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**Doctrine of Irrevocable Grace and
Young Sexual Addicts**

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Introduction

There are clear evidences that the present world is totally different from the world that was experienced by the ancient societies, which inhabited the world several centuries ago. While the latter inhabitants had been careful with their offspring concerning the manner ethical education was mediated to them, the former had been relaxed and allowed many influences, which were ascertained from outside to augment the manner their children were brought up. These differences of approaches, which concern how societies brought up

their offspring, might have been due to the circumstances prevailing in their environments. Due to lack of knowledge concerning many diseases, which were rampant and yet no adequate methods of eradicating them had been secured, the earlier societies had been extremely careful in their sexual education and had, consequently, taken adequate responsibility to bring up their children to respect and obey health laws. These contributed to the avoidance of many unwanted physical and venereal diseases, which they feared, could cause enormous problem in their communities. Contrary to the above, societies that had been in contact with modern civilization had not been bothered so much as to how their offspring could live, because the present conditions allowed many adults to secure adequate knowledge from the media and schools. These teachings enable them to prevent those intricate problems regarding diseases, which could lead to sexual addiction.

As we make comparison between past and modern civilizations, concerning how they brought up their children, we need to mention the Christian and non-Christian individuals in the manner in which they also behave toward sexual education in modern societies. Those individuals, who hail from the Christian background with parents active in some church or denominational activities, would be careful concerning their sexual behavior as against those who do not have any religious background. Is this conjecture something we could substantiate if we were to conduct an investigation? The latter may be careless concerning their attitudes toward sex in general. Here, therefore, comes our objective in the present essay, which is to discuss how the use of irrevocable grace of Jesus Christ our Lord could be utilized to counsel young adults with regard to their attitudes toward sexual addiction.

1. Purpose, Delimitation, and Essay's Accomplishment

The aim of this essay is to examine sexual addiction in young adults of modern day, and to find out how the doctrine of irrevocable grace of the Christian Church, could be utilized to counsel these age groups to desist from becoming addicts. As a corollary aim, it could be asserted that the study aims at the investigation of how the Seventh-Day Adventists as a denomination views the doctrine of irrevocable grace. As a Christian organization, what makes this doctrine effective in their counseling methods to these young adults;

and how should these approaches help these individuals to face life with their contemporaries in the outside world? The study will present the postulate that states that: *while frustration and lack of hope as a whole for these young adults could cause aggression, which could intensify their sexual addiction, those that have a knowledge of the irrevocable grace that are mediated to them by the Church (and through) would find peace in their behavior and overall lives in the world.*

2. Sexual Addiction: What Is It?

Presently, the word addiction is easily understood by many people, including young children. The word is used frequently concerning many things human beings do or like. Individuals can be addicted to everything, which they see around that they enjoy doing. People can even be addicted to eating food because of the abundance of food in certain parts of the world. Due to this manner of enjoying all things that people see around, the word “addiction” has become associated with almost anything in the world that can be enjoyed such that its synonymity with something “sinful” has been lost. Therefore, many people nowadays would agree that, sexual addiction does not denote anything that can be seen as harmful. But in the world of the Christian, excessive doing or enjoying the things we see around could be seen as sinful and therefore could be harmful. That is why the Seventh-day Adventist members call the need to observe “temperance” concerning everything, including the food we eat daily. What, therefore, is the meaning of Sexual addiction?

Sex is defined as the act of having physical intercourse between the male individual and the female. Addiction is recorded when these individuals become dependent on this act of intercourse as a habit so much so that it becomes habitual that they cannot do without it. Persons of this caliber shall therefore be seen as wanting to have this all the time irrespective of how this will affect his health or his reputation. The opposite of this behavior is someone who is capable of controlling himself/herself, and shall engage in this act whenever he/she sees it appropriate or necessary. The act is also done with carefulness and respect surrounding it, but not the copious nature which the former attaches to the act, which is supposed to be pleasure between two descent individuals that have come together through holy matrimony.

