

Dr Peter Reynolds – GTC NZ

**A COUNSELLING PHILOSOPHY FOR  
GRACE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**

by

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## Foreword

The primary purpose of this writing project is to propose statement of foundation and intent for the under-girding of the new Department of Counselling recently established at Grace Theological College (GTC) in Auckland, New Zealand. GTC is a non-denominational, reformed and evangelical college, established in 1995, to train men and women for ministry and service, primarily within those New Zealand congregations that subscribe to Reformed statements of faith.

Historically the focus of the College has been on training pastors for church planting ministries. With a number of our graduates now in such ministries, the College sees the need to better equip them, plus current and future students, with skills and knowledge in the area of effective pastoral counselling care. Toward this end GTC has (in 2007) introduced a two year certificate course in Pastoral Counselling. The focus of the course will be on training and equipping students to engage in a counselling ministry of encouragement in the church situations in which God has called them to serve.

The reformed and evangelical churches in New Zealand have little in the way of counselling services available to them that are distinctly Gospel centered. In general, Christian counselling in New Zealand tends to be eclectic, heavily reliant on theories and therapies developed outside of a Christian world and life view. This has contributed to a great deal of uncertainty among Christians and church leaders, as to the validity and usefulness of counselling as a profitable ministry for pastoral care.

Hence the importance of developing this proposal as both a foundational statement for the College as well as a way forward, as we develop courses in pastoral care that will be relevant, in the first instance, to the needs of the churches the College serves.

This thesis, then, will not seek to lay out a curriculum for teaching pastoral counselling, nor will it specify the clinical steps to be taken when using a biblical modality, but rather it will be a statement of a proposed counselling direction, with biblical support, for the pastoral counselling program at the College. My target audience will be the stake holders of Grace Theological College, namely, the students, the faculty, the members of the boards of governance and management, and the pastors and denominational leaders of the churches in New Zealand served by GTC.

However, it is also my intention to develop this foundation statement in conversation with other counsellors practicing in New Zealand. While the courses at Grace Theological College are to be developed in accordance with our confessional stance, it is important to listen to others in the field, to learn from them, and to contribute, where possible, to their own understanding and practice of pastoral counselling care.

While the focus of our counselling courses will be on providing a grace-orientated, Gospel-informed, Christ-centered, Scripturally based, and Holy Spirit directed training for pastoral counsellors, this does not preclude people desiring to be professional counsellors from studying with us. Hence, the focus of this new certificate course will be firstly to provide suitably and acceptably qualified people to care for the souls of troubled fellow believers within their churches, and secondarily, to provide biblically orientated counselling graduates who can seek further credentials to enable them to counsel professionally within the wider New Zealand community. With this dual purpose in

mind, a requirement of the second year of the program will be a counselling internship in which students are to complete a required number of face-to-face counselling hours under College approved supervision.

In order to meet the need for a theological and biblically orientated counselling programme, four of the six required courses in the first year of GTC's pastoral counselling course will consist of foundational courses in biblical theology, systematic theology, biblical interpretation, and spiritual development. In the second year, in addition to the counseling internship, students will be taking courses related to specific issues and topics within the field of counselling.

As our graduates return to their churches, we will be working with their church leaders, seeking ways in which these newly trained pastoral counsellors can begin to have an endorsed ministry within their churches. Issues such as confidentiality, multiple relations, and accountability to their church leaders will have to be addressed.

In order to show the roots and trajectory of my pastoral counselling proposal, I plan to begin in chapter one with a brief introduction of the developments in biblical counselling that have most influenced my thinking and writing in this area. It was out of this thinking and reflecting that the direction for a pastoral counselling programme at GTC has emerged and clarified. Also in this chapter, I will introduce the technical terms I intend to use, and the definitions I will be working with in this paper.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### Developments in Biblical Counselling

The pastoral counselling being considered for the Grace Theological College curriculum has come out of the biblical counselling theories and practice pioneered by Jay Adams in the early 1970's<sup>1</sup>, and further developed by the staff at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) in Glenside, Pennsylvania; men such as David Powlison<sup>2</sup>, Ed Welch<sup>3</sup>, Paul Tripp<sup>4</sup>, and Tim Lane<sup>5</sup>.

Jay Adam's concern was to fill a perceived gap in the thinking and practice of pastoral care that he observed in American church life in the 1960's and 70's. Much that passed for pastoral care at that time appeared informed and driven by the theories and therapies of Freudian and Rogerian thinking. In his writings Adams sought to provide an alternative approach to pastoral counselling care, one that was clearly anchored in the bible.

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel* [New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970].

<sup>2</sup> David Powlison, *Speaking the Truth in Love* [North Carolina: Punch Press, 2005].

<sup>3</sup> Edward Welch, *Blame It on the Brain?* [New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1998].

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemers' Hands* [New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002].

<sup>5</sup> Tim Lane, *How People Change* [North Carolina: Punch Press, 2006].

In the development of his counselling model, Adams treated the bible much like a counselling textbook, with bible verses being called on to correct errant behaviour and thinking. While Adam's did attempt to set his counselling approach in a wider theological context<sup>6</sup>, his methodology was overly behaviouristic. Unfortunately, in his concern with external behaviour, Adams tended to overlook the social or environmental impacts on a person's thinking and action. Also missing in his approach was an awareness of the counselee's personal history of struggle, and their emotional and motivational concerns. The result was a model of Christian counselling that tended to lack insight, compassion and wisdom.

However, the enduring value of Adams' work was his call to Christians to rigorously subject all theories and therapies of counselling and psychotherapy to the claims of Scripture. He claimed the ground for such biblically aware counsellors to be the ones who would effectively engage with people for their pastoral care.

Development beyond Adam's initial work was flagged by the publication of an article by David Powlison's in CCEF's 1988 issue of the *Journal of Pastoral Practice*<sup>7</sup> (now called the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*). Powlison signalled the way forward for biblical and pastoral counselling in areas not taken up by Jay Adams, including, identifying the heart motives behind behaviour and thinking, the impact of suffering and social context on peoples' struggles, and the crucial requirement to develop a compassionate and sympathetic counselling relationship between the counsellor and the counsellee.

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<sup>6</sup> Jay Adams, *More Than Redemption* [New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1979].

<sup>7</sup> David Powlison, "Crucial Issues in Contemporary Biblical Counseling," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* IX, no. 3 [1988], 53-78.

The subsequent history of the counselling movement at CCEF has seen a growing understanding and ability to access heart issues, and bring these issues to the truth of Scripture in wise, compassionate and grace-filled ways, in order to see lasting change and transformation of lives and relationships. This focus on heart is, I believe, among the greatest contribution CCEF has made to the field of biblical and pastoral counselling since the pioneering days of Jay Adams.

It is out of this concern to be biblical in both content and compassion, that the counselling programme at Grace Theological College seeks to be orientated. The opportunity is ours to provide an environment where effective, wise and compassionate soul care can be developed out of a study of the Scriptures, within the context of Christian community, while engaging seriously with the thinking and practice of the wider counselling and psychotherapy movements in New Zealand.

This being the case it would be helpful, at the outset, to differentiate between those issues that pertain to developing a biblical understanding of soul care, and those issues in the wider counselling community that intersect with our own concerns. As I flag these issues of interest and concern, I will provide some explanation of their importance and relevance to the establishment of a counselling programme at GTC.

## **Issues Pertaining to a Biblical Understanding of Counselling**

### 1. The Place and Role of the Bible in Our Thinking and Practise of Counselling.

It is GTC's premise, and confessional commitment, that the bible is God's own revelation of the history of his dealings with his people over time. By way of this historical record, God reveals his knowledge and understanding of people and their problems; he reveals himself as the Creator of us and of our world; and he reveals himself as our heavenly Father who redeems us in Jesus Christ.

Does this biblical knowledge and understanding provide a sufficient basis to enable us to proceed with certainty and confidence to counsel the lives of others?

The bible is *sufficient* when it speaks of people and their problems, their motivations, beliefs, vows and commitments. It is *comprehensive* in that the scope of its concern includes all of humankind. However, the bible is not *exhaustive* in details; it does not speak with the level of detail that comes with focused and extended observation in particular areas of human concerns.

For an example, consider Asperger Syndrome. The bible does not mention Aspergers in particular, or autism in general, yet the bible is sufficient to speak to the motivations and compulsive behaviours that are seen in these counselees. For a comprehensive description of Asperger Syndrome we can go to those who have studied this condition over an extended period of time. Such observation, however, will yield descriptions that have been heavily influenced by the observer's own theoretical commitments. For instance, literature on the complex of behaviours labelled as Asperger

Syndromes that focus on the physiological, environmental and cognitive aspects of these behaviours may not see the voluntary social isolation that arises from a heart attitude that demands that people relate to them in certain clearly defined ways.

In this way the bible develops our understanding of the person needing our help, while also directing us as to our practise of soul care. As those who seek to reflect Jesus Christ himself to those needing care, pastoral counsellors offer compassion, love, acceptance, trust, hope, and the invitation to walk in the newness of the life that Jesus freely gives.

In summary then, the bible provides sufficient instruction on the goals, motives and standards for life and action in any given situation, enabling the will and purpose of God to be known and followed. It also provides us with a way forward in our counselling methodology that will reflect the love and compassion of Jesus Christ to counselees.

## 2. The Motivations of the Human Heart and its Implications for Pastoral Counselling.

Words we hear spoken, behaviours we see in action, and the emotions we see displayed, do not make up the sum total of any person. There is more to people than what they say, do and feel. All that is seen, heard and felt comes from within. It is sourced and motivated by an inner reality and dynamic. The bible has much to say about this inner dynamic of the human person, describing and explaining it with such interchangeable terms as, the “heart”, the “soul”, the “spirit”, the “mind”, and the “conscience”. It is here, in the inner person, that beliefs are formed, convictions develop,

motivations grow, and the direction of a life is set for all our behaviours, emotions and cognition.

The bible speaks very specifically and directly to the issues of human motivation. For instance, the verbs used in Scripture to describe human relationships go to the heart of our motivations. Verbs like *love, trust, hate, fear, worry, hope, seek, obey, take refuge, thirst*, all point to motivations that produce a myriad of behaviours, thoughts and emotions. People are active verbs, displaying for all to see their functional gods<sup>8</sup>. Hence, the bible is the revealer of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12), including the lies we believe, the desires that control us, and the beliefs we live by.

Not all the thoughts and intents of the heart are problematic, but, nevertheless, it is here that the counselling conversation must eventually arrive. Only then, as motivations are directed God-ward, will behaviours and cognitions begin to reflect obedience to the two great commands given by Jesus, namely to love God and to love people (Matt 22:34-40).

Much of the pain of life is experienced in the stress and challenge of relationships. It is in our failure to love well, and to be loved, that our relationships are marred by conflict and brokenness. God, who is in an eternal relationship of love within his triune self, created us to likewise be in relationship with himself and with others. Hence the counselling relationship is the opportunity for the counsellee to experience a Godly mature relationship of love and help, thus preparing him/her to return to their own relationships with a renewed understanding and commitment to love others well.

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<sup>8</sup> David Powlison, "X-ray Questions: Drawing Out the Whys and Wherefores of Human Behavior," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* Volume 18, no. 1 [Fall 1999], 2-9.

Here is the great value and usefulness of a biblically directed theory and practise of counselling. With all the myriad of insights the bible gives us into our own hearts, and into the hearts of counselees, we can develop an understanding and a way forward in relationships and in life, beyond what is possible for counselling theories that do not have access to such understandings and insights into the motivations of the heart.

It is here that biblically orientated counselling has significant contributions to make to the wider counselling community of people carers. Christian counsellors, interacting seriously and humbly with the biblical material, are able to offer their secular colleagues rich and profound insights into the inner working of people.

### 3. The Role of the Holy Spirit and the Place of the Gospel in Pastoral Counselling

God's role in seeing people helped and encouraged to change is not a passive one. God does not stand by leaving it all up to the counsellors and their counselees to deal with life situations out of their own resources. God is actively involved in the lives of both counsellor and counsellee, having a passionate interest in seeing people helped to change and grow. To this end, God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the ever living Christ himself, who is nothing less than the other Counsellor in the room with us as we counsel. While we counsel, this Counsellor is actively speaking to the hearts of both counsellor and counsellee (even non-Christian counselees), in accordance with the Scriptures the Holy Spirit was himself involved in writing. The Holy Spirit speaks directly to our hearts to testify and seal biblical truth, reinforcing and enlivening what has already been clearly stated in Scripture. The presence and speaking of this

Counsellor brings assurance, comfort, hope, insight, understanding, and conviction in the midst of the counselling conversation, and afterwards as the counsellee reflects on all that has transpired in the counselling session.

The Holy Spirit's active speaking and guidance in the counselling session has the purpose of bringing to the situation the reality of Jesus Christ as he is presented in the Gospel. The Gospel is a message of hope, of good news, namely, that Jesus Christ died for the counsellee and rose again to offer him/her forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation with God, and with others; in short, new life. The counsellor does not need to judge or condemn or seek to convict the counsellee. That's the Holy Spirit's job (John 16:8-11), and he does it with far more gentle strength than the human counsellor can possibly muster. This Holy Spirit directed counsel is gentle, loving and compassionate; yet powerful to bring change, hope and healing to broken lives and broken relationships.

### **Issues Pertaining to the Wider Counselling Community in New Zealand**

#### **1. The Concept of Mental Health and the Medical Model**

Mental or psychological health and well being is defined by the practitioners in the field (usually psychiatrists), guided by public opinion's acceptance of what is healthy and normal. Behaviours, emotions or cognitions that are deemed unhealthy are subjected to therapy and/or medication. Thus, a culturally defined view of what is "healthy" and "normal" will create a demand in society for whatever therapy or medications will achieve this desired state.

When a person is diagnosed with a mental illness, a prognosis is provided, a treatment plan is drawn up, medications are prescribed, and recovery is monitored<sup>9</sup>. Unfortunately, this reliance on the medical model for treating mental disturbances deals only with the observable and known symptoms, and treats these symptoms on the basis of a subjective and culturally conditioned understanding of what constitutes mental health.

However, the bible speaks to the human condition, and defines for us what is healthy and normal by providing sufficient instruction as to the goals, motives and standards for life and action in any given situation, thus guiding us in our response to troubled people. The bible brings clarity to the difficult and uncertain task of understanding what is going on with people, including the connection between their outward symptoms and the inner dynamics of their struggles.

Here is where biblically directed counselling can intersect with a medical model to bring a comprehensive treatment to bear. So, instead of counselees being referred on from pastoral counselling, their pastoral counsellor can collaborate and confer with medical professionals in addressing the needs of their clients. The medical model of helping is thus supplemented with pastoral counselling, providing a model of concurrent care that addresses in tandem both motivational and medical issues.

## 2. The reality of Suffering and its Impact on Counselling Theory and Practise.

The bible is very clear in understanding suffering as being foreign and alien to the human condition. We were not created for suffering. Suffering is an unwelcome

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<sup>9</sup> This work is usually accomplished with reference to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM IV) published by the American Psychiatric Association.

intrusion into our world. In the future redemption of all things there will be no place for suffering and sorrow.

However, the bible also faces the day-to-day reality and presence of suffering. It does not shrink from acknowledging the persistence of suffering throughout one's whole lifetime. In so doing, the bible provides robust descriptions of human suffering and the response we can make to suffering, both in our own lives and in the lives of others.

By contrast, our modern society has no tolerance for suffering and no place for suffering in daily living. Counsellors are called on to help their counselees overcome, avoid, and banish suffering from their lives and relationships. Therapy and medications are called on to help counselees feel better that they might live better. There is little recognition among many in our society that suffering can be turned to good use, helping a client to develop tolerance, patience and endurance.

The bible has done so much more with the reality of suffering and, hence, has so much more to offer the wider counselling community as they seek to respond to the suffering of their counselees. A dialogue between Christian and non-Christian counsellors on the issues pertaining to suffering could yield much fruitful insight and encouragement to both parties, and their respective clients.

### 3. An Evaluation of non-Biblical Theories of Counselling and Psychotherapy

The objective of counselling is life change; to see the client change in ways that enable them to experience life and relationships in accordance with their personal objectives and aspirations. In order to help facilitate this life change the counsellor, and

counselee, must have a degree of insight into the obstacles in the client's life that prevent such change from taking place. The objective of pastoral counselling, as I use the term in this paper, is to pursue such life change in clients as reflects the qualities and virtues of the life of Jesus Christ, as portrayed in the Scriptures, by seeking to surface and understand the obstacles in a client's life that hinder such change.

Non-Christian theorists and practitioners have done much observing, researching, questioning and investigating into the lives and problems of people. In doing so they have constructed theories and therapies designed to help people change within a counselling environment. Hence explanations and descriptions abound as to the nature of people's problems and the most desirable responses to be taken by counsellors. This multiplicity of theories suggests that little common ground has been established between the different groups of theorists. What appears to be missing is understanding and insight into the inner motivations of the client's heart and soul; the false beliefs they cling to, the identifying of the desires they demand to have met, and the reasons for their dominating behaviors and thought patterns. Observation, explanation and description, left to themselves, produce little or no understanding of these dynamics, and tend instead to be more speculative than insightful.

Effective counselling is more than listening and empathy (humanistic therapies), questioning and insight (dynamic therapies), and the drawing up of practical strategies (action therapies). But this is as far as these secular therapies take us, leaving unanswered the question of inner motivations and orientation of the counselee's life toward God.

This God-ward orientation (either for God, or not) is always in play in the lives of both counsellor and counselee, and all theory and practise needs to take account of this

reality if counselling is to prove effective. It is not a matter of simply adding to non-Christian theories biblical insights of the inner human dynamic. The foundation and direction of non-Christian theories itself needs to be re-examined and reworked in the light of biblical revelation so they can be joined profitably to the biblical insights of the human heart. It is only then that non-Christian thinking and practise can be rendered useful to the Christian counsellor, and to the Christian community. It is only as these non-Christian theories and therapies are reprogrammed through the lens of Scripture that they can be made into effective instruments for long lasting life change.

#### 4. Counselling in Community and the Issue of Multiple Relationships and Confidentiality

The profession of counselling is a solitary one. A close relationship develops between the counsellor and the counsellee that is private to them. Strong commitments to confidentiality protect the exclusivity of this relationship. The special nature of this relationship has proven to be the occasion in which trust and empathy is most often established between counsellor and counsellee. This is vital and necessary, for it is within such a relationship of trust and understanding that counsel can be offered and received in confidence, and processed for productive life change.

However, a disadvantage of this counselling arrangement is the absence of the counsellee's everyday life supports. Spouses and families are kept in the dark (unless the therapist follows a family therapy model), as are friends and pastoral care givers who could provide support during and after the counselling process. The absence of these

community supports can result in change becoming transitory rather than permanent, with the client regressing when the counselling relationship comes to an end.

A solution to this concern is to conduct counselling within the context of community. But is it possible to do so and still maintain confidentiality and avoid the problems that can come with multiple relationships? I would maintain that pastors have been doing exactly this for hundreds of years. Their pastoral counselling has been simply an intensifying of their pastoral relationships, rather than an extra relationship. Furthermore, their pastoral counselling has taken place in the context of their church community. Not only is confidentiality maintained, but resources are immediately at hand to provide ongoing support and encouragement to the troubled parishioner, during and after the counselling experience. Thus the many relationships within the community become part of the healing process for the counsellee.

Will these other relationships get in the way of preventing an effective therapeutic relationship developing between the pastoral counsellor and the parishioner? Many professionals have seen a problem here and so are reluctant to encourage pastors to counsel their own parishioners. Hence, professional Christian counsellors themselves can often be seen keeping themselves separate from local church involvement in order to protect their therapeutic practise among their fellow parishioners from being “contaminated” by dual relationships. By so doing the professional counsellor is *creating* the problem of a dual relationship which now has to be managed in the absence of a pastoral relationship of ongoing love and support from them to their seeker clients.

The counsellee may experience discomfort on meeting the pastoral counsellor outside of the counselling session, especially if sensitive and shameful disclosures have

been made in counselling. The pastoral counsellor should raise this as a possibility at the outset of counselling, and ensure that adequate safeguards are put in place to minimise the counsellee's 'shame on later meeting'.

With adequate and wise safeguards in place, the pastoral relationship can be maintained during the pastoral counselling process, role modelling and words of encouragement can continue after the counselling relationship has ended, and the gains made in counselling can be monitored, strengthened and supported as counsellor and counsellee continue to fellowship and worship together.

As our society in New Zealand continues to fracture along the lines of divorce, suicide, domestic violence, gang intimidation and child abuse, the importance and value of strong supportive communities becomes more apparent. Professional counselling, historically, has assumed a stable and supportive society into which counsellees will return when the therapeutic relationship comes to an end. Such assumptions are fast becoming untenable for many in New Zealand today.

Hence the Christian community and their pastoral counsellors have a significant contribution to make to the wider counselling profession, and to society at large. Christian community has, for many years, provided exactly the compassionate, caring and supportive relational structures that troubled people need for their continued growth. There is a degree of expertise and experience in soul care within these communities that many currently outside the church (both counsellor and counsellee) could benefit from.

What about counselling issues beyond the "expertise" and "experience" of the pastor, or of the community? Should not the pastoral counsellor be referring such issues to expert others? Every presenting problem comes with, and is sourced in, issues of heart

motivations. As such, the biblically aware pastor is the best equipped person to be providing counsel for these heart issues. If he feels the need to consult with other helping professionals, or even to refer to others, he will not surrender his vital and necessary role of being involved, on an ongoing basis, as the “expert” on the heart issues of motivation. Nor will he deprive the client of the necessary supports the church community and its leadership are able to offer.

## 5. Treaty of Waitangi Issues

In 1840 New Zealand became a colony of the British Empire, with an independent New Zealand Parliament coming twelve years later. The occasion of our colonization was marked by the signing of a treaty at Waitangi, whereby the colonising power guaranteed indigenous rights over lands, fisheries and native customs to the Maori people, as well as full civil rights to Maori as British subjects.<sup>10</sup> On account of the Treaty having been broken many times since this signing, the nation’s concern in recent years has been to provide redress for past wrongs, thus making a determined effort to bring the intent of the Treaty into everyday life in New Zealand by giving appropriate priority to Maori interests through active consultation and bi-cultural partnerships at every level of social interaction and concern.

