“BUT TO BE LEARNED IS GOOD IF . . .”

On Friday April fourth the second semi-annual spring convention of AMCAP was held at the LDS Institute at the University of Utah. The theme was taken from 2 Nephi 9:28-29: “O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vanity, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.”

The single, three-hour program that followed Elder Featherstone’s talk and breakfast focused on “Putting the two together -- professional and religious life.” The three presenters were asked to “deal with the hard questions -- real cases with real dilemmas.” Following are the edited transcripts of their talks.

Discussion groups were held following their presentations in which participants responded to the issues raised by the speakers, then the entire group reconvened for reports from the discussion groups and responses from the presenters. A brief summary of this session follows the transcriptions of the three talks.

We trust that this report of the “mini-convention” will help us all to deal more effectively with the hard questions, the real cases and the real dilemmas we face in our practice as Mormon counselors and psychotherapists and to remember that “to be learned is good if [we] hearken unto the counsels of God.”

--Ed

E. Wayne Wright, Ed. D.*

This opportunity has mixed blessings today—both pleasurable and difficult. I have looked forward to the opportunity to share some of my experiences with you and with others of my colleagues—experiences in my professional practice and changes in my theoretical orientation about which I have come to feel much more strongly in the last seven or eight years, primarily as a result of my High Council assignment, as well as some unique professional experiences during these last several years. My High Council experiences have helped me become more cognizant of the spiritual aspect of our lives and the need for us to be aware of these more fully.

The difficulty I feel in today’s presentation is threefold: Aside from being the first of this panel to address a difficult topic, and having had Margaret Hoopes on our campus conducting some workshops which left our students all raving more about her more than about me—that’s difficult. But also to be on this program with a fulltime, stand-up comic, CarlFred Broderick, who just happens to be a spiritual leader as a stake president, is equally if not more difficult. And then the assignment itself, about which I called Gary Carson the other day, because my greatest dilemma in this preparation was trying to fit my presentation into the program description printed in the convention brochure, i.e.:

Panelists will attempt to illustrate how we struggle to integrate our professional practice into a gospel-centered base, with actual cases where a solution consistent with the gospel and scripturally supported is not present.

I have two dilemmas regarding the program assignment as stated above. To begin with I don’t struggle very much anymore trying to integrate these two roles. I used to, for many years; but experiences I have had in the last eight years have reduced this struggle to a minimal level for me. I will hope to clarify this for you as I bear my testimony about it. The other problem with the program description is that I could not think of any cases where “solutions consistent with the gospel were not really present.” With each case I thought of for this presentation, the real dilemma has been trying to get people to do what the scriptures or the gospel tell us to do; but in my mind the answers to these problems have typically been found within gospel principles and/or scriptural contexts. It reminded me of several years ago when I had the privilege to invite Elder Hartman Rector to speak to AMCAP; and when I went to talk with Elder Rector about AMCAP he said:

I don’t know anything about counseling but I do know that if I can diagnose the problem correctly, then I can tell people where to find the answers. . . . The answers are in the scriptures. . . . Sometimes it’s difficult to diagnose the problem, but when I can get the diagnosis determined, then I know where to find the answers.

I hadn’t thought about that very much until Elder Rector’s comment. So today, I would like to group my comments into two relatively broad kinds of issues which I think some of us struggle with at times, or have struggled with, and then I will try to illustrate these issues with one of two case examples.

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The first issue I would like to discuss is the possible need for us to make better differential diagnoses. That is, are we always dealing with mentally ill, neurotic, psychotic people, or are some really more spiritually sick—and in some cases even possessed by evil spirits? This is probably the most difficult professional-religious problem I struggle with in diagnosing problems within the context of the Church, particularly among LDS clients referred by priesthood leaders. The implications for treatment are obvious: that if, in fact, people are mentally ill and psychotic, then we prescribe counseling and psychotherapy for them. On the other hand, if they are spiritually sick then we may need to give them a priesthood blessing by anointing and laying on of hands. In some instances we may need to exorcise evil spirits or to rebuke the devil. All of these kinds of treatments are found in the scriptures. A brief discussion of one of my cases may illustrate this issue.

Recently my bishop called me and said, “Wayne, I need your help. I want you to accept a personal assignment as a home teacher to a young woman who just moved into our ward. She is beyond my knowledge of how to help, although my counselor and I gave her a blessing last night under frightening circumstances. The counselor was so terrified because of the influence of the adversary in her home that he could hardly wait for us to get out of the house.”

As soon as the bishop told me a few comments the girl had made to him, my thought was, “she is psychotic.” Since I was now going to be this woman’s home teacher (and my wife was to be my companion), I told my wife to gear up for a full-time crisis. And that was before I had met the young woman. That night my wife and I went to meet her, and while I was talking with her, she was obviously talking with other voices she appeared to be hearing—voices that were telling her things that were upsetting to her. On several occasions she shook her head, with a grimace on her face, and said quite loudly, “No, no! I can’t do that!”

