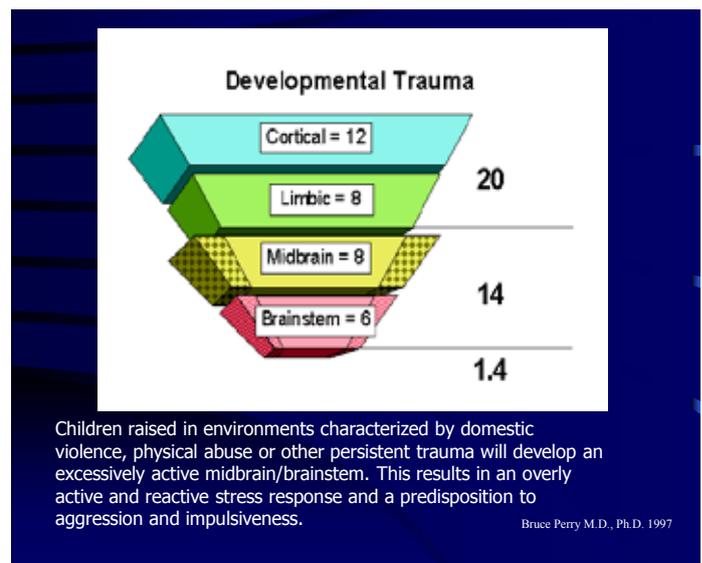


Figure 4: Perry's Diagram Showing the Effects of Developmental Trauma

You can see from Figure 3 that the effect of developmental trauma on the *brainstem* (that control motor regulation, “arousal” appetite and sleep) and *midbrain* (that control blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature) are overdeveloped.

All children need to experience fear so that they can develop ways to deal with it. However, chronic and repeated fear causes *trauma* that affects the neurochemical systems and changes the way a child pays attention, controls impulses, sleeps and develops fine motor skills⁴⁰. Persistent fear responses can “wear out” other parts of the brain such as the *hippocampus*⁴¹; the *subcortical* and *limbic* systems resulting in extreme anxiety, depression, and difficulty forming attachments to other people⁴². The fear responses become permanent “memories” and can become a way of life that is difficult to change, even if the environment improves.⁴³ There are

33 Perry, B.D. (1996). *Neurodevelopmental adaptations to violence: How children survive the intragenerational vortex of violence* http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/vortex_interd.asp

34 Pollitt, E. & Gorman, K.S. (1994). Nutritional deficiencies as developmental risk factors. In Nelson, C.A. (Ed.) *Threats to optimal development: Integrating biological, psychological, and social risk factors*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers. 121-144.

35 Karr-Morse, R. & Wiley, M.S. (1997). *Ghosts from the nursery: Tracing the roots of violence*. New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press.

36 Perry, B.D. & Pollard, R. (1997). Altered brain development following global neglect in early childhood. *Proceedings from the Annual Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience*, New Orleans.

37 Greenough, W.T., Black, J.E. & Wallace, C.S. (1987). Experience and brain development. *Child Development*, 58, 539-559

38 Helgeson, R. (1997). The brain game. *Adoptive Families*, July/August 1997, 26-31.

39 Perry, B.D. (1997). *Incubated in terror: Neurodevelopmental factors in the 'cycle of violence'*. <http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/incubated.asp>.

40 Perry, B.D. (2000). *The neuroarcheology of childhood maltreatment: The neurodevelopmental costs of adverse childhood events* <http://www.childtrauma.org/ctamaterials/Neuroarcheology.asp>; Perry, B.D. (2000). *Traumatized children: How childhood trauma influences brain development* http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/trau_CAMI.asp.

41 Hippocampus is involved in cognition and memory Perry, B.D. (2000). *Traumatized children: How childhood trauma influences brain development* http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/trau_CAMI.asp

42 Shore, R. (1997). *Rethinking the brain*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

43 Shonkoff, J.P. & Phillips, D.A. (2001) *Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on Brain Development* www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue.../



two main reactions to the developmental trauma of fear – hyper-arousal and dissociation:

When the response to fear is always “on”, children develop hyper-arousal, hyperactivity, anxiety, impulsivity, and sleep problems similar to PTSD⁴⁴. In social settings, the brain adapts to the unpredictable and dangerous world by becoming hyper-vigilant and focused on threats from non-verbal cues⁴⁵.

Dissociation is evident in “freezing” – physically and cognitively – when the child becomes powerless, numb, non-reactive, “acting like they aren’t there” and over-compliant. This is often called the “surrender response”. Dissociated children from traumatic parenting do not respond to adults who become angry and more threatening and become even more anxious and dissociated⁴⁶.

The effect of early trauma from extreme authoritarian parents who provide no nurture on brain development affects the formation of the Self – hyper-arousal or “freezing”.

INDULGENT PERMISSIVE PARENTING

Neal⁴⁷ suggested that children who experience permissive indulgent parenting are the unhappiest of all. Indulgent permissive parenting may result from historical antecedents. For example, post-war German parents who were raised by authoritarian parents and “conditioned” for Hitler⁴⁸ hoped to counteract the side-effects of authoritarian parenting by being overly permissive – allowing their children to express creativity and individuality with a belief that this would make them happy⁴⁹. Fearing religious or ethical doctrines, they failed to teach right from wrong⁵⁰, set clear limits or provide

adequate structure and discipline⁵¹. The result was that the children displayed bad behaviour that was regularly reinforced and rewarded. While the parents may have believed that they were empowering their children by their passivity, they did not feel responsible for the way the children turned out⁵². Hiding behind a façade of “care”, the *permissive indulgent* parents abdicated their responsibility to do the hard work of nurturing which is providing the structures for their children. In a post-Christian environment, they cling to the idea that they are letting their children decide but this simply saves them the responsibility of teaching ethical and spiritual principles that could help the child with life. This parenting style neglects the child’s need for structure and creates trauma because it does not provide any guidance in a chaotic world. It turns out that extremely indulgent and permissive parenting results in both *neglect and trauma*.

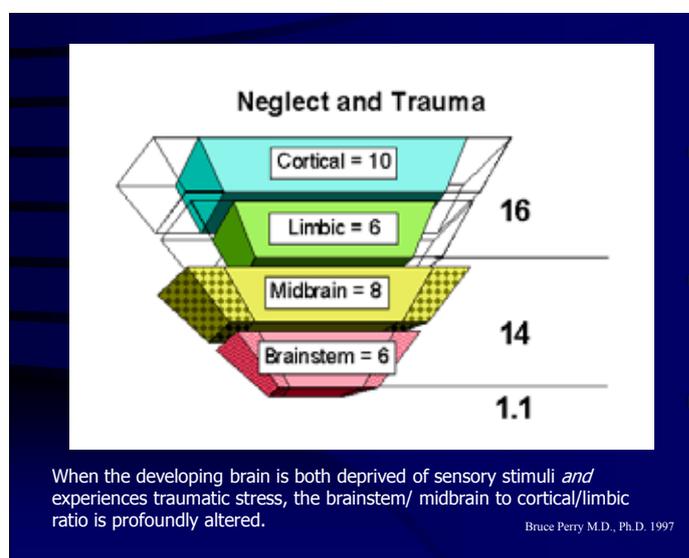


Figure 3: Perry's Diagram Showing the Effects of Developmental Neglect & Trauma

You can see from Figure 4 that the combined effect of neglect and trauma on the *upper cortical* and *limbic* areas diminishes development as the individual overdevelops the lower *brainstem* and *midbrain* areas that deal with basic survival. Children who have experienced chronic abuse and chronic neglect during their first few years may live in a persistent state of hyper-arousal or dissociation, anticipating threats around every corner, and their ability to benefit from social, emotional, and cognitive experiences may be impaired⁵³. **The combined**

[brain.../brain_development.pdf](#).

- 44 Perry, B.D., Pollard, R., Blakely, T., Baker, W. & Vigilante, D. (1995). *Childhood trauma, the neurobiology of adaptation and “use-dependent” development of the brain: How “states” become “traits”* http://www.childtrauma.org/states_traits.htm.
- 45 Perry, B.D. (1996). *Neurodevelopmental adaptations to violence: How children survive the intragenerational vortex of violence* http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/vortex_interd.asp.
- 46 Perry, B.D., Pollard, R., Blakely, T., Baker, W. & Vigilante, D. (1995). *Childhood trauma, the neurobiology of adaptation and “use-dependent” development of the brain: How “states” become “traits”* http://www.childtrauma.org/states_traits.htm.
- 47 Neal, K. (2000) *Parenting Styles/Children's Temperaments*. www.aboutourkids.org/parenting/p_styles.html
- 48 Dinwiddie, S. (1995) *Setting Limits: Steering down the Rocky Road of Childrearing*. *KidSource* (Feb.1995). www.kidsource.com/better.world.press/setting_limits.html.
- 49 Dworkin, P. (1997) *Permissive Parenting May Be Hurting Kids' Sleep*. *Science Daily Magazine* (9 Oct. 1997). www.sciencedaily.com/releases/1997/10/971009063543.htm.
- 50 Collins, A. W. et al (2000) *Contemporary Research on Parenting*. *American Psychologist* 55, no. 2: 218-32.

51 Huxley, R. (1998) *The Four Parenting Styles*. www.parent-ingtoolbox.com/pstyle1.html.

52 Gonzalez-Mena, J. (1993) *The Child in the Family and the Community*. New York.

53 Perry, B.D. (1996). *Neurodevelopmental adaptations to violence: How*



effects of neglect and trauma reveal diminished growth in the left hemisphere (increased risk of depression); the emergence of panic disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from irritability in the *limbic* system; increased the risk of dissociative disorders and memory impairments from smaller growth in the *hippocampus*; and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)⁵⁴ linked to impaired connection between the two brain hemispheres.

Although indulgent permissive parents may appear supportive of their children and “praise” them by using superlatives such as “You’re awesome” and “You can do anything”, it is sticky, patronising, plastic, smothering and subtly destroys the child’s confidence⁵⁵. Often expecting their children to fail, they show a false “sympathy” when they do; provide excuses by blaming other people, situations or fate when the child is disappointed and then “take over” or remove their children from resilience-building situations. Instead of feeling empowered, the children of *permissive indulgent* parents, may feel unhelped, depressed because they lack skills and disempowered by the lack of structure. Instinctually children search for structure and so many of them put “a lot of energy into controlling parents or trying to get parents to control them”⁵⁶. In this structureless environment, there is also a temptation for parents to meet their own needs at the expense of their child’s. Without identifiable structure to provide family guidelines, parents often have to resort to emotional manipulation in order to establish “control” or enmesh children in inappropriate alliances - all the while appearing to be warm and loving.

Although they appear supportive, *indulgent permissive* parents are unable to provide the nurture children need and leave them struggling with conflicting demands and conflictual relationship without any guidance. Parents who ignore the responsibility to provide structure for their children may be teaching them that they can get their own way and control others by manipulation, emotional blackmail, temper tantrums and “nice behaviour”⁵⁷. These children find it difficult to develop self-respect and transfer this behaviour into other areas involving adult authority and so have higher rates of misbehaviour and



poor grades in school⁵⁸. These children suffer because they do not have the structures to assist them interact and integrate with their world in an organized and healthy manner. Without adequate structures and self-discipline they become easily discouraged, turn away from full and satisfying participation in the world⁵⁹ and search for magic to solve their problems⁶⁰ and so become vulnerable to day-dreaming, substance abuse, and inappropriate sexual activity⁶¹. They are more likely to exhibit such psychological problems as anxiety and depression⁶²; have difficulty controlling their impulses and so more likely to commit violence⁶³; and more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour⁶⁴ and delinquency. Although it may appear benign, early permissive and indulgent parenting affects brain development and the formation of the Self more negatively than any other parenting style because the “nurture” they receive does

58 Steinberg, L. (1996) *Beyond the Classroom; Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need To Do*. New York.

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60 Illsley-Clarke, J. (2004) *Self-esteem: A family Affair*. Hazelton, Minnesota.

61 Snyder, H. N., and M. Sickmund (2000) “Challenging the Myths. 1999 National Report Series.” *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/jjbul2000_02_2/contcnts.html; Jacobson, K. C., and L. J. Crockett (2000) “Parental Monitoring and Adolescent Adjustment: An Ecological Perspective.” *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 10, no. 1: 65-97.

62 Steinberg, L. (1996) *Beyond the Classroom; Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need To Do*. New York.

63 Steinberg, L. et al.(1994) Over-time Changes in Adjustment and Competence among Adolescents from Authoritative, Authoritarian, Indulgent, and Neglectful Families. *Child Development* 65, no. 3: 754-70.

64 Simons, R. L., K. Lin, & L. C. Gordon (1998) Socialization in the Family of Origin and Male Dating Violence: A Prospective Study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60, no. 2: 467-78.

children survive the intragenerational vortex of violence http://www.childtrauma.org/CTAMATERIALS/vortex_interd.asp

54 Teicher, M.D. (2000). Wounds that time won’t heal: The neurobiology of child abuse. *Dana Forum on brain science*, 2(4), 50-67.

55 Illsley-Clarke, J. (2004) *Self-esteem: A family affair*. Hazelton, Minnesota.

56 Gonzalez-Mena, J. (1993) *The Child in the Family and the Community*. New York.

57 Huxley, R. (1998) “The Four Parenting Styles.” *Parentingtoolbox* www.parentingtoolbox.com/pstyle1.html.

not empower them and there is no structure to help them with life.

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTS

Authoritative parenting combines nurture and structure to produce a home that is high on warmth, moderate on discipline, high in communication, and moderate in expectations of maturity and the homes are warm and nurturing, loving with a high degree of emotional support⁶⁵. They are not always right, but are quick to apologize, make amends and learn from their experience. Both structure **and** nurture are required in authoritative parenting:

Structure: Unlike permissive parents, authoritative parents are firm, consistent, and fair with rational and issue-oriented strategies that promote the child's autonomy and social responsibility. Authoritative parents set developmentally appropriate limits and standards for behaviour which assists their children. When demands are not met, the parents reassert requirements, impose consequences and provide opportunities to be rewarded by trying again. Children are given alternatives, encouraged to decide, and accept responsibility for their actions and decisions so that the end result is self-empowerment⁶⁶ for the child. This approach promotes secure attachments and protects children from internalizing their problems and alliances between children and parents are reinforced. A study in the Netherlands which involved an analysis of parents working with their teenage children found that parents who behaved more authoritatively had children who were rated by their peers and teachers as more helpful and kind⁶⁷.

Nurture: By removing manipulative phrases such as "I'm disappointed in you" the children are able to focus on problem-solving become better learners⁶⁸ and achieve good grades⁶⁹. These children are likely to develop successful peer relationships in their teen years because authoritative parenting provides a healthy balance between control and independence. The result of authoritative parenting is that children

are more competent, socially responsible, self-assured, and independent with high self-esteem, positive self-concept, greater self-worth, less rebellion, and generally more successful in life⁷⁰. They are also less likely to become engaged in drug and alcohol use, juvenile delinquency, or other antisocial behaviour⁷¹

In concluding his international research on the effect of parenting styles, Laurence Steinberg described his opinion of authoritative parenting:

"I know of no study that indicates that adolescents fare better when they are reared with some other parenting style"⁷².

The structure of the brains of children reared by authoritative parenting is likely to be similar to Figure 1 – each section is developed to an appropriate proportion so that the child is able to face life in all areas – from the lower to the higher regions of the brain. The influence of authoritative parenting on the brain development of their children gives them the best preparation for their futures.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO "REWIRE" THE BRAIN AND CHANGE THE SELF?

*"Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life."*⁷³

So far we have seen that the original wiring of the brain has a profound effect on the development of the Self in adulthood. One of the three founders of psychology⁷⁴, Alfred Adler stated in 1932 that our memories and the things we choose to remember represent "the personal meanings of our lives" - *once we have discovered the Meaning to Life of a person and understood it we have the key to the whole personality.*⁷⁵ The Self is indeed "wired" by our past:

Every expression is saying the same thing, every expression is urging us towards the solution. We are like

65 Baumrind, D (1991) Effective parenting during early adolescent transition, in A Cowan and E.M.Hetherington (eds), *Family Transitions*, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, New Jersey.

66 Barakat, I. S. and J. A. Clark. (1999) *Positive Discipline and Child Guidance*. <http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor/hesguide/humanrel/gh6119.htm>.

67 Dekovic M and Janssens JM. (1992) Parents' child: Rearing style and child's sociometric status." *Developmental Psychology* 28(5): 925-932.

68 Kamins M and Dweck C.(1999) Person versus process praise and criticism: Implications for contingent self-worth and coping. *Developmental Psychology* 30(3): 835-847; Türkel YD and Tezer E. (2008) Parenting styles and learned resourcefulness of Turkish adolescents. *Adolescence*. 43(169):143-52.

69 Steinberg, L. (1996) *Beyond the Classroom; Why School Reform Has Failed and What Parents Need To Do*. New York.

70 Gonzalez-Mena, J. (1993) *The Child in the Family and the Community*. New York.

71 Querido JG, Warner TD, and Eyberg SM. (2002) Parenting Styles and Child Behavior in African American Families of Preschool Children *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 31(2): 272 – 277; Luyckx K, Tildesley EA, Soenens B, Andrews JA, Hampson SE, Peterson M, and Duriez B. (2011) Parenting and trajectories of children's maladaptive behaviors: a 12-year prospective community study. *Journal of Clinical Children & Adolescent Psychology* 40(3):468-78; Benchaya MC, Bisch NK, Moreira TC, Ferigolo M, and Barros HM. (2011) Non-authoritative parents and impact on drug use: the perception of adolescent children. *Journal of Pediatrics*. 87(3):238-44 .

72 Steinberg L. (2001) We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 11(1): 1-19.

73 Proverbs 4:23 New Century Bible

74 The three foundational psychological theorists are Freud, Jung and Adler.

75 Adler, A. (1998). *What Life Should Mean to You (Republished from 1931 edition)*. London: Hazeldon.

archaeologists who find fragments of earthenware, tools, the ruined walls of buildings, broken monuments, and leaves of papyrus: and from these fragments proceed to infer the life of a whole city which has perished. But we are dealing, not with something which has perished, but with the inter-organized aspects of a human being, a living personality which can set before us continuous new manifestations of its own meaning.⁷⁶

All of this may be confronting when psychotherapists and counsellors are faced with a person who has experienced trauma and neglect from poor parenting.

Does this mean that we are “hardwired” for the rest of our lives? Fortunately, both Adler and recent neuroscientific study were optimistic of the ability to change – Adler from experience in treating people, and neuroscientific study that has revealed evidence of the proliferation of neurons and growth of new connections across the lifespan so that even inherited genetic structures can be modified by learning and other psychosocial experiences⁷⁷. Some examples include neural growth in the *somatosensory cortex* of violinists as a result of practice⁷⁸; taxicab drivers developing brain areas associated with spatial relationships⁷⁹; the *orbital frontal cortex* and *striatum* which become overactive in sufferers of OCD changing when treated with a mindfulness-oriented form of cognitive-behavioural therapy⁸⁰ and change was noted in frontal and temporal brain regions of people suffering with panic disorder treated with CBT⁸¹. These pieces of research demonstrate that the early “wiring” of physical, mental, social, spiritual and psychological “wiring” of the Self can be changed *across the lifespan*.

It is particularly interesting for counsellors to note that the effect of psychotherapy dealing with negative and painful life experiences by recalling, reconstructing and reframing memories of past trauma and neglect is mediated by the reorganization and genesis of

neurons⁸². This appears within hours of significant learning experiences such as reframing the context so that the experiences take on new meaning⁸³. Although there is a lot yet to be discovered about the brain and the influence it has on the formation of the Self, these studies have demonstrated that proactive treatment can result in a positive “rewiring” of the brain and a transformation of the Self.

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind⁸⁴



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76 Adler, A. (1998). *What Life Should Mean to You (Republished from 1931 edition)*. London: Hazelden.

77 Garland, E.L. & Howard, M.O. (2009) Neuroplasticity, Psychosocial Genomics, and the Biopsychosocial Paradigm in the 21st Century. *Health and Social Work*, Vol.34 (3):191-199.

78 Ebert, E., Pantev, C., Wienbruch, C., Rockstroh, B., & Taub, e. (1995) Increased cortical representation of the fingers of the left hand in string players. *Science*, 270, 305-307.

79 Maguire, E.A., Gadian, D.G., Johnsrude, I.S., Good, C.D., Ashburner, J., Frackowiak, R.S., & Frith, C.D. (2000) Navigation-related structural change in the hippocampi of taxi drivers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA*, 97, 4398-4403.

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81 Prasko, A.J., Horacek, J., Zelsky, R., Kopecek, M., Novak, T., Paskova, B. (2004) The change of regional brain metabolism (18FDG PET) in panic disorder during the treatment with cognitive behavioural therapy or antidepressants. *Neuro Endocrinology Letters*, 25, 340-348.

82 Certozze, D. Siracusano, A., Calabresi, P. & Bernardi, G. (2005) Removing pathogenic memories: A neurobiology of psychotherapy. *Molecular Neurobiology*, 32, 123-132; Rossi, E.L. (2005) The ideodynamic action hypothesis of therapeutic suggestion: Creative replay in the psychosocial genomics of therapeutic hypnosis. *European Journal of Clinical Hypnosis*, 6(2), 2-12.

83 McGuagh, J.L. (2000) Memory – A century of consolidation. *Science*, 287, 248-251; De Shazer, S. (1988) *Clues: Investigating solutions in brief therapy*. W.W.Norton, New York outlines the way rape victims reframed themselves as survivors rather than victims.

84 Romans 12:2 KJV

Spirituality, Sexuality & Selfhood: A personal story about stages of faith, life and loving

BY NOEL GIBLETT

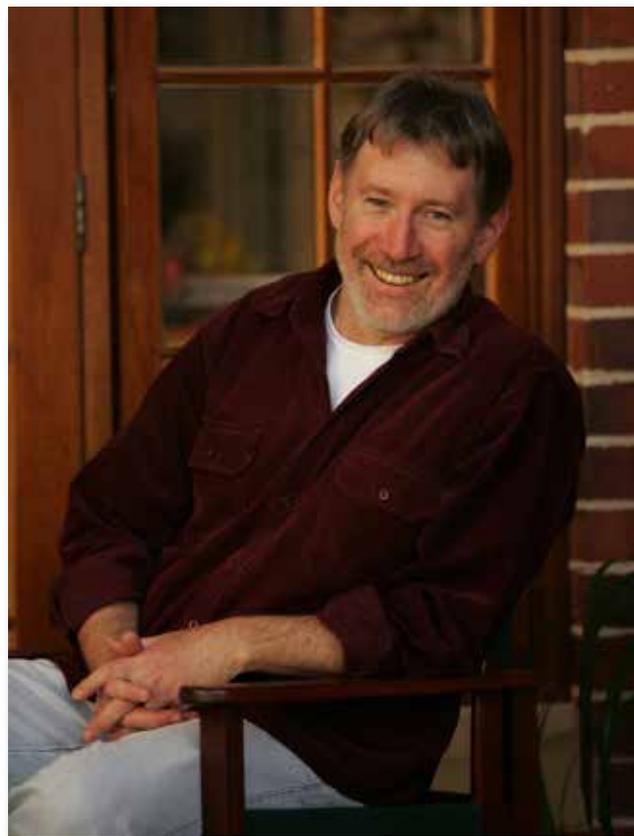
THE EARLY YEARS

One of my earliest introductions to notions of spirituality, sexuality and selfhood was the neat, pithy acronym JOY: 'Jesus first, Others next, Yourself last.' Or, as the set-to-music version put it more pointedly: 'Jesus first, yourself last and others in-between.' I got the message. The more people I would meet in life, the lower my position on the pecking order.

