

ATHENS AND JERUSALEM, THE UNIVERSITY AND RELIGIOUS COUNSELLING

EDWARD C. SHEA

*Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario*

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between the secular university and religion with special reference to religious counselling. The contention is that there is a new spirit of cooperation between the university and religion and that there is thus a need for a chaplain's presence on the campus. There is an examination of the kinds of counselling that a chaplain does. The paper concludes with some suggestions for the religious denominations as they relate to the academic community.

Résumé

Cet article présente une esquisse des relations entre l'université comme entité séculaire et la religion, et surtout le service de counseling qu'elle offre. On constate qu'il existe maintenant une coopération toute neuve entre les universités et la religion; donc, il devrait y avoir une aumônerie sur le campus universitaire. L'auteur présente les divers genres de counseling que fait l'aumônier. Il suggère plusieurs idées que peuvent adopter les dénominations religieuses vis-à-vis le milieu universitaire.

In approximately 195 A.D., a lawyer named Tertullian converted to Christianity and became a very influential spokesman for that new religion. At one point in his career he was asked how philosophy should relate to Christianity. His answer was, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (Nelson, 1971, p. 30). This response was indicative of the split between education and religion at that time.

The dethronement of theology in the university began with the Renaissance. Religion, however, continued to exert a definite influence on the campus. Many universities continued to be run under denominational auspices, and an effort was made to impart Christian values to the students in most universities. In an advertisement in the *New York Mercury* on June 3, 1754, the formation of the College of New York was announced as follows: "The chief thing that is aimed at in this College is to teach and engage the children to know God in Jesus Christ, and to love and serve him in all Sobriety, Godliness, and Righteousness of life, with a perfect Heart and a willing mind; and to train them up in all virtuous Habits, and all such useful knowledge as may render them creditable to their Families and Friends, Ornaments to their country, and useful

to the publick Weal in their generations." (Friedlander, 1967, p. 202).

Within three hundred years the university changed from a religious institution to what John D. Cannon referred to as "a soulless giant" (Friedlander, 1967, p. 202). I do not intend to examine the historical processes that brought about this secularization of the university. It was a difficult task for higher education to free itself from religious domination, and for many years the secular campus was generally suspicious of matters religious. The churches, in turn, looked upon the university as an interloper and as a place where their young people lost their faith. Campus ministers in the past were tailored to providing safe havens for students from the pagan influences of the secular campus. The marriage of the sacred and the secular on campus in the Middle Ages ended in divorce in the twentieth century. Thus the trend in education has moved from a split between religion and learning in Tertullian's time, to a union of the two in later centuries, and back to a split in the 1960's.

There are indications that the cleavage between the church and the university is changing in the 1970's, that a new *rapprochement* is developing between the two. What are some of

these signs? College courses in religion, for example, are at an all-time high. Names like Kierkegaard, Buber, Tillich and Teilhard are commonplace on course syllabi. Attendance at worship services which are geared to the students is climbing. There are more Bible studies and prayer groups than ever before. The Catholic Charismatic Movement, which began at Duquesne University in 1967, continues to grow.

We have also witnessed the popularity of eastern religions, of yoga, and of transcendental meditation. Students are much more socially aware in the 1970's than their counter-parts of a decade ago. This social concern is often bound up with religious belief, especially in the form of the Theology of Liberation. It is generally agreed that many students are dissatisfied with a completely secular orientation and are searching for something transcendental to give meaning to their lives.

The general disillusionment with science and technology which is evident today has caused more than a few persons to take another look at what the churches have to say. Another important factor is the ecumenical movement; because denominations are showing that they would rather work together than compete in proselytizing, their presence is less inimical to the university environment.

I do not suggest that a great wave of religious fervour is sweeping the secular university, and that we will soon return to the Middle Ages model of union between church and campus. This is far from the state of affairs. Even though there is a significant interest in religious matters, institutionalized religion has not fared so well.

In 1969 a Gallup Poll of a national sample of college students in the United States found fifty-eight per cent of them denying that "organized religion is a relevant part of my life at the present time" (Bates & Evans, 1972, p. 4). I do say, however, that there is a receptive climate and a definite call for a religious presence on campus. In the words of Donald Nugent, ". . . there are indications that the youth of today is more religious than his parents. If there is less interest in church there is more interest in religion. 'Jesus, yes! Christianity, no!' read a sign at a Berkeley rally . . . There are hints here of a potential alliance between intellect and religion" (Nugent, 1969, p. 241).

