

# Theology Matters

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## Holy Saturday & the Hell of Coming Home: Caring for War Wounded Souls

by Adam D. Tietje

In *Packing Inferno*, Iraq War veteran Tyler Boudreau describes his experience of going to war and of coming home:

They say war is hell, but I say it's the foyer to hell. I say coming home is hell, and hell ain't got no coordinates. You can't find it on the charts, because there are no charts. Hell is no place at all, so when you're there, you're nowhere—you're lost. The narrative, that's your chart, your own story. There are guys who come home from war and live fifty years without a narrative, fifty years lost. They don't even know their own story, never have, and never will. But they're moving amidst the text every day and every long night without even realizing it. ... They live inside the narrative like a cell, and their only escape is to understand its dimensions.<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that “war is hell,”<sup>2</sup> and it is, but as Tyler Boudreau suggests, so is coming home. Combat veterans<sup>3</sup> come home from war with deep psychological and spiritual wounds. These wounds are related to their combat story, their ability to give voice to it, and as Boudreau suggests, their ability to “understand its dimensions.” Telling our stories—in the presence of God and one another—is to begin to find our way home from the hell of war. Even more important, though, is to hear the story of God's descent into our hell and his overcoming of it.

With that in mind, I begin with a narration of my own story of going to war and coming home. I then outline

the shape and form of the spiritual wounds or traumas of war. I offer Luke's parable of the prodigal son stuck in the far country as a useful metaphor for understanding the situation of combat veterans who come home from war. Likewise, on Holy Saturday, Jesus' own far country journey finds its end. On Holy Saturday, God makes his place in the grave alongside all who suffer. The church, her pastors, and all those who seek to care for those who come home from war would do well to hear this story anew. Therefore, I conclude with the claim that Holy Saturday is the most fitting place to ground theologically the spiritual care of war wounded souls.

### War Is Hell

When I first entered active duty in 2009, I served as a chaplain for a field artillery battalion. Shooting artillery is a highly technical skill that requires real-time calculations and decisions to ensure that mass-casualty producing artillery shells land in the right place at the right time. Many soldiers in my battalion had trained for over a decade to hone their skills. Being an infantry soldier is its own unique specialty and also requires extensive training. Six months before we deployed, my soldiers reorganized as provisional infantry squads and

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platoons and began training for an infantry mission in Afghanistan. For nearly all of them, this was an unwelcome reality. Over time, some embraced the challenge, while others fought it every step of the way.

In the summer of 2010, the very beginning of the “surge” in Afghanistan, our brigade was positioned in forward operating bases and combat outposts along the Arghandab River. We were in the “spiritual heartland” of the Taliban and our mission was to prevent them from overtaking the second most important city in Afghanistan, Kandahar. Enemy personnel, weapons, and equipment were flowing freely when we arrived. Our task was to counter the insurgency by clearing the valley, holding the newly gained ground, and then maintaining order to facilitate the rebuilding of communities.

It was truly a baptism by fire. When we arrived to our area of operations (AO) the infantry company our battalion was replacing had already taken heavy casualties. Two more of their soldiers were killed while they introduced us to the key community leaders, terrain features, and tactics necessary to survive what we found to be a veritable mine field.<sup>4</sup> Our AO was the fertile soil along the Arghandab River. Fed with water diverted from the river into canals and irrigation ditches, it was lush with grape vineyards and pomegranate orchards, along with marijuana and poppy fields. I was told by one of the locals that when early Muslim traders arrived to this valley, they believed they had rediscovered the Garden of Eden.

Sown in the soil were also countless improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Most were built to detonate when a pressure sensitive plate was stepped on, closing a simple circuit, and detonating buried mortar rounds or homemade explosives (HME). While the pomegranates were supposedly the best in the world, HME was the main export when we arrived. The Taliban had expelled the locals and established HME factories in the now abandoned villages. They prevented the farmers from harvesting their fields and getting their goods to market. The farmers took refuge in larger towns on the edge of the desert and the landowners that could afford it sought safety in Kandahar.

The day my battalion assumed responsibility from that war-weary company of paratroopers, we received our first significant casualties. In less than ten minutes, three soldiers from Alpha Battery had stepped on IEDs, all of them with traumatic amputations of their lower extremities. One—who had been nearly cut in half—died in the helicopter on the way to the hospital, only to be revived when he got there.

That day—July 12, 2010—was the first of many that led me to increasingly wonder if I—if we—would ever make it home. Even if we did, could we ever be the same, physically, psychologically, or spiritually? Two days later, a sniper shot Private First Class Brandon King in the head while he was standing guard in one of the towers at Alpha Battery’s combat outpost.<sup>5</sup> The bullet went through his helmet, his skull, his brain, and lodged itself on the other side of the helmet. I’ll never forget the way his body bounced on the litter as they took him toward the gate or the mess of blood and bone and brain that resulted from the devastating force of the bullet’s impact. The medics continued to try to get him breathing, if only to show us that they were doing everything they could. As they worked, I prayed the only prayers I could muster.

His platoon sergeant had sent him to see me before we deployed. Brandon was afraid of dying. I tried to normalize his fear. I told him, “we’re all afraid.” It seemed that it was different for him. He went absent without leave (AWOL) a few days later. The platoon sergeant called his mother. He must have told her that Brandon talked to me. She wanted to know what I thought. Over the phone, I could tell she was a religious woman and she wanted her son to do the right thing. “He was nervous about deploying,” was all I said by way of describing our conversation. She seemed to know more than she let on: “I told him we’re all going to die one day, each one of us. You just have to trust in God. When it’s your time to go there’s nothing you can do to stop it.” He came back a few days before we deployed. Perhaps he had had a genuine premonition of his own death. No one else had come to me with quite the same fear. I don’t think I’ll ever comprehend the courage that must have taken. The only certainty seemed to be, “there’s nothing you can do to stop it.”<sup>6</sup>

Trauma, guilt, grief, and fear, all mounted for me and my soldiers as the summer slowly and painfully wore on. There was IED blast after IED blast. Many escaped with only minor wounds. As time wore on though, there were dozens of traumatic amputations from IEDs and more deaths.

July 30th was the next devastating milestone for our battalion. What started as a forty-eight-hour mission turned into a bloody battle that lasted for days as we fought to keep control of a small patch of blood-stained earth at a key intersection initially known as objective Bakersfield. Many IEDs were found and safely destroyed. Three were not and two more soldiers were killed, another had a foot amputated, and many others wounded. The next day I walked down to objective Bakersfield to check on my soldiers.<sup>7</sup> I had already seen the death and despair in the eyes of those who had rotated out. Those who stayed could no longer keep their

hands from shaking. The combat and traumatic stress were overwhelming. They had hardly slept, and if they did, it was in foxholes they had dug in the dusty earth.