According to the protestant evangelical churches I grew up in, this fail-safe formula held the key to that most elusive of gifts, joy. And who doesn't want joy? I certainly did. This simple hierarchical schema became my earnest aspiration throughout my childhood and adolescence. While I did not feel particularly joyful during those years, I certainly felt virtuous.

It was not until my early adult years that the neat JOY formula was comprehensively called into question. I was on a Gestalt Therapy training workshop in the early 1980s and the trainer quoted the second commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' He then espoused what may now be a commonly accepted axiom but, back then, bordered on heresy. He said, 'You cannot love your neighbour if you have not first learnt how to love yourself.' I was stopped in my tracks. My neat hierarchical schema was being called into question. Then he added, 'And you can only love your neighbour to the extent that you love yourself.' I felt the truth of what he was saying and I heard the challenge to my conventional evangelical upbringing.

Around the same time, several other neat dualisms and dichotomies on which I had been raised were also being called into question, for example: body versus spirit (deny the former; seek only the latter); the senses versus the intellect (mistrust the former; trust only the latter); sexuality versus spirituality (fear the former; seek only the latter); desire versus contentment (deny the former; espouse only the latter); and so on.



I started to question whether such splits were healthy and whether they were truly scripturally based, as I had been led to believe, or simply the constructs of my conservative evangelical upbringing. The more I dug, the more I realised how much of my upbringing had been based on fear, guilt and shame rather than love, grace and wonder.

Throughout my 20s I read widely and searched deeply, the net effect of which was to leave me with more questions than answers and an increasingly radicalised faith. In my late 20s I embraced the call to discipleship, but I found that even this did not resolve longstanding tensions within me or between me and significant others.

Then in my mid 30s I encountered Richard Rohr and his diagram, 'The Cosmic Egg.' Imagine three eggs, a small one sitting within a medium sized one, and the medium sized one sitting within a larger one. Imagine these eggs nestled within each other like Russian dolls (lift the lid on

one and there is the next one).

Richard called the small egg 'My Story' – my personal reality, my personal journey, my thoughts, my feelings, my longings etc. He called the medium sized egg 'Our Story' – our collective story, whether it be our marriage, our family, our tribe, our country, our society or the human race – the story of our relationships, our collective journey, our shared values and norms etc. The larger egg he called 'The Big Story' – true religion that brings us back to our roots – the ultimate story that makes sense of the other two stories and holds them both. The Big Story, as Richard put it, doesn't deny or devalue or dichotomise My Story and Our Story but it helps us remember that they are not the last word on who we are, why we are here and where we are going.

It is hard to adequately put into words the impact this idea had on me. Suddenly, as Richard would say, everything belonged. Nothing was of lesser value. Nobody was of lesser value. I felt like I was being relieved once and for all of simple hierarchies, dualities and dichotomies. Now everything fitted inside a warm cosmic embrace. The relief was palpable. I felt like I was hearing the true gospel.

Suddenly it was okay to say that I mattered, and that my struggling marriage mattered, and that my painful journey as a father might also have a place in the grand scheme of things. These were the arenas in which my story, our story and the big story were being acted out. Professions of faith and behavioural codes suddenly mattered a whole lot less than the urgent need to clean my lens and see the world that my God loves, piece by piece, person by person, through the eyes of the Divine.

I felt like notions of spirituality, sexuality and selfhood had been released from prison and it was time to look for different signposts than the ones I had been raised on. I needed to tread carefully but not fearfully, reverently but not in the straitjacket that had characterised my upbringing. I knew I was being invited into an adult faith, one that embraced all of me and all of those around me.

THE MIDDLE YEARS

Building on Merton and other contemplatives, Richard articulated a framework for a non-dualistic adult faith – something he called 'living in the tension of the opposites.' He talked about a journey characterised by a set of insoluble tensions which, if we can learn to appreciate them and learn from them, would guide us through life.

This idea dovetailed with a key tenet of my Gestalt training that I had embraced many years before, the idea that life is bi-polar, ie characterised by joy and sorrow, love and anger, darkness and light etc, and that the task

of therapy is to assist clients to embrace both polarities within themselves in the interests of wholeness. My therapy training and my spiritual journey were coming together in 'the tension of the opposites.'

Several tensions presented themselves in me and called me to make my peace with both polarities:

- Longings so strong that they would sometimes take my breath away and Satisfaction so deep that I would wonder what the problem had been, although of course this too was never a permanent state;
- Wounds that cried for healing and Healing so profound that it was hard to imagine ever feeling those wounds again, although of course there would be times when I would;
- Fragmentation, splits and divisions within and then times of overwhelming Wholeness that seemed nothing short of a miracle;
- Darkness, despair and discouragement and then Light in every nook and cranny of myself;
- Breaking, brokenness and falling to pieces and then profound Blessing that seemed to pick up every piece and put it back differently.

I didn't have a complete map of this territory but for the first time in my life (now heading into my 40s) I felt able to fully trust the process and surrender to the work of the Spirit in me.

What followed were all the colours of the rainbow, all the emotions known to humankind, and I knew that they all belonged and they all needed to be heard.

Times of profound intimacy with others alternated with periods of deep solitude and aloneness. I was often aware of an overwhelming sense of Otherness that would move me to silence and wonder, not just the Otherness of God but the Otherness of each person in my life.

During this period angels came to minister to me, writers who had gone before me in this territory. They brought me not just bread and water but a feast of insights, consolations and challenges. John V Taylor's *The Go-Between God* named the infinite ways in which the Spirit goes before us and dances between us. Sam Keen's *The Passionate Life* named the stages of loving and what happens when one of those stages goes awry. Thomas Merton's *No Man is an Island* articulated the contemplative mindset. I revisited Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* which had been my handbook as a younger Christian. I heard again his pronouncement, 'When Jesus calls a man (sic) he bids him come and die.' But I also saw in the gospels a Jesus who bids us come and live!

I opened myself more deeply to the Divine Lover, the 'Hound of Heaven,' but not as some onerous obligation to relinquish my freedom and individuality but rather as an invitation to discover my deepest me and therefore my deepest freedom and uniqueness.

As my spirituality deepened, so too did my sexuality. I could feel my eros overflowing, not simply my level of sexual arousal but my life-force, my life energy. I could feel me surrendering yet more deeply to the Divine Lover, as a bride opens herself to her groom, and I could feel my potency as a man like never before, longing to penetrate the mystery of the feminine Other.

Some of this was inconvenient and challenging. I needed to revisit questions of boundaries, fidelity and restraint, and seek discernment in the face of deep connections with others who shared a similar single-minded faith and surrender to the Divine. I 'fell in love' several times during this period, struck by the beauty of men and women I met whose heart matched mine.

I opened myself to the feast that George Herbert wrote of in his poem Love, the movement from feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness to the place where tears melt your resistance and you surrender to the Lover whose longing is for you to 'sit and eat' the feast prepared for you.

Be warned. If you embark on this kind of journey, it will take you outside your comfort zone and into territory that is not safe in conventional terms. I came to understand yet more deeply why we find it hard to remain faithful in marriage as other loves call to us. I came to reverence those powerful urges and longings that make us human. As my mother used to say, it's 'playing with fire' when you let yourself be close to people other than your life partner. But fire gives off such light and warmth that we are understandably drawn to it. My learning was about how close to get to the flames – close enough to savour the blessing but not so close as to be consumed.

Like Rilke's *'Dove that ventured outside, flying far from the dovecote...'* I knew that I could not go back. Life had irreversibly changed for me. I had, as Rilke put it, 'passed through all distance and fear' in the course of my wanderings. I had discovered, more than once, profound tenderness and deep intimacies and the pain of letting go. I had given up all and I had gained all. The question was how to integrate this 'other-worldly' set of experiences into my day to day life in this world. I had always found marriage and family life challenging but by my mid 40s I was particularly feeling the weight of my many shortcomings as a husband and father.

Thus began a journey of surrendering myself over and over again to whatever the Spirit wanted to teach me as

a husband, as a father and as a man. I held before me the mantra 'Everything Belongs' and I sought the Spirit in every conversation, every interaction and every detail of domestic life.

At times the learning was painful. As Wendell Berry says, not everything we discover will make us happy. However, I clung to the conviction that painful lessons could be transformative and, slowly but surely, they were. One day at a time, one step at a time, I submitted to the lessons of husbandry and fathering. More than once I claimed for myself the old bumper-sticker, 'Be patient, God isn't finished with me yet.' Through my wife and children, the Spirit continued to draw me into further growth.

THE LATER YEARS

Thankfully, our capacity to meet life in an open-hearted and well contained way can substantially increase with age.

A few years ago (in my early 50s) I attended a conference and retreat in Atlanta hosted by Spiritual Directors International (SDI). I was interested to meet others in the spiritual direction fraternity and compare the standard of training and discourse in the USA with what I had experienced in Perth.

On the first morning of the conference I fell into a conversation with a woman from Ohio. We were sitting at the same table and in the brief introductions at the start of the session I sensed that there was much that she was not saying, an undeclared (although not unknown) depth. As soon as the others got up from the table to go and get their morning tea, I seized the moment and asked her, 'So..., can I ask you more about ...?'

We didn't make it to morning tea but in that brief fifteen minutes the first foundations were laid of what would become a profound friendship. She shared with me a snapshot of recent years, including having nursed her husband to his death via cancer a few years prior. I saw the tear in her eye and she saw the same in mine.

The following year we arranged to meet up again at the Boston SDI conference and to attend the same post-conference retreat. We had spent further time together in Atlanta, and we had kept in touch by email in the intervening year, but the friendship was still very much in its infancy.

During that week in Boston we spent many a free afternoon and evening together. We talked about everything under the sun. We shed tears together. We laughed deeply together. We watched the sun rise over the Atlantic. And we shared a deep grief when it came time to part.

I now know what *anam cara* means – a friendship that crosses all convention and category, someone with whom you can share your deepest treasure and your deepest pain, someone with whom you are joined in eternity. This wasn't my first experience of this kind, but it was certainly one of the deepest and most fearless.

When it came time to part, which was far from easy, we were able to do so with great courage and a deep letting go. It was a great comfort to me, at 55, to finally be able to do this kind of intimacy with a full heart and integrity.

I share this story because it was an occasion of spirituality, sexuality and selfhood coming together deeply, for both of us. It was a time of knowing and being known, seeing and being seen. We were basking in the light of love and the heart of the Divine Lover. And yet it was also a time of clear boundaries and restraint. I was able to celebrate my new soul-sister and yet do nothing that would compromise my marriage.

Interestingly, the restraint did not take the form of ascetic self-denial. It was simply a matter of appreciating the warmth and light from this fire without being consumed by it. The Spirit really does come to our aid when we ask – to teach, to guide, to protect, to comfort and to bless – when we surrender ourselves to this work in us.

SO WHAT?

What has this got to do with Christian Counselling? When I started writing this article I thought I was going to write a scholarly treatise on the relationship between sexuality, spirituality and selfhood, complete with neat conclusions for Christian counsellors.

However, I was led down another path, the path of personal story. Why? Did I lose my way? Did I forget what I was 'supposed' to be writing?

When I look at the Scriptures I see story upon story upon story. I do not see neat theological treatises. When I listen to my clients, I hear story upon story upon story. Sure, the Scriptures use stories to guide and teach us, and admittedly my clients need some help to make sense of their stories, but all authentic human encounters begin with story.

So, what to make of this story of mine? I offer three observations:

Firstly, to state the obvious, we change. In fact, not to change is unnatural. We age, hopefully we mature. Our story is ever unfolding. We need to honour our unfolding story, attend to it and learn from it.

Secondly, life changes – it does not stay static. Our circumstances change and our perspectives change in

response to changed circumstances. Our understandings as children, adolescents and young adults are often not adequate for the middle and later years of adult life. We need to let our story keep unfolding and we need our story to be constantly informed and re-informed by the collective story and the big story.

Finally, the Spirit comes to help us, not only in our weakness but also in our fullness. I was about to say, 'I have learnt not to be so hard on myself these days, or on others.' However, I realise it's even better than that: *I am learning to live in a state of grace*. I am learning to love self and other, as I am loved. Yes, I have learnt to manage my eros and my energy much better than when I was a younger man, but I have also learnt to *celebrate* and *savour* my eros and my energy much more than when I was a younger man. It is a potent gift.

To be a human-being made in the image of the Divine is a 'fearful and wonderful thing,' as the Psalmist says. On those occasions when my spirituality, my sexuality and my true selfhood come together, I know this in my bones.

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A Touch of Heaven

*Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us
Establish Thou the work of our hands*

BY CHRISTOPHER BROWN

DONNA RETURNS¹

Donna had phoned for an appointment and was coming for a session today. I had not seen her for over twelve months. My first thoughts of our last series of encounters awoke in me a sense of trepidation, as from my perspective they had not gone well. I recalled my struggle in working with a woman so deeply wounded that much of her emotional life was barely accessible. I had listened to long accounts of her busy and demanding life and of her rote-like responses. How she had not collapsed under the strain was a mystery. At the very least, I thought I had opened a space in which she could talk some of it through. When she stopped coming very little appeared resolved. I became deeply burdened about her, feeling I had failed her. Soon she would once again be knocking on my door.

To prepare myself for this encounter, I needed to notice and then rein in my feelings of trepidation and failure. While these feelings could function as reminders of my humanness, it would be counter-productive to spend time anticipating how Donna might present today. The choice I made was to spend this time being prayerful; beholding the beauty of the Lord, seeking Him in His temple, and offering the person of myself as a relational space for the Lord's self-giving and other receiving love. This would be the space into which we—myself as counsellor-companion and God's Spirit as guide—could welcome Donna and any burden she might carry.

FALLING INTO A DARK HOLE

Much has happened for me during these intervening twelve months. Feelings of trepidation and failure had not been limited to my encounters with Donna. In fact, shortly after our last session, these thoughts and emotions had intruded into much of my counselling work, leaving me in a deep hole which many of my colleagues described as burnout. Their remedies included, seeking more balance in my life, taking an overseas holiday, or even seeking a human service job with less stress. One suggested I find a spiritual director.

For what seemed an eternity my psalmic utterances from within this dark hole simply echoed back from an empty void. Such echoes reaffirm my overwhelming aloneness in this down space. When the darkness extended into other areas of my life, the diagnosis moved from burnout to depression. The dark void almost became a tomb. Perhaps medication was needed. And yet, the inner experience—and how can one bring to language an experience which only leaves behind the metaphor of a tomb—was of a sense of something lost; something misplaced or even dying.

¹ Donna's story is a composite one, and does not refer to one individual.

A wise spiritual guide encouraged me to honour my tomb metaphor by taking it to prayer. It gradually dawned that my tomb was not void of presence. Prayerful attentiveness to this other presence extended an invitation. Attentiveness to this invitation did not focus on resolution. It focussed on relationship.

WORDS OF LIFE

The invitation to relationship worked its way into words; into familiar words. They had figured in my vocational call into the field of counselling and companionship. Some years ago a friend, convinced that these words—words of Jesus—had relevance to my work, etched them on a small plaque. ‘They could even be useful,’ he suggested, ‘if you happened to fall on hard times, which counsellors sometimes do!’

My hard times had come. It was difficult to see etched words through tear-filled eyes in the darkness of a tomb. But mysteriously they regrouped as a gentle invitation that hovered at the edge of my conscious awareness (‘Come to me’). They were whispered to me in the dark (‘all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens’). They began to resonate in a place below my scrambled brain and my exhausted body (‘and I will give you rest’). In fact, they sounded right within the midst of my powerlessness and anguish (‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me’). I then knew they flowed from a love far greater than my own (‘for I am gentle and humble in heart’).²

Jesus’ words arrived brimming with new life, just as if I was hearing them for the very first time. It was the freshness of this encounter that enabled me to envisage my tomb as a womb for new life; new life to bring respite and rest for my troubled soul. This was not to return me to my former equilibrium, for much of my personal life and the way I approached my counselling had become untenable. Rather, my desire was that this new kingdom life would re-form my identity and deepen my vocation in a better fit with the life and purposes of Jesus. It was also to be released from the debilitating hold of self doubt. And there was more. This had to do with how I might respond to pilgrims like Donna. If my true identity was to be found through growing closer to Jesus, then perhaps my real vocation was as his agent of restoration. In fact, I was to engage with pilgrims—all pilgrims and not just Christians—at their points of brokenness and to pray and to be attentive to where kingdom life was breaking through into their lives.

DONNA ARRIVES

A knock at my door announced Donna’s arrival. As she

settled into her chair I noticed the familiar darkness under her eyes. It was clear that her eyes were swollen from crying, and even as she sought a more comfortable position, I could see she was struggling to hold back tears. But I saw much more. Here was a precious child of God who, even at this very moment, was seeking her out, His Spirit ever alert to any little opening through which to reach and invite her to wholeness and to greater life. My interior prayer was, ‘What is your deepest desire for this your precious child right at this moment?’

TRAPPED IN A DARK ROOM

‘Donna,’ I began, ‘what is it that would be important for you to attend to in our time together this morning?’

‘I’m not sure,’ she replied in a barely audible voice as her eyes filled up with tears. ‘Now I’m here, I’m just not sure where to begin.’

‘I wonder if you would notice what begins to happen to you as you say you are not sure where to begin?’

As Donna averted her gaze, tears flowed freely down her cheeks. She had tried to blink them away as if they were impeding her vision. She had not jumped into a rapid fire description of her last few days as she might have done in past sessions. When she did look up I witnessed a pleading look in her eyes.

‘I’m . . . just . . . so . . . so . . . trapped,’ she began.

‘You are saying that you are trapped,’ I repeated as gently as I could.

‘Yes! It’s like I’m trapped in a dark room that has no windows. I just can’t find the way out. I’m just trapped.’

‘Donna, when you say you are trapped in a dark room that has no windows, and that you can’t find the way out, can you see yourself in that room?’

‘Why yes I can! I can’t see me clearly because it is dark. I don’t seem to be a whole person. I’m more like a cut-out figure that I can just see in the dark.’

‘I wonder what it would be like to gently watch over this cut-out figure of you in that dark room,’ I inquired as tentatively as I could.

‘Yes, I can do that,’ came Donna’s almost immediate reply. ‘I can do that.’

As Donna spoke the words, ‘I can do that,’ I felt my heart rate quicken. Donna had not moved into a description of her pressing and overwhelming circumstances. Instead, she had found a metaphor (trapped in a dark room), and that metaphor had already formed into an image. This image had the potential of opening up right in front of

² Matthew 11: 28 – 30, *NRSV*.



her as a new lens through which she could look in on the circumstances of her life. She had become a transcendent observer of her own life. She has engaged with her own person through the wonderful and God-given capacity of active and believing imagination. This happened so quickly that it caught me by surprise.

SURPRISED BY LOVE

“Surprise” is a name I often give to the Holy Spirit. This same Spirit seems to show up in unexpected ways in the very midst of encounters with a pilgrim such as Donna. It was one thing to speak of the third invisible person in the counselling room. It was quite another to realise that, through encouraging a pilgrim to be attentive to what was directly and immediately in front of them, that as a counsellor-companion, I could be in cooperation with this active guide; a guide and presence who was always on the lookout for tiny apertures to open up in the life circumstances of a pilgrim, searching out gaps just large enough for the Divine to squeeze through. I have noticed how the Spirit is able to connect onto a thought, a metaphor, a body response, a story or an image and stir up life—content, emotion, story, and lived experience—and enliven the eyes of a pilgrim’s heart in order that they may look at this expression of their life in a new and liberating way.

Nothing of this is forced upon a pilgrim. There is complete freedom for Donna to move into the transcendent observer role to observe the figure of herself in this dark room, or choose not to do so. But she was not alone in this choice. She was being wooed in love in a manner not unlike a courtship. There is One to whom she is desirable; One who constantly and patiently seeks her, always ready to engage her in love, to bring healing balm to the roots of her deepest wounding, and to invite her to become more whole.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH FEAR

As Donna observes the figure of herself in the darkened room, her shape gradually becomes more life-like. As she comes to trust the image, this figure is translated into that of a small child. Donna, as the adult observer, is invited by the child figure to visit the site of a wounding and to experience it over again—as an adult, rather than as a child. The pain of Donna’s re-experiencing was excruciating for her. It was also extremely painful for me as I walked in solidarity with her.

As Donna was invited by the child to walk towards the site of trauma, she pulled back full of fear. In her direct encounter with fear, she comes to the realisation that fear has sought to protect her for something in her life it does not want her to see. I inquired what was so important for fear that it has to keep you away from it.

‘Fear is trying to make out it’s my protector. You know, fear has been doing that for most of my life. Keeping me away from some truth for fear that truth will harm me, even kill me.’

‘What happens when you hear yourself saying that?’

‘Well even the little child starts to shake her fist at fear. Oh! Fear actually looks a bit crestfallen, almost as if it’s been caught out. It actually shrinking and moving aside. The child is reaching for my hand and we walk past it. I’m willing to go but my stomach is churning so much I think I’m going to be sick.’

AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

The churning in my own stomach, and the pain in the region of my heart, indicated that what might unfold next was not going to be at all pleasant. In fact, it was almost unbearable for both of us. To re-enter the experience of a highly sensitive and fearful six-year old child as she is taken into the care of strangers while her mother is removed into psychiatric care, was to enter into the deep wound of abandonment. All through her mother’s long hospitalisation Donna believed that her mother would never return to care for her. And to intensify that deep seated fear, the only time she was taken to visit her, the dear woman was so heavily drugged that Donna hardly recognised her. When Donna was finally restored to her care, her mother could become very withdrawn. There were times when the little child felt she needed to care for her mother. To survive the child became numb.

To re-experience the broken heart of an abandoned child, as the adult Donna had in my presence, is to enter a place of excruciating pain. There was intense pain for me as her witness as I sought to stand in solidarity with her in this place. I also believed that the Spirit, whose solidarity with her was far deeper than my own, was most deeply pained. For, in the very midst of our encounter with the experience of this traumatised child, Jesus became manifest to her. He knew in his own person the excruciating experience of abandonment. He too was weeping over the child.

Part of my being an agent of kingdom restoration is to actively share in the pain and suffering of the other. In the midst of Donna’s suffering I felt vulnerable and naked. It was as if the only trustworthy listening post for this part of her story was at the foot of Jesus’ cross. All that one is left to hold onto is the hope that death is followed by resurrection, though in the counselling room the holding to the hope can become most tenuous. During this time Donna’s dark room has become tomb-like. The Friday and Saturday of Holy week can seem very long when journeying with a pilgrim such as Donna through this

'valley of the shadow of death.'³ When Easter Sunday's resurrection life comes, as it did for her, and the light of life streamed into this dark place, I was taken by complete surprise.