3. Young Adult – Who Are They?

This is the age where an individual is seen as mature, but not yet grown up to be a responsible person in society. He may or may not be depending on the parents for housing and food. Psychoanalytic theory would see this person to have reached the point where it could be asserted that he had experienced “individuation.” The ages could be between 14-18 years, where the individual could be called a teenager. It is an age where delinquency could occur with those children who were not shielded well by their parents due to bad influences and other enticing backgrounds. It is therefore noted for the “crisis situations”, where most young adults find themselves in. As they learn to make new friends where they intend to engage in intimacy, there may be many different problems they will encounter. This is the reason why this period is known for addiction to sex, because there are many hormonal activities which prepare the young adult for physical activities, and this may have to do with the development of sexual behavior, either in public or in private. Young adult years are the periods where these children could be influenced positively or negatively for life.

4. Counseling Sexual Addiction in Young Adults: The Doctrine of Irrevocable Grace

4.1. What is the Meaning of this Doctrine?

The Christian Church holds Christ as the center of a person’s life. The crucifixion of Jesus, which offers hope and courage to those who believe in Him, is made an object of contemplation and the behavior of a believer is controlled by the implications of Christ’s death which is capable of making sinful men righteous. This doctrine states in no uncertain term that Christ is the Son of the Almighty God in heavens, the creator and giver of life to mankind. At a point in life when man became a sinner through the disobedience of Adam, the first human, mankind lost the favor of God and through this act could have remained in damnation forever. The sending of Jesus Christ, the only true Son of God to die in recompense of our sin means that the daily sins of persons that believe in Christ are made whole and clean by His *Atonement*. The forgiveness that is attained through Christ death is powerful and could enable all persons irrespective of race or origin to have peaceful lives on earth.

4.2. What is its Importance?

The doctrine of *Atonement* and abundance of Grace means that sinful acts such as sexual addiction could be forgiven. This could then relieve the individual from daily torment, which could bring him/her *guilt* and its consequence of *shame* into his/her personality. At the same time, the Christian or those that know of this irrevocable Grace would respect the death of Christ, which occurred on the cross and by beholding this constantly and ceaselessly would not be compelled to engage in these sinful acts always. This constant renewal of this individual strength through Christ's death equips the doer such that he is *sanctified* and made holy on his daily renewal. This daily renewal of strength and beholding of Christ is termed by the Christians as "*sanctification*." Thus persons that come to accept the death of Christ through this knowledge, are first "*justified*" by his death and made to be "*righteous*" persons and through acts of *daily communion* are sanctified. As these processes of acceptance become solid, individuals come to obtain the *Grace of God*, which is irrevocable through Christ's death. Thus many Christians believe that the justification, which occurred once in a person's lifetime, and the continuous renewal of strength which is gained through sanctification, are the most important periods of this journey of the Christian life. These experiences provide the Christian a new identity in Christ, which is able to make him walk on the path of righteousness, a vindication of Christ and the Christian overcoming sin and death together.

4.3. The Seventh-day Adventist View on this Doctrine

The Seventh-Day Adventists believe in the doctrines of Justification, Sanctification, and the Irrevocable Grace of Christ. But what makes their case quite different is the doctrine of "*Temperance*," which they attach to the Christian stewardship. By this doctrine they caution all persons that have knowledge of "*truth*" to be moderate in the manner they behave and experience with all things, which include food and all things that one can get addiction to. Christ death is very important, yet individuals must be careful not to over believe that copious engagement of something bad would necessitates forgiveness. There should be an attempt on the individual's side to live an exemplary life, and yes, it must be based on the principle of temperance, which as Christians we must be cautioned to emulate how Jesus himself lived when he was on earth during his mission.

This, which denotes careful and meticulous manner in enjoying all pleasures in life, also cautions on the attitude of the young Christian to respect the laws of God, especially, the Ten Commandments, which include the observance of the Sabbath day and to keep it holy unto God.

