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ARTICLES

Journal of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work

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Social Work and Christianity (SWC) is a refereed journal published by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) to support and encourage the growth of social workers in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice. *SWC* welcomes articles, shorter contributions, book reviews, and letters which deal with issues related to the integration of faith and professional social work practice and other professional concerns which have relevance to Christianity.

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ARTICLES

JUSTICE, NOT CHARITY: SOCIAL WORK THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH

Nicholas Wolterstorff

This article argues that justice should be the basic category for those who look at social work through the eyes of faith. After developing the definition of justice, the article briefly explores how taking justice as the basic category will differ from taking obligation, love, or freedom as the basic category. The article examines some implications of this perspective for social workers.

I: What is the Charter of Christian Social Work?

FROM NEAR THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY, THE SPEECH OF JESUS in Matthew 25 about the Great Assize, as it was traditionally called, has been seen as the grand charter of Christian social work.

Though I'm sure the passage is familiar to all of you, let me refresh your memory by reading it, using the translation of the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). It is my judgment that at two crucial junctures, the NRSV mistranslates the Greek; but let me get to that later and read the translation as it is. You might well ask why I use the NRSV translation if I judge that it is a mistranslation. My answer is that every other translation currently available mistranslates the Greek at the same two points.

> When the Son of Man comes in all his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say

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> to those at his right hand, "Come, you that that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?" And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25: 31-46)

I share the view that this passage can be seen as the grand charter of Christian social work—provided that it is rightly interpreted. English-speaking people of the modern world, however, almost always misinterpret it. They interpret Jesus as talking about charity, and they understand charity to be pitted against justice. They understand Jesus to be saying that in practicing charity toward the unfortunates of society, we are treating Jesus himself with charity. I find it beyond reasonable doubt that the passage is not about charity, but about justice. Jesus is saying that to fail to treat the naked, the hungry, the imprisoned, and so forth with justice is to wrong Jesus himself.

The context within which those who heard Jesus would have interpreted his words was, of course, the Hebrew Scriptures. So let me begin my argument for how the passage should be interpreted there. The writers of the Old Testament speak often about justice. And, as many commentators have noted, one of the most striking features of their talk about justice is that the presence or absence of justice in society is regularly connected with the fate of the widows, the orphans, the aliens, and the poor. Some or all of the members of this quartet regularly get special attention when justice, *mishpat*, is under consideration in the presentation of the original legal code, in the accusations by the prophets of violations of the code, and in the complaints of the psalmist about violations.

The Quartet of the Downtrodden and Excluded

There is nothing remotely like this mantra of the widows, the orphans, the sojourners, and the impoverished in John Locke's discussion of justice in his *Second Treatise*. The sort of justice that preoccupied Locke was the violation of a person's rightful liberty. For Locke, there was no differentiation in the rightful liberty of a person, no matter what sort of person that he or she might be. Nor is there anything remotely like this mantra in the discussions of justice by Plato and Aristotle, or in that by Kant.

Let me cite just a few passages from the many that could be found in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 24:17 Moses enjoins the people, "You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge." In Deuteronomy 27:19 the priests call out, in a ritualized cursing ceremony, "Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice"; to which the people say, "Amen." In Isaiah 1:17, the prophet says

> Seek justice,
> rescue the oppressed,
> defend the orphan,
> plead for the widow.

And in 10:1-2 he excoriates those

> who make iniquitous decrees,
> who write oppressive statutes,
> to turn aside the needy from justice,
> and to rob the poor of my people of their right,

that widows may be your spoil,
and that you may make the orphans your prey!

The widows, the orphans, the resident aliens, and the impoverished were the *bottom ones* in Israelite society, the *low ones*. That is how Israel's writers spoke of them. Whereas you and I tend to use the metaphor of a circle and to speak of such people as outsiders or on the periphery, Israel's writers gravitated toward the metaphor of up and down. These people are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Israel's writers regularly describe rendering justice to them as "lifting them up." Given their position at the bottom of the social hierarchy, they were especially vulnerable to being treated with injustice—vulnerable to being "downtrodden," as our older English translations have it, vulnerable to be excluded from community. They were *the quartet of the downtrodden and the excluded.*

The Aim of Justice

A question we all want to ask is why Israel's writers placed so much emphasis on the downtrodden and the excluded when talking about justice. You will find a number of explanations in the literature—as indeed you will find attempts by some writers to overlook or deny that there is any such emphasis. On this occasion I will have to forego engaging the alternative explanations and simply present my own.

Israel's writers were not indifferent to attacks on the person and property of well-to-do persons and those who enjoyed social esteem; I could cite a number of passages to this effect. So that is not the explanation. Rather, it is the following. It is a truism that for any society whatsoever, those with the least social power and esteem are the most vulnerable to injustice, and hence the ones most likely actually to be suffering the most grievous forms of injustice. The basic reason for that is the following. Robbery and assault are *events* or *episodes* in the lives of the wealthy or empowered. If the robbery is of a wealthy person, the robbery is an episode in a life that otherwise is usually going quite nicely. By contrast, it is probable that the *daily condition* of those without power and esteem is unjust. Widows are also victims of burglary and assault; episodes of injustice often occur in their lives too. But in addition to such episodes, the *condition of their daily existence* is all-too-often unjust. Injustice pervades their lives in a way that it typically does not for those at the social top.

Now add to this realization the aim or concern underlying discussions of justice and injustice in the Old Testament. These discussions occur in the context of a variety of different aims and concerns. One's aim in conducting such a discussion might be to set forth the basic social structure of a fully just society. Or it might be to discover the social and psychological causes of one and another kind of injustice in some actual society. Neither of these theoretical aims would require special attention to the plight of the vulnerable low ones in society.

But suppose that one's aim is the practical aim of advancing the cause of justice in one's society. Suppose the context of one's discussion is the struggle against injustice. Then one has to make priority judgments. One has to decide where the greatest injustices and greatest vulnerabilities lie in society and focus attention there. I suggest that it was because the orientation of Israel's writers was practical rather than theoretical that the quartet of the downtrodden and excluded ones looms so large in their writings. What they say about justice and injustice occurs within the context of an imperative that they had heard from Yahweh and that they then announced to their fellows: seek justice, undo the bonds of injustice. Israel's religion was a religion of salvation, not of contemplation—that is what accounts for the mantra of the widows, the orphans, the aliens, and the poor. It was not, be it noted, a religion of salvation *from this earthly existence,* but a religion of salvation *from injustice* in this earthly existence.

The Aim of Jesus to Do Justice

Now look once again at the passage on the Great Assize with which I began. Jesus speaks in the passage of being hungry, thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick, and imprisoned. It is of course the impoverished who are typically hungry, thirsty, and naked. So we can condense the list to the poor, the alien, the sick, and the imprisoned. It's hard not to see this as a variation on the Old Testament quartet of the downtrodden and excluded. The only item that might raise a question in one's mind is the sick. Everybody, it may be said, gets sick. Yes indeed. But not all who are sick get no visitors. The sick Jesus has in mind are the lonely sick, the forgotten sick.

Now let me bring another well-known New Testament passage into the picture. Shortly after he began teaching and preaching in public, Jesus attended the local synagogue on a Sabbath and was

invited to read from scripture and comment on what he read. "The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him," says Luke who tells the story. "He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written":

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
> and recovery of sight to the blind,
> to let the oppressed go free,
> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus then "rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down." "The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him," says Luke, expecting him to say something. What Jesus then said is that "today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:17-21).

What are we to make of this self-identification? Well, the first thing to note is that in his report of what transpired in the synagogue, Luke conflated two Old Testament passages, one from Isaiah 58 and one from Isaiah 61. The former speaks of God's demand for justice:

> Is this not the fast that I choose:
> to loose the bonds of injustice,
> to undo the thongs of the yoke,
> to let the oppressed go free,
> and to break every yoke?
> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
> and bring the homeless poor into your house;
> when you see the naked, to cover them,
> and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
> (Isaiah 58:6-7).

The latter passage promises the deliverance and restoration of God's people by the anointed one:

> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
> because the Lord has anointed me:
> he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
> to bind up the brokenhearted,
> to proclaim liberty to the captives,

and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God. . . .
(Isaiah 61:1-2)

The import is unmistakable. Jesus identified himself in the synagogue as God's anointed one, the Messiah, whose vocation it is to proclaim good news to the poor, the blind, the imprisoned, the oppressed—in short, whose vocation it is to proclaim that justice for the downtrodden and the excluded is on the way. Isaiah's examples of the downtrodden and the excluded are somewhat different from the standard Old Testament examples of widows, orphans, aliens, and the poor, just as Jesus' examples in the speech about the Great Assize are somewhat different. But there can be no doubt that the examples in each case are illustrations of those who are typically downtrodden and excluded. And there can be no doubt that the Old Testament writers and Jesus regarded the lifting up of the downtrodden and the incorporation of the excluded as the first priority in the undoing of injustice and the bringing of justice.

Righteousness or Justice?

We are now at a place in our discussion where I can point to the mistranslation in the NRSV translation of Jesus' speech about the Great Assize. Let me say, once again, that the NRSV is not peculiar in this regard; to the best of my knowledge, every English translation that is currently available in bookstores mistranslates the Greek in the same way. I am not "picking on" the NRSV; overall, I judge it to be the best of our contemporary English translations.

Jesus addresses those at his right hand and says that they fed him when he was hungry, gave him something to drink when he was thirsty, and so forth. What the NRSV calls "the righteous" then ask, when did we do this? And the entire passage concludes with the statement that those on the Lord's left hand will go away into eternal punishment whereas "the righteous" will enter eternal life. My contention is that the English word "righteous," twice occurring, is a mistranslation of the Greek. The Greek word is the adjective *dikaios*. In both cases, the Greek adjective *dikaios* should have been translated with our adjective *just*. It is the *just* who ask when they did what Jesus says they did; it is the *just* who will enjoy eternal life. The just receive this reward for they did exactly what

Jesus and the Old Testament say justice requires; they sought to undo the condition of the downtrodden and the excluded.

I am assuming that justice and righteousness are not the same thing, and that to be just and to be righteous are not the same. Righteousness is a personal character trait; justice is a normative social condition. The righteous person is the one who has the personal character trait of righteousness. The just person is the one who struggles to bring about that normative social condition which is justice. I concede that the Greek word *dikaios*, in the linguistic milieu of the New Testament, could be used to mean either what our word "righteous" means or what our word "just" means; it was ambiguous in that regard. I should add at once, however, that our word "righteous" acquired negative connotations somewhere along the line, and those connotations would not have been part of what was meant by *dikaios*. Our modern English word "upright" comes closer to catching the meaning of *dikaios* than our word "righteous."

In any case, since *dikaios* could mean either *upright* or *just*, context has to determine how we translate its occurrences in the New Testament. Given the context that I have presented to you, there can be no doubt that Jesus in Matthew 25 is talking about justice, not about justice-blind or justice-transcending charity. The story of the Great Assize is not about charity but about justice. Jesus is not saying that in treating his downtrodden and excluded brothers and sisters with charity, we treat him with charity; he is saying that in rendering justice to them we render justice to him, and that in treating them unjustly we treat him unjustly. Jesus calls these people the "least." To wrong the social least is to wrong Jesus himself.

Justice or Charity?

I began by saying that the Matthean passage about the Great Assize has long been taken as the grand charter of Christian social work. I said I agreed with that tradition, provided the passage is rightly interpreted. The passage, so I have now argued, is about justice. It says that to alleviate the condition of the social least is to render them what justice requires. It is not to go beyond justice into the realm of charity and benevolence; it is to render to them what justice requires. To fail to come to their aid is not simply to fail in charity or to be less than fully righteous. It is to wrong them. And the passage gives a truly awesome significance to wronging

them: to wrong the social least is, whether one realizes it or not, to wrong Jesus Christ himself.

To take this passage as the grand charter of Christian social work is thus to take justice as the fundamental category for such work. Not everybody that the contemporary social worker deals with fits under the categories of the downtrodden and the excluded. Some are victims of natural disasters, some are victims of disease, and so forth. Perhaps not all the poor that Jesus and the biblical writers spoke of were downtrodden. Some may have been the victims of natural disasters. This inclusion, however, does not cloud the issue. The fundamental question that the social worker asks in each case is: what does justice require?

II: The Rights of Creatures Made in the Image of God

What is justice? On this occasion I must be extremely brief in my answer to this question. Everything I say could be developed at length and in detail, and are, in fact, developed at considerable length and in considerable detail in the book I have just finished, which I call simply *Justice*.

My impression is that most Americans today, when they hear of justice, think of *meting out* justice. They think of retributive justice. A good rule of thumb for listening to our politicians is that if the politician is talking about justice, assume that he or she is talking about prisons. Some Americans, when they hear about justice, think a bit more broadly than this; they think about the justice system in general. They think not only of meting out justice, but also of what precedes that, namely, rendering justice in cases of conflict and determining whether an accused is guilty of the accusation.

To equate justice in general with either meting out justice or with rendering judgment is a serious mistake, however. Meting out justice and rendering judgment deal with what justice requires when injustice has occurred or when someone charges that it has occurred. But if meting out justice and rendering judgment become relevant when injustice has occurred or is said to have occurred, then there has to be another kind of justice and injustice than that of meting out justice and rendering judgment. There has to be that kind of justice which has been violated or is said to have been violated. There has to be that kind of justice which has broken down or is said to have broken down. Call that kind of justice 'primary justice'. Only when primary justice has broken down or is said to

have broken down do rendering judgment and meting out justice enter the picture.

Primary Justice Involves Rights

What I am calling *primary* justice is often called *social* justice. My reason for calling it *primary* is not that I am against calling it social—not at all—but to highlight the fact that this kind of justice is basic. Unless there were this kind of justice, there could not be the kind of justice that apparently most people think about most of the time, namely, retributive justice.

When I said that justice is the fundamental category for Christians in social work, what I had in mind was not only corrective or retributive justice, but justice in general: primary and corrective justice. The social worker will of course attend to the ways in which her clients are the victims both of crime and of the criminal justice system. But she also will go beyond that and seek to render to them primary justice.

And what, in general, do I take justice to be? Justice has to do with rights. Justice is present in social relationships insofar as people are enjoying what they have a right to. The dark side of enjoying that to which one has a right is being wronged; to be wronged is to be deprived of that to which one has a right. Thus we could also say that justice is present in social relationships when no one is wronged. You may recall my paraphrase of what Jesus says in the Great Assize speech: to wrong the social least is to wrong Jesus himself.

In my view, a 'right' is always a right to be treated a certain way by one's fellows—or in the limiting case, by oneself. That's why I said earlier that, in distinction from righteousness (which is a personal character trait), justice is a normative social relationship. It is further my view that one's right to be treated a certain way by one's fellows is grounded in what respect for one's worth requires: if respect for my worth requires that I be treated in such-and-such a way by my fellows, then I have a right to such treatment.

Rights have been getting a bad press in recent years from both Christians and others. Rights-talk, so it is said, reflects a self-centered, possessive, individualistic picture of society in which everybody is always talking about what he or she is entitled to rather than about what they ought to be doing and what the loving thing to do would be. I well remember a dear friend of mine standing up

after a talk I had given in favor of rights and, with quivering voice, saying, "Nick, nobody is entitled to anything; it's all grace!"

But that is mistaken. I acknowledge that rights-talk can be abused and often is abused, but name me the kind of talk that is not abused. The battered wife is abused by the love-talk of those who say she should accept her abuse out of love for her husband; benevolence-talk was abused by the Afrikaners who talked of the benevolence they showered on the workers living in huts in their backyards.

The 'other' comes into my presence bearing claims on how I treat him, and I come into his presence bearing claims on how he treats me for we are both creatures of worth. Rights-talk is for talking about that reality.

Creatures of Worth, Made in the Image of God

And let there be no doubt that we are creatures of worth, all of us. We have been made in the image of God. The psalmist can scarcely contain himself when he thinks about the exalted status that this gives us. Convinced that we human beings have been singled out from all other earthlings for divine attentiveness and love, he asks, "Who are we, that God is thus mindful of us?" The passage is often interpreted as if the psalmist's answer to his question were, "We're nothing, we're worthless, just dirt and dust." That is not the psalmist's answer. His answer is that we are created just a bit lower in the cosmic scale of worth than divine beings, or angels (Psalm 8). The theme is picked up by Jesus at various points in the gospels when he speaks of human worth. "Consider the ravens," Luke reports him as saying, "they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!"

III: Rights and Duties Rather Than Freedom

My discussion thus far is in-house. I have argued that justice rather than charity should be the basic category of the Christian in social work. But of course the main alternative perspectives that you face in doing social work are not alternative Christian perspectives but secular perspectives. I have decided on this occasion to focus on how social work looks through the eyes of faith rather than on how it does *not* look. If I were to analyze the secular alternatives,

what I would argue is that almost all of them, so far as I can tell, operate in one way or another with the ideal of freedom. The goal is liberation, empowerment. I have just read a wonderful book by Joseph E. Davis, *Accounts of Innocence: Sexual Abuse, Trauma, and the Self* (2005). In the book Davis tracks the emergence of the diagnosis of the sexually abused person as the innocent victim of a trauma, with one of the goals of treatment being to get them to accept this narrative of what happened to them. Here is part of what he says in his summary:

> According to the plot of the mediating narrative as it has unfolded in the victim account and survivor story, the pathological secret has been identified, and its effects progressively overcome. The hold of the past on the client has been broken; she has been freed from who she was, freed from the wrong story, freed from encumbering relationships, and has the power to become someone new. (p. 207)

My difficulty with all accounts that take freedom as the basic category is that there are some things that a given person should be freed from and some that he or she should not be freed from, and some things that a given person should be free to do and some that he or she should not be free to do. Thus, freedom and empowerment, though they are often exceedingly important, cannot be basic. Rights and duties, justice and obligation—these are basic.

IV: Focusing on the Worth of the Other

What difference does it make whether the social worker employs rendering justice as the basic category for understanding and directing what she does, rather than, say, the category of carrying out her obligations, or the category of bestowing charity? Employing the category of rendering justice places the worth of the other in the forefront of one's attention. It alerts one to that worth, and to what respect for that worth requires of one. Thereby it also alerts one to violations of that worth, to the wronging of the other. What I have in mind here by 'worth' includes not only the worth we have *qua* human beings—the worth the psalmist and Jesus were speaking about—but also the particular worth we each have: the worth of accomplishment, the worth of character, and so forth.

When thinking of what one is doing in terms of carrying out one's obligations, one does not focus on the worth of the other. One focuses on oneself, the agent, not on the object of one's agency. One focuses on one's own rectitude or guilt, not on whether the object of one's agency is being wronged. And depending on how one thinks of obligation and responsibility, this can be an exceedingly impersonal way of thinking. All too often in the Christian tradition it has been impersonal—especially, I would say, in my own tradition, the Reformed or Calvinist tradition. Responsibility is conceived in terms of conformity to law. One's attention is focused on whether one's own actions and those of others conform to law. That a person or human being has been wronged falls out of view.

When we employ the category of love or charity for understanding and guiding what we are doing we likewise do not focus on the worth of the other—not, at least, if it is the justice-blind love that is regularly recommended by theologians as *agape* rather than the justice-alert love of which, so it seems to me, Scripture speaks. Justice-blind love, agape, thinks not in terms of the worth of the other but in terms of her well-being. It seeks to enhance her well-being. All too often such love or charity comes across as smothering; not infrequently, as oppressive and demeaning.

If I think only in terms of enhancing your well-being and not at all in terms of what respect for your worth requires of me, then I will see myself as justified in imposing all sorts of hard treatment on you provided I think such treatment has the potential of greatly enhancing your well-being. I will torture you if I think torture is likely to save you from hell-fire. One can understand why Hannah Arendt remarked that the problem with Christians in politics is that they love too much. Further, if I see myself as treating you with love, charity, benevolence, rather than with justice, it is not unlikely that I will also think of myself as morally superior, and will expect gratitude for my generosity. It happens all the time.

