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Reading about . . .

Pastoral Psychology

Pastoral psychology is the application of modern psychology to the ancient ministry of the pastoral care exercised within the various Christian Churches. Today this care draws on insights and techniques from three primary sources: contemporary understandings of human personality and interpersonal relationships from the human sciences (especially psychology); therapeutic methods from one or more of the current counselling and psychotherapeutic approaches; and biblical, theological, and historical resources from the Judeo-Christian heritage.

The five traditional pastoral care functions are those of: healing, today also called pastoral psychotherapy; sustaining, seen in crisis and bereavement work; guiding, seen in educative work such as preparation for marriage; reconciling, in helping to resolve interpersonal conflicts; and nurturing – helping to enhance people's lives and work through phases of development crisis. In all these areas of concern the pastor makes use of religious concepts, theological background, prayer, scripture, and the sacramental system as well as understanding drawn from the social sciences (Campbell, 1987).

From this it must be obvious that while the concept of pastoral psychology may be simply expressed in broad terms, the reality is much more complex. There is not one single school of theology, any more than there is one single school of dynamic psychology. Thus, when we try to marry these two "understandings" we may find ourselves in a veritable minefield. An example of the Freudian application is seen in Faber (1976), of the Jungian in von der Heydt (1976), of the existential in Macquarrie (1972), and of the eclectic in Kelsey (1973).

However, to me there were two basic problems which had to be faced. The first was that the theological schools tended to view man's free will as too absolute, while the dynamic psychologists were perhaps viewing it as having too little freedom. The second problem was one of semantics. Both schools were using the same words and yet meaning very different things. Guntrip (1964) illustrated this when he examined the concept of 'guilt'. He pointed out the difference between moral guilt, juridical guilt, and emotional guilt (which he termed "shame"). He saw that the problem facing the therapist was "inordinate shame", i.e. either shame when there was obviously no guilt in reality, or a total lack of shame when the guilt was apparent. But who then decides in what real guilt consists? Is this not a philosophical or theological question rather than a psychological one? In this sense are we are not all in the field of pastoral psychology? This question is faced by Stafford-Clark, both in his book (Stafford-Clark, 1970) and in a previous essay in *Christian Essays in Psychiatry* (Mairet, 1956). The latter includes a series of chapters whose clarity and excellence have never quite been reached since. They include essays by Desmond Pond, Anthony Storr, Eve Lewis, E. B. Strauss, Victor White, Denis Martin, and Philip Mairet. These are indeed the fathers of pastoral psychology in this country.

In his essay, Stafford-Clark points out that it is the religious dimension only that can reconcile the inevitable conflict between loving and hating that psychotherapy may bring into consciousness. It is, he says, important to realise that psychiatry cannot really do this; it is not in itself a source of inspiration, nor can it provide a substitute for moral values or obligations.

Guntrip (1971) outlines the other side of the question in pointing out that the first use of psychology for the minister is to help the minister understand character in himself and in other people. He applies the concepts of psychology to the whole work of both the social worker and the minister, and not just to the narrow framework of counselling.

The need for man to have a meaning in life, an existential attitude, a belief, or whatever you might name it, is seen in the works of Frankl (1964) and May (1975). This would imply that every form of psychology requires its pastoral ideology, a philosophy of life. Psychotherapy can become the religion, but is this what it is meant to be? Every therapeutic theory has to be enlivened by the specific therapist, and every therapist has his or her own philosophy of life, belief, non-belief, attitude, call it what you like. This must be the basic background of their therapy.

Thus we are faced with the reality that pastoral psychology, as a general concept, relates to any form of psychology that explicitly includes an ideology of man's Ultimate destiny, his spiritual nature, and takes its value system from that source. This then finds its practical application in the more general field of pastoral care (New Library of Pastoral Care)

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rather than pastoral counselling (Clinebell, 1984; Godin, 1967). The basis for my own psychology I find in the book of Genesis (Marteau, 1986), where it was God the Creator who said "Let us make man according to our own image and likeness". I see the fundamental human activity as that of creativity – creativity in all its forms.

Pastoral psychology may also have a somewhat wider interpretation and refer to the application of psychology to the general care of people under some form of crisis or stress, although not in themselves pathologically disturbed. In this sense we may see the more popular writing of Kubler-Ross (1987) on bereavement where, aided by photographs, she takes a number of individual case histories and shows, in their own words, what they needed and what helped them in their last days or in the death of their loved ones.

The Social Welfare Commission of the Catholic Bishop's Conference (1986) produced a handbook titled *The Pastoral Care of People Suffering from Mental Illness* in trying to help ordinary congregants to lose their fear of such illnesses and prepare to care for those who would be returning to the community as the mental hospitals begin to discharge patients into the community.

The broad theme of all these writings is to underline the care of the whole individual person and respect for his or her personal dignity as a child of God. This is sometimes seen in apposition to the concept of healing a diseased organ or treating an illness in a person, and may be seen to be making its appearance in holistic medicine.

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