There is no way that my bishop can really understand psychosis or mental illness in this case, or believe anything other than that this woman was under the influence of Lucifer. My bishop is a man of true faith. In his mind she was possessed by evil spirits. And I might add, I have had enough truly spiritual experiences with my bishop and know the power of his faith and priesthood, that I don’t feel like questioning his diagnosis in favor of mine.

The bishop had previously told me that he could not think of a greater combination to save this young woman, temporally and spiritually, than to bring together, in full force, the combined strengths of my professional knowledge and training, “with complete faith in our Maker and the full power of the Holy Priesthood—to know how to help that girl and to have the power to rebuke the evil influences that are controlling her life.” There was no question in my mind, particularly as I came to know her background and the problems of her family, that her psychological problems include long-term spiritual problems and conflicts with her LDS values. Furthermore, I do believe that much of her own life situations, and the influences of the others in her immediate situation, involve “evil” in the true sense of the word. But at times like this I have difficulty having the kind of complete faith that my bishop does, and I wonder at times if this is a product of my professional training. Possibly I could experience the bishop’s degree of faith if I were not a professionally trained mental health practitioner—a counselor, a psychologist. At the same time, I am a high counselor in the stake and I do have a strong testimony of the gospel and of the power of the priesthood. I have seen people healed by the priesthood and I have experienced it personally many times in my own life and with my family. So, I ask myself in cases like this, why not do what the bishop has faith in me to do, i.e., exorcise this girl and make her well (i.e. heal her) rather than thinking of her only from a professional viewpoint and seeing her as psychotic, since in the latter instance I then find myself trying to explain the nature of psychoses to the Bishop.

In this particular case, I told my wife to stay close to the woman the next two days and bring her to our home early the next morning because I knew, clinically, that the woman would likely be ready for the hospital within a day or two at the most. My wife did stay close to the woman throughout the following two days, during which she brought the woman and her two children to our home for meals and watchful companionship. By noon of the second day, the young woman was “splitting out”—shifting back and forth between two or three distinct personalities (as we view psychoses from our professional viewpoint). At that point my wife took the woman to the mental health center in Logan, where the woman had been seen in psychotherapy for quite a long time prior to my involvement as her home teacher. As soon as they saw her at the mental health center she was immediately hospitalized by her therapist. I was at the University at the time, but I knew my wife well enough to know that we then had two additional children, ages 5 and 7, in our care at home. And we did have these children for the next two months.

The issue in the above case is that the woman is being treated as if she is psychotic; and the question is whether, at what time, or in which kinds of instances or similar cases, may it be more appropriate (or helpful) for us to really have enough faith to rebuke evil spirits, as advocated by my bishop in this case?

There is considerable theoretical basis for this kind
of confusion and uncertainty about mental illness versus
the influence of Satan. The Church has noted for a long
time the tendency of professionals to rely more on
professional training than on inspiration; and many of
us in the professions have been critical of the Church's
position on this. A number of Church leaders have said
that we as professionals try to fit our religion into our
professional training, and we therefore see some
mistrust of "professionals" among some of the
Brethren, who have encouraged us to try to fit our
professional lives into the framework of the gospel
rather than to explain gospel principles and/or Church
concerns in terms of our professional training and
perceptions of therapy. As I have been able (or willing)
to subordinate my professional position to inspired
priesthood authority and to utilize the gospel in my
professional practice, more so in recent years than
earlier in my career, it has been helpful to me personally
and, I believe, to many of my clients. Long ago Carl
Jung (1933) said:

It is safe to say that every one of my patients fell ill
because he had lost that which the living religions of
every age have given to their followers. And none of
them has really been healed who did not regain this
spiritual outlook.

Much professional literature throughout our
training has reminded us that we should not let our own
values enter into our therapy with clients—that we
should not try to influence others with our values or
beliefs. Other literature, however, suggests the need for
us to be "authentic" and "congruent" in helping
relationships, and it becomes apparent to us that we
cannot really keep our values out of an authentic,
congruent relationship—"genuine, loving sincere one.
So if we bear our testimonies at times to people we see in
counseling, we are quite likely to reflect our values.
Many counselors, particularly trainees and younger, less
experienced practitioners, typically disagree with or at
least react quite negatively to a definition of counseling
that I leaned from Alan Anderson a long time ago. He
suggested that "counseling (or therapy) is a relationship
in which we try to get people to do what we want them
to do." I submit to you that this is more true than most
counselors are willing to acknowledge. Or if we wish to
modify this definition somewhat, we might say that
"counseling is a relationship in which we try to get
people to do what we think is best for them." Within
such a framework and definition of counseling I have
no trouble at all in asking people where they are with
regard to the Church and in bearing my testimony about
the healing powers of the gospel. I do believe, however,
that while we typically expose our values to clients, we
need not, and should not impose our values upon them.
The imposition of values implies rejection, ridicule,
distain or some other form of withdrawal from those
who do not accept our counsel or who do not think or
believe as we do. Obviously such a stance does not
make for helping relationships. Bearing one's
testimony about the healing process, however, is a
different matter entirely—quite possibly a responsibility
that we too often neglect or avoid completely.