Do not misunderstand. I am not saying that the category of doing what one ought to do is irrelevant for the social worker, nor am I saying that the category of charity is irrelevant. I am asserting that the categories of responsibility and of charity, when employed without attentiveness to justice, all too often produce distorted, oppressive, and offensive ways of acting. Attentiveness to justice and injustice means attentiveness to the worth of the other and to all the ways in which the other can be wronged. What makes

such attentiveness especially important for the social worker is the discrepancy of power typically present in the situation. It is easy for the social worker to wrong in new ways the already wronged and suffering person.

V: Victims of Injustice Rather Than Unfortunates

Those who insist on thinking of social work in terms of bestowing charity rather than rendering justice will also insist on describing the clientele of the social worker as *unfortunates*; to describe them as downtrodden and excluded would be to think of them as victims of injustice, and thus to give the game away. As I mentioned earlier, some of them are indeed unfortunates. While some are not victims of social oppression or exclusion, they have been assaulted by natural disasters or disease. So let it be conceded that some of the clientele of the modern social worker are unfortunates. Though to fail to make available to them what they need for a decent existence is a rupture in justice, not merely a shortfall in charity, that which makes them needy is not itself a case of injustice. Nonetheless, a striking feature of the biblical writers and of Jesus is how little inclined they are to use the category of the unfortunates when thinking about the needy of the world, and how powerfully inclined they are to use the category of the downtrodden. In their eyes, the needy of the world are in great measure victims of injustice.

Thus justice and injustice operate on two levels in the thought of Jesus and the biblical writers. What I have been arguing up to this point is that Jesus and the biblical writers do not think of rendering assistance to the needy of the world in terms of charity but in terms of justice. What I am now saying is that they do not primarily think of the needy of the world as unfortunates but as victims of injustice.

The implications are as unsettling as they are clear. If it is unfortunates that one is dealing with, one simply treats the victims as justice requires of one. Or in those cases in which technology holds out some promise of forestalling similar unfortunate episodes, one both treats the victims as justice requires of one and promotes the technology. But if one is dealing with victims of injustice, then treating the victims as justice requires itself requires that one do what one can to eliminate the unjust treatment. Hence it is that the

passage in Isaiah which Jesus read or referred to spoke not only of sharing one's bread with the hungry, bringing the homeless poor into one's house, and clothing the naked, but also of loosing the bonds of injustice, undoing the thongs of the yoke, letting the oppressed go free, and breaking every yoke. One not only tends to the victims of injustice but looses the bonds that make them victims.

Attacking Victimizers as Well as Aiding Victims

I trust that I do not have to belabor the implications. Christians in social work will see their task as going beyond aiding the victims of misfortune and injustice to struggling to loosen the bonds of injustice. Rendering justice to the victims of injustice requires going beyond aiding victims; it requires attacking the victimizers—be they individual persons, social organizations and institutions, or whatever. Whether or not one wants to call the struggle against injustice *social work* or something else is of course a purely linguistic matter. In any case, Christians in social work should not only alleviate the distress of the downtrodden, but become their advocates against those who oppress them. Of course the entire Christian community is called to join them in this, but I do think that you who are social workers are peculiarly able, by virtue of your work, to inform, guide, and inspire the rest of us.

VI: The Almost Impossible Position of the Christian Social Worker

I recognize that if what I have been saying is correct, then many Christian social workers will find themselves in an almost impossible situation—and not only Christians in social work but other social workers as well. It appears to me that a good many supporters of so-called *faith-based initiatives* on the part of the federal government are hostile to the employment of social workers by the government. Perhaps the hostility of some is due entirely to the fact that, in their judgment, government does a poor job of social work, while other organizations, in particular faith-based organizations, do a much better job. But it appears to me that there are others for whom that is not the source of their hostility. Even if the government did a better job of social work than any other organization or institution, they would still be opposed to government-sponsored social work. Their reason, so far as I can tell,

is invariably that social work as they see it consists of bestowing charity rather than of rendering justice. They see government as having no business bestowing charity on people. In their opinion, taxing people to bestow charity is, they say, flat wrong. The business of government is justice.

I am in near agreement with that last point, that the business of government is justice—though I feel compelled to add that those who argue in the way I have indicated often seem to have no difficulty whatsoever with the government bestowing charity on the powerful and the wealthy. I do think that government is sometimes entitled to go beyond justice and regulate the life of the citizenry in such a way as to enhance the common good. That exception aside, I agree that the fundamental business of government is justice.

I trust I have said enough, however, to show that the remainder of this argument is flatly unbiblical. The argument turns a blind eye to some of the most fundamental themes in Christian scripture. Social work is not bestowing charity. Social work is rendering justice. It belongs, thus, to the business of government. It does not follow, indeed, that government must itself be the institution that sponsors social work. The argument does require that government must see to it that social work gets done. How it best gets done will differ from time to time and place to place. Here in the United States, the judgment has been that a mix of institutions is best. A good deal of social work in this country is sponsored by the government at one level or another and much of it, possibly most of it, is done by non-governmental agencies.

Can You Challenge the System While Under Its Employ?

And now I can highlight what I called the "almost impossible situation" of the Christian social worker. The Christian social worker, I said, will not be content to come to the aim of victims of injustice but will also struggle to loosen the bonds of injustice and give guidance to the rest of us in behaving and thinking similarly. Unfortunately, the government well seldom be pleased to have its employees speaking out against injustice, unless, of course, it be injustice off in the distance somewhere in Nepal, Uzbekistan, and the like. The government strongly prefers that its employees shut up unless what they say fits with government policy.

My view of the situation is in fact somewhat more cynical than what I have just said would indicate. I think a good deal of what the

government wants out of its social workers is that they will contain the discontent that arises over the injustice of government policies. The Bush administration has not concealed the fact that its tax policies have heavily favored the very rich, that they have shifted the tax burden to the middle and lower classes, and that the number of U.S. citizens living below the poverty line has increased over the past five years. The only official defense it offers for its tax policies is that they, when combined with the administration's spend-and-borrow policy, are necessary for "growing the economy." It should be obvious to all that the administration's tax policies really have nothing whatsoever to do with the state of economy. No matter what the economy does, whether it grows, declines, or remains steady, a tax policy that favors the rich will remain in place.

The big danger involved in advancing such a policy in a democracy is of course that the non-rich, and in particular the poor, will rebel. The unspoken task assigned to the social worker is to insure that that does not happen.

VII: Christians in Social Work Stand at the Near End of a Long Tradition

I want to close by calling attention to something of great importance that I have not done today and that I lack the competence to do. My discussion of social work through the eyes of faith has been entirely synchronic. I have said nothing about the long venerable tradition of Christian social work. And let there be no doubt that it is a long venerable tradition, going back to late antiquity when Christians acquired a reputation for their aid to the poor, through the middle ages when the bishops were responsible for the poor, on into early modern times when orphanages were founded in many European cities, into the nineteenth century when Christians were active in abolition and when the Salvation Army was founded. I have been told by some of you that present-day textbooks on the history of social work pretend that there was no tradition of Christian social work, and locate the beginnings of social work with some secular activists in the 1820s and 1830s. I find this secular bowdlerizing of the history of social work academically irresponsible and morally reprehensible.

One of the most important contributions that the historians among us can make to Christians in social work is telling the

story accurately, and as part of that accurate telling, recovering the memory of the tradition of Christian social work. You who are Christians in social work today may sometimes feel that Christian reflections on social work are only beginning. What that story would show is that, far from that being the case, you stand at the near end of a long and rich tradition. Knowing that tradition could not fail to inform, inspire, and encourage all of us in our attempt to uncover and describe how social work looks when seen through the eyes of faith. ❖

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Editor's Note

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An Elephant in the Sanctuary: Denial and Resistance in Addicted Christians and Their Churches

Kenneth M. Stoltzfus

This article examines denial and resistance in Christian churches in relationship to Christians who experience addictions. The article is heuristic in nature, as it is based on the author's clinical experience treating addictions within the Christian faith community. The scope of the article is confined to forms of denial and resistance which are uniquely expressed through Christian theology, doctrine, or culture. The first section of the article discusses the issues of the church as a whole and the second section examines resistance and denial among individual Christians struggling with substance dependence. Interventions that treatment professionals can use to impact the church's attitudes about addictions are proposed and suggestions for interventive strategies with Christians who experience addictions are offered.

When working with troubled families, helping professionals have been known to allude to the fact that "there is an elephant in the room, but no one will acknowledge it." This phrase, of course, indicates that there are obvious issues which are troubling the family, but no one within the family will recognize or address these issues.

Unfortunately, this same problem often exists within the Christian "family," the church. For a variety of reasons, our churches often fail to recognize and address their corporate issues and those of individual members. Addiction to drugs and alcohol is one such "elephant" that the church often fails to address, as evidenced by recent research conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) which indicates that seminary programs do not prepare clergy to understand and address the issue of addiction (2001).

This article is a heuristic attempt to understand the problem of

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addiction in the church. Recent research suggests that faith plays a protective and ameliorating role in regard to addiction (Johnson, Kristeller & Sheets, 2004; Hodge, Cardenas &Montoya, 2001; CASA 2001), but little has been written about the unique issues with which addicted people of faith struggle. In order to practice in a culturally competent manner, it is necessary to understand the unique struggles this population may face. Given the current dearth of research regarding this issue, this article draws from my clinical experience of working with addicted Christians and their churches to suggest categories for the unique problems faced by addicted Christians and intervention strategies geared specifically toward this population.

Many Christians seem to believe that people of faith simply do not suffer from addiction or that, if they do, their faith makes it easy for them to be cured. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. My clinical experience has shown that Christians are susceptible to addiction and that they are often more difficult to treat than other clients because of faith-based denial and resistance.

In addiction treatment, we often speak of "resistance" and "denial" when discussing difficult clients. For the purpose of this paper, denial will be defined as the failure to recognize or admit to a problem. Denial can be conscious, but it is often an unconscious defense mechanism. Our psyches know intuitively that change is a difficult, demanding process, and so avoid the admission of a need to change.

Resistance, on the other hand, may involve a failure to participate effectively in addressing and resolving an issue. Kottler (1992) defines resistance "as whatever the client does, deliberately or unconsciously, to prevent, circumvent, or otherwise block the progress of therapy" (p. 6). Resistance can take a variety of forms; some clients subtly resist change through false compliance and by pretending that change is taking place, while others are overt in their refusal to work toward problem resolution.

This paper will apply the terms resistance and denial to the behavior of many Christians and their churches regarding the issue of drug and alcohol dependence. This paper will also explore the etiology of resistance and denial on the part of both churches and addicted Christians, as well as discuss interventive strategies Christian therapists may utilize in confronting these issues. For the sake of clarity, I have separated the issues of the church from

those of the individual Christian. However, it should be noted that this boundary is fluid. The issues of both entities are inextricably entangled; in fact, the issues of one are often an extension of the issues of the other. It should be noted as well that the scope of this paper is confined to forms of denial and resistance unique to Christians and the Christian Church or those instances of denial and resistance which gain new forms of expression through Christian theology, doctrine, or culture.

Macro-level Issues: Manifestations of Denial and Resistance in the Church

One might logically expect the church to be deeply committed to the cause of assisting drug-addicted clients to achieve wholeness and freedom. Indeed, in recent years, some churches have developed quite effective models of support and accountability for addicted believers. For example, Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California developed Celebrate Recovery, a program intended to deal with a variety of life- controlling issues. Recent reports indicate that 7,500 people have participated in the program since it's inception in 1991 (Perry, 2004). Also, the National Association for Christian Recovery (2004) reports the emergence of "recovery churches" designed specifically for those seeking freedom from addiction.

Unfortunately, these efforts remain the exception, rather than the rule. In many churches the issues of addicted people are either ignored or mishandled by well meaning clergy and parishioners. The reasons for the frequent failure to effectively address the issue of addiction within the church include denial in the church, faulty theology, distrust of the therapeutic process, and a tendency to engage in enabling behaviors.

Denial in the Church

Denial occurs when a church refuses to believe that addiction is an issue that its parishioners and local community members are dealing with. Given that recent surveys indicate nearly 10% of the population of the United States struggles with addiction or substance abuse, churches are naïve to believe that the problem does not affect their members (Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Unfortunately, this belief is common in many churches, as evidenced by Royce and Scratchley's (1996) description of a study in which "91

percent of the clergy saw a need for alcohol programs in the nation, but only 40 percent saw a need in their own congregation" (p. 97).

An excellent example of church-based denial occurred as I was speaking to a group of ministers in a small town in rural Pennsylvania where my agency had a satellite office. During the course of the presentation, one of the ministers made the comment that "the worst thing you have to deal with in our town is some heavy drinking."

There were two causes for alarm in this statement. The first was related to the pastor's idea that "hard drugs" had not yet found their way to his town. In fact, his town had been the focus of numerous newspaper articles on severe heroin problem over the previous two to three years. In one well-publicized incident, a popular student from the local high school had died of a heroin overdose at a party with many other local students. Somehow, this pastor had come to believe that his town did not *really* have such a problem.

The second, and perhaps more alarming, issue here was the pastor's belief that heavy alcohol use was not a very serious problem. Susan Davis, a nurse practitioner and respected trainer in the field of addictions, noted (while leading a training seminar) that anyone who doubts the toxicity of alcohol in comparison to "harder" drugs such as crack cocaine and heroin, should reflect on the in-utero effects of these drugs. Davis went on to make the point that infants whose mothers drank alcohol heavily during pregnancy tend to suffer far more serious health problems than those whose mothers ingested cocaine or heroin regularly (2001).

Unfortunately, denial is common within the church. In fact, denial within the church (the Christian "family") seems to mimic that of families of addicted people, who are often convinced that no one in the family could suffer from an issue such as addiction. It has become fashionable lately to state from the pulpit that church is the place for hurting, imperfect people, but it is imperative that churches begin to take the next step and identify the specific hurts and imperfections among the people who have taken them at their word. When they do so, they will no doubt find themselves confronted by the issue of addiction in their congregation.

Instant Delivery Theology

Churches that do acknowledge the problem of addiction among their members may struggle with faulty theological as-

sumptions about the nature of healing from addiction. One of the more common theological errors is the belief that God is likely to instantaneously heal the addicted person. This assumption of instant delivery is problematic, of course, because such healing is highly uncommon.

The Jesus Factor (1977) discusses the experiences of David Wilkerson (hero of *The Cross and the Switchblade* and founder of the Teen Challenge addiction treatment program) regarding this very issue. Wilkerson found that Christian conversion did not instantly heal drug and alcohol addiction, as he had initially expected. Wilkerson had been leading drug-addicted gang members to Christ, and almost immediately involving them in his ministry. Unfortunately, but predictably, these young people quickly returned to drug abuse. Wilkerson then founded Teen Challenge to offer guidance, support, spiritual instruction, physical safety, and vocational training to his new converts (1977).

Wilkerson had stumbled onto the paradox that God, although capable of accomplishing miracles without human involvement, nearly always chooses to work through people. When we think about it, we realize that this has been the case most of the miracles described in the Bible. The Israelites were to mark their door frames with blood to ensure that the angel of death passed over their homes. The Red Sea did not part until Moses struck it with his staff. The sacrifice on the altar prepared by Elijah during his struggle with the priests of Baal did not ignite until the prophet prayed. Surely, God knew who the Israelites were when the Red Sea needed to be parted, and which sacrifice to ignite. However, on each occasion, people were the conduit for the miracle. It is no coincidence that in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul states, "the God of Peace will soon crush Satan under *your* [emphasis mine] feet" (Romans 16:20, New International Version). Why not under the feet of the risen Christ? We are left with no choice but to recognize that God usually chooses to work, even to work miracles, through human action.

It is important to understand the reason for this phenomenon as it relates to drug and alcohol treatment. God realizes that it is vital for those who are attempting to escape the bonds of addiction to struggle at times during their recovery. To better understand this statement, consider the case of a human parent whose child is recovering from a physically disabling injury. Although the child's

first steps in physical therapy may be painfully difficult, the child will not recover if the parent spares him the pain of the rehabilitation process by carrying him. In the same way, God wisely chooses not to completely resolve the crises of the addicted person who comes to faith. Rather, God allows the person to struggle through the pain of learning to live without substances, in order to develop the personal strength and interpersonal relationships necessary to remain clean and sober.

The miracle, then, includes the people whom God brings into the life of the recovering addict in order that they may offer support. When listening to the testimonies of people who have come out of addiction, they are nearly unanimous in citing the intervention of other humans who walked beside them through the difficult early days. God, as a relational deity, usually chooses to work miracles through human relationships.

Unfortunately, the very fact that instantaneous delivery is merely uncommon, but not impossible, is a stumbling block for many churches. There is anecdotal evidence that a few people have been successfully delivered by an act of God. Wilkerson found that this happened occasionally (1977), but not often enough to eliminate his need to establish Teen Challenge. Many churches will talk boldly of believing a miracle will occur for an addict, but do little in the way of human intervention or support to allow it to happen. In fact, the odds of a miracle are often linked to a person's strength of faith, with the implication that the addicted person is not strong spiritually, or perhaps not a true Christian, if the miracle does not occur. Sadly, this often leads someone struggling with addiction to abandon his or her church contacts out of shame that his or her faith was not strong enough to generate a miracle.

The same phenomenon may occur in churches' dealings with terminally ill parishioners, as the failure to receive a miraculous cure may be attributed to a lack of faith on the part of the sick person. Shamed, the patient may break off contact with the church, thereby losing a much-needed source of support. The important point here is that we need to recognize God's ability to bring about instant delivery, while also living in the reality that the vast majority of Christians who have experienced significant recovery from addiction have engaged in a long-term process of healing which involved supportive relationships with other people.

Theological Concerns Regarding the Treatment Process

Some churches' theological resistance goes even further than that discussed above, to the point where organized attempts at human assistance (e.g. therapy, AA, hospitalization, etc.) are vilified as humanistic and evil. Peteet (1981) described this as "group pressure" which results in "a religious group…more or less actively discouraging members from entering treatment" (p. 560). The premise that Christians should not be involved in treatment is usually expressed in some variation of the following statement: "counseling (or therapy, psychology, psychiatry, AA, etc.) is man's attempt to save man. The Bible is clear that God alone acts redemptively."

Addiction treatment, however, is not aimed at providing redemption, but rather fulfills the biblical injunction to "bear … one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2, King James Version). Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *Life Together*, notes the necessity of this ministry of "bearing" to the development of a true Christian community (1954).

Therapy is a temporary source of burden-bearing for addicted clients, as the therapist provides support while the client develops new relationships and rebuilds relationships weakened by the effects of addictive behavior. Indeed, most therapists take the view that they are "working themselves out of a job" with each client, in that the goal of treatment is usually for the client to move toward receiving an increasing amount of support from non-professional sources. Thus, addiction treatment is most correctly viewed as a supportive, time-limited intervention, rather than a humanistic attempt at redemption.

Enabling Behaviors within the Church

A final source of resistance within the church springs from the idea that no specialized training is necessary to deal with addicted people. Thus, churches frequently take up collections for people in early recovery and turn over the money with "no strings attached," only to end up financing a substance binge. This is not to condemn charity, but rather to encourage churches to consult with a trained professional in determining how to be of assistance to addicted people.

Churches need to be aware that any financial assistance *should* have strings attached. If it does not, we are creating a parallel universe for the addicted person to live in, one which does not correlate to the real world in which responsibility is necessary to

reap rewards such as money, housing, and transportation. One of the fundamental principles of addiction treatment is the need for the addicted person to feel the consequences of his or her behavior. The Twelve Step Fellowships refer to this as "hitting bottom." It is unconscionable for the church to provide enough support to enable an addicted person to live in abject misery just above his or her "bottom," but never able to reach bottom and begin the desperate climb back to health.

Macro-level interventions

At the risk of oversimplification, the root cause of denial and resistance within churches seems to be a lack of knowledge and/or insight. Most pastors and lay leaders (i.e. the policy-makers within churches) are generally well-meaning people who devote a large amount of time to serving others. Most, I believe, want to see people who are struggling with addiction or similar life-controlling issues find healing. However, many pastors and lay leaders are rendered ineffective because of a lack of knowledge and insight into the problem of addiction.

In light of this, the primary intervention for use in resolving macro-level issues of denial and resistance within churches is education. However, in many cases, churches are closed systems and education will not be possible unless a relationship is first built between the addiction treatment professional and the church. The following paragraphs will discuss frameworks for removing barriers to dialogue between treatment professionals and church leaders.

