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Five Pathways: Caring and Counselling in Today's Church

Roger Hurding examines five different Christian approaches to pastoral care: biblical counselling, the healing ministries, pastoral counselling, spiritual direction, and social change. By applying them to a specific case study he analyses their strengths and weaknesses.

The concept of journeying is written deeply into the human story from the earliest times. The centrality of the quest, of journeys with strongly-held goals, is seen in many of cultures' most memorable myths and sagas: in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and its search for the secret of immortality; in the courageous voyage of Jason and the Argonauts as they seek the Golden Fleece; in the Arthurian legend of the Holy Grail; and, as a latter-day narrative of a fateful journeying, the adventures of Frodo Baggins and his companions in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*.

The story of the people of God is similarly coloured by journey. Yahweh is a journeying God who calls Noah to engage with a voyage into the unknown, beckons Abram and his extended family to a six hundred mile trek 'to the land I will show you' (Gen. 12:1) and leads the Israelites to the promised land in a 'pillar of cloud' by day and a 'pillar of fire' by night (Ex. 13:21). This companionate God is, at times, obliged to take his people into places and experiences they would rather avoid, as, for example, when they had repeatedly spurned 'the good way' of the tried and trusted 'ancient paths' (Jer. 6:16). Jesus carries over the notion of the One who journeys. Of the dark road to Jerusalem, Stephen Barton, commenting on Mark 10:32, writes that the journey is one of 'revelation and spiritual encounter', for it is only thus that we can explain 'the language of epiphany, the "fear" and "amazement", which characterizes the response of the disciples as they follow.'¹ This call to follow is summed up in Jesus's declaration, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6). Jesus is not only our fellow-traveller; he is the journey itself.

This sense of pilgrimage has been held throughout the history of the Church, not least in the guiding, healing, sustaining and reconciling functions of its pastoral care. Within the orbit of these pastoral functions, together with Christian acts of mercy, the Church has offered certain ministries of specific care. These, in the twentieth century and beyond, have crystallized out into, I suggest, five particular

¹ Stephen C. Barton, *The Spirituality of the Gospels*, London, SPCK 1992, p 59.

callings, embracing five pathways to wholeness: *biblical counselling, the healing ministries, pastoral counselling, spiritual direction and social change*.² Such 'specialization' need not gainsay the day-in day-out calling of the Church to come alongside the needy: a parakletic ministry that is expressed in and through the Body of Christ.

I propose to survey these five pathways, acknowledging with Korzybski that 'a map is not the territory',³ that the analysis and systematization of these pathways is but an approximation of their rich diversity and complexity. I shall look at each pathway under the headings: focus of care; use of scripture; functional metaphor; and spirituality. Before doing so, I would like to outline an imagined situation of need in which a Christian woman seeks help. We will allow a practitioner from each of the pathways to engage with her, in order to illustrate some of the salient features of each approach.

A Situation of Need

Sally is a thirty-five year old with two children – Fiona (10) and Thomas (8) – and she feels that her marriage is under threat. Her husband Jack (40) is, she suspects, having an affair with his twenty-five year old secretary. She describes him as sexist and repressive, 'clipping her wings'. She admits that she too is tempted to 'have a fling' – in her case with a university lecturer she met at the public library. She would like to return to working as a nurse but Jack has always insisted that her priority should be the home and the children. She is from a Christian family but has a strained relationship with both her parents. She thinks that her father was abusive towards her in her early years and feels that her mother colluded with him. She feels worn out with the children's demands and the uncertainties of her relationships. She finds prayer difficult, struggles with the notion of a heavenly Father and 'only attends church for the sake of the children'.

Let us now address the five pathways and outline something of their distinctiveness through their encounters with Sally.