In his book, The Doctor and the Soul, Victor
Frankl (1955) said:

Today it appears more important to remind man that he
has a spirit, that he is a spiritual being. Man lives in
three dimensions—the somatic, the mental and the
spiritual. The spiritual cannot be ignored for it is what
makes us human... Proper diagnosis can be made only
by someone who can see the spiritual side of man. (pp
X, XVIII)

Frankl then goes on to talk about his concept of
Logotherapy and discusses Logotherapy as a process of
healing souls. He points out that dealing with this issue
places professionals in a position where it becomes
necessary for us to take a stand on the question of
values and he suggests that we have a dual role—of being
either in a "medical ministry" or of being "secular
priests".

One of my former students who became interested
in this concept of therapy through a number of
discussions that we had about it has since written an
article entitled, "Soul Searching in Psychotherapy"
(Gettis, 1976). Gettis references Jerome Frank's book,
Persuasion and Healing, in which Frank indicates that
what is common with all persons seeking psychotherapy
is that they are "demoralized", and in this sense Frank
suggests that a "demoralized" person is deprived of the
spirit, disheartened, bewildered or confused. Jourard
(1964) proposes as a general proposition that;

Events, relationships, or transactions which give a
person a sense of identity, or worth, of hope and of
purpose of existence are 'inspiriting,' while those that
make a person feel unimportant, worthless, hopeless,
low in self esteem, isolated and frustrated, and those
that make him feel that existance is absurd are
'dispiriting'. The hypothesis is that dispiriting events
render an organism vulnerable to the always present
forces of illness while inspiriting events mobilize the
forces of wellness latent in all organisms. (page76)

In a second article by Gettis (1976), entitled
"Psychotherapy as Exorcism", Gettis discusses
Jourard's notion in context with similar thoughts from
other authors. I submit to you that as members of
AMCAP, and as LDS practitioners trying to find a
professional orientation consistent with LDS gospel
teachings, I think we need to consider at appropriate
times the kinds of differential diagnoses suggested
above and thus being willing to risk possible ridicule of
those who might think that we have "flipped out" if we
suggest that we may at times be dealing with evil spirits
rather than just plain mental illness, e.g. psychoses. I
personally am not so sure which is which at times because I have seen many of our spiritual leaders heal people through faith and priesthood blessings, and sometimes with individuals who have not been helped through extensive psychotherapy by professionals.

Further, I have many LDS clients who have come to me for counseling, referred by bishops, who have asked me for a priesthood blessing on some occasions rather than the usual counseling session. Thus, I am becoming more and more convinced that we cannot any longer ignore the difficult questions related to the diagnostic issue of mental illness versus spirit possession and the role and potential power of the priesthood in conjunction with our professional roles. I believe we must address these issues professionally but also from within our gospel-oriented values and beliefs. For too long we have typically been unwilling to do so, at least openly within our professions, either because of our own uncertainty or disbelief, or out of the fear of professional ridicule. I am at the point in my own thinking at this time that we need to attend to this issue more directly and more openly than we have been willing to do in the past. With many of my cases (although I don't initiate it with every client), as my clients start to talk about or make some reference to church teachings or to things that let me know they are members of the Church, when I hear people talking about things that sound like guilt because they are not being what they feel they ought to be, and when they reference something related to the Church, then I say, "Where are you at this point with the Church?" When they tell me, I ask them if that is where they want to be, and then I try to help them to some extent by bearing my testimony about the healing influence of "getting straight with the Church." I have no hesitancy in these cases to say, "In my judgment your psychological problems are related to your spiritual problems and until you get spiritually well the psychological problems are likely to persist." Not all people hear this very well the first time, but I have become much more direct in saying it than I used to be.

The second major dilemma for me, which I had intended to present more adequately today than time will permit at this point, is the broad issue (and questions) regarding the extent to which we should extend our interventions beyond the typical therapy hour or normal contact in our office during a regular counseling session. At this time I will note the problem only briefly and hope there may be opportunity to respond to any questions about the issue if time permits later in the conference today. For me, this question gets into the dual role I have in being a professional psychologist and also being a high counselor in my stake and with the assignment for the Personal Welfare Services Program in the stake. In my latter role, all nine bishops in our stake send their most difficult cases to me (ones that typically have the bishops "going under" themselves), and I then have a problem of getting inundated myself, and finding it difficult to not "go under" also from the heavy load of very time-consuming, bishop-referred cases--most of which are difficult, often very urgent situations. But I do have that dual role, and everyone of you here who has a similar role in the Church has such a dual role. To what extent, then, should we extend beyond the therapy hour or the therapy office? As I raise this question I am thinking of the following kinds of alternative interventions and extra-office involvements with clients and significant others: (1) trying to influence people to live the gospel as a way of getting better; (2) getting the clients permission to discuss their situation with their bishop or help facilitate their willingness to see their bishop; (3) getting their permission to discuss their situation with their bishop; (4) discussing the concepts of sin and guilt, where appropriate, along with principles of repentance and forgiveness; (5) encouraging commitment to church activities and social involvement with potential friends in the church; (6) involving "significant others" as an adjunctive support system in the therapy process, etc.