Renunciation vs. Self-actualization

On the surface, it would seem as though helping professionals and churches would have a great deal in common. Many pastors learn basic counseling skills and utilize them in a variety of ways in pastoral counseling situations, such as dealing with the loss and grief which surrounds the death of a parishioner, conducting premarital counseling of engaged couples, and overseeing lay counseling programs within the church. On the other side, helping professionals are increasingly trained to recognize the need of many clients to work toward spiritual as well as emotional health.

Unfortunately, there is often a divide between the church and helping professionals. Paul Tournier (1968) summarizes this

divide by discussing the common view that the Church calls for renunciation of self in the pursuit of Christ, while helping professionals lead clients toward self-actualization. Christian helping professionals sometimes feel trapped between these seemingly divergent goals, as they may feel that they are attempting to serve two masters (1968).

Tournier, however, goes on to state that what appears to be a divide is not really one at all, but actually opposite sides of a circular pattern. Tournier states that Christ calls those who have a place (be it physical, emotional or spiritual) away from it in the pursuit of the kingdom. Those who do not have a place are given one. However, those who are called away from their place are led by Christ to a new place. Tournier goes on to explain that the process of therapy and the Christian life are remarkably complementary, as the Church's function is often to lead those who have a place toward renouncing it for the sake of Christ, while the therapist helps those who do not have a place to find one.

The Need for Common Ground: Avoiding the Sin vs. Disease Debate

The debate as to whether addiction is a sin or a disease can ruin potential partnerships between churches and treatment professionals. In short, churches tend to identify addiction as a sin, while treatment professionals (and Twelve Step fellowships) often refer to it as a disease. This leads to a debate as to where responsibility for the problem lies. The "sin" side of the debate believes that the disease model allows addicts and alcoholics to avoid taking responsibility for their actions. Proponents of the disease model, however, point out that the sin model can induce shame in an addicted person and lead to further substance use in order to anesthetize these feelings.

In dealing with this debate, it should be pointed out that there are no "winners' in such arguments. It is very unlikely for one side to set aside a long-held belief and embrace the other side's understanding of the problem. The answer, then, is to avoid the debate by focusing on the commonalities between the two beliefs. Sin model proponents who are concerned that addicted people may use the disease model to escape taking personal responsibility for their actions will be pleased to hear that the Twelve Steps (the intervention of choice for most disease model proponents), strongly encourage accountability and personal responsibility. Twelve Step

participants are instructed to be accountable to a "sponsor," someone with at least a year of successful recovery who will help guide the participant through the steps and the challenging early stages of recovery. The language of the Twelve Steps themselves encourages responsibility taking. Step 4 requires the addicted person to take a personal inventory of all past behaviors which were contrary to personal beliefs. Step 5 requires that the inventory be shared with God and another person. Steps 8 and 9 require that amends be made to all injured parties. Indeed, there is a level of personal responsibility here that could shame many churches. The "cheap grace" which Bonhoeffer describes as plaguing the modern church does not exist within the Twelve Steps (1959, p. 44).

Disease model adherents, on the other hand, may find some comfort in the realization that the church often discusses sin in disease-like ways. The church understands sin to be progressive, passed from generation to generation, and fatal. Certainly, these descriptions fit well with the disease concept of addiction.

It is also helpful for disease model adherents to understand that the Christian solution to sin is not the judgment or shame they fear could be harmful to the client: rather, it is the empowering notion that all have free access to redemption through belief in Christ. In healthy churches, sin is seen as a sort of common denominator among Christians. All have sinned, thus all are in need of a relationship with Christ and membership in his body on earth, the Church.

Those holding divergent views as to whether addiction is a sin or a disease may also find common ground in comparing the process of Christian conversion with the Third Step's requirement that addicted people make "a decision to turn our lives and our will over to the care of God as we understood him." The difference, of course, is in specificity. AA's purpose is to offer people of all faiths (or no faith) the opportunity for sobriety. Thus, the language is as non-specific as possible. On the other hand, the Church's goal is often to bring non-Christians to faith in Christ.

The Twelve Steps' vague description of God (often referred to generically as one's "higher power" within the Twelve Step fellowships) is often a problem for Christians, as many are uncomfortable with programs which lead followers to personal renewal without leading to conversion. However, Tim Stafford (1991) and Phillip Yancey (2000), in separate *Christianity Today* articles, remind the

Christian community that the Twelve Steps were developed by Christians and are based on biblical principles. Both authors conclude that Christianity and participation in Twelve Step programs are not mutually exclusive.

It also should be noted that coming to understand God's nature in the non-specific terms of the Twelve Step programs may be a precursor to Christian conversion. George Sayer, in his biography of C.S. Lewis, reports that the great author believed that a similar process could occur for children who read his *Chronicles of Narnia.* Sayer relates:

> His idea, as he once explained to me, was to make it easier for children to accept Christianity when they met it later in life. He hoped that they would be vaguely reminded of the somewhat similar stories that they had read years before. "I am aiming at a sort of pre-baptism of the child's imagination." (p. 318)

The same process may occur for the addicted person who participates in a Twelve Step recovery program. What begins as a skeptical commitment to follow a vaguely spiritual recovery program may blossom into a relationship with the living God.

In avoiding the sin vs. disease debate, I recommend that practitioners point out the similarities between the two sides. I especially would encourage early discussion of the emphasis the disease model places on addicted people taking responsibility for their own recovery. The *Christianity Today* articles may also be helpful in enlightening church leaders as to the origin of the Twelve Steps and the commonalities the Twelve Steps share with Christianity.

Micro-level Issues: Resistance and Denial within the Individual

I will now discuss manifestations of addiction and denial in individual Christians who are struggling with substance dependence. Again, the scope of this discussion is limited to issues of denial and resistance related to Christian faith and theology. It is likely that Christian clients will also experience the more universal forms of denial and resistance common to all addicted people; however, these are outside of the scope of this paper.

Faith as Irresponsibility

It is sad, but true, that American Christians have a tendency to use faith as an excuse for irresponsible behavior. For example, while celebrating the Christmas holidays with my wife's family, an out-of-state relative informed the family that he had driven 15 hours with little rest. He went on to describe adverse weather conditions during part of the trip, during which visibility was so poor that he could barely see. He then stated: "I was just praying to God to get me through."

While innocuous on the surface, the mentality that faith is an escape for those who choose to behave irresponsibly is demeaning to God and to our faith. It also trivializes the experiences of those Christians who really have been miraculously delivered by God. In this case, our relative should have stopped driving until he was properly rested and could see well enough to navigate his vehicle. Instead, he put himself and others at risk by continuing to drive. This is not to say that God, in his grace and mercy, does not sometimes choose to rescue all of us from poor decision-making. The question, instead, is should we Christians feel empowered to make irresponsible decisions (such as driving while tired and unable to see properly), simply because we are Christians? The answer, of course, is "no." Christianity is a call to greater responsibility, not less. At the core of this scenario is the sin of testing God capriciously, the very sin with which Satan tempted Christ on the walls of the temple, saying, "if you are the Son of God… throw yourself down" (Matthew 4:6, NIV). Satan then (mis)quoted scripture to imply that a divine rescue would be forthcoming if Christ did jump from the temple walls. Christ, of course, refused to use his relationship with God as an excuse for irresponsible behavior.

The temptation for an addict to use faith to justify irresponsibility is an ever-present danger, as one of the hallmarks of addiction is irresponsible behavior. When this tendency is combined with a faith perspective which views God as a means to escape the consequences of such behavior, the results can be frightening. I once treated a client who was in early recovery from heroin addiction. He was on probation and had signed a consent form allowing me to exchange information with his probation officer. At one point in his treatment I received a call from his probation officer, who stated that the client had relapsed and had been instructed to inform me about the relapse and to work on this in therapy. During

the next session, the client failed to tell me about the relapse. With a few minutes remaining in the session, I mentioned that I had spoken with the probation officer and that I did not want to end the session without addressing what he had told me. The client looked dumbfounded for a short time. Then, rather dramatically, he stated, "Oh, I know what you are talking about. I shot a bag of dope [heroin], but praise God, I didn't get high. That is how much God has healed me, I didn't feel anything." Here was a whole new level of denial, based specifically around Christian faith.

Two points of interest sprang from this experience. First was the sudden realization that the miraculous, supernatural powers of God provided my Christian clients with the potential for a whole new realm of denial which logical, cognitive-based interventions were hard-pressed to refute. The very principle of belief in supernatural phenomena, which is foundational to Christianity, could be perverted to allow an addicted Christian to justify irresponsible behavior.

The second realization I came to that day was that I was susceptible to this type of denial because I was employed by a Christian program and open about my Christian faith with my clients. I faced what Bruce Narramore (1994, p. 251) describes as "the Christian therapist's dilemma." Narramore expresses this dilemma in the following question:

> If we believe that our clients will not be able to grow unless they modify some of their defenses, and if some of those defenses are strongly tied up in Christian faith, how can we help our patients see the defensive, maladaptive way they are using faith without undermining that faith (p. 251)?

I also realized that it was unlikely that my client would have used his argument in a secular setting: in all probability he would have been laughed out of the room. In fact, Narramore (1994) points out that "some Christian patients choose Christian therapists precisely because they assume a Christian therapist will play along with their spiritualized defenses" (p. 253).

Vertical Religion

Addicted people in early recovery, or contemplating abstinence, are often resistant to involvement with non-substance abusers. It is common for addiction treatment professionals to hear comments

such as, "I just can't relate to those people" when they suggest involvement with Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous, a church, a civic organization, or other potential sources of social support.

Fear of being judged is often a reason for resistance to participation in such groups. Many addicts expect that people who have never abused substances or who have been successfully abstinent from substance abuse for a significant length of time will view them as weak, criminal, or morally bankrupt. This sense of shame is often a powerful disincentive for involvement with a social support system. In fact, it is not uncommon for addicted people to believe their issues with addiction will be readily apparent, even if they do not disclose them verbally.

Addicted Christians are often more resistant to developing social support than their non-Christian peers. While the reasons listed above apply to Christians, they are compounded by the fact that many addicted Christians believe that they do not need social support. They have bought into a "God and me" theology which states that their relationship with God is all that is needed. Alan Keith-Lucas refers to this type of theology as "vertical religion." (1985, p. 6). Extreme versions of vertical religion may even view depending on other humans for "support" as sinful, believing it indicates a distrust of God and a lack of recognition of the reality of one's relationship with God.

There is much truth within the concept of vertical faith. It is theologically imperative to understand that Christians do have a personal relationship with a living God. Certainly, many have erred on the other side of this issue by allowing personal faith to become merely an undergirding for social or political change, a routine of joyless rituals, an affiliation with an institution. Thus, the Holy Spirit may move in a fresh way to focus individuals or denominations on the need for a personal relationship with God, rather than good works, religious rituals, or church membership. However, Paul Tournier (1968) argues persuasively that fresh moves of the Spirit often evolve into legalistic heresy when people of faith begin to understand part of the truth ("we need a relationship with God") as the complete truth ("all we need is a relationship with God").

Thus, a necessary movement toward focusing on the relational qualities of God has, in many churches, evolved into an unbalanced faith focused on one's relationship with God to the exclusion of human relationships. This evolution has affected addicted Christians

by leading many of them to a belief that a conversion experience and an on-going relationship with God is all that is necessary to be healed of addiction.

This theology flies in the face of the Biblical mandates to "not give up meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25a, NIV), "spur one another on to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24b, NIV), and "carry each other's burdens" (Galatians 6:2, NIV). It also ignores the precedents set by Christ and by the Apostle Paul, who displayed a need for and dependence on other humans. Christ, of course, began his ministry by calling the Twelve Apostles to be co-laborers. During his imprisonment, Paul wrote longingly of his need for fellowship with other believers.

Differentiation from Non-Christians

As mentioned above, addicted Christians tend to view themselves in a different light than non-Christians struggling with life-controlling issues. This differentiation can be very harmful to both sides. The Christian can very quickly come to have a judgmental attitude toward non-Christians in his or her treatment program or within local Twelve Step fellowships. This judgmental spirit leads to a focus on the flaws of others at the very time when it is critical for the client to be focused on identifying and resolving his or her own issues. This leads the addicted Christian to discount the value and wisdom of non-Christians, even though they may have much of value that the Christian needs to hear.

This attitude of superiority is damaging to addicted non-Christians as well, as it is likely to reinforce their belief that Christians are hypocritical and judgmental. These individuals are likely to become more resistant to exploring involvement in the Church and eventual conversion, due to an unwillingness to become like their detractors. In addition, open competition and conflict may break out between these sub-groups unless firm boundaries are established early.

Spiritualizing

Christians struggling with addiction may engage in spiritualizing as they search for a purpose behind their painful experiences. Their behavior during the addiction can become, in their minds, an example of God's will for their life. Such ideas are often discussed in terms of a benefit which may be derived in the future from the client's experiences. This benefit is usually related to future involve-

ment in counseling, ministry, or some type of helping endeavor wherein past addictive behavior will provide knowledge, wisdom, understanding, empathy, or insight which will be helpful to others. While the possibility of God using evil actions for good purposes is very real, the Bible is clear that God does not pre-ordain evil. It is important for the addicted Christian to take responsibility for his or her own actions rather than push that responsibility onto God.

This point is important on another score, as well. Failure to recognize and address spiritualizing behavior such as that described above often leads to a type of grandiosity in the addicted person. A number of my clients over the years have stated their intention to become counselors and have implied that they will be extremely effective as such because of their past substance abuse and accompanying behaviors. Of course, for most clients, years of sobriety, education, and personal growth stand between them and a counseling or ministry position. While these are noble future goals, their accomplishment depends on much more than merely having a personal testimony of healing from addictive behavior. These clients are in danger of engaging in what the Twelve Step fellowships refer to as "two-stepping"—completing only the first and last of the Twelve steps (i.e. admitting one is addicted, then taking the message of recovery to other addicts). By doing so, they are avoiding all of the painstaking, soul-searching work which occurs between the first and last step.

Micro-level interventions

If the root cause of resistance and denial at the macro-level in churches is a dearth of understanding and knowledge, at the micro-level it involves the avoidance of discomfort. Here, the addicted Christian is struggling with the same dynamic that hinders his or her non-Christian counterpart. The difference is that Christian faith often provides yet another tool for the addicted person to use in avoiding the discomfort associated with change. Thus, whether the addicted Christian uses faith to excuse irresponsible behavior, adheres to "vertical religion" (Keith-Lucas, 1985, p. 6) in order to avoid accountability relationships, differentiates from non-Christians in order to avoid receiving help from them, or spiritualizes away the negative aspects of addictive behavior, he or she is really trying to avoid the discomfort that comes from working toward

change. Often, the client is not even aware of this behavior, as it is usually an unconscious ego defense.

Micro-level interventions present unique difficulties for Christian therapists working with Christian clients due to the "Christian therapist's dilemma" (Narramore, 1994, p. 251) mentioned earlier. The solution involves entering the client's world by pursuing the therapeutic agenda via Christian principles and traditions. This corresponds to the age-old social work axiom of "start where the client is." This type of intervention is usually well-received by clients, since the therapist is now "speaking their language." As Goldstein, paraphrasing Perlman (1957) states, "the client's problem can only be taken hold of from where he or she stands" (p. 267). Thus, we may use traditional addiction treatment principles, but couch them in the language of Christian scriptures and traditions. Narramore (1994) describes a similar approach to the treatment of mentally ill individuals, wherein "judicial use of alternative interpretations or corrective biblical passages can be a very helpful part of the therapeutic process" (p. 252).

In the following paragraphs, I will share three concepts which may guide addiction treatment work with Christians. I do not claim personal credit for these concepts. One emerged as I prayed silently during an extremely frustrating session with a client. Another came about through the process of naming the ministry by which I was employed during the time I worked with addicted Christians. The third concept came about through a reading suggested by two of my mentors.

The Need to Struggle toward Healing

One of my clients, Juan, was a young man who was in the work-release program of a local county prison. Juan resisted involvement in any kind of accountability or social support relationship outside of treatment, even though work-release prisoners were allowed to attend church and Twelve Step meetings in the community. One of the discharge criteria for our program stated that a client must have developed social support and accountability relationships outside of treatment in order to be successfully discharged. Juan had been in treatment for months and had yet to make any attempts to develop such relationships. Paradoxically, he frequently stated that such relationships were important and encouraged his peers in group therapy to attend church or Twelve Step meetings for support.

Juan had expressed a desire to attend both church and Twelve Step meetings during the treatment planning process. Early in treatment, he stated that he wanted to attend, but was too busy due to his work schedule and being involved in our treatment program. Accordingly, I attempted (on numerous occasions) to help Juan organize his schedule in order to find time to attend church and NA meetings. Unfortunately, Juan continued to report non-attendance. We reached an impasse, wherein all of our sessions began to sound the same, with me discussing the need for support and accountability outside of our program and Juan resisting the need to develop these relationships. As we explored the reasons for Juan's failure to participate in activities which he initially supported, he began to tell me that he felt that these activities were unimportant. He stated that he believed God would not let him fall again. In frustration, I began to pray silently for direction. I immediately remembered the story of the man who was healed by Jesus only after his friends carried him to the roof, ripped it open, and lowered him down.

I shared this story with Juan (I was now speaking his language by talking about God providing healing) and speculated as to whether willingness of the man in the story to do whatever it took to receive healing was applicable to Juan's situation as well. We discussed how Twelve Step involvement or church attendance perhaps would need to be Juan's way of doing whatever it took to put himself in a place where healing could occur.

There is also a strong case for social support within this story. The disabled man did not climb to the roof or rip it open himself, but rather was assisted by friends during his journey to wholeness.

The Need to Submit to the Healing Process

Most of my experience working with addicted Christians came during my employment at the Naaman Center, a Christian-oriented outpatient addiction treatment facility in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. The Naaman Center was founded by a group of Mennonites in the early 1990's with the intent of combining state of the art addiction treatment methods with the Christian gospel. In the process of developing the program, one of the founding board members led a devotion based on 2 Kings 5:1-19, the story of Naaman. The other board members quickly agreed that the story was an excellent metaphor for the process of addiction treatment.

Naaman was a Syrian general who was afflicted with leprosy. He was instructed by a Hebrew slave girl to travel to Israel and seek healing from Elisha, an Israelite prophet. Upon arriving in Israel, Naaman was instructed by Elisha to wash in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman angrily began to leave, stating that there were better rivers in Syria and implying that Elisha was making sport of him. However, a servant convinced Naaman to follow Elisha's instructions and after washing in the river he was healed.

The message for addicted Christians in treatment is that there is a need to submit to the treatment process. Naaman's healing did not come about until he was willing to submit to Elisha's instructions, bizarre though they seemed. The treatment process, with its meetings to attend, relationships to develop, feelings to share, and moral inventories to make, often seems bizarre to our clients. When clients are Christians, they often use their faith to avoid submitting to the treatment process, as described in this paper. It may be helpful with these clients to discuss the story of Naaman. Naaman's story provides a non-threatening common ground with which to explore the difficulty of putting one's fate in someone else's hands, the frustrating experience of following seemingly meaningless directions, and the mysterious ways God sometimes uses to bring healing.

The Dialogue

According to Paul Tournier (1957), therapy is, by its very nature, spiritual, in that it involves a dialogue between persons. Tournier differentiates between the person and the personage, by explaining that the person comprises the true self, or the spirit, while the personage is the outward package shown to the world. Thus, Tournier explains therapy as two spirits connecting, a process which mirrors a relationship with God.

The intervention related to this concept involves creating a space where dialogue can occur with our clients. This can be especially difficult when working with addicted clients, as a culture of mandated involvement in addiction treatment permeates most addiction treatment agencies. This culture leads to power struggles between therapists and clients and prevents the healing dialogue Tournier describes from taking place.

Current trends in the requirements of organizations (such as managed care organizations and governmental agencies) which

oversee and fund addiction treatment also may detract from the ability of treatment professionals to enter into true dialogue with clients. In the search for the briefest, most evidence-based intervention, it becomes easy to lose sight of the individual needs of the client being treated (Glenn, 2003). Thus, we may become guilty of a "cookie cutter" approach to treatment, wherein we do not open ourselves to the possibility of engaging in Tournier's dialogue with our clients.