In his book, *95 Theses on Righteousness By Faith*, Venden,¹ a scholar and minister, unveils these in connection with the doctrine of justification:

26. Conversion and repentance are continuing experiences, not once only. Luke 9:23.

Repentance

27. Repentance is sorrow for sin and turning away from sins. Repentance is a gift. Therefore, sorrow for sin is a gift, and turning away from sins is a gift. Acts 5:31. 28. We do not change our lives in order to come to Christ. We come to Him just as we are, and He changes our lives. John 6:37. 29. God gives us repentance *before* He gives forgiveness. Acts 3:19. 30. Worldly sorrow is being sorry we broke a law and got caught. Godly sorrow is being sorry we broke a heart and hurt our best Friend. 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Forgiveness

31. The only known sin that can't be forgiven is the one for which we don't repent and ask forgiveness. 1 John 1:9. 32. Forgiveness does the sinner no good unless he accepts it. Psalm 86:5. 33. God's forgiveness is not limited, but our acceptance of His forgiveness can be. Matthew 18:21, 22. 34. Those who are forgiven much will love much. Those who love much will obey much. Luke 7:41-43; John 14:15. 35. Forgiveness is free, but it is not cheap. It cost the life of God's dear Son. John 3:16.

The Cross

36. God forgives sinners, not sins, but the Bible calls this the forgiveness of sins. Jesus died because sins could not be forgiven. Isaiah 53:5, 6, 8. 37. Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture. 1 Corinthians 15:3. 38. The Cross made it possible for God to be just and yet to forgive anyone. Romans 3:23-26. 39. The death of Christ was necessary in order for us to be forgiven. John 3:14, 15. 40. We can add nothing to what Jesus did at the Cross, but God can add plenty. Hebrews 7:25; 9:11, 12.²

5. Analysis of Emotional States in Sexual Addicts and Counseling

Counseling conducted by the therapist or counselor in the Christian context is capable of employing all these concepts and the processes mentioned above. Moreover, the therapist should also

¹ White 2009a; 2009b.

² Venden, 2003:4-5.

combine his frame of reference, which is rooted in the psychological or psychoanalytic knowledge of his patients. The employment of the unique aspects of these doctrines of justification, sanctification, irrevocable Grace are capable of giving the troubled individual some respite and peace of mind, better than when the counseling is taking place outside the Christian context. The Christian therapist or the counselor, who uses these methods, is capable of dispelling guilt quickly, which enables the patient or the troubled individual to have good contact with himself and those around him/her. *Faith in Jesus becomes his enormous credit, which he uses to pay his debt of falling into addiction.* It provides her troubled soul with everlasting peace, and thereby offering her insurmountable strength to resist the evil company she might have been harboring around in the neighborhood.

The mention of shame and guilt here, are important for the understanding of the emotional state of the young adult and her addiction, and also any individual trapped in addiction. It is necessary for the therapist to know what these emotional feelings mean. In one of my works, I have tried to describe what they are, and have successfully distinguished between them using very important materials provided to us by renowned researchers and clinicians. It has to do with shame as it relates to abuse in general, and also the usefulness of the clinical pastoral model in helping us to comprehend the problem of abuse. In that presentation, I examined the development of shame and guilt in the prisoner, as this was capable of helping the therapist to comprehend how shame, in particular, functions in the dynamics of personality of the abused person or criminal, and those who had fallen into the trap of addiction. But before we analyze these important emotional feelings, let us examine briefly what the term “psychopath” means. Is it something we could also employ for the description of the young sexual addict?

In Edward V. Stein’s book, entitled *Guilt: Theory and Therapy* (1968), he explores the necessity for understanding our guilt, and its application in psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and religion. He studies in depth the normal individual, the sociopath who does not suffer from guilt, and the neurotic who feels overly-guilty. Chapter 5 of his book, in particular is devoted to the study of “Guilt in the

Sociopathic personality.”³ The “Psychopath” as is often loosely denoted, is variously defined. The American Psychiatric Association refers to him/her as “a person whose behavior is predominantly amoral or anti-social and characterized by impulsive, irresponsible actions satisfying only immediate and narcissistic interests, without concern for obvious and implicit social consequences, accompanied with minimal outward evidence of anxiety or guilt.”

The term “sociopathic personality” is a more precise term which can be broken down into four subheadings: 1) “Antisocial reaction,” 2) “Dyssocial reactions,” 3) “Sexual deviation,” and 4) “Alcohol and drug addiction.”