I could tell you of several cases in which I am extensively involved outside of my office at the present time, but I will only have time for one particular case as an example. A young couple came to me, referred by a pediatrician to ask what to do about their four-year old daughter who had made a comment to her mother (and described in very graphic terms) about a situation she (the four year old) had experienced with her uncle--a situation which, if true as described, would apparently constitute child molesting, probably an act of sodomy upon the little girl by her mother's brother-in-law. My perception of the couple's presenting problem was that they had not come in for the purpose of reporting the uncle or to cause trouble for him. At least they did not indicate this in any of my three interviews with them. Their primary expressions of concern centered in wanting to know how to help their little girl and how to answer questions the little girl is raising with them about the purported incident. They also wondered how this might impact upon the little girl as she gets older. I am reasonably convinced that they had no desire for vindictiveness in coming to me about the problem. They were not there to find out how to bring charges against the brother-in-law. This question did not arise.

During the first session I asked their permission to discuss the situation with their own bishop and for an introduction from their bishop to the brother-in-law's bishop, in order to also discuss the matter with the brother-in-law's bishop. I had the couple sign release-
of-information forms to this effect. We have not evidence of guilt, only what the little girl tells her parents, which I tend to believe. Also, I asked all six of my colleagues what they would be inclined to think if they were to hear this kind of graphic description from a four-year old little girl. All six of them said they would believe it, primarily because of the unique and specific description of the reported incident and the spontaneous manner in which the little girl had mentioned it. We also concurred in our general presumption of the relative honesty and innocence of four-year olds in matters like this.

I pursued the information I had with both bishops and the bishop of the girl's uncle subsequently called the man in for a personal interview regarding the report. The man (age 25) professed total innocence of any such incident with the little girl. His bishop and I had previously discussed the matter and had agreed that if the man did not confess any wrong doing to the bishop, that the bishop would refer the man to me and ask if he would be willing to see me on a voluntary basis. The man agreed to see me and showed no sign of malice or resistance in doing so. I subsequently saw the man (at no fee) and asked him if he would take the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). My invitation for him to take the test was at the end of an extensive session with him (2 1/2 hours). In my judgment the man's MMPI profile is "suspect," although it would probably not stand up in civil or criminal court action. Nevertheless, to me, the MMPI along with my interview and "clinical intuition" led me to believe that there is a reasonably high possibility of the man's guilt.

The man's bishop is now saying to me that since we have gone this far with the matter, it appears that someone is apparently lying and that we therefore cannot drop the matter unresolved. The bishop suggests that he and I get both couples together and confront all of them in a joint session. Obviously, this is far beyond the purpose for which the girl's mother and father came to see me initially, and my involvement at this point is on a moral and ethical level rather than merely a professional one. In other words, while the couple ostensibly came to me primarily to know how best to deal with concerns expressed by their young daughter, I felt very strongly that I should go beyond my professional role in this case, to involve and be involved with both bishops, not only because of the possibility of child molesting, but also because of the damaging effects the whole matter was having on the relationships among the parents, grandparents and inlaws of several families.

There are many other kinds of cases like this one which we all encounter, and in which I have found it helpful to reach out beyond the therapy hour, not only with the individuals who come for help, but where I ask them who else they are willing for me to involve, or who else they think it might be helpful to involve in seeking a solution to the problem. I am of the opinion that we can often maximize not only the potential of our professional expertise, but hopefully the inspiration of the Lord, also, in dealing with very difficult and troublesome issues. I invite each of you to consider the extent to which you, or any of us, ought to go beyond the regular therapy process we conduct in our offices, or the extent to which we find ourselves at times having to do so out of a sense of moral conscience rather than merely performing our "professional role" and thus staying more comfortably apart and distant from the complex issues which arise in cases like the one I noted above.
One other brief comment and then I will stop. Another injunction (or thought) which I have shared freely with my clients the past several years came from Elder Hartman Rector when he visited our stake conference about three years ago. In our priesthood leadership meeting at that time Elder Rector told us that President Kimball had called the Brethren together and told them that “adultery is not cause for divorce”. I did a “double take” in my mind for a moment, and then Elder Rector added, “adultery is cause for forgiveness and repentence. The person who has to repent may need to get outside the Church for a while to do it, but the one who must learn forgiveness also has an equally, if not more difficult task.” I have had frequent occasion to present this notion to couples with whom I have worked over the years, but I have really done so only in the last few years as I have become more comfortable with and committed to the combining of my priesthood and professional roles—after Elder Rector’s visit to our stake and his inspiring message to our priesthood leadership. So now, in the immediate case I discussed above, while I am pursuing the possible guilt of a man suspected of child molesting, I am also saying to the mother of the little girl, “If your brother-in-law is found guilty of molesting your daughter will you be able to learn the principle of forgiveness if he repents?” She looked shocked and said to me, “Will I have to do that? My response was, “If he repents, yes.”

