A Fact-Finder's Journey to Europe

ROBERT C. HAMLYN

ABSTRACT: The author undertook a trip to sixteen cities in eight European countries to study Continental models of integrating spiritual development and mental health and to look at training programs in pastoral counseling. He found a growing secularization of clergy who want to offer human services and cannot do so within established church hierarchies. In Roman Catholic areas he found pastoral counseling services directed to the religious professional rather than to the laity or the public. Training programs have yet to be fully developed. Only the Swedish model, in its history and multidisciplinary character, resembles the situation in the United States.

In January, 1978, I received notice of an International Congress of Pastoral Care and Counseling to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in August, 1979. I had long been interested in the international field of pastoral counseling and so decided to apply for one of the AAPC's thirty delegate positions. When I was selected as a delegate, I began to make inquiries of those in the United States who were organizing the congress, but I found that even those who had attended the previous two congresses (of whose existence I had been unaware) could tell me very little about the international scene. I, therefore, proposed to the Board of the Foundation for Religion and Mental Health that I undertake a fact-finding trip to get firsthand knowledge of pastoral care and counseling on the Continent. The trip would deepen my preparation for the 1979 International Congress and seemed a fitting way to mark the FRMH Tenth Anniversary. The Board authorized me as President to make the trip, to study European models of integrating spiritual development and mental health, to look at training programs, and to present the FRMH model in return. My itinerary included visits to sixteen cities in Italy, France, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. The International Congress Committee, the World Council of Churches, and the Episcopal Church Center gave me the names of individuals who had pioneered the field in Europe, and these leaders responded graciously to my invitation to meet.

I returned from the trip in late August with impressions, questions, and some tentative conclusions that I would like to share.

It is a cliché to say that travel broadens, and yet my firsthand view of Europe made me acutely aware that although I had been a part of the AAPC for ten years, I really knew very little about the origins of the pastoral care and counseling movement in our own country. I realized that I had been basing my
assumptions solely on my own experience, and I became aware of the need for additional research into this growing movement within the ordained ministry. At this point, I can only try to share what I know, and I hope that others will correct or substantiate points that are based on all-too-limited knowledge.

The pastoral counseling movement, as I have known it since 1959, began in the large cities of the United States, and I expected that the same would be true in Europe. In fact, this was an accurate prediction. Mental health services are generally associated with wealthy academic urban areas both here and on the Continent, but that is where the similarity ends.

The American version, as suggested by the FRMH model, sees pastoral counseling as a growing edge of a new concept of ministry, created when the discipline of psychology (including psychotherapeutic experience) is added to the traditional liberal arts and theological studies of the rabbi, priest, or pastor. In this model, pastoral counseling offers the clergyperson the opportunity to practice his art and skills in a discipline joining the best insights of the young science of psychology with the ancient wisdom of the spiritual life. There is room within the ministry for the new information, the new skills, the new way of seeing oneself produced by psychological training and insight. In Europe there is no such alternative. Many clergypersons do receive this specialized training, only to find that there is no place within the traditional church structure to practice their skills. As a result, there has been a growing secularization of clergy who want to offer human services and can find no way to do it within the established church. There is no third alternative. I felt a great deal of empathy for this dilemma, recalling my own training in pastoral counseling, when my colleagues and I wondered if we would one day be forced to leave religious life to enter private practice. Indeed, when I originally presented a new model of pastoral counseling services to the Episcopal Diocese of New York in 1962, it was turned down because the church at that time had no place for it. We had to go out and create a new structure so that we could provide an alternative for ourselves. The AAPC is a part of this alternative, establishing standards and credentials for pastoral counselors on a national basis; FRMH is also a part. Its uniqueness is in employing the services of pastoral counselors in community-based, religious-sponsored mental health centers.

In the Roman Catholic areas of Europe, where the secularization of clergy is a serious problem, pastoral counseling services are directed exclusively to the religious professional rather than to the laity or the public. The Church has created centers for training religious in an understanding of depth psychology, not to do psychotherapy but to be consultants and advisors to fellow religious, emphasizing the possibility of transcending rather than rejecting the limitations of the Church hierarchy. Some of these advisors have desired further training and have received psychotherapeutic treatment and additional training as well. Moreover, research studies have been focused primarily on the psychodynamics of the religious vocation and on the emotional maturity of the religious professional. In fact, as a result of a recommendation in one of the authoritative publications of the Vatican's Sacred Congregation of the Reli-