WALKING LIGHTER

Donna left today walking lighter as a person often does having entered their tomb, encountered their fear and their wounding, and experiencing God's transforming touch and invitation to more abundant life. When she found there was a way out of the dark room that I have called the tomb, she had experienced the death of much of what had been debilitating and untenable throughout much of her life. It had happened in a space made sacred as it was enfolded and infused by a love far greater than our own; the love that flowed from the very heart of God. It was a love that was incarnated in the very midst of Donna's deepest trauma and pain.

As the session came to close to the ending Donna said:

'You know, all these years I was sure that if I went to those dark places I would completely fall apart; that I might even die.' Donna paused to brush a tear from her cheek. She then continued.

'Even though I have been badly shaken by what I have witnessed today, I know I will not disintegrate. And because today I have looked fear in the face, I know that over the next few months I will come back, if you will have me, and look at other incidents in my life. I now know I can because I have met something—someone—far stronger than my fear. I am already feeling freer than I can ever remember. Thank you.'

A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE

In walking in solidarity with Donna, I needed to remain awake to my own lived experience, including my wounded and shadow parts, and to humbly and sacrificially offer the person of myself in her service and in the service of the Spirit. I needed to remain attuned to the self-giving, other-receiving and sacrificial love which flowed out from the heart of God. This was the same love that flows endlessly between the Divine Lover and the Beloved Son, carried to and fro on the wings of the Spirit and then right into our counselling room to come alongside, to woo, to draw, to guide, to prompt, to enlighten, to enliven, and to chasten us.

In my experience of encountering deep relationship trauma, I have witnessed profound healing come through an encounter with a relational love far more abundant than the conditional experience of love that

had given rise to the trauma. How often have we, as counsellors and companions, sought to step into this breach alone, relying on our own resources? How often do we take away a strong sense of our failing in this task? I am sure this is what had happened in my previous encounters with Donna. But today, our wounded hearts had been gathered up by a greater heart; a heart far closer to us and so much more for us than we have been for ourselves. And though, as a counsellor-companion, my faith is small, and I am weak, wounded, and often anxious of heart, I do receive courage and strength for each day, sometimes even session by session, and so each day I believe.

A GLIMPSE OF BEAUTY

To glimpse the beauty of the Lord is to encounter a little of our own, and this I believe is what happened for Donna today. I am sure there was more wounding for her to discover and more kingdom restoration to awaken within her. And yet, the quest upon which she was invited was one upon which she would find rest for her soul. In tasting of such rest today she is sure to desire more. Today we encountered each other as wounded souls; wounded through what we might perceive as the scarcity and conditionality of our human love. Indeed, we are all wounded. We all need a touch of abundant and unconditional love. We all need a touch of heaven.



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³ Psalm 23

Christianity and Sexuality: Issues for counsellors

BY SANDRA BASHAM

Bestiality, necrophilia, rape, incest, adultery, coitus interruptus, sodomy and catamy are all mentioned in the Bible – so is intense sexual desire, preparation for sexual encounters via anointing and perfuming oneself, women initiating sex, pleasurable sex play, erotic dancing, tongue kissing, outdoor sexual relations, a positive view of chastity and a very positive, egalitarian view of marital sex. However, this is not the secular, public perspective. Religious dogma and censorship of the Bible's language, taught over the centuries has resulted in a modern, reactive and 'tainted' view of Christian sexuality, which growingly secular 'Western' sexual health or sexual therapy service providers take a negative, skeptical view of (Ellis 1960-1971, Krivacska & Money 1994), if not completely ignore in terms of client treatment (Carter 1985, Laws & O'Donohue 1997, McMinn 2011, Weiten 2011). This article will explore the effect of this tainted view of Christianity and sexuality upon counselling and sexual health practice with Christian clients.

When counsellors, therapists or health professionals' work with human sexuality problems, they can unwittingly assume that their client's beliefs and worldview about sex and its meaning are irrelevant to treatment (Laws & O'Donohue 1997). This is based upon most practitioners being trained using a reductionist view of perceiving client symptoms and the treatment focus upon symptom reduction via specific procedures or via medical or pharmaceutical interventions (Krivacska & Money 1994). Nearly all training in sexology, sexual health or counselling, most therapeutic literature or training material or courses, are facilitated using a 'Western', individualistic cultured focus or methodology. What Western culture misses is the fact that the majority of the world are not Caucasian, not middle-class or tertiary educated, and that most have a religion that gives meaning to their life, inclusive of how they view the meaning or purpose of sex or sexual difficulties. So when you think about a Christian client presenting for a sexuality problem – do you instantly think Caucasian? This thinking is flawed, given the changing nature of migration to Australia. Australian migration patterns

Based upon a presentation to Western Australian Sexology Society Members (WASS) in March 2013, at Family Planning Western Australia (FPWA). 'An introduction to a Christian perspective on sexuality, within an anthropological and therapeutic framework.'

have changed substantially since the abolition of the White Australia Policy (1850-1973), with Asian migrant and African or Middle-Eastern migrant or refugee populations increasing across Australia, especially in the last 20 years. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2008, 2012) reported, "Australia's net overseas migration (NOM) now comprises substantial numbers of people born in China and India." It is naïve to assume that a Christian client from mainland China or India would have the same exact worldview about sexuality as a Christian from Sierra-Leone, Eritrea, Argentina, America, Indonesia or Australia. You can share a religion and be of a differing culture.

The majority of the world's people have a religious faith: all of the world's population holds a cultural worldview (CIA 2010: np). The American Government's statistics on worldwide religious adherence indicate:

"Christian 33.39% (of which Roman Catholic 16.85%, Protestant 6.15%, Orthodox 3.96%, Anglican 1.26%), Muslim 22.74%, Hindu 13.8%, Buddhist 6.77%, Sikh 0.35%, Jewish 0.22%, Baha'i 0.11%, other religions 10.95%, non-religious 9.66%, atheists 2.01% (2010 est.)."

If religious belief is part of the worldview of so many people, then ignoring religious influence upon clients seems illogical, let alone unethical: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), article 2, 16 and 18, all deal with freedom of religion without discrimination: This is assumed to be in all arenas of life. A primary concept of professional ethical reasoning is to respect a client's autonomy and secondarily, not to impose your



own beliefs (Coates 2003).

So, what is a worldview? Kraft (2011:52) defines it as: "The culturally structured assumptions, values and commitments/allegiances underlying a people's perception of reality and their responses to those perceptions. Worldview is not separate from culture." A worldview includes traditions, music, art, dress code, values, writings, 'filters' for viewing 'others' and rules for inclusion or exclusion. A worldview includes a belief system, which is a set of values, principles or rules that a person or culture uses to make moral decisions or regulate behaviours. Any religion is a belief system. Atheism is also a belief system. Some of the worldviews involved in sexual health, therapy or treatment are described as follows:

- **Reductionism** – A reductionist approach is one that views people's experiences or events in terms of reducing these to component parts for the purpose of analysis. The DSM-IV (APA 2000) is an example of this, especially in regards to sexual problems.
- **Secular** - Someone or a group of persons whose public activities, work or involvement in engaging with the facilities of their society are separated from a religion, in part or all, by the State's intervention.
- **Christian** – A person who has chosen to identify themselves, their lifestyle and worldview with conformity to the teachings of Jesus Christ: a disciple. This is a broad definition.

A person's worldview about sexuality, shaped by the training and understood norms of their family, culture and religion, will define the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviours for that culture (Stott 1999). Anthropologists (Hiebert 2008; Kraft 2011) know that understanding the cultural and religious norms of people groups brings better communication and openness to new knowledge, treatments or medical help. Logically, understanding the worldview of a people group in regards to their sexuality would thus make sexual health treatment or therapeutic interventions more likely to have positive outcomes for the clients, regardless if the practitioner agreed with all of the client's beliefs or practices. This is the essence of client centered (Bruno 1977, Rogers 1951), respectful and ethical practice especially in matters of sexuality (Ringheim 1995, Basham 2011). It however, means taking time to get to know the client's world and associated meanings. A comprehensive sexuality and worldview assessment is part of any effective treatment.

Some of the problematic issues with not considering the Christian client's worldview about sex are that you could suggest activities, behaviours or treatments that may be

totally unacceptable to that particular Christian of that culture. For example:

1. *A Philippino, or southern Indian Catholic couple having difficulty conceiving due to the husbands low sperm count and wife's irregular ovulation. A sex health practitioner may advocate the husband regularly masturbates after a week of no sex to produce semen to collect and freeze for assisted conception. This may be totally unacceptable to the husband, wife or both due to religious conscience or doctrine and would coercing the clients to do so be actually doing them harm? (Coates 2003).*
2. *A Christian couple married 4 years, attends sex therapy for anorgasmia of the wife and premature ejaculation of the husband. The secular practitioner suggests the couple watches erotic movies together to increase her arousal and desensitize her to sexual imagery - to try using a vibrator on the wife apart from intercourse, or that the wife masturbates using a vibrator on her own to learn about her body. They may also be told to use the squeeze technique on her husband to slow down his arousal and orgasm. Depending upon which branch of the Christian church they are from and what sexual taboos they have learnt, this couple may use the squeeze technique, but could call any visual erotica, pornographic and refuse to use a vibrator. However, they may not.*
3. *An Indonesian or Malaysian Christian single woman is preparing for her marriage; she has gone to a doctor to discuss contraception. She is a virgin and has had no in-depth sexuality education. The G.P. asks about her sexuality education, knowledge of her body and sexual history, including a masturbation history (none). An insensitive secular practitioner may leave a girl like this very shamed about her sexual ignorance and suggest she read some secular sexuality literature – however, what if it is offensive to the girl's beliefs? What Christian resources are available and would the secular practitioner know what they are?*
4. *An African Christian woman – a refugee from Somalia, South Sudan or Sierra Leone, presents at a women's counselling practice looking for assistance with getting her life sorted since her husband left her and the 4 children. During assessment, it is discovered that she has undergone female genital cutting and part of the reason her husband left, was that she didn't enjoy sex, it was painful for her and she tried to avoid it, even though she said "it was her wifely duty." Focusing on surgical repair may not be the client's first need. What her culture, church and family think about what has happened and the support she needs may be the priority for this collectivist cultured woman.*



5. *A young Christian couple comes to a sex therapist for help at the insistence of the husband. He is Australian and comes from a different denomination as her (she's Eastern European Lutheran) and he thinks that oral sex is fine (cunnilingus or fellatio), however, she refuses to do it as she thinks penile-vaginal sex is all that is allowed. He is very bored, wants sex with the lights on to enjoy her body, to try sex toys and different positions. She is very modest and believes his demands mean he doesn't love her; she is disgusted by the demands. What is the real sexuality issue a therapist needs to deal with? How can both gain in sexuality counselling and what Biblical principles guide both people and the practitioner?*
6. *A mid thirties young man asks for counselling for his confused sexuality. He says he is a church-going Anglican. He was sexually abused as a child by his favourite uncle. He had strong feelings for girls and boys in high school, he has dated a few girls, had limited sexual experiences with a girlfriend, and it really embarrassed him as he prematurely ejaculated and the relationship ended after a year. He's recently been having dreams about being males performing fellatio on him and he's woken up very aroused, which has confused him. He feels so alone – he asks, Is he gay? If a therapist didn't understand the difference between sexual identity, sexual orientation and sexual behaviour, and discuss this with the client, it could be very dangerous to treat this man's identity issue.*

As you can observe from the above scenarios, the Christian client is by nature, going to view sexuality, sexual behaviours and meanings within the context of what they have learnt within a dominant culture and a religious sub-culture, even if they haven't investigated the Scriptures in depth for themselves (Basham 2011). Importantly, some Christian clients who have been hurt within a particular religious worldview or denomination will have an ANTI-bias to what they say they have rejected. The 'Eight Rules for Biblical Interpretation' have been helpful with Christian clients to help them re-think for themselves what the Bible says about sexuality issues especially some of the terms used with specific scriptures, like 'fornication', 'lust', 'adultery' or 'uncleanness'.

The rules are also helpful to deconstruct some Biblical events that hint at sexuality – for example, Rachel and Leah negotiating over mandrakes (an aphrodisiac) and who would be having sex with Jacob that night (Gen 30:14-16), or that women can sexually desire their spouse before he desires her (Song of Songs 1:2): Christian women can unfortunately think sex is for men. Some Biblical sexual issues that can be re-examined in light of the eight rules are: Sodom & Gomorrah, how incest was dealt with in Corinth, how rape was considered theft,

sodomy as a form of religious worship, catamy as a form of sexual slavery, the lusts of the flesh, etc. Your Christian clients would have heard a lot about these issues, often with a negative bias. If their religion is anything, it is leverage for change if used wisely (Egan 2002, Ivey & Ivey 2007).

In terms of specific sexual practices with clients: Masturbation is not mentioned in the Bible at all, mutual masturbation isn't mentioned either, yet many Christians are riddled with guilt about doing it: Other Christians view masturbation as safe-sex. If you need to, for example, talk about clitoral anatomy, orgasm, G-spot location or female anatomy, you may need to do so without photographs... a diagram may be OK, even if you have to draw one. It is not as if God built the woman and added the pleasurable parts after sin, yet many Christian women have never inspected their genitals to see what is 'normal' for them (Basham 2011).

This may hold true for Islamic clients too. 'The Great Wall of Vagina' (McCartney nd.) is a useful pictorial resource for external female anatomy education as it is real vulvas in plaster cast form. Your clients may find condoms or dental dams are OK for sex-toys or oral sex, but not for penile-vaginal intercourse (some Catholics). Some Christians are very liberal about erotica in movies, sex toys, fantasy games, anal or oral sex, rimming and fisting: others are scared by what they don't know if it's OK or not, and they have nowhere to go to ask the questions. Most Christians are adverse to explicit hard-core pornography because they believe it denigrates and objectifies women and men (Stott 1999). There are some excellent Christian books that give basic sex education, however, when it comes to difficult sexual matters, or multiple ethical concerns about Christian clients and their conflicts about sexuality, sadly, you may need to consult outside of the church network. If you work with lesbian or homosexual clients who identify as Christian, you may find that the church overall is not very welcoming of them, thus, finding supportive networks can be problematic.

A challenge needs to be made to sexual health or sex therapy practitioners about their prejudices and biases – would they work with a Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic or other religious person about their sexuality issue, but not a Christian? If they cannot, then that bias could preclude them from ethical practice (Coates 2003). If you do not work with the client's worldview, you by default could impose your own solutions – which could do harm if it conflicts with their worldview. In terms of fidelity and truthfulness, you aren't considering what is *true* for them (Coates 2003, Stassen & Gushee 2003) and the likelihood of successful outcomes on the client's terms is reduced.

As previously mentioned, a sexuality history as part of assessment is vital: Ask your Christian clients where did



they learn that? Who told them that? How do they know it to be true for them? What Biblical evidence do they have? Is there any room for flexibility? You then have leverage to discuss attitudinal or behavioural change in the context of their sexuality issue (if they agree to) and when you challenge your Christian client – you do so in terms of congruence to their beliefs, not yours (Basham 2011).

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At the dawn of time, humans were created *Imago Dei* – in the “image of God”:

God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, to be like us.” (v.26)

After this pronouncement, a wonderful event happened without which you and I would not be here:

“Humankind was created as God’s reflection; in the divine image God created them; female and male, God made them.” (v.27)

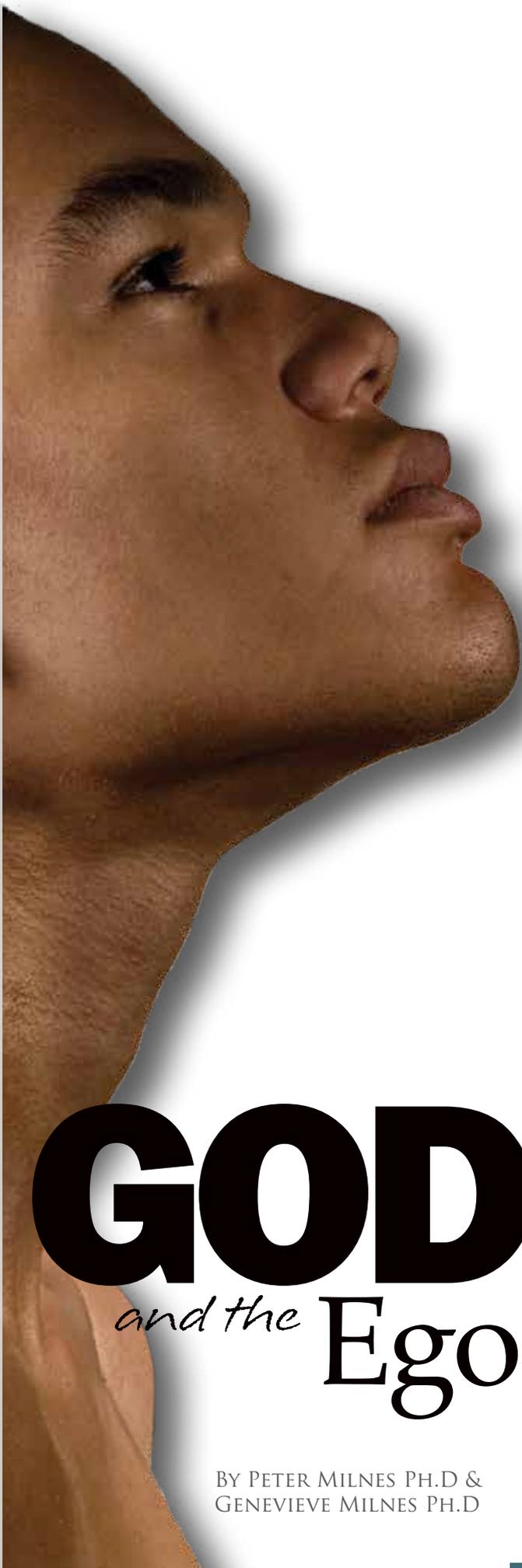
This remarkable non-sexist, non-racist and universal statement made at the creation included ALL humankind as *Imago Dei* – a reflection of God!

The question immediately arises as to how we continue to reflect God’s image. For me, there are further clues regarding *Imago Dei* that can be gained by studying a conversation between God and Moses in Exodus 3 when Moses was being called to go back to Egypt to announce freedom to captive slaves and bring them to freedom. Lacking confidence in his own authority, Moses asked God “Who are you? What is your name?” At that moment, God’s mysterious name YHWH was revealed - I AM WHAT I AM. (Exodus 3:14, Latin Vulgate: “*Ego sum qui sum.*”). We see here the two elements or divine attributes – the “*Ego*” or person of God and “*sum*” – the existence of God. Within the divine *ego*, there is the “being” and within the divine *sum*, there is the “doing”. In YHWH, the *Ego* and the *Sum* are seamlessly congruent. Philip St Romain¹ suggested that YHWH cannot be just “I” because the potential and power of this *Ego* needs to be placed within the context of pure Being and Doing. Without the *Ego* (“I”), nothing exists, and without the *Sum* (“AM”), there is no context to allow the glory and luminosity of God’s existence to be revealed. God’s *Ego Sum* is seamlessly integrated and congruent in the divine majesty.

Having been created in the image of God, *Ego Sum* contains a definition of the dilemma of humanity in a fallen world. The human *Imago Dei* struggles to find congruence between the *Ego* (“I”) and the *Sum* (“Am”). There is a tension between who we are and what we do. Martin Buber² described this dilemma in his famous discussion of the “I-Thou”. The *Ego* (“I”) is the individual’s perception of truth and the *sum* is the “Thou”. The *Ego* is bound up in its own perception and finds it difficult to adapt its thoughts “over and against” others. Instead of communicating harmoniously with others - there is “my

¹ P. St. Romain (2012) *God, Self and Ego: Discerning “Who’s Who” on the Spiritual Journey* 2nd edition. Contemplative Ministries, Inc. USA .

² M. Buber (Reprinted 1970) *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1970):31-33.



GOD

and the Ego

BY PETER MILNES PH.D &
GENEVIEVE MILNES PH.D

viewpoint". Clinging to our own perceptions of reality, humans often display a lack of empathy for the other and blindness to their plight. Paul Tillich suggested that the *Ego* succumbed to the seductive falsity of security offered by false absolutes supplied by the *Ego*. The *Ego* ultimately loses contact with the *sum* and there is a disjunction between the Being and the Doing. Both of these theologians found resolution to this human dilemma by pointing to the congruence of the divine I AM. Tillich proposed that by having the *Courage to Be*, our *egos* live more harmoniously in the *sum* of our conflicting and ambiguous world³. Buber resolved the human "I am" tension that we face in living with others through joining the perfect harmony of the divine I AM.

For many years I have had difficulty understanding the significance of the name I AM. I found it difficult to find significance in the personal pronoun followed by a verb to be. So, it was exciting to find out that this foundational name for God has significance to my practice as a Psychologist and Counsellor. Like the divine I AM, I can describe human *Imago Dei* where the "Ego" describes personhood and the "Sum" the circumstance they inhabit within the world. Let me elaborate. The Ego includes all the things that I studied in Psychology and Counselling in reference to the development of a personality – the conscious and subconscious, the mental state and health, the perception or lack of it, the learning, wounding and fixations, and the strength of the Ego states – Inner Parent, Adult and Inner Child. As a Christian counsellor I can assist the restoration of the *Ego* in the soul's spiritual quest and a reconciliation with the *Sum* of daily life in a complex world filled with human relationships, environmental stresses, and day-to-day living in which the *Ego* finds itself. In other words, I meet a client in an *Ego* state who comes to counselling seeking to resolve their tensions with their *Sum*.

In a fallen world, these clients become self-absorbed in a disordered mental activity of their *Egos* and lose the wonder of the *Sum* of their surrounds. The disjunction between their thought-lives and their reality is what Paulo Freire⁴ called "fantacized consciousness" - a state of "alienation" where thoughts do not correspond with reality. For example, humans can become enslaved to doing things to themselves they know are harmful (such as over-eating, smoking and taking drugs) in their search for peace and joy in their conflicted *Egos*. The reality of harm is minimised or rationalized in a "fantacised consciousness" developed by the thought processes of their *Egos*. Because of our false self-conditioning in a fallen and imperfect world, our *Egos* become distorted and incomplete, they lose sense of place and origin.

The *Ego* becomes lost in the convoluted activities of the mind, the subconscious and the emotions.

Eventually the *Ego* becomes the sole object of its own mental activity. In so doing, the *Ego* becomes not only shaped by the experiences of the actual, but determined by them. The individual loses the "inner locus of control" and surrenders to their perceptions of external loci⁵. The false perceptions about others that they develop within their *egos* gives rise to jealousy, envy, malice and pride. The self-conditioning of the *Ego* becomes so terribly distorted that it does not know from whence it comes, and so it attaches to all manner of things within and without the person in an attempt to complete itself. Berne⁶ describes *Egos* becoming consumed with desires stemming from archaic Inner Child fixations, intellectualizations from archaic Adult forms of thinking, and inappropriate rules and regulations stemming from archaic Inner Parent. Meanwhile, the *Sum* of a person's surrounds fades into oblivion and returns only to intrude with harsh and punishing issues that become the fodder for ever greater fantasy and deeper enslavement.