According to the teachings of President Kimball the same is true for a wife or husband whose spouse is unfaithful. As I encounter more and more potential divorce situations today, and when one spouse comes to me wanting a divorce because his or her partner has been unfaithful, I find myself quoting Elder Rector, saying “According to President Kimball, adultery is not cause for divorce. You can justify it, you may have adequate cause to take this action and your stake president or bishop will possibly go along with your decision, but learning forgiveness may be your task at this point, provided your spouse is willing to go the full route of repentance.”

I have tried to present today some of my current thinking about a few issues—dilemmas—that are prominent for me. I invite your consideration of these issues and any questions you may want to raise, either about the issues themselves or my discussion of them. I bear you my testimony that I personally have grown as I have been more willing to use the power and influence of my priesthood and testimony of the gospel within my professional practice, when doing so seems appropriate to a particular counseling situation and when I sense that it will be accepted, or at least heard by the client. I know, without any question in my mind or my heart, that as I am able to bear my testimony to those with whom I work, along with presenting my professional expertise as a psychologist—and if I convince my clients, in some degree, to believe what I am telling them, i.e. that living the gospel or scriptural principles will facilitate better solutions to life’s problems, (which I believe is true in therapy situations for non-Mormons as well as Mormons)—then I feel that I help people better in that sense as a professional. From this viewpoint, I have found that many processes we call “therapy” (and espouse as professionals) are not always therapeutic. Conversely, there are many other types of “helping” relationships and processes (including spiritual relationships and religious experiences) which are not “therapy,” per se, but which can be, and very often are “therapeutic”, i.e. helpful in the true sense of that term.

I bear this personal testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

References:

Jung, C.G. Modern Man in Search of a Soul, 1933.


material I faced a dilemma immediately, that of confidentiality. As I look into your faces and see how many of you are my friends and how many of you know me in some role, I am very aware that the people with whom I do therapy, and from whom the case material would come, may possibly be known by you and may know you. Let me illustrate my point. I have a teaching appointment at Brigham Young University. Consequently, I'm not paid to do therapy, but rather teach classes about therapy and supervise students in training while they do therapy. In order to keep my therapy skills current I carry three or four private cases. Usually the people who want to see me do not want to be in the Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic, nor do they want to be observed and known in any way. For example, a woman called last week and said that she needed to see me but that she was suspicious of therapists generally. She emphasized that she did not want to become case material in one of my classes. She indicated that I had been highly recommended by a friend, but she wanted assurance that I would not use her for case material. I assured her that I would not. As is often true I found that this woman is related to someone I know well. She exemplifies the dilemma of confidentiality in a Mormon community.

Thus the challenge facing me in this presentation. Minimize the political, religious, social, educational network we Mormons have. My task is to disguise information so that you won't recognize people or to have enough faith in you that if you do you will think not about the individuals, but only the examples given.

This dilemma of confidentiality faces me and my students continuously. What to do with all the information we have about people! Where does it fit? What do I do with it as a therapist, as a teacher, as a friend, as a spiritual leader, as a colleague?

My second dilemma has to do with training people to be therapists. In our training program we have returned missionaries, former bishops, former institute and seminary teachers, and members ranging widely in church experience and testimony. In addition we have non-member students with beliefs in God and various religious experiences. Some from both groups have established patterns of working with people correlated with mind sets about their relationship with God and their ability to help people change. My dilemma is how to teach them new information, new possibilities, without appearing to desire to move them away from the gospel or appear to be not gospel oriented myself.

The following example will demonstrate what I mean. I teach a graduate class, Introduction to Marriage and Family Therapy. The last objective deals with male and female roles and related issues and therapy. Several times teacher evaluations took place immediately after this objective and before the end of class when we integrated all of the course material. A number of males in class rated me as having a low spiritual influence in class or of having little or no testimony. I learned to announce before we began the objective that my testimony was not going to change in two or three weeks as they read and discussed this objective.

I learned from this and several other experiences that if my behavior doesn't match the expectations of my students, and/or my clients, my motivations and my testimony may be questioned. As a teacher I value my role of raising questions, of bringing out issues, of looking at a situation from a number of different perspectives. I also value my testimony and my relationship to God. Yet, I find that I and my testimony will be questioned. It's a dilemma to me, not knowing when I'm going to be misread and questioned in this way. My understanding about dilemmas is that I may present them to you, but I don't have to solve them for you. So, I'll move on.