I am not sure I truly knew fear until I knew it that day and the next. Even though we had the close air support provided by the Kiowa and Apache helicopters overhead, we continued to take fire. The Taliban eventually got their rifle-mounted grenade launcher zeroed-in on our position. For over an hour, we took a beating. I ran from casualty to casualty trying to provide comfort to the wounded and assistance to the medics. The next day, it was more of the same, except that I too became a casualty. It was just a few small pieces of shrapnel scattered across my body. I did not even fully realize what had happened at the time. The previous blast had badly wounded my first sergeant and I was busy trying to get him to cover. When the dust settled that day and I finally lay down on my sleeping bag, the flashbacks kept coming as my body involuntarily recoiled at the reliving of each shock. I am not sure how I ever made it to sleep that night.

In the first three months, seven soldiers were killed from our small artillery battalion, dozens experienced traumatic amputations from IED explosions, and a full 20 percent were awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received in combat. All the while, I performed regular services of Word and Sacrament, prayed with soldiers, counseled soldiers, conducted traumatic event debriefings, and honored each one of our fallen soldiers with memorial ceremonies. When Specialist Anthony Vera was cut in two by an IED, I went to minister to his platoon, but I confess to only being able to go through the motions one more time. I was hiding symptoms of post-traumatic stress, experiencing compassion fatigue, and had nothing left to give. It was all I could do to hang on the few more days it would be until I went on leave. I wrote about this during my deployment:

My first stop at Kandahar Airfield on my way out of country for much-needed leave was the chapel. I went seeking some sense of God's presence. It was dark outside when I entered the dimly lit sanctuary. I was aghast as I walked past all the books, pamphlets, and bibles available in the foyer. I looked around at the wooden sanctuary, complete with pews and stained-glass windows and my initial instinct was anger and then, jealousy. I breathed them out and kept searching the room with my eyes, slowly, carefully. On a little table before going down the center aisle, there on the left side I spotted a small journal with a photograph of Mother Teresa on the cover. I knew immediately it was there for me. I picked one up, flipped to the article, and began to read. I learned about some recently published letters and personal writings in which it became evident that this deeply spiritual woman had struggled

for decades with a profound sense of the absence of God. "I have come to love the darkness for I believe now that it is a part, a very, very, small part of Jesus' darkness and pain on earth." As I read those words I laid down my burden and wept.<sup>8</sup>

In this quotation, I found the hope I needed to keep going. In my experience of God-abandonment in the midst of great suffering and evil, I found strength in knowing that Christ too suffered pain and darkness such that now all suffering is bound and contained by his own and through which his love can be known.

It was surreal to see tracer rounds being shot below me as I left our AO in a Blackhawk helicopter and then a few days later to be sitting in my own home. There, I spent time with my wife, performed my sister's wedding, and visited with family and friends. I was even able to visit several of my wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. I never adjusted to being home. How could anyone, when all the while you knew you had to go back?

When I returned to Afghanistan, everything had changed. After taking so many casualties, my commander finally received permission to undertake a devastating offensive. The abandoned villages the Taliban used as HME factories and safe houses were too well defended and booby trapped with IEDs. The only way beyond the impasse was to destroy the villages. To be clear, the residents had long since abandoned their homes. They were now only used as strongholds by the Taliban.<sup>9</sup> When the bombs began to fall, the Taliban realized that the rules of the game had fundamentally changed and the fighters left the valley, at least until the next fighting season. Fighting season. It sounds strange, but just like a sport, fighting has a season in Afghanistan. It picks up in the spring with the opening of the mountain passes from Pakistan, the coming of warmer nights, and the concealment of vegetation. It tapers off as the nights cool, the leaves fall, and the mountain passes become impassible. The Taliban's early withdrawal allowed me to focus on caring for my soldiers and eased my overwhelming anxiety.

After the Taliban retreated, we were able to patrol freely the entire valley, all the way to the river. One of the most important symbols of our progress was having the privilege of baptizing one of my soldiers in the Arghandab River. Unfortunately, a few weeks later and a few hundred meters from where my soldier publicly bore witness to his faith in Christ, there were several more IED blasts that would kill another soldier and cause two more traumatic amputations.

Just a few weeks earlier, I remember several of those soldiers grimly joking that any one of us would be lucky

to leave with an amputation; at least he would leave alive. This sort of gallows humor was pervasive and helped us cope with the nearness of death. By the time we redeployed back to the United States, the rebuilding of the destroyed villages had begun, with the mosques being constructed first. Farmers were once again allowed to freely work in their fields, vineyards, and orchards, and with the coming of spring it seemed for a moment that hope, too, had returned.

### **Coming Home is Hell, Too**

I was still on post-deployment leave when I received the call telling me that one of my soldiers had died of an overdose. It was a cruel bookend to the deployment. Two months before we left for Afghanistan, one of my fellow staff officers had shot himself in the head. The first few weeks back at the office were eerily quiet, and then the dam broke. In story after story, I recognized myself.

My soldiers and I too struggled to find meaning and purpose in the aftermath of war. A large number of them suffered the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in silence and self-medicated with alcohol or drugs. The ones that did seek help found our behavioral health system incredibly overloaded. It took weeks to get an appointment. Many gave up seeking help in frustration and joined their peers in self-medication. Depression, despair, and thoughts of suicide were commonplace. Soldier after soldier was punished for misconduct and many were separated from service.<sup>10</sup> Within six months of coming home, four soldiers had killed themselves. We had found our way home, but we were still lost. I spoke to this reality at the memorial ceremony of the second of my soldiers who died at his own hands when our battalion returned home from southern Afghanistan.

Brothers and sisters, we may be home from the war, but the war has come home with us. Of all we have had to fear, and there has been much, this scares us most. For if not at home, where is peace to be found? And yet it is here at home in the silence of our thoughts that the voices of our guilt and grief have cried out the loudest. Peace, we have learned, is not as easy as getting on a plane. Memories forever burned into our minds and bodies threaten to take us back daily and lead us to wonder if our most difficult days may yet come. Whereas once we faced the enemy with our squads and platoons, now it seems we fight on alone. With the Psalmist we cry out, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night."<sup>11</sup>

Sergeant Justin Junkin had been drinking alone and reminiscing about a dear friend who was killed in combat. Overwhelmed with emotion, he loaded his

pistol and killed himself while his wife and child were sleeping in the next room.

I served to minister to such soul wounds the best I was able, even as I too was lost and hurting after coming home. I read Scripture and prayed every day while I was deployed. Toward the end, it became almost unbearable. When I returned home, I stopped praying for months and questioned my calling. I was angry at God. I was grief-stricken for my soldiers, but also for myself. At the height of my depression during the summer of 2011, I visited my home congregation to thank them for their love and support during the deployment. Their cards and letters were truly life-sustaining. I will never forget what one of these faithful women told me when I confessed that I was not praying. She said, "It's okay. You don't have to pray right now. We are praying on your behalf." I'll never forget that. It was one of the most important things anyone could have said to me at the point. It still speaks volumes to me about the nature of the church at prayer on behalf of a world that cannot pray for itself.

As I slowly reconnected with the life of the church at prayer and continued to journey with my soldiers who had been so spiritually devastated by war, I came to a renewed understanding of my calling. My story continues to unfold, but this much is clear: I now understand my calling to be, in part, directed toward the care of those who have been spiritually wounded in combat.

