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Methods of Cross-Cultural Pastoral Care: Hospitality and Incarnation

Introduction

In pastoral care and counseling it is not enough to borrow from the counseling psychologies for methodology. One reason for this is that the context out of which the method develops in the counseling psychologies is different from the context of the church. The techniques should be specific to the context in which pastoral care and counseling is provided.

If the methods of pastoral care and counseling are to be specific, then, how do they utilize the counseling psychologies for the religious context? If the counseling psychologies are used, what criteria must be employed for the needs of the church? If pastoral counseling is cross-cultural, where does one begin theorizing and theologizing about its systems?

Counseling Psychologies

For some, theorizing and theologizing about the methods of cross-cultural pastoral counseling must begin with counseling psychologies, having secular models of counseling uppermost in mind. For others, all theologizing and theorizing must begin with the faith community and its confession prior to engaging secular psychologies. An understand-

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ing of these two emphases is important in order to clarify the major issues involved in developing cross-cultural methods.

Some people within the church think that the approaches and theories of the secular world are far superior to those produced by the church and the Bible. The writer remembers a Doctor of Ministry class taught at a predominantly white seminary. There were two factions: pastors of churches who spent every day making correlations between their understanding of faith and needs of people and pastoral counselors who felt that theology began with a universal form of spirituality which was constant for all persons regardless of their religious orientation. Great tension emerged.

The pastors felt that traditional religious language and symbols are important in caring for the needs of people, and the pastoral counselors felt that religious language and symbols are irrelevant for their work. Understanding the latter group is important prior to determining principles for developing procedures of cross-cultural pastoral counseling.

Pastoral counseling began as a movement, taking seriously both ministerial and pastoral context. However, since 1945 ministry is redefined in some pastoral-care circles by utilizing modern medicine, psychotherapy, and the behavioral sciences.[1] Few seminaries offered courses in counseling prior to the World War II. However, during the war seminaries began discovering counseling skills as necessary for training chaplains.[2] Theological schools began offering courses in pastoral counseling, and such studies became important for those training for institutional chaplaincies. During the 1940s there were few chaplaincies, but by the end of the 1950s there were

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[1]Rodney Hunter, ed. *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 845-849.

[2]Ibid.

over 500 full-time chaplains serving in general hospitals and at least 200 more working in mental hospitals. During this same time counseling centers with pastors, psychotherapists, and social workers emerged with a distinction between pastoral care and pastoral counseling. Pastoral counseling meant specialized training in counseling and psychotherapy; pastoral care emerged as work within local congregations where the faith tradition and counseling skills are related.[3]

Important in the history of modern pastoral care and counseling are secular counseling, psychotherapy, behavioral sciences, and medicine. For some, the secular disciplines and counseling psychologies were dominant with no attempt to correlate these resources with belief. For others, particularly pastors, this conviction continued in focus, and correlational efforts to bridge the gap between the secular disciplines and counseling psychologies remained important.

The tension between those who emphasize counseling psychology and those giving a prominent place to the faith tradition has been present since the beginning of the pastoral care and counseling movement in the United States. This splitting between pastors and pastoral counselors in the class regarding pastoral theology was a reflection of what had existed since the emergence of pastoral counseling in the 1940s.

The writer's own bias early in pastoral counseling was to give a more prominent role to the counseling psychologies and behavioral sciences. This was particularly the case in 1968 beginning my pastoral counseling training at the Worcester Area Pastoral Counseling Center while serving as pastor of a small church and an urban minister for the local Council of Churches. However, a new book permanently influenced my

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[3]Ibid., 848.

thinking regarding the relationship of faith and counseling psychologies.

This work by William Hulme entitled *Pastoral Care Comes of Age*[4] emphasized that pastoral care was a developmental movement which flirted with secular counseling psychologies and behavioral sciences. Hulme stressed that pastoral counseling had reached its maturity and could now claim its true identity within the faith tradition. This signalled the beginning of interest in wedding the faith of our parents with the resources of counseling psychologies and behavioral sciences. From reading this book, faith resources are central in the writer's methodological formulations, giving a prominent place to faith tradition in developing methods of pastoral care and counseling.

An implied incarnational theology undergirds the thought. Although not defining this in my writings until recently, I have been influenced by Thomas Oden's *Kerygma and Counseling*.[5] Drawing upon a Barthian method of neo-orthodoxy, Ogden influenced my understanding of borrowing from the secular fields in the service of ministry. Presented briefly is his theory of developing methods of pastoral counseling, relating theology and the behavioral sciences. After this, cross-cultural challenges that expand Oden's thinking into the cross-cultural area are analyzed, drawing on Augsburger's *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures*.[6] Paul's cross-cultural sensitivities harmonize with this discussion. Fi-

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[4]William Hulme, *Pastoral Care Comes of Age* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).