It is interesting to note the context within which the name YHWH or I AM was revealed. The name was given in the context of freedom from bondage. YHWH said:

"I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt; I have heard their cries under those who oppress them; I have felt their sufferings" (Exodus 3:7)

This sounds very much like the Counsellor's reconciling role when sitting with those whose personal suffering is palpable, living oppressed lives and weeping as a result of their circumstances. While it may be helpful for a Counsellor to merely "sit with" a client, listening to tales of woe and empathizing with angst, it is my philosophy that the counselling process requires more – much more. We, as Christian counsellors should have our eyes set on leading our clients out of their places of affliction. But returning to the call of Moses – YHWH told him about the task:

"Now I have come down to rescue them from the land of Egypt, out of the place of suffering, and bring them to a place that is wide and fertile, a land flowing with milk and honey." (v.8)

The literal meaning of the "land of milk and honey" was "goat's milk and date syrup". However, these were ancient euphemisms for the male and female sexual fluids respectively. The people were to enter a land

5 Rotter, J. (1966). Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcements. *Psychological Monographs*, 80(1): 1-28.

6 E.Berne (1957) Ego States in Psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 11 (2), 293-309.

3 P.Tillich (1952) *The Courage to Be*, Yale University Press, USA: 189.

4 P.Freire (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, Middlesex.

flowing with milk and honey - a place of peace and joy and depicted as the full expression of physical love. The work of a counsellor is to assist clients to leave their place of bondage, suffering and sensory deprivation and to enter a "land of milk and honey", a place where peace and joy are physically tangible.

Coming to the New Testament we find that Christ was also the I AM. On seven occasions Christ invoked the use of I AM in the Gospel of John. Jesus said, "I AM":

- Bread (6:35) - sustenance;
- Light (8:12) - insight;
- Gate (10:9) - opportunity;
- Good Shepherd (10:11) - care;
- Resurrection and Life (11:25) - renewal;
- The Way, Truth and Life (14:6) – a pathway of living;
- True vine (15:11) – communion with others.

These metaphors suggest human enlightenment and "aha moments" to find care, rehabilitation, renewed life, sustenance and community that are found in a congruent 'I am'.

The Bible does not include any references to the term "Psychologist", and the term "Counsellor" meant something different (Mordecai was a "Counsellor" or "Minister of State" (Esther 8:1) and the Holy Spirit is the other Counsellor (John 15:26).) So, it was interesting to find that these two very simple words "I" and "am" hold insights into my role as therapist who is restoring the *Imago Dei* – the reflection of God – in my clients. I can assist them to move their distorted human "I am" to return to the *Imago Dei* and reflect the divine unity of the "I AM" where the glory and luminosity of God's existence shines. It is my view that the counsellor's task is to bring about a reconciliation of the human "I" and "am" and to bring clients out of bondage, suffering and sensory deprivation and to enter a "land of milk and honey", where peace and joy are physically tangible.

THEORIES OF THE EGO

To assist people to become free of the wounds and fixations of their *Ego* so that they become the integrated *Imago Dei* they were designed to be, we need to examine the *Ego theory*. Sigmund Freud called the Ego by the German phrase *Das Ich* before it was translated into the Latin form *Ego* by Paul Federn. Since then there have been many different takes on the way the *ego* is manifest and the way that it can assist counsellors:

Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) structural model of the human psyche was first outlined in *Beyond the Pleasure*

Principle (1920)⁷ and contained the *id* (a chaotic and self-destructive instinct for satisfaction⁸); the *ego* (an organized, realistic construct⁹); and the *super-ego* (that played a critical and moralizing role). For Freud, the energy of the *Id* required *cathexis* in much the same way that a steam engine requires release. If this *cathexis* of libidinal energies was denied by the *ego* or *super-ego*, then a resulting "sublimation" would lead to the formation of disabling "regressions" that supplied a *re-cathexis* of the former frustrations, "fixations" or other psychosexual desires from the oral, anal or sexual phases. In other words, if you block the steam, it would blow up the engine. Freud's therapy consisted of getting back to the fixations and dealing with them at the root.

Paul Federn (1871-1950), a contemporary of Freud, believed that the *ego* needed to be structured. To him, people who were suffering hysteria had a weak ego strength and needed to be strengthened to control themselves and brought back to normal. So, therapy under this model encouraged the client to build an ego strength to control the *cathexis* in a normal way so that the 'adult' controlled the 'infantile' responses.

Divided Ego Theories–

John and Helen Watkins conceived of ego states that were split off from the core ego – the many personalities that we have and struggle to integrate. Some of you may have seen *The United States of Tara* in which a young woman tries to manage her separate ego states. While that is an extreme case, there are 'personalities' that all of us have that we fight to control and struggle to integrate.

Eric Berne created the concept of Parent Adult Child (PAC) in landmark papers in 1957 and then developed the whole notion of 'Transactional Analysis' where he rendered the complex interpersonal transactions understandable by referring to the interactions arising from one of the three "ego-states" - Parent, Adult or Child. Berne insisted that each one of these ego states is, in effect, a "mind module" - a system of communication with its own language and function:

- the Parent's is a language of values,
- the Adult's is a language of logic and rationality, and
- the Child's is a language of emotions.

7 Freud, S. (1920). Beyond the Pleasure Principle. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works, 1-64

8 E. Berne (1957) Ego States in Psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 11 (2), 293-309.

9 E. Berne (1957) Ego States in Psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 11 (2), 293-309.



Berne trained Transactional Analysts to recognize the ego states from people's behaviour and speech, follow transactional sequences and de-code the "games" they are playing. Transactional Analysis continues to produce valuable results – especially in family counselling.

Re-Integration of the Ego. Other therapists wanted to bring about some sort of re-integration of the Ego. Bradshaw found that TA "lacked developmental detail"¹⁰ and others such as Harville Hendrix¹¹, Jean Illsley-Clarke¹² and Peggy Pace have emphasized the use of the three ego states (Parent Adult and Child) in assisting adults to identify their toddler behaviour; we can continue to believe in magic like a pre-schooler; and we can pout and withdraw like a first grader who has lost a game. All these behaviours are childish and represent various levels of arrested childhood development.¹³

The archaic "Inner Child" – the emotion-driven and feeling part of us should not run our lives. Nor should archaic "Parent" be left to emulate the old out-dated parental models shown to us by our parents so that we finish up saying the same things to our children. The archaic adult ways to deciding may not be appropriate for the new situations that we find ourselves in. It still amazes me how many clients come to therapy totally controlled by their Inner Child. Their Executive Adult is completely overshadowed because the Inner Parent is so weak or too strong and unkind. This produces even further emotional reactions within the "Inner Child". The client whose responses are stuck at times of past wounding can be unaware that this is happening to them. They try to turn over a new leaf, try to be good, try to please others but still act in childish paradigms. They continue to use archaic relics in order to solve contemporary issues. The dilemma of the disjunction between the *Ego* ('I') and the *Sum* ('am') is continued.

The resolution of the 'I am' dilemma lies in the integration of the self. In order to achieve this integration with reality, archaic elements of Parent Adult and Child need reconciliation. As a Christian Counsellor, I use the "integrated self model".

10 Bradshaw, J. (1990) *Homecoming: Reclaiming and Championing Your Inner Child*. Bantam, New York. p.xiii.

11 Hendrix, H. (1992). *Keeping the Love You Find*. New York: Pocket Books.

12 Illsley-Clarke, J. (2004). *Self-esteem: A Family Affair*. Hazeldon, Minnesota.

13 Bradshaw, J. (1990) *Homecoming: Reclaiming and Championing Your Inner Child*. Bantam, New York. p.xiii

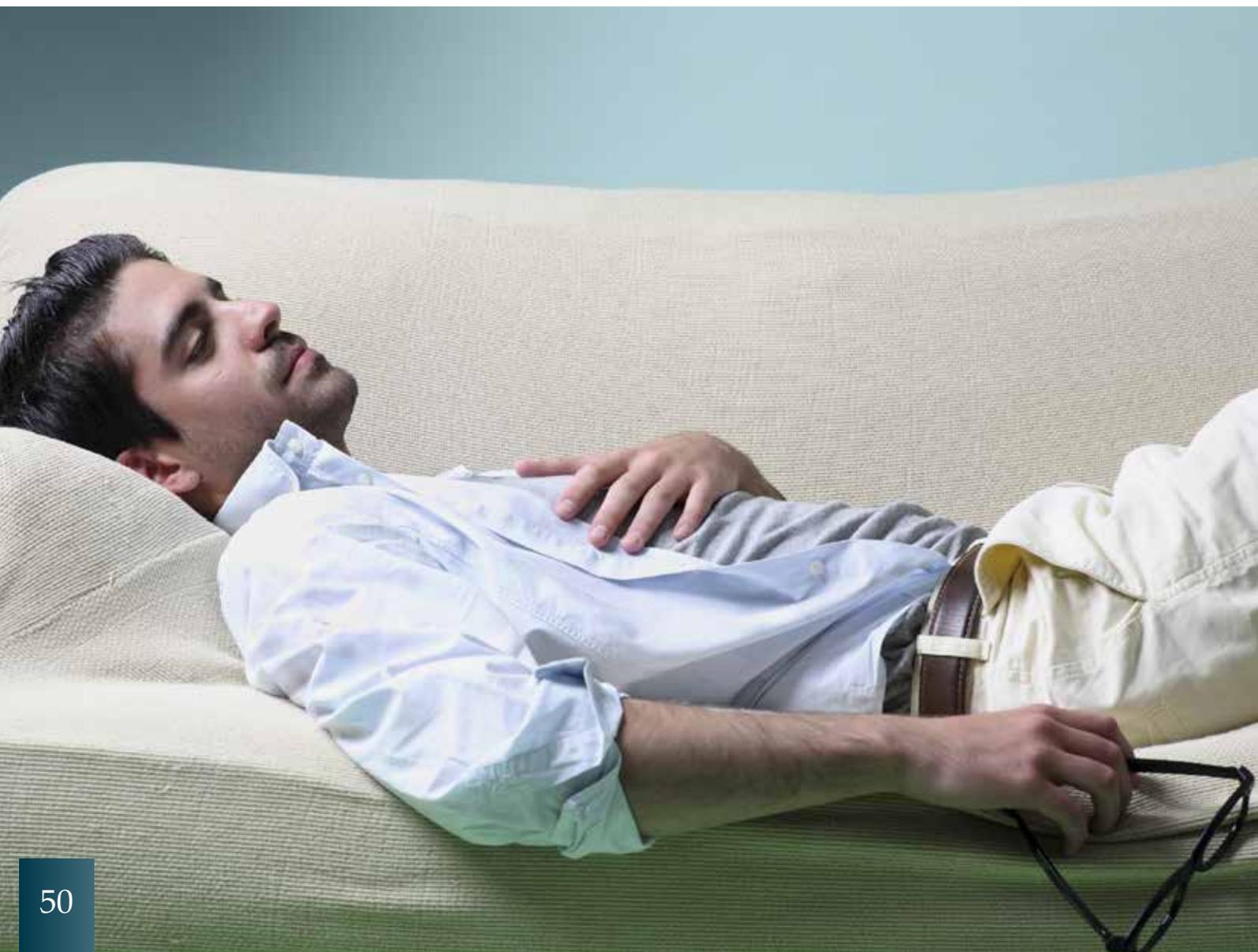
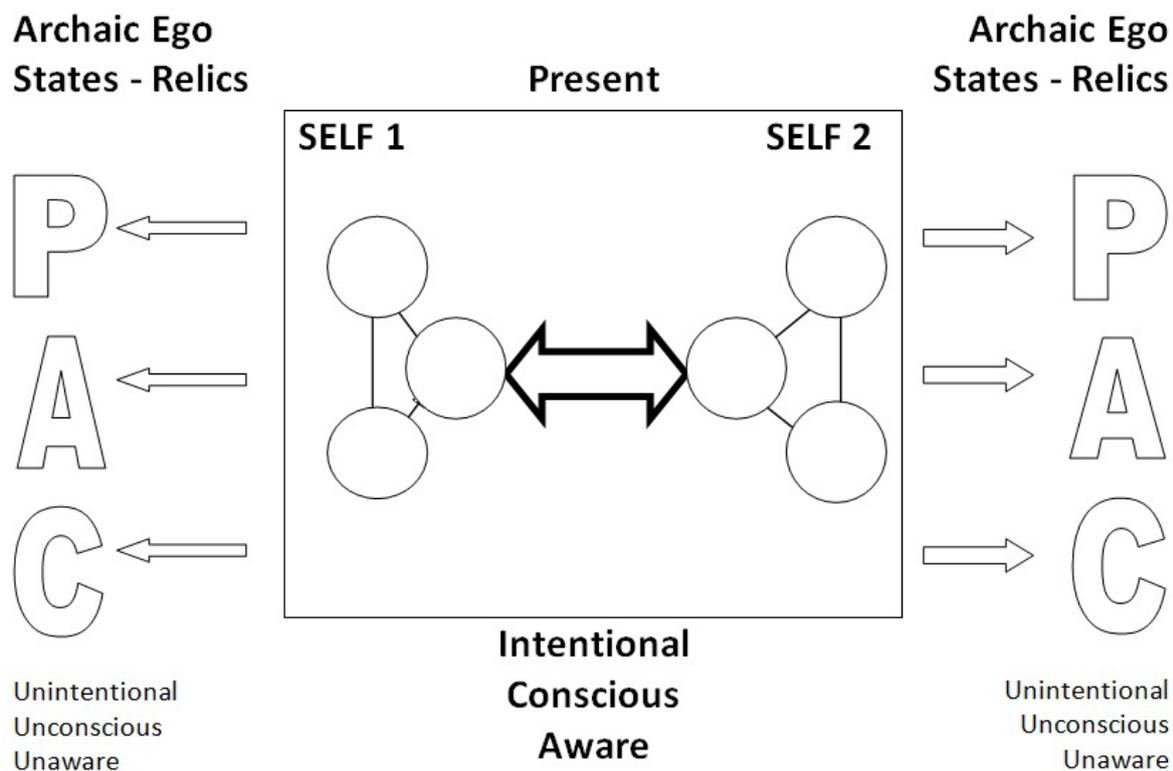


Diagram of the Relationship between “Integrated Selves”



Instead of fixating on past relics, the integrated self becomes aware, intentional and relational in the present. One of the ways I do this is by using *Bears in Therapy*¹⁴ so that the client is given a tool to reconcile the ego states. By using the Bear to “stand in” for the archaic child state, the client is assisted by the clinician to “parent” the child but providing appropriate nurture and structure. After regressing a client to “find” the wounded inner child who formed the core belief system, it is possible to change these core beliefs *directly and quickly*. In a constructive conversation between “Inner Parent” and the archaic “Inner Child”, dysfunctional thought patterns are revealed and the client is able to take control again. Instead of being bound by archaic relics, the client is able to live in the present – intentional, conscious and aware. The egos find their appropriate places in the “integrated self”.

In a clinical trial¹⁵, the efficacious use of using an integrationist approach to the Ego, subjects were measured three times using a Beck Depression inventory – once to establish a baseline, once after four weeks of inner child therapy and once after four weeks without contact. The trial showed that it was efficacious in decreasing depressive mood:

Clinical Trial: Mean Difference Scores Within Conditions on BDI (0-63) for 3 Conditions¹⁶

BDI	PDT	CF+PDT	WL
0-63	n=15	n=11	n=8
T1	0.00	0.00	0.00
T2-T1	16.47***	21.92***	0.37
T3-T1	18.00***	24.37***	
T3-T2	1.50	2.45	

Notes:

Difference scores are calculated by subtracting mean scores at post-treatment (T2) from mean scores at pre-treatment (T1), and mean scores at follow-up (T3) from mean scores at pre-treatment (T1) and mean scores at follow-up (T3) from mean scores at post-treatment (T2) to give an overall change statistic.

BDI=Beck depression Inventory II

PDT=Psychodynamic Therapy Condition

CF+PDT=Cognitive Fluency +Psychodynamic Therapy

WL=Wait-List Control Group

***p=.001, **p=.000

When the “I” becomes disjointed from the “am”, the client may live in an archaic world of rules and perceptions made in childhood. As he progressed through the stages

¹⁴ See G.Milnes (2011), *Bear Therapy* CCAA Journal, No.1,

¹⁵ G.Milnes (2010) *Rewiring Head & Heart: An Investigation into the Efficacy of a Clinical Psychotherapeutic Modality for the Treatment of Depression*. Belco, Perth.

¹⁶ G.Milnes (2010) *Rewiring Head & Heart: An Investigation into the Efficacy of a Clinical Psychotherapeutic Modality for the Treatment of Depression*. Belco, Perth.



of life, these strategies prevented him from living in the present. Even Christian people who regularly attend worship find themselves unable to understand why they continue to feel enslaved, bound and defeated. The Apostle Paul was led to exclaim:

What is happening in me is not really me, but sin living in me. I know that no good dwells in me, that is, in my human nature; the desire to do right is there, but not the power. What happens is that I don't do the good I intend to do, but the evil I do not intend ... How wretched I am! Who can free me from this body under the power of death? Thanks be to God – it is Jesus Christ our Savior! This then is the problem: I serve the law of God with my mind, but I serve the law of sin with my flesh.”
(Romans 7:17-19; 24-25)

Ego therapy does not replace the spiritual work of the Holy Spirit, the power of Christ and the parental divine care. Ego therapy merely points out the existence of the disjunction between our *Imago Dei* I AM and points the ways that we can ask for divine guidance in bringing the ego “I” of our lives in line with the *sum* “am” of our reality. Instead of a fanaticized consciousness where the ego seeks attachment to relics, and fixates in archaic states, Ego therapy assists us in identifying early wounding and dealing with it. The Inner Parent can reflect the parental love of God to assist, love, nurture and structure the Inner Child.

The archaic decision-making can be based on the integrated self where the parent, adult and child fulfil their roles in a healthy and holy (wholesome) way which can bring a person to be a true *Imago Dei* – a reflection of God’s power to translate the *ego* (“I”) into the *sum* (“Am”), the “courage to be” in an often chaotic and unpredictable world and the ability to resolve “I-Thou” fractures. Ego Therapy such as Bear Therapy is perhaps a contemporary expression of the way we deal with the age old disjunction between our *Ego sum* – our “I” and our “am”, our “being” and our “doing”. This assists clients to identify their Ego States, begin an inner dialogue and leave their alienated fixated lives to “live in the moment”. In so doing, they leave bondage to discover freedom, and forsake oppressive living to live in a “land of milk and honey”, a place where peace and joy is physically tangible.

This was the *Imago Dei* that God intended for us at creation where the relationship between *ego* (“I”) and *sum* (“am”) restored because the tension between them is being resolved.

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A Personal Story of Childhood Spirituality, Sexuality and Selfhood

BY GREG HAWKINS

I was only a child when my emerging sense of self as a sexual being was thrown into confusion. I stood in innocence, with my parents, at the front of my home waving goodbye to the visitor who had been with us for a few days. I liked him. He brought laughter and a ray of sunshine into my world and into our home. But somehow, during this visit, this visitor offended my father and it was my fathers throw away words, after we waved my new friend goodbye, which seared deep into my soul.

"He's an F*#@kin poofter. I hate him!" Dad said in tones of aggression and hostility to my mother. It was the first time I had heard my father swear and I really didn't understand the term 'poofter'. All I knew it was something to do with what some men do together that Dad didn't like. It was something to do with 'sex', I thought, but I really didn't know what sex was. The unexpected explosion of the emotional response that welled up in me frightened and disturbed me. Somehow in the innocence of that moment I died a thousand deaths and I did not understand why.

As we walked back into the yard I sensed myself becoming more and more detached from the collection of individuals I called family. The tenuous relational umbilical cord was severed and I was orphaned. For all intents and purposes I had become estranged from my family, and... myself. Everything became surreal. The fish eye lens distorting my peripheral vision was at the same time intensifying the object of my gaze, my parents. They continued to move forward with their backs towards me. They exchanged the space with me outside for a space inside, without me. I had become their flotsam. A strange reasoning swirled around in my head. I liked the visitor, therefore, I must be the same as him, I thought. If I am like him, then, I must also be a 'poofter' and a person whom my father hates. I felt insignificant in an environment that, just moments before, was brimming with life and vitality. Intense, rancid black space filled my sense of being and I knew I was deeply alone.

As I processed this experience from the perspective of being an older man I have come to realize, contrary to popular belief, that I was both a 'child' and a 'sexual being'. However, mentioning the word 'child' and the word 'sexual' in the same sentence is generally problematic

and provocative (Flanagan, 2011. Taylor, 2010). It even now seems to go against the dominant discourse of my childhood and challenges certain assumptions held by adults today. However, I was somehow participating in my own sexual development, consciously, at an age when society would suggest it was inappropriate to do so. I was an agentic sexual self without realizing it.

Hawkes & Egan (2008b) citing Giddens (1984) describes agency in sociological terms as a 'level of self-consciousness and independence from and even resistance to restricting social structures within which the agentic individual is positioned' (p195). I wanted to be me, but I didn't know what 'me' looked like. There were no adults in my world that I identified with. No significant 'other' to look up to, other than the visitor who fleetingly come into and went out of my life. I made the decision in the depth of my heart, at that moment that I would never be like my father. But what power of 'agency' did I possess as a child? The answer, I possessed the only agency inherent within a child, the power of observation (Martin & Ruble, 2004), the power of internal dialogue (Ferryhough, 2009) and the resultant behavioral expression of that dialogue and observation.

Biologically my childhood morphed into what some consider to be a more dangerous period of life, adolescence (Johnson, Sudhinaraset, Blum, 2010). During these years my inner critic loomed large and the condemnation upon my soul in regards to my sense of being a sexual self became onerous. No matter how hard I protested and expressed my sexuality, no matter how fervent my prayers, this childhood experience set the agenda for my overt and covert sexual exploration. My sexual identity was not neither-or, but, both-and.

My sense of selfhood had been dented, my sexual identity seemed to be fluid and my spirituality was a cry of help as much as an expression of devotion. As an active Christian from childhood I listened to the doctrinaire oratory of the preacher and the Bible Study leader, endeavoring always, to interpret the Scriptures from their 'learned' perspective. However, in this I failed. There was always this niggling in the back of my mind saying that there was a different perspective, a more fuller point of view, a richer and deeper meaning to the texts, especially those texts that related to sexual activity. Historical and contextual criticism abounded, but I was a Postmodern child (Aichele, Miscall, Walsh, 2009), an existentialist in heart without really knowing it at the time. I was very aware of the adversary prowling like 'a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour' (1Peter 5:8 NASB) and I prayed without ceasing (1Thessalonians 5:16-18 NASB) in the hope that it would not be me who would be consumed because of the experience in my childhood.