Many of the methods of creating a safe space for dialogue to occur will be the same, regardless of whether the therapist is a Christian or not. However, the faith of the Christian therapist can provide additional resources for true dialogue which are only available to people of faith. Prayer is one such resource.

I realize that some Christian therapists pray with clients regularly and others feel very uncomfortable with this practice. This is a personal issue and I urge each professional to explore it for themselves. Some therapists may find that praying with clients leads to difficulty in maintaining professional boundaries. Some clients also may attempt to use prayer to manipulate or control a therapy session (Narramore, 1994), while others may be uncomfortable with the level of intimacy created through prayer. Clients must voluntarily participate in prayer, but even when this is the case I do not advocate praying with every client or during every session. However, I have felt moved, at times, to pray with my clients and this often has led to a greater opportunity for dialogue with these clients. I will give two brief examples of the use of prayer in the following paragraphs.

During a session in which a client was verbally attacking me because I had never been addicted, because of my dominant culture status, and because I was not raised in the city, I found myself countering his attacks defensively. At the end of the session, I asked if I could pray for the client and, if so, what I could pray about. He looked shocked and mentioned a few prayer requests, including concerns regarding his mother's health. As I prayed for the client's mother, an unbelievable softening occurred and the client then asked me if he could pray for me. This exchange allowed us to end the power struggle we had been engaged in and to have meaningful dialogue during future sessions.

On a purely human level prayer is a way to join with a client by showing concern, as I have described above. On a spiritual

level, though, it allows access to power of which the client may be unaware. During his first appointment with me, one of my clients (who had been rather defensive and argumentative throughout the session) asked me to pray that he could have assurance of his infant son's safety. (His paramour had taken the child and moved to another state with no notice.) He showed up for his next session with his son, whom his ex-paramour had suddenly dropped off at his house, for no apparent reason. The client was clear in articulating his belief that something supernatural had happened. He was also more willing to talk openly with me than he had been during the first session.

Of course, prayer is not the only way Christian faith creates an atmosphere for Tournier's dialogue to occur. Often, our ability to relate to our clients as God's children, to model God's unconditional love (albeit through a finite, imperfect human lens), and to go beyond what is required in advocating for our clients can be invaluable in creating an atmosphere conducive to dialogue. Indeed, clients who came to the Naaman Center after involvement with other, usually secular, agencies, often commented that there was "something different" in how they were treated. They usually went on to link this with the agency's faith orientation.

Conclusion

Addiction among Christians is often "an elephant in the sanctuary," due to faith-based resistance and denial. This paper has offered strategies for exposing and confronting the "elephant" at both the micro and macro-levels. May God deliver the Church (both individually and corporately) from such distortions of faith which keep us from wholeness and community. ❖

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"Older but Not Wiser": What Custodial Grandparents Want to Tell Social Workers about Raising Grandchildren

Margaret M. Robinson and Scott E. Wilks

Skipped generation families, where grandparents are raising their grandchildren, often without the help of the biological parent(s), constitute a steadily increasing phenomenon in the United States. U.S. Census data reports that six million children are living in grandparent or other relative-maintained households. The purpose of this idiographic study was to obtain information from custodial grandparents regarding issues that they identify as most pressing to grandparent caregiving. A small sample of grandparent caregivers (N=l6) selected from a custodial grandparent support group were interviewed to elicit knowledge regarding perceived critical issues of caregiving. Common themes emerged from the qualitative data including perceptions of a generation gap, health concerns, problems of discipline in the home, and relationship strain with spouses. Implications are discussed for social work practitioners who work with these families within the Christian church.

Skipped generation families, where grandparents are raising their grandchildren, often without the help of the parent(s), constitute a steadily increasing phenomenon in the U.S. These grandparents represent all races, all socioeconomic levels, and all educational levels. While much research has been conducted on caregiving grandparents and their grandchildren, little has sought to understand the needs of these grandparents from their perspective. The purpose of the current study was to seek understanding of the needs of custodial grandparents by providing an outlet for their stories—narratives—to be told, stories relating to their successes, their difficulties, and whether or not their needs can be met through the church and its social systems. As the literature review presents, many factors come together to redefine their world.

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Literature Review

According to the Census Bureau, in 1970, 2.2 million children resided in grandparent-headed households. Thirty years later that statistic vaulted to six million children in grandparent or other relative-caregiver households (Generations United, 2002). Approximately 2.4 million custodial grandparents are responsible for the caregiving of these children (Bryson, 2001). With such a noteworthy increase in this segment of America's population, it is important to develop an understanding from the vantage point of custodial grandparents. A review of recent literature reveals two major issues facing custodial grandparents: health concerns and custody issues. Additional literature included in this review reflects the role of the church and faith as sources of strength and coping among custodial grandparents and caregivers. These grandparents, however, are as varied as the numbers would suggest.

Demographics

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP, 2002) reports that the majority of grandparents raising their grandchildren are between the ages of 55 and 64 with approximately 25% over age 64. According to a survey of more than 3400 participants (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2000), the mean age of custodial grandparents is approximately 60 years. Census data (Lugaiha, 1998) revealed that 6% of American children are living in grandparent-maintained households. Breaking down this population by race/ethnicity results in the following distribution of children in grandparent-maintained households: 13.5% of African American children, 6.5% of Hispanic/Latino children, and about 4% of Caucasian children live with grandparents or other relatives. According to the previously mentioned survey of 3400 custodial grandparents (Fuller-Thomson and Minkler, 2000; Thomson, Minkler, & Driver, 2000), the majority of grandparents raising grandchildren are non-Hispanic Caucasian individuals (62%), followed by 27% African American, 10% Hispanic, and 1% other. A per capita evaluation of grandfamilies, families in which grandparents are primary caregivers (Bartram, 1996), reveals that African American and Hispanic grandparents are more likely to raise their grandchildren than those of other races (Chalfie, 1994; Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, & Driver, 1997). In terms of gender, women are much more likely

to be grandparent caregivers than men (Chalfie, 1994; Harden, Clark, & Maguire, 1997). Aggregate data on socioeconomic status within grandfamilies reveals a significantly higher poverty level compared to parent-headed households, and children in grandfamilies are twice as likely to receive public assistance as other children (Chalfie, 1994; Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, & Driver, 1997; Hardin, Clark, & Maguire, 1997). It is interesting to note that race does not significantly affect the likelihood of grandparent-raised grandchildren receiving public assistance (Casper & Bryson, 1998), suggesting that race and poverty are not necessarily linked among the custodial grandparent population.

Health Concerns

The age of custodial grandparents may explain some of the health problems within this population. Older individuals, aged 55 and over, are more likely to report chronic medical conditions (Solomon & Marx, 2000). When compared to non-custodial grandparents of a similar age cohort, past data show that grandparents raising grandchildren are twice as likely to be diagnosed as clinically depressed (Fuller-Thompson, Minkler, & Driver, 1997). Approximately one-third of American grandmothers, in a study by Minkler, Roe, and Price (1992), reported a worsening of health since they became custodial grandparents. Overall, compared to grandparents in non-custodial roles, numerous studies have documented significantly poorer physical and mental health issues and symptoms among custodial grandparents across all races and levels of socioeconomic status (e.g., Bowers & Myers, 1999; Burnette, 1999; Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, & Driver, 1997; Robinson, Kropf, & Myers, 2000). The unselfish commitment of these grandparent caregivers, with potentially adverse effects upon their health and well-being, is demonstrated in the previously cited Minkler, Roe, and Price study (1992) where the researchers noted that these caregivers, in particular grandmothers, may underreport their health problems in order keep their respective families intact.

For the sake of balance, one should not overlook the positive effects of grandparent caregiving reported by custodial grandparents in the literature. Custodial grandparents have reported perceptions of being blessed, increased feelings of familial love and joy, and a renewed purpose of living in their new custodial roles (Ehrle & Day, 1994; Jendrek, 1993; Kelley & Damato, 1995).

Axmaker (2003) also states that custodial grandparents reported a sense of satisfaction with their role, knowing they are doing what is best for their grandchild, and enjoying providing a sense of family with such statements as "Did you know that your mother once..." Researchers have noted that many custodial grandparents see the grandparent caregiving role not as a burden, but rather, as a normative familial process that is consistent with their cultural beliefs (Kataoka-Yahiro, Ceria, & Yoder, 2004).

Custody

A prominent legal issue facing custodial grandparents is guardianship of their grandchildren (Kropf & Wilks, 2003; Silverman, 2002). A variety of guardianship problems and potential confusion plagues custodial grandparents. In particular, when a grandparent is appointed as a legal guardian, the parents' rights are not terminated; parents remain legally responsible for support of the children (Perez-Porter & Flint, 2000). This continued relationship may lead to role confusion for the custodial grandparent, particularly when a parent fails to provide mandated support. Such confusion and difficulty may be heightened in cases where the parent grants limited authority of the child, e.g., medical and educational decisions, to the grandparent caregiver (Perez-Porter & Flint, p. 136). Everyday decisions regarding the child must often be made quickly, thus allowing little time for discussion among all involved family members. When the parent of the child is inaccessible, the custodial grandparent may be pressured into making a decision while, at the same time, wondering if he or she has the legal role as decision maker in the given circumstance in lieu of the parent.

According to Kropf and Wilks (2003, p. 192), "most grandparents are informal kinship-care providers and often resist moving to a more formal arrangement such as legal custody or adoption." The researchers cited three reasons for this: (1) a distrust of formal legal systems; (2) cultural values [that] may be at odds with public policy; and (3) a fear of tense, divided loyalties among family members. Regardless of whether or not the decision is made to formalize the custodial relationship between grandparent and grandchild, the variety of decision-making capacities facing these grandparents creates difficulties and confusion within the family (Karp, 1996).

Religion, Caregiving, and the Church

Focusing on caregivers in general, earlier studies reported that custodial grandparents found/find a strong religious belief system to be a source of strength and support (Picote, Debanne, Namazi, & Wykle, 1997; Taylor, 1985). Studies of historically disenfranchised families and communities (e.g., low-income African American families and Latino families and communities) revealed that church and religious involvement are important sources of support and solidarity within these populations, particularly for those families who are less willing to seek and utilize other support systems (Brown & Mars, 2000; Cox, Brooks, & Valcarcel, 2000; Pickett-Schenk, 2002; Taylor & Chatters, 1988).

Grandparent caregivers are at an increased risk to experience feelings of isolation and lack of social support (Kelley, 1993; Jendrek, 1993; Minkler, Roe, & Price, 1992). Therefore, these caregivers need additional sources of strength and social support. Churches can play a vital role in offering support sources, e.g., through support groups, pastoral counseling, parishioner and peer-group activities, and other means of social support. Congregations have long been heralded as communities of healing and health (Chang, Noonan, & Tennstedt, 1998; Droege, 1995; Idler & Kasl, 1997).

Previous research has shown that custodial grandparents exhibit a range of needs and issues, from an increase in health concerns, to an increase in social isolation, to concerns about the permanence of their grandchild through custody or adoption. While previous research outlined problems, it failed to discuss the everyday realities of living in a grandparent-headed household. We, however, wanted to capture the stories that had not been told about the day to day issues that the grandparents felt were most important to them, by providing an outlet for their narratives, i.e. stories relating to their successes and their difficulties. We felt that a better understanding of these everyday realities would enhance intervention strategies. The second part of this research was to correlate the difficulties which the grandparents highlighted with services that churches can offer.

Method

A large number of grandparent caregivers, over 60, are involved in a grandparent caregiving project. This project offers social work,

health, and legal services to grandparents raising their grandchildren in a semi-rural area in the southeast. It is funded by the state with Federal dollars under the Safe and Stable Families Act. From this population, a purposive sample of 15 grandparent caregivers and one grandparent caregiver-to-be (N=16) was selected. These grandparents were attending a monthly, custodial grandparent support group. Along with the grandparents, an interviewer and three additional observers were present at the meeting. The first author of this paper is the principal investigator for the grandparent project and was the interviewer. The project director and two BSW interns were the three additional observers for the interview. The interviewer orally addressed ten questions to the sample relating to perceived critical issues of grandparent caregiving. The questions were developed from both a review of the literature and first-hand observation of grandparent caretakers for the duration of this project, which is currently in its seventh year. These questions concerned such topics as the generation gap, discipline in the home, problems at school, and spousal relationship strain. Responses were tape recorded and later transcribed; in addition, notes were taken by the three observers to confirm the information obtained via the recorder.

Results

Generation Gap

One of the main findings was a keen perception of the generation gap between grandparents and grandchildren. One grandparent stated that people used to be able to say, "I know when you have been to your grandparents!" but not any more. Return to a traditional grandparent/grandchild relationship became impossible once the grandparent assumed the role of primary caregiver. Furthermore, the style of parenting that these grandparents had employed with their own children did not work with their grandchild(ren). The issues included both the areas of discipline and the relationship between grandparent and grandchild. Another grandparent, in addressing the differences between her husband's relationship with his children and his grandchildren stated, "The kids knew that their father watched the news at a certain time, but not grandpa….They want to watch cartoons. You can't do grandkids the same way."

Discipline

Discipline was also a problem area. Often, the grandchild(ren) experience difficulty when the grandparent(s) attempts to enforce discipline. In addressing the discipline problems that occur when the child returns from spending time with their biological parent, this grandmother stated that "we have to deprogram them from Mommy and Daddy…They will walk all over you if you let them…. They will retaliate toward the person they know loves them, and you never know what they have been through at home." Adding to these difficulties, the grandparents discovered that outsiders often think that the child will not be disciplined in a grandparent-headed household. One grandparent stated that her child's teacher automatically assumed that her grandchild would be difficult to control because he was being raised by her. Compounding these difficulties are the age and possible ill health of the grandparent, which are difficulties that they will continue to face regardless of the presence of their grandchild(ren).

School

Often the relationship between the school and the grandparent is strained. When a grandparent attends parent/teacher functions, they are often the oldest person in the room and generally far older than the rest of the parents. As reported earlier, statistics put the average age of a grandparent caregiver as 60 (Lugaiha, 1998). In general, we would say that the average age of elementary and middle school parents is probably in the 20-40 range. The age gap between a custodial grandparent and the grandchild's friends' parents only adds to the isolation and parental difficulties that these grandparents feel. Further school difficulties include problems getting the child into school. One grandparent worked for over a month to get her grandchild in school. She did not yet have legal custody of the child, so the school would not allow her to enroll him. Finally, children are learning more complicated information at a much younger age. Their grandparents are often twice removed from any type of school setting, making homework help extremely difficult. One grandmother stated, "Every 25 years is a different type generation." Essentially, grandparents have to learn a new vocabulary to commutate with their grandchild(ren), especially the teenagers.

Lack of Assistance

Counselors, teachers, social workers, and professionals in general often approach grandparent caregivers as if they were wiser parents because they are older. Yet, these grandmothers firmly stated that this supposition is not always the true. As was previously noted, these grandparents are often learning new ways of parenting, especially since many of the grandchildren were psychologically and physically injured by birth parents before they were sent to live with their grandparent. Three grandchildren working with our project have Asbergers's Syndrome. One of these children also has been diagnosed with a bi-polar disorder. Many of our children have ADHD. A few have been sexually abused. One 10-year old grandchild attempted suicide when she began to talk about her abuse.

Grandparents reported struggling to learn new ways of dealing with varying degrees of emotional and physical trauma and receiving little help from others. Many of these grandparents felt betrayed by the foster care system. One grandchild had been in eight foster care homes in one year before he was placed with a grandmother. These grandparents, however, reported that having a counselor for their grandchild and for themselves was very important for the development of a positive relationship with the child. Often the focus has been obtaining help for the troubled child. While we should continue to do so, equal focus should be placed on providing counseling and support for the custodial grandparent.

Spousal Relationship

A final area of reported difficulty is the relationship between the grandparent and spouse, especially if the spouse is not the biological grandparent. Participants reported they once held the expectation of retiring and relaxing with their spouses, yet now felt a major disruption in the home due to their present custodial roles. Additionally, if either one of the grandparent caregivers is not the biological grandparent and/or has never had children of their own, further role strain between the couple can occur. Questions such as "Why do I have to give my retirement up for a child that is not even mine?" begin to cause friction between spouses. This problem is further compounded by emotional issues that may accompany the grandchild. One grandmother, expressing the sentiment of many of the group, stated: "These are angry kids. They

will retaliate against the person that loves them the most, because they have no one else." Several of the grandmothers stated that since their husbands were retired and at home most of the time, they felt like they had three children again!

Discussion

The number of grandparent caregivers in the United States is increasing daily. This family system brings with it some unique needs, among them the need for the instrumental and social-emotional education and support of all members of the family group (Dellman-Jenkins, Blankemeyer, & Glesh, 2002) as demonstrated by the participants in this study. Social-emotional support is important both for the grandparents and the grandchildren. Despite the increasing number of children who live in grandparent-headed households, there may be only one or two such children in a classroom. Due to their different home environments, these children may feel isolated and different. Couple this experience with any feelings of abandonment and you have a lonely, mixed-up child.

The grandparents similarly no longer fit in with their friends who have only teenage or adult children or are in retirement. These custodial grandparents now have parenting duties, Little League, PTA, and after-school child care. Their friends, on the other hand, enjoy trips, television, leisure time, and hobbies. Further, the relationship between the grandmother and grandfather may be strained from unexpected parenting responsibilities and financial hardship.

How can the church be helpful? There is a range of ways that the church and the faith community can be of use to these family systems. The church can provide social outlets and support groups for both the children and the grandparents. Educational groups for the grandparents can serve as an outlet and as a source of parenting information, especially given the difficult emotional needs of many of the grandchildren. As previously stated, the grandparents openly acknowledged that this generation of children is very different than their own. Many felt at a loss when they tried to discipline these children. An ongoing support group that is housed in a church and is either peer-facilitated or led by an MSW would be a great outlet for grandparent caregivers. Many of these grandmothers have not missed any group meetings held in conjunction with our project. Throughout the duration of project, the grandparents in

our monthly support group have developed on-going relationships with each other. In her study of grandparent caregivers, Musit (1998) reports that support groups are very important for these caregivers, given their high stress and anxiety rates.

As noted previously, the marriages of custodial grandparents frequently are distressed. Churches often sponsor marriage enrichment courses for couples. They could also take the lead in offering marriage enrichment courses for grandparents who are parenting again. Intimacy, communication, discipline, time management, and permanency planning are crucial to the successful continuation of the marriage and these families. These groups could be led by professionals within the church or peer-facilitated. It is believed and confirmed by this sample of grandparents that grandparent caregivers prefer to participate in courses that are offered within a church setting or in a setting such as a Council on Aging office. As the number of custodial grandparents within any one church may be small, this may be a project for which several churches may coordinate their resources to better provide support to a larger number of families.

While previous research has demonstrated that the health of grandparents raising grandchildren is frequently problematic (Fuller-Thompson, et al, 1997), these grandparents were more concerned about custody issues related to their grandchildren. One grandparent said they would sell their house if necessary to afford to adopt their grandson. Our grandparents reported additional difficulties with their grandchildren after they had return from staying with their mother and father. This situation requires some type of permanent arrangement for these families. The church could be very helpful in this arena, from having members volunteer their time and expertise to supplementing custodial grandparents' finances with monetary donations. Adoptions, even uncontested ones, can run into the thousands of dollars. Church programs might also offer an educational component that addresses the various forms of custody, describes what is involved in a contested and uncontested adoption, and explains what should be included in a will.

This research was conducted with only a small number of grandparent caregivers. Additional research needs to be conducted. This research should quantitatively and qualitatively ascertain the needs of grandparent caregivers and more specifically how the church and helping professionals in general can be supportive of

them. There are several implications for social work practice within a Christian setting. An intervention model that addresses the range of issues, both social-emotional and educational is important. The model needs to include a multi-focused approach, including counseling, modeling, group interaction, and education about discipline and about custody, adoption, wills. Unless these children are placed in the grandparents' home by the state, they do not always have access to Medicaid, so health issues are very important for both the grandparent and the grandchild. For example, the church could be effective by serving as a clearinghouse of names of professionals who will work at reduced rates. The church is in a unique position to offer help to these families; it is time for a call to action. ❖

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The Black Church as a Practice Resource: Networking on Behalf of At-Risk African American Youth

Wanda Lott Collins

Far too many African American youth from low to working class households are struggling to beat the odds against teenage pregnancy, crime, violence, and substance abuse in the form of alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes, and trauma from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect. This paper proposes that collaborations between social work practitioners and Black churches may be advantageous to at-risk and marginal African American youth. The historical role of the Black church as spiritual custodian and community icon is discussed, several models of youth-based programs in Kentucky are included, and strategies are suggested to maximize collective efforts and common goals among social workers and faith congregations in serving families in need.