In their book, *Psychopathy and Delinquency*, the McCords, on the other hand, without depreciating the value of the precision in diagnosis of its obvious clinical value, focus on “aggressiveness, guiltiness, affectional shallowness, and extreme impulsivity” as a central core of the psychopath’s syndrome.⁴ They emphasize guiltlessness and lovelessness as the two traits which “conspicuously mark the psychopath as different from other men.” Cleckley attributes the following characteristics to the primary psychopathic personality: 1) Unexplained failure; 2) Undisturbed technical intelligence; 3) Absence of Neurotic anxiety; 4) Persistent and inadequacy Motivated Antisocial behavior; 5) Irresponsibility; 6) Peculiar inability to distinguish between truth and falsehood; 7) Inability to accept blame; 8) Failure to learn by experience; 9) Incapacity for love; 10) Inappropriate or fantastic reaction to alcohol; 11) Lack of insight; 12) Shallow and impersonal Responses to sexual life; 13) Suicide rarely carried out; and 14) Persistent Pattern of Self-defeat.⁵ What, therefore, are the differences between shame and guilt, which we believe the young sexual addicts often experience in their lives? Could these be of help to the Christian therapist who counsels the young addict in a Christian context?

6. Shame and guilt developments in the addicted Individual

Shame and guilt are both psychological conflicts, which occur in personalities of the individual patients and those trapped in addiction.

³ Stein, 1968: 86-112.

⁴ Ibid., 86.

⁵ Ibid., 86-87.

But in its examinations, we find that shame represents a deeper conflict than guilt.⁶ While guilt arises from such feelings as “I have done wrong,” “I have failed,” shame reveals itself from the sense that “I am weak or inadequate,” or “I am a failure.” The latter is associated with feelings of inferiority; the former is connected with wrongdoing. One thing is clear from the standpoint of these two emotions: *guilt and shame may arise from the same situation and they may reinforce each other*. Merrell Lynd observes that, because shame entails a sense of personal failure, it is interpreted “as a wound to one’s self-esteem, a painful feeling or sense of degradation excited by the consciousness of having done something unworthy of one’s own excellence.” In fact, shame is also “a peculiarly painful feeling of being in a situation that incurs the scorn or contempt of others. The awareness of self is central in both conceptions, but in the second, the feeling or action of others is also a part of shame.” Shame does not have legal reference as in guilt; it does not entail a question of a failure to pay a debt, and has less implication of the violation of a prescribed code.⁷

A former Princeton professor, Don Capps, sees shame as directly related to the experience of hoping, and says these about shame:

This is the fact that shame is very often our most immediate and deeply felt reaction to the failure of our hopes to materialize. When our hopes do not turn out as we anticipated or expected, we may feel guilt, holding ourselves responsible for their failure to come true (“I didn’t adequately prepare for the interview”), but the deeper, more persisting and more painful feeling that failed hopes evokes in us is shame. When our hopes fail to come about, we have feelings that are typically associated with shame: We may feel exposed, an easy target for the ridicule or derision of others (“She actually thought they would hire her over all those other people who had much better credentials than hers”). We may feel embarrassed, even humiliated, and have a powerful sense that others pity us (“Poor soul, he wanted that promotion badly”). And we feel that the failure of our hopes to materialize is a direct and total indictment of us. We may feel utterly stupid for having entertained such a hope, and the disappointment we feel may translate into a total, pervasive sense of worthlessness: “I am just no good”⁸

As one glances at the root meaning of shame, most scholars agree with Taylor that shame carries the idea of “covering up” or

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Merrell Lynd, 1961:23-24.

⁸ Capps, 1995:123.