[5]Thomas Oden, *Kerygma and Counseling: Toward a Covenant Ontology for Secular Psychotherapy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

[6]David W. Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986).

nally, the writer dialogues briefly with a form of incarnational theology from African American Womanist Theology as a way of assisting pastoral counseling to be cross-gender oriented as well as cross-culturally sensitive.

The Doctrine of Incarnation in Thomas Oden's Thinking

Tom Oden has focused on theological ethics throughout his career. However, he also has an interest in ethics in ministry and counseling theory. He has seen a connection between what counseling psychologists were doing with the concept of empathy and decided to explore this from a theological perspective. The result was the conclusion that the method of empathy made a basic assumption about the nature of reality which was essentially theological. However, he noted that this was not articulated.

This unarticulated supposition undergirding empathy is that the world in which we live is graceful and accepting.[7] In short, Oden believes that most modern psychology makes a broad leap of faith and builds its methods on a theological view of the world that is not acknowledged.

Oden feels that Christians who practice pastoral counseling need to explicate reasons for which the world is gracious and accepting. The Christian must always begin confessionally from within the community of faith and explain that the world is gracious and accepting because of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.[8] Therefore, Oden says our understanding of empathy must not begin with the clinical setting but with this self-disclosure. The emphasis is how the

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[7]Oden, *Kerygma and Counseling,* 123.

[8]Ibid., 23.

light of Jesus Christ illumines the therapeutic process.[9] It is Christ that reveals the nature of the world with its gracious and accepting reality.

Oden's contribution to pastoral counseling enables us to look to Jesus Christ and the doctrine of Incarnation as the starting point of methodology. Some pastoral theologians begin with the clinical setting and move to theology; however, Oden wants the pastoral counselor to understand that empathy is not a modern invention. Rather, it began with God's compassion for humanity, God's initiative to enter into human form for our sake.

David Augsburger's Interpathy

While Oden was writing in the 1960s, concerned with the relationship of counseling and the Gospel, the 1980s introduced a new dimension to pastoral counseling theorizing. This new direction was cross-cultural pastoral counseling. Empathy as formulated by Carl Rogers came under close scrutiny for its cross-cultural, inclusive nature. Empathy was to be with those from the same cultural background as the therapist. However, what would empathy be like if it were to occur cross-culturally?

David Augsburger tries to answer this question. He discovered that clinically, empathy works best when the pastoral counselor is from the same cultural background as the counselee. He believes that this cultural encapsulation of empathy restricts pastoral counseling and that such controls are not justifiable when the cross-cultural nature of society is considered. Consequently, he wants pastoral counselors to

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[9]Ibid., 47.

become cross-culturally sensitive. Toward training them in this direction, he introduces an innovation into the understanding of empathy—interpathy. The term means entering the worldview and experiences of another of a different cultural background.[10] The skills needed for interpathy include respect, understanding, and appreciation of others of a different cultural background so that the pastoral counselor is able, for a brief moment, to transcend cultural limitations.[11]

Augsburger explains that this is important because human beings are not ahistorical, apolitical, or acultural. Many counseling theories assume they address the universal needs of persons; therefore, a cross-cultural model is not needed. As the "melting pot" metaphor is inadequate, the "acultural model" of counseling is also deficient.

The concern for Augsburger is truly extending empathy beyond cultural boundaries, grounding his rationale for such commitment in the theology of Incarnation. He suggests that the radical solidarity of God with humanity has led to the inevitable direction of interpathy. He says: "In this radical solidarity with us, a God accepts full the responsibility for creating finite beings who are vulnerable to evil and remains in loving relationship with us."[12] He emphasizes that this same presence of God is present through those who care and embody God's grace.

Given this theological understanding of the Incarnation, he extends the traditional concepts of empathy into specific pastoral-counselor characteristics of which the following reflect interpathic qualities:

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[10]Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling*, 14.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., 38.