Introduction

In the professional literature proactive practices are lauded as a necessary measure to help people a little before things get really bad. Smale (1995) refers to Egan and Cowan's metaphor of *"upstream work"* to conceptualize the idea of rescuing drowning people as an aspect of preventive activity. He cites:

> The life guards jump into the river to rescue first one person, then another, and then another. When the fourth appears they realize that somebody has to go upstream to try to stop these people getting into the water or to find a way for them to get out before they are exhausted (p. 59).

The moral of the story is simple. Develop the vision to spend greater effort in giving people help to solve their problems before the helper and the one helped become overwhelmed with the magnitude of the needs and the strain of the task.

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Sadly, far too many African American youth from low to working class households are struggling to beat the odds against teenage pregnancy, crime, violence, and substance abuse in the form of alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes, and trauma from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect. For purposes of this article, the term "youth" refers to primary, school age, adolescent, and teenage children under the age of 18 years old.

The social work literature reflects that African American youth with vital needs are often coming to the attention of social work practitioners after many are drowning "down stream" (Glikman, 2004; Schmitz, Wagner, & Menke, 2001; Finn & Checkoway, 1998). The seriousness of their plight points to the need for proactive interventions that may serve to mitigate negative influences and provide them with a hedge from damaging life-altering conditions (Hodge, Cardenas, & Montoya, 2001).

Historically, the black church has looked upon African American families as individuals with resources, wisdom, knowledge, and skills. It has been the one institution that serves as a community icon and instills a physical and spiritual foundation of hope and strength (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1999). From pre-Civil War slavery to the modern industrial age, the Black church is the moral adhesive that holds the African American community together. Through cultural awareness and religious education programs, community outreach, and other supportive services, the African American church traditionally provides African American families with resources that reinforce their competence in solving problems and continues to play a major part in enriching the lives of at-risk youth and their families.

This article challenges social workers to consider practice approaches that include outreach programs and community partnerships with black churches to reach at-risk African American youth before they experience academic failure, behavioral problems, or come to the attention of social services via criminal justice agencies or through incidents involving social disorder (Dryfoss, 1996; Krivo & Peterson, 1996; Washington, 1996). Considering the history and impact of the black church, its role in sheltering African American youth from negative behavior and costly social outcomes cannot be overlooked.

Unremitting Challenges Encountered By African American Youth

Rates of poverty, challenges with the criminal justice system,

and access to quality education are factors that social workers need to understand in the course of their work with African American youth. A brief look at poverty data, criminal justice statistics, and educational outcomes reveals disproportionate obstacles that many African American youth and their families from low to working class households encounter in order to learn, thrive, and achieve at every stage of their lives. As an example, race and ethnicity continue to be defining poverty factors. According to the 2002 census, non-Hispanic Whites represented 8.0 percent of the poverty rate, Hispanics were 21.8 percent, Asians, 10.0 to 10.3 percent, and Blacks represented 23.9 percent to 24.1 percent of those reported to live in poverty. The poverty rate for Blacks remained higher than the rates for people of other racial and ethnic groups and was higher than the 22.7 percent for those living in poverty in 2001(U.S. Census Bureau, 2002, p.1).

Disappointingly, the number of children in poverty under 18 in 2002 was 12.1 million, up from 11.7 million in 2001. The data also highlight that children under six years of age are particularly vulnerable to poverty. The 2002 census further points out that the poverty rate for all children under 18 years of age was 16.7 percent, higher than the rates for people 18 to 64 years old and 65 and over (10.6 percent for each). Although children represent one-fourth (25.5 percent) of the total population, they show a disproportionate rate of poverty (35.1 percent). Of the 400,000 newly poor children, over 100,000 of them are under six years of age (U. S. Census Bureau, 2002). The poverty rate for Black children was the highest of all age/race groups, increasing from 30.2 percent in 2001 to as high as 32.3 percent in 2002. The poverty rate among Hispanic children rose from 28 percent to 28.6 percent (U. S. Census Bureau, 2002, pp. 30-32).

In the area of the juvenile justice system, minority youth are more likely than White youth who commit similar crimes to be arrested, referred to juvenile court, detained, and face trial (Schindler, 2001; Krivo & Peterson, 1996). Data from the U. S. Department of Justice reveals racial disparity in reference to minority youth encountering the juvenile justice system. Minority youth in the juvenile justice system are out of proportion to their representation in the general population (National Criminal Justice reference Service [NCJRS], 1999). Among ten to seventeen year old minority youth, one-third are identified as juvenile offenders in the juvenile population nationwide but represent two-thirds of those detained and committed to secure facilities.

Education is viewed as a way to improve one's social and economic prospects, especially for individuals who are socially or economically disadvantaged. However, educational events from primary to elementary and postsecondary schooling are also indicators of perilous outcomes relative to African American youth. The National Center for Education reports, "children living in families that are below poverty are less likely to participate in preschool education than children in families living at or above poverty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002, p.1, 1995). Similarly, "black 4th-graders are more likely than white 4th-graders to be in schools with high levels of students from low-income families and less likely to be in schools with low levels of students from low-income families as well as more likely to be concentrated in high-poverty schools" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002, p. 1).

Dropout from high school usually results in less earnings and higher unemployment, and high school students living in low-income families dropped out of school at six times the rate compared to their peers from middle and from high-income families. Yet, from 1992 to 2001, the dropout rate remained fairly stable for young adults and the dropout rates for Blacks declined compared to Whites (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Overview of the Black Church

Scholars agree that black churches and their community outreach programs play a prominent role in helping poor to working class youth in their socialization and resilience skills by buffering them from illegal or negative activities that limit their ability to achieve success (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Johnson, Larson, DeLi, & Jang, 2000a; Cook, 2000; DiIulio, 1999; Johnson, 1999). Historically, the black church has served as a major spiritual foundation for African American families and has been a bedrock of community heritage, history, and culture. After the Civil War and the end of slavery, African Americans built churches in unprecedented numbers (Martin & Martin, 2002). The black church concerned itself with matters of the soul but also with social, economic, and political issues. It was viewed as a response to the needs of impoverished African American people requiring social services after slavery (Martin & Martin, 2002) and served a multiplicity of purposes in the early days in response to the hostile conditions of black life. Although the black church has adjusted over time, it still positions itself to

meet the challenges of racism, sexism, and social and economic injustice.

DiIulio (1999) reports, "Black Americans are in many ways the most religious people in America. Some 82 percent of blacks (versus 67 percent of whites) are church members; 82 percent of blacks (versus 55 percent of whites) say that religion is "very important in their life" (p.43). In 1990, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya , wrote *The Black Church in the African American Experience.* They described the seven major black denominations that comprises the core of the black church: the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church; the National Baptist Convention, USA., Incorporated (NBC); the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). However, more recently, the National Missionary Baptist Convention (NMBC) and the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship (FGBCF) have gained prominence. Eight of the major black denominations alone encompass some 65,000 churches and about 20 million members (DiIulio, 1999). In essence, the African American church is a primary institution within the black community.

The Role of the Black Church in Working with Youth

Whether it is with individuals, families, or groups, social workers can be the link guiding black churches in solving community problems and tackling the complex social and economic issues that impact at-risk African American youth and their families. Greater requests for social services and overwhelming social needs call for professionally prepared social workers to lend their professional skills to support church initiatives that strengthen African American families.

Research suggests that religious participation in faith-based programs and church attendance are factors that buffer urban youth from poverty, crime and other social problems (DiIulio, 2002; Brega & Coleman, 1999). Likewise, evidence suggests that African American youth who regularly attend church services get into less trouble than those who do not attend. (Johnson, Jang, DeLi, & Larson, 2000b). These researchers examined the degree to which an individual's religious involvement significantly mediates and buffers the effects of neighborhood disorder on youth crime

(Johnson, et al., 2000a). Neighborhood disorder is defined as the lack of peace, safety, and observance of law whereas control is an act of maintaining the order. The results showed that involvement of African American youth in religious institutions significantly buffers or interacts with the effects of neighborhood disorder on crime and, in particular, serious crime. Johnson et al, (2000a) report, "The harmful effects of disordered neighborhood on serious crime are not as great when black youth are actively involved in the church." In other words, African American youth from "bad neighborhoods" with high levels of community church involvement reported lower rates of serious crime than youth from "good neighborhoods." It is speculated that religious commitment may help youth to learn prosocial behavior and insulate them from various forms of deviance associated with inner-city poverty (Johnson et al., 2000a; Johnson, Larson, Li, & Jang, 2000b). Therefore, as a prudent strategy, African American churches should not be viewed as "invisible institutions" but included in community partnerships to prevent crime (DiIulio, 2002; Johnson et al, 2000a, Johnson et al., 2000b; Ward, 1995).

By contrast, Rubin, Billingsley, and Cardwell (1994) surveyed a total of 635 Northern churches to study family-oriented community outreach and socially significant youth programs provided by black churches. The Black Church Family Project's findings show that the most common church programs consisted of Christian fellowship, ministry, counseling, group discussions, rap sessions, seminars, and workshops. The survey data highlighted a mixed, but generally disappointing picture regarding the church's role in addressing more prominent adolescent issues such as delinquency, reproductive health issues, adolescent pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births. However, the researchers indicate enough variation among black churches to suggest that growth and outreach appear promising. DiIulio (1999) comments, "When it comes to social action against urban problems and the plight of the black inner-city poor, the reality is that black churches cannot do it all (or do it alone) and that not all black churches do it." (p. 46).

Reporting on a study of 32 African American, Haitian-American, and Latino male and female teenagers, Cook (2000) reports churched teenagers were less stressed and less likely to have psychological problems than were teenagers in a comparison group. Further, the findings reveal that the church helps the teenagers to refrain from negative behaviors; it sets standards they should

strive toward; offers reassurance when wise decisions were made; provides clear guidelines distinguishing between right and wrong, desirable and undesirable behaviors; and provides a reference point outside their own experience (p.724).

Models of Church-Based Youth Programs

One role that social workers perform in their work with children and families is to facilitate access to federal, state, and local programs that address such issues as child abuse, homelessness, substance abuse, poverty, and violence. On a broader scale, African American churches could benefit from social worker's skills and knowledge of welfare reform legislation and funding streams to religious organizations as the church seeks new ways to expand its historic, informal tradition of helping.

At the grassroots level, African American churches work tenaciously with parents, schools, business leaders, and community members to provide alternatives for safe supervision and non-destructive activities for African American youth. While some African American churches do not offer socially significant youth programs (Rubin et al., 1994; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990), those that do are forging ahead with creative input into the lives of a most precious resource, African American youth.

Black pastors are leading congregations in promoting soup kitchens, mediating police-community relations, prison outreach ministries, gun-back programs, academic tutoring, athletic programs, rites of passage projects, counseling, after school care, job training, and mentoring (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000); Harvey & Coleman, 1997; Rubin, Billingsley, & Caldwell, 1994). As the central institutional sector in most black neighborhoods and community life, Black churches are actively engaging in outreach ministries to decrease drug use, delinquency, and premarital sex. They extol the virtue of teaching self-help, hard work, thrift, and education among African American youth. Consider the following four examples from Kentucky:

Clay Street Baptist Church, in Shelbyville, KY, a rural community of about 10,000 residents, represents a growing number of African American congregations building "Family Life Centers" to provide centralized, safe, and supervised community-based gathering places for a variety of family and youth programs. Under the pastorate of Rev. Ronald L. Holder, the congregation committed

their energies to build a $1.4 million family life center to counterbalance negative peer influence and to reduce boredom for youth who may likely get into trouble. Efforts are made to offer activities to both believing and non-believing families in all walks of life and are open to both church members and non-members alike. Housed with a walking track, classrooms for seminars, a dedicated room outfitted with ten computers, a fully equipped kitchen and other amenities, the new facility features a high school regulation size basketball court with bleacher seating for 100 plus people. The day care center offers affordable and quality care for roughly 130 infants and pre-school age multiracial children, many whose families' denominational membership is outside of the church. Volunteers recruited from the congregation provide assistance with lock-ins, tutoring, and mentoring. The church has on staff a youth minister, youth director, and a Ph.D. level counselor who provides crisis intervention and short-term individual and family counseling. Adult congregational members are recruited in various capacities to instruct in "right and wrong" behavior, to teach interpersonal skills, such as good manners, how to handle arguments, and to generally instill moral values and a positive life direction. Youth are also afforded the opportunity to build self-confidence through competitive sports and public events that strengthen public speaking skills. Biographical stories of African American accomplishments are shared to foster lessons in faith and self-respect despite pandemic manifestations of oppression and injustice (Clay Street Baptist Church Ministries, 2002).

As the harmful effects of poverty, youth crime, and dropout rates come to light, urban churches in Louisville, KY such as Canaan Christian Church, shepherded by Dr. Walter Malone, Jr., First Gethsemane Baptist Church, with Dr. T. Vaughn Walker serving as the Senior Pastor, and St. Stephen Baptist Church under the spiritual leadership of Dr. Kevin Cosby stand as examples of strong outreach ministries that embrace youth and their families and play a significant role in helping inner-city males and females to escape from a world of spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical deprivation. For example, Canaan Christian Church offers African American males between 8 and 15 years of age an after school academy referred to as the Sons of Issachar**.** This zero fee after school program has five training components: Leadership development, tutoring and homework assistance and study skill

enhancement, life skills training, character education, and parent family support services. The program focuses on teaching youth the dignity of hard work and emphasizes a transformed mind as an avenue for young people to develop integrity and character within themselves (Canaan Christian Church, n.d.).

In a similar fashion, First Gethsemane Baptist and St. Stephen Baptist Church demonstrate a fervent commitment to African American youth through Rites of Passage programs, mentoring, computer classes, cultural exposure, and life skills development. Young people are allowed to sing, participate in liturgical dancing, and to read during the worship service. Students who excel academically are publicly acknowledged for their devotion to excellence. This allows them positive reinforcement for achievement and the development of social and leadership skills. The recognition of high achievers also encourages other young people to strive for development of their intellectual abilities and creative talents and to harness their energies into constructive channels (First Gethsemane, n.d.; St. Stephen Baptist Church, 2001).

While these churches are not exclusive in promoting youth related programs and activities, they are models of black churches engaged in intentional community outreach to socially isolated youth. The cultural milieu of the African American church promotes a strong sense of responsibility and lead faith congregations to tithe time, talent, and resources. The richness of the heritage teaches children and youth valuable lessons in self-esteem, resilience, a sense of achievement, self-pride, and the development of social and spiritual skills that last a lifetime.

"Up Stream" Practice Strategies

African American youth experience various stressors that can impact their ability to mature as intellectually and sociably responsible adults. Some, depending on their social status, family strengths, employment opportunities, and residential address, may possess fewer tools to overcome obstacles and defeat. Others, through community and family support, sheer grit, resilience, and inner drive lessen their vulnerability to social injustice and hardship by refusing to succumb to victimization and passivity in society. Social workers have a role to play in forming meaningful alliances and common goals with black churches. Such partnerships can support young people and their families in maintaining

their hopes and dreams and help to promote values that emphasize productivity and self-worth. These include:

Collaborative Arrangements with Peer Tutors

Students helping students can be a very successful and fun way to learn. Students who excel academically are publicly acknowledged for their devotion to excellence in many African American churches. The timing of this public recognition varies from church to church, however many African American churches utilize the 11:00 a.m. worship service and/or sponsor Back-to-School events with special guest speakers to profile and to motivate young school-age youth. This allows positive reinforcement for achievement and provides a model for other young people to succeed in improving their grades. In some churches, high achievers obtaining B or above are given plaques, specialized ceremonies, standing applauses, and prominent feature in Sunday bulletins or other brochures to mark their year-end accomplishments. In other church settings, those students who have improved academic scores from D to C are treated to gift certificates to their favorite eating places or awarded various school supplies as a way to encourage their attention to better grades.

Social workers could enlist the help of high school students (tutors) with middle school and elementary school age youth (tutees) who have demonstrated a need for academic assistance or a need for support in developing successful study habits and time management. Since some youth may work best with the absence of authority and the tutor knows what it feels like to be a student, the end result could be better grades and improved self-esteem for both the tutee and the tutor. Academic success minimizes dropout and acting out behavior. "One program that hires high-risk adolescents and trains them to tutor younger children has been shown to produce positive changes in both the younger and older groups" (Cardenas, Montecel, Supik, & Harris, 1992 cited in Dryfoss, 1997, p. 14). Freedom Schools, a summer learning youth leadership development, and parent engagement program that keeps children safe, engaged, and off the streets reading books with college age mentors is another collaborative arrangement which benefits young people (Children's Defense Fund Action Council, 2004, p. 13).

Exposure to Job Readiness and Career Counseling Training

Use of family life centers or other dedicated space within African American churches would ease anxiety relative to meeting career counselors on their turf. Job readiness and career counseling training would allow African American youth to increase their job readiness by getting clear on the right careers, the value of staying in school and college planning, and vocational awareness and vocational education. From accessing a computer to writing a resume to knowing how to appropriately communicate with a potential employer, job readiness training will allow youth an opportunity to transition or prepare for long-term self-sufficiency. Social workers could conveniently coordinate and arrange sessions for young people to expand their job readiness by helping them to research their prospective careers in detail and scheduling interviews with professionals in a career they've chosen. These efforts would not only benefit the young person but his or her family in a milieu of familiarity and comfort.

Recruitment of Dedicated Intergenerational Mentors

Mentoring can be defined as a nurturing process in which one or more skilled persons serves as a role model to teach, sponsor, encourage, counsel, and befriend a less skilled person. Mentoring relationships can be divided into those that evolved naturally (informal mentoring) and those that are created (formally) by an organization (Grossman & Garry, 1997). In a rather large-scale evaluation of a formal mentoring program, Tierney, Grossman, and Resch (1995) studied over 900 youths from 10 to 16 years of age and the effects of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program. The results showed that mentored, as opposed to non-mentored, children were less likely to initiate the use of alcohol or drugs, less likely to report having hit someone, and more likely to report better attitudes toward school. The research supports that adults who care do make a difference in the lives of vulnerable youth.

The Sunday hour in African American faith congregations is generally filled with testimonies of adults whose stories proclaim success against great odds and struggle. Such individuals serve as inspirational and motivational leaders and provide young people with valuable insight and experiences, connection with positive role models, render cultural and historical perspectives, teach about aging, and provide a forum for them to appreciate better the legacy seniors have created for them.

It is essential to reach young people before they become involved in risky behaviors. During the school year, these leaders could be recruited, with the help of the pastor and social worker, to visit area primary and secondary (elementary, middle, and high) schools or to talk about their own schooling and the importance of education. Evening and weekend programs can offer homework help during the school year with summer leadership programs focusing on academic refresher information and community service. Approaches that are designed to assist mentors in holding group discussions and to teach positive interaction and life skills would also be beneficial. Once developed, mentors become self-sufficient members of the social worker's team, needing little direction from the social worker. Dedicated and effective mentors give young people the push they need, the spirit to believe in their ability, and the courage to take risks. The likelihood of their success is strengthened because someone who is culturally similar and identifies with their day-to-day challenges believes in their ability to excel. Overall, mentoring efforts have the potential for exceptional success.

Assistance in Researching Grants to Support Programs

When it comes to willingness to help and reach out, historically African-American congregations are strongly involved in addressing social needs, such as assistance to families, youth programs, food distribution and other outreach services. They are always beyond the four walls of the church, rather than existing for the congregation itself. However, in some instances, in spite of cost saving measures, some churches experience tight finances while others are in good financial health.