The third dilemma relates to one that Wayne talked about--is it a spiritual problem or is it a psychological one. For me the question is how does therapy fit with the gospel. Often we are taught to think in terms of black and white. To illustrate this point let me read from Brigham Young (Journal of Discourses, Volume 9, p. 121-125):

We are very apt, through our traditions, former associations, and notions of things and ideas, to attribute every act of man and every manifestation of mankind to an invisible source — the good or the evil. God is the author of all good; and yet, if you rightly understood yourselves, you would not directly attribute every good act you perform to our Father in heaven, nor to his Son Jesus Christ, nor to the Holy Ghost; neither would you attribute every evil act of a man or woman to the Devil or his spirits or influences; for man is organized by his Creator to act perfectly independently of all influences there are above or beneath. Those influences are always attending him, and are ready to dictate and direct — to lead him into truth or to lead him to destruction. But is he always guided by those influences in every act? He is not. It is ordained of God that we should act independently in and of ourselves, and the good is present when we need it. If we will ask for it, it is with us. If we yield to temptation, the evil is present, and nigh enough to lead every son and daughter of Adam to destruction, if they give way to it. But it is the design of the Almighty that we should act independently. Then, when you see a person endowed by the Holy Ghost, you need not expect him to look and act precisely as you do.

If we accept this as true then we need to teach therapists to act independently and yet present themselves in such a way that they can be open to the influence of the Spirit.

When I came out to BYU in 1970 controversy about how psychotherapy fits into the church was still
I was disturbed by rumblings on campus manifesting distrust between religious leaders and psychologists. Add to that picture the fact that my non-LDS colleagues did not want me to move to BYU. They wondered what I could do there as a psychologist and thought my usefulness would be minimal.

As I listened to the rumblings on campus I began to wonder too. I decided to take the problem to the Lord. Essentially I said to him, “If what I have been taught to do and if who I am is useful to you, then you send me the people you want me to work with and direct me in what to do with them.” I’m in a position in which I’m not reliant for a living on the number of clients I get or whether they can pay me for services. Once I made that offer I have had people sent to me by the Lord. I have known very clearly that this person or this family is who the Lord wants me to work with.

I remember very clearly the first time this happened to me. It was on a Monday after a weekend of introspection about being overloaded and overworked. I had resolved to limit the number of speaking engagements I accepted and to cut down on the number of clients I would see. I walked out of my class and there waiting for me was a young woman whom I had met that weekend at an informal gathering. She asked to talk to me for a moment. In my office she said that the reason she attended that gathering was to meet me. Then she presented her problem and it was a sticky one. Though I was sympathetic I knew that I didn’t want it, nor did it fit in with my new resolutions. I hastily thought about therapists who could handle her particular problem. I opened my mouth to tell her that I knew she needed help and that it was available through another therapist. That isn’t what I said. I said I would help her. And at that moment I knew the Lord was directing her and he was directing me. I had no choice if I meant to keep my promise to the Lord. She was the first of many.

Very often their problems seem insurmountable and I wonder how I will find the right direction. However, it is evident to me that I get additional help with them. I get stuck, as I do with other cases, but not for long, and sometimes the resolutions are startling. As Wayne mentioned, some cases don’t fit the 50 minutes once a week in my office mold. I find myself in their homes, on a mountain side, or sitting on a sun deck. I spend two hours, eight hours, or a 24 hour marathon. I work with the entire family or with part.

One of the biggest differences is that I love them as friends, as my brothers and sisters. That’s a dilemma for me. Are they friends? What’s the difference between me and them? Do I just have some skills they don’t have? How do I know when therapy is over? How do I shift my role into something else, and what should it be?

I’m not taking the time to share some of the events or directions these experiences have taken me. But, often those people are still special people in my life. We may be a part of a group and someone will ask me how I know so and so. While I’m gulping and wondering what to say the other person speaks right out. She/he explains that I was once her/his therapist and that he/she was directed by the Lord to me. I think this is one of the dilemmas in our culture. How do we—or do we always—separate friendship and therapy? I know that it’s wise to do so for some clients. It has not been that way for me for those people who have been sent directly to me by the Lord.

These are the dilemmas I’ve chosen to share with you and to invite you to think about. I know that the faith I have in myself, in the Lord, and in people’s ability to change lead me into and out of these dilemmas. I learn from each excursion and am grateful for them. I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Carlfred B. Broderick, Ph. D.*

I really feel very vulnerable today because my dark fantasy is that most of you won’t agree with how I dealt with this case or that those who do agree will do so for the wrong reasons. I don’t see any way that I can win or you can win, it’s a double bind for both of us. But it seemed like a good one to share because I can’t believe that it’s something that others don’t run in to. Let me just say that the problem that I’ve encountered is that people don’t come packaged right for me.

Recently I’ve been going around doing the White House Family Conference circuit and all too often I find that the people whose values I’m in favor of I don’t like. When I run into people who seem to be my kind of people, people that I like, they turn out to be pro-abortion, etc. The dilemma I want to share with you is that kind of dilemma.