### **The Spiritual Wounds of War**

The Greek root for trauma simply means wound. Throughout this study, I will be using trauma and wound interchangeably. In her groundbreaking study, *Trauma and Recovery*, psychiatrist Judith Herman defines psychological trauma as

an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning.<sup>12</sup>

This overwhelming event is most often an encounter with death or its possibility, an all too frequent occurrence in combat. The result of this overwhelming force is that the traumatic returns in the form of intrusive thoughts, daytime hallucinations, and nightmares among many other frightful symptoms. As a result, hyper-vigilance becomes a way of life for the traumatized. The survivor of trauma makes every effort to avoid triggers that might provoke a painful re-experiencing of the event and negative emotional reactions. These are the symptomatic responses to trauma that can lead to a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD): re-experiencing the traumatic event (e.g., intrusive thoughts, distressing dreams), avoiding stimuli related to the trauma, “negative alterations in cognitions and mood,” and increased arousal (i.e., hyper-vigilance).<sup>13</sup> While experiencing these symptoms the survivor of trauma may have a particularly difficult time maintaining her significant relationships with loved ones and even herself.

Of considerable concern for us, those who have endured significant trauma often wonder if God has abandoned them. Herman writes:

Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others. *They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim’s faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis.*<sup>14</sup>

Trust in the nature of God and reality can be shattered by traumatic events and there is often a loss of meaning, purpose, and hope. God’s justice and God’s love can both be put on trial in the wake of horrific trauma. As a result, the traumatized often feel cut off from God with no hope of return. This experience of God-forsakenness can cut deep into the soul of the veteran.

While trauma is a fear-based stress reaction to an encounter with death or its possibility,<sup>15</sup> the reality that clinicians are now uncovering is that many soldiers coming home from Afghanistan and Iraq have exhibited symptoms of PTSD that have nothing to do with feeling powerless or fearing imminent death, but rather with acts that violate their conscience, e.g., the killing of innocents. The startling reality is that the greatest predictor of PTSD symptoms among combat veterans is killing. The research consistently bears out that the perpetration of violence is more injurious to soldiers than simply witnessing it. One study suggests that “actual killing or not acting to prevent killing better predicted higher suicidality, more PTSD symptoms, and other mental health disorders.”<sup>16</sup>

As a result, many psychologists have begun setting out criteria and treatment modalities for what has come to be known as moral injury. Litz et al. define moral injury as “perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”<sup>17</sup> Or, as Rita Brock and Gabriella Lettini put it in their book *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*, moral injury follows from “having transgressed one’s basic moral identity and violated core moral beliefs.”<sup>18</sup> While clinical research is in its infancy—the first comprehensive study was only

completed in 2009<sup>19</sup>—moral injury is as old as war itself and is evident in Homer’s epics.<sup>20</sup> Responses to moral injury include guilt, shame, depression, and feelings of worthlessness, despair, and remorse. Many veterans are explicit in the use of theological language to describe these experiences and God’s judgment figures prominently.

Even though it is clinicians who have largely taken the lead in understanding moral injury and prescribing treatment, it should be evident that moral injury is also a spiritual wound. Both PTSD and moral injury have psychological and spiritual aspects.<sup>21</sup> In the aftermath of war many veterans return with their faith shattered. The hellish realities of combat persist in very real ways, even though the soldier has come home. These hellish realities—encounters with death, moral failures, seemingly unending grief—may inflict deep spiritual wounds that leave many feeling abandoned by God or judged unworthy to enter into his presence.

### **A Far Country Journey**

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the parable of a son who is stuck in a far country. Reduced to poverty by his previously prodigal ways, the son remains in the far country in servitude and filth to survive. I find here a metaphor for the situation in which combat veterans find themselves.<sup>22</sup> In the aftermath of morally troubling and traumatic combat experiences, they too remain stuck in a far country, often struggling just to survive. On the other side of trauma, one’s sense of purpose, meaning, and faith are often destroyed or badly damaged. What remains for the combat veteran in this far-country dislocation?

Karl Barth outlines the obedience of Christ as Son in the incarnation as “The Way of the Son of God into the Far Country.”<sup>23</sup> With the help of Barth’s heading, we see that the incarnation turns the parable of the disobedient son on its head. It is as an obedient Son to the Father that Christ empties himself of his heavenly glory and makes his way to our far country. The Son of God willingly suffered this dislocation in the far country even unto death on a cross and descent into the depths of hell.<sup>24</sup> In Jesus’ parable, it is the love and mercy of the father that remains for the prodigal son. This is the upshot of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s interpretation of Holy Saturday.<sup>25</sup> Even as Jesus experiences God’s utter abandonment on the cross and descends into the very depths of hell, through the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father for the Son remains. Thus, veterans may know that even in the farthest reaches of the far country, even in the depths of hell, God has already made his place with them.

With that in view, I suggest that the church embrace a theology of Holy Saturday, particularly in light of the church’s confession of Jesus’ descent into hell. In

conversation with Hans Urs von Balthasar, Barth's doctrine of the descent and the God-abandonment of Jesus is extended from the cross to include the grave. I argue that the story of salvation, and even God's very being as God for us and with us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, turns on this moment in the life of God in which God abandons God on the cross and in the grave. Indeed, it is from this moment of utter hopelessness that our salvation and all hope spring forth.

In the liturgies of the church, Holy Saturday is marked by absence and silence. The altar is stripped bare. The Eucharist does not return until the Easter Vigil. There is no light from candles and no vestments are worn. As the church remembers Jesus' burial and death, we hold vigil at the tomb and wait. This is where the church, and her pastors and chaplains, must begin with those who come

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<sup>1</sup> Tyler Boudreau, *Packing Inferno* as quoted in Rita Nakashima Brock and Gabriella Lettini, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 65.

<sup>2</sup> This quote is commonly attributed to William Sherman. He may have used it in conversation, but there is no written record, and its origins are uncertain.

<sup>3</sup> Often the term veteran is used to mean those who have left active service. By combat veteran, I mean those who have gone to war and come home, including active service members. Thus, I often use soldier and veteran interchangeably. Moreover, when I use the term soldiers to refer to the class of those who have gone to war and come home, I mean for these references to be inclusive of all branches of military service (i.e., sailors, airmen, and marines).

<sup>4</sup> For a close look at our transition with a unit from the 82nd Airborne Division, see Brian Mockenhaupt, "The Last Patrol," *The Atlantic*, November 2010, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/11/the-last-patrol/308266/> (accessed June 14, 2018). His article describes the very last patrol conducted by one of their platoons with one of ours. I took part in this mission, although I moved with a different element. I can personally attest to much of what Mockenhaupt reports.

<sup>5</sup> For reporting on this incident and the challenges our battalion faced as we began our mission see Rob Taylor, "Death Comes from Far Away in Afghan Valley," *Reuters*, July 19, 2010, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-outpost-sniper/death-comes-from-far-away-in-afghan-valley-idUSTRE66J08I20100720> (accessed June 14, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> These conversations are documented in my unpublished account of our deployment, "Faith and Doubt in the Arghandab," unpublished autobiographical manuscript written during deployment to Afghanistan 2010–2011.

