

### ["Outside-The-Church" Counseling \[1\]](#)

by: [Delbert Shetler](#) [2]

Much ado is being made these days about the counseling and psychiatric movements that are filtering into our plain, conservative Anabaptist churches. I am thankful for this, as it shows there are still people concerned about that which penetrates the hedge surrounding our churches. Thank God that not all the watchmen have left their posts.

First of all, I would like to point out that the way this is happening, is exactly backwards from how it should be working. One must admit that this movement is indeed filtering into the churches. How can we prove this? If we go back twenty, thirty, or possibly fifty years, how much did the church know about the terms psychiatry, psychology, hurts, emotional pain, spiritual abuse, etc.? Today, you supposedly need to know and understand these terms, plus many more, in order to live a victorious Christian life and to be able to help fellow-believers effectively deal with their struggles. So, it is indeed filtering into our churches.

The question now becomes, "Do good Biblical teachings filter into the church?", or rather, "Should good Biblical teachings be flowing out of the church?" Amongst Bible-believing Christians this should not even be a question. We have gotten it all backwards! We are letting worldly philosophies and secular ideas impact our understanding of how to deal with people who are struggling. We certainly cannot say that the church struggled more before these teachings showed up. There actually are way more issues to deal with today than there ever were.

So, really, what is wrong with this movement? This was the question which haunted me until I decided I just needed to know.

Before we take this any further, I would like to share my background. Not so long ago, I fully supported the counseling movement. I went to the seminars and came home feeling enlightened. I wondered what I could do to get more people motivated to attend these insightful meetings. I felt irritated with anybody who would not support this way of thinking. The only thing I could see were the churches with all their issues (there were many) and this being the answer for the majority of them.

All along, though, there was one thing that bothered me. I knew there were a certain number of people who were really concerned about what this movement would do to the church. What bothered me even more was that they were well respected people of the community—people that were known to be deep thinkers. However, I also noticed there were other people of the same stature that were supportive of this movement. How could this be?

It did not take long until this started causing division among the brethren. Suddenly, the heart-to-heart and upbuilding talks between certain brothers stopped, because they could no longer agree on these certain issues. Why? Because they were not getting their facts and information from the same source. Yet, they were both well respected men that the community and churches looked up to for direction and guidance. I came to realize that there was only one way to explain this.

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I spoke with numerous open-minded people who were on both sides of this concern in an effort to hear the whole matter. I finally came to the conclusion that this is one of the most deceiving issues that is presently affecting our plain churches. We all know the devil when he shows up in a suit of red, or with a fork and horns, but do we know him when he shows up in the form of an angel? That, I believe, is what we are facing, and that is why it is so hard to decipher between right and wrong. One must really want to understand the Truth, and then only through earnest seeking, Bible reading, and prayer will they be able to tell the difference between Truth and deception.

Remember, I used to be in total agreement with this idea. Then, when God's Truth started dawning on me, I actually inwardly resisted it for a while, until finally the picture became so clear for me that I could no longer deny it. I believe the wolf in sheepskin is among us!

What concerns me the most is all the people who are involved that I do not doubt want nothing but that which is right. If we could somehow get the church motivated to put forth as much effort to help the struggling people among us as the counseling centers do, this might not even be an issue. However, that still does not make it right.

So, what really is wrong with it?

Let us take a look at the word trend. Trend is the direction something is taking.

Church and trend often appear in the same sentence. What trend does the counseling movement promote? Does it promote brotherhood? Does it promote unity within the church? Does it promote dying to self and taking up the cross? From my observation, the answer would need to be NO to each of these questions and many more besides.

I would most certainly agree that we have many struggling people among us that need help. Instead of putting all our efforts into how to deal with the issues once we have them, I think the question that needs to be answered is, "why do we have so many issues?" If we look for answers outside of the church to solve problems within the church, where do we think people will end up looking for answers to their many other questions and struggles?

That is the trend this has started. The church is rapidly losing its authority! I have been there and I know that if we decide that psychiatry and outside-the-church counseling is OK, then the next time an issue arises, we will first consider "what does the counselor think about this?" And that is a major problem! It does not matter how sincere that counselor is, or how devoted he is to working for God, he is not our God-ordained spiritual authority—our church leaders are. Worse yet, if he is not giving clear Biblical answers, then he is not our source for Truth!