A year or so ago a couple came to me. Actually the wife was more or less dragged into this by her husband. He was a tall, good looking, dynamic, charismatic, successful, tanned, faithful Latter-day Saint, loyal to
the Church, from a long pioneer family background. He had married a girl that was younger than himself by ten or twelve years, not a member of the Church but he converted her, he swept her into the Church and into the marriage. And they were sealed in the temple, although according to her it never quite took with her. He insisted that's not true. He insisted that she was a good Latter-day Saint for 10 years then she had a romantic flirtation with someone which he dealt with by setting private detectives on her and tapping the telephone and confronting her with the tapes, and so on. It was always kind of a father-daughter relationship (except that they had a great sex life), but for the most part he trained her and he taught her. And it included some rebelliousness on the part of the “child.” On his side he kept her out on very short rein; he didn’t give her much money for herself or the children or the house. She complained that they never had enough money to furnish the house because he was busy buying the boat and so forth. You can fill in the rest of her complaints. He was very critical of anything she did that wasn’t right in the mode of the Mother-in-Zion syndrome. Well, when she got her children mostly raised (they had 5 kids) she went back to school and found she just thrived on it. She went into a professional field dominated by men. She was bright and she had good mathematical ability and she got A’s and everybody looked up to her and thought she was a wonder and sort of courted her. It quite turned her head in some ways and she became again romantically involved and finally sexually involved with another student who was younger than she was by as much as she was younger than her husband but who made her feel wonderful, who looked up to her, who thought she was terrific in every way. She became his mentor and helped him through school. He adored her, didn’t look down on her or treat her like a child or cut her allowance or try to tap her telephone, etc. She became sexually involved with him not so she could live with him because she didn’t have any fantasies that that would work out but as a statement of her independence from her old life. She left her family and entered into a zestful, lusty, re-discovery of herself, rejecting the gospel and her family.

It was at this point that her husband brought her in for me to straighten out and bring back into the fold. He wasn’t up to therapy for himself. He brought her in to be therapized. After 2 or 3 weeks we began to meet separately because joint sessions didn’t work very well. He would sit there directing the session and I would get more and more resentful. In the separate session all he would talk about was how he and I could be co-conspirators to get her back into the gospel. He knew that I had to do that because I was a stake president and had no choice, so he could count on me as an ally.

But it seemed to me that he did terrible things. For example, he broke into her house and hid (he wouldn’t tell me where—under the bed or in the closet) and witnessed one of their love making scenes and taped it and played it back to her. He was constantly peeking in windows when she was with her boyfriend.

She, on the other hand, was a person who was in some ways a model client. She was in some pain because although she was really enjoying her freedom and her new found sense of worth and so on, her children with their father and everybody else in the Church had renounced her and wouldn’t have anything to do with her. Her initial tactic was to tough all of this out but she had a lot of pain underneath (I’m good at getting at people’s pain). So for me she was a great client. She worked hard trying to figure out who she was and what she was doing and what she wanted.

From time to time he would get her to come back for a while (they were sexually great together) and then he would do something outrageous. Eventually, as you can see, I became counted as her therapist and his adversary. I became her strength to deal with his strength. As a result, he came to feel, I think still feels, that I ought to be hauled before a court, a church court and/or a civil court or both or perhaps a mafia contract would be nice. From a therapeutic point of view she is doing very well. That is, she feels stronger, she’s making better choices, she’s no longer promiscuous in her sexual activity, she’s taking better care of herself, she’s back in contact with her children, she’s re-established one by one her contact with them. But she’s still living a life that isn’t close to the Church. I’ve not borne my testimony to her although she knows very well where I stand. She’s very grateful for the therapy she’s received and she thinks of me as someone who helped her in a time of need and really saved her.

On the other hand, of course, he’s mad at me and feels that I have sustained her and supported her in her immoral life style, that I have irreversibly blown the opportunity that I’ve had to bring her back into the fold. In fact, from his point of view I’ve strengthened her in resisting the efforts he has made to bring her back in. And that’s the dilemma. I like her; I don’t like him. From time to time he would get her to come back for a while (they were sexually great together) and then he would do something outrageous. Eventually, as you can see, I became counted as her therapist and his adversary. I became her strength to deal with his strength. As a result, he came to feel, I think still feels, that I ought to be hauled before a court, a church court and/or a civil court or both or perhaps a mafia contract would be nice. From a therapeutic point of view she is doing very well. That is, she feels stronger, she’s making better choices, she’s no longer promiscuous in her sexual activity, she’s taking better care of herself, she’s back in contact with her children, she’s re-established one by one her contact with them. But she’s still living a life that isn’t close to the Church. I’ve not borne my testimony to her although she knows very well where I stand. She’s very grateful for the therapy she’s received and she thinks of me as someone who helped her in a time of need and really saved her.

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Now I feel the need to add that I’m really not a bad stake president. I love the Lord and there are times when the Spirit of the Lord is very powerfully present. Even in my practice I have told people they need blessings in the worst way. Since I can’t charge for those sessions it costs me $60 everytime I give somebody a blessing. And I consider that a small thing.