Social workers can assist churches to research funding designed to increase the church's capacity by improving the quality of the programs it offers. By starting up, aligning, or expanding programs using strategies that work, social workers' technical expertise and grant writing skills would help African American churches improve outcomes for clients and ensure long-term sustainability for programs. Funding may be used toward new activities associated with start-up or expansion of programs with strategies that work ("best practices") in areas of need such as unemployment and welfare-to-work; homelessness and hunger; at-risk youth; offenders and children of incarcerated parents; and people needing alcohol/drug/mental illness rehabilitation.

Teaching Advocacy Efforts

Social workers can use their macro knowledge to introduce advocacy strategies and organizing within African American congregations. If a congregation has had little or no experience with social justice advocacy it is important to introduce the idea slowly. One of the most direct ways is for social workers to coordinate letter-writing campaigns to assist church members to adapt "talking points." When congregations implement "talking points" the social worker and congregation are given a clear picture of the problems they are working on, the possible solutions, and the reasons their work is contributing to a solution. The "talking points" can be a tool for personal use by social justice committees or working groups, and they can also prompt these groups to engage in citizen advocacy. This strategy allows members to take on manageable but politically important issues and strengthen participation in the democratic process. Likewise, social workers can teach congregation's methods and tools involved in holding candidate forums or political briefings in churches.

Another example of church advocacy is the National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. The Children's Sabbath, designated for the third weekend of each October, is endorsed by more than 200 denominations, faith groups, and religious organizations across the nation to raise awareness of children's needs and to advocate on children's behalf (Daley-Harris, 2001). The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is an illustration of how social workers can assist African American churches in generating advocacy efforts on children's behalf. Daley-Harris (2001) states, "The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is an opportunity for people of all ages and all faiths to learn about the urgent needs of children and the mandate in every faith tradition to nurture and protect children, to seek justice on behalf of those most vulnerable. Through worship services, religious education classes, and congregational outreach and advocacy activities, people of faith learn more about the problems facing children (such as poverty, lack of health care, and violence) and commit to responding to them" (Daley-Harris, 2001, p.5). Whatever tools and methods are chosen, advocacy efforts will be collaborative situations, either in congregational activities or joint activities with other churches and organizations.

Practice Implications

Although black churches have a long historical tradition in assisting those in need, youth involved in drugs, stealing, or other high-risk behaviors may be disinclined to respond to outreach efforts. Social workers should give some considerations to innovative opportunities to develop new ways to link at-risk African American youth to church-based programs. However, future research that evaluates church-based community outreach programs would be useful for social service agencies, university faculty, and social work students wishing to establish partnerships with African American churches. Of particular importance is research that identifies youth related anti-social behaviors and the effectiveness of church-based interventions. In collaborating with African American churches, college students, and social work faculty, universities could utilize their research capabilities to provide leadership to issues that address African American youth.

Overall, belonging to or associating with a religious community enhances young people's self-worth and helps them to refrain from negative behaviors. Church and neighborhood interventions, whether it is in community, family, education, or social life, can help African American youth to experience a sense of purpose, which can lead to interconnectedness and a life which decreases anti-social choices. Although dichotomies exist within African American churches, the church generally provides a wealth of support, love, attention, and guidance to African American youth. Additionally, it provides a spiritual consciousness that has to do with learning from the inside out.

While there is a tendency for practitioners to exclude religious institutions as a part of the helping process, direct participation and collaborations with faith congregations may be advantageous to at-risk and marginal youth. Social workers may find it useful to embrace the black church in its role as spiritual custodian and consider ways to maximize collective efforts and common goals in serving those families in need. Such efforts may avert the impact of discrimination, poverty, and marginalization and improve the chances for successful transition to adulthood for at-risk African American youth. ❖

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Celtic Spirituality: Resources for Social Work Practitioners

Andrew Dahlburg

Christianity provides many resources upon which Christian social workers may draw as they seek to incorporate spirituality into their practice. This article provides an overview of Celtic spirituality, one of the most ancient Christian spiritual traditions. This article examines several key themes of Celtic spirituality, including monasticism, the soul friend, creation, simplicity, learning, mysticism, and pilgrimage and discusses implications for social work practice. Because of the broad themes of Celtic spirituality, it is argued that Celtic spirituality provides an ecumenical approach which may appeal to the practitioner and to the client, as well as to Christians from many backgrounds.

There is a widespread hunger for spirituality in our culture, a hunger that is not confined to "religious" people alone. Almost everyone seems interested in connecting to some form of spirituality. The longings are so strongly felt that people turn almost anywhere for answers to their questions—even to astrologers, psychics or palm readers.

Spiritual themes have also found their way into the mainstream of the social work profession. A number of books and articles outlining the relationship between spirituality and social have been published in recent years. Several important books, such as David Hodge's *Spiritual Assessment* (2003), Edward Canda and L. D. Furman's *Spiritual Diversity in Social Work Practice* (1999) and Ronald Bullis' *Spirituality in Social Work Practice* (1996), demonstrate how important the spiritual dimension can be for the client and practitioner.

Within Christianity itself, there has also been a renaissance in the subject of spirituality. Perhaps resulting from the breakdown of "traditional" religion, and the decline of mainline Christian denominations, people have turned to ancient spiritualities for

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guidance and inspiration. One of the oldest and most popular forms of Christian spirituality is Celtic (pronounced "keltic") spirituality. This article provides a background to modern Celtic spirituality, discusses its main principles, and explores how it can be a resource for the social work practitioner today.

Celtic Christianity

Celtic Christianity refers to a strain of Christianity which thrived in parts of Britain, Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, Brittany, Spain and Italy. The Celtic church was founded sometime between the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The church organized quickly and sent representatives to the Synod of Arles in A.D. 314 and to the Council of Ariminum in 359 (Cross, 1957, p. 256). Officially, the Celtic church existed until the Synod of Whitby in 664, when the Anglo-Saxon ruler of Northumbria, King Oswy, decided to follow the Roman practice. However, the Celtic spiritual tradition continued to remain popular throughout the centuries. As an ever-increasing number of books on the topic suggests, it attracts a wide audience even today. The Celtic church produced many charismatic and heroic figures that still fascinate readers today. The long, lonely journeys of St. Patrick, the energy and idealism of the dynamic duo of Lindisfarne, Saints Aidan and Cuthbert, and the theology of Pelagius still speak powerfully to men and women today.

The Celtic church was now part of the Roman Catholic Church, and never saw itself in opposition to or apart from Rome. The Celtic church, however, offered a different spiritual and religious perspective on Christianity. This was the result of unique indigenous and cultural factors, and the lack of regular communication with Christianity on the European continent. Although the Celtic church differed from Rome on such ecclesiastical matters as the dating of Easter and the method of tonsure, their differences went far deeper and represented something more akin to a clash of cultures (Joyce, p. 64).

The Celtic church was predominantly rural, whereas the Roman church was primarily urban. The Celtic perspective may best be described as a free-flowing openness to God's spirit. The thousands of monks who set sail in their small coracles to follow wherever the winds of the Holy Sprit would take them demonstrated this sense of Celtic "free spiritedness" (John 3:8). Other monks demonstrated this same "free spiritedness" on foot, and wandered from monastery to

monastery. The Roman outlook, as demonstrated by the Rule of St. Benedict, was much more organized and structured. Monks generally remained in a single monastery and were discouraged from *wanderlust*. *Stabilitas loci* (i.e., the Benedictine being "stabilized in a single community") was a key principle of the Benedictine Rule. In contrast to the Roman Empire, the Celts were a race of clans and tribes. As a result, the Celtic church typically consisted of small intimate communities which were often located in rural or isolated areas, such as the islands of Iona or Lindisfarne. These small communities would never produce a Celtic basilica or cathedral; such buildings were the architecture of cities, not villages. Instead, the Celts chose to build their churches out of stone in a beehive fashion like the Gallarus oratory in Kerry, Ireland. Rome, on the other hand, was metropolitan in outlook, and boasted huge basilicas, which, in the High Middle Ages, became cathedrals.

The differences between both groups also expressed themselves within community life. Celtic communities revolved around the abbot, the elected head of the monastery. In contrast, Roman Christianity focused on the bishop and his cathedral. In addition, the Celtic church had a "progressive" view of religious orders and included both sexes. Religious orders were not restricted to celibate men and women, and to the offices of deacon, priest and bishop. In the Celtic church monks could marry. Abbots and other leaders of the community were often women. In the Celtic view, bishops were not authoritarian figures, but rather were members of the religious community and subject to the abbot's authority like everyone else. A bishop's main role was to be an evangelist among the people, instead of overseeing the administration of a diocese.

Major Characteristics of Celtic Christianity

Discovering the main characteristics of Celtic Christianity proves difficult at first. The Celtic church did not produce its own version of "The Westminster Confession of Faith" or any systematic statement of faith; rather, the Celtic viewpoint and the main themes of Celtic Christianity must be gathered from a variety of sources, including hagiographies such as "The Life of Patrick" or "The Voyage of Brendan." There are also important monastic texts such as "The Rule for Monks" by St. Columbanus, which describe what religious life was like. Significant devotional and liturgical texts such as "The Stowe Missal" and major collections of poetry

in the "Carmina Gadelica" also provide useful information. The philosophical works of John Scotus Erigena and Pelagius also provide insight into the Celtic point of view. Taken together, these texts provide at least seven unique strands within Celtic spirituality (Order of St. Aidan):

1. The deep monastic roots of Celtic Christianity.
2. The concept of the "anamchara" or soul friend.
3. A profound love and reverence for the natural world.
4. A love of simplicity in the spiritual life.
5. A love of learning and education.
6. An emphasis on mysticism.
7. An emphasis on journey and pilgrimage.

Monastic Roots

The history of Celtic Christianity is predominantly about monks and monasteries. Most of the key figures were monks: Columba, Aidan, Cuthbert, and Columbanus; and the key sites of the Celtic church were often monasteries: Clonmacnoise, Lindisfarne, Iona and St. David's. These monastic communities introduced monks to the spiritual tradition of the Desert Fathers, who were Christian hermits from all over the Mediterranean and the Middle East seeking to live a simple life of prayer in the deserts of Egypt from the middle of the 3rd to the end of the 4th century. The writings of John Cassian (360-435), provided the monks with an overview of monastic life and St. Athanasius' (296-373) "Life of Anthony" introduced the monks to perhaps the greatest Desert Father of them all. Together these writings provided a model of the spiritual life which resembled more of the Eastern, Byzantine tradition of Christianity than the Western, Roman tradition. Paradoxically, Celtic Christianity, rooted in a land surrounded by water, embraced a spirituality from the desert.

Soul Friend

Another key concept in Celtic spirituality is the *anamchara,* from the Gaelic "anam" ("soul") and "chara" ("friend"). The concept of the "soul friend" is central to all of Celtic spirituality. Theologically, the concept goes back to the incarnation of Christ. God befriended humanity, took the form of a loving servant, and served humankind. The spiritual life was linked with sacrifice, sharing, and giving.

Celtic Christians regarded Christ as the original "soul friend," the friend of sinners, who consistently gave of Himself.

The principle of the "soul friend" guards against the dangers of being a loner in the spiritual life. St. Bright of Kildare stated: "Anyone without a soul friend is like a body without a head" (Sellner, 2002, p. 5). The "soul friend" represented one of the earliest forms of the "spiritual director." Historical origins suggest several sources for the "soul friend". Some scholars suggest the Celts were influenced by Brahmans from India. Others regard the "soul friend" as a legacy left by the ancient Celtic Druids (Sellner, 2002, p. 22). The Druids were known for their wisdom, viewed as shamans, and knew a wide range of poetry. Even Caesar noted that the Druids possessed good communication skills and were talented "reconcilers between individuals and tribes" (Sellner, 2002, p. 35). The Celtic "soul friend" assumed all of these roles, became an important figure in the Church, and ensured that the spiritual life remained at the forefront of community life.

Love of Creation

Celtic spirituality possesses a deep love for all created life. God's hand is seen in all creation: from the stars in the skies, to the beauty of the natural world, to the earth beneath us. The divine is found everywhere. Not surprisingly, later Celtic Christians came to call God the "Lord of the elements." They took St. Paul's statement in Romans to heart: "What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what was made" (Romans 1:19, NIV).

Creation was God's book for humans to read, full of signs and wonders which ultimately pointed back to God, (O'Loughlin, 2000, p. 35). The world is "panentheistic," literally a place where God is in everything. The love and closeness of creation is a common theme in Celtic prayers and songs. Much of Celtic poetry is charged with the notion that the created world was charged with the love and power of God:

> Almighty Creator,
> it is you who have made the land and the sea...
> The world cannot comprehend in song bright
> and melodious,

even though the grass and trees
should sing all your wonders,
O true Lord.
The Father created the world by a miracle;
it is difficult to express its measure.
Letters cannot contain it,
letters cannot comprehend it.
(O'Malley, 1998, p. 110)

Love of Simplicity

Celtic spirituality, much like Franciscan or Native American spirituality, also stresses simplicity. A wonderful sense of wholeness and completeness pervades Celtic spirituality; it never seeks to be complicated. Celtic spirituality stresses the unity of all life. It offers a whole view of the world, and notably lacks the dualism so commonly found in Gnosticism and other religious views which separate good and evil, flesh and spirit. For these reasons and others, many people find Celtic spirituality is a breath of fresh air. Celtic spirituality is an "earthy" spirituality which senses the presence of God in every place and in everything. Spirituality is thus not something which is esoteric or practiced only by a few. Rather, it is a perspective that is available to all, if only they would have the eyes to see. Esther de Waal, a popular writer on Celtic spirituality, explains this perspective in this way: "The sense of the presence of God informs daily life and transforms it, so that any moment, any object, any job of work, can become the time and the place for an encounter with God" (de Wall, 1991 pp. 10-11). God's presence is in every activity and encounter that takes place during the day. The spiritual is at every turn, present in every activity.

Expressions of the immediacy of God in Celtic spirituality can be found in the *Carmina Gadelica*, a well-known collection of Celtic prayers and blessings, preserved by the Victorian scholar, Alexander Carmichael. For approximately forty years, Carmichael traveled and lived among the Celtic people, writing and gathering their oral traditions. Carmichael's collection reveals that Celtic people prayed for all kinds of things and events. They prayed at life's every turn and at every opportunity during the day. There are prayers of waking, sleeping, dressing, washing, and tending the fire. Here is an example of a morning prayer:

Each thing I have received, from Thee it came,
Each thing for which I hope, from Thy Love it will come,
Each thing I enjoy, it is of Thy bounty,
Each thing I ask comes of Thy disposing.
(de Waal, 1992, p. 21)

There are other poems which are situational and then expand to include related topics. One of my favorite poems begins with a person tending his fire. The theme of "fire" extends from his heart and then moves beyond to the "fire" of love for those around him:

God, kindle Thou in my heart within
A flame of love to my neighbor,
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all,
To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall,
O Son of the loveliest Mary,
From the lowliest thing that liveth,
To the Name that is highest of all.
(de Waal, 1992, p. 21)

Love of Learning

Celtic Christianity was also well known for its love of learning and scholarship. While much of Europe languished intellectually and culturally during the Dark Ages, the Celtic church thrived and many of the monasteries became places of great learning and culture. Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (1995) describes how the Celtic church preserved the great classical heritage of Western Civilization. In the monasteries the monks lovingly preserved and copied Greek, Latin, and Hebrew manuscripts. By so doing, they kept alive much of the best writing and scholarship recorded up to that time. The Celtic church also played a major role in spreading learning throughout Europe. Many of the Celtic monks became wandering scholars and crisscrossed Europe, teaching in monasteries and churches. They successfully spread all they learned and remembered.

Celtic learning and culture took several forms and utilized many of the arts. Celtic monks not only copied manuscripts, but they added many personal features as well. The Lindisfarne Gospels and Book of Kells are arguably some of the most unique and beautiful books in the world. The Lindisfarne Gospels are famous for their image of each evangelist, which is then supplemented

by many other shapes and designs. They also contain memorable drawings of monks, saints, cross carpet pages, and breath-takingly decorated initial pages. The Chi-Rho page in the Book of Kells provides a grand example of the levels of meaning found in the work. On one level, the Greek letters Chi-Rho are a monogram for Christ. Yet, as one looks around the page, one discovers two mice playing tug of war over a piece of bread, while being watched by two cats.

The Celtic church was also known for its great high crosses, typically a cross with a circle around the head of the cross. The Iona High Cross, the Oronsay Cross, and others are known by their intricate and magnificent designs. Such crosses were often fifteen feet tall, and the oldest dates from the fifth century. The Celts also created unique church architecture. The Kerry oratory, Gallarus, resembles an upturned boat made of stone and is so small it could probably hold no more than a dozen people. Due to their shape and structure, they have been thought to resemble beehives.

Mystical Outlook

Another unique feature of Celtic Christianity is a strong monastic and mystical outlook. Celtic spirituality was so radically different from Latin spirituality because it had a different set of theological roots. Celtic spirituality was deeply influenced by the Desert Fathers and Mothers and marked by a rigorous asceticism. This explains why so much of early Celtic Christianity revolved around the abbot and the monastery.

The most important Desert Father for Celtic Christians was John Cassian and his influence cannot be overstated. Cassian's writings on Desert Christianity and the ideals of monasticism deeply influenced the Celtic church. Cassian learned of the fame of the Desert Fathers and toured the monasteries in Egypt for seven years where he met many of the monks. Cassian then went to France and began writing books and founding monasteries. Cassian's "Institutes" describe the ordinary rules of monastic life and examine common barriers to monastic life. In one section Cassian wrote (1985, p. xiii):

> To gaze with utterly purified eyes on the divinity is possible—but only to those who rise above lowly and earthly works and thoughts and who retreat with Him into the high mountain of solitude. When they are freed

> from the tumult of worldly ideas and passions, when they are liberated from the confused melee of all the vices, when they have reached the sublime heights of utterly pure faith and of preeminent virtue, the divinity makes known to them the glory of Christ's face and reveals the sight of its splendors to those worthy to look upon it with the clarified eye of the spirit.

Cassian cited many resources the spiritual traveler could turn to along the journey. These include the scriptures, the Eucharist, prayer and meditation, and spiritual directors. The meetings between elder and student were called "conferences." In his *Conferences*, Cassian recalled his discussions with notable monastic figures. This became the prototype for the Celtic church. Typical topics in the sessions included an overview of what was causing problems in a person's life. Ultimately, the conversation would turn to the person's soul-sickness and self-destructive patterns of behavior. Sin was important and taken seriously because it was something which had the potential to affect the entire community. It was common for an elder to share his thoughts, personal struggles, and victories on related issues. Cassian also utilized something he referred to as the "principle of the contraries." Just as a fever is cured by the application of something cold, so too other illnesses can be cured in the same way. For example, fasting can heal the spiritual disease of over-eating. Remedies are found not by focusing on the illness itself, but rather by focusing on its opposite. Instead of focusing on the vice, one should seek to develop the opposing virtue. "The Penitential of Columbanus" puts it this way: "The talkative is to be punished with silence, the restless with the practice of gentleness, the gluttonous with fasting, the sleepy with watching, the proud with imprisonment, the deserter with expulsion; let each suffer exactly in accordance with his deserts, that the just may live justly" (Sellner, 2002, p. 189).

Life as Pilgrimage

Another important theme in Celtic Christianity is that of pilgrimage. At the core of the Celtic tradition is the realization that we are all on a spiritual journey. The Celtic view of pilgrimage differed from the Roman understanding. The Roman view of pilgrimage meant going to a specific place, and that in visiting the holy place, one would become spiritually renewed. The Celtic Church believed that

pilgrimage was an "inner state of mind expressed in outward terms in a life of physical exile and journeying" (Bradley, 2000, p. 200).

The theme of journey was best exemplified by St. Columbanus, who traveled around Europe and founded many monasteries:

What then are you, human life? You are the roadway of mortals, not their life, beginning from sin, enduring up till death...so you are the way to life, not life; for you are a real way, but not an open one, long for some, short for others, broad for some, narrow for others, joyful for some, sad for others, for all alike hasting and irrevocable. A way is what you are, a way, but you are not manifest to all; for many see you, and few understand you to be a way; for on a roadway none dwells but walks, that those who walk upon the way may dwell in their homeland. (Bradley, 2000, p. 200).