<sup>7</sup> For an account of the Bakersfield operation see Paula Broadwell and Vernon Loeb, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York: Penguin, 2012). Our battalions efforts were featured prominently in her book about David Petraeus' leadership in Afghanistan. While the book was clouded in controversy after news of their affair broke, her sections on 1st Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment are a much-appreciated record of what my soldiers did and endured in Afghanistan. By way of capturing a bit of personal

home from war and, indeed, with all those who suffer. The good news of Holy Saturday is that God in Christ came to keep vigil with us all, even in the darkness of a tomb and in the depths of hell.

This is a slightly revised chapter from Adam Tietje's book, *Toward a Pastoral Theology of Holy Saturday: Providing Spiritual Care for War Wounded Souls* (2018). Used with permission from Wipf & Stock, Eugene, Oregon.

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history, I met Broadwell while she was in our AO doing interviews with our commander and others. My commander suggested she interview me, given my breadth of experience with our soldiers and across the battlefield. It is probably just as well that the interview never happened.

<sup>8</sup> Adam Tietje, "Faith and Doubt in the Arghandab." The quote from Mother Teresa is found in *Come Be My Light: The Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta*, ed. Brian Kolodiejchuk (New York: Doubleday Religion, 2007), 241.

<sup>9</sup> News of the destruction of these villages was widely reported and widely criticized. As someone who walked through each of those villages in the aftermath, watched as they were rebuilt, and witnessed the renewal of life among the residents of the valley afterward, I tend to side with my commander's decision. See Spencer Ackerman, "25 Tons of Bombs Wipe Afghan Town Off Map," *Wired*, January 19, 2011, <https://www.wired.com/2011/01/25-tons-of-bombs-wipes-afghan-town-off-the-map/> (accessed June 14, 2018) and for my commander's rebuttal see Ackerman "Why I Flattened Three Afghan Villages," *Wired*, February 1, 2011, <https://www.wired.com/2011/02/i-flattened-afghan-villages/> (accessed June 14, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Some misconduct could be easily attributed to negative coping with trauma and the effects of war. Many alcohol-related incidents were simply the result of self-medication gone awry. In addition to any negative coping with war, a number of other unfortunate factors came together during the service of many of my soldiers. The "surges" in both Afghanistan and Iraq required the retention of soldiers whose misconduct would have otherwise demanded separation. Additionally, the bar for entry into service was lowered by the granting of tens of thousands of waivers for soldiers to enlist with misdemeanors, felonies, and histories of significant drug and alcohol abuse. This also coincided with the significant economic downturn of late 2008. See U.S. Army, "Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, Suicide Prevention Report," 2010, [http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/docs/Commanders%20Tool%20Kit/HPRRSP\\_Report\\_2010\\_v00.pdf](http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/docs/Commanders%20Tool%20Kit/HPRRSP_Report_2010_v00.pdf) (accessed June 14, 2018), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Adam Tietje, "Home From the War," homily given at the memorial service for Sergeant Justin Junkin, Memorial Chapel, Fort Campbell, KY, October 3, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 33.

<sup>13</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-V*, (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 271. While the DSM-V suggests four primary components to the disorder: re-experiencing painful memories (criterion B), effortful avoidance of trauma cues (criterion C), negative changes in mood and perception (criterion D), and increased arousal (criterion E), Engdahl et al. suggest in a 2010 study that “observed differences in neuronal interactions reflect the re-experiencing component.” See B. Engdahl et al., “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: a Right Temporal Lobe Syndrome?” *Journal of Neural Engineering* 7 (2010): 6. The implication is that avoidance, negative emotions, and increased arousal may simply be derivative of the re-experiencing aspect of PTSD. They connect their findings to studies on the “effects of electrical stimulation of the cortex during brain surgery, namely the elicitation of reliving or re-enacting past experiences . . . These re-enactments are evocative of the flashbacks experienced by patients suffering from PTSD.” See *ibid.* Perhaps just as remarkable is the fact that these effects, while attenuated, were also observed in subjects in remission. See *ibid.*, 7. Also of note, the DSM-V does include emotions of guilt and shame, a nod to some of the concerns noted by the clinicians who have called for a recognition of moral injury. See *DSM-V*, 275.

<sup>14</sup> Herman, 51, emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> *DSM-V*, 274-76.

<sup>16</sup> Everett Worthington and Diane Langberg, “Religious Considerations and Self-Forgiveness in Treating Complex Trauma and Moral Injury in Present and Former Soldiers,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 40 (2012): 276.

<sup>17</sup> Brett T. Litz et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 29 (2009): 697.

<sup>18</sup> Brock and Lettini, xiv.

<sup>19</sup> Litz et al., 695–706.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Shay does an excellent job of bringing the wisdom of those ancient epics into our own time in both *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and Undoing of Character* (New

York: Scribner, 1994), which draws on the stories of the *Iliad*, and *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (New York: Scribner, 2002), which draws on the stories of the *Odyssey*. In fact, it is Shay who first uses the term moral injury to describe the moral betrayal of soldiers by their leaders in combat in *Achilles in Vietnam*.

<sup>21</sup> I draw out this distinction in “*Contra Rambo’s ‘Theology of Remaining’: A Chalcedonian and Pastoral Conception of Trauma*,” *Pro Ecclesia* 28.1 (2019): 22–38.

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that this metaphor does not illuminate all who go to war and come home. It is also important to note, I do not mean for any judgment of the prodigal son’s agency in the parable to be broadly applicable to the agency of combat veterans, in general. The prodigal chooses to demand his inheritance and leave his father for the far country. While soldiers in America’s current volunteer army choose to join, this has not always been, nor may it always be the case. Further, this study makes no judgment of such a choice. Ultimately, my interest in the parable lies in where the son ends up, the far country. How soldiers end up there may be the result of their own agency (e.g., an explicit war crime), or may be the result of circumstances far beyond their choosing (e.g., an ambush set by the enemy).

<sup>23</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4/1, trans. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 157–210.

<sup>24</sup> Jesus goes to the far country *pro nobis*. I do not mean to suggest that American soldiers are sent to the far country on a divine mission. By setting Jesus’ far country journey alongside the far country journey of soldiers, some may be tempted to think the far country analogy runs both ways. It does not. I am in no way endorsing a theology of empire. Indeed, I suspect that for some, moral injury actually occurs at the intersection of the demands of the “liturgy of war” of American civil religion and the demands of religious faith. For more on the “liturgy of war” see Hauerwas, *War and the American Difference: Theological Reflections on Violence and National Identity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, trans. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 148–81.

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# Calvin's Theology of Pastoral Care

by David E. Willis

How did Calvin understand pastoral care?<sup>1</sup> There are different ways to approach this question.<sup>2</sup> I shall take the following text as representative of his understanding. It is from Calvin's commentary on John 10, which he takes to be dealing with the office of pastor.