“wounding”. It often connotes the idea of a wound to an individual’s self-esteem, which leads to feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. Guilt carries with it the central idea of transgressing a taboo; shame conveys with it a sense of being exposed.⁹

From a psychoanalytic orientation, Piers and Singer distinguish between shame and guilt proper: “The following seem to be properties of shame which clearly differentiate it from guilt: 1) Shame arises out of a tension between the ego and the ego ideal, not between ego and superego as in guilt. 2) Whereas guilt is generated whenever a boundary (set by the superego) is touched or transgressed, shame occurs when a goal (presented by the ego ideal) is not being reached. It thus indicates a real “shortcoming.” Guilt anxiety accompanies transgression; shame, failure. 3) The unconscious, irrational threat implied in shame anxiety is abandonment, and not mutilation (castration) as in guilt. 4) The law of Talion does not obtain in the development of shame, as it generally does in guilt.”¹⁰

Shame and guilt have been given a considerable discussion in an article “Shame, repression, field dependence and psychopathology”, published in 1990 in a very interesting and valuable book entitled *Repression and Dissociation*. Here, H. Lewis, the author, distinguishes between guilt and shame and asserts that the term “shame” contains a family of feelings. These are “humiliation,” “mortification,” “feeling ridiculous,” “painful self-consciousness,” “chagrin,” “shyness and embarrassment.” Each one of these feelings differs from the other, but all have in common that the self is helpless. Guilt, on the other hand, calls to the attention a family of feelings, which include fault, blame, responsibility, and obligation. Although these states of feelings differ, they all have in common that something was done or not done. With regards to guilt, the self is able to have done or not done the guilty act.¹¹

Narramore conducted an investigation in which he asked an audience to write down some of their emotions that occur when they felt guilty. Some of the replies indicated these feelings: sacred; uneasy; tense, like maybe I’m going to get caught; a feeling of

⁹ Taylor, 1994:38-39.

¹⁰ Narramore, 1983:136.

¹¹ Lewis, 1990:239.

impending punishment; like if somebody finds out I'll be punished and they will scream what I've done to everyone; my mind has a tendency to kick itself several times; disgusted with myself; like a raunchy person or a complete failure; stupid, low, remorseful; miserable and ashamed; rotten inside, worthless; a feeling of separation; lonely and frustrated; I feel nobody loves me- especially God; I find it hard to like myself; depressed and separated from others and many others. These responses, according to Narramore, fall into three general groupings. The first group reflects a fear of punishment or self-inflicted punishment. The next shows a loss of self-esteem. And the last indicates a feeling of loneliness, rejection, or isolation. These three categories correspond exactly to what he called "the three negative attitudes of the punitive self". These three types of anxiety, he asserts, make up the broader emotion of guilt.¹²

A more recent research informs us that, in the case of criminals (and also young sexual addicts) addicted to crime; guilt and shame are allied with their criminal addiction. It is established that shame emerges after the pseudounification experiences (i.e., alcohol and drugs which anaesthetize the pain, in addition to sex and crime, which establish the unification experiences). The acting-out behavior that occurs through crime, the use of alcohol, drugs or sex, may make the prisoner feel that he has "got his act together". The prisoner may feel that his/her outer and inner worlds are operating as one. The unification experiences mentioned above are described by D. C. Gordon as follows: the prisoners have them when they drink, when they have sexual relationships, and frequently when they are in the apex of anti-social act of crime. Many criminals during the commission of a crime experience a unified state and frequently they urinate, defecate, masturbate or have an orgasm at the scene of the crime after its commission. "Sometimes the evacuation is unpremeditated, involuntary and spontaneous and as a result of an over-all relaxation of physical as well as mental tension, and other times it is deliberate or mechanically and voluntarily induced... as a result of the same great tension for relief is sought...." Imprisonment and disgrace are the risks that any thief puts himself into, but the peak experience is of such intensity that he becomes a recidivist. "The

¹² Narramore, 1983:134.

crime is committed not for the fruit or spoils, but for the unification which the criminal experiences when committing the crime as he is totally involved, totally concentrated and one with himself.¹³

As soon as the drama of acting-out ends, the prisoner finds that, he is in the same miserable space as before and he may then be overwhelmed by shame. His incapacity to adapt to life makes him ashamed. The result is that, he becomes powerless. Coupled with this powerlessness, he feels hopeless. Rage becomes the response to these feelings of shame and powerlessness, and it is directed either inwardly at the individual or outwardly at the world. If the rage is turned inwardly at the individual, it continues to activate the cycle of addiction, which results in such feelings as shame, low self-esteem, loneliness, despair, and isolation. When the rage is directed outward, it leads to violence. If the direction of the rage is turned inward on the person as stated, this will increase the prisoner's feelings of isolation, alienation, low self-esteem and powerlessness. In order that he may experience "the accompanying high and so override these negative feelings," the prisoner will turn again to his/her former criminal behavior. Once entangled in this vicious cycle, the prisoner becomes "a victim of the addictive dimension of criminal behavior. He discovers a mood altering experience which temporarily relieves the pain of living a life of hopelessness and powerlessness."¹⁴