For the counselling profession in New Zealand, this has meant that when Maori present as clients counsellors must be sensitive to and aware of their client’s cultural and religious values and concerns. In the interests of cultural safety, non-Maori counsellors are required to seek supervision from a Maori supervisor to ensure there is a shared

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the Treaty of Waitangi, and its implications for counselling, see Appendix A.

understanding and common counselling objectives between themselves and their Maori counselees.

Having addressed the two major sets of issues to be considered in the development of this foundational statement on pastoral counselling for Grace Theological College (that is, issues to do with developing a biblical approach to counselling, and issues pertaining to the wider counselling community in New Zealand), I will now set out and define the technical terms that I will be using in this paper.

### **Technical Terms**

I will be working with the following terms and descriptions.

#### **Bible/Scriptures/ Word of God**

All of the books of the Old and New Testaments which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life (Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter one). By “inspiration” we mean that God so superintended the writing of Scripture that men wrote what he wanted and were kept from error in so doing.

#### **Biblical Counselling**

The theory and practice of Biblical Counselling initially developed by Jay Adams<sup>11</sup>. While this approach to Christian counselling has since been overtaken by subsequent thinking and development in the field of Christian counselling, Adam’s work

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<sup>11</sup> Adams, *Competent to Counsel*.

continues as a useful reminder to Christian counsellors to be self consciously biblical in all their theory and practice.

### **Pastoral/Christian Counselling/Therapy/Soul Care/Soul Talk**

Person-to-person talk within the Body of Christ that is grace-orientated, Gospel-informed, Christ-centered, Scripturally based, and Holy Spirit directed. It seeks to process heart issues and motivations as to their impact on emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Such counselling can be formal or informal, planned or spontaneous, fee paying or otherwise. It can be practiced by any reflective and compassionate Christian who is overseen by wise and sensitive spiritual elders.

### **Pastoral/Christian Counsellor or Therapist**

One who is willing to grow and develop in his or her ability to assist others in the process of moving towards personal growth and change in the areas of behaviour, thoughts, and feelings, as heart issues of motivation are identified and processed. They are concerned to do their counselling work within the context of the Body of Christ, and within a Biblical framework of understanding people, and under the supervision of their spiritual elders.

### **Body of Christ**

A biblical concept that refers to the corporate identity of the church as Christians gathered together in a commitment to meet regularly for worship and fellowship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the direction of his Holy Spirit. This gathering will be

marked by the presence of recognized and gifted spiritual elders, the common partaking of sacraments, a mutual commitment to the authority of the Scriptures, and to a sharing of their lives with one another in a common commitment to grow in the graces of Jesus Christ.

### **The Gospel**

The Gospel is the good news proclaimed by the Christian church, that Jesus Christ's death and resurrection means that a new life, characterised by forgiveness, restoration and reconciliation with God and with others is now possible. The graces of this new life, springing out of the Gospel, are for any who come to Jesus in prayer to confess with a contrite heart the wrongs they have done to God, to themselves and to others, and to place their faith and trust in Christ alone for their forgiveness.

### **Spiritual Director/Guide/Mentor**

One who seeks to grow and develop in their ability to assist others to find God's path for their lives.

### **Counsellor/Client/Seeker**

One who desires personal growth and change and who actively pursues help and engagement toward this end.

## **Psychology**

The study of the mind as an entity and its relationship to the physical body, based on observations of behaviour, thoughts and feelings. The fruit of such study produces a range of psychological models for understanding people. From these models arise numerous psychological theories and therapies for treating illnesses as defined by particular theories.<sup>12</sup>

## **Psychotherapy**

Any systematic methodology based on some theory of personality intended to achieve desirable changes in thinking, feeling and behavior. More than 400 different systems of psychotherapy have been identified,<sup>13</sup> making for “a labyrinthian assortment of theories and practice”.<sup>14</sup>

## **Psychiatrist:**

A physician who specializes in the diagnosis, treatment, prescription, prevention and study of mental and emotional disorders<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> For expansions of this definition refer:  
Ray Corsini, *The Dictionary of Psychology* [New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002], 784.  
David Powlison, *A Biblical Counselling View* in “Psychology and Christianity”, ed. Eric L. Johnson and Stanton L. Jones [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000], 198.

<sup>13</sup> Corsini, *The Dictionary of Psychology*, 789.

<sup>14</sup> O. Strunk, *Psychotherapy* in “Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counselling”, ed. Rodney Hunter [Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1990].

<sup>15</sup> Corsini, *The Dictionary of Psychology*, 777.

### **Dual or Multiple Relationships**

Dual or multiple relationships occur when the counseling relationship is joined with one or more other relationships.

### **Treaty of Waitangi**

The agreement signed between the British government (representing the colonial government of New Zealand and its non-Maori citizens) and many of the Maori chiefs of New Zealand in 1840, when New Zealand became a colony of the British Empire. In recent years there has been an effort at many levels in New Zealand life to reflect the biculturalism the Treaty envisaged between Maori and non-Maori. In the field of counselling generally, this has meant that Maori cultural and religious values must be considered when it comes to dealing with the personal issues of Maori clients. The counsellor is expected to have, for example, an awareness of the impact of these personal issues on their Maori client's immediate and extended family, and on their sense of place and person in their own cultural world view.

### **Tangata Whenua**

This Maori language term can be translated “people of the land” and is used as a reference to the Maori people as being the original inhabitants of New Zealand and hence Treaty partners.

## **Non-Maori**

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed between the Crown, representing the colonial government of New Zealand, and the Tangata Whenua. The Crown represented all non-Maori citizens at the time of signing, whatever their nationality, although this was, and still is, predominately European (or Pakeha). This distinction and definition has implications for the debate concerning bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism in New Zealand society today. All non-Maori citizens of New Zealand, regardless of their ethnicity, are considered represented by the Crown and are therefore Treaty partners with Maori, and bound by Treaty obligations.

## Conclusion

Having established the counselling issues to be considered in this paper, and a definition of the terms I will be using, I will now proceed in chapter two to review the history of professional counselling in New Zealand. This will help us to understand the current theories and therapies in use in New Zealand at the present time, and how they relate to pastoral counselling.

Also, in chapter two, I will consider, in more detail, how New Zealand's post-colonial culture in general, and Treaty of Waitangi issues in particular, impact on counselling theory and practice in New Zealand.

## Chapter Two

### History and Culture

#### The History of Professional Counselling in New Zealand

In order to place Grace Theological College's new pastoral counselling programme into the New Zealand context I will, in this second chapter, review both the history of professional counselling in New Zealand, and the current cultural conditions in this country that together help explain the theories and therapies currently favoured by New Zealand counsellors. This will enable me to interact with the New Zealand situation as I develop a rationale for the new counselling programme at GTC.

The relatively stable and prosperous years of the 1950's in New Zealand gave way to the turbulent 1960's.<sup>1</sup> This decade was marked by an increasing restlessness among young people who were beginning to challenge authority and moral traditions as they experimented with, and increasingly embraced more liberal attitudes and lifestyles. This social instability and unrest became particularly evident in the nation's secondary schools. Since the New Zealand Department of Education was concerned to address

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Hermansson, *Pieces of Silver: Twenty Five Years of the New Zealand Counselling Guidance Association/New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 1974-1999* [Auckland: Inside-Out Books, 1999]. Much of the historical information in this section of my paper comes from Hermansson's work.

these issues, the New Zealand Government, in May 1966, established a guidance counselling service for secondary schools.

This government initiative aimed to establish at least one counsellor in every secondary school in the country. This in turn led to the need to provide both training at university level for these new appointees, and provision of a professional association for their accountability and peer support. To address this latter concern the New Zealand Counselling and Guidance Association (NZCGA) was formed, in 1974. A “new” profession of guidance and counselling was underway in New Zealand, focused somewhat narrowly on the education scene<sup>2</sup>, and made up largely of members employed by the Department of Education as school counsellors.

The counselling modalities generally employed by school counsellors in the early years of the NZCGA tended to be client centred, and focused on behavioural and cognitive concerns. This is understandable given the social issues of the day that had given rise to the government initiatives that had established and were now supporting this new profession of high school counselling and guidance. This concern for a directive element in counselling and guidance in schools also led to a desire to see the school community having an input in the counselling process. In short, to see the school counsellor’s work embedded in, and augmented by the support that an informed, aware, and caring school community could provide, to ensure that the client centred approach did not become overly humanistic and self focused.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hermansson, *Pieces of Silver*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Hermansson, *Pieces of Silver*, 17. See references to Alan Webster and Felix Donnelly’s remarks at the inaugural (1974) conference of the NZCGA.

The decade beginning in the mid 1980's provided the next great change in New Zealand's society that would impact on the counselling profession in New Zealand. This was a decade of government led economic and social reform that would have immediate and significant consequences for the lives of most New Zealanders. These reforms represented a profound shift in political and economic ideology that emphasised the removal of government controls and centralised monitoring and letting the market place determine needs, resource allocations and service provisions<sup>4</sup>. In order to deal with mounting national debt and falling prosperity, government agencies and secondary industry underwent restructuring, jobs were lost, welfare benefits were reduced, and accompanying hardship and distress became commonplace.

As the need for different kinds of counselling services grew in this brave new economic environment, so did the opportunity for their provision. The "user-pays" mentality that became the catch cry of this new economic reality led to the stimulus and development of a private practice industry of professional fee charging counselling in New Zealand. Also, accompanying this rapid change and growth in the counselling profession, came the need to expand counsellor training beyond that currently provided by the universities for high school guidance and counselling.

Conscious of these changes in the profession, the NZGCA, at its 1990 conference, changed its name to the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC), and opened up its membership beyond school counsellors. Association membership had been reasonably static at around 325 members for the five or so years before the name and membership criteria change. After these changes, and within the next seven years,

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<sup>4</sup> Hermansson, *Pieces of Silver*, 2.

membership of the NZAC would exceed 2000, with membership currently standing at around 2500.<sup>5</sup>

The changes taking place during this time also saw the growth or establishment of other professional bodies in New Zealand with similar helping concerns. Social workers, psychiatrists and psychotherapists all experienced a strengthening of their member numbers. Membership of the NZAC, however, remained significantly higher than any of these other professional bodies.<sup>6</sup> This growth in the counselling profession in New Zealand, the opportunity to be trained and accredited professionally, and to be funded, in part, by third party contributions (often from government agencies), drew many into the profession for the first time.

This dramatic growth was driven, to a large extent, by government policy. The New Zealand Government saw the need to step in and help ease the distress caused by their own reforms. In 1992 they provided for the Accident Compensation Commission whose brief included funding counselling for survivors of physical and sexual abuse. A few years later would come further government support from the Department of Social Welfare (now called Work and Income New Zealand, WINZ) to fund counselling for a wider range of issues. To access this funding, counsellors needed to be full members of the NZAC, or another related professional body. In turn, these counselling bodies were required to maintain standards of accreditation, training and discipline, and to ensure that

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<sup>5</sup> New Zealand Association of Counsellors, under “History of NZAC”, <http://www.nzac.org.nz>. [accessed October 9, 2009].

<sup>6</sup> Hermansson, *Pieces of Silver*, 138 for a reference to comparative numbers in 1995. Today NZAC membership is still higher than these other bodies, see note 3 above.

every practising counsellor in their membership was subject to supervision, regardless of their qualifications or years of experience.

This time of rapid growth and change in professional counselling in New Zealand saw Christian counselling beginning to develop its own professional awareness and identity. Many Christians now saw the opportunity to be involved in counselling as a professional vocation, rather than as a non funded, unrecognised and unaffirmed, spontaneous, ad hoc, lay ministry. This growing interest by Christians in the field of professional counselling, but within a Christian context, saw the establishment, in 1996, of the New Zealand Christian Counsellors Association (NZCCA).

To enable their members to access third party government funding for their counselling clients, the New Zealand Christian Counsellors Association had to satisfy the concerns of the government regarding regulation, supervision and ethical oversight. This also included ensuring that their members completed government accredited training courses in counselling.

What did these government accredited counsellor training courses involve? To gain an idea of the accepted modalities at the time, reference can be made to Gary Hermansson's *Eclectic Counselling: Working with an Integrated Model*. At the time of its publication, in 1992, this book functioned somewhat as a text for counselling practitioners. When Hermansson published this book he had, for the previous 20 years, been a counsellor educator at Massey University, which was then New Zealand's largest university-based counsellor education provider. This book reflects his thinking and

conclusions as to the theory and practise of counselling for the New Zealand environment at that time.<sup>7</sup>

Hermansson sought to be both client-centred and goal-directed. He valued the Rogerian commitment to the client's world view, expectations, needs and goals, but wished to avoid the lack of direction, relative passivity and seemingly endless cycle of exploration in search of insight that can characterise Rogerian therapy<sup>8</sup>.

With these concerns uppermost, Hermansson developed a model of counselling that sought to combine the best of the thinking, feeling and action oriented strategies for counselling currently in use in New Zealand at that time. In doing so he was picking up and working with the counselling modalities developed by others, especially by North American theorists, as outlined in such works as Gerald Corey's *Theory and practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy*.<sup>9</sup> In this he was not alone. In the rapidly growing field of professional counselling in New Zealand in the late 1980's and 1990's counsellors and their training institutions were grateful to be able to make use of counselling theories accredited overseas, and readily available in the current literature.

These were the counselling modalities made available and taught to Christian counsellors when, as a newly formed professional body, they sought their academic

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<sup>7</sup> Other universities in New Zealand developed their own process models. For example a skills based model was developed at Canterbury University; see E. A. Munro, R. J. Manthei and J. J. Small, *Counselling – A Skills Approach* [Auckland, New Zealand: Methuen, 1979]. This book was republished by Routledge of London, in 1983 under the title *Counselling – The Skills of Problem Solving*.

<sup>8</sup> Gary Hermansson, *Eclectic Counselling: Working with an Integrated Model* [Palmerston North, New Zealand: Inside-Out Books, 1992], 1.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* [California: Brooks/Cole, 1977]. First published in 1977, this book has undergone eight subsequent editions, the most recent being 2008.

credentials from the government accredited training courses being taught in New Zealand.

These same theories (the thinking, feeling and action oriented approaches to counselling) were also the underpinning of the pastoral counselling courses taught in colleges that trained men and women for pastoral ministry. Pastoral counselling practice was also informed by these theories as pastors, not all of whom were trained to counsel, sought to help troubled parishioners with these secular interventions before referring them on to professional counsellors.

Hermansson shows no awareness in his book of narrative therapy, which, in 1992 (when his book was published), was gaining ground in New Zealand with counselling practitioners, and has continued to do so up to the present day.<sup>10</sup> To be fair to Hermansson, narrative therapy, in its early days, was seen as a subset of Family Systems Therapy, a modality of counselling Hermansson does not address in his book. It was only with subsequent research, development and increasing use that narrative therapy came to be considered a “stand alone” modality, especially among Australasian (Australian and New Zealand) counsellors.

The impact of Jay Adams<sup>11</sup> in New Zealand was felt largely among the more fundamentalist churches. Lacking any academic counselling credibility in New Zealand, Adam’s approach to counselling did not gain traction with either pastoral counsellors generally, or with their clients. The tendency to refer parishioners to counsellors,

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<sup>10</sup> Narrative therapy became more widely recognized after the publication of Michael White and David Epston’s *Narrative Means to a Therapeutic End* [New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1990]. I will have more to say about narrative therapy later in this chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Adams, *Competent to Counsel*.

Christian or otherwise, who had been trained in non-biblical modalities, became common practise for church based pastoral counsellors.

What was missing in the theory and practise of Christian counselling in New Zealand was a way of counselling that went beyond thinking, feeling and behaviour, not in order to delineate underlying pathologies in an effort to realign personality, but rather to access the heart or inner motivations that gave rise to and energised such feelings, thoughts and behaviours. A modality that brought the power of the living God to bear on the inner dynamics of motivation and belief in a way that produced long lasting life change was still not available in the theories many Christian counsellors were relying on in their counselling and soul care. Such a modality is available if we begin with the knowledge of the inner workings of people that comes to us from God, as revealed in the bible.

As the new millennium drew closer it was the increasing popularity of narrative therapy in both training programs and counselling practice that began to challenge the place held by many of the older traditional modalities in use in New Zealand. Narrative therapy was developed in the late 1980's and early 1990s, primarily in Australia and New Zealand, but today has a wider international support, due in large part to the 1990 publication of *Narrative Means to a Therapeutic End*<sup>12</sup>. Utilizing post-modern thinking, especially the work of Michael Foucault, narrative therapy seeks to disassemble and dismantle those power structures and beliefs that are part of a client's daily living, and which give rise to their counselling issues.

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<sup>12</sup> White and Epston, *Narrative Means to a Therapeutic End*.

Narrative therapy takes the client's story as the basic unit of their experience. The story we believe about ourselves, that has been told to us all our lives by family and society, is the story we believe and act out as our cultural narrative. Hence client's problems are to be sourced in their story, rather than in themselves. The problem is the problem; the person is not the problem. This problem saturated story<sup>13</sup> must be deconstructed and re-told, re-imagined and re-authored, by the client. Thus clients, as their own storytellers, redefine for themselves the social construct that is their life, and so rebuild the plot of their own life story.

Narrative therapy's current popularity in New Zealand, with both non-Christian and Christian counsellors, can be explained in part as being "home grown", but, more importantly, it fits the postmodern tenor of our day. It purports to set people free from the oppression and power of social constructs that may have bound them for years and which are responsible for their struggles. This application of postmodern deconstruction by way of a counselling theory fits well with the general surge in our society to maximise personal freedoms by distancing ourselves from every social and moral constraint, real or imagined. It is a therapy that fits well with our society's current desires, concerns and beliefs.

This review of counselling in New Zealand has highlighted some of the significant historical factors that have impinged on counselling practice in this country. I will now examine in greater detail the cultural conditions that have influenced the theory and practise of counselling in New Zealand, giving particular attention, at the end of the chapter, to Treaty of Waitangi issues.

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<sup>13</sup> M. Nichols and R. Schwartz, *Family Therapy, Concepts and Methods* [Maryland: Allyn and Bacon, 1991], 495.

## Current Cultural Conditions

New Zealand is a post-colonial settler society with institutions originally shaped by Victorian England's colonizing and governing. New Zealand came to its independence, in 1852, peacefully and reluctantly, conscious of its distance from that part of the world where its mainly British settlers began coming in significant numbers from the mid 1800's on. Great Britain is a world away, and New Zealand is a South Pacific island nation, whose population is predominately white Anglo Saxon, but with a significant proportion (some 15%) of Maori people. The Maori, a Polynesian people, had inhabited the islands of New Zealand (Aotearoa "the land of the long white cloud", as the Maori called them) for some 500 years before European "discovery" and settlement.

New Zealand's feeling of isolation and smallness (four million people on two main islands) has made for a pluralistic and tolerant society, ready to accept the ideas of others lest we be found to be falling behind in our too easily forgotten corner of the globe. New Zealand is and has long been an exceptionally secular society by most criteria<sup>14</sup>. Without a coherent and widely accepted national religion to bulwark new ideas, New Zealand has been willing, from its earliest days of colonization, to embrace the ideas, beliefs, and innovations of others. In this respect New Zealand is less like Great Britain, and more like the West Coast of the United States, notably California, which did not receive substantial "Anglo" settlement until about the same time as New Zealand, and which – especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – was

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<sup>14</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn* [Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1993], 194.

open to utopianism, reformism and spiritual experimentation, although relatively low in conventional church attendance<sup>15</sup>.

This readiness to embrace the ideas, beliefs and innovations of others goes some way to explaining the rapid and wide spread influence of present day postmodern thinking on many aspects of New Zealand life and culture. The embracing of both humanism and consumerism by government and commerce promotes a way of life consistent with the belief that we are what we choose to buy and what we choose to believe. Constraints to personal choosing must be removed or dismantled in order to maximise the economic and moral freedoms that make for authentic living. Postmodernism provides a theoretical framework for the pursuit of these goals.

Postmodernism in New Zealand has also been stimulated by the growth of image-based and interactive communications by way of the internet that have brought the individual user into contact with a world of ideas and opinions very different from their own. There is so much we don't know! Any conclusion as to meaning must be held in abeyance while we continue to consume the data of cyberspace. Thus meaning is always becoming, and conclusions are always tentative, and so in our isolated corner of the globe we must not presume to have found the answers ahead of the global cyberspace generation.

In New Zealand's post-colonial culture, what will replace the traditions and structures on which our society has operated? Postmodern's answer is "nothing and everything". The everlasting consumption of ideas, goods, services, beliefs, extreme experiences, and relationships is all we need. Modernist belief that truth can be found through the scientific method has given way to the postmodernist view that the seeking or

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<sup>15</sup> Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn*, 189-190.

consuming of many truths and meanings will ensure that we are never again taken in by those who claim to have found the truth that we need to believe, and who have built structures of power and control around those beliefs that now hold us captive.

Can the Treaty of Waitangi survive a postmodern critique of its text? Words, or texts, do not represent a perfect expression of the essence of things, but are only somewhat arbitrary and accidental conventions from our limited and changing human perspectives<sup>16</sup>. A postmodern critique of the Treaty would not be so concerned with the meaning of the ancient text, but rather with what the text is trying to hide. Does this text establish, implicitly or explicitly, power structures and positions of privilege? If so, then the traditional interpretations (and the racial conflict they generate) must be abandoned, whether sourced in Maori or non-Maori understandings, and be replaced with a deconstructed text that levels the playing field for every consumer of the nations' resources. If the Treaty is to have any meaning for me it must be a meaning in submission to my own story, since my story is all that there is, and being a consumer is all that I am.