My childhood is not too dissimilar to many children

today, especially within religious communities. While the social milieu is different, the juxtaposing of the sacred and the secular is ever present. The Church seeks to, from a moral/religious perspective regulate sexual activity (Delamater, 1981). The secular/scientific seeks to reveal empirically what is current (Denzin, 2011). The former seeks to inspire and influence. The latter seeks to identify and inform. Both ideologies influenced my maturation (Blume & Blume, 2003). I danced with both beliefs in the hope of finding salvation. But neither delivered, and, I feel as though I was a free-floating individual, unanchored between a rock and a hard place.

Historically, the lingering effects of Western Religious, 19th century Romanticism and early 20th century Modernity's conceptualization of childhood as a period of 'innocence' linked to particular age markers thwarted robust dialogue concerning the capacity of the child to be an agentic self (Hawkes & Egan, 2008a. Egan & Hawks, 2008). Taylor (2010) labels this particularly modern Western response to childhood sexualization as a compulsion to essentialize, de-historicize and universalize childhood as a natural state of innocence. This understanding in many ways limited research into childhood sexual and gender identity and blinded 'common' folk to the sexual and gender identity formation capabilities of children (Blaise, 2010). Sexual and gender identity, as we know from qualitative research, are core organizational categories (Person, 1980) that shape and inform relationships and are constructed in social contexts (Knudson-Martin & Laughlin, 2005). These social contexts involve dialogue with 'self' (thinking, reflecting) and with 'others'. Using terminology from Transactional Analysis (TA) this dialogue can be complementary and/or a cross transaction (Harris, 1973) with each having numerous dimensions of influence depending on the relational context. In today's social media saturated world this dialogue can take on the form of blogs, Facebook, Snapchat and of course the ubiquitous texting along with face-to-face and group interactions with peers and multigenerational individuals and groups. But what is to be noted in the formation of 'self' within these contexts is the use of and understanding of the words used. Language plays an important part in the construction of self (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004.).

There is a general acceptance of children using sexual words as part of developmental maturation (Wurtele & Kenny, 2011. Sandnabba et al., 2003) but when these words are acted upon in sexual behavior then the construction of 'childhood innocence' is challenged. At best any childhood sexual exploration is viewed as an asexual moment. That is, the action was not knowingly generated by a sexual desire. At its worst, childhood sexual exploration is viewed as deviant and inherently dangerous (Hawkes & Egan, 2008b. Heiman, et al., 1998.



Lehr, 2008). As with anything perceived as dangerous, especially in regards to a 'child', anxiety rises, boundaries are established and increased surveillance happens, all on the assumption of 'protecting' the child and safeguarding 'our' civilization (Foucault, 1981. Egan & Hawkes, 2008). The current Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse is a testament to this phenomenon prompted in part by the victimization mentality generated by research into the negative side of child sexual abuse (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, Finkelhor, 1993). What is missing, however, is a broader and deeper understanding of normative childhood sexual behavior (Wurtele & Kenny, 2011). Until this eclipses the non-normative research there will remain an imbalance in understanding childhood sexual identity formation (Friedrich et al. 1998).

Understanding childhood as a period of 'innocence' has had a powerful hegemonic effect on the collective psyche of Western thought, which, proclaims that it 'just makes commonsense' to think of a child is 'innocent'. Therefore, ipso facto, it is sagacious to regulate a child's observation of, initiation into and knowledge of sex and sexuality (Kehily & Montgomery, 2004). To suggest otherwise invites scorn and ridicule. However, this is a discussion that is vitally important. An initial start in this discussion is the need to identify elements of Western and Religious thinking that lay outside our awareness so that we can be fully present in any debate with integrity. Breaking one such element down into its component parts is the concept of 'innocence' being inherently 'good' and knowingness being inherently 'bad' (Hawks & Egan, 2008b). From a Christian Theological perspective this debate echo's back to Genesis and the Fall where 'knowledge' is perceived to be the 'downside' of the fall (Genesis 2:16-18 NASB). However, what I needed as a child at that point of 'awakening' was a broad spectrum of information, couched in a context of a loving relationship with a significant other who 'knew' beyond words where I, like Adam, was psychologically hiding. I needed someone to call my name 'where are you' knowing full well where I was and how to restore my sense of wholeness. Unlike Adam, I think, I would have said 'here I am', at least from a now adult perspective.

Of the many children and young people I have worked with over the course of my professional life no moment is more important than that moment of existential connection of being 'found' and by inference say, 'it's OK, I am here with you'. Unfortunately a common experience of young people, particularly, within a Christian/religious context upon revealing in word or deed their sexual preference or activity which is in contrast to their parent(s) is to experience what Adam experienced. Namely, being 'cast out' of the environment that was for them at least a place of shelter and familiarity. Unfortunately, too many messengers of the Sacred have made sex and sexuality

into a chimera of mythical proportions and have used the rhetoric of 'child protection' to serve as a catalyst in the promulgation of racism, classism and sexism (Egan & Hawkes, 2008).

There were several reasons for writing this paper. The first one was personal. It relates to sharing with you who I am as a person and giving light to a long held dark moment in my life. The second reason was to highlight that incidental comments made in intensity, positive or negative, have an impact on a young child's sense of self that could affect their sense of sexuality and spirituality. Thirdly, a child's sense of self as a sexual being can become a part of their lived awareness at anytime even in the most obtuse moments of living. Fourthly, as a parent or a worker with children relax in your own sexuality and do not be afraid to explore sexual themes with children in age appropriate language. Sexuality is not a labyrinth that must be navigated in fear because of the peril that lurks like a roaring lion. Sexuality, like Spirituality can enhance a person's life. It can add a fuller dimension to who a person is. But most importantly of all, what I needed back then and what children need now are advocates who will give them a voice (Flanagan, 2011. Blaise, 2010. James & Prout, 1997) and journey with them in integrity of being as they explore what it means to be a sexual being.

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The Crucible of Supervision

BY PAULA DAVIS

"The truth is the kindest thing we can give folks in the end."

Harriet Beecher Stowe, Novelist

"Courage is the power to let go of the familiar."

Anonymous

During one of my regular supervision sessions I inadvertently dropped out a phrase that must have been submerged deep within my subconscious. I implied boredom during a counselling session with a twenty-something client. The comment intrigued us both and what emerged surprised me. We spent the whole session on material around that comment.

During supervision, it became apparent to me that my boredom was significantly inhibiting the counselling process. It also became apparent that it was related to the sense of helplessness I was experiencing in relating to my own twenty-something children who were in a similar stage of transition from adolescence to adulthood. As I explored these issues in supervision, I was confronted by the fact that there was significant personal work I needed to address. My supervisor understood this. She cared for me and assisted me to explore a difficult and painful concern. Eventually, the matter became a wonderful growing experience for me. A blockage was cleared that enabled me not only to relate differently and more courageously with my children, but I was enabled to put my issues aside and be much more present to my client. We went on to accomplish some great work in our counselling sessions together.

This is the value of supervision. As counsellors we know that in working with distressed people we can avoid personally painful areas but we will eventually hold our clients back. We also miss opportunities for our own personal and professional development. We need a mirror in the form of a supervisor to reflect our personal, practical, moral and ethical dilemmas.

Counselling is a complex practice. It can be extremely stressful at times and sometimes we feel stuck. Insight into difficult cases can evade us. There are important morsels missing in our conversations. Supervision can light the way forward and allow us to review a case from a range of previously elusive perspectives. We emerge with fresh ideas, new skills and valuable insights to assist us in our work.

The term supervision is confusing to some. Tim Bond (2005) suggests that it is difficult to identify a term that encompasses the comprehensive role of a supervisor.



He quotes The Code for Counsellors as using the term "consultative support" as an alternative to "counselling supervision". Bond suggests that this distinction highlights the autonomy of the supervisor as a supportive consultant as opposed to supervisory insistence on standards and accountability. Michael Carroll (2001; Carroll, & Gilbert, 2008) believes that supervision is a working alliance between two professionals where supervisees offer an account of their work, reflect on it, and receive feedback and guidance. I have overheard colleagues suggest that the title "coach" or "consultant" would be a better fit than "supervisor" as the latter implies status and can conjure up an image of a line manager



overseeing his charges. Yet it remains difficult to describe this multifaceted activity with an appropriate alternative terminology.

In a previous life I ventured into life coaching for corporations. I find it interesting that the corporate world has embraced life coaching with an enthusiasm that is only matched by an obsession with productivity and profit. In reality I see life coaching as a pseudonym for counselling. Moreover, it could be used interchangeably with the term supervision because it helps Chief Executive Officers and Managing Directors to become better managers and better people.

One of the tasks of a life coach is to identify the need to integrate missing resources. Like a good supervisor, a coach seeks not to generate an awareness of error but the envisioning of possibilities. Life coaching not only focuses on learning the skills needed to compete in the arid landscape of corporate life. Rather, what matters is a discourse about a person's internal realities (attributes like motivation, suppressed emotion, etc.) instead of speaking only about surface interactions. Coaching is similar to the counselling relationship in that draws forth a person's inner wisdom and integrity. Could it be that the role of a supervisor is somewhat like a coach,



assisting the counsellor to address internal realities as well as find direction and purpose in their work?

Counselling can be a terribly lonely profession. It is conducted in solitary confinement. Keeping secrets is mandatory and essential to the gift of safety we offer our clients. I am one of those individuals who hate keeping secrets. When I buy a special gift or plan a unique outing for someone I love, I don't want to endure the long wait. In my enthusiasm I want to share it with them now! That is the nature of what secrets want – they want out. The urge of a normal person is to confess secrets. Secrets contain part of our life stories and are essential to who we are as people. Normal people in normal professions indulge in the luxury of regaling others with their work stories over a glass of red wine at a dinner party. They are able to release tension and acquire perspective about a difficult day's work by confession, joking, even laughing about the amusing aspects of their work-a-day-life with others who are all too ready to share their own stories. Counsellors are not permitted that extravagance. Our secrets are forced into hiding and this can have its downsides. Difficult cases can drag us downward much like a literal weight. Sometimes thoughts can intrude into our personal lives, poisoning our pleasure and relationships. Hence, most of us possess a compelling need to name our experience in front of at least one other human being.

I can hear you asking, "But how do I find the type of supervisor who is going to be truly supportive and helpful to me?" Jacki Short (1995) believes the style of a supervisor should be taken into account when choosing one as this will influence the way certain kinds of material is dealt with. She refers to two ends of a spectrum. At one end is a supervisory style "characterised by distance" between the parties and "a predominantly didactic mode of communicating". At the other end, is the "extreme intuitive style that may differentiate little between teaching and counselling" (p.23). She argues that both styles represent conceptual frameworks for understanding the





supervisory relationship and that style is “determined by a number of factors including personality, theories and convictions, interventions, means of presentation, and preference for dealing with certain kinds of material” (p.23). Bond (2005) agrees and proposes that counsellors who are relatively inexperienced would be better served to find a supervisor who is of the same theoretical persuasion. Conversely, experienced counsellors would be stretched in supervision with someone who uses a different approach.

I believe that supervision, like counselling, is primarily a relationship. Windy Dryden (2007) advocates that the combined deliberations of supervisor and counsellor contribute to the success of the counselling endeavour (as opposed to one “advising” the other). Dryden believes that the supervisor has a “privileged, responsible position of mentor, guide and, often, assessor” and that the supervisor “places his accumulated experience and knowledge at the service” of the counsellor (p. 330). An effective supervisor (like an effective counsellor) remembers that counsellors are people and people are capable of change and growth. They sometimes give advice and solutions, but they do not take over the responsibility. They serve as conduits to help the counsellor deal with a problem, work out the meaning and significance of a client’s communication, understand the nature of their conflicts, recognise transference or countertransference, and choose a different path where necessary.

My long experience with supervision has largely been positive. I have learnt what it means to care for myself and my clients. You may think this is strange, because caring should come naturally with the territory. But early on my “care” really amounted to little more than over-identification with clients, or cherishing a highly entrenched “Messiah Complex” (Berry, 2003). Many times, my agenda ruled. Much of my “care” was really designed to lower my anxiety, confusion, and the terror of “not knowing”. My keen desire to “help” actually

got in the way of my client’s process. One of my early, astute supervisors discerned this and sensitively prised open my mind and heart to reveal my true motivations. However, she did not stop there. She lovingly engaged with my desire to find the right words that would reach into where a person inhabits their inner world. I learned what it is to be fully present with someone.

I am constantly amazed at the privilege of being invited into another’s world, to hear and participate in their stories, pains and secrets. It is crucial for me to feel supported both personally and professionally in this work. I meet regularly with a compassionate supervisor. We have a deep respect for each other’s expertise and experience. I have found her to be incredibly supportive. Our relationship is growing to look more like peer support and friendship than a “professional” one. I am able to be thoroughly honest with her, not just about my clients but my inner life and motivations. This kind of honesty has a remarkable effect on me for the benefits are not only personal but my supervisor learns as well. For my part, her loving presence has contributed greatly to my sense of safety and enjoyment (dare I say it) of change! I’m sure my clients are grateful.

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RESIDING IN A SOUND ETHICAL HOUSE

BY LYN HADLEY

Possessing a personal framework for sound ethical practice and decision making is a vital aspect of counselling. Just as a house describes a dwelling place, place of safety, replenishment and hospitality, so is the house a useful metaphor when considering a personal ethical position. An ethical house then, describes an epistemological dwelling place; the foundations on which counselling practice is based; the ethical boundaries practice occurs within; and the security, protection and safety promoted through sound ethical practice.

FOUNDATIONS

The foundations on which ethical practice is built, is that of a Christian worldview. This undergirds and informs clinical practice, providing the basis for interpreting ethical principles and codes and making ethical decisions. A belief system is foundational to professional identity and provides a rationale for professional counselling standards. A Christian worldview and the Bible illuminate and clarify ethical codes and principles, giving context, increased understanding and direction. Presuppositions about the nature and character of God and humanity, inform and enrich an understanding of ethical codes and principles and the way they are practiced. Belief in a God who is personal, immanent, triune, relational, and desiring to reveal Himself and communicate, provides a foundation for professional life, a source of assistance for ethical process and sound and creative decision making. An awareness of God's involvement with an individual's situation and their transformation process is promoted. God's goodness, holiness, love and beneficence, modelled by the person

of Jesus, is the supreme standard of righteousness and morality, informing responses to self, clients and ethical dilemmas.

The Christian worldview embraces humanity as having infinite value and worth, made in God's image, and the object of His love and desire to give salvation and restoration. This guides professional conduct, acknowledging God's care and recognition of the individual, especially the marginalised or disempowered. His granting of personal autonomy informs responding to others in ways that balance self-determination with a duty of care to individuals and society.

A Christian worldview provides a solid foundation on which to base ethical practice, which is steadfast despite challenges, dilemmas or changing fashionable paradigms. Whilst not necessarily providing distinct answers or recipes, this worldview undergirds the continual process of grasping and working through ethical procedures, incorporating personal reflection and self-examination, experimentation and learning from mistakes. A personal relationship with God is fundamental in the ongoing formation of what has been termed the 'ethical identity' (Handelsman, Gottlieb & Knapp, 2005). This development includes a process of gaining and maintaining ethical awareness, with alertness and attentiveness to possible weaknesses, vulnerabilities and blind spots.

FLOOR

In an ethical residence, personal and professional values are like the floor on which a counsellor walks, built upon the foundations of a Christian worldview. Such values are described by the Psychotherapy and Counsellors Federation of Australia's Code of Ethics (2011). These include standing on a commitment to respecting human rights and dignity, in which



The importance of having a personal framework for ethical counselling

the diversity of cultural backgrounds and personal experiences are honoured. A dedication to ameliorating personal distress and suffering, helping people to increase their personal and relational effectiveness, and create a personally meaningful sense of self is embraced. Maintaining integrity in therapeutic relationships and providing counselling that adequately meets client needs with attention to fairness and justice is purposed. Important is a commitment to ongoing personal and professional development with attention to maintaining up to date and high quality, professional knowledge and therapeutic applications.

Personal values are also shaped by a Christian worldview and the Bible, belief systems and experiences, which may or may not be similar to those of clients. Whilst values undoubtedly influence the counselling process, ethical practice denotes that these may be discussed with clients but not imposed upon them. Rather than attempting to be neutral, the challenge lies in using values to enhance the therapeutic process with attention to power sensitivity and mindfulness of a client's vulnerability. Furthermore, it is vital to remain aware that preaching, indoctrination or even persuasion is not a counselling process and when encountering clients with different values, responding to them with deep respect and value is essential. If value conflicts impair the ability to work effectively, supervision and possible referral may be warranted.

FRAMEWORK

The six Ethical Principles of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia form the framework of an ethical house. Professional commitments to act with fidelity, autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and self-respect, support all ethical practice and decision making. These principles may be embraced as having the ability to not only inform, concretize and clarify the living out of the Christian Worldview, but challenge and critique it.

Fidelity describes the responsibility to be trustworthy, including honouring obligations of confidentiality, informed consent, developing therapeutic relationships which are trusting and safe, and keeping promises but ensuring commitments are realistic. Autonomy recognises that a vital aspect of the counselling process is a client's commitment and requires promoting self-determination and freedom, striving to empower rather than create dependence. This, however, must be balanced with consideration for an individual's ability to safely make autonomous decisions, client wellbeing and knowledge, and social responsibility. Beneficence describes a commitment to do good towards clients, acting according to their best interests, rather than being motivated by personal interests. It includes the obligation

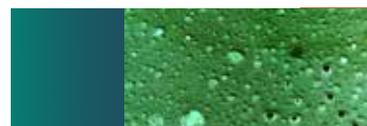
to maintain high levels of professionalism, obtain supervision, engage in professional development and work within personal competence limits.

Non-maleficence involves the commitment to avoiding client exploitation or harm and minimising the risks of doing so. Justice speaks of the commitment to treat clients justly and fairly, providing services impartially and without discrimination, appreciating individual differences and respecting their rights and dignity as human beings. Self-respect entails the commitment as a counsellor, to also look after self and continue to expand self-awareness, including engaging in supervision, professional development, self-reflection, personal relationships and self care activities. Self care facilitates the ability to put into practice all the other principles and is the basis for burnout prevention and self-preservation.

At times, these ethical principles may themselves come into conflict, for example beneficence being at odds with fidelity. Paramount is the ongoing need for reflection, consultation with peers, supervision and spiritual guidance. This is particularly important due to the broad and reductionist nature of ethical principles which makes them open to personal interpretation or bias. Having a Christian worldview, does not mean that the authority of the Bible or personal Christian practices provide undisputable answers to ethical dilemmas which should be insisted upon or imposed on clients. Caution should be exercised regarding placing a higher value on spiritual dimensions than others or 'higher ethics' based on love, being used as an excuse to ignore ethical principles. Again reflection, supervision and consultation remains important, in order to maintain a strong and supportive framework for the ethical house.

WALLS

The Codes of Ethics of both PACFA and the Christian Counsellors Association of Australia are the walls of an ethical dwelling, delineating and defining the boundaries and limitations within which professionals walk. Although ethical codes provide protection, guidelines and structure for counsellors and the therapeutic process, safeguarding the welfare of clients is the primary purpose of a code of ethics. These codes address good standards of practice and care; the maintenance of competent practice, fitness to practice and attendance to self care; responsibilities to clients, preservation of client trust, moral integrity in counselling practice; supervision and working with colleagues; and professional conduct procedures including record keeping and dealing with complaints. Adherence to ethical codes minimises the potential of ethical dilemmas, client harm and complaints.



They provide the opportunity to think through and be prepared for potential ethical dilemmas, rather than dealing with them after they occur, an important aspect of sound ethical practice.

Adherence to ethical codes, means ensuring that the limits of personal competence and training are worked within, with a willingness to refer clients when their needs are beyond individual competence or they require parallel services; engage in regular professional development; and keep up to date with the latest information. Personal reflection upon and review of work is crucial, complemented by the support and accountability of regular and ongoing supervision, and at times, colleague consultation and feedback.

Ethical codes clearly address the importance of informed consent, with the explicit disclosure regarding the nature of the counselling process, including clarification of client and counsellor rights and responsibilities; information regarding fees; description of counsellor qualifications and theoretical orientations; details of professional memberships and issues regarding confidentiality. Codes of ethics address the importance of zealously protecting client confidentiality, with a deep respect for the privacy and dignity of others, which permits clients to express their issues with honesty and freedom. This includes the protection of personally identifiable information; the prohibition of unauthorised disclosure; and attention to the keeping and protection of accurate and respectful case records. Limitations to confidentiality should be clarified with and agreed upon by the client, such as where there is the risk of serious harm, abuse is suspected or court orders occur.

Ethical codes address guidelines for placing and maintaining appropriate parameters or boundaries around therapeutic relationships. Ethical walls include limitations on physical contact, business and social relationships, self-disclosure and the exchange of gifts. Ethical codes caution against dual relationships that have the potential to cause harm to the client or impair professional judgement. Unavoidable dual relationships require careful management, accountability and importantly, discussion with the client.

As a Christian, having ethical walls around the use of prayer and spiritual practices is important. This is specified in the CCAA Codes of ethics (2007) indicating the need to 'recognise that counselling is a different process to Prayer Ministry or Prayer Counselling' (p. 5), and suggesting that prayer for clients during sessions may not be appropriate. Secondly, counsellors are admonished to respect the spiritual beliefs of clients, attempting to understand them and avoiding imposing personal beliefs.

ROOF

Legal issues and policies are the roof of an ethical house, offering protection and covering for ethical practice. As a counsellor, it is important to be informed and keep up to date with the legal issues affecting the counselling process. These include issues such as confidentiality and its limitations, duties of care, mandatory reporting, informed consent, record keeping and responding to court orders. Informing clients of the limitations to confidentiality and obtaining written informed consent at the outset of therapy prevents many difficulties later. Counsellors are required to keep accurate records of their work, which may be required by law, in the event of being issued with a subpoena. Notes may also be requested to be passed onto another counsellor in the event of a referral. Records should be 'respectful of clients and colleagues and protected from unauthorised disclosure' (PACFA, 2011). Keeping notes that are factual and general, and refraining from labels or diagnoses is appropriate. It is important to be aware of the possibility of notes being viewed by others, thinking carefully about wording and possible inferences that could be drawn.

DOORS

Planning for how ethical decisions will be made forms the doors of an ethical structure, for these inform how paths between rooms are negotiated in accordance with ethical principles and codes. Secondly, just as there are many doors in a house, when faced with ethical dilemmas, there may be more than one option to consider. One ethical decision making model is the 'Feminist Model' which utilizes emotional-intuitive processes, valuing the counsellor's responses and personhood alongside a rational-evaluative process. This use of the therapist's intuition may be considered to invite a more fully informed and less potentially biased decision. The person of the counsellor affects this process and is considered in an emotional and analytical sense throughout the course of decision making. Furthermore, the Feminist decision making model incorporates collaboration with the client and considers socio-cultural contexts.