One specific area of alliance that I see developing is between psychology and religion. Since the days when Nietzsche declared that God was dead and when Freud found religion to be an

illusion, psychology and religion have, for the most part, gone their separate ways.

This has been due, to a great extent, to the overwhelming influence of behaviourism and of Freudian psychoanalysis which exclude any possible transcendence to a realm of spiritual values. This realm was considered the ghost of a superstitious era, and not to be taken seriously by psychiatrists and psychologists. These latter professionals took over the role of high priests in ministering to the needs of their followers. People exchanged the confessional for the analyst's office, and ministering to souls gave way to the medical model of psychology.

The churches in turn abdicated their responsibilities in the field of mental health. Theologians, already on the defensive towards technology, repudiated psychology as the work of the devil. Donald F. Tweedie Jr. sums up this situation as follows: "There was a great gulf fixed between the secular university department and religious organizations over which apparently no man could, or would, pass." (Tweedie, 1961, p. 23).

There are, however, definite signs that the gap between religion and psychology is being bridged. Because of the pragmatic benefits of religion as a therapeutic ally, at least some psychologists and psychiatrists are becoming increasingly sensitive to theological concepts. Just one instance of this concern is shown in the book by the psychiatrist Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (1973). Priests and ministers, for their part, are becoming more aware of, and more willing to accept, the fruits of psychological research. Organizations such as the Academy of Religion and Mental Health, and the Christian Association for Psychological Studies in the United States, and the Institute for Pastoral Care in Canada are signs of the cooperation between these two disciplines.

Another sign of the narrowing of the gap is the increasing popularity of courses and seminars on psychology and religion in hospitals, churches, seminaries and universities. There is, however, a danger here: priests and ministers may go forth armed with pseudo-psychological techniques and do more harm than good. There are nonetheless serious and responsible efforts being made to combine the work of theologians and psychologists. One such effort is the existential psychology of Viktor E. Frankl: Frankl recognizes a truly spiritual dimension in human personality. His theories promise to make a significant contribution to both religion and psychology.

Thus far I have discussed just one area of greater understanding at university, but it is an

important one, especially for the chaplain in his work as a counsellor. The climate is right at university for a greater involvement by priests, ministers, and rabbis, especially in the area of counselling. There is a definite need for chaplains to give much of their time to this type of work. I hope this need will be apparent from the ideas that will follow on the nature of pastoral counselling at the university level. Even though there is a proliferation of material in the general area of pastoral counselling, there has been very little published concerning the counselling of university students. In fact, Charles F. Kemp says in the introduction to his book *Counseling with College Students* (1964) that his is the first book written on this subject (p. 13).

There are many reasons why the campus needs the pastoral counsellor more than ever before. To give an obvious reason: one-half of the college age young people in the United States attend post-secondary institutions. These people bring with them a whole range of problems that are endemic to our age. Students are on their own much earlier than their predecessors. They have more mobility, they are more affluent, they experience a sense of uprootedness, a loss of presence. They are often cynical about politics and mistrustful of science and technology. Paul Goodman says that the Western tradition is quite dead and that the job of the chaplain is not to try to revive it, but rather to ". . . provide centers and be centers for confusion to express itself" (Friedlander, 1967, p. xii). The chaplain has many roles to perform, but I feel that the most important part of his work is to be a presence. Many students find the university a hostile and lonely institution. The presence of an understanding chaplain can help to ease the burdens of anxiety and frustration.

The chaplain also has advantages over others in the university as an agent of healing: his traditional role includes being able to counsel and he is usually more available than a psychiatrist or psychologist. In a crisis situation, clergymen are often called upon because of the more rigid office hours and appointment schedules of a psychiatric clinic. Counselling centres may be at a certain disadvantage because, by the time they see many of their clients, critical moments have passed and opportunities may have been missed. The chaplain is also better known as a rule, and more visible than other counselling personnel. Although much of the stigma attached to consulting a psychiatrist has disappeared, there still remain those persons who are less reluctant to visit a chaplain

than a psychiatric clinic. As one student recently said to me, "I could have gone to a psychologist, but I didn't want to become just another case."

If counselling is a critical area of the university chaplain's work, what is he to expect? What is the nature of this counselling and how does it differ from general pastoral counselling?