Christ had earlier called himself the door, and said that those who bring sheep to this door are true shepherds. Now he himself assumes the role of shepherd, and indeed affirms that he is the only shepherd, for unto no one else does this honor and title properly belong. Because it is he who raises up faithful shepherds for the church, equips them with the necessary gifts, governs them by his spirit and works by them, they do not stop him from being the only governor of his church or from ruling as the only shepherd. For although he makes use of their ministry, he does not cease to fulfill and discharge the office of a shepherd by his own power. And they are masters and teachers in such a way as not to derogate from his mastership. In short, when the word shepherd is applied to men, it is used, as they say, in a subordinate sense; and Christ so communicates his honor to his ministers that he still remains the only shepherd of them and of the whole flock.<sup>3</sup>

This text contains the main elements of Calvin's theology of pastoral care. That theology can be succinctly stated and is starkly obvious—though its implications were extensive in his day and are today. Calvin's theology of pastoral care is what the church must teach and do about these facts: (a) that Christ is the pastor who cares for those whom he joins to himself by the bond of the Spirit, (b) that this one pastor accommodates himself to govern through humans who are called pastors in so far as they are servants of his Word, and (c) that the wholeness which is the scope of this pastoral care is the freedom of those whom Christ more and more unites to himself until he is finally one with them.

Accordingly, let us consider, first, Calvin's view of Christ as pastor, second, Calvin's view of how Christ exercises his office through humans, and, third, Calvin's view of what constitutes the wholeness which is the aim of Christ's pastoral care through his agents. Finally, I will suggest some implications of Calvin's theology for defining and practicing pastoral care today.

## The One Pastor

One of Calvin's most explicit definitions of what, strictly speaking, is meant by pastoral care comes from his

commentary on John 10 and 21. Both passages were and are loaded with freight in the history of interpretation that focuses on the right exercise of authority in the church and therefore on the identity of the true church. This is no minor point when it comes to Calvin's theology of pastoral care, for as we shall see, it is ultimately impossible to speak of the wholeness which is the aim of pastoral care apart from the content of life together in the body of believers though there may be many penultimate and extra ecclesial anticipations of this wholeness. Moreover, it is no minor point that the voice of Christ, the only shepherd, is heard and learned and recognized and followed within the company of others who by grace hear and follow that voice and resist following other voices. This ecclesiological context of the Christological specificity of Calvin's theology of pastoral care is succinctly put in his commentary on John 10:1:

In my opinion, those who scrutinize every part of this parable very closely are wasting their time. Let us be content with the general view that Christ likens the Church to a sheepfold in which God assembles his people, and compares himself to the door, since he is the only entrance way into the Church. It follows from this that they alone are good shepherds who lead men straight to Christ; and that they are truly gathered into God's fold and reckoned his flock who give themselves to Christ alone. . . . If the so-called shepherds try to lead us away from Christ, we should flee from them, as Christ tells us, as if they were wolves or thieves; and we ought not to join or to stay in any society save that which is agreed in the pure faith of the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

It is striking that Calvin sums up the office of pastor under the function of governing.<sup>5</sup> Governance is what a shepherd is about,<sup>6</sup> and there are three aspects of it: (1) leading the flock in the right direction, (2) defending the flock from the wolves and false shepherds, and (3) nourishing the flock. That person alone is able to fulfill the office of shepherd who is willing to risk his or her life for the flock. It is because of the love which the shepherd has for the flock that this governance in all its forms takes place. The shepherd's love is such that the sheep recognize they are loved by this one; that causes them to trust the shepherd to lead, protect, and feed them. That is what it means to hear and know the shepherd's voice, to be governed by him or her because the flock knows that it is to that one that they belong.



Calvin's warning against pushing the imagery too far is well taken. At least, however, there is a realism to his way of understanding the pastor's office which contrasts sharply with bucolic tapestries of fields where sheep always safely graze. We shall say more about this later. Here, however, we need to note the significance of making governance the summary office of the pastor.

Whatever else pastoral care may be, it is centrally a matter of Christ's making his voice to be heard so that persons are led, protected, and fed by the one to whom they already belong. This has far-reaching implications for what is meant by the wholeness which is the aim of such pastoral care. Health is a matter of growth in the assurance that we already belong to the one whose love constrains us and frees us. Growth is the joyful discipline of more and more hearing the voice which alone is to be trusted and obeyed in life and death; and that includes paying less and less attention to other voices which are nothing more than stubborn hallucinations about oneself, about others, and about God.

Men and women engage in pastoral care when they enable men and women to hear and trust Christ's voice and not their own voices or the voices of others as saying the first or last word to or about themselves. The techniques, skills, pharmacology, social work, economic and political betterment, diagnostic expertise, individual and group therapy, trans-generational mapping, as well as theological reflection, all are goods of this world,<sup>7</sup> which, when rightly used, are instruments for helping persons discern which voices are being heard and lived by and how that effects their lives.

What makes their use in pastoral care remains the same as what Calvin discerned it to be without any knowledge of the providential development of these disciplines, namely, that of freeing persons in Christ's own governance of leading, protecting, and feeding. That is why the assertion, "outside the church there is no salvation" is not a warning but a tautology. *Church* is exactly the context in which the true Shepherd's voice is heard above all other voices, and *salvation* is growth in the life together of those who are freed for service by hearing that singular voice above all others.

### **The Subaltern Shepherds**

The connection between the one pastor of the church and the many pastors is an instrumental one, not the juxtaposition of the one and the many. There is one who is pastor and he exercises that office by accommodating himself to use men and women who thereby become—*in usu*, in the actions of proclamation and teaching in their various forms<sup>8</sup>—nothing less than spokespersons of Christ, oracles of Christ, mouthpieces of Christ.<sup>9</sup> Calvin is full of woes for those who make being a pastor something other than this, and he is even more so full of

encouragement for those who carry on their work of attending to and re-speaking as faithfully and clearly and persuasively as possible the Word of the singular Pastor.

John's Gospel abounds with mixed metaphors, like Christ being the door to the sheepfold and being the Shepherd. There is another mixed metaphor which Calvin notes and which he says is inherent in identifying Christ as the sole Pastor. It is that he is both the Shepherd who leads the sheep to food and the food—the pastor and the pasturage—on which they feed and grow. It is an interesting question how much this is intended by the writer of the Gospel of John and how much is supplied by the history of interpretation in which Calvin stood. At any rate, Calvin carries over what Christ says in John 6 about being the bread of the world to what Christ says in John 21 about feeding his sheep through true pastors. According to Calvin, chapter 10 of John shows us why properly speaking Christ is the only pastor of the church.

It is because he governs his sheep by the teaching of salvation and so feeds them, for he is the only true food of the soul. But since he uses men's own work in preaching the gospel, he gives them also his own name, or at least, shares it with them. Therefore, they only are regarded as pastors in the sight of God who, under Christ their head, preside over the church by the ministry of the Word.<sup>10</sup>

What finally motivates—motivates, not equips—those whom Christ uses as pastors is the love of Christ. By the love of Christ, Calvin means Christ's love of his people, and the resultant love which his people have for Christ and for each other.<sup>11</sup> That is one thing which may be so presupposed as to be neglected: it is fundamentally because of their love of Christ that persons they function as good pastors.