Biblical Counselling

The pedigree of counselling methods which claim to be specifically and overtly 'biblical' goes back to the 1950s and 1960s as, at least initially, something of a reaction to the secularized approaches of the North American 'counselling movement'. Broadly, from the earliest days there have been two main strands of biblical counselling – 'excluding' and 'integrationist'. The former stance adopts a strongly 'special revelational' position, within which the Word of God is held supreme and is seen to render all 'non-Christian' insight as invalid. Thus, the perspectives of, for example, psychology and psychotherapy are seen to be, at best, suspect, and, at their worst, 'of the devil'. The latter approach embraces both special and general revelation, arguing that the scriptures, as in Psalm 19, declare both God's Word ('the law of the Lord is perfect', v 7) and a created order that shows

2 For a fuller appraisal of these five pathways, see Part II of my *Pathways to Wholeness: Pastoral Care in a Postmodern Age*, London, Hodder & Stoughton 1998.

3 Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity* (4th edn), Lakeville CT, The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company 1958, p 58.

something of the divine glory ('the firmament proclaims his handiwork', v 1). In 'integrationist' positions, all truth is seen as God's truth and, thus, theology can enter into dialogue with psychology. Influential biblical counsellors include Jay Adams amongst the more excluding practitioners and Gary Collins amongst the integrationists, with Larry Crabb and Selwyn Hughes holding more intermediate views.

Focus of Care

The more excluding forms of biblical counselling focus their attention on the transformation of mind and action: they are essentially *cognitive-behavioural* in their approach. This emphasis on changed thinking and behaviour, according to biblical principles, is seen as the Christian's birthright. Thus, Adams has argued, the non-Christian cannot be counselled using this method. He writes, 'you can't counsel unbelievers in the biblical sense of the word (changing them, sanctifying them through the work of the Holy Spirit)'.⁴ Conversion to Christ is *the* prerequisite for effective biblical counselling.

Amongst the more integrational forms of biblical counselling we find a wider remit in terms of the focus of care. Kirk Farnsworth, for example, adopts a method which embraces 'subjective phenomena such as feelings and religious experiences', as well as the observable and objective.⁵

Use of Scripture

Biblical counselling, by definition, sets a huge store on the authenticity and trustworthiness of the Bible's text. At its most rigorous, this method handles Scripture *propositionally*, seeking out biblical statements that address patterns of attitude and action for the Christian disciple. Thus, the Book of Proverbs and the more instructional elements in the Pauline epistles provide a happy hunting-ground. Further, especially amongst the more excluding forms of biblical counselling, this pathway uses such propositions *prescriptively*, applying texts which are seen to be relevant to the counsellee's needs as 'homework' for practical assimilation.

Again, integrational approaches have increasingly moved towards a more comprehensive handling of Scripture. James Guy, for example, reminds his readers of the diversity of the Bible's genre – 'commands, prayers, proverbs, parables, poetry, stories, and history' – and of its language – 'symbolic and metaphorical, as well as literal'.⁶ Here, Scripture is used reflectively, as well as propositionally, in helping the counsellee on his or her journey.

Functional Metaphor

Jacob Firet has argued that the Church's calling can be seen as threefold: proclamation (*kerygma*), teaching (*didache*) and pastoral care (*paraklesis*).⁷ Without denying the parakletic element in the more integrational forms of biblical

4 Jay E Adams, *More than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House 1979, p 326.

5 Kirk E. Farnsworth, 'The Conduct of Integration', *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 10:4 (1982), p 311.

6 James D. Guy, 'Affirming Diversity in the Task of Integration', *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 10:1 (1982), p 37.

7 See Jacob Firet, *Dynamics of Pastoring*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans 1986.

counselling, we can see clear proclamatory and didactic strands within this pathway. It is noteworthy that Adams was initially trained in homiletics and has always held a strongly instructional stance in his methodology. Amongst more integrational approaches to counselling we find the same functional metaphor of the biblical counsellor as *teacher*. Crabb, for instance, argues for a counselling model that engages with ideas which 'move people in directions that ultimately are good'⁸ and Collins emphasizes the need for 'mentors' in order to develop 'practical skills for more constructive living'.⁹

Spirituality

Spirituality is not a concept that has sat comfortably with the fundamentalist, evangelical and Reformed traditions of biblical counselling. With its origins in the French mysticism of the seventeenth century, the term has been seen to be overly pietistic and far removed from the tougher realities of faithful discipleship. Even so, there is now a strong bid, not least in the more integrational forms of biblical counselling, for a theology that embraces an *evangelical spirituality*. James Packer has set the trend in his desire to 'arrange a marriage' between a systematic theology that is 'practised as an element in our spirituality' and a spirituality that is seen as 'an implicate and expression of our systematic theology'.¹⁰ A comprehensive definition of such a spirituality is, I suggest:

Christian spirituality is that dimension of human existence which emphasizes the living out of a commitment to God in every area of life (personal, social, political, ecological), in relationship with Christ, sustained by the Holy Spirit, and within the contexts of the believing community and the wider world.¹¹

Thus, biblical counselling both needs to stay true to its evangelical roots and, at the same time, welcome a spirituality that is, for example, open to the full and rich range of the Bible's various genres and seeks to balance its legitimate Cross-centredness with a commitment to an adequate Creation theology. This more inclusive understanding of the Scriptures will lead to a more holistic and, inevitably, more integrational form of caring and counselling.

A Situation of Need

Let us take the example of a more excluding style of biblical counselling to illustrate an outline of how Sally might be handled. As we have seen, a counsellor of this persuasion will see the encounter with Sally as essentially *educational* in terms of certain perceived biblical principles. Her story will be held up against the plumb line of the Scriptures. In listening to her the counsellor might challenge her attitude towards her wayward husband – 'Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord' (Eph. 5:22); might question her response to the lecturer – 'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14); and might urge her to find a change of heart towards her parents – 'if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly

8 Lawrence J. Crabb, *Understanding People: Deep Longings for Relationship*, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan 1987, p 26.

9 Gary R. Collins, *The Biblical Basis of Christian Counselors for People Helpers*, Colorado Springs, NavPress 1993, p 57.

10 J. I. Packer, 'An Introduction to Systematic Theology', *Cruce*, 26:1(1990), p 7.

11 Hurding, *Pathways*, pp 182f.

Father will also forgive you' (Matt. 6:14). In order to help Sally with her daily struggles, she might be given a biblical statement to memorize, assimilate and apply as 'homework' between counselling sessions, such as 'I can do all things through him who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13).

The Healing Ministries

The healing ministries of the Church are much more anciently rooted in the history of pastoral care than either form of counselling discussed in this article. The Bible points to a God who declares, 'I am the Lord, who heals you' (Ex. 15:26) and we see that divine largesse carried over in the healing and deliverance ministries of Jesus Christ and the early Church. That same inheritance has waxed hot and cold through the ages with a strong re-emergence of the call to heal surfacing in the successive waves within the twentieth century of Pentecostalism, charismatic renewal, power healing and the Toronto blessing. At the same time, Christian sacramentalism has focused on the Eucharist as a Christocentric context for healing.

Focus of Care

Although, traditionally, the healing ministries have centred on the bringing of relief to people oppressed by physical illness, there has been a strong movement since the 1940s to widen the remit to include emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects of human malaise.¹² Within this more holistic approach there is often a strong focus on the roots of those elements in our lives that disturb, preoccupy or confine us, entailing a *journey back* to earlier personal events. Such methodologies of 'inner healing' as prayer counselling, the healing of the memories, primal integration, requiem healing and healing of the family tree seek pathways to wholeness through a conciliatory re-engagement with the past.

Use of Scripture

The 'therapeutic' use of Scripture by the healing ministries may, especially when physical illness is encountered, adopt something of the prescriptive approach of biblical counselling. Here, scriptural propositions may be held before the sufferer to encourage the prayer of faith, such as: 'Bless the Lord... who heals all your diseases' (Ps. 103:2-3); 'Ask, and it will be given to you' (Matt. 7:7); and 'your Father knows what you need before you ask him' (Matt. 6:8). In the various forms of inner healing, though, the Bible is often handled more *reflectively*, whereby the person in need is encouraged to read a psalm or a passage in the gospels or epistles, seeking the Spirit's prompting and application.