No one else's story about meaning or purpose or explanation, whether it comes from past traditions, Treaties, ancestors, or from God will do. My personal story is the only one I need to be concerned about. It is the only authentic story I have access to, and it is the only story that will keep me safe from the oppressive power of the stories of others. The influence of such oppression can only be faced as I (perhaps with the help of others) disassemble these stories in order to expose the agendas of those who would seek to disempower me with their narratives of how things ought to be.

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<sup>16</sup> Dick Keyes, *Seeing Through Cynicism: A Reconsideration of the Power of Suspicion* [Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006], 59.

Narrative therapy, then, appears as a very suitable therapy for New Zealand's postmodern, post-colonial culture. Perhaps this explains the rise and wide acceptance of narrative therapy in New Zealand, by both Christian and non-Christian counsellors. It provides a modality that can hear the stories of each culture, Maori and non-Maori, without seeking to impose a different story. It is a therapy that will not extend colonialism into the counselling session by way of Western ideas of health and well being, power and control. Instead, clients, or seekers of health, develop their own story and their own definition of what a healing experience in counselling and a way forward in their culture should be for them.

Narrative theory assumes that we can liberate ourselves from what binds us by speaking and believing a different reality about our lives. (This is narrative theory's own meta-narrative for every person). Certainly, the beliefs we hold onto are worked out in our behaviours, thoughts and feelings, but they are present in our lives, not so much because of the imposition of the stories of others, but because of the misdirected worship of our hearts. All peoples everywhere owe their worship and allegiance to the One whose image they bear, the living Creator God. A refusal to worship this God arises from unbelief, a commitment to live independently from God or God's revelation, in spite of and in defiance of the command that every knee bow and every tongue confess the One True and Living God. They have rejected God's story and have embraced their own.

This is God's story, the true story that describes, explains, and provides a way forward for all peoples. By contrast, all human stories are told and believed in order to block out this one story, God's grand narrative for all ethnicities. Our own stories are told in order to suppress what we know to be true of this greater story; to supplant God's story

in our lives with our own story. We need to deconstruct our stories in order to take hold of a new story, one that connects us to God's story, a story we can tell and retell to succeeding generations; telling the story God has for us, and of what God has done for us; the story of gospel promise.

Pastoral counselling, as I have defined it, seeks to connect the seeker's story to God's transcendent story so that their own story can be reshaped, revised, reworked, and be imbued with new meaning and power for life change as they understand themselves, not as others have seen them, or even as they have seen themselves, but as God sees them. Only when they have and own this story will the power of all other stories be broken, and they will be set free to live and love as they tell over and over the story of God's great love for them in Jesus Christ.

#### Treaty of Waitangi Debate and Issues for Pastoral Counselling

To whom do the resources of the nation belong? Who has sovereignty and who should have possession of the land and its resources? As Maori make their claims based on original possession, and non-Maori make their claim based on conquest and population numbers, and as they both argue over what the Treaty of Waitangi actually meant, the Christian voice, whether Maori or non-Maori, sounds a different note. For the Christian it is very clear that God alone owns the land by virtue of his creation. We all occupy the land as tenants-in-common, with God as our Landlord. Together Maori and non-Maori enjoy the land as stewards-in-common, not as competing owners, as exemplified in the creation mandate when newly created men and women were

instructed to rule and subdue the earth under God who alone is owner/creator (Gen 1:27-28).

This uniquely Christian attitude of willingness to share with others as tenants-in-common sets the Christian free to enter the debate on power sharing and biculturalism without an interest in the land to own and control. This stance allows Christian Maori and Christian non-Maori to speak together and to others with clarity and relevance since they have no vested interest in the outcome. This stance is the transcendent view that will rescue the debate in New Zealand from the particular cultural concerns of Maori and non-Maori. This remains the case whether the debate is over land issues, economic and political power structures, the writing of history, the interpretation of Treaty principles, the preservation of cultural treasures, or cultural safety in the helping professions.

Recent debate, however, has gone in a different direction from this transcendent view. It has won general acceptance that the Treaty is with us today as a document that establishes the principle of biculturalism as the basis of the relationship between Maori and non-Maori, both being tangata tiriti (people of the Treaty). Abbott and Durie<sup>17</sup> describe biculturalism, at its core, as being the “recognition of Maori people as the tangata whenua (people of the land) with a right, as enshrined in the Maori language version of the Treaty of Waitangi, to their language and cultural self determination”. Quoting from a 1986 Department of Social Welfare report, they go on to say, “It (biculturalism) involves understanding and sharing the values of another culture ... that an institution must be accountable ... for meeting (client) needs according to their

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<sup>17</sup> Max M. Abbott and Mason H. Durie, “Taha Maori in Counselling and Psychotherapy University Training Programs,” *New Zealand Counselling and Guidance Association Journal* 9, no. 1[1987], 14.

cultural background and includes the sharing of responsibility and authority of decisions with appropriate Maori people”.

The importance Abbott and Durie attach to biculturalism, over against multiculturalism, can be seen in their further comments in the same article. “... until the majority European population has learned to recognise, respect, and gain some competence in taha Maori (the ‘Maori dimension’),<sup>18</sup> it is unlikely to be in a position to be able to extend these sentiments to other cultural groups”. Biculturalism is thus viewed as a prerequisite to the formation of a multi-cultural society. They go on to say, “.... counselling, and working with people who support troubled members of other ethnic groups (other non-Maori ethnic minorities in New Zealand), does require additional specialised knowledge and skills. There is no reason why training in these areas cannot be subsumed within a biculturally oriented framework”.<sup>19</sup>

These sentiments made twenty years ago, and others like them, have carried the day, such that now biculturalism is recognised in government and non-government institutions in New Zealand as the most appropriate and necessary way by which Maori and non-Maori can fulfil their obligations to each other as Treaty partners. Yet the term remains problematic, and poorly understood. “My confusion arose out of the difficulty in defining biculturalism, trying to implement biculturalism in daily life, the apparent gap between Maori agendas for biculturalism and Pakeha (New Zealand European) expectations and practice, and the overall yawning chasm between bicultural theory and

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<sup>18</sup> Abbott and Durie, “Taha Maori,” 14.

<sup>19</sup> Abbott and Durie, “Taha Maori,” 24.

practice ... many New Zealanders would find it difficult to provide a comprehensive and effective working definition of biculturalism”.<sup>20</sup>

Much of the difficulty with the term ‘biculturalism’ is that it seeks to define the intent of a 170 year old agreement, rather than describing the reality of present day multicultural life in New Zealand. Biculturalism is a political statement about power sharing rather than a descriptive or social/anthropological statement of New Zealand’s multiculturalness.<sup>21</sup>

Biculturalism is a political statement carrying a political agenda. Are the nation’s resources going to be shared fairly and equitably between the treaty partners? Will power, authority and decision making be shared at all and every level of national life? Will biculturalism come to include all non-Maori citizens in New Zealand who were represented by the Crown when the Treaty was signed in 1840?

While the concept of biculturalism remains the predominant present day working principle of The Treaty of Waitangi we must ask how biculturalism relates to counselling Maori. In counselling there is a power imbalance between counsellor and client. The client comes to counselling needy, vulnerable and dependant on the counsellor to help. The counsellor, in turn, presents as one having qualifications, confidence, and insight. Biculturalism requires that this power be shared equally between client and counsellor. Each comes with their own ‘power’, their own cultural treasures to contribute to the counselling.

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<sup>20</sup> Carolyn Stirling, “Biculturalism in New Zealand Secondary Schools,” NZARE/AARE Joint Conference 2003, <http://www.aare.edu.au/03pap/sti03500.pdf> [accessed October 9, 2009], 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ian Stuart, “Maori and Mainstream: Towards Bicultural Reporting,” *Pacific Journalism Review*, no. 8 [2002], <http://www.asiapac.org.fj/PJR/issues/next/2002maori.pdf> [accessed October 9, 2009], 43.

Hence, it has become a general recommendation from the professional counselling bodies in New Zealand that non-Maori counsellors have ready access to supervision by Maori, as needed, in order to ensure the counsellor continues to develop in their understanding of cultural safety as it pertains to their Maori clients. While such a recommendation is also made in regard to any cross cultural counselling situation, the post colonial concern of Maori has brought this issue to the fore in general New Zealand counselling practise.

Regarding this issue of ‘cultural safety’ it should be noted that Christianity received widespread acceptance among Maori in the early days of colonisation. By 1840 over 20 mission stations had been established, many of which were based in the North Island.<sup>22</sup> Christian chiefs played an important role in persuading their fellow chiefs to sign the Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>23</sup> This acceptance of Christianity is still present among Maori today even though many have developed their own cultural expressions of their spiritual beliefs separate from the mainstream European church. A sharing of spiritual values between a Christian counsellor and a Maori client can be seen as fulfilling the power sharing mandate of biculturalism, while at the same time allowing for both client and counsellor to be distinctive in their own spiritual orientation. Indeed, I would argue that a Christian non-Maori counsellor can more readily understand and accommodate bicultural spiritual values and concerns in their counselling with Maori clients than can a non-Christian non-Maori counsellor on account of the Christian willingness to reassess “Western” values.

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<sup>22</sup> [http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/New\\_Zealand\\_History/Missionaries](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/New_Zealand_History/Missionaries)

<sup>23</sup> Claudia Orange, *The Story of a Treaty* [Wellington, NZ: Allen & Unwin, 1989], 19-20.

Christian values are often assumed to be ‘Western’ values. Western values, such as individualism, self expression and self fulfilment are said to be at variance with classic Maori culture, and Western therapies that espouse these values “continue the process of colonisation, for a Maori can always learn to be a psychologist but a psychologist can never learn to be a Maori”<sup>24</sup>. Yet biblical Christianity asserts that Christian identity is found in our relationship with God and church community (where the individual reaches his/her full potential in service to others), that love for God and others is the expression of the Christian ethic (rather than self expression), and sacrificial service lies at the core of personal fulfilment (rather than a prior commitment to self fulfilment). Biblical Christianity, at its best, stands apart from Western cultural values in order to allow the unique and distinctive life and teachings of Jesus Christ to speak to all cultures.

Here the pastoral counsellor must be an example of humility and contrition in that they are willing to subject their own cultural values to the values of Jesus Christ, thus modelling the way forward for their Maori client, since Christian values are not necessarily Western values. In their own history Maori have shown a readiness to enter into such a process of cultural self examination. Maori Anglican Bishop Muru Walters has noted that when Maori first encountered Christianity there was a readiness to acknowledge that their culture needed to be transformed by the Christian Gospel. Quoting Walters, “This renewal of Maori culture – which Maori had to do for themselves – was a liberation from paganism to Christianity. ... It was liberation, based on the faith of living

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Charles Waldegrave, as reported by Edmund Salem in “The Contribution of Charles Waldegrave”, *New Zealand Association of Counselling Journal* 12, no. 1 [1990] 8. For the full text of Charles Waldegrave’s “Just Therapy” see *Dulwich Centre Newsletter* no. 1 [1990] 5-46.

in Christ”.<sup>25</sup> European or Pakeha Christians can do no less. From their Western cultural perspective they too must be willing to acknowledge that their culture must be transformed to the ethic of Christ. I believe this mutual self examining by both counsellor and client of their respective cultures in the light of the universal Christian message will address the concerns of bicultural counselling with Maori, including the issues of cultural safety.

For the Christian counsellor, a problem solving modality that seeks to impart ‘Western’ values to the way a Maori client thinks, feels, behaves and relates is inadequate for effective pastoral care. Rather, the concern of the non-Maori pastoral counsellor must be to understand the heart and the motivations of Maori clients, while bringing their own heart to the counselling experience. The conversation will go back and forth as counsellor and client reflect, speak to and process their own motivations with a view to seeing their way forward for themselves, as they are in relation to others, and to the teachings of Jesus Christ. The pastoral counsellor will be aware of the cultural nuances of non-verbal communication as the conversation continues. The client’s concern and place in and for their wider community will be revealed as being more or less important. Support people can then be identified and reconciliation for broken relationships can be pursued.

Maori clients who have experienced significant deprivation will be most aware of European dominance in their society and in counselling. It has been noted that Maori “are over represented in school failure, disease, infant mortality and crime. They make up a disproportionate percentage of New Zealand’s defendants, patients, freezing workers,

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<sup>25</sup> Muru Walters, *Te Upoko o te Ika Karaitianatanga, The Future of Christianity: Historical, Sociological, Political and Theological Perspectives from New Zealand*, ed. John Stenhouse and Brett Knowles [Adelaide, Australia: ATF Press, 2004], 6.

prisoners and street kids”.<sup>26</sup> This situation remains much the same today, and remains a major concern for the counselling and other helping professions in New Zealand. Can the cultural divide be bridged in counselling in order to access the Christ-centred hope available for both, and all, cultures who experience deprivation in our society?

Christian pastoral counselling will challenge such European values as individual choice, unassailable personal freedoms, responsibility only to self, competitive status and success, and being in personal control. They will challenge these values, not because they are not Maori, and not because they are unattainable to those Maori who have “fallen through the cracks” of a European way of life, but because they are not Christian when they become the centre of the heart’s worship, and get in the way of loving God and loving others. So, with sensitivity to bicultural concerns in counselling, Christian pastoral counselling (as defined in this paper) calls all participants to live out of a Christ-centred transcendent set of values in order to bring renewal and hope to every culture.

Despite the challenges in understanding bicultural counselling and developing appropriate modalities for such counselling, efforts have continued in the New Zealand counselling scene to develop a distinctive approach to Maori counselling that meets the requirements of biculturalism. The New Zealand Journal of Counselling gave one of their 2007 issues over to this very task. The first article<sup>27</sup> began by noting that most Maori participate in the prevailing New Zealand (European) culture. Hence the task becomes a little complicated in that counsellors cannot assume that all Maori will share the same concerns regarding biculturalism, or indeed Maori cultural values. A further

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<sup>26</sup> Jennifer Ross, “The Cross-Cultural Context: Some Issues for Counselling in New Zealand,” *New Zealand Counselling and Guidance Association Journal* 7, no. 1 [1985], 39.

<sup>27</sup> Mason Durie, “Counselling Maori,” *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* 27, no.1 [2007], 1.

complication has arisen with a widespread ‘paralysis among Pakeha researchers and practitioners for fear of breaching cultural boundaries.’<sup>28</sup>

In an effort to move through this impasse Dr. Mason Drury has highlighted seven features of a modality for Maori therapy that could be considered culturally safe for Maori clients<sup>29</sup>. These include, (1) establishing a collaborative counselling relationship based on mutually reciprocal obligations, (2) the importance of developing a transcendent view, (3) the telling of the client’s story and response of the counsellor to that story (or stories) as they are retold thus establishing a collaborative reciprocity, (4) the emotional shift where both client and counsellor are together moved and changed as a result of the story telling, (5) a growing mutual trust to plan together the course of the therapy and its outcomes, (6) discussing together what a growing wholeness will look like as a renewed balance between emotions, social relationships, spirituality and body is envisioned, and finally, (7) exploring a way to rejoin others in a familiar social world, especially with those who will join in the authentication of any new awareness gained in the process. Drury adds that these steps are not unknown to non-Maori psychotherapists; while a familiarity with them may enhance the alliance (between non-Maori and Maori approaches) thus allowing non-Maori therapists to better meet their Treaty obligations.

A Christian pastoral counselling approach need not be at variance with these seven steps, but will work with them to reinforce the story that God is speaking to both cultures. Here there will be an added richness as well as critique, as the distinctiveness of

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<sup>28</sup> Durie, “Counselling Maori,” 9. Durie here is quoting from M. Tolich, “Pakeha Paralysis: Cultural Safety for those Researching the General Population of New Zealand,” *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* 19 [2002], 164-78.

<sup>29</sup> Durie, “Counselling Maori,” 13-16.

each culture is appreciated, but the power claim of the either culture to dominate the other is dismantled before the feet of King Jesus.

To be bicultural in our counselling does not require us to not be Christian, but it does require us to understand Maori cultural distinctives. Under the requirements of biculturalism both client and counsellor operate in tandem, each appreciating and contributing to the strengths of the other. Lang<sup>30</sup> notes that such an approach “redistributes the balance point of the power relationship back to the centre”. For Christian pastoral counselling this centre can only be Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the Gospel message. This message is one of hope for all peoples, but is also a disrupter of all cultures at variance with the claims of King Jesus. So as Maori and non-Maori counsellor and client together centre themselves in humble dependence on Jesus Christ, then their cultural concerns and contributions will be enhanced, restored, reworked and renewed as they are bought into service for God’s will and purpose for their lives and relationships.

Having reviewed the history of counselling in New Zealand, and the current concerns of our counselling culture my next chapter will seek to outline the biblical framework on which a counselling modality for Grace Theological College will be developed.

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<sup>30</sup> Steve K. W. Lang, “Tikanga and Ethics: A Dialogical Encounter of Two Cultures,” *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* 27, no. 1 [2007], 38. Lang relates this quote to the interchange of Maori and Pakeha cultures in therapy. I have made use of Lang to make the point that such can also apply to Maori and Christian approaches to counselling.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Biblical Foundations for Pastoral Counselling**

Having established the need for a new pastoral counselling programme for Grace Theological College (chapter one), and demonstrated the need for such a counselling orientation within the wider New Zealand counselling field (chapter two), I will now, in this third chapter, lay down the biblical basis on which I will (in chapter four) develop the counselling theory for the new counselling department at Grace College.

In this chapter, the biblical basis I intend to outline will begin with GTC's interpretative approach to the bible. Then I will select ten representative samples of Scripture that show the whole bible speaking to a wide range of pastoral care concerns.

A myriad of personal concerns and struggles present themselves to pastoral counsellors. They see people struggle over many years with the same debilitating failures. Clients become entangled in ways of living that seem beyond their ability to change. A husband can't stop watching pornography, a teen age girl refuses to eat, a mother's anger seems unstoppable. What does the bible have to say to such people? What difference does it make that these people are in the image of God, when there seems so little evidence of such image bearing in the way they live and relate?

Furthermore, the bible seems to be full of laws and commandments that seem impossible to keep. Standards are set for us that leave us discouraged, depressed, guilty

and shamed, or angry, demanding, arrogant and legalistic. What should we do with all these laws and how should they relate to pastoral counselling? Is it enough to tell an angry client to stop being angry? Is all anxiety sinful evidence of a failure to trust God? Haven't the laws in the Old Testament been superseded by the love commandments of the New Testaments?

There are times in everyone's life when it feels like we are walking through valleys of death-like shadows. It is dark and lonely, a time of despair. Does God know or even care? Is he there? Where is he? What has been the experience of people in the bible who have gone through such times of grief, loss and struggle? Do they find God at such times, and how do they find him? Where does the pastoral counsellor turn to in order to offer hope to such people? Is there a hope that is grounded in the reality of life's struggles, yet offers a genuine way through?

Counsellors need to be wiser than most. They are up against the complexities of the inner workings of troubled people. What makes a wise counsellor wise? Where does such wisdom come from and how can it be obtained? Is wisdom being able to give advice, or to gain superior academic counselling qualifications, or does it go deeper than that? What does wisdom say to a sexually abused child or to a spouse that wants to be rid of an adulterous partner? What wisdom is available to an elderly client suffering significant health loss and wishing that his or her life was over?

Christian counsellors are expected to reference Jesus Christ in their life and in their counselling. How big a part should Jesus play in our counsel? What should we do with Jesus? When he was on earth, how was Jesus seen and believed? What were the reactions of others to the claims Jesus made for himself? Is he alive today, or does he

live only in the minds of those who believe in him? How should we relate to Jesus in the face of our client's problems? Is Jesus good but powerless, or powerful, but not as good as he should be? Where was Jesus when your client, who has faithfully walked as a Christian for many years, lost his/her teenager in a car accident? Has their faith been for nothing?

We live in a psychologised culture where "pop" psychology has become part of the common vernacular and understanding of how people live. What is the pastoral counsellor to do with these theories of counselling that seem so acceptable, yet leave God out of the picture? Can these secular theories be made right simply by inserting God back in where he is missing? Is it true that all truth is God's truth? Or is there a more profound way to engage with the secular thinking we encounter all around us? When people come to counselling having already diagnosed themselves with a popular and well known mental illness and wanting you to counsel them on the basis of their diagnosis, what should be our response?

What difference does it make to the anorexic teenager to be told that the risen Christ is living within her? In the nuts and bolts of daily living what impact can the life of Christ within make to people caught up in situations and circumstances beyond their ability to control, change, or cope? Is the life of Christ within an objective, historic reality, or is it simply a motivating idea to help people access their own inner resources?

What of the life of Christ without? How is it possible to live the life of Christ and to offer the graces of Christ to others when we are overwhelmed with the pressures and disappointments of life? What can a parent be expected to offer a rebellious teenager, or an autistic child? What can an office worker be expected to offer a work colleague who

mercilessly persecutes them for their Christian commitment? What can a householder offer to workmen whose incompetence and laziness is costing her/him money and sleepless nights?

What causes breakdowns in even the closest of relationships? Can two people be expected to be happy together when such little issues seem to divide them? Where do we go to find the wisdom we need as counsellors to help people with their relationships? In a culture of easy “no fault” divorce, can Christians be expected to have stand-out marriages that defy our society’s norm of mix and rematch? Can a conflicted relationship be turned around? Where do we go to get the specific help we need as counsellors to intervene in marriage and family conflict; to see intimacy develop where there has only been distance?

We need more, much more! As pastoral counsellors we need on-going access to pastoral wisdom for all of life. For issues of personal living and relating, for living in community, living in work and marriage relationships, for facing well the suffering of a fallen world, and for leading others in the ways of God and goodness. Where do we go for the help we need to so counsel?

All these questions, and many more, are provided for in the bible. Yes, the list is surprisingly comprehensive. As Christian pastoral counsellors we need not be shut up to the wisdom (the bible calls it ‘foolishness’, 1 Cor 1:20) of this world. We have in the bible a reliable guide and powerful word that draws us to love and counsel beyond the wisdom of this world.

I will now proceed to provide foundational samples of Scripture that address the issues in my list above, and point a way forward for the counselling process. But first I will develop our interpretative approach to the Scriptures.