A core principle of Celtic thought was the *peregrini pro Christo*, that human beings are "pilgrims for Christ." The concept was so dominant that the Celts devised several shades of "martyrdom" or ways to serve God. Some Celtic monks adopted "white martyrdom," a form of sacrifice which meant leaving all the pleasures and temptations of home, family, and native land. Others practiced "green martyrdom" and retreated to a life of silence in a hermitage or cell. "Red martyrdom" meant giving one's life for the faith. Service and personal sacrifice were at the core of Celtic Christianity, which helps explain why so many thousands of monks went abroad, built churches and monasteries, and sought to improve the world.

Celtic Christianity and Christians in Social Work Practice

Although Celtic Christianity is an ancient Christian spirituality over a thousand years old, many of its themes bring something fresh and valuable to Christian social work practitioners. One of the most attractive features of Celtic Christianity for social work practitioners is that many of its themes apply to many different areas of social work practice. It refuses to be compartmentalized like other spiritualities and it is genuinely ecumenical. Celtic spirituality is broader in approach than many other Christian spiritualities, such as Ignatian or Dominican. This is an important point because it offers social workers many themes they can use in their work setting.

Monastic Roots

Celtic Christianity has a strong mystical component. One of the most important things Celtic Christianity provides is an alternative way of viewing the Christian faith and the predominant world view. Celtic spirituality allows one to avoid the extremes of literalism and liberalism. Many in the United States have been raised within a Roman Catholic or Protestant understanding of Christianity. The Celtic view is more Eastern and mystical in approach. Celtic Christianity has the potential to invite people to a different kind of Christianity than they may have ever experienced—monastic spirituality. This can literally open up a whole new world of positive religious experiences.

Being in a profession which stresses relationships with others, it is important to remember that we must also nourish the hermit side of ourselves. Many people, including this writer, have benefited from discovering the richness of the Liturgy of the Hours and the practice of the Divine Office. The center of the monastic experience combines a regular cycle of prayer and meditation on the scriptures. Celtic spirituality also introduces one to the ancient monastic practices of silence, meditation, solitude, spiritual direction, and simplicity of life style. A positive monastic experience can also lead one to regular spiritual retreats. Some individuals encounter such moving and life-changing experiences that they take on additional community vows. Practicing Celtic spirituality is an invitation to develop a deeper spirituality.

The "Soul Friend" in Social Work

The concept of the "soul friend" also has ramifications for social work practice. First, the "soul friend" has something to say to the clinician. It underlines the importance of mentorship. In our field of practice, it is important to have someone we can go to and talk about various aspects of our work. More importantly, we need to be able to talk about our own selves, the "I" of our work, and how we cope in the midst of all that we do during the work day. Having a "soul friend" is an excellent way to ensure that one does not over-extend oneself and that one maintains good professional boundaries.

Having a "soul friend" means more than discussions focused around social work tips and techniques. It is more than mere supervision. These conversations go much deeper; they center on how one is functioning in her faith tradition. The "soul friend"

focuses conversations on the practitioner's relationship with God. Within the context of social work practice, the "soul friend," or spiritual director, seeks to improve the quality of the practitioner's spiritual life. A soul friend gives the practitioner the opportunity to discuss the sense of where she is in her spiritual tradition, and where she feels the Divine is leading her. The "soul friend" assists her in bringing these two points together. Such guidance is less problem-centered and more focused on how a person functions in her Christian community and discerning the will of God.

Having a "soul friend" is a good thing, which can result in numerous positive outcomes. When one is involved in examining one's spiritual journey it makes it easier to be a "soul friend" to others, including clients. This is especially important as we live in an increasingly impersonal world where the values of friendships take second place to other things. A "soul friend," in today's world, is "present to" and "available for" others. Our professional offices or group rooms can be places where strangers can feel welcome and experience acceptance, love, and hospitality. The hospitality of the open door reflects the openness of one's heart and mind.

The "soul friend" tradition also teaches us something very important about the nature of interpersonal problems. Problems rarely have quick solutions. Many problems require time and reflection to be adequately resolved. This goes against the increasing pressure of short-term therapy and the rush to get the person out of the door so the next person can be seen. Perhaps the notion of the soul friend can provide practitioners with a different reference point. Instead of focusing on a client's problem or symptom, we can focus on their life journey. Personal growth and transformation were never meant to be one-time events; rather they are always occurring.

The "soul friend" also reminds us of the importance of modeling behavior. It utilizes the principle of modeling the kind of behavior one desires in the other person. This does not mean that every social worker has to be involved in intensive psychotherapy groups. One can see their "soul friend" as little as twice a year. The important thing is that the social worker is working on his or her own issues, staying fresh, and moving ahead spiritually. The best practitioners are those who acknowledge and work on their personal and professional issues.

Creation Spirituality

Celtic Christianity says something important regarding the way we perceive nature and the environment. The Celts had a positive, affirming view of creation. They began with the theme of blessing rather than the theme of original sin. This restorative view markedly contrasts with the Fall/Redemption model, or mechanistic understanding many modern writers have today. It is important, some would argue even necessary, for us to recover a sense of the goodness of creation. Today nature is frequently seen as an enemy, something which is out of control and which could hurt us. The Celts and other native people viewed creation in a friendlier, more holistic way, where God is present in all of life. Pelagius put these thoughts this way:

> When God pronounced that his creation was good, it was not only that his hand had fashioned every creature; it was that his breath had brought every creature to life. Look too at the great trees of the forest; look at the wild flowers and the grass in the fields; look even at your crops. God's spirit is present within all plants as well. The presence of God's spirit in all living things is what makes them beautiful; and if we look with God's eyes, nothing on the earth is ugly (Newell, 1997, p. 11).

A positive view of creation can be a stimulus and motivating factor to be more open to one's environment. There is something healing and restorative about spending time outdoors, whether it is gardening, going for walks on the beach, or watching the sun rise or set. The importance of feeling connected to the earth goes back to the biblical story of creation that teaches that we originally came from the soil. Being open to the healing environment also implies that one is not closed off or shut down from the outside. This is an important factor as we often ask people how they function in their overall environment. Openness to the environment is important because such a stance allows one to hear and experience the healing word from a variety of voices in Creation.

Several years ago I had the pleasure of starting a horticulture program at a Veterans' Hospital in New Jersey. The program included two greenhouses and a one-acre garden. Participants included homeless veterans, the majority of whom had a history of substance abuse and mental illness. Activities included making

plant cuttings, planting seeds, and the overall care and maintenance of the area. The program was very popular and many of the veterans told me how much they enjoyed working with plants and that working with the soil brought back pleasant memories from the past. It was also my impression that one of the reasons why the program was successful was that the labors in the garden taught lessons which extended into other areas of life. Vegetables and flowers needed daily care in order to survive. Weeds had to be pulled. Neglect would result in death. In this respect, nature became an additional instructor in the overall program.

One of the lessons nature teaches is that whatever one sows, this one also reaps. The Celts were reminded of this truth as they farmed their crops year after year. Moreover, these themes recalled many of Jesus' parables and other biblical stories.

Simplicity in an Age of Complexity

The Celtic church found simplicity in the wilderness of the British Isles and in the wilderness of the African desert. Here again, the natural world can be a powerful teacher. Such a perspective was countercultural then and it is countercultural now. Much of our society glorifies a view that "more is better" and that "the person with the most toys wins." The Celtic tradition stresses that the value of a person is not measured by one's possessions but by what one becomes. These themes of value are important for social work practice, especially with the growing number of homeless and other marginalized groups. Social workers can be countercultural like the church is supposed to be and can teach a different perspective and lifestyle.

Much of my work with substance abusers and the mentally ill involves taking complicated lives and trying to make them simple. Social workers can greatly assist clients by helping to simplify their lives. Practitioners can help remove clutter from clients' lives by helping them stay focused on treatment goals and avoid bad decision making. Practitioners can also direct clients to a simpler lifestyle founded on honest relationships with their higher power, others, and themselves. People often use Twelve-Step programs as part of their treatment. These programs emphasize simplicity, putting first things first, and getting clear on the basic principles of one's life. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) works in the same way a religious rule does. It provides a new frame of reference which

becomes the building blocks of one's life. Simplicity of lifestyle means that the concerns of one's life are prioritized and in order. Nothing is meant to come in the way of our relationship with God, including our work, money, and possessions. By keeping one's priorities in life, one is able to let go of thoughts and things, thus freeing one's spirit.

Life-Long Learning

The Celtic tradition exemplifies the importance of education and learning. For the Celtic Christian, learning was a life-long process, not a single period of one's life. Monks and monasteries stressed continual learning, and they devoted many hours of the day to reading books, copying literature, and learning new languages. Cahill remarks: "The Celtic monks brought everything they could lay their hands on. They were resolved to shut out nothing" (Cahill, 1995, p. 158). The Venerable Bede believed it was the emphasis on learning which attracted people from many countries to the Celtic way:

> In the course of time some of these devoted themselves faithfully to the monastic life, while others preferred to travel round to the cells of various teachers and apply themselves to study. The Irish welcomed them all gladly, gave them their daily food, and also provided them with books to read and with instruction, without asking for payment (Sellner, 1993).

Our educational system today wrongly leaves the impression that the completion of a degree marks the end of one's education. The Celtic view teaches something contrary. Education and learning are ongoing. To ensure our intellectual development and professional standards, professionals need to read important books in the field, keep abreast of journals, and attend relevant training seminars. We need to take better care of ourselves and take the time to learn new skills and interventions. Many professionals complain about the additional CEUs we are required to complete every year. Perhaps we need to adopt the attitude of the Celtic monks who viewed learning as a lifelong task. Learning never ends; but we should not be concerned about learning for the sake of learning. The purpose of education is to transform us into better servants of Christ and of others.

Life as Journey

Christians in the first century were called people of "the Way." These early followers of Jesus understood that when one embarks on the spiritual life, one begins a never-ending journey. Celtic Christianity revives this sense of discovery and wonder. One can never say, "I have arrived." On the contrary, life is filled with back-alleys and side-streets. Existence is filled with questions and disappointments. It is a cliché, but true nonetheless, that the journey itself, not the destination, is important.

Throughout life, it is important to take periodic pauses to assess where one is. The Celts appreciated this and valued times of silence. The monks knew that in their primitive cells, and in the silence, they had all the resources they needed. Hence the saying: "Go sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything" (Ward, 2003, p. 10).

Here many of the Celtic saints can be our models. Perhaps the two most obvious exemplars are St. Brendan and St. Columbanus. St. Brendan, like many mariners, kept sailing and traveling the seas. He never seemed satisfied, and kept going beyond what he had previously achieved. The same can be said of St. Columbanus. He, too, felt restless and left Ireland and went abroad. He went on to found numerous monasteries throughout Europe, especially in France, Italy, and Switzerland.

Conclusion

Celtic Christianity, though ancient, has many important themes which apply to social work. Celtic spirituality offers contemporary readers many new perspectives and insights into the topic of spirituality. The fact that Celtic Christianity attracts seekers from many different religious backgrounds and faiths, including those of our clients, is reason enough for practitioners to know something about it. Because of the themes presented above, Celtic spirituality, perhaps more than any other spirituality, is an excellent resource for clinician and client. Celtic spirituality appeals to many perspectives—Protestant and Catholic, conservative and liberal, and traditionalist and revisionist. Few other spiritualities can make such a claim.

The emphasis on monastic spirituality provides sensitive, practical, and wise responses to some of life's deepest questions. This is an important point inasmuch as we live during a time when

there are many competing spiritualities, including many that make false and fantastic claims. The practices of prayer, silence, and contemplation are rock-solid and time-tested. The "soul friend" reminds the social worker that everyone has a social side which needs to be nurtured. It stresses the importance of relationships, and that people do best in their spiritual life when in relationship with others. The "soul friend" is also another way of speaking about the importance of mentoring and supervision. The Celtic view of creation reminds us that our environment is something good, that we should be open to our environment and the natural world, and that we can grow and be changed by it. The stress on simplicity pushes us back to our first principles, to what we value most. Celtic spirituality stresses the importance of relationships with God, others, self, and the world. Everything else, although good, is secondary. Its emphasis on learning reminds us that God created us with minds that need to be stretched and exercised. We must constantly learn new skills and interventions. Lastly, the theme of journey reminds us of the essential mystery behind all of life. Our journey is never-ending; it is filled with many new beginnings and endings. It recalls those wonderful Celtic knots which magically flow one into the other. Being on the journey, reminds us that life involves a process of letting go of all things: thoughts, roles, relationships and, finally, life itself.

Spirituality—and Celtic spirituality in particular—is a rich resource for social workers and other helping professionals. Perhaps the best way to introduce oneself to Celtic Spirituality is to begin reading on the topic. There are many places to start; therefore let me recommend just a few. Social workers will find *Introduction to Celtic Spirituality* (1989), ed. James P. Mackey, and Ian Bradley's *Celtic Communities* (2000) helpful and inspirational. Also, the writings of Esther de Waal (1984; 1992; 1997), and Edward Sellner (1992; 2002) are excellent places to start. ❖

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REVIEWS

God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It

Wallis, J. (2005). New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Jim Wallis, founder and editor of Sojourners magazine, combines passion, political awareness, and keen story-telling ability to present his vision for the future of faith and politics in America. In doing so his intentions are not modest. While he does intend to clarify the moral debate in America, critiquing the severing of faith from social consequences that has robbed politics of its soul, he does not stop at critique. Wallis labors for 374 pages to present a new option that he labels "prophetic politics."

Wallis sees three existing political options in America: the conservative, the liberal, and the libertarian. The conservative option is "conservative on everything—from cultural, moral, and family concerns to economic, environmental, and foreign policy issues" (p. 73). In like fashion, the liberal position is consistently liberal. The libertarian position is conservative on economic, environmental and foreign policy issues, but liberal on cultural, moral, and family concerns. The new option he presents, prophetic politics, arises at the intersection of personal morality and social justice. Wallis claims that this new possibility is conservative on cultural, moral, and family concerns while embracing liberal and even radical positions on social justice issues like racial equality and eradication of poverty.

Were Wallis to balance his discussion of prophetic politics equally, spending just as much time advocating for personal morality as he does for social justice, one might conclude that he was attempting to spark nationwide change throughout the spectrum of American politics. As it is, Wallis devotes almost 70 percent of his pages to presenting the case for social justice which could be perceived as an attack on the current Bush administration.

Prophetic politics is Wallis' attempt to construct, as a series of preachments rather than in a consistent fashion, a Christian ethic of life. He makes a biblical case for the denunciation of American foreign policy that exalts American interests over international justice. He condemns war and renders just war arguments impotent

in the context of a worldwide body of Christ. He labels terrorism evil, but does not see military violence as the solution. Instead, Wallis argues for the use of American force to alleviate the injustices, poverty, and alienation that breed terrorism.

Wallis is at his best in answering the question, "When did Jesus become pro-rich?" His passion for the alleviation of poverty on both the domestic and international arenas is inspiring, and the biblical case he makes for economic justice should prove quite persuasive to every Christian social worker. In his concluding section he applies the ethics of life to abortion, capital punishment, racism, and community—issues that should also ring true to Christian social workers.

There are three potential weaknesses in Wallis' construction of prophetic politics that go unanswered. First, the extension of an ethic of life to encompass forgiveness of third world debt, reduction of nuclear arsenals, stewardship of environmental resources, and progressive tax codes could be perceived as metaphorical. Once "life" has been redefined to include qualitative issues, it is a small matter for those without an evangelical commitment to biblical constraints to extend this ethic to libertarian extremes. The aspirational ethic of social work may well be in conflict with the obedience central to an evangelical ethic. Wallis does not appear to be sensitive to this potential disharmony.

Secondly, Wallis provides an inadequate ethical justification for the compassionate and hopeful attitude that he sees as essential for the application of his ethic of life. He contends that this ethic would be pro-life, pro-family, and pro-feminist, all at the same time. He contends that a Christian ethic of life would never condemn, not even the homosexual. Wallis' tendency to neglect personal morality is evident here. He simply does not present as compelling an argument for these more personal applications of his ethic.

Thirdly, Wallis' equates Christianity with prophetic religion without balancing this aspect with the priestly and personal which also are parts of the biblical story. Prophetic religion is the voice crying out for change from the margins of society. Christianity simply cannot be reduced to this aspect alone. The institutionalization of tradition passed on from generation to generation within denominational structures also has biblical warrant, as does the intense subjectivity of personal experience. Wallis' advocacy of prophetic politics in the hope of yielding a historical movement

based on spiritual and moral values may not do justice to the faith of many of his readers.

Christian social workers will find much in *God's Politics* to admire and emulate. Many are likely to find that Wallis has given voice to their unexpressed feelings. I hope that many will encourage their own faith communities to become engaged with this book. I am less optimistic that this book will spark the degree of change that Wallis is hoping for, but I will not be disappointed if I am wrong. ❖

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Living the Word, Resisting the World

Andrew Goddard. (2002). Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press.

LIVING THE WORD, RESISTING THE WORLD, BY OXFORD SCHOLAR Andrew Goddard, provides a fascinating introduction to the life and thought of sociologist, and theologian, Jacques Ellul (1912-1994). This is not an easy task, since Ellul wrote over forty books, a thousand articles, had opinions which changed over time, and a difficult writing style. Nonetheless, this is a comprehensive and impressive account of a great Christian thinker of the last century.

The book is neatly divided into two sections; an opening section examines Ellul's theology, and the second discusses major social and political themes. An opening chapter provides a fascinating biography outlining major intellectual influences in Ellul's life including the economist Karl Marx, and the theologians John Calvin, Soren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth. Other key influences came from involvement with the French Personalist Movement, the French Resistance, the Reformed Church, and a lifelong decision to remain in Bordeaux, France—somewhat out of the mainstream.

Major theological themes are then examined. According to Ellul, God's relationship with humanity is marked by a theological dialectic of "communion" and "rupture." Man's decision to turn from God and create a world of his own has caused a world of 'ruptured' communion where there is death, fragmentation, Eros, and necessity. In vivid contrast, God has four central affirmations

and is a living God who is Wholly Other and acts with love and freedom. The intention of the struggle is to restore the world to God, which God will do as the Final Judge.

The second section examines Ellul's penetrating criticism of society. At the heart of Ellul's social criticism is a critique of how "*la technique*" has become the touchstone and drumbeat of contemporary society. By "technique" Ellul refers to the concern with efficiency in every realm of life: intellectual, economic and political. The emphasis on technique has brought a fundamental change to Western Culture. The over-emphasis on efficiency, the best means of achieving certain ends, and one best possible way comes with a heavy price. Instinct, feeling, social taboos and social groups come under attack. Loyalties to family and religion are called into question. Now all that matters is efficiency and production. In times past there was always a diversity of techniques, series of choices, and ways of doing things. Now, efficiency and conformity are king.

Three other key central themes of Ellul's social thought are then discussed: violence, law, and the State and politics. Each of these chapters is fascinating to read, provokes thought, and gives further shape to Ellul's overall social critique. The section on the State is one of the most intriguing parts of the book. For many, the modern State has taken the place of God and is now where many people look for security, protection, and the solution to life's problems. In addition, Ellul critiques the just war theory, arguing for pacifism.

Living the Word, Resisting the World is a wonderful introduction to one of the most discerning Christian social thinkers of the last century. Social workers, as well as clergy and churches, need to have a prophetic voice which can guide them through many of the profound social and economic changes which are taking place around us. Churches should be filled with subversive people who refuse to go along with society's expectations. Here, the reader is introduced to a long standing dissenting political tradition, whose depth of analysis embraces other pivotal Christian social thinkers such as R.H. Tawney, E.F. Schumacher, and Stanley Hauerwas.

One of the major achievements of Ellul's work is that it helps readers to stay focused on "first things" and on what is really important in society. Should the highest goal of society be the production and accumulation of wealth? For Ellul, and other Christian thinkers, true "wealth" has always referred to one's relationship with God and with others. Part of Ellul's legacy is to correct the

overemphasis on technology and mass consumerism and to stress the human side of things. This is a significant accomplishment, especially for an age which has championed the machine and the computer. Ellul's books invite us to question the culture's overriding emphasis on technology, and as to whether or not these gadgets actually make a better world a better place, and result in producing better human beings. Those fortunate enough to visit the Amish, or travel abroad to Vietnam will no doubt discover that many of our so called "pressing" issues are not important as we might think. Some might be shocked to discover that not everyone on the planet is rushing out to get on the Internet, carry a cell phone, or have a hand held computer. Here Ellul can be a wonderful teacher, something he did for years as Professor of History and Sociology at Bordeaux University.