First of all, I understand counselling according to the definition of Buford Steffle: "Counseling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counselor and a client. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more than two people; and it is designed to help the client to understand and clarify his view of his life space so that he may make meaningful and informed choices consonant with his essential nature in those areas where choices are available to him." (Steffle, 1965, p. 14).

This, in general, is the work of the chaplain counsellor. In particular, his "helping to clarify and make decisions" refers to a certain age group — eighteen to mid-twenties — and in a particular situation, *viz* at university. Many of the problems a chaplain encounters are common to all young people. These include breaking away from family ties, gaining emotional independence, discovering new masculine and feminine roles, making the choice of a life partner, selecting a career, and developing a life philosophy. Jesse H. Ziegler says in *Psychology and the Teaching Church*: "Early adulthood is the most individualist period of life and the loneliest one." (Ziegler, 1962, p. 91). Added to the developmental problems of the young people is the anomie that many of them experience at university. Many students away from home for the first time are testing their new freedom. The university setting can be a confusing, lonely and competitive place. The presence of an understanding chaplain who has developed counselling skills can go far in helping the students cope during these transitional years.

At this point, I would like to distinguish five different kinds of university counselling. Three of these are of major importance to the chaplain, *i.e.*, spiritual, marital (and pre-marital) and general anxiety problems. The other two, academic and vocational, although not specifically the work of a chaplain, do in fact take up some of his time.

I. SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS

The chaplain may be accepted somewhat reluctantly in other areas of counselling, but in

spiritual matters his expertise goes almost unchallenged. There is, however, a danger inherent in considering oneself an expert. This danger consists of a propensity to rush in with the answers, to preach, or to proselytize: and counselors should engage in none of these activities. The main work of the chaplain is to provide an atmosphere of acceptance, a presence in which students can discuss any problem without fear of censure. Henri Nouwen, speaking on "Training for campus ministry," says, "But what is needed is a climate to allow searching without fear, and questioning without shame. The first demand of a question is not to be answered but to be accepted." (Nouwen, 1968, p. 5). Some students will raise questions to test the chaplain or to make radical, irreligious statements that do not reflect their own beliefs. The chaplain (somewhat gullibly) may take the bait and enter a religious argument, but this is not counselling.

It seems that more and more young people go through religious crises at high school, but there is still a large number whose religious beliefs are not seriously questioned until they reach university. Much doubt, confusion, and guilt can arise when the student's beliefs and values are questioned or ridiculed by his professors or peers. If the student comes from a small community and has had a very strict upbringing, the secularism and pluralism of the university campus can be very threatening.

Apart from the crises of faith, other religious problems include guilt, sin, denominational problems, and problems connected with prayer and worship. The chaplain's work at times will include the imparting of religious information, but what is most important is the kindly, nonjudgmental attitude that the chaplain brings to the religious counselling situation.

II. MARITAL (AND PRE-MARITAL) PROBLEMS

Problems connected with interpersonal relations, masculine and feminine roles, the place of sex in life, and the choosing of a partner are part of every university student's experience. Student services are beginning to provide information and counselling in these areas, but the chaplain is in a key position to be of help. Very often he conducts wedding services and his traditional role encourages people to seek his help in these matters. Because more people are staying in school longer, marital and pre-marital counselling take up more of the chaplain's time than ever before. This is time well spent because preparing for

marriage is an occasion for clarifying one's goals, values, expectations, and religious commitment. It is a time when various problems may be faced that have previously been avoided. This area of counselling would in itself be sufficient reason for having well-trained chaplains on campus.

The chaplain's work should continue after the wedding ceremony in helping in the adjustment phase of marriage. These marriages, besides having the usual kinds of problems, have further tensions associated with the university situation. I am thinking of such problems as the long hours spent in studying by one or both of the partners. There may also be problems of a reversal of traditional roles if the wife works to support her student husband. Financial worries may add further strain to the lives of married students. At a time when the students' marriages and possibly their academic careers are at stake, counselling is essential.

III. GENERAL ANXIETY PROBLEMS

Although problems of a religious or marital nature may cause anxiety, there is a host of other problems that the chaplain will have to face. These problems range in seriousness from homesickness of freshmen in the first semester to the severe problems of students who need psychiatric help. Knowing one's limitations and knowing when to make references are essential qualities of a chaplain. I think, however, that some referrals are unnecessary, and indicate a fear of getting involved in a counselling process. Even though a problem might not be specifically religious, a chaplain with some training in psychology and counselling techniques can and should make an effort to help.