WINDOWS

Importantly, an ethical house has windows, acknowledging the need to look outwards, seeking supervision, consultation with colleagues and others, professional networking and collaborating with clients. Practicing in isolation without connection with other professionals renders a counsellor vulnerable to making poor or biased decisions and encourages burnout. To assist professional development, supervision provides a forum for honestly reflecting upon the counselling practice. Supervision is about 'becoming students of our own experience... sitting at the feet of our work'

(Zachary, 2002, as cited by Carroll & Gilbert, 2006, p. 1). Supervision provides accountability, through the review, monitoring and dissecting of cases, including the ethical and professional issues involved. An important part of the ongoing learning process, supervision gives the opportunity to gain input, drawing on the expertise and wisdom of another and being able to be challenged and stretched. This is of great benefit when faced with ethical dilemmas.

As counselling has the potential to be an isolating profession, the importance of networking with other counsellors and health care professionals is prominent. Attending professional development workshops and seminars provides the regular opportunity to engage with other counsellors. Group supervision gives the opportunity to discuss cases and ethical issues, receive feedback and learn from the experiences, including the mistakes, of others.

INTERNAL ROOMS

An ethical dwelling contains internal rooms, representing the essential areas of self-care, the 'feeding' of self, replenishment, rest, recreation and attention to close relationships. Planning ways to maintain attention to these internal rooms is a vital part of professional practice, in order to counsel effectively and avoid burnout. When trying to build a counselling practice, there is a danger of taking on more than is necessary and failing to maintain boundaries around time and commitments. Additionally taking on too many 'difficult' cases increases the potential of becoming overwhelmed. Attention to the forming of realistic and attainable goals, in collaboration with a supervisor, is important. Furthermore, role ambiguities, personal and family stresses, environmental and organisational hassles are likely to exacerbate counsellor stress, increasing the need for support and attention to self care activities. Self care is an important aspect of ethical practice which requires commitment and ongoing attention.

CONCLUSION

A sound ethical house is a vital aspect of a counselling practice, which like all houses, requires ongoing attention, maintenance and sometimes renovation. It uniquely represents the one who resides there and outwardly portrays something of its character to those who come by. Perhaps its greatest value is that it provides a place of security, safety, boundaries and protection, which may also serve as a refuge for others.

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Examining the Interplay between Spirituality and Professional Counselling

DR VIVIENNE MOUNTAIN

Interplay is an important word. It seems that in every decision of life there are various voices that are engaged in debating the best solution, action or sense of understanding. As we wrestle in prayer we “groan” and the Holy Spirit “groans” with us (Romans 8:22-26) We are engaged in the struggle, the “birth pangs” of the coming new order, the Kingdom of God. As a Christian it feels that I am often walking a tight rope, listening to the voices, discerning the spirits, listening for the Holy Spirit, the guidance of God.



Our faith is that God is with us in all situations, but in some situations the competing voices are unbalanced. For example, if I am preparing a message for a worship service, the scriptures take the central role, along with reflective prayer and some knowledge of the audience. But if I am negotiating in a family argument there is strong use of my background of experience with the different family members along with some silent prayers

This article shows some of the preparatory input from a new Professional Development initiative sponsored by the Victorian committee – a book discussion group. Dr Art Wouters and Dr Judy Wilkie have also written on the same theme to give a variety of viewpoints. We look forward to a good response to this initiative and will provide a brief report on the CCAA web site.

for guidance. On the other hand as I teach, the relevant subject matter is uppermost in my mind along with awareness of the needs of different students. In the clinical counseling situation I am aware of the client as unique and loved by God, of the Holy Spirit helping me to listen and understand coupled with knowledge and skills from psychology. In all of these situations where the emphasis is different, I am still myself, and my relationship and dependence on God is in all.

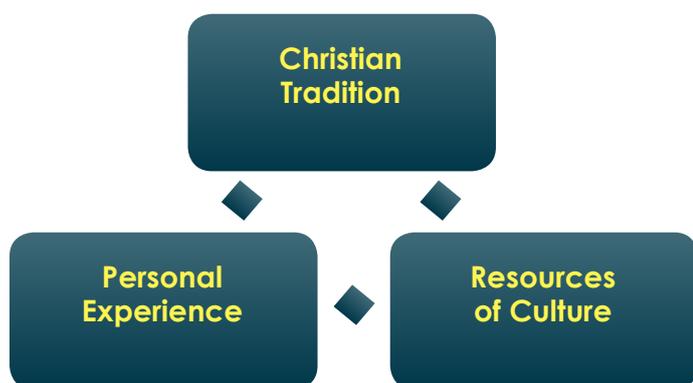
As I struggle to discern the interplay between my spiritual life as a Christian and my position as a professional Counselor I use the method of “Theological Reflection”. Theological Reflection links three aspects of Christian life: There is the authority and wisdom of the Christian tradition, found in the person of Jesus as revealed in the scripture and church teaching. There is personal experience, the background we have been given of hurt and blessing and our current situation as we engage with contemporary society. This is related to the third aspect of evaluating the wisdom revealed through culture, current knowledge and scientific understanding, particularly in the social sciences. I believe as Christians we do not live in a simplistic bubble, we do not live with our heads in the sand, rather we are called to follow Jesus to be his hands and feet, his heart of love and compassion- that means engagement with the society. Moltmann sees this struggle not just for Christian Counsellors, but also

Christian engineers, Christian doctors, Christian scientists etc. "Theological reflections . . . are not the prerogative of one university faculty . . . they belong to the horizon of every scientific discipline. (Moltmann 2003, 18)

As I move to consider my role as a counselor, I can recognize these different voices. I want my work to be more than just earning money, there is a sense of calling to continue the loving and healing work of Jesus. However, the ethical requirements of my professional counselling role are a reality. The wisdom of my contemporary psychological training links with my Christian faith and is also part of my personal experiences of living.

This is my calling, a spiritual and an academic task as I seek to balance the different forms of wisdom that are available. The method of Theological Reflection has been well documented by Whitehead & Whitehead (1995) it is a tool in practical theology used to foster greater honesty and integrity in Christian ministry. Further application of the method has been suggested by the Melbourne theologian John Paver.

The diagram below provides a useful model to help look at the situation more clearly.



The three elements in the model are different yet there is a dynamic interplay between them.

1. Wisdom from the faith tradition - Examination of scripture, Christian tradition and Church practice.

2. Wisdom from my life experience- Reflection on own spiritual life and faith development.

3. Wisdom from contemporary culture- Discernment and Consideration of contemporary scientific and cultural understanding.

As an example I have tried to identify the different parts of my Theological Reflection in relation to my role as a Christian Counselor.

1. Wisdom from the faith tradition: conversion

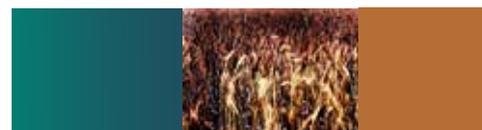
experience, awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit, power in communal worship, prayer, Jesus who "emptied himself" for us, Jesus blessing the children, Jesus accepting the outcast, Jesus the healer, Jesus who for the joy before him endured the cross, Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again, the brokenness of the church, the hierarchical and patriarchal structure, the tendency to make rules, forgetting about the call to love, vision of hope in the Kingdom of God. As well as Bible study, there are many texts that have influenced my understanding of the Christian tradition, these include: Brueggemann (1986), Bunge (2008), Freedman (2002), McFague (1988), Moltmann (2007), Ulanov (1982).

2. Wisdom from my life experience: parents separated when I was three years old, known sense of love from a grandfather, general sense of dislocation, anxiety and fear, conversion experience, answered prayer, valuing being part of a community of faith, teaching experience, personal psychoanalysis, deep involvement in my family, power of friendship, value of teaching and chaplaincy, relationships and networks.

3. Wisdom from contemporary culture: Teacher training, developmental psychology, attachment theory, art therapy training, Tavistock training, play therapy training, research into children's spirituality, research into the Child Theology Movement, understanding systems theory, awareness of transference and counter-transference, defense mechanisms, the importance of empowerment for the client and the dangers of co-dependency. In my various professional roles some of my influential reading includes: Berryman (2002), Collier (2009), Bradley & Emanuel (2008), Grille (2008), Hay & Nye (1998), Music (2011), Palmer (1998).

As I hold all of these different perspectives together I can recognize how I integrate my spiritual life with professional counseling. I can identify ways in which my counseling work reflects my spiritual life:

- I am advertised on the Christian Counsellors website.
- As part of my intake form there is a part for "Spiritual health" - "What gives your life meaning?" and "Do you belong to a worshipping community?" This indicates that I believe these aspects of life are important.
- When I am with a client there is silent prayer.
- At the end of the session I place my hands on the file (as a symbolic gesture and again pray) * I am alert to any request to discuss spiritual/faith issues during the session.
- I am alert to the request for prayer from a client- if this happens I ask the client what should be prayed



for, then suggest that the client could lead the prayer or we could sit together with these silent prayers in our thoughts.

AN ACTIVITY FOR YOUR ENGAGEMENT

As you consider the theme of Theological Reflection use the guide below to identifying the main areas of wisdom that you use in your counselling work. This intentional analysis of your personal style will help to clarify your perspective and maybe challenge the interplay between your faith and professional counseling methods. This schema can also be used as a discussion point in your Reading Group or Group Supervision where these areas of wisdom can be compared. Hopefully this will lead to greater respect for the many ways we approach our clients, recognizing our own differences in our Christian expression of spiritual life mixed with the understanding from our contemporary psychology training and personal experiences.

1. Wisdom from my faith tradition: What books have influenced your understanding of faith?
2. Wisdom from my life experience: What particular experienced have been formative?
3. Wisdom from the contemporary culture: What books have influenced your professional understanding?

As you hold all of these different aspects of wisdom together, can you recognize the practical ways in which you integrate your spiritual life with professional counselling.

Developing Reading Groups is a vision of the Victorian PD committee. The purpose of the Reading Groups is to encourage counselling support networks in regional areas around Melbourne. We recognize as a problem the wide distribution of our membership, our meetings in Melbourne are convenient for only a small number of members. If this idea is successful, the groups could be ongoing and many areas of skills development or theoretical concern could be addressed in the future. Apart from the professional development the groups have the potential to foster pastoral care for members,, encouragement and prayer support.

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Reflection on Issues of 'Power' with Regards to Counselling Practice

BY LYN HADLEY

The exploration of issues of power is particularly pertinent for the counsellor who seeks to journey with others in a way which intentionally seeks to promote autonomy, build personal resilience and empower others. Delving into how power works in society, organisations and relationships, is enlightening and as a counsellor with a Christian worldview, further illumination is gained by considering power practices within the church context and that which is presented in the Bible. These are both personally impacting and of great significance to the counselling process.

Power is about the construction and maintenance of sharp, rigid, secure and self-protective boundaries by which identities, roles, relationships and actions are defined. It is easy to impose boundaries around oneself, preferring to live with rigid definitions and the security of adherence to rules, expectations and methods. So in considering one's counselling practice, it is in the context of the personal and spiritual life that these understandings regarding power may begin and can be most challenging, their embodiment facilitating much personal growth. As described by Alexander (2008), "The most challenging outcome of these understandings of power and authority is the challenge to our own transformation. It necessitates that I be willing to journey with another in such a way as to release the power within them" (p.89).

POWER IS EVERYWHERE

Power differentials and hierarchies are an unavoidable aspect of life, existing universally within the structures and practices of organizations and society. Foucault (1980) considered that "Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (p. 93). Power exists on three levels, these being the individual level, (describing one's sense of internal power, competence and self worth), the interactive level, such as the family or group, and the societal level. Furthermore, power is considered to be constructed socially and historically, and is often related to gender, class, culture, age and role, and evidenced in

oppression experienced in everyday lives. As a counsellor, power-sensitised practice begins with recognising that people's concerns as well as opportunities to grow, exist within contexts of power, and that these are vital to explore. In fact, it has been suggested that "Therapy that is not sensitised to relations of social power risks reinforcing existing inequalities as therapists will inevitably, though not necessarily consciously, either sustain or challenge discourses of social power in the course of their everyday work" (Spong, 2012, p. 72).

The Christian church is certainly not immune to oppressive power practices, although these may exist implicitly, in hierarchical and authoritarian structures, religious demarcations, the building of personas, attempts to gain approval and validation, the exaltation of, reliance upon and allegiance to leaders and the strict compliance to particular Biblical interpretations. These may be of a seductive yet subtle nature. Whilst attractive for some, such outworkings of power have the potential to be suppressive, demoralising, divisive, infantilising and abusive.

According to French and Raven (1960) five kinds of power exist in relationships and organisations including that of the church, these being coercive, reward, legitimate, expert and referent power. Whilst coercive power is that which is used to force the compliance of others, reward power utilises the offering or withholding of resources, praise or approval. Legitimate power relates to position and hierarchy, whilst expert power is linked to the possession of knowledge, expertise and skills. Finally referent power is derived from admiration or respect due to perceived attractiveness, charisma or fame.



However, from the Christian perspective, it was Jesus who modelled an alternative type of power in His responses to others – one which was concerned with serving, empowering, liberating and influencing by example, but being collaborative, relational and invitational (Alexander, 2009, p. 72). This may be considered a demonstration of what has been termed ‘Transformational Leadership’, which gives freedom, responsibility, values the diversity of each individual and encourages their participation, initiative and fulfilment. It is this power system which underpins an approach to counselling which acknowledges the power that resides within each person, and journeys with them in such a way that this power might be acknowledged and released.

POWER – TO BUILD SELF

With regards to leadership, it has been suggested that the need to build, protect and affirm an identity, causes a preoccupation and absorption with self, allowing diversion from the needs of others. The meeting of ego needs motivates the construction, preoccupation with and defending of a personal narrative of being ‘someone’, which invites grandiosity. This construct is one of a ‘False Self’, personal value and identity being attributed to the opinions of others, as well as what one has and does. Pennington (2000) described the difficulties of living in the domain of the False Self:

It is a fearful existence, living in this false self. And a perilous one in this competitive world in which we live. We must ever be defensive. There are always those who would be happy enough to take away what we have, no matter how hard we have worked to earn it, no matter how much we seem to deserve it. And it is a lonely place. We must never let others get too close. They might just discover what we so fearfully know: that down beneath all that we have and all that we do is that little one who is all need and is ever trying to win the approbation of others in the hope that it might ultimately assure us that we are worth something (p. 35).

Power then, is operational in the use of others to obtain validation, approval and to gain proof of one’s value and position. A servant leader is one who is not driven by the need to protect status. Unethical conduct may occur where “leaders become preoccupied with their own image as leaders rather than with their ethical responsibility to others” (Knights & O’Leary, 2005, as cited by Sinclair, 2008, p. 177). This need to have one’s self-image confirmed may be a result of the post-Enlightenment emphasis on autonomy and individualism.

Secondly, a striving for self-advancement and improvement contributes to the construction of power. This may be imbedded in well-meaning attempts to attain excellence or Godliness, or less implicitly in the

desire to gain personal rewards or status. Even practices of personal reflection can enforce ‘ego-centredness’ moreso than self awareness. This could be extended to apply to the vigorous pursuit of spiritual practices, subtly seeking to build a ‘spiritual persona’. Thirdly, where an addiction to validation or self-advancement exists, people may be used for one’s own advantages, even reducing them to obstacles which require control and manipulation.

POWER – TO LIBERATE

Rather than a unilateral, wielded power, Jesus demonstrated the use of empowerment, in which power is increased as a result of it being shared. This is diametrically opposed to the traditional view of power which considers that the possession of power by one, means that another lower on a hierarchical scale has less, or that the giving of power to another, diminishes one’s personal power. Rather than employing oppressive hierarchical structures and using power over others, Jesus modelled a use of power that is relational, invitational and collaborative, by which He acknowledges and calls out the power residing in each individual. Ross (2007) spoke of the humble ‘Kenotic God’, who although omnipotent, chooses to self-empty, “suffer-with” and “indwell” (pp. 203, 204). Through this different use of power, Jesus brought freedom to others, rather than oppression and control.

The use of power to bring freedom was discussed by Sinclair (2008) who suggested ways in which leadership might have a ‘liberating intent’. In line with the model of ‘Transformational Leadership’, individuals are empowered by being listened to, encouraged to have greater self-governance, permitted to make choices, gaining skills and resources for increased self-direction, being trusted to have responsibilities and being treated with respect (p. 169). Correspondingly, counselling orientations, which recognise that individuals possess all the necessary ingredients for change within, and therefore are given responsibility for their own change, give freedom and call power out. This is opposed to approaches which may conceptualise counselees as deficient, defective or unable to help themselves.

The importance of encouraging autonomy is reflected in the codes of counselling ethics. Commitments to promoting autonomy recognise that a counsellee’s personal commitment is a vital aspect of the counselling process. This ethical principle instructs counsellors to promote client self-determination and freedom, striving to empower rather than create dependence. Moreover, the ‘Self-determination Theory’ by Ryan and Deci (2000) proposes that change occurs as a result of movement along a continuum from extrinsic motivation or control, to self determination (p. 74). Therefore control and a lack



of autonomy hinders individuals from moving towards intrinsic motivation, which is necessary in order to achieve authentic and integrated change.

For the counsellor, well-meaning desires to help or 'rescue' others may actually prevent the realisation of inner strengths, resources, autonomy and real change. It is therefore crucial to understand the way in which power may be acknowledged and called out of another.

POWER – TO HONOUR

Rather than the use of power for advancement and the meeting of personal needs, it is the ability to transcend self which provides the ability to empower others. Levinas proposed an 'Ethics of Responsibility', in which responsibility to another replaces pre-occupation with self. He suggested that in the 'face-to-face' encounter, one can never fully grasp or comprehend the other but yet has a responsibility towards them necessitating some response. This 'other', who is different, perhaps a stranger, is considered 'higher', more than one's equal, for their being is infinitely beyond any idea of them that could be inwardly perceived. They are considered to be asking for a response and unable to stay passive. Furthermore, it is thought that through another, one is given the opportunity to intimately encounter God.

This perspective of 'otherness', is one which honours each as unique, beyond complete comprehension, worthy of being given respect and a voice without judgement or stereotyping, and from whom we may learn. This response is like that of Jesus who responded to others without controlling them, modelling the creation of "a relational space for otherness" (Daktaraite, 2012, p. 47). Regardless of how 'different' one way seem, one may be challenged to find or create that 'meeting' and 'relational space'.

POWER – TO LET GO

Rather than using power to build self, the ability to step back from self allows for a new way of 'being', including experiencing a greater compassion towards and connection with others. When preoccupations with self and personal needs for validation and proof of value are let go of, one is released to more fully respond to others. What is needed is "a kind of forgetting of self, a letting go of the all-important personal narrative, which can allow one to be with others without looking for gratitude, or for the self to be reflected heroically through the eyes of others" (Sinclair, 2008, p. 176). Foucault described this transformative process as "getting free of oneself" and "surpassing one's self".

This gaining freedom from the 'False Self' is aided by ways in which a distance is created between the striving ego

and the 'True Self'. Eastern Philosophies have embraced ways of being that promote the letting go of concerns, insecurities and vanities. Practices of Mindfulness and Meditation facilitate awareness within the present moment, separated from the control of thoughts and struggles. Additionally, the use of Centering Prayer allows one to simply 'be' without needing to do anything or build any sense of self, merely "allowing God to be in us and express God's being in us, in our being" (Pennington, 2000, pp. 39, 40). Finally, reflection which rather than maintaining a preoccupation with self, facilitates the self awareness necessary for releasing oneself from self scripts, is valuable. Where an attachment to the 'False Self' is released, freedom to empower others and have greater compassion and relationship is accessible. It is as if, "the sharp boundaries of 'self' become less important, replaced by a sense of connection with the whole" (Sinclair, 2008, p. 175).

POWER – TO TRANSFORM

For someone who seeks counselling, feelings of vulnerability, powerlessness, being out of control or demoralised, will often be present. Although the counselling environment and the therapeutic relationship contain inherent power differentials, a counsellor has the opportunity to minimise these, make power practices visible and utilise power collaboratively, relationally and invitationally. In important and informative research conducted with female sexual abuse survivors regarding perceptions of power and control in counselling, Koehn (2008) uncovered some valuable insights. She identified that counsellees found it helpful to be supported to have power and a sense of control over their own process within counselling sessions. Counsellor's flexibility and willingness to let go of personal agendas or methods allowed counsellees to feel respected, relieved and empowered, able to feel in control of the pace and content of the counselling. In contrast, where counsellors pushed their agenda on counsellees, for example, pressuring them to disclose or participate in particular exercises, feelings of beings controlled, violated and re-abused were experienced.

Secondly, counsellor's willingness to offer choices, such as regarding counselling direction, exercises, seating and appointments, was experienced as very helpful, allowing for attitude shifts including the realisation of even having choices and a sense of ownership of their own healing. Being asked permission to talk about abuse was experienced as being extremely empowering. Furthermore, having suggestions listened to and heeded, was also considered helpful and empowering, whilst ideas being dismissed or not followed up caused a sense of powerlessness, discouragement and defeat.

Thirdly, counsellors responding to criticism

nondefensively, with self-examination and being willing to make room for the authentic expression of emotions, was experienced as helpful, surprising and empowering and promoted the use of conflict resolution skills. Fourthly, counselees reported appreciation of being responded to as an equal or with honour. This was experienced as counsellors stepping out of their professional or authority figure role, or momentarily being placed higher, such as when a counsellor thanked them for sharing or humbly apologized. Fifthly, not having expectations or pressuring counselees to engage in forgiveness was cited as being empowering, freeing and cultivating of trust, allowing them to make their own decisions, feel in control and not feel like they were in a teacher-pupil role.

These findings offer valuable insights, which may demonstrate that power-sensitized counselling is not so much about techniques or methods, but about embracing a different way of being and responding to others. This requires personal transformation.

CONCLUSION

Sharp, rigid boundaries of power define, divide and self-protect. Here conformity, obedience, striving and rigidity abound. Yet power may be utilized in a different way, in order to abolish boundaries, set free, empower, invite and embrace. Exploring issues of power may alter the ways in which one views and respond to others. As counsellors, we have the opportunity to journey with others in ways that acknowledge, are sensitive to and explore power practices, but also call out the power residing within. This journey is one which requires the willingness to embrace personal transformation also.

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The Implications of the Use of Prayer in Counselling

DR.PETER MILNES & DR.GENEVIEVE MILNES

Two thirds of Americans view religion as important in their lives, and, of these, two thirds “prefer to see a therapist who holds spiritual beliefs”¹. While these American statistics may not reflect Australian society, the existence of the Christian Counsellors Association of Australia indicates that there are many counsellors keen to integrate Christian beliefs into their professional practice and there are many clients who seek out Christian counsellors. For those people seeking Christian belief and spirituality, prayer is often an important element of their faith journey and so it is necessary for professional counsellors to understand the role of

This paper touches on, but does not fully explore, the issue of integration of the Christian faith with professional counselling practice. For that discussion, readers are directed towards Dr Irene Alexander's Integration in the practice of Christian Counsellors – behaviour, beliefs and being, www.ccaa.net.au/documents/CCAACounsellingIntegration.pdf.

studies where there is very little or no Christian content⁴ and they may not be sure about the way prayer should be included or excluded from professional practice. Gubi⁵ suggested there are two main types of prayer in counselling – covert and overt. Although 50% of accredited BACP⁶ counsellors and psychotherapists reported using prayer as part of their practice, 37% used covert prayer for guidance during a session as a source of personal strength or as an intercession on behalf of a client and only 6% had occasion to use overt prayer as a psychotherapeutic intervention⁷. Covert prayer would not infringe upon clients⁸ but the use of “overt prayer” raises the ethical question of whether a professional counselor is “pushing their own beliefs and values on clients”⁹ - even if prayer is requested by the client. This paper will begin with a brief examination of “prayer ministry” (that is sometimes called “prayer counselling”)

prayer in counselling². Prayer may be requested by the client³ but many professional Christian Counsellors have studied counselling, psychology, social work or welfare

1 S.Hage (2006) A closer look at spirituality in psychology training programs. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, Vol.37, No. 3, 303-310.