1. Include a clear understanding and awareness of one's own values and basic assumptions;

2. Have a capacity for welcoming, entering into and prizing other worldviews without negating their legitimacy;

3. Seek sources of influence in both the person and the context, both in the individual instance and the environment;

4. Are able to move beyond counseling theory, orientation, or technique and be effective humans;

5. Are able to view themselves as universal citizens related to all humans as well as distinct from them.[13]

Augsburger is not a cultural relativist. His concern is for communication and ministry across cultures. To avoid the kind of cultural relativity that weakens one's own faith, he introduces the concept of mutuality to demonstrate being interpathic while remaining faithful to one's own faith commitment. For him:

> Mutuality means entering another's worldview, sharing that consciousness, exploring its interior, looking out at the wider world through its windows while retaining one's own worldview. One does not become identical with the other, but mutual. Identity has been joined with another's identity in reciprocal interchange and trans-

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[13]Ibid., 20-21.

formation.[14]

The cultural challenge that Augsburger makes to traditional empathy is both clinically and theologically sound. Our heritage itself developed in a cross-cultural environment. Moreover, the cultural pluralistic nature of our world makes it plausible to find oneself extending pastoral counseling to others of different cultural backgrounds. This is even the case for the writer who teaches in a predominantly African-American seminary.

The Womanist Critique

Feminist thought brings a critique to traditional opinions of empathy. This review is that empathy is gender encapsulated, and men who perform pastoral counseling do not really take women's experiences seriously. It is a valid criticism. Some radical feminists go even further and say that patriarchal Christianity and a faith rooted in a male Jesus cannot ever be sensitive to their experiences. Consequently, two major characteristics of feminist thought include a critique of patriarchal religion (analysis of sexism) and making women's experience the starting point of theology.

Being an orthodox Christian, it is difficult beginning theology either with male *or* female experience. The writer begins with the faith tradition's expression of faith and its central norm for theological thinking. However, feminists raise the point how is it possible to begin with the faith tradition which is male dominated. This, they feel, will negate women's experience.

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[14]Ibid., 39.

The writer turns to women of color who are Christian and have directly reflected how God incarnate in Jesus Christ has illuminated their experiences of racism and sexism. Jacquelyn Grant, a colleague at ITC, will be the spokeswoman for this perspective. She is in the Womanist Tradition because this term is unique to African-American women and has its origin in African Americans describing assertive African-American women.

Grant emphasizes that women cannot throw the "baby out with the bath," stressing that Jesus is important to African-American people. She describes the connection between Jesus's experiences with suffering and the suffering of African-American women.

> For Christian Black women in the past, Jesus was their central frame of reference. They identified with Jesus because they believed that Jesus identified with them. As Jesus was persecuted and made to suffer undeservedly, so were they. His suffering culminated in the crucifixion. Their crucifixion included rape, and babies being sold. But Jesus' suffering was not the suffering of a mere human, for Jesus was understood to be God incarnate.[15]

Grant further affirms the significance of Jesus Christ for African-American women. For many African-American Christian women today Jesus is the Christ—God incarnate. Jesus means freedom and a political messiah who frees people, not only from spiritual bondage, but also holistically: mind,

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[15]Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 212.

body, spirit, economic-social-political oppression.[16] Black women noticed that Jesus was especially concerned about the lowly, the oppressed, and outcast. She concludes that it is in the cross of Christ that African Americans find Jesus' radical identification with the needs of the oppressed. However, the resurrection also gives hope for the future.

Grant connects Jesus with the experiences of African-American women, illumining their own life situations, affirming their worth, and lifting their visions toward hope. In other words, African-American Womanist Christology believes that the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ transcends gender boundaries.

Delores S. Williams' *Sisters in the Wilderness* introduces a warning about the centrality of the cross in any christological formulations. She warns that certain interpretations of the cross can lead Black women to a form of ministry that is self-destructive. She says:

> In this sense Jesus represents the ultimate surrogate figure; he stands in the place of someone else: sinful humankind. Surrogacy, attached to this divine personage, thus takes on an aura of the sacred. It is therefore fitting and proper for black women to ask whether the image of a surrogate-God has salvific power for black women or whether this image supports and reinforces the exploitation that has accompanied their experience with surrogacy. If black women accept this idea of redemption, can they not also passively accept the exploitation that surrogacy brings?[17]

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[16]Ibid., 215.

[17]Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 162.

Williams' critique is informed by African-American women's experience with coerced and voluntary surrogacy where they were forced or chose to sacrifice themselves following the example of Jesus. This is a special problem for clergywomen concerned about pastoral care and who easily extend themselves as a care giver bordering on self-destruction.