In any case, the point is I feel the Lord uses me as an instrument in many instances. Did he use me as an instrument in this instance or was I acting out of some set of transferrences or counter-transferrences that have
nothing to do with that? Was I simply weak and unable
to do the things that a good Latter-day Saint, a
courageous Latter-day Saint, would have done—busting
through her defenses with the Spirit, dragging her
kicking and screaming back into the fold? I have a
sense of peace about that myself but I have no idea if
anybody else in the world except her would ever agree.

And that is the dilemma that I am trusting might
correspond to some of your own experiences. I do want
to bear witness, though, that I know that this is the true
Church and that the gospel is of infinite value to
everyone. It’s just that sometimes that doesn’t seem to
be the only issue that I’m dealing with. I leave that
dilemma with you and hope that you’ll come up with
charitable evaluations.

SUMMARY SESSION

Because of time limitations, only two people were
invited to give reports of group discussions: Steven R.
Covey and Glen Grygla. Brother Covey indicated that
in his group they focused primarily on the case reported
by Brother Broderick. They felt that it was a very good
case, in that it represented the dilemma very well—the
idealism of Gospel standards vs. the realism of bigotry
and adultery. He reported (with tongue in cheek) that
they didn’t know who to excommunicate: the bigot or
the adulteress. They finally decided to excommunicate
Carlfred for loving the adulteress and hating the bigot!

In a more serious vein, he reported the feelings of
the members of his group to the effect that ultimately
the dilemma of integrating our religious convictions
with our professional practice is a personal one which
we face in our homes as well as in our professional lives
and that each of us must resolve it personally. There is a
“comfort zone” within which we operate which is
transferred to our role as counselors. This comfort zone
is a big factor in dealing with these cases. The
resolution of the dilemma involves an effort to work
closely with the Spirit. The more a person works on his
relationship with the Savior, the more power he/she has
to separate the person from the person’s
deed, to love both the bigot and the adulteress
unconditionally and to come up with a far more
accurate diagnosis of the situation.

Brother Grygla raised five questions that were
formulated by his group for the panelists:

1. Would you have treated your clients differently
    if you had not been a stake president or a high
counselor? Why has therapy changed for you since you
    received your priesthood calling?
2. Was the case of sodomy reported? When do
    we decide to report or refer?
3. Do we ever release information without
    permission?
4. Who has stewardship to determine what
    therapy is to be given? The client, the counselor, or the
    bishop? May we, as counselors, ever counsel the bishop?
5. Regarding becoming a friend to our clients,
    how far should we go?

He then invited Brothers Broderick and Wright to respond to the first question.

Brother Broderick: I get into a lot of trouble by
not being a different person in different roles. My goal
is to be integrated, to be the same in all my roles. I’ve
learned a lot from the Lord in my role as stake
president. I am forced into the presence of the Lord. I
have changed as a person. We don’t work as hard to get
the Spirit in our private lives as we do in our appointed
lives. When you have the Spirit with you it radiates.
That is enhanced by my calling. My prayer is that I’ll
find a way after I am released to keep that Spirit with
me.

Brother Wright: I don’t ever raise the question of
religion until I hear it coming through from them. If
they don’t raise the issue, it never comes up. My
therapy hasn’t changed drastically. I still teach my
students not to impose their values on their clients, but
it’s alright to expose them. My testimony has grown
and I have become more open and willing to make
statements when they give me clues that they are
receptive. For example, I recently received a letter from
a woman who thanked me for telling her (as she
remembered it) that she would never be mentally well
until she healed herself spiritually. She said that she
thought at the time that I was a fool, but now she
realizes that I was right. She reported that she is making
good progress in both areas now. To me that is a
testimony.

Sister Hoopes responded by invitation to Question
#5: When clients get to the point where they no longer
want to take but to give, we need to learn how to accept.
But it is still a dilemma for me. I need to increase my
capacity to love, to receive. I not only give therapy, I
am in therapy—if you know what I mean. I used to tell
my groups as we terminated that I loved them and that I
wanted to have contact with them. But then my
telephone would start to ring and with all my other
responsibilities I couldn’t handle it. My first impulse
was to not get close, to not let people in, to not give and
not to receive. But then I decided no, that’s not what I
wanted—I wanted to live each moment with each person
for whatever I could give and for whatever I could get. That's what earth life is all about. We're here to partake of whatever is here at the moment. So I would tell them, "I want you to know that I love you and that I value what you've given me and I do want to have contact with you but it's impossible for me to do that and continue to do what I'm doing." In some way that's still the same dilemma that I have. How much contact am I going to have with this person who is now a part of me and I'm a part of them? If you can resolve it, good luck.

The following responses were given to Questions #2 and #3:

Brother Wright: The Church is very specific about the importance of keeping confidences. I would not go to a stake president or a bishop with anything without the permission of the client. We must honor and respect the confidences of the client. That's absolute.

Brother Broderick: As ecclesiastic authorities we are not required by law to report to civil authorities. A recent letter from the First Presidency instructs us not to reveal confidences.

Limitations of time precluded further comments or responses to the questions. Readers are invited to submit their comments about these and/or related questions either to the Journal or to the members of the panel.