2 K.L.Swindle, (2008) *Using Prayer in Professional Counseling*. www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/writing_center/files/sample_sixth_edition_APA_Paper.pdf, p.7. Accessed 20 August 2013.

3 K.L.Swindle, (2008) *Using Prayer in Professional Counseling*. www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/writing_center/files/sample_sixth_edition_APA_Paper.pdf, p.7. Accessed 20 August 2013.

4 Unless the counselling training has been undertaken in the setting of a theological college or Christian institution such as CPE where specific attention has been paid to the integration of faith with professional practice.

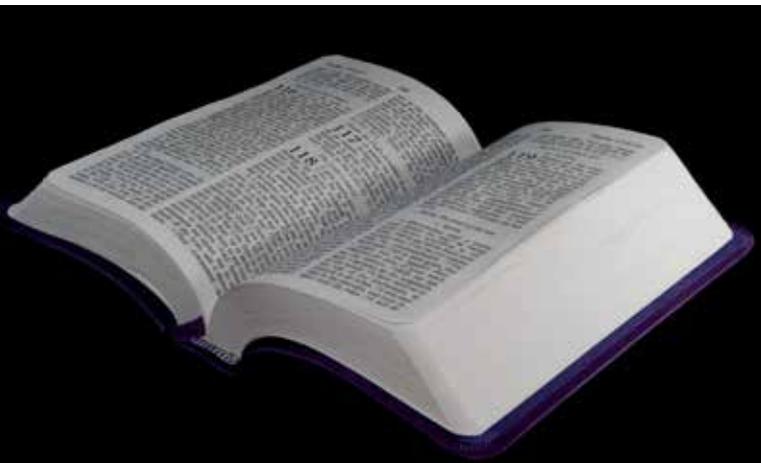
5 P.M.Gubi (2004) Surveying the extent of, an attitudes towards, the use of prayer as a spiritual intervention among British mainstream counsellor. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Vol.32, No.4, p.166.

6 British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

7 P.M.Gubi (2008) *Prayer in Counselling and Psychotherapy: Exploring a Hidden Meaningful Dimension*. Kingsley Publishers.

8 J.E.Johnson *Guidelines for Meaningful Prayer in Counseling* www.tonycooke.org/free_resources/1articles/_others/prayer-in-counseling.html. Accessed 20 August 2013. Covert prayer may be effective in the “spiritual realm” but, because it is not overt, it does not affect or raise ethical and professional issues.

9 K.L.Swindle, (2008) *Using Prayer in Professional Counseling*. www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/writing_center/files/sample_sixth_edition_APA_Paper.pdf, p.6. Even this point can be argued – just what is “pushing one’s own ethical beliefs and values”? Counselling by its very nature may be a discussion of “irrational beliefs” (A.Ellis (1974) *Disputing Irrational Beliefs (DIBS)*, Institute for Rational Living) in which the counsellor’s views of “rational thought” provide a theoretical underpinning. This point is outside the scope of this paper and readers are directed elsewhere for a fuller discussion.



before moving to a discussion of overt prayer in counselling that should assist CCAA in clarifying this potentially divisive issue in Christian counselling circles.

PRAYER MINISTRY AND COUNSELLING

The CCAA has officially made a decision that “prayer counselling” is a ministry of the Christian church and therefore not counselling as such. And yet, on its official webpage, the Ryde Uniting Church in Sydney advertises “prayer counselling”¹⁰ but no details are given about the way prayer is used or the qualifications of the counsellors. To clarify this issue it is necessary to examine a small sample of the agencies in “prayer ministry” and those who are sometimes labeled “prayer counsellors”, such as Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM)¹¹, Elijah House, (Australia)¹², and Freedom House (Canada)¹³. Dr Alexander suggested that these practitioners were trained in a particular method and theology “rather than giving students a theoretical framework to contextualize their thinking.”¹⁴ Also, while “Prayer Ministries” are clear in their claims to be “prayer ministries” and not “counselling”, a Christian Clinical Psychologist, Dr Entwistle, was concerned that the distinction was not clear enough¹⁵ leading to confusion both internationally and in Australia.

- *Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM)* was developed during the 1990s in the United States by a Baptist minister, Dr Edward Smith. After concerns about the legal liabilities of offering “counselling services” were expressed, the name was changed to *Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM)* (*Theo*= God; *phostic* = light). A TPM session is guided by a “Ministry Facilitator” who is optionally accompanied by a “Prayer Partner” whose task it is to “help emotionally wounded people (“Ministry Recipient”) to acknowledge and to identify the true source of their inner emotional pain and find lasting peace through receiving personalized truth directly from the Lord.”¹⁶ More specifically, TPM proposes that the Ministry Recipient’s present situation is

not the cause of on-going pain but rooted in a first-time experience which gives rise to “lie-based woundedness”. To facilitate emotional renewal from the original and present emotional pain and identify the accompanying “lies”, Recipients are encouraged to free themselves of deception. This cannot be removed unless it is done by God’s divine intervention and an experience of the truth that leads to a renewal of the mind¹⁷.

The session begins with a description of the process by the Ministry Facilitator and then a “prayer of encouragement” after which the Ministry Recipient is asked to close their eyes and concentrate on feeling the emotional pain from which relief is being sought and to focus on the emotion of related memories. The Ministry Recipient describes the memory and then the Ministry Facilitator drills down to the core belief that informs the “lie-based pain” by asking a series of open-ended questions. Once the Ministry Recipient has identified the troublesome core belief, the Ministry Facilitator prays and asks God to provide a new perspective through a mental picture, a feeling, a Scripture, a word of knowledge or some other way and provide peace¹⁸.

Some preliminary research has indicated that TPM treatment correlates with symptom reduction. The same research has also raised questions about the Ministry Facilitators’ training levels because many practitioners do not have any formal training in psychology or counselling¹⁹ and also recommended that further research and training was necessary. Also, there has been controversy about TPM’s use of recovered memories and visualization²⁰ and whether it is associated with “Recovered Memory Therapy”²¹ even though both are denied by Dr. Smith²². Perhaps more importantly, there have been theological questions raised about the emphasis on the literal appearances of God and Christ, and the way in which this is interpreted as “healing” or “truth”.²³ Also, while

10 www.rydeuc.org.au/Programs/prayercounseling.html. Accessed 20 August 2013

11 <http://www.theophostic.com/>. Accessed 20 August 2013.

12 Elijah House, *Lesson 2 – A Model for Prayer Ministry*. www.prayercounseling.com/counseling/lesson2.php. Accessed 20 August 2013.

13 www.freedomhousecanada.ca/prayer-ministry/basic-prayer-ministry-procedure#.Uh63mH-s81A. Accessed 20 August 2013.

14 I. Alexander (2004) *Integration in the Practice of Christian Counsellors – Behaviour, Beliefs and Being*. www.ccaa.net.au/documents/CCAACounselingIntegration.pdf, p.1. Accessed 20 August 2013.

15 D. Entwistle (2004) Shedding Light on Theophostic Ministry. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Spring 2004.

16 E.M. Smith (2004) *Freedom from Performance-based Spirituality*, DVD, Theophostic Prayer Ministry.

17 E.M. Smith (2005) *Healing Life’s Hurts through Theophostic Prayer*, New Creation Publishing, p.39.

18 E. Miller, (2006) *Theophostic Prayer Ministry (Part One) – Christian Prayer, Occult Visualization or Secular Psychotherapy*, Vol.29, No.3.

19 F. Garzon (2003) How is the Research Stacking Up? *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry*, pp.4 & 15; F. Garzon (2004) “Research Corner” *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry*. pp.10-11.

20 M. & D. Bobgan (1999) *TheoPhostic Counseling: Divine Revelation? Or PsychoHeresy?* Santa Barbara, EastGate Publishers.

21 S. Brandon, J. Boakes, D. Glaser, R. Green, J. MacKeith & P. Whewell (1997) “Reported recovered memories of child sexual abuse: Recommendations for good practice and implications for training, continuing professional development and research”. *Psychiatric Bulletin*, Vol.21, No.10, pp.663-665.

22 E. Miller, (2006) *Theophostic Prayer Ministry (Part One) – Christian Prayer, Occult Visualization or Secular Psychotherapy*, Vol.29, No.3.

23 D. Entwistle (2004) “Shedding Light on Theophostic Ministry”. *Journal of*

Dr Smith may eschew emphasis upon deliverance from demonic activity, practitioners remain free to involve themselves in this practice and still remain within the fold of “prayer ministry”.

Of greater concern to CCAA is the question of whether TPM is “counselling”. The official website of TPM in Australia contains the following disclaimer:

Theophostic Prayer Ministry is not counselling nor should any person seeking such or who may be in need of professional mental health care assume that this prayer ministry will provide counselling or mental health care. It is a ministry of prayer and is spiritual in nature and biblical in principle. If you are seeking mental health care please seek out a Christian mental health care provider in your area.

In spite of this disclaimer, Christian Psychologist Dr.D.Entwhistle, was concerned about “flawed explanations of basic psychological processes; dubious claims about the prevalence of Dissociative Identity Disorder and Multiple Personality Disorder; demonic activity; estimates of traumatic abuse that exceed empirical findings; the failure to sufficiently appreciate the possibility of iatrogenic²⁴ memory contamination; and application to a variety of mental disorders without empirical validity”²⁵. Entwhistle also doubted that the distinction between TPM and counselling was clear enough and whether the legal question of TPM being either a religious intervention or a counseling procedure was settled by changing the name from “Theophostic Counseling” to “Theophostic Prayer Ministry”²⁶.

- *Elijah House Australia*. After pastoring for over twenty years, John and Paula Sandford founded Elijah House in 1974 and Myra Wilkinson introduced it to Australia in 1991. Elijah House (Australia) has spread to most states and has headquarters in Caloundra, Queensland. Like TPM, Elijah House include disclaimers about “counselling”:

... the emphasis is on prayer and not counselling²⁷

... we refer to the person being ministered to as the ‘client’ ... because we are not counsellors, so

Psychology and Theology, Spring 2004.

24 Iatrogenic (adj.) = induced in a patient by a physician’s activity, manner, or therapy. Used especially of an infection or other complication of treatment.

25 D.Entwhistle (2004) “Shedding Light on Theophostic Ministry”. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Spring 2004.

26 D.Entwhistle (2004) “Shedding Light on Theophostic Ministry”. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Spring 2004.

27 Elijah House, *Lesson 2 – A Model for Prayer Ministry*. www.prayercounselling.com/counselling/lesson2.php. Accessed 20 August 2013.



'counselee' is not appropriate.²⁸

The Sandfords claimed that there is no "methodology" although they then proceed to explain the way in the Ministry Leader" and "Prayer Partners"/ "Intercession Team" should conduct the sessions – use a questionnaire that includes questions on 'obvious sin' or trauma in the family, "chat" with the client to put them at ease and find out the reason for seeking ministry. The session proper then begins with a commitment prayer in which the Holy Spirit is asked to come in power upon the client and then the client is encouraged to relax, close their eyes and listen to the Lord while the Ministry Leader and Intercession Team are encouraged to pray with their eyes open to facilitate focus on the client. Ministry is then aimed at identifying issues, recognition and confession of confession of sin, repentance and the reception of healing, comfort and a prayer for deliverance. The session closes with the client being encouraged to pray aloud to thank God.

The model also contains counsel to observe safety techniques in cross-gender ministry, restraint to avoid overriding the free will of the client, limit of sessions so that not everything is dealt with in one session, retention of absolute confidentiality and not taking the client's problems home²⁹. While the foundation of Elijah House has a different history and separate organizational structure from TPM and different techniques and emphases are used, there are striking similarities between Elijah House and TPM.

- *Freedom House* (Canada) Facilitators ask clients why they have come for ministry and may be asked to fill in a *Spiritual Inventory Form* in the first session. The questionnaire asks about the family history which particularly looks for recurring patterns and results of generational iniquities (such as health problems, incest, false religions, miscarriages and barrenness, fears, mental health problems); family issues (such as the quality of relationships with parents, authority figures, siblings, and spouse); and the relationship with God (including any involvement in the occult, either by the individual or their parents, grandparents, ancestors or other family members – looking for indications of generational curses, such as family breakdown, alienation and divorce). If appropriate and/or applicable, the person is led in a Renunciation of Satanic Involvement and in the Rededication to Jesus Christ. If the client is not a born-

again Christian, the need for salvation is explained so that "inner healing can be accomplished by the cross and a saving relationship with Jesus Christ". The main purpose is to help clients see the root or the event and the sin in it so that they can be brought to confession, repentance and forgiveness. After prayer ministry the client may be offered materials, home assignments, journaling of a sort, practical ways to apply what they have just experienced and/ or other applicable helps³⁰. Freedom House is once again similar to TPM, although in this case, there is greater emphasis on the use of questionnaires and the results of family history.

Up to date, CCAA has taken the stance that "Prayer Ministry" is a ministry of the church and not counselling as such. As a result, Prayer Ministry practitioners are not eligible for membership in CCAA unless they qualify with the acceptable entry-level qualifications. Apart from this, CCAA has refrained from making any further statements about the benefits or otherwise of Prayer Ministry.

THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN COUNSELLING

While the "Prayer Counselling" that has just been described appears to lie outside the ambit of professional counselling, the issue of overt prayer within counselling remains unresolved. Some have been suspicious about the use of prayer in counselling³¹, some suggest that "it should be implemented with extreme caution"³², while still others suggest that an "exclusion of a client's spirituality from counselling is, in fact, unethical"³³. The type of overt prayer may also vary from reference to written prayers such as the *Desiderata*, *Lord's Prayer* or *Prayer of St Francis* to *ex tempore* prayers that may be similar to those used in "Prayer Ministry". Furthermore, as professional counsellors, there is a need to discuss the effect of overt prayer on the relationship between the client and the clinician as well as the way in which the clients' faith traditions are assessed. In spite of these variations, CCAA require some basic principles and

30 www.freedomhousecanada.ca/prayer-ministry/basic-prayer-ministry-procedure#.Uh63mH-s81A. Accessed 20 August 2013.

31 K.T.Sullivan & B.R.Karney (2008) Incorporating religious practice in marital interventions: To pray or not to pray? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, Vol.27, No.7, pp.670-677.

32 T.E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham (2008) Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.5. Accessed 20 August 2013.; K.L.Swindle, *Using Prayer in Professional Counseling*. www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/writing_center/files/sample_sixth_edition_APA_Paper.pdf, p.7. Accessed 20 August 2013..

33 D.R.Bishop, E.Avila-Juarbe & B.Thumme (2003) Recognizing spirituality as an important factor in counsellor supervision. *Counseling and Values*, Vol.48, pp.34-46; P.S.Richards & R.W.Potts (1995) Using spiritual interventions in psychotherapy: Practices, successes, failures, and ethical concerns of Mormon psychotherapists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, Vol.46, No.2, pp.163-170.

28 Elijah House, *Lesson 2 – A Model for Prayer Ministry*. www.prayercounselling.com/counselling/lesson2.php. Accessed 20 August 2013.

29 Elijah House, *Lesson 2 – A Model for Prayer Ministry*. www.prayercounselling.com/counselling/lesson2.php. Accessed 20 August 2013.



procedures so that the highest standard of ethics and client care are maintained by the counsellors utilizing prayer during professional counselling sessions.

In attempting to find a way through this maze, Dr Timothy Coppock, *et al* have suggested that four guidelines can be of assistance: counselor self-awareness, informed consent, client/counselor assessment and supervision/consultation³⁴:

- *Self-awareness*³⁵. At the *counsellor level*, counsellors need to understand their own beliefs about prayer and prayer in professional practice. Covert prayer before, during and after the counselling session does not present a problem but they need to understand that they need to maintain primary concern for client welfare when using overt prayer within the professional counselling process. At the *counsellor/client level*, prayer and spirituality should not be used as a “substitute for professional competence”³⁶ but may assist counsellors in understanding and utilizing their client’s spiritual resources. The proviso for this is that counselors should not impose their own values on their clients but remain non-judgmental, non-intrusive and non-offensive. So, when non-religious counsellors encounter religious client and/or religious counselors encounter non-religious clients, counsellor self-awareness is an ethical obligation³⁷. At a *counsellor/supervisor level*, consistent competent supervision is required to maintain counsellor awareness and to assist the counselor in the management of appropriate therapeutic boundaries³⁸.
- *Informed Consent* is essentially a contract between a professional counsellor and the client. As such, the contractual legal elements of offer, acceptance and consideration apply. This implies that the purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, limitations, risks and benefits of the therapy should be understood and

accepted by the client and that the counsellor’s qualifications, specializations and competencies³⁹ are known. In their application of these principles to religious interventions, Hunter and Yarhouse have extended informed consent to include:

- Disclosure of religious views /cultural/spiritual diversity
- Assessment of client’s openness to religious interventions
- Newness of the modality
- Availability of other options

Coppock *et al*⁴⁰ have suggested that professional counsellors who anticipate the use of prayer should maintain a professional disclosure statement that a) includes reference to prayer in their informed consent, b) makes sure that their client are aware of their personal values and beliefs regarding prayer, and c) explains how they plan to use prayer in the counselling session. After describing a case study in the use of prayer in therapy, Abernathy *et al*⁴¹ decided that its use was ethically correct because:

- The prayer was consistent with the clients’ faith traditions.
- The terminology was adapted to fit the clients (i.e. referring to God as Jehovah).
- It focused on positive aspects of the client’s relationship, such as unconditional love.
- The prayer had a practical purpose – to bring Jamal and his aunt together.

In this case the prayer was appropriate but on a wider front, obtaining informed consent for the use of prayer in professional counselling is ignored at one’s peril.

- *Assessment*. Cashwell and Young⁴² suggest that assessment should be completed before counsellors “risk entering into a practice without the knowledge of how prayer will affect the client and counselling

34 The following is a summary of Coppock *et al* - T.E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham. Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.5. Retrieved 20 August 2013.

35 T.E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham. Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.6. Retrieved 20 August 2013.

36 P.S.Richards and A.E.Bergin (1997) *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy*, APA, p.203.

37 T.E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham. Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.9. Retrieved 20 August 2013.

38 P.R.Magaletta & P.A.Brawer (1988) Prayer in psychotherapy: A model for its use, ethical considerations, and guidelines for practice. *Journal of Psychology and theology*, Vol.26, No.4, pp.322-330.

39 American Counsellor Association, *Code (A.2.b)*, ACA.

40 T.E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham. Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.7. Retrieved 20 August 2013.

41 A.D.Abernathy, T.R.Houston, T.Mimms & N.Boyd-Franklin (2006) Using prayer in psychotherapy: Applying Sue’s differential to enhance culturally competent care. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, Vol.12, No.1, pp.101-114.

42 C.S.Cashwell & J.S.Young (2011) *Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Counselling: A Guide to Competent Practice (2nd Ed.)*, ACA, p.250.

relationship". Canda⁴³ has suggested three conditions that must be considered if prayer is appropriate:

- the client is interested or assessed as likely to be interested;
- a spiritually sensitive relationship has been established and the practitioner has assessed the client's spiritual and religious background; and
- the practitioner is qualified with well-developed spiritual self-awareness. Assessment could also include the significance of the spiritual/religious dilemmas to the client's issues⁴⁴.

Assessments can be assisted by asking "religious questions" in the client intake form and enriched by further discussion with the client. Further, the way

in which the prayer is understood by the client can be assessed by reference to developmental theories such as Erik Erikson's *Stages of Life*⁴⁵ or Fowler's *Stages of Faith*⁴⁶ to ascertain the effect of the prayer on the individual. It may be that the clients whose faith journeys best described by Fowler's Stage 1 "Intuitive-Projective" or Stage 2 "Mythic-Literal" may confuse a counsellor's prayer as "God speaking" or place the counselor in a position of increased power.

Supervision. Coppock *et al*⁴⁷ stated that when counsellors use prayer in professional counselling, it is "an ethical imperative" to enter into supervision or consultation with another professional counsellor with appropriate expertise and use tools such as Bernard's *Discrimination Model*⁴⁸. The *Discrimination Model* focuses on intervention skills required after consideration of:

- the way that the assessment of readiness is conducted;
- conceptualization skills which concentrates on the supervisee's ability to assess the client
- the working relationship with the client;
- the maintenance of theological consistency between the spiritual belief system and the preferred counselling theory⁴⁹;
- personalization skills where the supervisee is challenged to consider spiritual self-awareness.⁵⁰

As well as supervision, Russell and Yarhouse⁵¹ suggested that professional training be conducted to facilitate:

- the discussion of religion and spirituality;
- an examination of recent trends, models of incorporation of religion and spirituality as a diversity variable;
- training in cultural diversity;

43 E.R.Canda (1990) An holistic approach to prayer for social work practice. *Social Thought*. Vol.16, No.3, pp.3-13.

44 E.W.Kelly (1995) *Spirituality and Religion in Counselling and Psychotherapy: Diversity in Theory and Practice*, ACA, p.131.

45 E.H.Erikson & J.M.Erikson (1987) *The Life Cycle Completed*. Norton.

46 J.Fowler (1981) *Stages of Faith*. Dove Communications.

47 T.E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham. Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.16. Retrieved 20 August 2013.

48 J.M.Bernard (1997) The discrimination model. In C.E.Watkins (ed), *Handbook of psychotherapy supervision*, Allyn & Bacon.

49 P.J.Polanski (2003) Spirituality in supervision. *Counselling and Values*, Vol.47, pp.131-141.

50 T.E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham. Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.16. Retrieved 20 August 2013.

51 S.R.Russell & M.A.Yarhouse (2008) Training in religion/spirituality within APA accredited psychology predoctoral interships. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, Volume 37, Number 4, pp.430-436.



- how to form alliances with members of faith communities.

Swindle⁵² suggested that prayer can be a positive part of counselling but that psychologists and counselors must be educated on the topic.

CONCLUSION

“Prayer Ministry” used by TPM, Elijah House, Freedom House and other organizations using similar approaches remains outside the ambit of professional counselling. However, there is a place for prayer in professional counselling providing issues of self-awareness, assessment, informed consent and supervision are appropriately addressed. There have been a number of codes that have been developed for using prayer in counselling but the one that is consistent with this discussion is the one developed by Coppock *et al*⁵³. They recommend that counsellors who intend using prayer in counselling:

- Be aware of self in terms of beliefs about prayer and its use in counselling as well as being able to explain why they are opting to use prayer at this time with this client;
- Have training in the use of prayer in counselling;
- Obtain informed consent from the client in a way that informs the client of the purpose and the use of prayer, how it will be done, its potential benefits and possible harm;
- Do an assessment both their own and the client’s views/values of the prayer that is to be used in counselling;
- Be supervised or be in consultation with someone who understands the potential benefits of using prayer in counselling.