Those called to govern the church should therefore remember that if they want to discharge their office truly and properly, they must start off from the love of Christ. Meanwhile, Christ testifies clearly how highly he places our salvation when he commends it so carefully to pastors. And he asserts that he will be greatly loved by them if they seriously care for it. Indeed, nothing more efficacious could have been said for encouraging ministers of the gospel, than when they hear that the service most agreeable to Christ is that which is expended on feeding his flock. All the godly should receive no ordinary consolation when they hear that they are so dear and precious to the Son of God that he substitutes the pastors as if it were in his place. But the same doctrine should also greatly frighten false teachers, who pervert the government of the church. For Christ declares that he is dishonored by them and will give them a dreadful punishment.<sup>12</sup>

## The Benefits of Pastoral Care

Here the focus is not on what the results would be if people should receive proper pastoral care, and surely the focus is not on what their condition would be without it. For Calvin both these questions are too hypothetical to dwell on, though he says something about each. The focus is on the condition in which those are growing whom Christ has already, actually, really united to himself and really already, actually leads, protects and feeds. The reason for this is that hearing and following the one Pastor's voice is what it means to have faith, faith which itself is a response to that voice. The one whose voice is heard and obeyed in faith is the one united to us. The wholeness which results from pastoral care is the assurance that this is surely so. Growth in the active practice of the assurance of our salvation is the aim of pastoral care.

Central to Calvin's theology of pastoral care is his understanding of the mystical union of Christ. It is, of course, central not just to Calvin's theology of pastoral care, but is a doctrine one cannot ignore if one is to understand fully other aspects of Calvin's theology.<sup>13</sup> Obviously there was a rich tradition which spoke of the mystical union of Christ, and meant quite a wide range of things by that. It is worth reminding ourselves, therefore, of the characteristic way Calvin speaks of it in the familiar passage of the *Institutes* 2.2.24.

The assurance of salvation is not derived from considering our works or our faith: that is clear. When it comes to that assurance we are to look to Christ and the truth of his promises. However, for Calvin looking to Christ also includes seeing ourselves united to Christ, also includes knowing ourselves members of his body, also includes considering ourselves as those to whom Christ is daily growing more and more one with. On this point Calvin differs from those whose position at first sounds like his own:

They so place the conscience between hope and fear that now it moves in one direction and now another. They see hope and fear related in such a way that when the one is up, it completely extinguishes the other, and when it is the other's turn it does the same. ... Their contention is, if you look upon Christ there is sure salvation, if you turn back to yourself there is sure damnation. As indeed we ought to consider Christ remaining apart from us instead of living within us!

It is entirely hypothetical for those who have already been united to Christ to consider first Christ and then themselves, and so to swing back and forth between hope and fear.

The reason we hope for salvation from him [Christ] is not because he appears afar off, but because, having

engrafted us into his body, he makes us participants not only in his benefits but also in himself. ... Since Christ has been communicated to us with all his benefits, so that what is his has been made ours and we are made members of him and made one with him, his justice covers our sins, his salvation wipes out our damnation, his worthiness interposes itself so that our unworthiness does not come before the face of God. This is for sure: we ought neither to separate Christ from ourselves nor ourselves from him, but with both hands hold fast to that fellowship by which he has bound us to himself. ... Not only by an inseparable bond of fellowship does he hold fast to us, by a certain marvelous communion he daily grows more and more with us into one body, until he finally makes himself one with us.<sup>14</sup>

Faith does not create that union but grasps it and practices its benefits. The voice of the one Pastor through several pastors leads, feeds, and protects those who already belong to and participate in Christ as members of his body by the freeing bond of the Holy Spirit. What pastoral care does is to reinforce persons in that already established, ultimately irreversible identity by continually calling them to repentance and assuring them of pardon and empowering them thereby to walk in newness of life by focusing on the truth of the freely given promises given in Christ. The active knowledge in which they grow is that of God's benevolence, not just God's benevolence to other creatures and other persons but God's benevolence to themselves.

That saving knowledge is the same as having the conscience freed by the gospel, or to put it another way, it is knowing God and self with a good conscience. The pastor's voice is what is heard in the forum of the conscience, and it displaces, drowns out, both the complacent silence of the hardened conscience and the strident condemnation of the bad conscience.<sup>15</sup>

This entails as perpetual correction, daily mortification and vivification, away from a cold or speculative knowing something about God and it involves a daily shift, a daily mortification and vivification, away from an affective, fervent but false conviction that God is not benevolent to one's self. The saving knowledge of God entails, inherently contains, a corrected self-knowledge. It involves a daily shift away from complacent ignorance about the extent of one's sinful condition and sins. But it also involves a daily shift away from becoming fixated on the conviction of one's sin and speculation about whether or not one is forgiven. That shift away is a shift to the good news which displaces the bad news. This positive shift is the *sana cognitio*—the healthy, whole, healed knowledge—of self as freed for the new life together in Christ and therefore from the bondage of sin and death and the devil.

The particular form of health which is the special focus of pastoral care is this active, affective, inclusive, converted knowledge of God and of self. It is health as the active comfort,<sup>16</sup> in the midst of the most devastating external and internal crises, of belonging not to oneself but to Christ. It is the comfort of the fact that one belongs to Christ, from which fact is derived the comfort of knowing that one belongs to Christ. The comfort includes knowing; but what we know to be true is a prior, irreversible fact. When we forget, when we distrust, when we despair of our primary belonging, we do not thereby cease to belong to the one who has claimed us and will not let us go. Our salvation is not like Auden's "kitchen table which exists because I scrub it!"<sup>17</sup>

Faith is informed trust which practices the wholeness of Christian freedom in all its parts, in every area of life. Faith is not a substitute for wholeness of soul and body, not a substitute for the restoration of right relationships and growth in them. Nor is wholeness a finished product in this life; wholeness is exactly the growth in life together in Christ in the midst of the most pressing difficulties, the most appalling failures, the most crushing melancholy, the greatest temptations to despair—and in the midst of the most joyous, victorious, patent enjoyment of the goodness of creation and redemption.

Calvin's treatment of Christian freedom, in the *Institutes* 3.19, has rather evident, pastoral significance on this point. One of the benefits of pastoral care is that people grow in the realization that their righteousness is completely freely given, and they do not live under the servile fear of doing works in order to earn acceptance or to avoid alternative dire consequences. Another benefit is that people grow in distinguishing between the few things which are essential and the vast number of things which are matters of indifference. And a third benefit of pastoral care which continually frees the conscience by the assurance of pardon is that people are enabled to grow in the practice of the law.