### Grace Theological College's Interpretive Approach to the Bible

In its subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Grace Theological College concurs with the statement on the Scriptures developed in chapter one of the Confession<sup>1</sup>. In so concurring, GTC holds that God's superintending of the writing of Scripture is the testimony of the bible to itself. One place where this can be seen is in the conversation Moses had with God, in his initial commissioning at the burning bush, where he was summoned to be God's mouthpiece to Pharaoh, and to the enslaved people of Israel.

Moses had an issue with God over his ability, as a fallible man, to accurately record and convey without error God's word that had come to him. In the Old Testament book of Exodus, chapters three and four, God meets with Moses at a mountain in the Sinai Desert. There God gave Moses a message to pass on to Pharaoh, King of Egypt. Moses was convinced of his inability to accurately convey the message. God overcame these concerns by reminding Moses that he, as Creator of all things, including humankind, made Moses' mouth and hence is well able to direct, instruct and assist Moses' speech so that while Pharaoh will hear the voice of Moses, it will in fact be God's very own words, and clearly understood as such (Exod 4:10-17).

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter One of the Westminster Confession of Faith can be accessed at the website: [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf\\_with\\_proofs/](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/)

Moses' fallibility would not get in the way of God being able to convey his word, through an fallible instrument, in ways that can be clearly understood, relied upon and acted upon by others. So when Moses came to record in written form the words spoken to him by God, and the history of Israel's dealings with God, he was in fact writing the words of God, under God's superintending providence (Exod 17:14; 34:27; Num 33:2).

In the New Testament we find the same regard toward the words of the bible. The Apostle Peter tells us that the writers of Scripture were not speaking out of their own originality, but were speaking God's words aided and assisted by God's own Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21). Their humanness was not suspended or set aside. They spoke out of who they were and their own unique writing styles, yet, when inspired by the Holy Spirit, they were speaking the words of God; the words God himself would have spoken if he had been present.

Further, the Apostle Paul was able to confidently assert that his audience in Thessalonica heard his words, not as words of men, but as they actually were, the words of God. Since this is what the words actually were, without ceasing to be Paul's words, the Thessalonians reception of these words became a cause of great blessing to them. These words were effectively at work in them because they received them as words from God, rather than rejecting them as merely the words of a fallible man. (1 Thess 2:13).

Paul is careful to note in this passage that his words did not become words of God simply because his audience believed them to be so. The words Paul spoke were words of God, and the Thessalonians' faith is seen in their receiving them as such. When God's word is heard some will believe and some will not. The hearers' believing does not make

these words words of God. They come as words of God and remain words of God whether or not they are believed and received as such by those who hear.

When the words of the bible are received in counselling as the words of God, from a heavenly Father who loves and cares and speaks to every issue of the heart, then the Holy Spirit powerfully works to bring about life change. Faith and hope are made stronger and trust in the Lord Jesus grows to where the client is able to face their situation in new and helpful ways.

Some might object, claiming that the bible is written in human language, meaning not only that the writings of Scripture exhibit human styles and cultural forms of expression (which they certainly do), but, more significantly, that the writings of Scripture originated in the human authors and so are a product of the fallible creature rather than the infallible Creator.

The term ‘human language’ is misleading. Our language belongs to God, it originated with him (Ps 33:6), and we have it only as a gift (Ps 94:9). Speaking is something God does before man does, so linguistically man is in God’s image, as he is in all of his functions and attributes. Since our being is derived from God, our knowledge is derived from God (we know what he has given us to know), and also our language is derived from God (we speak because he has first spoken and has created us to be speaking beings). So, strictly speaking, we do not use human language, but rather the language God has given us to speak (Gen 11:7).

Our language and speech is not inherently ambiguous, veiled, confusing, distorted, inadequate or defective, though language can certainly function in these ways. When it does function in these ways it is because of the misuse of language, not because

of a functional or creational defect in language itself. The problem is not with the language, but with the users of the language. All of creation is subject to futility because of the fallen or sinful state of mankind (Rom 8:20), including the language coming from human speakers.

In the perfect state of creation in the Garden of Eden, language imposed no limitations or barrier on the user and receiver with respect to the communication between Adam and Eve and between themselves and God. Language functioned as it was created for, and it was all ‘very good’. The limitations are with us now because of the fallibility (fallenness or sinfulness) of the human users, rather than any inadequacy of language as such. Since God is not limited by any imperfection in creation, when he resorts to ‘human’ language he is well able to use ‘our’ words to convey his own words, unaffected by the fallen state of his human authors or spokespeople (2 Pet 1:18).

Furthermore, the text of Scripture comes to the reader with a meaning all of its own by virtue of its divine authorship. It is not left up to the reader to give the text meaning or significance, but only to believe what is written. This the text itself requires of its readers. The bible’s testimony to itself is that the purpose of the written text of Scripture is to elicit belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ as Son of God, and that we might be changed into his likeness (John 20:30-31; 2 Cor 3:18).

Historically, God’s ways of communicating to us in language includes direct speech (as it was to Moses) or words through human lips (as it came to Pharaoh through Moses) or words in written form as when God commanded his prophets to write down what he was saying. In addition to Moses and the testimony of the Apostle Peter (2 Pet 1:20-21), we have examples of Isaiah being given this command to write down the words

of God (Isa 30:8), and also Jeremiah (Jer 30:2). But pre-eminently the word of God has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John referred to Jesus as the Word of God (John 1:1; Rev 19:13).

In Jesus Christ not only is God defined for us, but God's word is conveyed to us, both directly and indirectly. Directly in his person (when he was alive on earth), and indirectly through his Spirit, the Spirit of Christ (Acts 16:6-7; Rom 8:9; 1 Pet 1:11; 2 Pet 1:20-21) or the Spirit of God (Rom 8:14; 1 Cor 3:16; 1 Pet 4:14; 1 John 4:2), the Holy Spirit, who not only inspired the writing of the bible, but who indwells us and brings to our consciousness the words and truths of God's written down revelation.

Pastoral counselling, as defined in this paper, is counselling that brings the word of God and the Spirit of God to bear on the hearts and lives of troubled people. After counsellor and client have listened to each other they then listen to the voice of another Counsellor, the Spirit of God who speaks words from God, through the bible (John 14:25-27, 15:26). If the client is a non-Christian then the counsellor listens to the voice of the great Counsellor, praying all the time that the client will be given 'ears that hear' (Matt 13:9). With the client's permission and informed consent the pastoral counsellor may be able to share Scripture and/or pray in the counselling session without disrespecting the client's own values and concerns.

This need to bring the written word of God to bear has biblical warrant. Adam and Eve, in spite of their unfallen state, needed to hear the spoken words of God in order to understand the significance of the general revelation that surrounded them in the Garden of Eden. They were not able to understand their reality aright until they heard the spoken word of God interpreting for them the general revelation of the garden, and the response

required of them (Gen 2:15-17). How much more so today, in our imperfect and fallen state, do we and our clients need to hear the word of God to enable us to interpret our own reality in our lives and circumstances, and respond to it as God would have us respond?

Having established the foundational regard we should have towards the bible, based on the bible's own testimony, I now wish to turn to the issue of interpretation. If we are to be workmen and women of this book, then we need to have regard to our use of it. When we have established our interpretative stance towards the bible then we will be ready to look into specific passages in order to understand God's way of seeing and dealing with people. Then, building on this understanding, we can begin to develop our own approach to pastoral counselling. Does the bible provide for us a way to interpret its own writings? Yes it does.

### *The Redemptive-Historical Interpretation of Scripture<sup>2</sup>*

What should be our interpretative approach to the bible? Having embraced the bible as God's inspired word, should we regard it then as a book of essentially devotional material, or a rule book containing ethical instructions, or a discipleship manual, or a handbook on Christian doctrine, or a book about the history of an ancient people, or a

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<sup>2</sup> Evangelicalism has often favoured an historico-grammatical hermeneutic. While this approach does treat the bible as the inspired Word of God, it does tend to limit the interpreter to the literal context of the text while doing little to appreciate how the text functions in the wider biblical message and in the wider theological themes of the whole bible; in short, taking into account the whole counsel of God. For more on this issue see Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* [Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005] 275.

collection of unrelated texts to be pulled out at random to explain a condition or situation pertaining to a troubled client?

We should let the bible speak for itself and tell us, the reader, how it should be interpreted. Jesus, the one who is Word of God incarnate, tells us how his word (the whole bible inspired by the Spirit of Christ) is to be interpreted.

After his resurrection Jesus spent forty days in Jerusalem teaching, instructing and preparing his disciples for the ministry they were about to begin (Acts 1:3-4). Making use of the Old Testament Scriptures they were to spread the message, the good news, about Jesus, namely his life, death and resurrection. At the end of his Gospel, Luke records for us a summary statement of the content of this forty day ministry Jesus had with the disciples. Jesus taught them how the Old Testament Scriptures spoke primarily of him and his mission and purpose as it pertained to the Kingdom of God. He opened their minds to understand these Scriptures as speaking about himself (Luke 24:44-45). Jesus had said these same things to two disciples on the Emmaus Road when, on that occasion, he went through all the Old Testament explaining to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:27). In his explanation Jesus was not concerned just with their immediate confusion regarding the events surrounding the crucifixion. He was more concerned that his suffering and resurrection were understood by them in the context of the whole Scripture, which we call today the Old Testament. The Old Testament was concerned with the revelation of God as the Saviour of his people. Hence it anticipated the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as Saviour; the one who accomplished the salvation God had in mind for his people from the very beginning.

This teaching about Jesus, and the spread of the Kingdom of God, were two sides of the one Apostolic concern (Acts 8:12, 28:31). Throughout the book of Acts the Apostles, and the preachers influenced by them, put into practise what Jesus had taught during those forty days. Again and again they were found using the Old Testament Scriptures to show that Jesus Christ, particularly in his death and resurrection, was to be the focus of the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Examples include, Peter, in Acts chapter two, Stephen in Acts chapter seven, Phillip in Acts chapter eight, Paul in Acts chapters thirteen, seventeen and twenty-eight, and Apollos in Acts chapter eighteen. When the audience was made up of people who had no background knowledge of the Old Testament, the same message about Jesus was reworked around the evangelist's own testimony and experience of the risen Christ, thus making use of the world and life context of the audiences they were addressing (Acts 17 and 24).

Peter heard well the bible lesson given by his Lord during those forty days. Many years later Peter reminded his readers that the writers of the Old Testament, inspired by the Spirit of Christ, spoke of the ministry of Christ. Thus their Old Testament writings were meant for the service of those who would later believe in the revealed Christ for themselves (1 Pet 1:10-12).

In his instructions to a young pastor (2 Tim 2:14-15) Paul instructs Timothy to interpret the bible as a 'workman' who 'correctly handles the word of truth'. The implication here is that there is an improper or incorrect way of handling the Scriptures. The bible exegete who is approved by God as one who properly handles this word of truth, is one who cuts a straight path through godless chatter (v.16) and the quarrelling about words (v.14) and who focuses instead on Christ and our life in him (2:8-14a). This

exegete will have no reason to feel shame about his/her understanding of Scripture, but rather can proceed with confidence to bring their understanding to bear not only on their lives, but also on the lives of others.

We are to avoid the shame of handling, teaching, interpreting, and counselling out of the Scriptures in a way different from that required by the Scriptures themselves. The Scriptures are self-interpreting; the bible itself tells us how to interpret the bible. Our confidence, when using the bible in counselling, must be in the hermeneutic required by the Scriptures themselves. How then should we view the bible? We should view the whole bible as a word about God's redeeming purposes for people in Jesus Christ. This view can be further seen when we consider the structure of the bible, not only as redemptive, but as *historical* revelation.

The historical records that make up Scripture do not have an historical end in themselves; the Scriptures are not simply a recording of historical events for the record. It is rather an historical record of God's progressive dealings with his people in order to reveal more and more of himself and his redemptive purposes for them. It is a record of history marching toward an endpoint, the fulfilment of God's redemptive purposes in Jesus Christ. Redemption, not history or historical record, is Scripture's reason for being. This redemption is accomplished in time and the Scriptures record this history as the historical sovereign actions of God by which he saves his people and renovates his creation in Jesus Christ. If we miss this focus, we miss everything, even if we know the Scriptures well. Jesus made this very clear when chastising Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament (John 5:39-40). If we do not see Jesus as Saviour in the text, then the text will have no life giving message for us or our pastoral counselling clients.

Again, God is the author of this biblical history and Christ is the subject. The various lines of biblical writings merge on Christ, he being the nucleus, the telos, the focus that holds the whole scope of the Scriptures together (Heb 1:1-2). The symbols (Zech 3:8) and patterns (Rom 5:14) all lead in one direction. All the wisdom and knowledge of God revealed in the Old Testament are to be found in Jesus Christ (Col 2:3), and all the Old Testament promises of God for his people are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1:20).

We see then that the Old Testament revelation, in all its parts, is a unified whole, unified around Jesus Christ as Saviour. The New Testament is an addition to the biblical canon only by way of an endpoint. The New Testament is a mature, final, complete, and fully developed statement of truth compared to the Old Testament which is a more general, seminal, anticipatory and provisional statement. There is nothing in the Old Testament revelation that passes outside the scope of the New Testament, a scope that focuses on Jesus Christ. Hence an understanding of the Old Testament cannot be sought apart from the New Testament's understanding of the life, ministry, teachings, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ as being the fulfilment of all that was written in the Old Testament, and all that was promised in God's plan of salvation..

In all this we see how the bible has provided for its own unity. We should use and view all Scripture as an historical record of God's dealings with his people, with the focus being on their redemption through the life and death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Thus the message of salvation is the great unifying theme of the Scriptures. Does this mean that every verse in the Old Testament speaks of Jesus Christ? No, but every verse in the Old Testament is set in a *redemptive* context that leads

*historically* and inevitably to Jesus Christ, and to his death, resurrection and ascension to glory as being the accomplishment of our salvation. This means that every portion of Scriptures has something to say about God's redemptive-historical purpose to redeem his people in Jesus Christ. Every portion of Scripture contains a message of hope and grace anchored in God's redemptive promises and purposes. Thus any and every portion of Scripture can be used in pastoral counselling to convey this redemptive hope and grace to every client.

More can be said about the significance for redemptive history of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. His coming ushered in the age of God's kingdom. The coming of Jesus Christ marked the end of one redemptive age in God's redemptive purposes, and the beginning of another. Jesus himself spoke of these two ages that account for all of history, past, present and future (Matt 12:32).

In the Gospel accounts, the age to come is spoken of as the Kingdom of God or eternal life, and was associated with the personal presence of Jesus himself. Jesus has come and he has bought with him the Kingdom of God. This age to come, this eternal life, is here with us now. To be sure the full experience of this age to come awaits the glory of the returning Christ, but the reality of this age is here with us now because the reality of Christ, by way of his Spirit, is here with us now. Believers in Jesus Christ are even now participating, tasting, the reality of this new glorious age (1 Cor 10:11; Heb 6:5).

Yet the present evil age (Gal 1:4) is also still with us, and will not disappear until the return of Christ. So there are two ages, this present evil age and the Kingdom of God age, that simultaneously make up our day to day experience. We live in the reality and

tension of these two ages, a push and pull between two opposing forces which we can never escape in this life.

Hence clients who come to pastoral counselling present as people struggling with the reality of this present evil age and how it has treated them. If they are Christians they are also experiencing the tension of wanting to live in and experience more fully the blessings of the age to come, yet find themselves caught up in this present evil age; caught up in this push and pull dynamic. As we listen to their stories we are hearing an historical account of their experience of this tension and how they have reacted to it.

From this perspective we ask questions about the client's past history in order to understand the convictions, beliefs, and commitments that life in this present evil age has formed within them. Their ways of dealing and coping with life in a fallen world have not been working too well. This is their life story. This is why they have come to see the pastoral counsellor.

Even with non-Christian clients, the pastoral counsellor is able to show empathy and understanding given the counsellor's own insight and experience of the workings of this present evil age. The pastoral counsellor will be able to ask questions that extend the non-Christian client's understanding of the contours of their motivations, fears, and self protection as they have sought to bulwark themselves against the disappointments and pain of living in a fallen world, this present evil age.

If the client is a Christian then the pastoral counsellor understands that he or she is talking to one who lives between two worlds, in the tension and overlap of two ages, one earthly, fallen reality that is passing away, and one heavenly redeemed reality that is coming as the Kingdom of God on earth continues to grow and spread among all

nations.. The on-going tension of this overlap between these two ages has aggravated the presenting problem, but also provides the pastoral counsellor with a way forward in the counselling conversation.

The pastoral counsellor will ask questions regarding the past and present history of the client's personal experiences because they take seriously the pain of living first as children and then as adults in this present evil age.

Scriptures that speak of forgetting what lies behind and straining toward what is ahead (Phil 3:13), and the old is gone, the new has come (2 Cor 5:17) are not referring to our personal past histories and experiences, our pre-conversion life, but rather are references to the old age that has gone and is going because Christ has come. These verses are exhorting believers to live out of the new-age life they have in Christ, and put behind them those things in the present evil age they have looked to for life and in which they placed their hopes and dreams. These verses are not a negation of personal histories, but a negation of misplaced faith in this fallen world.

The New Testament writers nowhere encourage us to live as if the blessings of heaven were here now in all their fullness and thus deny the ongoing reality of struggle in this life. This would only encourage arrogant triumphalism that denies, or at best, provides superficial remedies for present pain and suffering. Nor do the New Testament writers encourage us to live as if heaven's blessings were all future and all we can now do is grit our teeth and hope we can make it until Jesus comes back. This would tend towards despair and hopelessness and endless self effort and moralistic legalism.

The biblical focus is rather on both struggle and joy as dual present day realities. As the client's past and present histories are known and understood as having present day

consequences that hinder a richer and more profound experience of the blessings of the new kingdom age, then pastoral counselling can proceed in the direction of opening up for the client new ways of experiencing the life of the indwelling Christ (Col 3:1-4), and the world Jesus Christ is progressively redeeming, while the client continues to live in the tension between the two antithetical ages. Here is the way forward for the pastoral counsellor, as provided by the interpretative stance of the Scriptures themselves.

Having outlined an interpretative approach to the Scriptures, with its counselling implications, I will now consider samples of Scripture that, in their own way, contribute to an understanding of the whole bible as foundational for pastoral counselling. I will endeavour to exegete these Scriptures using the redemptive-historical hermeneutic explained above, and show their relevance to pastoral counselling and care.

### Genesis 1 – 3

These three chapters establish our foundational understanding for knowing and interacting with one another and with God.<sup>3</sup> The first two chapters of Genesis establish all people as being created in God's image, originally perfect, holy and pleasing to their

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<sup>3</sup> Before beginning this section I wish to make a comment about my use of *he*, *him* and *his* to refer to God. God is a Spirit and is hence without gender. God is not male or female. This is seen, for instance in his creation of humankind when both male and female were created in his image (Gen 1:27). If God were gender specific then only the male, or the female as the case may be, could be considered as God's image bearer. In fact both are considered to be equally God's image bearers. So my use of the male gender term to refer to God is done so without prejudice.

Also, I use these male gender terms to refer to God because that is how he has revealed himself to us. To refer to God in this way is to follow in the footsteps of God's own self-revelation. So the use of these terms should not be seen as giving priority to male over female, or to suggest that God is any way more favourably disposed towards men than he is towards women. Both equally bear his image, and both equally receive his promises and blessings.

Concerning my use of the male gender term, I will be using 'man' or 'mankind' interchangeably to refer to humankind in general; in the way God himself seems to do (Gen 5:2). When I wish to use 'man' as a gender specific term I will endeavour to make it clear in the context that I am referring only to males.

Creator, while chapter three records Adam and Eve's disobedience to God and to his word, and the consequences that eventuated. As a result of their disobedience the earth would bear the weight of God's curse, their relationship with God would be one of fearful hiding and avoidance, the relationship between the man and the woman would be one of conflict and heartache, and painful toil would characterize Adam's tending of the garden, and Eve's bearing of children. The redemptive purposes of God, however, were also recorded in this third chapter of the bible to remind the reader that God himself would intervene and provide a way back to creational wholeness and oneness with himself. Eve would still bear living image bearers of God, and one of them will eventually crush the head of the tempter and free mankind from God's curse (3:15 end).

As the record of redemptive history unfolded in the Scriptures it became apparent that this one who would come from the woman to crush the tempter's head would be Jesus Christ, the focus and fulfiller of God's redemptive purposes. All the miseries arising from the events of Genesis Three find their way to the counsellor's door. Unless Jesus Christ is found there also, in the counselling room, these miseries will have nowhere to go, and the counselling will be largely ineffective.

#### Image of God.

Genesis 1:27 tells us that humans were created in the image of God, male and female. What does it mean to be created in the image of the uncreated God? There is mystery surrounding this term since what the term 'image of God' means is not really explained in Scripture with anything like precision. Hence it should not be seen as a

technical term that bears the same precise meaning every time we see it used. It may well be used in different ways by different biblical authors. So what can we say about image bearing?

In Genesis 1:27 we have two phrases with no grammatically explicit link between them. We have one phrase just butted up against another, describing the same event from two different aspects: “In the image of God he created him: male and female he created them” (see also Genesis 3:19 and 15:15 for similar grammatical constructions). So we see that both male and female are in God’s image, rather than the two together making up God’s image. Each in their own being is completely image of God.

So image of God should not be defined in terms of male or female characteristics. Such an association would not occur to the Israelites since God was not gender specific. The qualities or aspects of masculinity and femininity belong to the out-working of image bearing, not to the definition of image bearing. So a man, for instance, to fully live out his image bearing, is not required to show or develop feminine characteristics, nor vice versa. In marriage counselling the maleness of the husband and the femaleness of the wife are not problematic in themselves. A convergence of gender distinction is not necessary in order to restore and maintain harmonious relationships between the sexes.