Functional Metaphor

Just as the educative role in biblical counselling can be subsumed under the metaphor of the teacher, the therapeutic work of the healing ministries is best summarized as that of the *wounded healer*. This metaphor avoids the triumphalist note that can be readily sounded by those involved in the callings of healing and

12 Agnes Sanford, an American Episcopalian, introduced the 'healing of the memories' through the publication of *The Healing Light*, The Drift, Evesham 1949.

deliverance. The Jewish tradition of the one who is profoundly injured, and yet unbinds and rebinds his wounds one at a time so that he is always ready to attend to the needs of others, portrays the healer who brings succour out of his own weakness.¹³ This picture resonates faithfully with Isaiah's perspectives on the Suffering Servant, 'by [whose] bruises we are healed' (Isa. 53:5).

Spirituality

With its strong links with the Pauline 'gifts of healing' (1 Cor. 12:9), we may talk here of a *charismatic spirituality* which is marked by strong emphases on God's power to heal and on the Holy Spirit's gifting and enabling. On the former, there may be the need to rediscover that the Bible's theme of healing is interwoven with the pastoral function of sustaining – a ministry that helps people 'to endure and to transcend' affliction.¹⁴ Healing is not the invariable outcome of the prayer of faith and the call to sustain those who continue to do battle with long-term debility (paralleled by Paul's unremitting 'thorn in the flesh') is perhaps the most demanding aspect of pastoral care. On the latter, the healing ministries are always in danger of exalting a Spirit-centred theology of glory over a Word-centred theology of the cross. Tom Smail sees this tendency as a slide from 'the power of love' towards 'the love of power'.

A Situation of Need

How will Sally fare at the hands of the healing ministries? It is likely that one of the inner healing' methodologies will be used. Those aspects of her story that indicate something of a need to 'journey back' will be given priority. The focus of care may well engage with the strained relationship with her parents. The Holy Spirit's guidance will be sought in order to discern the way forward. As part of the process of uncovering the layers of the past the Scriptures will be handled reflectively, putting forward a suggestion of a time of prayerful listening to the words of, say, Psalm 139. It is within the framework of a God who knows every detail of Sally's unfolding life, since she was 'knit together in [her] mother's womb' (v 13), and has loved her throughout, that she may find the impetus for a fresh appreciation of her fallible parents and the grace to forgive them.

Pastoral Counselling

The pedigree of pastoral counselling is a complex one since it has been raised up from various stables of influence. Broadly, there have been three major trends. One has fought for its Christian roots and has seen this pathway as an expression of the Church's overall pastoral care. The second has tended to assimilate secular understandings of psychology and, at times, has disowned its Christian pastoral origins. The third has sought to integrate its theological and psychological insights. We can offer a comprehensive definition that allows for this diversity:

Pastoral counselling is that activity carried out by representative Christian persons, lay or ordained, which aims to help others toward constructive change

13 See Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, New York, Doubleday & Co. 1979, pp 81-96.

14 W. A. Clebsch and C. R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, Aronson, New York 1975, p 8.

in any or every aspect of life through a caring relationship, which has agreed boundaries and is accountable to a recognized community of faith or other authorizing institution.¹⁵

Focus of Care

Where biblical counselling focuses on the cognitive and behavioural, pastoral counselling is essentially *relational* in emphasis. This focus can be justified both theologically and psychologically. It is noteworthy that Jesus, in his recorded encounters with the 'common people', is committed to relationality: a look, a question, a rebuke, a story rather than a quoted text. Psychologically, there has been a careful sifting of the research that undergirds the priority of relationship within the more person-centred methodologies of counselling and psychotherapy.¹⁶ Here, we can speak of a Christian personalism that is committed to the process of spiritual and psychological maturation.¹⁷

Use of Scripture

Whereas biblical counselling and the healing ministries adopt the overt use of the Bible in prescriptive and reflective modes, the link between pastoral counselling and Scripture can be described as *formative*. Here, biblical insights form or mould every aspect of the pastoral encounter: the careful listening to story; the valuing of the individual's unique personhood; the goal of psychological and spiritual maturity; and the counselling relationship itself. In the words of Thomas Oden, there is an 'implicit assumption' hidden in effective pastoral counselling 'which is made explicit in the Christian proclamation.'¹⁸ Just as Paul's encounter with the Athenians in Acts 17 is one of a prior respectful listening to the context of another's culture and its beliefs, so pastoral counselling offers an engagement with another's world that seeks to make knowable that world's 'unknown God'. Although the pastoral counsellor holds to the covert, formative influence of the Scriptures, there may be times, as with Paul in Athens, when the Christian kerygma needs to be made explicit.