Living the Word, Resisting the World provides many valuable lessons for social workers and other health care professionals. First, Ellul also invites us to think "small" instead of "big." One of Ellul's main literary goals was to make individuals more aware of the alienating structures of the modern world. In resisting conformity, Ellul borders on being anarchistic. Ellul encouraged others to organize into small groups, such as the church and cell groups. The dual emphases on people over things, and small human scale communities over large ones, are just two of many traits which distinguish the Christian community from the trends of the world.

Secondly, Ellul helps one to remember that "less is more." This theme is particularly important as we live in an acquisitive, consumer driven society which preaches a message that "whoever has the most toys wins." In sharp contrast, Ellul notes how Christianity teaches followers "to seek first the Kingdom." Therefore, the present cultural stress on status and success is viewed as inappropriate, misdirected, and the source of many personal problems. Ellul helps us to remember that people are what really matter in this life.

Third, Ellul also stresses the importance of acting locally. He would have eagerly embraced the phrase "think globally, act locally." Ellul was not an ivory tower professor or academic. On the contrary, he was involved in local politics, worked with troubled youth for years, and took groups of students to the mountains to study and learn.

Living the Word, Resisting the World is a fascinating, thought-provoking book which has something interesting on every page.

One of the best features is that each time you read it you learn something new, or something stands out which you did not see before. The thought in this book is original and compelling; you will be drawn to return and read more. Goddard also provides a thorough bibliography of both French and English sources. One feature I felt lacking was more examples of churches, communities, and small groups which have applied Ellul's principles. Where are these groups? And in being counter-cultural, what shape did these groups take? What lessons did they learn? Perhaps Professor Goddard will answer these questions in a future volume. ❖

Reviewed by Rev. Andrew D. Dahlburg, MSW, CSAC, is clinical social worker with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Honolulu, HI and is also a priest in the Celtic Catholic Church. Phone: (808) 433-0332. Email: adahlburg@hotmail.com

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The Freedom of Faith-Based Organizations to Staff on a Religious Basis

Esbeck, C. H., Carlson-Thies, S. W. & Sider, R. J. (2004). Washington, DC: The Center for Public Justice.

Public debate is heating up over the right of faith-based organizations (FBOs) to hire staff based on their acceptance of the religious mission of their respective organizations. This brief treatise is a carefully drawn apology for the freedom of FBOs to continue this practice even as they receive federal, state, and local government funding. The authors shed light on the present controversy over the interpretation of the Constitution around church-state issues. They examine the original federal documents, legislation, and public policy surrounding the arguments, pro and con.

The authors describe the current debate over government funding of FBOs that began in earnest when the Charitable Choice rules were established under Section 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 enacted under former President Bill Clinton. The Charitable Choice provision provides states with the choice of using faith-based or secular organizations in the delivery of social welfare services to the poor. Two stipulations regarding the use of FBOs are included in this act: (1) the states must provide a secular alternative when funding FBOs;

and (2) the FBOs may not proselytize clients as a determinant for receiving services.

While government funding of FBOs has been available for a number of decades, government contract language has often forced religious organizations to behave like their secular counterparts. Contract language has prohibited FBOs from religious expression, e.g., removal of religious pictures and other symbols, detachment of government-funded facilities from their parent religious-purpose buildings, and staff hiring practices that disallowed discrimination based on congruence with the religious mission of the organization. This "secularization" of FBOs in receipt of federal funding resulted in many quality religious social welfare agencies steering clear of public funding.

The authors are careful in documenting strict separation of church and state rulings by the Supreme Court on First Amendment interpretations over the past three or four decades that had a dampening effect on religious speech. The more recent First Amendment interpretations changed the strict separation approach to more equitable treatment for FBOs. Charitable Choice regulations and those subsequently enacted by President Bush helped to clarify these gray areas by leveling the playing field for FBOs. Federal law and follow-up regulations now clarify free speech that had been disallowed by Supreme Court rulings for FBOs over the preceding years. Government agencies were no longer obligated to choose secular over FBOs, but to treat them as equals.

Two further goals of this new approach increased visibility for grassroots community and faith-based groups and stimulated philanthropic giving. For example, smaller donors are now allowed to claim their charitable contributions as deductions on their tax returns.

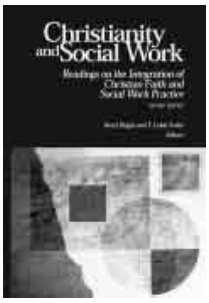
The authors go on to refute the arguments of strict separationists at both legal and policy levels. They make a strong argument for government's neutrality toward religiously based service providers taken from the monumental Civil Rights Act of 1964 in its Section 702(a). This section protects FBOs in hiring of staff who adhere to their religious tenets. The receipt of public funds does not abrogate this freedom. The authors' plea is that state and local regulations that continue to discriminate against religious groups' receipt of government funding should be struck down on the basis of First Amendment protection of religious speech.

This brief treatise is must reading for those who are currently receiving public funding for social services provision and for those who are seriously considering competing for grant funding. The appendices provide a wealth of specific case laws and regulatory decisions that will enable many more FBOs to compete for public funding. This book also points to the future by providing next steps that need to be taken legally and through policy and regulatory change to bring equity to public social service delivery by FBOs. Researchers will also find helpful citations and summaries of federal, legal, and policy decisions that historically and currently impact FBOs in their attempts to engage in public-private efforts to serve the poor. ❖

Reviewed by Leonard Erb, Assistant Professor of Social Work, Social Work Division, Roberts Wesleyan College, 2301 Westside Drive, Rochester, NY 14624. E-mail: erbl@roberts.edu

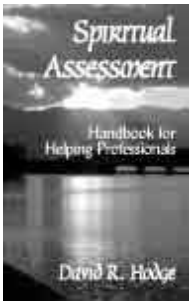
PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM NACSW

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK: READINGS ON THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH & SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE (SECOND EDITION)
Beryl Hugen & T. Laine Scales (Editors). (2002). Botsford, CT: NACSW $28.95 U.S., $43.35 Cdn. ($23.15 or $34.75 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies)



This extensively-revised second edition of *Christianity and Social Work* is written for social workers - from students, whose motivations to enter the profession are informed by their Christian faith, to seasoned professionals - whose desire is to develop distinctively Christian approaches to helping. The book is organized so that it can be used as a textbook or supplemental text in a social work class, or as a training or reference materials for practitioners. Readings address a breadth of curriculum areas such as social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT: HELPING HANDBOOK FOR CARING PROFESSIONALS
David Hodge. (2003). Botsford CT: NACSW $18.00 U.S., $27.10 Canadian. ($14.50 or $21.85 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more).



A growing consensus exists among helping professionals, accrediting organizations and clients regarding the importance of spiritual assessment. David Hodge's *Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals*, describes five complementary spiritual assessment instruments, along with an analysis of their strengths and limitations. The aim of this book is to familiarize readers with a repertoire of spiritual assessment tools to enable practitioners to select the most appropriate assessment instrument in given client/practitioner settings. By developing an assessment "toolbox" containing a variety of spiritual assessment tools, practitioners will become better equipped to provide services that address the individual needs of each of their clients.

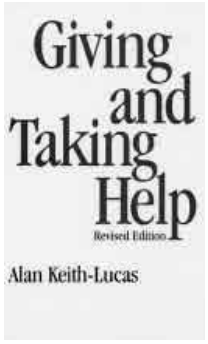
So You Want to be a Social Worker: A Primer for the Christian Student

Alan Keith-Lucas. (1985). Botsford, CT: NACSW. Social Work Practice Monograph Series. $10.00 U.S., $15.05 Canadian. ($8.00 or $12.05 Cdn for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more).

So You Want to Be a Social Worker has proven itself to be an invaluable resource for both students and practitioners who are concerned about the responsible integration of their Christian faith and competent, ethical professional practice. It is a thoughtful, clear, and brief distillation of practice wisdom and responsible guidelines regarding perennial questions that arise, such as the nature of our roles, our ethical and spiritual responsibilities, the fallacy of "imposition of values," the problem of sin, and the need for both courage and humility.

Giving and Taking Help (Revised Edition)

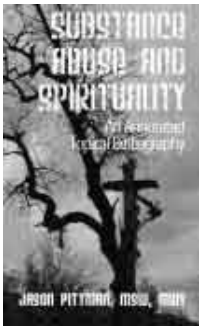
Alan Keith-Lucas. (1994). Botsford CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $18.00 U.S., $27.10 Canadian. ($14.50 or $21.85 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more).



Alan Keith-Lucas' *Giving and Taking Help*, first published in 1972, has become a classic in the social work literature on the helping relationship. *Giving and taking help* is a uniquely clear, straightforward, sensible, and wise examination of what is involved in the helping process—the giving and taking of help. It reflects on perennial issues and themes yet is grounded in highly practice-based and pragmatic realities. It respects both the potential and limitations of social science in understanding the nature of persons and the helping process. It does not shy away from confronting issues of values, ethics, and world views. It is at the same time profoundly personal yet reaching the theoretical and generalizable. It has a point of view.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SPIRITUALITY: AN ANNOTATED, TOPICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jason Pittman. (2003). Botsford, CT: NACSW. Available from NACSW only as an e-publication for $15.00 U.S., $22.50 Canadian. Available in regular hard copy version from Booksurge at www.Booksurge.com or 866-308-6235.



Jason Pittman's *Substance Abuse and Spirituality: An Annotated, Topical Bibliograply, Substance Abuse and Spirituality* provides access to a broad range of resources related to spirituality and addictions, treatment, and the ethical integration of faith and social work practice. The thoughtful annotations included in this work are based on a solid knowledge of the literature, the problem of addiction, and the spiritual and treatment issues involved.

Substance Abuse and Spirituality is carefully organized as well as exhaustively and meticulously researched, and is a valuable resource for social workers and related professionals interested in or working with addictions issues.

CHURCH SOCIAL WORK: HELPING THE WHOLE PERSON IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH

Diana R. Garland (Editor). (1992). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $18.00 U.S., $25.35 Canadian.

CHARITABLE CHOICE: THE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY SERVICE

David A. Sherwood (Editor). (2000). Botsford, CT: NACSW $12.00 U.S., $18.00 Cdn. ($9.60 or $14.50 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more)

Charitable Choice is primarily for use as a text in social work and social welfare classes to familiarize students with both the challenges and opportunities presented by "Charitable Choice," a key provision embedded in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. It raises significant issues and questions regarding the implementation of Charitable Choice, and documents initial efforts by states to implement the law, provides examples of church involvement in community so-

cial ministry, looks at characteristics and attitudes of staff at faith-based substance abuse treatment programs, and explores the experiences of volunteer mentors in social welfare programs.

HEARTS STRANGELY WARMED: REFLECTIONS ON BIBLICAL PASSAGES RELEVANT TO SOCIAL WORK
Lawrence E. Ressler (Editor). (1994). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $8.00 U.S., $12.05 Canadian. ($6.50 or $9.80 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more).

Hearts Strangely Warmed: Reflections on Biblical Passages Relevant to Social Work is a collection of devotional readings or reflective essays on 42 scriptures pertinent to social work. The passages demonstrate the ways the Bible can be a source of hope, inspiration, and conviction to social workers.

CALLED TO COUNSEL: A COUNSELING SKILLS HANDBOOK
John R. Cheydleur. (1999). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Order through NACSW for $24.95 U.S., $38.51, Cdn. ($19.99 or $30.85 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). Hardcover.

JUST GENEROSITY: A NEW VISION FOR OVERCOMING POVERTY IN AMERICA.
Ronald J. Sider. (1999). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. Order through NACSW for $11.99 U.S., $18.05 Cdn. ($9.60 or $14.45 Cdn for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more).

THE POOR YOU HAVE WITH YOU ALWAYS: CONCEPTS OF AID TO THE POOR IN THE WESTERN WORLD FROM BIBLICAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT
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ENCOUNTERS WITH CHILDREN: STORIES THAT HELP US UNDERSTAND AND HELP THEM
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A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A RECONCILIATION MODEL FOR SOCIAL WORKERS
Cathy Suttor and Howard Green. (1985). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. Social Work Practice Monograph Series. $10.00 U.S., $15.05 Cdn.

INTEGRATING FAITH AND PRACTICE: A HISTORY OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK
Alan Keith-Lucas. (1994). Botsford, CT: North American Association of Christians in Social Work. $8.00 U.S., $12.05 Cdn

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Course Objectives and Outline
Readings in the Social Work and Christianity
Home Study Program, Summer 2006 Issue

Program learning objective is to increase therapist's ability to apply the new and changing conceptual frameworks (referenced in the Table of Contents) to their practice with individuals, families and the systems within which these clients interact.

This home study program is appropriate for mental health professionals who have at least a master's degree in a mental health discipline or who are being supervised by such a professional.

By completing the Social Work and Christianity Home Study for the Summer 2006 issue, participants will:

1. Discover why justice should be the basic category for those who look at social work through the eyes of faith. Understand how this category differs from obligation, love or freedom — and the implications of this perspective for social workers. **("Social Work Through the Eyes of Faith")**

2. Learn about forms of denial and resistance which are uniquely expressed through Christian theology, doctrine, or culture. Understand the issues of the church as a whole as well as those of individual Christians struggling with substance dependence. Discover suggestions for interventive strategies with Christians who experience addictions. **("An Elephant in the Sanctuary: Denial and Resistance in Addicted Christians and Their Churches")**

3. Discover the results of an idiographic study to obtain information from custodial grandparents regarding issues that they identify as most pressing to grandparent caregiving. Hear stories relating to the grandparents' successes, their difficulties, and whether or not their needs can be met through the church and its social systems. **("'Older but Not Wiser': What Custodial Grandparents Want to Tell Social Workers About Raising Grandchildren")**

4. Discover how collaborations between social work practitioners and Black churches may be advantageous in preventing problems for at-risk and marginal African American youth. **("The Black Church as a Practice Resource: Networking on Behalf of At-risk African American Youth")**

5. Examine several key themes of Celtic spirituality, including monasticism, the soul friend, creation, simplicity, learning, mysticism, and pilgrimage, and understand their implications for social work practice. **("Celtic Spirituality: Resources for Social Work Practitioners")**

NACSW Home Study Evaluation Form

Issue of Social Work and Christianity: _____

Please rate this home study program according to the scale below by circling the appropriate number:

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Undecided 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

1. The learning objectives for this issue's articles were clearly outlined	1	2	3	4	5
2. Through participating in this home study I met the stated objectives	1	2	3	4	5
3. My knowledge of the topics addressed in this home study increased	1	2	3	4	5
4. The information I learned will be useful in my practice/work	1	2	3	4	5
5. The materials integrated faith and practice effectively	1	2	3	4	5
6. I would recommend this home study program to others	1	2	3	4	5

7. This content of this home study (based on my current level of training and licensure status) was:

❍ Too basic ❍ About right ❍ Too advanced

Please note any additional comments on an piece of paper and enclose it with your quiz. Thank you!

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY QUIZ: As you are reading the following articles you should be able to answer the questions below. This is an "open-book" exam. Use this page or a photocopy. Mark your answers by pressing down hard and completely filling in one circle per question. Then mail it with a $25 payment to JournaLearning International. *Please do not send cash.*

Program learning objective: Program learning objective is to increase the reader's ability to identify ways to integrate Christian faith and professional practice, and to identify professional concerns that have relevance to Christianity, by correctly completing a multiple choice quiz. Please contact the NACSW office at info@nacsw.org or 203-270-8780 (or JournaLearning if you prefer) if you need any special accommodations.

Summer 2006 Quiz

1. *In contrast to the wealthy or empowered, it is probable that the ___ of those without power and esteem is unjust.*

2. *Everybody that the contemporary social worker deals with fits under the categories of the downtrodden and the excluded.*

3. *God's ability to bring about the miracle of instant delivery:*

4. *Why did Juan resist involvement in any kind of accountability or social support relationship outside of treatment?*

5. *All of the following are noted as obstacles for grandparent caregivers within the school setting EXCEPT:*

6. *The article suggests all of the following EXCEPT ___ as ways the church can help grandparent caregivers.*

7. *The Clay Street Baptist Church family life center includes all of the following EXCEPT:*

8. *What strategy can social workers teach congregations so they may take on manageable but politically important issues and strengthen participation in the democratic process?*

9. *The Celtic perspective may best be described as:*

10. *The author's work with substance abusers and the mentally ill:*

Please print clearly, then return with completed quiz and a $25 payment to:
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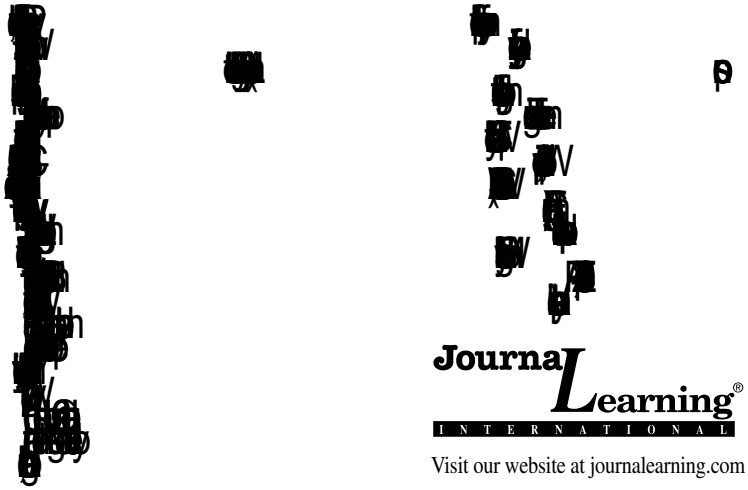

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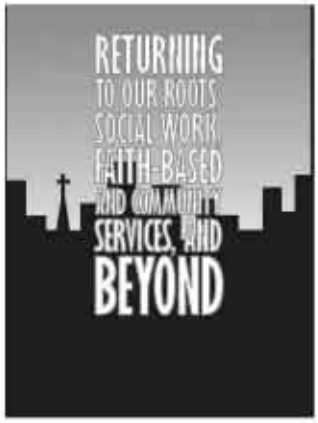

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- Administration: Includes but is not limited to management of organizations, grant writing, budgeting, and social work policy and planning
- Social Work Education: Includes but is not limited to teaching social work, accreditation issues, educational policy, and integrating faith and spirituality into the curriculum
- Promising Practices of FBOs & Congregations: Includes but is not limited to models of services and partnerships between FBOs, congregations, and public entities

For additional information about how to submit a proposal, please go to NACSW's website at http://www.nacsw.org/Call2007.htm or contact the NACSW office by email at info@nacsw.org or by phone at 888/426.4712 (tollfree).

Please note that proposal submissions are due by September 30, 2006.

All proposals are peer reviewed. Final decisions will be made and submitters notified in November 2006. Only a limited number of proposals can be selected.

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Submit manuscripts to *SWC* with a separate, unattached title page that includes the author's name, address, phone, email address, and an abstract of not more than 150 words, as well as a brief list of key words. Repeat the title on the first page of the text and double-space the text. Use the American Psychological Association Style Manual format (5th edition) for in-text references and reference lists. Submit manuscripts as email attachments to David_Sherwood@baylor.edu, preferably in Microsoft Word for PC.

At least three members of the editorial board will anonymously review manuscripts and recommend an acceptance decision based on the following criteria: relevance of content to major issues concerning the relationship of social work and Christianity, literary merit, conciseness, clarity, and freedom from language that conveys devaluation or stereotypes of persons or groups. The editor in chief will make final decisions.

Authors may also correspond with the editor-in-chief by phone or mail: David Sherwood, 110 Royal Springs Ln, Crawford, TX 76638, USA. Telephone: (254) 710-4483. Manuscripts submitted by mail must include an electronic copy as above, but on diskettes.

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- Supporting and encouraging members in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice through fellowship, education, and service opportunities.
- Articulating an informed Christian voice on social welfare practice and policies to the social work profession.
- Providing professional understanding and help for the social ministry of the church.
- Promoting social welfare services and policies in society which bring about greater justice and meet basic human needs.