Our concerns can often be centred around the question, “What is the image of God in men and women?” The text in Genesis 1:27 however, does not use the expression, “image of God in man”. God did not place his image in mankind or on mankind. Rather, he created men and women generically in his image. Hence the text of Scripture does not encourage us to look for some specific item of image bearing in a person, or evidence of such. Every aspect of what it means to be an unfallen human is a

reflection of the divine image. This suggests a wholeness of similitude, rather than a list of image bearing qualities.

If we are not careful to make this distinction we will begin trying to identify the image of God in human beings, perhaps either structurally, relationally, or functionally. Do our attributes, for instance, constitute our image bearing? Our human attributes are indeed a reflection of God's person and attributes; we speak because God speaks, we relate because God relates, we build things because God creates, or we rule over things because God is a ruler, but these are only the out-workings of image bearing, not the definition of image bearing.

If we begin see these functions as the definition of what it means to bear God's image then we will be inclined to think that restoring the divine image means speaking more truthfully, or relating more sincerely, or building more diligently, or ruling more wisely, or thinking more rationally or behaving more acceptably. In short, we will look for a change in outward manifestations, rather than seeing that bearing God's image has in view the whole person. Hence we need a pastoral counselling model that goes beyond outward functioning and takes us instead towards the restoration of our true image bearing in Jesus Christ as it pertains to our whole person, both inside and out.

Even though image bearing cannot be defined with precision, Scripture does give hints and clues throughout, until finally in Jesus Christ image-bearing is given full and final content and meaning (Heb 1:3). Jesus Christ is the image of God, the exact representation of God's being. Scripture does not direct us inward, into ourselves, to find the image of God and what it means to bear the divine image, but rather God-ward, and

more especially to Jesus Christ who is the express image of God revealed. Jesus in us is the restoration of our image bearing.

It is here in Jesus Christ that the mystery surrounding the image of God is finally made clear. Both the definition and outworking of divine image bearing come together in Jesus. We reflect and bear that image most authentically when we are found worshipping at the feet of Jesus, as fallen image bearers in the presence of the image of God, wanting to be changed into that image. This is what restored image bearers look like, reflecting more and more the humiliation and glory of Jesus in every aspect of their lives, living and relating (2 Cor 3:18).

This is the goal of pastoral counselling, to see clients become more like Jesus, beginning from the inside, the heart, the seat of our motivations, where we experience the life transforming change that comes with faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Only then will our functioning, our speaking, relating, building, ruling, thinking, and behaving begin to mirror the life of Jesus as image of God.

## Exodus 20

The descendants of Abraham found themselves enslaved in Egypt for over 400 years. When the time came for their deliverance God renewed his promises to them, rescued them from their taskmasters, and gave them his law by way of spoken, heard words from his own mouth, at Mt. Sinai. The giving and obeying of these words, this law, would establish a covenantal relationship between God and these people, whereby they would become his people and he would become their God (Exodus 19:5-6).

The 'if' clause of Exodus 19:5 would be a stumbling block for Israel, since only by obeying the law would they be blessed with the promises of the Sinai covenant. It was a condition they could not keep, and a blessing they could not earn. Knowing this, God made provision for the people's inability by providing at Sinai another way. They were to make an altar and sacrifice an animal whose blood would cover their sin, their inability to keep the covenant stipulations. Then God would come among them and bless them (Exodus 20:22-26). This promised blessing, coming with sacrifice, would be the impetus for their imperfect obedience.

In time all these laws would be perfectly obeyed on their/our behalf by Jesus Christ, whose perfect life would earn the promised blessings. In his perfect life Jesus fulfilled the 'if' clause of Exodus 19:5, and became our Sinai law-keeper, and in his death he became the final sacrifice on the altar of Calvary, bearing our punishment for disobedience, thus becoming our Exodus deliverer. His perfect obedience is credited to us when we put our faith and trust in him as Saviour and Lord.

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20 and Deut 5), and the subsequent laws given by God through Moses, spelt out the implications for Israel of the relationship with God they would now enjoy in the land God was going to give them (Deut 4:13-14; 5:30-31; 6). Hence, the laws that came through Moses, subsequent to the Ten Commandments, were the explanation and interpretation of the Ten Commandments for living in the land.

Christians are no longer 'in the land'; but are 'in Christ'. While Israel was "in Christ" in a preliminary way (I Cor 10:1-4), we are now united to Christ in a final way as he is our Saviour and King, Law Giver and Law Keeper. It is now Jesus Christ who, as a better than Moses (Heb 3:3), interprets and explains for us, in this new age of the

kingdom, the laws of God. In Jesus Christ's own life and teachings we have both the interpretation of the God's laws for today, and the means of obeying them.

We may now see the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 in this new light. Jesus has redeemed us from slavery (20:2), he is now God for us (20:3-4), his name is honoured in our hearts and on our lips (20:5), he is our Sabbath rest (20:8-11), we honour our parents and all those in authority as unto him (20:12), murder, adultery, stealing and lying are contrary to his command to love our neighbour as ourselves (20:13-16), and not to covert requires a life of repentant faith centred on Jesus Christ who gives us a new heart.

While we are now 'in Christ', we remain, nevertheless, 'in the world', caught up still with this present evil age (1 Pet 2:11-12). Here the Old Testament laws serve to continually remind us of the perfection that is Christ's sinless life and to bring us back again and again to him in brokenness, humility, faith and repentance, in order to learn again and again what it means to live out the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

It is the Holy Spirit's job to convince the client of their sin and of Christ's righteousness (John 16:8-11). Our job as pastoral counsellors is to point them to Jesus Christ who offers them both forgiveness and peace from all the guilt and shame that comes from unrighteous living, and a new life and a new way of living that pleases God (2 Cor 7:1)

What God's holiness demands in his laws, his mercy provides in Jesus Christ and his Gospel promise. Here is where client hope is to be centered, rather than in law keeping. The discouraged law breaker and the arrogant law keeper have both, in their own way, strayed far from the love of Christ. In their hearts there is little understanding

of the loving Father-heart of God toward them both. Their respective guilt and pride have been taken up in the sacrifice of Jesus on their behalf, and liberation from these debilitating beliefs concerning their relationship to law is held out to them in the new life Christ offers. In the joy and thankfulness of this new life comes a renewed willingness to obey Christ out of gratitude for all that he has rescued them from.

### The Book of Psalms

Here is the hymnbook of ancient Israel. The songs in here all speak of the human condition and its relationship both to God and to the realities of living life in a fallen world. In the poetry of the Psalms every human emotion is reflected, the joy of praise, the sadness of lament, peace and confidence, reverence and fear, shame and anger, doubt and despair, and love for God, his people and his law. Psalm 42 is an example of a psalm that ranges over a wide spectrum of these heart-felt emotions.

The book of Psalms can be divided broadly into songs of praise, laments and thanksgiving, the largest of these sections being the laments<sup>4</sup>. These laments consist of passionate expressions of grief, yet they end with praise, when a feeling of God's absence is replaced by a feeling of his presence. (An exception to this general pattern is Psalm 88 where the lament continues to the very end of the psalm).

The laments in the book of Psalms often express the experiences of a lifetime compressed into a single lament as the psalmist reflects on his life and allows his emotions to describe his response. For example, Psalm 69 begins with the psalmist

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<sup>4</sup> Longman identifies seven basic types of psalms, thus expanding on our three categories. See Tremper Longman III, *How to Read the Psalms*, [Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press, 1988] 20, 24-36.

describing his feelings as if he is drowning. Then he moves on to complaint, confession, and a plea for help. The psalm ends with praise being more desirable than sacrifice, and with pictures of peace, safety, and confidence. This psalm is a reflection of a lifetime of struggles, joys, sorrows, and deliverance. We should not think of the psalmist's experience of God necessarily changing from lament to joy in the time it takes him to compose and write the psalm. As the psalmist looks back over his life he sees periods of lament and periods of joy, all of which he brings together in a testimony to the goodness of God. As the psalmist bares his soul to God he invites us to do likewise, and to pray to God with our hearts, with our emotions; prayers born out of life's struggles and the yearning for spiritual rest.

These laments are a profound reminder to us that God does understand the groans of the human heart. He is not deaf to our pleas. He is there and he hears! What's more he answers. His answers are not often what we expect, but they are answers, nonetheless. A loving heavenly Father does not send his children away empty handed. God's answer to human suffering is ultimately to trust him and his presence in the valley of dark shadows. This valley is the way to the Father's house (Psalm 23), a way the pastoral counsellor can open up for the despairing client.

The greatest lament in the entire bible is the cry of abandonment uttered by Jesus on the Cross. His was a lament that received no answer. He was left in the darkness (refer Psalm 88). In his endurance of the Father's abandonment, as he bore the sins and wrong doing of mankind, Jesus took all our laments, including the laments of the Psalms, upon himself. There could be no greater suffering.

The laments of the book of Psalms can now be sung to Jesus. He has borne them all. He understands our miseries because he experienced them. He has been resurrected out of all suffering and hence his word of comfort provides real hope. His promise of deliverance, rather than the groan of suffering, will have the final word in our lives. A hope centred in Jesus Christ is a real hope for a despairing client. Yes, we lament with our clients, but not without genuine and life sustaining hope that enables them to eventually embrace also the praise and thanksgiving psalms.

#### Proverbs 1 – 9

Effective pastoral counselling requires that wise counsellors impart wisdom to clients who lack an understanding of what the best way forward is for their lives (Phil 1:9-10). The Old Testament book of Proverbs, written mainly by King Solomon, has much to say about this kind of wisdom, the wisdom needed for counselling and for life.

Solomon's wise sayings, or proverbs, begin in chapter ten of the book of Proverbs. The first nine chapters of this book are an introduction to the subject of wisdom. In these introductory chapters we are introduced to Lady Wisdom (Prov 1:20-23) and Dame Folly (Prov 9:13-18). Both these women are pictured as having their own temple in Jerusalem, and both are calling from the rooftop of their temple seeking to entice the young man who is wandering through the city streets to turn aside into their temple. Will he hear and respond to the voice of Lady Wisdom above the clamour of Dame Folly? The answer from these first nine chapters is that only if he 'fears the Lord' (Prov 1:7) will he turn aside into Wisdom's temple.

The one who fears the Lord is the wise person who accepts God's foundational role in the world and in their lives, and who seeks to reflect the wisdom of God in all their living. By contrast the foolish person has no time for God (Psalm 14:1) and seeks to live their lives without reference to God. Hence this fear of the Lord will lead the young man to reject the call of Dame Folly and instead respond to Lady Wisdom, and enter her temple and feast at her table.

With this introduction to the book we can now turn to the proverbs of Solomon, beginning in chapter ten, and read them in the light of the competing calls of Wisdom and Foolishness. The wise son who brings joy to his parents (Proverbs 10:1) is the one who has given himself over to God, is seated at the table of Lady Wisdom, and is committed to walking in God's ways.

This approach to understanding wisdom and foolishness in the book of Proverbs will enable us to avoid seeing a wise son as simply someone who knows more than most, or who understands worldly-wise ways of living. Rather we will be directed to the heart that is given over to loving, serving and worshipping God. It is in such a heart that wisdom begins, and is then displayed in the life. Here is the wisdom that will make wise counsellors and clients of us all.

The powerful personification of Wisdom in the ninth chapter of Proverbs is taken up in the New Testament and applied to Jesus Christ as being himself the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:18-31; Col 1:15-17, 2:3). The implication is clear: Jesus Christ is the personification of God's wisdom. To fear the Lord, to enter Lady Wisdom's temple, to possess God's wisdom, all means to embrace Jesus Christ and live out of the power of his resurrected life. So the wise sage (counsellor, client) among us is the one who is clothed

with Christ, who has experienced a lifetime of putting on Christ (Col 3:9-10). These are people in whom the peace of Christ and the wisdom of Christ mark their every relationship (Col 3:15-16).

By pointing the client to the word of Christ, the life of Christ and the Spirit of Christ, we are moving the counselling in a direction that will enable the client to develop wisdom and discernment as to what is the best way ahead for them (Phil 1:10). The counsellor also will grow in wisdom and discernment as he/she continually turns aside from foolish ways of counselling and counsels out of the wisdom of God as found in Jesus Christ.

### The Gospel of Luke

In his gospel Luke presents Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament expectations that God will visit his people with a Saviour and a Restorer (Luke 1:1, 4:21, 9:31, 18:31, 22:37, and 24:44). In sounding this note of fulfilment Luke is encouraging his readers to see Jesus as the one in whom their hopes and dreams are to be centred. Jesus is the one who visits us in person both as the Saviour and Restorer. This is good news for the pastoral counsellor. Counsel that is Christ-centred and grace-filled will bring the client into the fulfilment of all that God has available for them in Jesus Christ. Luke also introduces Jesus as one who will bring joy and delight to many (Luke 1:14), and who will be great in God's sight, and be filled with God's Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15). Here is a man from God for a people in need of a Deliverer.

The story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19 is an example of Luke's portrayal of Jesus. This story is not recorded in any of the other Gospels, but is recorded by Luke as a way of explaining for his readers the purpose of Jesus' ministry. Zacchaeus was intrigued with the person of Jesus, and Jesus was keen to spend extended time with him. The result of his encounter with Jesus brought about a saving life change in Zacchaeus that involved a heart felt confession, and new actions of restitution. Zacchaeus was lost and Jesus came to meet him in order to save him from his cheating and defrauding way of life (Luke 19:10). Here is encouragement and confidence for the pastoral counsellor to point clients to Jesus, as he is revealed in the gospels, in order to see heart change taking place, and new ways of relating developed.

The post-resurrection accounts in this gospel (chapter 24) are unique to Luke. He wants his readers to know and believe that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead indeed took place in time and space. But not content with that, Luke wants to show us the significance of this resurrection for us, for our living and our ministry to others. In his resurrection state, Jesus takes time out to meet with and talk to his confused and frightened followers. His reassuring message was that they can have hope as they trust in what the bible has to say about Jesus in both Old and New Testaments. The resurrected life of Jesus connects with our life through the Scriptures and by his Spirit. This was the blessing he left them with and which caused them to worship him with great joy even after he was physically taken from them (Luke 24:50-53).

With growing confidence the pastoral counsellor can reference his or her client's presenting problems to the Scriptures in order to connect them with the living Christ, by faith through his Spirit. No grief, guilt, fear, shame, thoughts or behaviours are beyond

the power of the Risen One to heal, save, forgive, restore and bring long lasting life change.

## Romans One

Here in Romans chapter one is perhaps the most comprehensive description of the non-Christian that can be found anywhere in the New Testament. This then would be an important chapter for pastoral counsellors, since many of their clients are non-Christians. We learn here that non-Christians know that God exists (1:19-20), know in their conscience God's moral law (2:14-15), and God's sanctions (1:32), yet at the very same time their response is to actively suppress this knowledge (1:18,21), to refuse to give God the glory and thanks for what they know to be true (1:21), to exchange the truth of God for a lie (1:25), to live wickedly (1:28), and to applaud wickedness in others (1:32). This is indeed foolish living!

This chapter is telling us that non-Christians examine and observe the data of general revelation (this world and the people living in it) and they gain knowledge from the facts they observe. However, all the general revelation they are observing is first and foremost revelatory of God; speaking about him and revealing truths about him (Psalm 19:1-4a). The non-Christian's response to this general revelation however is to suppress the truth that all these facts would teach them about God. By suppressing these truths about God they are separating the knowledge they are gaining off from the truth about God this knowledge proclaims. So they end up with facts, the knowledge, to which they then apply or attach their own truths of interpretation.

This autonomous pursuit of knowledge seeks to make the facts stand alone, independent of God. This enables the non-Christian to claim ownership of this knowledge, and to treat it as objective and neutral with respect to God. As a result the truth about God that comes with this knowledge is minimized, suppressed, and disregarded as personal subjective preference. What is the heart doing with the knowledge the mind is acquiring? The non-Christian's heart is unwilling to see the evidence of the Creator in the creation and give glory and thanks to God.

Since the universe comes from God then God is the ultimate source or explanation for the facts we observe. Every fact and the meaning of every fact comes from God (Rom 11:36, Rev 4:11). This holds for all theories of counselling and psychotherapy. Such theories begin with observation of people, their thoughts, emotions, behaviours and motivations. Without reference to God and his prior explanation of what is being observed, these observations lead to speculative theories about how people work and how they can be helped. Like doing brain surgery with a chainsaw, speculative theories and therapies about people wade into a client's life pretending to know much, yet with little understanding, or awareness of the damage and misdirection being perpetrated on the ones seeking help.

So, on the basis of Romans chapter one, the pastoral counsellor differs with the speculative, non-Christian theorists as to their starting point, their methodology and the expected outcomes of their counselling modality. Our starting point is not that people are free agents constrained only by society and culture, but that primarily they are constrained by their image bearing, their creatureliness and their sinfulness, to give their first allegiance in worship and service to their Creator, the God of the bible.

In our counselling methodology we subject our observations about people to the prior explanation provided by God in the Scriptures. We listen to God's explanation about people before formulating our own explanations. We take into account the creation of mankind, their fall into sin, the redemption and restoration available in Christ, and the eventual glorious renewal of all things in Jesus Christ. We do not deny these historical realities. This is the framework for our methodology in counselling. We do not do our work as autonomous theorists who believe that the deliberations of our own minds are all that we have or need.

In our expected outcomes we seek a modality that does not simply leave people polishing the outside of their lives with surface changes in behaviour, emotions or thinking, or despairing over the pathologies they have seen in their inner selves. Our concern is where God has placed his concern, with the hearts of people. We look for inner heart change, change that will see the client moving towards the perfect life of Jesus Christ.

Our rational capacities have not been destroyed by our fallen state, but they have been blighted. Non-Christian inquiry can show brilliance in their observations, thus testifying to their image bearing, but in their subsequent speculations testify to their foolishness and fallenness as they refuse to subject their 'findings' to God's prior word of knowledge and interpretation. From these secular observations the pastoral counsellor will gladly learn in matters of detail, while differing wholly and completely on matters of starting point, methodology of observation, and conclusion.

A pastoral counselling modality will take the distorted truths that have come from non-biblical observations and by reworking them through Scripture, render them useful

for effective pastoral care. All truth, outside of the bible, is distorted truth. Thus we bring every psychological truth captive to the feet of Christ (2 Cor 10:5) while calling on our non-Christian colleagues to rework their own findings from general revelation in submission to God's prior word of interpretation.

We are not better than other men and women in the helping professions. We too are fallen and finite and subject to error and misunderstandings. On the contrary, we know and recognise our limitations and so come humbly with the Scriptures in our hands, dependant on the Holy Spirit's working, inviting others to look with us into the data of God's prior word of explanation concerning his world.

#### Romans Six

In this chapter the dying and rising of Jesus Christ is presented as the life giving power available to any who would be united to Christ's new resurrected life through faith, trust and surrender to his gospel call. Here is the goal and focus of pastoral counselling and care. While we may not reach this goal with everyone we see, nevertheless it provides us with a modality, as I have sought to describe in this paper, that goes beyond listening, empathy, questioning, understanding and insight. This is not simply giving advice, or seeking to change surface behaviour, thinking and feelings; this goes much deeper, to the heart or core of human motivation.

When the client is a non-Christian, active listening, genuine empathy, wise and gentle questioning, significant understanding and profound insights can all be employed to great benefit and effect. But the client is still left with themselves and their own

resources. The powerful encounters they experienced in the counselling session, where they gained new insights and understandings, may well be left behind when they return to the reality that gave rise to their presenting problem. They can be left with no resources other than themselves, and are equipped with nothing more than the new insights they may have gained in counselling.

When the client is a Christian however, the active listening, genuine empathy, wise and gentle questioning, significant understanding and profound insights can all be taken on to something far greater, to the very life of Christ himself being formed in them. They can be taken to the Cross by way of the Gospel where the power of the risen Christ is freely available. They can be taken to Christian community where the powerful encounter they experienced in counselling can be grounded and advanced under wise elder care and love.

This is where we must go with clients, but non-Christian secular theories and therapies cannot take us there. In Jesus Christ a new life is being held out to our clients (Rom 6:4). They have been freed from sinful and harmful patterns of living and relating (Rom 6:7). It may take time and effort before the client can experience this freedom, but the freedom is there to be had. This is the life of the age to come available now (Rom 6:22). This is inner change, and subsequent outer change, that comes from the new life on the inside that is immersed in the grace coming from Christ (Rom 6:14). This redemption life is experienced by the whole person, in not only the inner life of emotions and motivations, but in the outer life of thoughts and behaviours. Because of the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus, believers can already experience the freedom of that new life,

while not yet experiencing in full measure the glorious life that will come when Jesus Christ returns.

Ephesians, James, I Peter

These three New Testament epistles are general letters of encouragement to Christians, and as such are full of great wisdom and insight for our life in Christ and in the world. Each deals with different aspects of Christian living.

**Ephesians.**

The letter to the Ephesians is not concerned with any pastoral issue in particular, but is a letter of general encouragement aimed at developing the believer's understanding of the glory of their redemption in Jesus Christ, as it encourages them to turn aside from the voices and deeds of darkness and unbelief. As such it has become a very adaptable tool for pastoral counselling as it opens up the full dimensions of the scope of the Gospel and the extent of what Christ has done (1:3-10).

Ephesians speaks to us about the tendency we all have to listen to the wrong voices, voices that would over-ride and block out what God is saying to us in Christ. These voices come from the darkness, representing the enticing voice of the Evil One to draw us away from the counsel of Christ. We have been made alive in Christ, so we must listen to his word above all others, no longer heeding the ways of this world (2:1-6). In this Gospel word is the wisdom of God for all peoples (3:1-13).

This theme of who and what we should listen to is further developed in chapter four as Paul explains that the gifts given in the church (4:11) are designed to lead us all to

heed the voice of Christ, and grow up into him. No longer tossed around by competing voices, we will live in unity with one another as we walk in the light of Christ's revelation (4:14-15). The power of Satan's lie has been broken and we are to now live in the truth of Christ's word.