Functional Metaphor

The adjective 'pastoral', from the Latin *pastor*, strongly evokes the biblical imagery of the *shepherd* as a useful metaphor for the pastoral counsellor. Seward Hiltner, writing in the 1950s, put forward healing, sustaining and guiding as 'the three aspects of the shepherding perspective' in Christian pastoral care.¹⁹ This perspective, though, has had a chequered career since, tied as it has been into a clericalist stance in which the 'pastoral' exclusively denotes the ordained, and distorted into a pretext for manipulative control within certain house churches and the more cultic forms of Christian discipleship under the umbrella term of

15 Hurdling, *Pathways*, p 253.

16 See for example, Petruska Clarkson, *The Therapeutic Relationship*, London, Whurr Publishers 1995.

17 For an exploration of 'psychospiritual' maturity, see David G. Benner, *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest*, Grand Rapids MI, Baker Book House 1988.

18 Thomas C. Oden, *Kerygma and Counseling: Toward a Covenant Ontology for Secular Psychology* (2nd edn), San Francisco, Harper & Row 1978, p 9.

19 Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press 1958, p 146.

'shepherding'. Even so, where the rich paradigm of Jesus as the good shepherd, with its gentle, nurturing, intimate and guiding components, is allowed to colour pastoral counselling, the 'shepherding perspective' can be seen to offer an appropriately relational metaphor.

Spirituality

As we have already hinted, pastoral counselling is practised by a wide range of Christian traditions and is thus variously infused with, amongst others, evangelical, charismatic and catholic spiritualities. However, this pathway's most distinctive theological input has been from the more *liberal* and *postliberal* wings of the Church. Liberalism is a 'broad church' with practices and beliefs ranging across a spectrum from 'liberal' evangelicalism to the views of Don Cupitt and 'Sea of Faith' theology. Of particular influence on the spirituality of pastoral counselling have been the ethical stance of Reinhold Niebuhr²⁰ and the commitment to dialogue between theology and psychology in Paul Tillich.²¹ Postliberalism has seen a shift from liberalism's stress on the individual and the commonality of human experience to an engagement with community and the differentness and otherness of human story.

It is these latter emphases that tally well with pastoral counselling's focus on relationality. Such a spirituality needs a relational theology that is inspired by trinitarian and covenantal perspectives. Thus, the pastoral encounter can be seen as a pale reflection of the Trinity's 'being-in-relationship' in which human 'otherness' and 'particularity' are respected, and where the therapeutic relationship mirrors, however inadequately, something of the mutual covenant-love between God and his people.

Situation of Need

If Sally comes to a pastoral counsellor the latter will seek to build up a relationship of trust with her. This may not be easy since she is likely to feel defensive towards her counsellor, especially if he is an older male, with whom she may subconsciously identify her abusive father. Further, knowing the counsellor to be a Christian, she might anticipate judgmentalism towards her desire 'to have a fling' with her lecturer friend. Hopefully, the pastoral counsellor will be seen as unthreatening, as a good listener who helps her, step by step, to re-evaluate her fraught relationships. The goals of counselling will be negotiated and may well focus on Sally's compromised relationship with her husband Jack. It is likely that the counsellor will offer to see him too and thus, if both parties are willing, move into marital counselling. In time, Sally's feelings towards her parents may come centre-stage and the possibilities of relational reconciliation explored. Throughout, the pastoral counsellor will allow the 'implicit assumption' of the Christian kerygma to influence the counselling process, with a preparedness to make that kerygma explicit if and when it is deemed helpful for constructive change in Sally's life.

20 See, for example, the influence of Niebuhr on Don Browning in the latter's *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press 1991, pp 142-199.

21 See Elaine Graham's critique of Tillich in her *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty*, London, Mowbray 1996, p 70.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is a pathway to wholeness that lies deeply embedded in the mystical traditions of the Church. Its biblical roots can be seen in the pastoral oversight offered by Elijah to Elisha, Jesus to his disciples and by Paul to Timothy, and its development traced in the spiritual counsel sought from the Desert Fathers, within the monastic orders, from the Celtic 'soul-friend' and within the unfolding disciplines of Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. From the second half of the twentieth century the concept of spiritual direction and its desirability for the Christian pilgrimage have gained footholds amongst evangelicals and charismatics.