Our age has been called the "age of anxiety", and the pressures on a campus tend to increase anxiety. The pressure of studies, the limited amount of time available, the competition for acceptance into some faculties, and the worry about possible unemployment after graduation are just a few of the stresses faced by students. I think it is apparent that pressures and thus anxiety are on the increase at university. This was documented by Doctors Gordon and Gordon (1963) in a work entitled *The Blight on the Ivy*. They concluded that college students had far more emotional problems in the 1960's than they did in the 1950's. The trend has not changed for the better in the 1970's. It is in the milieu of stress that the presence of an understanding chaplain can be very effective. His most central concern should be to answer the needs of what

Henri Nouwen calls, "a heightened desire for warmth, tenderness, and disarmed relaxation" (1968, p. 7).

IV. ACADEMIC PROBLEMS

The chaplain is not an academic counsellor *per se*. His obligations in this area include knowing something about higher education, knowing well his own university, his colleagues, and the services available to students and staff, and being willing to make referrals to the proper agencies. No problem, however, is exclusively academic. Many scholastic difficulties have an emotional etiology, and in this sense they are pertinent to the work of the chaplain. This is one of many areas where the chaplain and other persons involved in various branches of student services should complement and reinforce each other.

V. VOCATIONAL PROBLEMS

In one field of guidance the chaplain is considered the expert, namely in the area of religious vocations. Other university personnel are not expected to be familiar with the nature of a "call" to the ministry, nor with the variety of seminaries for the many denominations. Although the chaplain has expertise only in this field, he can also be helpful in offering vocational guidance beyond his own field. Many supposedly vocational problems are of an existential nature. Although the phraseology may sound hackneyed, the basic demand of students is still the same: "Who am I?" and "Where am I going?"

Vocational problems may be bound up with emotional difficulties or with interpersonal relations. A student with any of these difficulties may turn to a chaplain especially if there is already a warm relationship established. The religious counsellor is obliged to admit his own limitations and to learn something about the vocational guidance services available at his university. He makes use of all the resources available and realizes the gravity of a life decision to the student. Vocational problems are complicated ones, and this is another area where the chaplain and student services should work together.

There are many other areas of counselling for the university chaplain that I have not examined. There is the area of special students, such as foreign students. There is the whole subject of responsibility to faculty and staff. There are all the other religious roles of the chaplain that are beyond the scope of this paper.

One subject that is very important is the chaplain's training. He is firstly a theologian and secondly a counsellor. Not all chaplains will spend most of their time in counselling. The ideal situation would be a team ministry where at least one of the chaplains is a specialist in counselling. He would be familiar with the techniques of counselling and have taken part in an extended supervised practicum. The role and thus the image of the minister as counsellor is still developing and has not always been a favourable one. Some even feel that the minister-counsellor is too judgmental and directive. It is only by adequate study and training that a chaplain can dispel this image and be considered a professional university counsellor.

There is no doubt that a new spirit of cooperation is emerging in the 1970's between universities and the churches. J. A. Appleyard of Boston University states, "Students who believe in God are beginning to come up out of the ashes. They're looking around for each other, and they're not afraid to identify themselves. Anonymous Christianity isn't fashionable." (1975, p. 12). It is to these students that the churches have a responsibility. There is a crucial challenge here for the churches in the 1970's. How well are they meeting this challenge? There are hopeful signs, such as an increase in the number of university chaplains. For example, in English-speaking Canada, there were sixty chaplains in 1967 and ninety in 1973. I believe, however, that denominations are still reluctant to give the manpower, resources, and support necessary to adequately meet the challenge.

Charles Davis (Coulson, 1964, p. 115) has pointed out that the university does not only need the churches, but that the church needs the university. Richard N. Ottaway says that the university is becoming the most significant institution in our society, and that knowledge is the most important commodity in our economy (1971, p. 35).

Thus, it is imperative that the churches realize the importance of their potential role in higher education and make decisions accordingly. For their own good and the good of the students, they should encourage some of their best men to enter campus ministry; for these men (and women) they should provide adequate training and the necessary support for their endeavours, both financial and moral. These steps are necessary if the denominations are to have an effective presence in this vital area.

They are necessary if the church is to respond to the new spirit of *rapprochement* that is now possible between religion and learning. They are necessary if there is to be better communication between Athens and Jerusalem in the 1970's.

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