We will put off falsehood and false beliefs and speak the truth in love (4:25), being done with the secrets and lies of those who walk in the darkness (4:17-19). So in chapter five, wives and husbands listen to each other, children heed the voice of their parents, and we heed our earthly authorities in the light and truth of the word of Christ.

Against this backdrop, the onus for change and Christ-like living does not come from the need to meet standards prescribed by tradition, culture, counsellor's agenda or current relationships, but by the impetus to live out the life of Christ (6:10ff) who powerfully indwells us by his Spirit and speaks to us a clear word of counsel. Christians who heed this word of counsel can stand in the midst of trying circumstances and offer grace, good things from their hearts to the people who are making life difficult for them. While their situation may not change, they will change, and hence much will change.

We live this new kind of life in community, with others who are experiencing the same empowerment (2:11-22). The client is not alone, and the counselling is not done in isolation from God's purposes to glorify himself through the community of his own people (4:17-5:20)

**James.**

Here is a little New Testament book packed full of the wisdom of God for Christians living in any time and place that picks up on the Old Testament wisdom teaching and applies it through Jesus Christ. Here we have universal principles and

instruction that clearly set out for us the practical implications of the life of Christ within. As such it goes far beyond simply offering rules for living, but seeks to impart inner wisdom that will prepare us for living out the life of Christ in any circumstance and in any relationship.

The first chapter of this little book briefly covers many of the themes that will be later expanded on in the body of the book. Against the backdrop of enduring patiently with the general hardships of life (1:2-9), we see themes of pride, temptation, self-deception, anger, obedience, use of the tongue, and care for the vulnerable in our communities, all mentioned in chapter one. Elsewhere in the book other issues surface such as economic and social inequalities, sickness and suffering, relational conflict, and prayer. All these issues are seen by James as mainly heart issues, issues of motivation and desire. James goes straight to the heart when he is dealing with the difficulties of living life in a fallen world. The wise pastoral counsellor can do no less.

An example is the wise insights provided by chapter four for dealing with relational conflict. James wastes no time in putting his finger on the cause of our quarrelling with one another. The cause comes from inside of us, our hearts, and the desires and motivations of our hearts (4:1-3). When we do not get what we want from others we oppose them to the point of slandering, judging and condemning them (4:11-12).

The antidote is to undergo a heart renewal and change with humility and brokenness. (4:8-10). James urges us to wash our hands, a metaphor for having our sinful hearts washed clean by the Gospel's promise of forgiveness and lasting change. The Gospel message urges us to come to Christ, confessing our wrong doing and the self

centred motivations of our hearts and asking Jesus for his forgiveness and cleansing, which he will freely give. Having been reconciled in our hearts with God, we are now free to be reconciled to one another. Our first act of worship is to be reconciled by way of this gospel dynamic (Matt 5:23-24). Here is love for God and love for neighbour clearly laid out for us. A pastoral counsellor would do well to become fully acquainted with this wisdom for life.

### **I Peter.**

Peter's first epistle is written against the backdrop of the suffering we endure at the hands of others. When wronged by those who are stronger than we are our tendency is to lose sight of our hope and become fearful, resentful and retaliatory. Pastoral counsellors often find themselves talking to people who have been sinned against, and who have, in their turn, responded sinfully to those who have sinned against them. A fallen world is not an easy place in which to live. Here is wisdom to help the seeker stand up under such suffering, not in their own strength and resources, but in the new life available to them in Jesus Christ. Peter's purpose in so writing is to encourage his readers to "stand fast in the true grace of God" (5:12).

Peter knows that Jesus rose from the dead since he saw him ascend into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). He knows too why Jesus died and what his death accomplished; freedom and healing from our sins and a new life for all who put their faith and trust in him (2:24). The dying of Jesus was a powerful word from heaven about human suffering. We do not suffer alone. Our suffering, even at the hands of others, is one with the sufferings of Jesus who suffered on our behalf that we might share in his glory. The Spirit of glory

rests upon those who suffer (4:14) assuring them that just as Jesus passed from suffering to glory, so will they.

We cannot promise our clients an end to their suffering in this life, but this little epistle does promise that they will be able to stand. Suffering will not overwhelm them or destroy them. Suffering will not have the last word. Not only will they stand but they can continue live in the midst of their suffering, loving those around them and offering them the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. Quietly and humbly they can endure, not seeking to claim their own rights, but honouring others, because their trust is in both the judgement of God and the promises of God.

### Conclusion

Such powerful counsel as this that we find in the Scriptures is not available in the world's wisdom, in the secular theories of people-care that abound. This is wisdom from another place, the one where God sits enthroned in his splendour. And this wisdom has been made available to us in God's own word of revelation that he has spoken to us. This wisdom from God is surprisingly comprehensive in its understanding and coverage of human concerns and dilemmas. We would do well to take heed.

Having come to the end of chapter three and an explanation of how a biblical foundation works for pastoral counselling, I will use the next chapter to develop a counselling theory for Grace Theological College. I will seek to draw on the work of my previous chapters in order to compare and contrast my approach to pastoral counselling

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with prevailing New Zealand counselling practice. I will conclude the chapter with a consideration of how pastoral counselling can work in the context of a local church.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Ministry Model**

Chapter one established the need for a new pastoral counselling programme at Grace Theological College, while chapter two demonstrated the need for such a counselling orientation within the wider New Zealand counselling field. Then chapter three laid out the biblical basis on which to ground this new counselling programme. So now, in chapter four, it remains to develop the counselling theory for our new counselling programme by drawing on what has been said thus far. Then I will conclude this chapter with a consideration of some of the ramifications for our counselling theory when counselling in the context of a local church.

Counselling is about change. Clients, both Christian and non-Christian, look for change. They want to see change in their relationships, in their circumstances, in the people around them, and sometimes in themselves. And the client wants the counsellor to facilitate this change. They want change because they want to feel better. They want to feel less anxious, depressed, fearful, guilty, shamed, angry, destructive, hopeless or bored. Or they want to feel more joyful, confident, peaceful, loving, kind, fulfilled, content, worshipful, or perhaps feel better about themselves.

Christian counselling will see the reasons for this desired change, the change process itself, and the goal of change quite differently from secular or non-Christian

counselling. While a “fly on the wall” observer may see the Christian and the non-Christian counsellor doing much the same things in the counselling session, the similarity is only apparent. The Christian counsellor is in fact working with a very different paradigm of understanding from the secular counsellor, a difference that permeates and informs every aspect of the counselling process.

I will endeavour to indicate this paradigm difference in counselling theory and practise by considering the three areas of reality, knowledge and ethics.

### Reality

The bible makes a distinction between two realities, the reality of God and the reality of his creation, including all that happens in created time and space (Genesis 1:1).<sup>1</sup> These two realities are separate, but not isolated from each other. God interacts with his creation, and all that happens in his world, but remains transcendent to it. Non-biblical thinking, by contrast, assumes only one reality, the creation itself, and any spiritual forces or supernatural beliefs or paranormal phenomena, including God and/or gods, are to be considered a part of this one reality, and able to be explained by all that happens in this one reality.

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<sup>1</sup> The bible also speaks of the reality of the invisible forces of spirits, both good and evil. These spirits were all created by God, and at the time of their creation were sinless. Subsequent to their creation a number of them fell from their sinless state and allied themselves to their chief (Satan or the Devil) as evil spirits. Since all these spirit forces (both good and evil) are created phenomena, they belong in the realm of created reality, even though invisible. Hence we can confidently know that there are no spiritual forces or spiritual reality over against, separate from, or independent of God and what he has created.

Refer to David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare*, [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995] for his understanding of how these invisible spiritual forces impact on pastoral counselling theory and practice.

The Christian counsellor will see these two realities, God and his creation, interacting in every counselling situation. There is the reality of the client and their presenting problem (the created reality and all that is happening), and there is the reality of God and what he has to say about the client and the client's problem. A counselling theory that deals with only one reality, one having no regard for God and his word, will be of little use for the pastoral counsellor, while a counselling theory that works only with the other reality, one that has no regard for the client's personal situation and circumstance, will be of little help for the counsellee.

In the course of a day's counselling, the pastoral counsellor will encounter a variety of personal problems in the people who come to see him or her. Does each personal problem require its own theory to be able to explain, understand and counsel the presenting issue? Is the counsellor left to choose a way forward among the myriad of secular theories with only his or her experience and informed opinion preventing a random and arbitrary selection of what seems best for each client?

The revelation of God, from his reality to ours, provides a unifying framework over all the particulars pertaining to the many secular counselling options, and to the many individuals seen in counselling. The pastoral counsellor is not lost in the never-ending particulars of opinions and people. While the pastoral counsellor does not treat everyone the same, and we can never know exhaustively about the inner workings of people, nevertheless a humble certainty can pervade all our counsel as we relate the particular individual, or any one theory, to the universal truths and insights available in God's word.

A Christian counsellor works with the universal as well as the particular. For example, anger or anxiety is universal to the human condition (as revealed by God's revelation), but the cause and the cure are particular to the individual client. Anger management or anti-anxiety pills provide only surface and universal solutions to the particular problem of client anger. Insight into psychodynamic pathologies only get us part of the way. The particular heart issues that drive these universal emotional responses are not readily apparent, and have to be patiently revealed and understood. We need a way of counselling that accesses the very thoughts and attitudes of every client's heart. A counselling theory that begins by presupposing the Christian position of the two realities of God and his creation will get us there.

### Knowledge

A Christian theory of knowledge follows from a Christian theory of reality. Just as there are two levels of reality (God and his creation) so there are two levels of knowledge; God's knowledge of himself and the universe, and our knowledge of ourselves and the universe. The Christian counsellor will hold the knowledge of themselves and their universe in a way quite different from that of their non-Christian counterpart. For the non-Christian counsellor such knowledge is based on observation and speculation, while for the Christian counsellor their knowledge is based on observation and revelation.

For Christian counsellors to ignore the question of reality and move directly to the questions of knowledge, in order to establish what they have presume to have in common

with non-Christian theories of counselling, is to exclude from the outset the Christian position and the authority of God over all of life. The non-Christian theorist will insist that he or she alone, in community with other secularists, is the final reference point for all their theories and therapies. Thus the issue of whether or not there are two realities or only one (a transcendent point of reference over against a humanistic one) has to be faced at the outset by our Christian counselling model.

The non-Christian counsellor, operating only with reference to the created reality, the one source to which they reference themselves and all things, will subject all of their observation of the client to their own single reality of accumulated knowledge, thus building one speculation upon another. By contrast, the Christian counsellor will subject these same observations to God and his revelation, thus avoiding speculation. The first way the bible calls foolishness, the second the way of wisdom.

God's revelation comes to us in the bible, in creation itself, and by the Holy Spirit speaking through the Scriptures. The bible is comprehensively sufficient for counselling theory in that it speaks to all of life. However, the bible is not exhaustively sufficient; otherwise the created reality would have nothing left to say to us. Revelation from the creation continues to speak, and is available to all mankind (Psalm 19:1-4). Thus the non-Christian's observations can be a contribution to the sum total of our knowledge. They often have the details of observation, while the Christian has the big picture of understanding. The Christian counsellor is able to reframe and rework the details of any non-Christian counselling theory/observation in submission to God's word of revelation and understanding, (the bible), thus rendering it useful for pastoral counselling and soul care.

The Christian counsellor does not have all the answers; hence there is no room for pride. But nor do they need to be intimidated by non-Christian theories; hence there is no need for fear. Rather, with faith and trust that the Scriptures are a sufficient lens through which they can engage the general revelation which comes to them as counselling theories, the Christian counsellor will reformulate all that comes to them in a way that honours God and promotes Christ-like change in their client.

This difference between Christian and non-Christian understandings of counselling theory can be exemplified by the issue of suffering. The client presents with a recent significant loss and is experiencing grief and despair. The non-Christian theories offer no hope to the client except the possibility that time will heal as life moves on. They can offer no explanation for it and see no place for it in the real world, other than the misfortunes of blind chance. In the details they will have observed a process of grieving. This grief process helps to describe what is going on for the client, but offers no understanding of the place and purpose of suffering in our world.

A Christian approach to suffering comes with that other reality, God and his voice fully, in the picture. God has much to say about suffering (the bible is full of it), its causes, its process, and its eventual end. Death fills us with horror, terror, pain and grief as we face the reality of life in this present evil age. But death is also a release from this present evil age into the eternal life of age-to-come blessing. The grief of suffering is laced with a genuine hope in God who alone is powerful enough to bring an end to all suffering, even death itself. Here is the substantive comfort a Christian counsellor can offer Christian and non-Christian clients alike.

## Ethics

Just as our created reality comes from God, so does our knowledge and our ethics. In affirming one truth we affirm all three; they stand or fall together. This is the paradigm out of which a Christian theory of counselling is developed over against a non-Christian one. Christian counsellors cannot, for instance, hold to the derivative nature of human existence, as created by God, and then ignore or deny the derivative nature of mankind's knowledge and ethics, as also being from God, in an attempt to find neutral or common ground among the many non-Christian counselling theories and therapies. It is not enough for Christian counsellors to see the parallels between secular theories and biblical insight and so claim a reliable basis in secular theory on which to develop a Christian counselling modality. This is accommodation, not critique. Rather, God speaks comprehensively and authoritatively to all aspects of our human reality, including our knowledge and ethics. Our ethical goal is to bring the knowledge of God to every situation in order to see his glory displayed, in short; to bring our observations in submission to his prior word of revelation.

To allow that the secular therapist has a moral conscience that can be relied on to provide ethical truth, untainted by the fall into sin, is to admit that the non-Christian is exactly what he or she claims to be, the proper judge of all knowledge and the ultimate reference point of all reality. Such is not the case. In their being, knowledge and ethics all mankind must live as created creatures, dependant on their Creator.

Christian ethics must be more than non-Christian ethics. While it will take up many of the concerns of the non-Christian ethicist, Christian ethics will also have regard

to moral issues of behavior, and virtuous issues of attitude and motivation. In this, Christian ethics always has the heart in view. Both the counsellor and the client are required to live holy lives from hearts that desire to please and honor God. That neither can do so, and are both reliant on the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ, ensures an equality of struggle and hope that each can share with the other.

An example of a Christian ethic that stands over against a non-Christian one is the issue of adultery. In our secular society adultery is not a crime; it is not punishable by law since it breaks no man-made law. Adultery is simply seen as a relational realignment that has to be accepted and worked with. Given that a life-long monogamous relationship is no longer expected by our society, our culture accepts that infidelity in marriage, or couple relationships, is inevitable. Adultery is simply the occasion for a new story to be written and told for their lives and their relationships which all the partners involved must be ready to co-author. Sexual faithfulness in the relationship is not the ethical norm or expectation. The norm is rather to please self, and to consume whatever is on offer, including people. Rather than making life-long commitments to one another, the ethical reality of marriage, when the reality of God is absent, is that we are together now, but no promises can be made for the future.

The Christian ethic is radically different. God has made a commitment to us, to love us and save us. We have made a commitment to him, to love and worship him. Having made this life-long commitment to God, we now see that life-long commitments are not unreasonable in themselves. Just as God has committed himself to us, and we to him, so we can commit ourselves to one another. This ethic of commitment arises directly from our understanding of reality and knowledge in God's world.

The marriage commitment God wants us to make to our spouse reflects his commitment to us. Marriage is a living drama to a watching world that faithfulness in commitment is the way God relates to his people. Since a marriage commitment speaks so powerfully of God's way of relating to us, God has a real interest in helping couples stay committed and faithful to each other. So he provides much help and assistance by way of his Word and his Spirit to help couples strengthen their love and commitment to one another.

Adultery, then, is a sin against the spouse, and a sin against God. The adulterer (whether Christian or non-Christian) has broken his or her relationship with God as well as with his or her wife or husband. What they have done is morally and ethically wrong, even if not considered legally wrong. It is a sin that must be repented of and forgiveness and reconciliation sought with the offended spouse, and with God, even if the marriage ends in divorce.

With God's forgiveness comes the added power to restore the adulterous marriage and rebuild love and trust. The restored marriage becomes a glorious testimony to the grace of God, and the faithfulness of God, to people who have sinned. Marriage is a public display of love and fidelity. Adultery is a public display of deceit and betrayal, of unresolved and unforgiven sin and grief. It is like suicide in that it intensifies the couple's grief and loss, and spreads it around to others. A restored marriage is a public display of forgiveness and reconciliation, and is a cause for much praise, thanksgiving and glory to God.

This example of adultery serves to bring the three aspects of a Christian counselling theory together and show their integration. Marriage is seen as speaking of

the *reality* of God and man in relationship as creator and created. Our *knowledge* of the significance of marriage comes from God's word of instruction to us his created image bearers. And, because God never requires anything of us *ethically* without providing the resources of his grace and his Spirit to accomplish it, we are able to build a marriage that glorifies God and brings encouragement and blessing to many others.

From the example of infidelity in marriage, it can be seen that our educational objective in the counselling programme at Grace Theological College must be to help student counsellors intersect God's revelation with their own observations of the lives of their clients. Only then will they be able to develop modalities of counselling that promote and enable ethical living that honours God and blesses others. Such ethics will go beyond the codes of ethics of professional bodies. It will take up these professional concerns, but extend ethics to the heart issues of attitude and motivation.

### Putting the Theory to Work

So what does pastoral counselling actually look like in practise? An excellent overview of the process can be found in the biblical book of Philippians, chapter one, verses 9 – 11, which records the prayer Paul delighted to pray on behalf of the Christians in Philippi. His prayer for them is that they would have a quality of love among themselves that leads to effective personal, pastoral ministry in each other's lives. In the process of caring for one another, love abounds and empathy, compassion, and tenderness are the milieu in which pastoral counselling takes place. It is a love that is felt to be genuine, and yet has purpose and direction.

Further, knowledge is gained as to the client's story (verse 9). This requires listening that invites sharing at a heart level. But more than knowledge is required. Insight (verse 9) must also be gained as to the hidden motives of the heart that have contributed to the client's presenting problems. Through careful, sensitive and wise questioning these insights into the heart will be exposed to the view of both counsellor and client. As these insights are matched to relevant passages of Scripture, the client will come to discern (verse 10), by way of the Holy Spirit's counselling, what the best way forward is for them.

The best way forward is the way that moves the client towards the pure and blameless life of Jesus Christ, filled with the righteous evidences of his life, to the glory and praise of God (verse 11). This best way forward will leave them with the peace of Christ, the truth of Christ, the conviction of Christ, the obedience of Christ, the hope of Christ, and the glory of Christ. The way forward to this goal is through the gospel (Phil 1:5-6), the gospel dynamics of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation, first with God and then with others. As pastoral counsellors, we do not want our clients to believe that simply gaining further insights into their situation will result in lifestyles that please God. We have to go further, all the way to the Gospel. Only the Gospel has the power to change the client's heart to desire a lifestyle of worship, love and service, in the midst of painful and difficult situations.

With clients who come as unbelievers (who see no necessity to be trusting Jesus Christ alone to cover their sins) much ground can be covered as the pastoral counsellor listens with empathy and explores with sensitivity. This may be more than anyone has ever done with them, and the result may well be dramatic. It may soften their heart

toward the counselling process and the pastoral counselor's message of testimony and hope. With their permission, the pastoral counsellor can then talk to them of Christ, pray for them, and share insights from biblical passages.

How do we use the bible in counselling? With permission first having been gained, the client reads the bible passage from a bible available in the room. Then the counsellor asks questions that relate the passage read to the heart motivations surfaced in the counselling. Thus it becomes an interactive dialogue, where the counsellor and client are engaged in a conversation about the text and its application to heart issues. The Holy Spirit will bring his own comfort and conviction as the client is exposed to the Scriptures, and will move the client in the best direction for their lives. Often a passage of Scripture can be assigned as a take-home task to read and/or journal and pray over

How directive should pastoral counsellors be with clients? The goal should always be to see the client reach the point where they can be self-directive. The Holy Spirit has promised to convict of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8-11). If that is his job then it need not be ours. If we bring truth, love and Gospel grace to the client's concerns then the Holy Spirit will do what is necessary to promote inner movement and change with far more grace than we can ever muster.

If the pastoral counsellor experiences client resistance to the counselling process then a loving challenge may be appropriate (1 Thess 5:14), but of greater concern would be to seek to understand what underlying issues are bringing the resistance. Pastoral counsellors should not assume from the outset that a client is struggling because they have a hardness of heart towards the Holy Spirit's leading. A fearful heart, for instance, can be mistaken for a hard heart. If the pastoral counsellor proceeds on the basis of such

wrongful assumptions, they could well find themselves warning those they should be encouraging and helping (1 Thess 5:14). The admonition in Scripture to be patient with everyone (1Thess 5:14) should give the pastoral counsellor pause before confronting. Furthermore, the client should be given the freedom to discuss and agree or disagree with the confrontation being used in the counselling. If it also becomes apparent that there are issues in the client's life that their pastoral leaders should be made aware of, then the counsellor should encourage the client to take these issues to his or her pastor or elders.

Exhortations to live a better life are not wrong in themselves, but they are wrong by themselves. If unaccompanied by the grace and enabling power of the Gospel such exhortations will lead either to despair for the ones who cannot perform, or pride in the ones who think they can perform.

### Pastoral Counselling in the Context of the Local Church

We have considered the theory and process of pastoral counselling. We have seen the need to *listen* empathically, ask *questions* with a view to gaining further insights and understanding of heart motivations, and to bring Gospel grace to bear by application of *biblical truth*. Now it remains to place this counselling approach in its community context. Pastoral counselling, whether it is practiced in a professional fee paying capacity, or as a pastor speaking with his parishioners, should take place within the Body of Christ. It is a ministry of the Scriptures, a means of grace, and as such must be overseen and safeguarded by the provisions the bible itself has put in place for such one-another ministry. While much secular counselling takes place largely in isolation from

community, Christian pastoral counselling takes place in the context of Christian community, itself a means of grace. Within the church whole generations of people, over a lifetime, are being urged, taught and encouraged to live lives of purity, love and mercy, and modeling such to one another. So there develops in church community an ongoing corporate encouragement to grow and change. Here is the environment that welcomes and assists the counselling ministry of the church as it counsels for life-long change and growth.