In light of this warning Jacquelyn Grant presents a hopeful way of viewing the cross as liberating. This liberating word is that Black women have liberated Jesus from the oppressive views of surrogacy at the same time Jesus was liberating them. She writes:

> African-American women's understandings of Jesus help us to see how Black women are empowered in appropriating Jesus, even in spite of the historical oppressive presentations of him. What we find in the experiences of African-American women is a process of mutual liberation: Jesus was liberating or redeeming African-American women, as African-American women were liberating or redeeming Jesus. The Jesus of African-American women has suffered a triple bondage or imprisonment as well. Jesus has been held captive to the sin of patriarchy [sexism], the sin of White supremacy [racism], and the sin of privilege [classism]. As such, Jesus has been used to keep women in their 'proper place'; to keep Blacks meek, mild, and docile in the face of brutal forms of dehumanization; and to ensure the servility of servants.[18]

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[18]Jacquelyn Grant, "Womanist Jesus and the Mutual Struggle for Liberation," in *The Recovery of Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*, ed. Randall C. Bailey and Jacquelyn Grant (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 138.

Grant's position is that African-American women's experience with Jesus is not a form of bondage but one of liberation and empowerment. The employment of surrogacy and surrogacy views of the cross are, in Grant's mind, formulations that need to be liberated.

Here are implications for cross-cultural methods of pastoral care, which must take seriously the centrality of Jesus Christ as God's supreme example of the Incarnation. Moreover, such procedures need to be cross-cultural and gender-difference sensitive.

Additionally, the feminist and Womanist critique of christological formulations is clear that incarnational theology must take seriously African-American women's experience of the liberating Jesus. Concepts like interpathy and mutuality are important. Rooting these methods in understanding how the early church developed its methods of cross-cultural ministry is also meaningful.

Cross-Cultural Methods

There are certain ways to consider cross-cultural methods. One is to discuss metaphors emerging from the faith community context and the secular therapeutic community which promote healing and wholeness in cross-cultural pastoral care. They include scripture, including language of household codes: brother and sister, neighbor, friend, members, fellow servant workers, joint heirs, joint citizens, joint workers, partners.[19] These are collegial terms for partners in the eschatological community and fellow participants in God's salva-

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[19]Anne S. Wimberly and Edward P. Wimberly, *The Lanauage of Hospitality: Intercultural Relations in the Household of God* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1992), 74.

tion drama. Such metaphors can help pastoral counselors envisage themselves as co-workers in the vineyard.

Metaphors and language help determine the tasks of pastoral counselors. The images just described and those that follow were developed in cross-cultural contexts and are key for providing insight to cross-cultural relationships. Augsburger says that "our metaphors reveal the truth of our relationships, our understandings of ourself and others, and the values and beliefs that connect us."[20]

Therapeutic metaphors that relate specifically to counseling include hospitality (guest and hosts), therapeutic community, healing relationship, human transformation and change, the healing community, and wounded healer.[21] These figurative expressions find their meaning primarily in the quality of relationships pastoral counselors are able to establish with others. The key is the ability to be full human beings to another. The quality of being present also translates into specific skills, including increasing attention to one's own personal wounds through therapy and spiritual direction. The more one knows about oneself, the better able one is to be a host for another. Moreover, it is important for a person to identify and accept racial and cultural prejudices, enabling one to be tolerant of oneself. This also increases one's ability to be hospitable. A supervisor who can help a person recognize the cultural and racial blind spots is indispensable. Becoming cross-cultural sensitive is not easy to do, and consultation and supervision by a person from another cultural and racial group is important in the sensitivity process. Another helpful means of becoming cross-cultural is to explore with the counselee the cultural factors involved in the issues being

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[20]Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling*, 347.

[21]Ibid., 348.

presented in counseling. This demonstrates interest and a willingness to enter the experiences of a different other.

Another important dimension of cross-cultural counseling is increasing one's creative imagination regarding interpathy. As indicated, interpathy relates to placing oneself in the shoes of another from a different cultural background. Such projection requires creative imagination. Yet, this resourcefulness is not developed totally within the counseling relationship. It not only requires cross-cultural supervision, but also necessitates reading case studies, novels and the literature of those whom we seek to understand. The assumptive worldviews of others are often revealed in literature of a particular people, which is invaluable to a cross-culturally sensitive pastoral counselor.

Conclusion

The emphasis has been grounding empathy and interpathy in the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Cross-cultural counseling has been conceived as that which is done primarily because it is at the heart of our Christian heritage. The early church developed its own ministry in a cross-cultural setting, and scripture portrays Jesus Christ as one concerned about all regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. The concern was to highlight the cross-cultural methods consistent with the theological and spiritual heritage of our faith.