Focus of Care

Where the focus of care in pastoral counselling is on relationality and psychological maturity, spiritual direction centres its attention on the *inner journey* and its route towards spiritual maturity. This quest can be seen as a bid for, in Thomas Merton's terms, the 'true self' that is discovered through surrender to God, over against the 'false self' that seeks independence from the divine.²² As Henri Nouwen puts it: 'Put simply, life is a God-given opportunity to become who we are, to affirm our own true spiritual nature, claim our truth, appropriate and integrate the reality of our being, but, most of all, to say "Yes" to the One who calls us the Beloved.'²³

Use of Scripture

The uses of Scripture in spiritual direction are many and various, including the propositional, reflective and formative approaches already considered. Even so, perhaps the most distinctive handling of the Bible found within this pathway is the *imaginative* use put forward by Ignatius Loyola. In essence, a passage of Scripture, such as a Gospel story, is read prayerfully and unhurriedly and, following the Spirit's promptings, the narrative is engaged with using the five senses. This 'application of the senses' is an imaginative entering into the incidents described: the sight of Jesus and those who mill around him; the smells of animal fur and human sweat; the sounds of the market-place; the taste of dried salt on the lips in the heat of the day; the touch of a jostling crowd. As the imagined scene unfolds the directee may ask, 'Where am I here? Am I close to Jesus, or am I a distant observer? What do I see? What is Jesus saying to me?' In such ways the images sensed are allowed to enter into the directee's life, giving new understandings and new ways for obedient Christian living.

Functional Metaphor

The spiritual director, whether lay or ordained, can be seen to have resonance with the biblical ministry of the *priest*, a ministry to Israel which, according to Walter Brueggemann, 'dealt with the problem of sin and guilt and the felt need for forgiveness and reconciliation'.²⁴ Here is a go-between role that seeks to be a 'soul-friend', a companion on the inner journey who offers discernment and supportive wisdom to a fellow-pilgrim. As David Augsburg puts it: 'when one is truly there

22 See Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (2nd edn), Wheathampstead, Anthony Clarke 1972.

23 Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, London, Hodder & Stoughton 1993, p 106.

for another, a depth of communication occurs that is beyond words or style, or technique, or theory, or theology. It is presence gifted by Presence.²⁵

Spirituality

As we have seen, the pathway of spiritual direction inherits a rich legacy in the more sacramentalist traditions of Catholic, Celtic and Orthodox spiritualities. Here, there is a *spirituality of the heart* which enmeshes closely with a theology of presence. The former holds to a deep commitment to God in the 'heart', the very 'centre of gravity' in a person's life and being. It engages with 'what can unify our fragmented selves, with what can heal our brokenness' and 'points to communion at a deep level, heart-to-heart.'²⁶

This single-heartedness is linked necessarily with a stress on God's immanence, with a search, to quote Ignatius, for 'God's presence in all things, in their conversations, their walks, in all that they see, taste, hear, understand, in all their actions, since his Divine Majesty is truly in all things by his presence, power, and essence.'²⁷

This theology of presence can, in some practitioners of spiritual direction, slip into a blurring of the distinctiveness of Creator and created, into a New-Age pantheism in which everything is God and God is everything – he is the erupting volcano, every tree in the forest, the sea and every fish within it. Where it is truest to Scripture, however, we see in this pathway a pantheism that accords well with a Pauline theology that sees Christ as one in whom 'all things hold together' (Col. 1:17) and who 'fills all in all' (Eph. 1:23).

A Situation of Need

In seeking spiritual direction, Sally will hopefully find someone who will identify with her as a companion on her Christian path. As with pastoral counselling, it will take time to build up a relationship of trust within which Sally feels able to share the hopes and fears of her inner journey. The understanding between director and directee will be that the arrangement is open-ended, although it may be concluded at any stage by mutual consent. It is likely that Sally's prayer life will be explored and access to her thoughts and feelings about prayer may be achieved through an imaginative engagement with a gospel story, journal-keeping, painting or sculpting. It may be seen that a meditative silence is a rare luxury for Sally and that she is best helped by a practising 'of the presence of God' in her relationship with Jack and amidst the demands and delights of her children.