In the end, this addictive character of criminal behavior turns out to be so powerful that the prisoner is incapable to live a life free of crime. Since,

His mind becomes absorbed with criminal thinking, for, having diminished contact with the spiritual dimension of his life he becomes vulnerable to psychological forces, and as recent research indicates, his addiction may also become associated with a neurophysiological change in the brain¹⁵

Taylor means that, this vicious cycle of crime could only be broken if the *individual addicted to sex*¹⁶ acknowledges

- 1) his/her powerlessness to live a crime free life. This recognition will bring him/her to the process of surrender;

¹³ Gordon, 1968:61-64.

¹⁴ Taylor, 1994: 20-24

¹⁵ Taylor, 1994:21.

¹⁶ Emphasis are mine.

- 2) faces the pain of impaired bonding and of abuse of the ego-Self axis;
- 3) gets in touch with his spirituality which is centered in the Self/Soul and which is the organizational and structural center of personality;
- 4) deals with the guilt, shame and need for forgiveness and reconciliation; and
- 5) faces realistically his/her criminal activity and its consequences through individual and group counseling.

7. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

We stated in the beginning that, it is frustration and lack of hope as a whole which will make these young adults to experience aggression and inner rage, which could also intensify their sexual addictions, but those that have a knowledge of the irrevocable grace, which are mediated to them by the Church and through the help of the Christian therapist, would find peace in their innermost parts, behaviors, and overall lives in the world. The examinations of the emotional feelings on shame, guilt, and the psychopathic personality, illuminate on these concepts. Life without hope in the one who was desired for the ages to come, in order to bring peace and love to the world, could be a tormenting experience. Thank God, Christ's righteousness offers men of all races with hope of everlasting life and joy. It reduces the burden of those that are trapped in sexual addiction and other vices that they have difficulty in surmounting them. It is the knowledge of this gift and the power of Christ, which is able to promise freedom from addiction and also furnish the addicted individual as well as all criminals the opportunity to experience a new life and identity.

As to the experience of guilt and shame in the young adult that is experiencing sexual addiction, the consequence is not different from the criminal. But as mentioned earlier, while those with an attachment to a denomination would have access to a Christian therapist, the one without any attachment may be compelled to deal with guilt and shame through counseling devoid of the principles used by the Christian therapist. It is the absence of these which would allow some addicted individuals to return to their old ways, for they find the world outside a lonely place to live, while the Christian shall find a belonging with a group that will make life palatable and not burdensome.

The hope of the young adult who is sexually addicted lies in the Christian therapist's knowledge of the dynamics of the personality of the individual, and the combination of the principle of justification,

sanctification, and the Christian doctrine of irrevocable Grace, which could be mediated to him. As the young addicted faces the torment of guilt and shame, which he/she finds it difficult to deal with it daily, the therapist should bring to life Christ's death, which offers the individual the knowledge of justification by faith. The gift of justification and its associated processes of sanctification (daily dying unto oneself) could bring irrevocable Grace and peace to the individual.

Seventh-day Adventists believe in Christ's Atonement, which offers hope to all persons that come to Him irrespective of their backgrounds. In the course of life, the Adventists believe that the young addicted as well as all persons that are tormented with guilt and shame over their sins are offered forgiveness through Christ's Grace and power, which are irrevocable so long as the individual lives and continues to walk in Christ's way. But as a supplement to their teachings, this denomination which believes in Christ's atonement as the most powerful agent of blotting away all sins, teaches its young children and the grown-up alike to practice temperance. This experience, which concerns a careful and meticulous manner in enjoying all pleasures in life, also advises on the attitude of the young Christian to honor the laws of God, especially, the Ten Commandments, which embrace the observance of the Sabbath day and to keep it holy unto God.

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