A template made from a template, made from a template, will not remain accurate. Remember the two brothers that could no longer have a heart-to-heart conversation. Their templates are no longer the same!

Most people, both for and against counseling, would agree that a weak or lukewarm church contributes to having more of their people struggling with various issues. If the church ends up being the problem, how do we then expect a program from outside the church to fix that problem?

However, we still need to fix the problem. Treating symptoms never actually fixes the real

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problem. The concerning part of this is that we have many people looking to the symptom treater for the answers to all their issues. If a misaligned vertebra is causing a backache, how much Tylenol will it take to heal that particular problem? The Tylenol will help ease the pain, but it will have no impact on fixing the actual problem.

In Revelation 13, we read of the beast that came out of the water that deceived many. This should concern us greatly. However, we, as concerned, church-going Christians should be even more concerned with a second beast we read about in the same chapter. Just at a glance the second beast does not seem to be near as dangerous as the first beast, but this beast will affect the church more than the first one. According to this Scripture, the second beast (the false prophet) came out of the land and caused the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast. It does not say that he told them to, or made them worship the first beast. He "caused" them to worship the first beast. How did he do this?

What is the way to get someone to change their mind once they really know what they want? There is only one way! That is through cunning deception! And, who is surer of himself than a deceived person? According to the Bible this second beast deceived even the most elect. If we expect to recognize this second beast let us not be looking for an "obvious" devil. It will be something much more close to the real thing. So close to the Truth, in fact, that even some of the most elect (well-respected men of the community) will fall for it.

By now you are probably wondering if I actually think the counseling movement is the second beast. My answer is yes and no.

No, in the fact that counseling itself would be way too obvious. Yes, in the fact that it promotes a wrong mindset. A wrong perspective of where we as humans rank ourselves in the eyes of God, since it promotes individualism, humanism, new-age thinking, plus many other similar forms of heresy.

Humanism, as one writer put it, is to set ourselves up in the temple of God, the human body (Greek for temple is "Naos" meaning dwelling place of the Holy Spirit) and then decide right and wrong by ourselves, as though we are God. While we would never proclaim, with words, to take the place of God, our actions end up saying otherwise.

Of course, if we are okay with this, we then believe we have the right to take authority away from the church. This strongly promotes individualism, which is "new-age" thinking. This gets us to believe that the human race is mostly good and that we should just nurture it along. This directly contradicts what Scripture teaches us. Our good deeds are as filthy rags in the sight of God.

My personal opinion is that this way of thinking totally fails in teaching people how to die to self. I realize that people unfortunately find themselves in horrible situations: Abuse, neglect, and many other sinful circumstances. However, do we deserve better? Do not get me wrong, I am not saying that these people do not need help. We need to help these people by listening to them and being there for them. But they must also understand that as long as we are living in this "sinful and fallen" world, we will always be living among other people who may sin against us. Dying to self is a daily necessity and will not come easily, depending on what we are dealing with. Here is where one might need help from the church.

So, what is the root of the problem? In Romans 3:23, it says "for all have sinned and come

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short of the glory of God”.

Nowadays, we have people needing to see a counselor for no apparent reason other than the fact that their parents fell short of perfection. In doing this, do we realize that we are teaching our children that they will someday need to see a counselor because of our short comings? Does that seem right? We know (if we are honest with ourselves) that we will not be perfect parents for our children.

In closing, I would like to ask a couple questions for each of you to consider carefully, questions that I cannot say I have all the answers for. Therefore, I encourage each of you to ponder them in light of the teachings of God’s Word.

- Should a born-again Christian, who has truly died to self, struggle with the past to the point of not being able to control his or her emotions?
- If we have truly died to self, do we focus on our own struggles, or do we forget about ourselves and start looking where we could help other people?
- Does the persecuted church need “outside-the-church” counselors?

It is not my desire for this writing to cause any arguments or divisions, but rather to get people to think deeply about where this movement came from and where it is taking us. I realize that some strong statements have been made in this article. However, I believe that through much seeking, praying, speaking with many concerned brethren, and the leading of the Holy Spirit, I have developed an understanding of where this is coming from and where it is leading to. Above all, I do not want to lead anyone astray.

Give all honor and glory to God if anyone gleans any useful information from this article for their Christian walk.

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