Social Change

The issues surrounding and needs for social change are writ deeply into the history of God's dealings with humankind. The Scriptures portray the story of a people

24 Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith*, Atlanta, GA, John Knox Press 1972, p 105.

25 David W. Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press 1986, p 37.

26 Annice Gallahah (ed), *Spiritualities of the Heart: Approaches to Personal Wholeness in*

Christian Tradition, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press 1990, p 1.

27 Ignatius Loyola, *Letter to Anthony Brandao, 1 June 1551*, quoted in Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Finding God in All Things: The Way of St. Ignatius*, London, HarperCollins 1994, p 230.

called out by Yahweh and established through the saving work of Jesus Christ as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Pet. 2:9). This restored humanity is to be profoundly committed to 'the widow, the orphan, the alien, ...the poor' (Zech. 7:9). The Church's track record on its calling as a reformed and reforming community is a mixed one. At times it has been faithful in its quest for social justice and its championing of the poor and disadvantaged; at times it has been too preoccupied by its internal politics, its bid for power or its preoccupation with the individual's state of soul to hear the anguish of an oppressed people or the weeping of those who mourn. This, our fifth pathway, should be a corrective to the sometimes spiritualized and psychologized individualism of the four pathways so far considered.

Focus of Care

Here, as already indicated the focus of care is on the *context* of people's lives and by definition this embraces the social, communal and environmental dimensions of human existence. Within this broad sweep issues of poverty, gender, culture and ecology may come to the fore in the pastoral encounter with individuals, social groupings and local communities. Behind every immediate cry for help more long-term perspectives involving the economic and political will not be forgotten. The strongly held impetus for social change in the face of life's deprivations is expressed by the Boffs in a Latin American context:

'Poor' for the people means dependence, debt, exposure, anonymity, contempt, and humiliation. The poor do not usually refer to themselves as 'poor,' which would offend their sense of honor and dignity. It is the non-poor who call them poor. So a poor woman..., hearing someone call her poor, retorted: 'Poor, no! Poor is the end. We are the dispossessed, but fighting!'²⁸

Use of Scripture

Engagement with Scripture on this pathway is one of a 'hermeneutics of suspicion', in which the biblical text is interpreted in the light of a *socio-political awareness* that questions the ready assumptions of the strong, the powerful and the systematically self-assured. David Clines likens this healthy willingness to suspect the text as 'reading against its grain'. Where, for example, the Egyptians' perspective on the Red Sea crossing or Bathsheba's feelings over King David's behaviour are focused on then fresh conclusions for the 'outsider' or violated may be drawn. As Clines puts it, such a process need not show disrespect for the text so much as an avoidance of the assumption that the text 'will say what it is we would like it to say'.²⁹

Functional Metaphor

There are two functional metaphors which can be used in the pathway of social change: they are the complementary ones of the *prophet* and the *wise one*. This twofold function is seen in Jeremiah 18:18 where we read that not only 'instruction

28 Leonardo Boff & Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Tunbridge Wells, Burns & Oates, 1987, p 32.

29 David Clines, 'Images of Yahweh: God in the Pentateuch' in R. L. Hubbard Jr., R. K. Johnston & R. P. Meye (eds), *Studies in Old Testament Theology*, Dallas, Word 1992, p 82.

shall not perish from the priest' neither shall 'counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.'

The 'word from the prophet' is one that runs counter to the prevailing culture where that culture is materialistic in its mindset, oppressive towards its people or excluding towards outsiders. The prophetic voice, in the words of Brueggemann, is 'to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture'.³⁰ This 'over-against' function is a call 'from above', a calling from the God who weeps with those who weep and hears the cry of the poor and afflicted.