■ Drs Peter and Genevieve Milnes live and work in Perth, WA. Genevieve is the National President of Christian Counsellors Association and heads up a team of counsellors at her clinic in Mt Lawley, Psychology Australia. As a Clinical Psychologist she works with all areas of mental health. Peter is a pastoral counsellor, and historian in indigenous education and government policy. Peter and Genevieve are both theologically trained and worked with missions in Brazil for 8 years.

52 K.L.Swindle, (2008) *Using Prayer in Professional Counseling*. www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/writing_center/files/sample_sixth_edition_APA_Paper.pdf, p.7.

53 .E.Coppock, S.Huss, A.M.Gleason, K.E.Carney & S.Garnham. Ethical Guidelines for Prayer in Counselling. www.hsu.edu/~pic/documents/EthicalGuidelinesforuseofprayerincounselling.pdf, p.16. Retrieved 20 August 2013



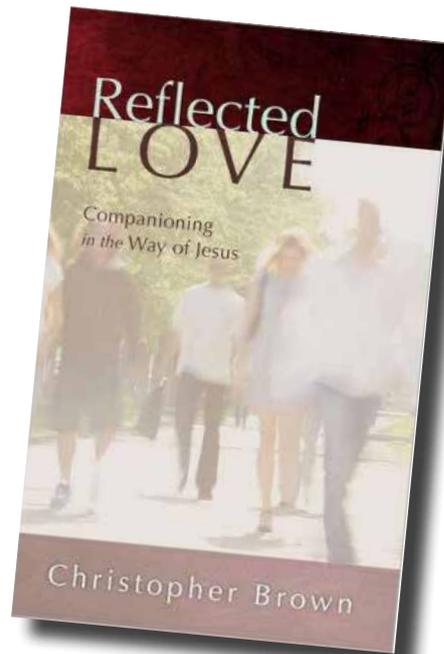
Reflected Love

*“Those who find themselves in the fires of affliction, I will make nourishment for others” This favourite quotation is meaningful to me as it illuminates an incarnational truth – the resurrection – with its movement through pain and death to new life. Brown’s book, *Reflected Love* describes a gentle, respectful and honest integration of spiritual truth with counselling practice, a process he describes as “*companioning in the Way of Jesus*”.*

If your heart’s desire is to seek out for yourself or become for another a spiritual companion who can highlight the presence and action of Jesus in your life, this book is for you. Within its pages Brown describes how companioning another (as counsellor, supervisor, spiritual adviser or teacher) is about creating sacred space and igniting shared awareness of the action of God within. This awareness allows insights which become transformational in our understanding of self and others. Brown’s writing instils in me a deep desire to watch for the presence and action of Jesus, to make the inward journey not for the purposes of introspection but so I might offer safe passage for another through understanding the journey myself. Through the twelve descriptive chapters of his book, I am invited to look at my everyday experience through the lens of God’s present action in this moment. Sub-titled “*Companioning in the Way of Jesus*”, and structured around the parables of Jesus and four companioning conversations, Brown’s skill as a story-teller weaves conversation and spiritual teaching together in a way that brings in-depth understanding to each parable.

Understanding that a safe space and facilitated reflection on inner awareness create moments of insight, Brown provides questions to draw out and illuminate this awareness. “What is it that is in front of you that would be useful to attend to in our time together?” communicates a respectful invitation to focus on what is of greatest importance at the beginning of a session. Further questions invite exploration of what is emerging in the present moment as feelings find words and connections are made between past and present experience. Never interpreting experience for the other, companioning means being a midwife/observer to what is unfolding, gently facilitating the other as feelings are birthed.

Birther feelings connect us to inner pain, and from where



do we find the answer to the problem of human pain? It is transformed when we are companioned by one who can “hold hope in the face of despair”¹. Having created a safe context for encounter through manifesting a calm, gentle, attentive and attuned presence, companions ‘move with’ as those they companion move forward towards and through the place of pain. Companioning means helping the other to be attentive to what emerges, confronting the pain and stepping back only when there is a deeper knowledge of God. Holding hope in the face of despair is made possible to the extent to which we understand pain is transformational when it deepens our understanding of our acceptance by and security in God.

What would it take for me to make the journey inward, without flinching from the pain? Strategies employed to maintain avoidance of pain deplete our very soul, and with great understanding Brown uses storytelling to acquaint us with these false guardians of vulnerability. In my reading of this book, Brown gently brings to my understanding that I, too, am a wounded healer, with permission to enter into the Presence of Jesus, to be made secure, comforted, equipped and inspired not only that I may offer the same nourishment to those I journey with, but because I too am His beloved child.

In reading Brown’s book, I am invited to ‘taste and see’ the action of God, and to experience the goodness of the One who holds in perfect tension grace, truth and mercy.

Reviewed by Dominie Nelson - Editor, CCAA Journal, Counselling Connections Across Australia

¹ P.27

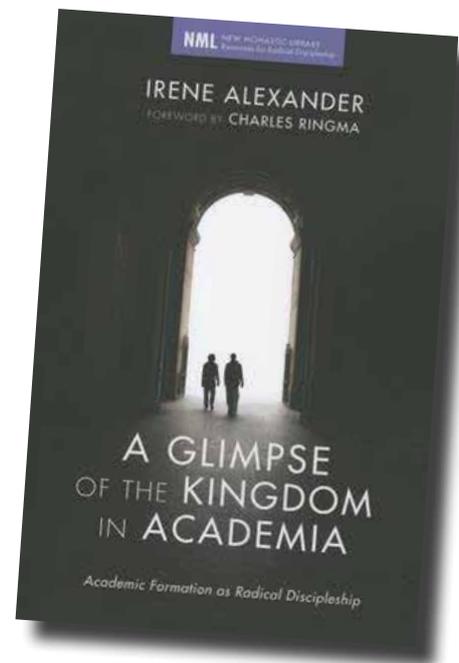
A Glimpse of the Kingdom in Academia

Academic Formation as Radical Discipleship

“Christian educational institutions have a 2000 year history of bringing together learning and faith. What shapes our actions is our spirituality”. How does transformation occur – it’s always in the context of relationship. Alexander’s inspiring book unpacks the journey of transformation and the process of becoming, identifying along the way to steps towards mature knowing. The carefully crafted narrative powerfully integrates the growth of spirituality within the learning environment with the emphasis not on knowledge but on ways of being.

Counsellors bring who they are, their ways of being to every counselling session. We counsel from who we are, perhaps more so than from what we know. The emphasis is on relationship as we bring together who we are, recognising our individual ‘ways of being’ and fostering our connectedness - the deepening relationship between us. Using a 3-sided pyramid as an illustration point, Alexander unpacks three ways of knowing – separate knowing, which relies on scientific rigour, relational knowing which allows us to become aware of our patterns of relationship, self-perceptions and personality, and inner knowing. Relying on our ability or willingness to become self-aware inner knowing matures as we become able to differentiate our emotional states from those of others, to ‘be with’ ourselves in emotional pain, and to tolerate and empathise with the pain of others without the reaction of needing to fix or solve. Critical incidents within relationship become means of knowing self more deeply and of understanding others more completely. Ultimately, wisdom relies on bringing together these different ways of knowing.

Issuing an invitation to another way of seeing, another way of being, Alexander places self in the greater context of God’s story. Opening the imagination to see with the eyes of faith enlarges our capacity to be in relationship and participate in community. As we relate to the One who knows and loves us completely, our transformation brings a greater capacity to pass on this love and acceptance to others. If the ultimate purpose of an ethical education is creating the capacity for connectedness then accepting the invitation to participate in the processes of transformation via relationship can only enhance our journey of becoming. Alexander’s book is relevant not only to those who work in the educational context, but for those who desire to make a difference in their work context or community, those who serve



as guides in the process of spiritual formation, and for those who desire a richer knowledge of self. As counsellors we will find within the pages a deeper and richer understanding of how we may more fully connect to and transform self and others within the context of relationship.

Reviewed by Dominic Nelson.

Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Christian Approach (Second Edition)

Many students and new graduates in counselling will be familiar with a book Jack Balswick co-authored titled *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (2005) which presents an integrated view of human development based both on social science research and Biblical theology. The second edition of another of the books he co-authored - *Authentic Human Sexuality* - allows Jack Balswick to take the ideas he formulated in *The Reciprocating Self* and integrate them into his original 1999 text on sexuality. This book is co-written with his wife, a marriage and family therapist and lecturer in that area at Fuller Seminary and she brings much practical knowledge and experience to the text.

Authentic Human Sexuality, as the preface explains, is divided into four parts, the first two of which move through from an examination of the origin and formation of sexuality, to looking at authentic sexuality and an examination of relationships, singleness, and healthy intimacy. Part three examines inauthentic sexuality – exploring much of the world that we as counsellors encounter and the final section explores the ‘importance of developing societal structures capable of promoting and sustaining authentic sexuality’ (p.9).

Jack and Judy Balswick examine sexuality in a refreshing and uplifting way. While factual, the book also touches many sensitive issues around sexuality; while Christian, it does so in a way that allows a width of thought and beliefs in the areas; while integrative, it allows space to look at issues that pervade our society that aren’t easily addressed; while counselling orientated, it allows a depth of theological response to the topics discussed.

The major areas of change in the text from the first edition, in addition to updating thinking and references around sexuality, are around Jack Balswick’s innovative theological concepts laid out in *The Reciprocating Self*. These involve an examination of sexual relationship from a Trinitarian theological viewpoint (i.e. the theology of both particularity and relationality alongside the concept of reciprocity) as well as an examination of

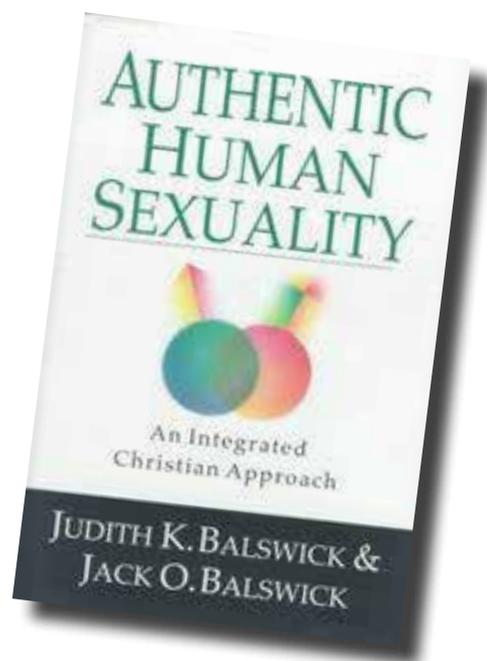
sexual development throughout the human lifespan.

The strength of *Authentic Human Sexuality* is in the new material to this edition which encourages a counsellor to think at a deep level about the place of sexuality in God’s creation as it applies to all our lives and our society. Its limitation is that many chapters, particularly in Part Three, appear to just scrape the surface of the topic. As an experienced counsellor, I longed for these chapters on sexual harassment, sexual abuse, rape, pornography and addiction to go deeper and wider than my present thinking and knowledge.

This book is a worthy addition to all Christian counsellors’ bookshelves and an excellent read for students and new graduate counsellors. I, for one, am eagerly looking forward to next year’s CCAA conference when we hear more from these two authors on this topic.

Balswick, Judith K. & Balswick, Jack O. (2008). *Authentic Human Sexuality: an integrated Christian Approach*. Second Edition. Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press.

Book Review by Helen Miller - Helen is a lecturer at Morling Baptist Theological College in Sydney as well as an individual, couple and relationship counsellor of some twenty years’ experience.



Brave Enough

*Ah! Precious Lover of Lovers
How choice to lie in Your embrace
Shamelessly ravished
Such unspeakable intimacy
Limp I lie in ecstasy's postlude
Listening to Spirit's whisper
Filling me, telling me
Be brave enough
to come again*



Karen J Gibbs (c) May 2012

Phil Henry's Valuable Contribution

Since 2000 Phil Henry has invested himself wholeheartedly into our Counselling profession, giving large quantities of his time, resources, commitment and passion.

Phil joined CCAA on the Queensland State committee in June 2000 as Treasurer whilst still studying his Masters of Counselling at Christian Heritage College. Alongside his role as Treasurer, he became the CCAA National Council Representative and PACFA Rep in 2003.

In 2005 he also added the CCAA Membership Officer to his repertoire. In 2006 he became Queensland President for CCAA as well as being the State Treasurer, Membership Officer, NC Rep and PACFA Rep. In 2008 he handed over the Membership role and from then to date he has remained as State President, Treasurer, National Council Rep and PACFA Rep.

During his years as a CCAA National Council Rep from Queensland (since 2003), he has fulfilled the roles of Secretary, Ethics Chair and PACFA Rep. Currently he holds the roles of National Vice President, National Secretary and PACFA Rep.

Whilst serving as the CCAA PACFA Rep (since 2003), he has held roles as PACFA Treasurer, Ethics Chair and Board Member.

CCAA Queensland is deeply appreciative of Phil's significant and long term investment, not only in our own lives, as friend and colleague, but also as a key advocate for professional and ethical Christian Counselling in Queensland and Australia.



Sue Viney OAM, M.Ed. (Counselling & Development)

Following the CCAA Conference, Sydney 2001, Sue was instrumental in forming and subsequently leading CCAA Tasmania for 7 years.

After 30 years as a teacher Sue had gained her Masters in Counselling and Development and took a position as School Counsellor at Calvin Christian School, developing and implementing a Peer Support and Grief and Loss program for students as well as a broad based Primary sex education program, which was later refined and published nationally.

She wrote many articles for the national 'Nurture' Parent magazine and has presented at conferences both nationally and internationally. Sue has long been involved with the Girl Guides Assn., using her Counselling expertise to support and help in many ways and has lectured at Tabor College Tasmania in Counselling for the past 10 years. Sue has used her skills and talents in mentoring, church, community settings and Spiritual retreats, while more recently working with individuals and groups to assist new Aged Care residents to make the

difficult emotional and physical adjustments in transitioning to full time care.

In 2011 the Governor General recognised Sue and husband Rod's contribution to the community, awarding them both an OAM for their many years of service to the Tasmanian community.



Dr Willem Boereê

An Acknowledgement of Significant Contribution to CCAA(SA)

AN ARTICLE BY DR WILLEM A. BOEREÊ

Dip. C.D., B.A., M.A. (Counselling), M.A. (Psychology & Counselling), Ph.D.

BACKGROUND

On 25 January 1997, Dr John H. Court wrote a letter, addressed to three people, in which he stated that he had requested a print-out from the Christian Counsellors' Association (Vic) detailing its then membership listing. According to the said print-out, there were only four people in SA who were members of the Christian Counsellors' Association (Vic). Discussions with other Christian Counsellors' Associations in other states, namely WA and NSW, revealed that their membership listings contained no members from SA. In light of these factors, Dr Court proposed two steps: first, that a Christian Counsellors' Association be formed in SA and, second, that a National Body draw closer to international colleagues such as the American Association of Christian Counsellors.¹

That inauspicious beginning became the catalyst in the formation of a Christian Counsellors' Association in SA. Dr Court issued another letter on 4 June 1997 in which he reported that he had received an excellent response to his earlier letter. Accordingly, he proposed that an inaugural meeting be held on Sunday, 20 July 1997, at Trauma-Care, 134 The Parade, Norwood, between 2.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. Dr Court suggested that the meeting might facilitate discussion on the formation of an Association in SA with a view of exploring ways in which such an Association might relate to the rest of the counselling profession and offer, by way of education to those who were Christian Counsellors, a means of support, net-working, skills training and a referral base.²

The inaugural meeting is indelibly etched upon my mind because I had just returned from a two weeks' visit to my late father in Holland who was, at that time, dying. I was, therefore, significantly jetlagged and my beloved

wife was kind enough to drive me to the meeting. Nevertheless, I am so glad that I did attend that meeting because it was very successful. I still have a copy of the minutes for anyone who would like to see them. One of the wonderful things to come out of that meeting was a clear indication that Christian Counsellors here in SA definitely wanted an Association to belong to and work with. For that reason, a Steering Committee was elected on the day which consisted of: Dr John Court (Chairman) Dr Ivan Atkinson, Dr Willem Boereê, Rev. Peter Bean, Mrs Raylene Thompson, Mrs Jill Steele and Mr Peter Orr-Young. Mr Orr-Young became the Association's first treasurer.³

The first meeting of the Steering Committee took place on 7 August 1997 at Tabor House, 9A Wheaton Avenue, Plympton SA. During this meeting, some precedents were laid down which are still followed even to this present day. One of those was that the Association have, as its primary emphasis, the importance of ongoing professional development. In fact, the first Professional Development meeting was set for 29 November 1997 and the topic was "Counselling Victims of Sexual Abuse." The two keynote speakers on that day were me and Mrs Lois Wakelin. It was also decided that the Association's first Annual General Meeting would take place on 15 March 1998.⁴

At the first Annual General Meeting, which took place on the date aforementioned, the Steering Committee was formally dissolved and the members elected the Association's first Committee which consisted of: Rev. Peter Bean (President), Mr Peter Orr-Young (Treasurer

and Secretary) and four Committee Members, namely: Mrs Lois Wakelin, Dr Willem Boereê, Dr Ivan Akinson and Mr Graham McDonald. From that time onward, the Association's growth has neither been spectacular on the one hand nor stagnant on the other hand, but steadfast, remaining true to the original vision of providing a Professional Association for Christian Counsellors.⁵

Since that time there have been several significant movements within the Association which have had a profoundly positive effect on it. First, following a Committee Retreat held in December 2006, the Association embraced what it believed to be the heart of counselling, namely a deep emphasis on the importance of relationship.⁶ Second, true to the original vision of the Steering Committee, the Association has continued to provide ongoing professional development in terms of Professional Development Meetings, Seminars and Workshops. Gradually, the standard of these forms of presentation has improved and it would be fair to say that the Association can be duly proud of the calibre of both its speakers and the topics which are offered to the membership.

WILLEM'S INVOLVEMENT

Period	Details
1997-1998	Steering Committee Member
1998-2001	Committee Member
2001-2004	President
2004-present	Committee Member and Chairman of the Membership Committee

Acknowledgements

- 1 Letter from Dr John H. Court, dated 25/01/1997
- 2 Letter from Dr John H. Court, dated 04/06/1997
- 3 Minutes of the CCASA Inaugural Meeting, dated 20/07/1997
- 4 Minutes of the first CCASA Steering Committee Meeting, dated 07/08/1997
- 5 Minutes of the first CCASA Annual General Meeting, dated 15/03/1998



Maureen Ireland

I would like to endorse Maureen Ireland as an inspirational leader of CCAA Victoria. Over a period of thirteen years her faith and warm personality have led the way as the Association has developed. Maureen's first contribution was as convenor of the Professional Development Committee and after that she became leader of the Accreditation Committee. In 2004 Maureen was elected to the role of President. Since that time her various areas of skill and experience have been greatly valued by the Executive and the wider membership.

One highlight of Maureen's role as President has been as a member of the National Committee as Chairperson of Training, Ethics and the National Conference. Another highlight was her leadership when Victoria ran the 2011 National Conference in Melbourne. Her encouraging manner and willingness to "roll up her sleeves" and help with the many practical problems led to a smooth and successful conference. It was at this time that Maureen

did the initial research for the History of CCAA. She made special mention of her supervisor and trainer, Rev Bruce Redrop, who played a large part in the formation years of CCAA in the 1980's.

As well as strong academic foundations, Maureen brings a positive base of Christian faith and hope. Her faith is demonstrated in her concern for students, both in her teaching role at Tabor College and her ongoing counselling supervision and support. Speaking for the Executive, we have appreciated the open welcome into Maureen and Garry's home, her Christmas parties in July and her random thank you notes and small gifts just when encouragement was needed.

For myself I thank her for her smile, her prayers and her friendship.

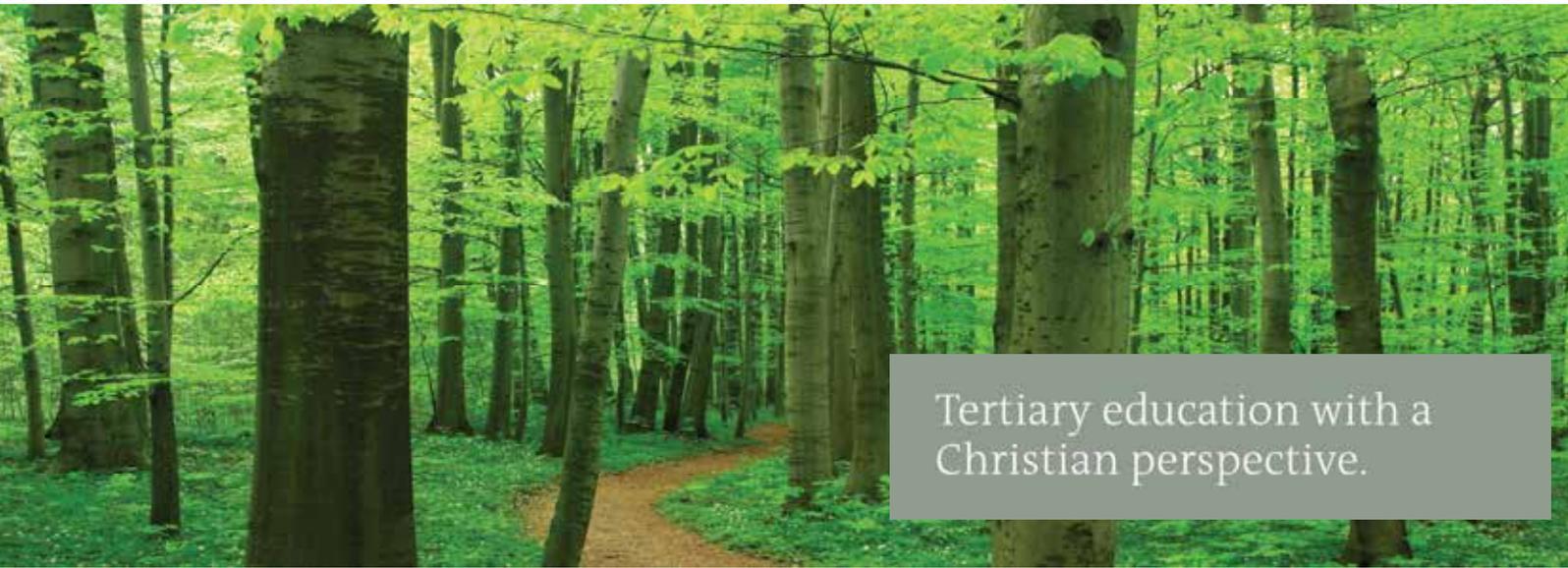
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