When we speak of counselling in local church community clients become seeking brothers and sisters, and issues such as multiple relationships, confidentiality and counsellor supervision (including peer support and accountability) come to mind. I will now deal with each of these in turn.

### Multiple Relationships in a Local Church Setting

A multiple relationship occurs when a counsellor assumes two or more roles simultaneously or sequentially with a person seeking their help<sup>2</sup>. In a church situation such mixing of roles can seldom be avoided and counselling may often be viewed as simply an intensification of the pastoral relationship. Yet, how will the Christian pastoral counsellor continue to relate with current and former seekers as they fellowship together in their local church?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> for further explanation of multiple relationships see Gerald Corey, Marianne Schneider Corey and Patrick Callanan, *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. [California: Brooks/Cole, 2007], 262.

<sup>3</sup> NZCCA, “Code of Ethics,” <http://www.nzcca.org.nz/index.mvc?ArticleID=184> [accessed October 9, 2009]. Interestingly, the New Zealand Christian Counsellors Association (NZCCA), in their Code of Ethics (amended 2001) does not mention dual, or multiple, relationships. Rather, it speaks of the

Any non-counselling relationships between the counsellor and the current or former seeker that occurs in a local church setting should be monitored to ensure that they do not impede on the counselling relationship in ways that are unhelpful. For instance, if the seeker is a member of a small group bible study where the pastoral counsellor is also a member, and the members are expected to share what is going on in each other's lives, then the seeker may feel quite uncomfortable knowing that another member present knows information about them that has been given in confidence. In order to preserve the strength of the counseling relationship, it may be best for these two people to be in different bible study groups. The seeker may be quite at ease with being in the same group as their counsellor, but it remains the pastoral counsellor's responsibility to check this out rather than assuming that such is the case.

If, during counseling, information has been shared by the seeker of a sensitive or even shameful nature, then relating to their counsellor in another role can often reactivate

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commitment to do no harm, to not exploit, and to esteem the interests of the client above that of the counsellor. This more flexible approach seems to reflect what, for many Christian counsellors, is their reality in a local church setting.

The NZCCA Code of Ethics states: **(4.2)** The welfare of clients takes precedence over the self interest of Christian Counsellors and over the interests of colleagues, employers and other agencies. Under the heading, *Professional Relations*, the code states: **(8.1)** Christian Counsellors do not exploit their professional relationships with clients, supervisors, or other colleagues. They ensure that clients are fully informed of all aspects of the services offered and obtain their informed consent to participate and remain in interventions. **(8.2)** Christian Counsellors do not condone or engage in sexual harassment, which is defined as deliberate or repeated comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature. Sexual relations with clients are unethical, and are prohibited.

By offering guidance rather than prescriptions the NZCCA code of ethics leaves the responsibility with the counsellor who remains accountable, at all times, to both clients and colleagues for their various relationships. In the wider counselling scene there is a growing realization that multiple roles are inevitable and must be managed carefully. See, for instance, Tim Bond, *Standards and Ethics for Counselling in Action*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [London: Sage Publications, 2010], 36. Also Corey, Corey and Callanan, *Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions*, 265-267.

these feelings of shameful exposure, thus disempowering the seeker and leaving them vulnerable and shamed without the protection of a safe counselling environment This experience can undo much of the good work that was achieved in the counselling relationship.

If the power differential in the counseling relationship becomes an issue in subsequent relationships then an unhelpful relationship dynamic has eventuated. This ought to be discussed in counseling and, if appropriate, the pastoral counsellor may need to apologize to the seeker for any embarrassment or discomfort caused to the seeker by their ‘outside of counselling’ relating. Further relating, outside of the counselling relationship, may need to be temporarily terminated or restricted in the interests of maintaining the usefulness of the counselling relationship.

Unhelpful relating can occur in pastoral counselling when the life experiences of the counsellor and seeker becomes enmeshed to the point that objectivity is lost and the counselling loses much of its effectiveness. Not wishing to endanger the friendship, the pastoral counsellor is unable to maintain an objective, non-anxious presence in the counseling session, especially when they feel to need to challenge the seeker. Conversely the seeker may withhold information in order to retain the friendship and respect of the pastoral counsellor or simply out of concerns over confidentiality.

If pastoral counsellors bring their own relational needs into the counselling sessions then they will be unable to maintain the fine balance between empathic identification and objectivity. The counsellor becomes lost in the seeker’s experience. The resulting enmeshment will be detrimental to the seeker’s ability to benefit from the counselling. If the counsellor becomes aware of this loss of objectivity then the

counselling should cease and the situation discussed with the seeker. Christian love demands no less. The counselling may be able to be resumed, or the seeker referred elsewhere. If referred on, the pastoral counsellor can, and often should, remain as an empathic support person in the seeker's life.

The difficulties associated with community relating in pastoral counselling should be identified and brought into the counselling and discussed, thus minimizing their impact and potential for harm. It is the pastoral counsellor's responsibility to raise this issue with their seekers, since the seeker may not be aware of the issue, or may be naïve enough to dismiss the issue as an unlikely problem.

To pull back from all non-counselling relating is to promote an artificial distancing that strengthens the legitimizing of the power imbalance between counsellor and seeker, thus increasing the opportunity for the abuse of power. Trust may be violated as the counselor is perceived as being no longer 'for' the seeker. The resulting confusion and loss of confidence that comes with this sense of betrayal because of the counsellor's perceived abandonment, could undo much of the good work that was achieved in the counselling relationship.

Having considered some of the difficulties associated with multiple relationships I will now move on to discuss the important and necessary place of multiple relating in local church counseling.

In a sole-charge church the preacher discovers that the sermons are generating pastoral counselling opportunities. Now the preacher must assume a similar but different role, that of a counsellor as well as a preacher. Hence, between pastoral counsellor and the parishioner there could arise a difference in expectations, conflicting responsibilities,

or a power differential as the switch is made from distant preacher to intimate counsellor, resulting in an intensifying of the pastoral relationship. However, the issues associated with multiple relationships in counselling should not discourage local church preachers from seeking to counsel their church members as part of their overall duty of pastoral care.

The Christian church has much to offer seekers who come to their preacher/pastor for focused, individual attention in their time of need. The Church has available an *epistemology* that relates all the issues and concerns of life to the wisdom of the Creator God, wisdom available through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The church also offers a *community* of people able to offer grace, love, and support to complement personal pastoral counselling. Furthermore, the *story* of creation, the fall of mankind into sin, redemption from sin, and future consummation to glory, is God's story made available through revelation (the bible) and given to the church. Also available through the ministries of the local church is the *supernatural* power of the Gospel and the Spirit of God to change lives, bring reconciliation, offer forgiveness, and heal broken relationships. Furthermore, the *symbols* and *disciplines* of the Christian faith, such as baptism and communion, prayer and bible reading, enable the struggling believer to experience powerful connections with the forgiveness and the grace of God through the life giving Holy Spirit. As a *minority* culture in a secular environment the church is able to offer understanding and insight to any who experience themselves oppressed, marginalized, powerless, or victimized by the power structures of their society. Finally, the church has available *pastors* who are already known and trusted, are readily accessible to all classes of society, are role models for changed living, who can take the

initiative with their own people, and do not generally charge for their counselling services. With so much to offer, the Christian church is the one institution in our society which *ought* to be in the business of individually focused pastoral counselling and soul care.

The bible expects that multiple relationships, relationships of many kinds and types, will abound in a church that is actively involved in the mutual care and concern of its members. In Ephesians chapter four, for instance, we are told that the church leadership is to equip their members for works of service or ministry (verse 12). This ministry will involve the people in each other's lives for the developing of their faith, their knowledge, and their maturity as Christians (verse 13, also Col 1:28, 3:16). This mutual ministry will require them to speak truly to one another regarding their understanding of doctrine, love, unity, and labor (verses 14-16), relationships in the family (Eph 5:21-6:4) and in the workplace (Eph 6:5-9), and the inevitable suffering that pursues us all (Rom 5:3-5, 8:18ff), even to the point of death (I Thess 4:13). The Scriptures give no hint of restricting our involvement with one another on account of the multiple relationships that abound (1 Thess 5:14); only that it all be done in love (1 Cor 16:14).

Pastoral counselling is not a science, a mystery, a business, an adherence to legal and administrative standards, a crisis, or a system of answers; rather, it is a relationship. It is a relationship between two people who love and respect and care for one another. This relationship is bounded and safeguarded by the authority of the bible. It is accountable to a community committed to live out, individually and corporately, the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Pastoral counselling insists on being practiced in community where the mutually enriching graces of Christ are known and experienced by many and available

for both counsellor and client. Hence, when people are bound to each other for mutual growth, admonition, and collective accountability in Jesus Christ, many kinds of relationships (including the counselling relationship) become an inevitable and a necessary part of the healing process.

In the church we should celebrate our reliance on each other, and the rich and profound ministry we can have in each other's lives as we grow in our knowledge, respect and love for one another. This is a counter-cultural stance that refuses to accept the increasing isolation and disconnectedness that many experience as normal in today's society. The church has a different message for those who suffer alone. Not only counselling, but a loving relationship is offered in the name of Christ as we pledge to involve ourselves in the lives of hurting people. The pastoral counsellor will not restrict his or her commitment to the counselling hour alone, but will also have regard to all the many community ways in which they can foster the seeker's healing and growth.

#### Supervision, Accountability and Peer Support for Community Based Pastoral Counsellors

Many pastoral counsellors operating in a local church setting do so more often in an informal fashion, without charging fees, and sometimes without regular appointments. This raises the issue of the pastoral counsellor's own ethical standards, accountability, supervision and peer support. Can the local faith community provide this standard of care and watchfulness for their pastoral counsellors?

The pastoral counsellor must not counsel in isolation from others. As with the pastor, so also the counsellor must look to the church community for their accountability

and supervision and peer support. It is imperative that the pastoral counsellor strengthens his or her ties with their local church. Coming under the pastoral oversight of their local church is perhaps the most tangible and visible way to bring pastoral counselling under the banner of Jesus Christ (Col 3:23).

Supervision needs to be provided and peer supports must be put in place. If isolated from others the pastoral counsellor may become discouraged, over burdened with brothers and sisters seeking help, be unable to deal with seekers who develop unhealthy dependencies on the counsellor, become stuck in one mode of counselling, or miss out on opportunities for ongoing development and training. If the church needs their supervision and peer support for the pastoral counsellor to be augmented from outside the church then the leadership should ensure that such approved help is put in place.

A complaints procedure should be set up by the church and made known to every seeker coming for counselling. This procedure would allow seeker complaints to be heard by the pastoral committee or by a group of selected elders. Their recommendations should carry sufficient weight to ensure accountability for the counsellor, while safeguarding both the seeker and counsellor's interests. .

### Confidentiality and Church Based Pastoral Counselling

A further issue to be considered when counselling takes place in community is that of confidentiality. On the issue of seeker confidentiality the church leadership should develop a criteria of what should remain confidential and what should be open to being told to others. For instance, ongoing abuse of children and spouses, and seeker self harm,

cannot be kept confidential and should often be reported to law enforcement authorities as well as to the church. Also, there may be other issues of conduct for which the church may wish to subject the seeker, or the counsellor, to their disciplinary procedures in accordance with the church's biblical understandings. For instance, they may require ongoing adultery to be brought to their attention, rather than remaining confidential to the counsellor and the seeker. A useful rule to follow is to keep the confidence private until or unless Scripture requires it to be made public, say for the purpose of discipline and reconciliation (Matt 18: 15-20). In such cases it may be necessary for the counsellor to stand apart from the disciplinary action in order to be available to the seeker as a secure and trusted counsellor during the church's examination.

If issues arise in counselling that the seeker and counsellor agree that others in authority should know about, it is desirable that the seeker goes to that person with the information, rather than the counsellor.

The stance the church leadership takes on confidentiality issues should be able to be endorsed by the pastoral counsellor, and explained to the seeker at the first counseling session. The seeker's informed consent should be gained at the outset of counselling to any exceptions to the confidentiality commitment.

Confidentiality, while necessary for the establishment of a counsellor/seeker relationship of trust, does create a barrier and a separation between the counsellor/seeker and the church community. No one else is involved in what is going on in the counselling session. Hence the counsellor should look to draw others in, with the seeker's permission, with a view to restoring the seeker to genuine community support and involvement at the conclusion of the counselling. Seekers should be encouraged to broaden their own

relationships to include trusted others in their community. Pastoral counsellors should not encourage isolated decision making by their seekers. Rather than the counsellor being the only one to whom reference is made as to life changes, the seeker should be encouraged to consult with trusted others in their church community (Prov 15:22). For instance, a couple who have been coming for relationship counselling may well be encouraged to link up with an older couple in the church for ongoing mentoring, without breaking the confidentiality of the counselling relationship.

These concerns of church based pastoral counselling, multiple relationships, confidentiality, and counsellor supervision, accountability, peer support and, suggest that a degree of formal understanding is desirable between the church leadership and the pastoral counsellor/s operating within the church community. If such safeguards are put in place, the counselling ministry can be commended to the congregation and the counsellors themselves brought into the structure of oversight and care available from the pastoral team.

A life of transparent integrity, deeply transformed by the Holy Spirit, and empowered by Gospel love and grace, goes way beyond mere compliance to ethical and professional codes. The pastoral counsellor, in order to remain safe and to continue to grow spiritually, is to be vitally connected to a local church, accountable to church peers and to church approved supervisors, thus enabling loving safeguards to be gently held in place for all. This will be in addition to whatever safeguards are required of any professional body to which the pastoral counsellor may belong.

On a final note; pastoral counsellors can be either men or women, since it is not a role that carries spiritual authority in the church. The spiritual authority of church office

resides with the elders. These men are the ones given authority to rule and to teach in the church (Titus 1:7-9, 1 Pet 5:1-2). So a recognised elder who counsels others does so with spiritual authority. Non-elders who counsel others cannot claim such spiritual authority and must be overseen in their counselling by their elders who have the responsibility to care and guard the flock of God.

How are such pastoral counsellors then to be identified? As the body of God's people exercise their general calling to be involved in encouraging and counselling one another, those especially gifted to this role will be seen by all, and be obvious to the pastoral leadership who know their people well. Then, as these gifted ones are carefully shepherded and supervised in their ministry role, their competency will grow and many more people will be helped. The church leadership would provide ongoing support by way of supervision, arranging for peer support, and for ongoing training and development.

### Summary

At Grace Theological College our pastoral counselling programme will carry the weight of instructing the students in a process of counselling that is under-girded and informed by a biblical view of reality, knowledge and ethics. Also included will be instruction on doing counselling in a local church setting while taking account of the local church's concerns and requirements. We will be seeking the support of local church leadership in our training so they can receive our graduates back into their churches with confidence. Ideally the church will have selected such people for this training, and have

supported them throughout. Thus, when these pastoral counselling students return, they can be endorsed by their church leadership, and given opportunities to assist in the pastoral care of the parishioners.

With the description of the counseling programme at Grace College explained it now remains for me to subject this material to the critique of a number of chosen individuals in New Zealand for their feedback and evaluation. In chapter five, my final chapter, I will interact with this feedback for the purpose of enriching my own thinking and practice.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Results and Critique**

I submitted the first four chapters of my writing project to 25 people in New Zealand, in order to receive their comments, insights and evaluation. These 25 included the board members of GTC, eleven pastors, a marriage and family counsellor and GTC lecturer, two Bible College principals, a Christian counsellor in private practice, a Christian high school counsellor, a Christian high school principal, three businessmen (two of whom are seminary graduates), a director of a Bible College Christian counselling programme, and a GTC pastoral ministry graduate. Based on the responses I received, I have evaluated the feedback under the following topic headings.

#### **Pastoral Counselling and the Doctrine of Progressive Sanctification**

One of my reviewers asked how my understanding of counselling and life change related to the doctrine of progressive sanctification. In this paper I have sought to develop an understanding of pastoral counselling against the backdrop of the progressive nature of biblical revelation in redemptive history. However, in light of my reviewer's question, I will include here some comments on the relationship between pastoral counselling and progressive sanctification.

The doctrine of sanctification seeks to bring together all that the Scriptures have to say about growing in holiness; changing more and more into conformity with the likeness of Jesus Christ. God is holy and as such can not be approached by sinful humans unless they themselves have first been sanctified, or made to correspond to his holiness. This is one of the paramount concerns of biblical religion.

In the Old Testament sanctification was the act or process by which people or things were cleansed and dedicated to God both ritually and by moral living, as they obeyed the laws given them by God. Yet even in the Old Testament it is always acknowledged that ultimately it is God who makes the unholy holy. The acts of God's people, independent of God's sanctifying intervention, could not make them holy. This is seen, for instance, in Lev 20:7-8 where both the imperative ("Be holy!") and the indicative ("I am the Lord who makes you holy!") lie side by side without contradiction. It is no surprise, then, to see that in the New Testament the sanctification of believers is again seen primarily as the work of God in Christ (John 17:19; I Cor 1:30; Eph 5:26; Heb 2:11, 10:10,14, 12:2) and in the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16; II Thess 2:13; I Pet 1:2).

Sanctification is a work of God because it is God's will for us to be holy. He works to accomplish his own will in our lives. And since it is God's will for us to be holy we must be holy in all our living, not because our holy living will advance our sanctification (it is a work of God) but rather because our holy living will bring glory to God. Our holy living is a powerful testimony to God's life at work within us while we continue to participate in a sinful world. This then is the ultimate goal of pastoral counselling, to encourage and assist others to live holy, Christ-like lives while living in this present evil age.

Sanctification is not simply our grateful response to the salvation (justification) we have in Jesus Christ. To counsel this way would be to introduce a works principle after we have been justified by faith. Rather, both justification and sanctification are freely given to us by God. For instance, from Ephesians 2:9-10 we see that even the good works that arise from a justified and sanctified life are not “ours”. They originate from God and belong to Him: so all that we have, including our justification and sanctification, is given to us by a loving and gracious heavenly Father.

Sanctification is for us, then, both a possession and a goal; a gift and a task. Yet the goal/task is meaningful only because we already possess what we seek. It is not that the gift of sanctification is future and the task is now. That is to confuse sanctification with the future glorification that is coming to all Christians when they will be gloriously changed into the likeness of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, the gift is now (we have been made holy) and this gift is prior and foundational to the task of being holy. So in our counselling we bring Christ and all his saving benefits to bear on the counselling session, rather than the requirements of law. Jesus Christ, as he is revealed in the Gospel, is the great incentive to the task/goal of the client’s active pursuit of holiness.

Yet the presence of the many imperatives in the New Testament show clearly that the moral consequences of being Christian do not follow automatically for believers. On one hand faith receives and rests, and on the other hand faith actively pursues Godly living in a sinful world. So it is all by faith on account of grace, God’s gracious gift of holiness to his people. The New Testament is full of commands, or laws, given to direct and guide believers in their pursuit of holiness. Obedience to these commands is required of those who have been made holy.

Upon reflection it becomes apparent that all these commands require us to do nothing less than what love demands. They are all out-workings of the royal law of love, a law that is impossible for us to obey perfectly. The new commandments of Jesus and the Apostles take up the Ten Commandments and apply them to the inner person as well as the external actions of persons. An unloving thought breaks the law of love as much as an unloving act. So in our counselling we surface the failure to love well, and apply the dynamics of the Gospel to bring reconciliation, hope and long lasting life change.

All the imperatives in Scripture must be seen against the backdrop of the command to love as Jesus loved. None of these imperatives are concerned simply with outward behaviour but rather serve to expose sin in the heart and our failure to obey perfectly. These laws serve to stimulate our hunger and thirst for righteousness, and return us again and again in repentance to the throne of grace that we might receive mercy and grace to help us in time of need. This is the active involvement that is required of believers and out of which the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in increasing measure.

So the biblical laws, or commandments, or imperatives serve as a necessary way forward to assist believers to know how better to love God and neighbour. It is this love of Christ so shed abroad in our hearts that makes the pursuit of holiness a force for reconciliation and healing in our families and churches and society.

We must do justice to the full and necessary involvement of the believer in a life of holiness without seeing this as competing with the final and finished work of God who has already made the believer holy. We live with this dual reality every day and in every relationship as we participate now in the new creation order of the age to come (“you are holy”), yet continue to live in the old order of this present evil age which is passing away

(“you must be holy”). People come for counselling when the pressure of living with this dual reality overwhelms them, or when their strategies for easing this tension are failing them.

We are still present in this evil age. Our bodies, in this life, remain a continuing source of sin that no longer is our master. Hence our sin remains our own and can not be blamed on another. This is a fundamental tenant of pastoral counselling; that clients begin to take robust responsibility for their contribution to the breakdown of their relationships, and with their struggle to live with personal integrity in all their circumstances.

Sanctification, because it is dealing with the sinful tendencies in all of us, must include suffering, a continual struggle, an inward groaning (Rom 8:23; II Cor 4:7-12; Phil 3:10-11; II Cor 1:5; Mark 8:34, 10:39), rather than a quiet growth. We suffer in this present evil age because we have been raised with Christ to holiness. We who are seated with Christ in glory continue to live on an earth that remains in bondage to the sin of man and the curse of God.

While the struggle is continuous our level of awareness of it will vary depending upon our circumstances, the state of our relationships, or the strength of current temptations. The resolution of these tensions, struggles and sufferings is not in doubt since our sanctification to glory is assured on account of the merits of Christ and his promise to bring this present evil age to an end and usher in the full experience of the age to come.

So suffering is to be expected in this present age. Christian suffering is related to all that pertains to living in this world that is passing away. We are living in the world yet

longing for heaven. Every sorrow and hurt, joy and thanksgiving reminds us of all we hope for when our sanctification is fully our experience in glory. This is the ultimate hope that becomes the hallmark of pastoral counselling. It is here that pastoral counselling plays a necessary role in a believer's active sanctification. Suffering provides the occasion to know God in richer and fuller ways, and to experience the love of other believers (beginning perhaps with the pastoral counsellor) in ways not previously known or experienced.