A further word about the third use of the law in relation to Calvin's theology of pastoral care is necessary if we are not miss one of the strongest and most relevant parts of his insight. Christian freedom in all its parts is indeed a summary of the wholeness which is the aim of pastoral care. But it is more: Christian freedom is also the way the humans chosen to be pastors do their work. The several pastors' care becomes otherwise works righteousness, they begin to take their own gifts and personalities and moods as essentials rather than as indifferent things, and they suffer from shrinking pastoral care to inter- and intra-personal adjustment. That is really the issue of the third use of the law: not just that individuals are freed by grace to be better obeyers of the decalogue (which is also true), but that the wholeness which forgiven sinners are

freed to grow in is social both in its nurturing context and in the extent of its transforming range.<sup>18</sup>

Pastoral care is governance by attending to Christ's voice which governs by leading, protecting and feeding on himself—those whom Christ has united to himself. It belongs to the humanly office of pastoral care, which, remember, is one of governing in response to and by the Word of Christ, to grow in the practice of the decalogue. That is why social reform is not an addition to pastoral care but integral to it. It is part of the governance for wholeness which is the pastor's office.<sup>19</sup> That, incidentally, is why Calvin's own international leadership to an increasing refugee movement<sup>20</sup> and his own local social humanism are of a whole cloth with his own functioning in the explicit, direct offices of teacher and preacher and minister of the sacraments. To say that social reform belongs to pastoral care may sound strange to modern ears. But that is mainly because of a wider development which is individual centered.

We have become accustomed to thinking of pastoral care as focusing on one aspect of the total ministry, that aspect which mainly has to do with the individual's condition (whether defined in terms primarily borrowed from the behavioral sciences, or whether defined in terms of confession and regeneration). That aspect is of course included in Calvin's theology of pastoral care, as we have just seen. But for Calvin, that aspect is part of the larger whole of the life together of believers who are co-members of the body of Christ whose wholeness is blessedness and whose blessedness includes costly discipleship in this world. Blessedness includes profound joy. Blessedness even sometimes includes happiness as the world recognizes it—but often it does not. Blessedness is not a sub-category of happiness or pragmatic adjustment or success.

### **Some Implications for Pastoral Care Today**

There are some discernible vectors to Calvin's theology of pastoral care for the contemporary discussion and practice of pastoral care.

First, it recalls us to the fact that pastoral care is first and foremost a matter of life together in the body of Christ over which and through which Christ himself is the active agent by his Word and Spirit. What goes on in the dynamics of pastoral care is ultimately Christ at work through those chosen, equipped, and used as his subordinate, vicarious agents.

Second, it recalls us to a correlative fact: that the single, focused office of the pastor is to hear and re-speak the voice of Christ. That office is immensely complex and demanding, and obviously quite impossible except by, and exclusively by, trusting in the promises of Christ. Such focused trust includes the confidence and boldness

of being assured that the voice of the one pastor, Christ, will in fact be heard and obeyed in life and in death.

Third, Calvin's theology reminds us that pastoral care is a matter of welcoming others as Christ has welcomed us. Pastoral care is exercised by communicating, through preaching and sacraments and discipline, the voice of the one pastor, which a person has himself or herself heard and so can re-announce. Jung observed the closest possible connection between accepting forgiveness and conveying it; that means pastors must also proclaim the gospel to those nearest neighbors who are most resistant to hearing it, namely themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Pastoral care is doing what comes naturally to those who extend to others the demands and the assurance of the gospel. It involves more than a good heart and laudable intention. It entails expertise, skill in diagnosis and treatment, whose acquisition and practice are expressions of one's Christian freedom. We are committed to expert care for others, and we allow ourselves to be expertly cared for by others, because we are freed to actualize Christ's wholeness in every area of life. In pastoral care, one practices what it means to be freed from status based on the mountain of one's (or one's family's or social class's or nation's or gender's, etc.) accomplishments or failures, freed to consider the wholeness of life envisioned in the decalogue, and freed to be indifferent about nonessentials.

Fourth, pastoral care is a contextual discipline of co-membership in the body of Christ. The pastor and the persons being cared for engage in a reciprocal ministry enabled by the way the gospel's demands and assurances are heard and lived in successive contexts. This contextualization is really a matter of the fidelity of Christ's promises. Christ, the one pastor, accommodates himself so that it remains his voice that is heard, trusted and obeyed. This is another way of saying that the Word and the Spirit are never separated. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the gospel takes root in people's lives with healing particularity, becomes vital for them with person-by-person and season-by-season and institution-by-institution specificity.

Fifth, the actions of pastoral care through the ordinary means of grace—preaching, sacraments, prayer—are not to be divorced from other ways the pastor responds to and communicates the gospel, including social reform and church administration. Pastoral care as governance by the Word through guidance, protection and nourishment cannot be separated from the commonweal for which the pastor also has a responsibility as part of his and her exercise of Christian freedom. The wholeness that comes about through pastoral care (and remember, that means

Christ's care through those whom he chooses and equips) includes people's social, economic, political, medical, and aesthetic well-being, and so forth. The wholeness of the people of God entails all the areas of life covered by the decalogue.

Sixth, it means that the called and equipped vicarious pastors are those whose Christian life includes the right use of the goods of this world and deployment of resources according to the imagery of the body whose various parts are mutually helpful to the health of the whole. This means that the God whom we know from the gospel to trust is the one who also works through other than ecclesial structures and through other than believers. The reality rightly understood and made explicit by the gospel is often previously experienced penultimately, partially, and indirectly. Advances in research, skills, technical equipment, specializations, pharmaceuticals, and so on, are to be critically (*n.b.*, critically) and gratefully welcomed as ways God is also at work healing persons.

The specific office of pastoral care does not presume to duplicate these, much less engage in them with religious intent but dilettante incompetence. Clearly God also works through psychological counseling and through psychiatry. While a pastor is grateful for the insights and skills these make available for the pastoral contextualization of the gospel, he or she does not confuse pastoral care with psychological counseling much less with psychiatric treatment. There is a difference between pastoral care, and psychological counseling done by clergy or done with the use of religious categories; both are needed, but they are not the same thing.

The distinctive feature of pastoral care is its focus on the wholeness that comes about through the forgiveness of sins how that fundamental reorientation affects every area of life. Pastoral care has explicitly to do with sharing in Christ's death and resurrection so we may walk in newness of life. There is timing and variety to pastoral care as there is to every skilled caring; but eventually, sooner or later, in pastoral care the participants get around to the freely offered new being which is co-membership in the body of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> At one level this seems an obvious topic which should pose little problem for method of study. There lurks behind this seemingly obvious topic, however, a perilous anachronism.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., W. Kolffhaus, *Die Seelsorge Johannes Calvins*, Neukirchen, B. V. Erziehungsvereins, 1941; J.-D. Benoit, *Calvin, Directeur d'Ames* (Strasbourg: Oberlin, 1947); L. Schummer, *Le ministere pastoral dans l'Institution Chretienne de Calvin a la lumiere du troisieme sacrament* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1965); B. Armstrong, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Calvin's Teaching on the Ministry," in P. de Klerk, ed., *Calvin and the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 99-111) and "The Pastoral Office in Calvin and Pierre du Moulin," in W. van't Spijker, *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag* (Kampen: Kok, 1991), 157-167; Han Chul-Ha, "Theology of Ministry in John Calvin," op. cit. van't Spijker, 95-105; A. Ganoczy, *Calvin, thologien de l'eglise et du ministere* (Paris, 1964); W. Dankbaar, "L'Office des docteurs chez Calvin," in *Regards contemporains sur Jean Calvin* (Strasbourg Colloque sur Calvin, 1964), Paris, 1965; R. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament* (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1953).