The 'counsel from the wise', in contrast, is 'from below', rising up, as it were, from where the common people are. It is the voice of godly wisdom, identifying with the group in need, and pleading its cause before the authorities. This is an advisory and supportive 'ministry at the margin' of the faith community, not given to sermonizing but, rather, tackling 'questions of value and reality [that] are wide open and unsettled'.³¹ Whereas the prophet exercises a confrontative, assured role in the quest for social justice, the wise one contributes perceptive insight to the case of the needy set amidst the harsh realities of a complex and compromised world.

Spirituality

In the pastoral pathway of social change we can talk of an 'exodus spirituality' that is undergirded by radical theologies which challenge issues of class, race, age, gender and disability. The Exodus story reveals a template for a nation's stance towards the disadvantaged, a stance that mirrors Yahweh's very nature:

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You also shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Deut. 10:17-19).

In contemporary terms this 'exodus spirituality' is carried over into battles fought by the new, liberative theologies put forward by the poor, ethnic minorities, third-world cultures, women, gays and the disabled. One example of this is the emergent theology of Chung Hyun Kyung from Korea, a theology that is described by Elaine Graham as 'very Third World, very Asian, very women'.³²

A Situation of Need

Within this pathway Sally may be helped through individuals or groups who seek to change the societal contexts that she is part of through the prophetic voice and solidarity of godly wisdom. Through the pastoral encounter she may be encouraged to read the Scriptures 'against the grain', discerning and taking heart from the frequently ignored stories of women in the Bible. She might, for instance, engage with Hagar's tale, finding solace and encouragement in the narrative of a woman who was pushed from pillar to post, disempowered, abused and rendered homeless,

30 Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1978, p 13.

31 Brueggemann, *In Man We Trust*, p 112. I am indebted to this work for this brief section.

32 Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty*, London, Mowbray 1996, pp 133f.

and yet, on encountering the Lord's angel, could declare, 'I have now seen the One who sees me' (Gen. 16:13). She may thus find courage to confront her husband Jack's repressive and sexist ways, hopefully challenging him by a bid for greater mutuality within the marriage. Further, she may be enabled to move forward in her relationship with God by allowing the more nurturant, creative and 'motherly' aspects of the godhead to the fore. In this journey towards a greater freedom and celebration of her womanhood Sally may find health-giving support from a women's group and a new level of understanding and forgiveness towards her abusive father. Her return to nursing may bring about a deeper practical engagement with the physical, emotional and social needs of her patients.

Conclusion

In exploring five pathways to wholeness we have been reminded of the rich fabric of the Church's calling to pastoral care. That calling is an holistic one which seeks to address human need in all its fullness: cognitive, behavioural, physical, emotional, experiential, spiritual, social and environmental. At times, though, due to the pathways' various traditions of theology and spirituality, there have been an elevation of this or that methodology as *the* approach to bring wholeness and, conversely, a deep, unyielding suspicion towards the remaining four pathways. Thus, for example, spiritual directors, with their 'spirituality of the heart', may be dismissive of the prescriptive, cognitive style of biblical counsellors, who, in turn, may be highly critical of the liberal stance of some pastoral counsellors. Similarly, charismatic healers may look askance at the sociopolitical commitment of social reformers, while the latter may see the former as individualized and pietistic.

Although the big picture is sometimes fragmented through the particularities of each pathway there is the requirement to see each route as complementary to the others. Whichever pathway and tradition the reader feels most at home in there is a need, not least for the sake of those we seek to help, to understand and respect the value of the other four pathways to wholeness. No one route has the monopoly on shaping the journeying of fellow-pilgrims. Each pathway, whether primarily didactic, healing, shepherdly, priestly, prophetic or sapiential needs a trinitarian emphasis that focuses centrally on Christ Jesus, 'the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being' (Heb. 1:3). It is in him that pathways to wholeness find their way and their destiny. Waldemar Janzen sees the range of functional metaphors subsumed in the servanthood deity of Christ:

Though Jesus Christ... embraced paradigmatically the offices of king, priest, and sage, these were qualitatively transformed by the attributes of suffering and redeemed servant. He was the lowly king; the self-sacrificing priest; the bringer of a wisdom not of this world. Above all, he was the Son of God...³³

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33 Waldemar Janzen, *Old Testament Ethics: A Paradigmatic Approach*, Westminster/John Knox 1994, p 176.