Suffering can now be seen on at least two levels, firstly the furtherance of our experience of sanctification in this present age, and secondly a reminder of the joyous promise of a suffering free eternity in the age to come that awaits all who are united to Jesus Christ by faith. So pastoral counselling or effective shepherding, ministers the grace of Christ, with the hope of an assured sanctification to the suffering believer in ways that are related to the realities of everyday living.

The requirement for holiness takes up both the inner and the outer person. Not only do we suffer and struggle with holiness in both the inner and outer aspects of our awareness, but the movement towards holiness must also be both inner and outer. Sanctification is to be experienced at the level of heart, and not merely at the level of our actions and behaviours. We are not simply to be seen to be holy; holiness must be in the heart. For example, for a Christian man to desert his wife and family because he no longer loves his wife (so he claims), is an unholy action to be condemned. But a Christian man who never deserts his family and continues in the marriage and regular church attendance but closes off his heart and stops loving his wife, is just as guilty as the first husband. When he sees his sin, takes responsibility for it, seeks forgiveness from God

and his wife, and begins to pursue holiness in this area, disruption will eventuate in a situation that outwardly appeared peaceful and spiritual. Such disruption must be faced and such hypocrisy must be challenged otherwise we are saying that sanctification is concerned only with polishing the outside of the cup of life and not with the hidden sins of the heart and conscience. Pastoral counselling can often be blamed for this disruption. Yet this is where a biblical understanding of the doctrine of sanctification will take us. It will take pastoral counselling to the inside of the cup (the heart), and not be content with polishing only the outside of the life (Matt 23:25). The result may well be disruptive as the Holy Spirit begins to bring conviction and change from the inside out.

Sanctification takes place in the community of believers under pastoral oversight that administers the gospel grace of justification to struggling, suffering believers who are growing in holiness. Amid the disruption that comes from doing battle with sin the community's hope lies in the Lord Jesus Christ who has obtained for them a full salvation and who even now, in his own body, represents and anticipates their completed sanctification before the Father's throne in heaven. Here is our joy and hope in the counselling task.

### The Progressive Sanctification of Counsellors-in-Training

Another of my reviewer's wanted to know what regard our training programme had to the personal issues of our counselling students. Were we concerned to see our students address their own problems and concerns while they are being trained to address the problems and concerns of others?

The answer to this query follows very naturally on from our comments on progressive sanctification.

We recognize that we do not counsel out of what we know; we counsel out of who we are<sup>1</sup>. The counselling programme at GTC is not designed to simply train competent counsellors having skills, techniques and ready answers. GTC counselling students are encouraged to deal with their own issues in order to be able to counsel others with wisdom, empathy and insight.

In other words, we take seriously the need for prospective counsellors to be growing in their own sanctification. This has to be the most important criteria for developing counselling wisdom. With self awareness and insight into their own hearts, they will be able to define the profiles of their own struggles and hence be able to attend to their clients with empathy and wisdom (Phil 1: 9-11).

The counsellor must have experienced the comfort and compassion of God the Father by way of their own response to the Gospel, if they are to be able to convey this comfort to others (2 Cor 1:3-7). Our own struggles with temptation will produce an integrity and authenticity to our counselling when we have experienced the reconciliation with God and with others that comes through repentance, confession and forgiveness. Only then can we be wise guides and shepherds to those who also struggle (1 Cor 10:12-13). Our struggles do not have to match theirs, but our experience of facing with honesty the truth of our own hearts will point the way forward for client seekers to face all that is true about their own heart condition; to bring all that is true of them to all that is true of God.

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<sup>1</sup> David Benner, *Strategic Pastoral Counseling-a Short Term Structured Model* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic [2003] 27.

For every spiritual leader, including pastoral counsellors, there must be a priority requirement to keep a close self-watch on what they believe and how they live out their beliefs (1 Tim 4:15-16). This self-watch will be seen by others and the resultant quality of life required to be an effective helper will be noted. They will be seen as ones who can exhort others and encourage others in the progressive sanctification that must characterise all who belong by faith to the Body of Christ.

The counsellor's attention to their progressive sanctification will make him or her very aware of their own struggles to live a holy life, thus enabling them to help and encourage a fellow struggler (Gal 6:1-2; James 5:19-20). Here is the grace requirement of effective pastoral counselling. The pastoral counsellor can not be someone who never struggles with their own heart, or with the fallenness of the world around them. Such a person is simply unaware, and may well be living their life by formulas and rule keeping. On the contrary, the one who has struggled and known grace in the midst of their struggle, is exactly the kind of Christian who will be able to bring a gracious word of encouragement and help to any who are suffering.

Jesus talked about planks of timber and specks of sawdust (Matt 7:3-5). Seekers come to us with specks of sawdust in their eyes. If we have not first done the hard work of removing the planks of timber from our own eyes we will be blind and of little use to them. In fact we may even be hurtful and harmful, with our plank hitting them every time we move toward them. This metaphor graphically illustrates the need for attention to be given to the progressive sanctification of the counsellor-in-training (and also trained counsellors) lest harm and even abuse result from counsel that comes from one who is unaware of their own need for gospel repentant and grace.

To this end counselling students at GTC are offered discounted counselling at the counselling centre associated with the College. The classroom experience is often a therapeutic one, and the interaction with their readings and class discussions will often surface student's individual issues and heart struggles which can then be addressed in personal counselling.

Many a counsellor will testify that it was their experience as a client that taught them most about the counselling process. It was here that they learnt about, and experienced, compassionate, empathic responding and relating, and so became convinced of the necessity to develop these qualities in their own lives and counselling practice. To be an effective counsellor it is advisable that one must first have been a client.

#### GTC's Place in the Wider Christian Counselling Scene in NZ

Another reviewer asked why GTC thought it was necessary to provide another Christian counselling programme in the city when a number of such programmes were already on offer from a variety of educational providers.

In the greater Auckland area Christian counselling is taught to a diploma or degree level at Laidlaw College in Henderson, Bethlehem College in Tauranga, and Lifeway College in Walkworth. In addition, some of the denominational schools teach pastoral counselling as part of their pastoral training curriculum.

At these institutions students are taught the secular theories, and are trained to use them in the light of their Christian understanding. By contrast, GTC students are taught the secular theories, but are not trained to use them. Rather they are trained to use a

modality that arises out of the Scriptures, as outlined in this thesis. Our approach to handling the secular theories in the classroom will, we trust, train GTC pastoral counselling graduates who are able to speak to such secular theories and assumptions with biblical insight, as they pursue their own biblical counselling modality and practice.

However, in the interests of unity and fellowship within the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God, ongoing contact will be maintained with these other counsellor training institutions, and their graduates. From their ranks can come peer support, supervision and consultation. We can attend each other's seminars and network at conferences and educational events. Membership in the New Zealand Christian Counsellors Association (NZCCA) will also facilitate networking and peer relationships. Given the breadth of those in New Zealand who would call themselves evangelical<sup>2</sup>, it is expected that the position taken in this paper will find a place among Christian counsellors in New Zealand, though not necessarily endorsed by all<sup>3</sup>.

It has been suggested that those churches in New Zealand committed to the Reformed tradition need and will benefit from the counselling programme GTC has on offer. It was applauded that these churches now have a counselling connection they can relate to with confidence. But it was noted that our strong commitment to theology and to the bible, while necessary for this target audience, would ensure that we had little to contribute to the wider Christian counselling scene since we are "weak" on our

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<sup>2</sup> John Hitchen has indicated something of this breadth in his, "What it Means to be an Evangelical Today – An Antipodean Perspective", *Evangelical Quarterly* 76:1 [January 2004] 47-64 and 76:2 [April 2004] 99-115.

<sup>3</sup> The breadth within the NZCCA membership, for example, is noted by Ruth Penny, one of the leaders in that organization, "As an organisation, NZCCA is constantly holding the tension between differing, and at times conflicting, expressions of faith, all of which come under the broad heading of 'Christian' ", see "Response to Phillip Culbertson's Presentation", *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* 29:1 [2009] 19.

understanding and use of the secular theories and therapies. Further, it was argued that the other Christian counsellor training programmes available had made adequate efforts to Christianize their teaching of the secular therapies, and so why do we not make use of their programmes rather than starting our own.

As has been mentioned above, we, like the other Christian counselling programmes available in New Zealand, teach the secular theories, but unlike these other programmes we do not train our students to use them. Rather we train our students in a counselling modality that arises out of the Scriptures. Our students are trained to use this biblical approach, with an awareness of what the secularists are saying and teaching.

I have sought to show in this paper that a biblical counselling modality, rather than being simplistic and unsafe, actually go to the deeper, heart and motivational level of a person's life, while, at the same time bringing them into contact with the life changing power of God, rather than leaving them dependant upon their own resources. The counselling world needs to hear the message that Jesus Christ, as he is revealed in his Gospel, is the author of life, and the healer of souls.

Also we must stay in business for the sake of the church in New Zealand. Not just for the churches that share our faith commitment, but all the churches in New Zealand need to hear that there is a counselling approach on offer that begins with and arises out of the Scriptures, and is compatible with orthodox Christianity. A third reason for us to press on is the need to be training men and women to be able to counsel pastorally in their churches in either a recognized and organized ministry, or spontaneously and regularly as they live out their lives among their fellow believers. For these three reasons we believe we occupy a niche in the counselling world here in New

Zealand, offering an approach to counsellor training not available elsewhere in the country.

In the counselling centre associated with the College we have in place an understanding with local churches whereby we offer free counselling to any who are referred by their church leadership, asking only for a donation from the church. In return we pledge to keep the church leader/s informed, with the client's consent, of the outcomes of the counselling, making it clear that we are not assuming responsibility for the pastoral care of the ones they send to us. That responsibility remains with their own elders and leaders. We confer with the elders or pastoral leaders, and make suggestions, but encourage the clients themselves to be giving their own feedback directly to their leaders, and to be taking full advantage of the means of grace and support available in their home churches. The counselling centre offers churches a signed memorandum of agreement detailing this service.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Future of GTC's Counselling Programme in the Light of Government Regulation

Another reviewer was concerned that our counselling programme, being unaccredited by the government or any other statutory body in New Zealand, would not find a secure and long-lasting place in the New Zealand counselling environment.

Changes are in the wind for the counselling profession in New Zealand, changes that will have a direct effect on GTC's counselling programme. The counselling profession in New Zealand has been put on notice that the government is about to

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B for a copy of this memorandum.

introduce new legislation that will require counsellors to be State registered if they wish to practice professionally.

The minimum educational requirement for this counsellor registration will be a Bachelor of Counselling degree. Here at GTC we are not accredited with the government's accrediting agency to offer a bachelors degree. Advice from our educational consultant is that we are unlikely to get accreditation because we are relatively small in student numbers. Also, other Christian colleges offer the required degrees, and the government does not want to see an unnecessary (in their view) duplication of such Christian educational providers. We realise that the distinctiveness of our programme, as outlined in this thesis, would not be appreciated by a secular accrediting agency. Finally, the cost to GTC of applying for accreditation, and maintaining it if it were granted, would be a significant financial strain on the College.

*What possible responses can GTC make in the face of these impending changes?*

- 1.** Join forces with an accredited Christian college that offers a Bachelor of Counselling degree. In order to maintain the accreditation of such a course we would have to teach their course rather than our own. We would simply be a satellite campus of that Christian college, unable to teach our own pastoral counselling courses.
- 2.** Offer an accredited degree in counselling from an overseas university that we have confidence in. Currently GTC offers a Masters degree in Biblical Counseling (MBC) from Birmingham Theological Seminary in Alabama, USA. Since this degree is credited overseas, even though taught in New Zealand, it is not known at this stage if it would be considered an academic equivalent to the Bachelor of Counselling that will be required

for New Zealand counsellor registration. If it is accepted, in whole or in part, then we can offer a qualification to students who wish to graduate from GTC into professional practice as registered counsellors. This option has yet to be tested by a graduating MBC student from GTC.

**3.** Continue on with what we are currently doing, offering both an undergraduate certificate in Pastoral Counselling, and a masters degree in Biblical Counselling. Since our courses are not accredited in New Zealand we will see a probable drop in student numbers in our counselling programme when the government's registration requirements are enacted. Those wanting to eventually practice as vocational counsellors may well choose the accredited programmes on offer at an accredited Christian college.

However, by continuing with our current operation we may attract vocational Christian counsellors who wish to pursue further studies in a distinctively Christian approach to counselling. We can offer to these students a master's degree to complement their Bachelor of Counselling degree. This way we can continue to contribute to the pool of Christian counsellors in New Zealand; counsellors who are able to practice biblically, and who have an understanding of how to subject secular theories to a biblical modality.

Furthermore, this third option ensures that we continue to offer a counselling approach that can be received with confidence by the church in New Zealand. It also ensures that we will continue to train non-vocational counsellors who can return to their local church setting, able to offer counsel to others and assist in their church's souls care and pastoral load.

## The Final Word

Having come to the end of this writing project it is now time to offer a concluding word.

Church based pastoral counsellors are uniquely placed to help the many who would not go to any other counsellor for help. Aside from family and friends, people will tend to see a pastor or church based counsellor before going to an independent professional counsellor. A known pastor/counsellor is seen as a competent and trusted shepherd who is willing and able to walk with the troubled person through their dark valley of struggle.

This personal ministry of the word of God enables the pastor or pastoral counsellor to bring the bible to bear on a person's life in a highly personalized and relevant manner as a complement to the public ministry of the Scriptures. This public ministry of the bible has the effect of broadcasting the Word of God to a large number of people, often generating an awareness of pastoral need. A trained pastoral counsellor is then able to follow up this worship experience with pointed and personalized understanding and application of the bible to the individual situation. Pastoral counselling then must be central to the pastoral task and to the helping ministries of the local church.

Grace Theological College is richly blessed in the support it has enjoyed over many years from churches, individual supporters, students and graduates. Our courses have been tried, tested and proven at local church level. The counselling programme is already beginning to receive this same encouragement and endorsement as the

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counselling students are seen to develop in their self awareness, with a growing competency to wisely and tenderly minister to the needs of others. The GTC pastoral counselling courses will continue to benefit the many who return to their churches with enlarged hearts for people and their problems.

May the Lord continued to be glorified as he gives us the enabling to further serve him in the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-13).

## APPENDIX A

### **THE TREATY OF WAITANGI (1840)**

There were two distinct versions of the Treaty, and they differed from one another in their wording. There was the Maori language version signed by over 500 chiefs, and an English language version signed by only 39 chiefs. It would be the English version only that would become the official version.<sup>1</sup>

Maori contend that the English version of the Treaty disadvantaged them with respect to their lands and fisheries and cultural treasures, such as their language, unlike the Maori language version. They object that the Maori version of the Treaty has been largely set aside. In recent years the New Zealand government has sought to give due weight to the Maori version, and to bring redress to wrongs that were committed on the basis of the English version, or, as was more common, by the setting aside of the Treaty altogether by the courts and parliaments of New Zealand in the 170 years since the Treaty was signed. This process is continuing.

It is worth noting that the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi was the first and only time in the history of the British Empire that an agreement was made with the native race of any of their colonies, guaranteeing the indigenous people equal and civil rights under British law. The impetus behind this new development from the British Colonial Office can, in part, be traced to the abolition of slavery in the Empire in 1833 (a mere seven

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<sup>1</sup> Claudia Orange, *The Story of a Treaty* [Wellington, New Zealand: Allen & Unwin, 1989], 30-32.

years before the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi), and the efforts of William Wilberforce to bring a distinctly Christian ethic to bear on the way the British Parliament performed its duties of governance, an ethic that bore fruit in the signing of the Treaty at Waitangi.

Wilberforce's efforts arose from his own conversion to the Christian faith, as a teenager, through the influence of an aunt who had herself been converted under the preaching of John Wesley. Through the good offices of this aunt, Wilberforce made contact with John Wesley, and the two corresponded for a number of years, with Wesley encouraging Wilberforce in his Christian faith, and in his fight against slavery.

While Wilberforce's relationship with the former slave ship captain, John Newton, is well known; what is less known and appreciated is that the "spirit of the age" that was behind the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi was influenced largely by an evangelical commitment that arose from the spiritual revival centred in the preaching of John Wesley. This evangelical commitment was subsequently worked out in personal and national life by such soundly converted men as William Wilberforce.

This same religious fervour and sentiment was also behind the missionary endeavours of brothers William and Henry Williams, and other missionaries, who came to New Zealand in the early 1800's to evangelise Maori. Many of these missionaries came as members of the British Church Missionary Society which was itself under of governance of such men as William Wilberforce.

Such was the response of Maori to these missionary evangelistic efforts that by 1840 many of the chiefs who signed the Treaty were Christians<sup>2</sup>. They recognised Queen

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<sup>2</sup> Orange, *The Story of a Treaty*, 34 "... by 1840, nearly half the Maori population was following Christian beliefs and ways".

Victoria as head of the Church of England, of which they were now part, and hence the Treaty as a solemn commitment between fellow believers, guaranteeing equal and harmonious mutual development of the two races, side-by-side in a partnership under the God of the Bible<sup>3</sup>.

While this evangelical sentiment has largely been lost in the years since the Treaty's signing (as the British settlers exhibited little concern for the Treaty, and New Zealand society grew increasingly secular), the Treaty of Waitangi does represent a moment in our history when our ideals outshone our behaviour. The Treaty continues to show New Zealanders that agreement can be reached between Maori and non-Maori when Christian faith and action is held in common by all parties.

However, without the under-girding of the evangelical faith and love, empowered by the Christian commitment to Jesus Christ that lay behind the efforts of William Wilberforce, and many of the leaders of British society in his day, as well as the work of the Williams brothers and other like-minded missionaries in New Zealand, it is unlikely that the future for New Zealand race relations will be able to reflect the sentiments and ethos of the Treaty, or of the men who inspired it.

However, the presence of the Treaty in our history does signal a requirement by all non-Maori New Zealanders to bring a cultural understanding of our treaty partner, the Maori, to all aspects of our living and working in New Zealand. This means holding an awareness of European or Western values alongside an understanding and appreciation of Maori values, and where the two differ.

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<sup>3</sup> Orange, *The Story of a Treaty*, 22

For example, while a Western approach to counselling often seeks to understand clients' behaviour and thinking and emotions by dissecting and separating and identifying the separate aspects of a person's experience, the taha Maori approach goes in the opposite direction. This approach, by contrast, seeks to understand people by looking at their relationship with their environment, not by going into the person, but rather looking outside of them<sup>4</sup>.

Again, self actualisation, independence and self sufficiency are not, for the Maori, indications of mental health or well being. Rather quite the opposite. The Maori seeks wellness by knowing where they have come from, where their strength is, and where they are going<sup>5</sup>. They look for their place in the larger concerns of their cultural world. Their cultural and spiritual values of personal interaction, family connections, equality of sharing and respect, are often held above scientific knowledge, theoretical understanding and academic achievement.

Another significant cultural value held by Maori is the maintaining of strong connections within the wider family circle. This may mean that the counsellor may be asked to go to family, and extended family, and counsel the individual or family group within this wider context, often eating with them. The professional model of counselling individuals, with set weekly appointments at a professional office, may be inappropriate for many Maori. In many cases it may not provide a culturally safe environment for them.

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<sup>4</sup> Mason Durie. *Ethnic Background and Counselling*. Paper, New Zealand Counselling and Guidance Association Conference [1985].

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The challenge for pastoral counsellors in New Zealand is to enfold these, and other cultural realities, within the biblical modality in a way that brings all cultures under the authority of Scripture. With wisdom, deference and sensitivity we seek to work out the intent of the Treaty of Waitangi within, and subject to, the teaching of the Word of God

APPENDIX B

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**Memorandum of Understanding between  
*Grace Counselling and Conciliation Services (GCCS) and Local Churches***

**Preamble**

Grace Counselling and Conciliation Services desires to offer a grace- filled, Christ-centred, and biblically-based pastoral counselling and conciliation service to local churches. With this in mind the Board of GCCS has approved the drawing up of a Memorandum of Understanding by which local churches will be invited to enter into a co-operative relationship with GCCS.

Our **counselling** service, covering a range of personal and relational issues, will be provided by professional counsellors, and/or supervised trainee counsellors.

Our **conciliation** service provides opportunities for couples, families, churches, or others in conflict, to be reconciled to one another. This professional conciliation service will be provided by a certified Christian conciliator, who may be assisted from time to time by trainee conciliators.

**This Memorandum of Understanding establishes a co-operating relationship between *Grace Counselling and Conciliation Services (Manurewa)* and your *Local Church* being the referring church.**

**Referrals**

- Individuals, couples and/or families can be referred to GCCS for pastoral counselling or conciliation by the referring church.
- Referees will be treated in a professional and confidential manner.

### **Payment**

- No fee will be charged referees from the referring church; however a donation, as arranged between the referee and their referring church, will be sought.
- As a guide for the church and their referees, the current rate for our individual counselling service is \$70 for a 60 minute session, and for couples \$100 for a 90 minute session.
- Where applicable, donations can be supplemented by government subsidies.
- Donations for our conciliation service will be by negotiation.

### **Duration**

- Initially GCCS will plan on up to six (6) weekly counselling sessions.
- There will be consultation with the referee, and their referring church, if further counselling sessions seem desirable.
- Conciliations (seeking to reconcile parties in conflict) usually span 1-2 full days.

### **Accountability**

- The referee remains the spiritual responsibility of their referring church.
- With the referee's informed consent, GCCS will consult with the leadership of the referring church on the referee's progress and outcomes.
- Such consultations will not violate the relationship of trust and confidentiality GCCS has with the referee.

### **Non-referees**

- Any seeker who comes without a referral will be charged the standard current fee.
- Such seekers will be encouraged to let their pastor know of their use of GCCS.
- Mandatory consulting by GCCS back to the seeker's church will not apply in these cases, however, where further involvement by the church would be considered helpful the seeker will be referred to their pastoral leadership.

Signed on behalf of the *Referring Church*

Date:

Signed on behalf of Grace *Counselling and Conciliation Services*

Date:

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