<sup>3</sup> Comm. on John 10:10. John Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 263.

<sup>4</sup> Comm. John 10:1. Parker trans., 259; OS, 47:236-237.

<sup>5</sup> On this also see B. Armstrong, "Pastoral Office" in van't Spijker, op. cit., 162.

<sup>6</sup> The relation between governance and being a shepherd is reciprocal, mutually defining and mutually correcting, as Calvin increasingly uses those terms. He prophetically reinterprets the title of king, largely through his, Calvin's, manner of interpreting the Psalms and 1 and 2 Samuel. See D. Willis, "Calvin's Prophetic Reinterpretation of Kingship," in E. McKee and B. Armstrong, eds., *Probing the Reformed Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 116-134. Although in commenting on John 10 and John 21, Calvin is speaking of the governance of the church, the criteria he discerns for Christian magistrates are also set forth in the ideal of the Shepherd ruler.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Calvin's treatment of that part of the Christian life which is the right use of the goods of this world, *Institutes* 3.10. See J. Leith, ch. 5 of *From Generation to Generation* op. cit., and J. de Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). The resources available for the contemporary exercise of this office are plentiful.

<sup>8</sup> Especially the ordinary means of grace, preaching, sacraments and prayer, for which see R. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament*, op. cit. Compare chapter 13 of the Tetrapolitan Confession of 1530, in A.C. Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 69-70.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Institutes* 4.1.5, and Comm. on 2 Cor. 4:5.

<sup>10</sup> Comm. John 21:15. Trans. T.H.L. Parker, vol. 2, 219; OC 47:252.

<sup>11</sup> "For though he [Paul, in 2 Cor. 5:14] means that love with which Christ has loved us and of which he has given us a proof by his death, yet he connects with us that mutual love which springs from the conviction of having received so great a blessing." Comm. on John 10:15.

<sup>12</sup> Comm. John 21:15. Trans. T.H.L. Parker, vol. 2, 219; OS 47: 452.

<sup>13</sup> See W. Kolffhaus, *Christusgemeinschaft bei Johannes Calvin*, Neukirchen, Kr. Moers, 1939; W. Niesel, *The Theology*

*of Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), esp. ch. 9; F. Wendel, *Calvin* (New York: Harper, 1963), 234-242; W. Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1957), esp. 265-272; David Willis, "The Unio Mystica and the Assurance of Faith According to Calvin," in van't Spijker, *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag* (Kampen: Koch, 1991), 77-84; W. van't Spijker, "Extra nos' and 'in nobis' by Calvin in a Pneumatological Light," in P. de Klerk, ed., *Calvin and the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Study Society, 1987); C. Partee, "Calvin's Central Dogma Again," in J. Leith, ed., *Calvin Studies: Papers of the 1986 Davidson Colloquium*, Richmond, 39-46.

<sup>14</sup> OS 4, 35; CIB 3, 42-43. Cf. CIM, 570-571.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Institutes* 1.3.2; 2.2.22-24; 3.19.16; *et passim*, including Comm. on Rom 2:14.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the way the opening question of the Heidelberg Catechism deals with this active trust.

<sup>17</sup> From Auden's "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio."

<sup>18</sup> The third use of the law is part of Christian freedom because of the all-important preface to the decalogue. The people are granted an identity because of the identity of the God who claims them. Were it not for this preface, the third use of the law would simply become a particularly disastrous new form of legalism, guiltocracy, and schismatic works-righteousness. Indeed, there were times in the history of the Reformed churches when the third use of the law malfunctioned in the form of a *sylogismus practicus* bereft of Christological focus and content. The point, however, is that the life of those who belong to this God takes place in concrete, specific acts and structures which exist for the sake of the well-being of all the whole people (and not just for people, for there are elaborate provisions also made for other creatures). Hence the weight Calvin—and Reformed catechisms and confessions—give to the positive end for which each commandment is given. Think, for example, of the emphases these documents place on the positive provisions intended by the commandments not to steal, not to bear false witness, not to commit adultery, not to covet.

<sup>19</sup> See J. de Gruchy, *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis*, op. cit., esp. chs. 2 and 3; J. Leith, *From Generation to Generation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), esp. ch. 5, "Pastoral Care," and *Introduction to the Reformed Tradition* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), 137-162; W. Bouwsma, *John Calvin* (New York: Oxford, 1988), ch. 13; W. F. Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary* (Richmond: John Knox, 1972), chs. 6-8; E. McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Geneva: Droz, 1984), R. Kingdon, "Calvin and the Government of Geneva," in W. Neuser, ed., *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos* (Frankfort: Lang, 1984), 49-67; H. Hoepfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin* (Cambridge: University Press, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> See Benoit, *Calvin, Directeur d'Ames*, chs. 2,5, and 8; R. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1988).

<sup>21</sup> "What I do unto the least of my brethren, that I do unto Christ. But what if I should discover that the least among them all, the offenders, the very enemy himself—that these all are within me, and that I myself stand in need of the alms of my own kindness that I myself is the enemy that must be loved—what then?" Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1933), 271-272, cited in M. France, *The Paradox of Guilt* (Philadelphia: United Church, 1967), 22.

# The Care of Souls Through the Centuries

“Following the only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who died, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.”

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

“The scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image, if it abides, to take it by the hand, if it is in danger, or restore it, if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit: and, in short, to deify, and bestow heavenly bliss upon one who belongs to the heavenly host.”

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 2.22*

“The shepherd needs great wisdom and a thousand eyes to examine the soul’s condition from every angle.”

John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*, II.4

“No one ventures to teach any art unless he has learned it after deep thought. With what rashness, then, would the pastoral office be undertaken by the unfit, seeing that the government of souls is the art of arts. . . . For no one does more harm in the Church than he who having the title or rank of holiness, acts evilly.”

Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*, I.2

“Disturbers are to be rebuked, the low-spirited to be encouraged, the infirm to be supported, objectors confuted, the treacherous guarded against, the unskilled taught, the lazy aroused, the contentious restrained, the haughty repressed, litigants pacified, the poor relieved, the oppressed liberated, the good approved, the evil borne with, and all are to be loved.”

Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon ccix*

“Let the Christian learn to cast both his heart and his cares upon God’s back, for God has a strong neck and strong shoulders; He can easily carry the load. Moreover, He has commanded us to commit our cares to Him. Nor can we lay and cast too much upon Him; He only likes it even more.”

Martin Luther, *Sermon on 1 Pet. 5:5-11*

“On the goal and end of this seeking and leading to Christ of lost sheep . . . is to bring them into the fold of Christ, so that they give themselves wholly to Christ . . . hear his voice in all things, and use all these things which the Lord has appointed for further the salvation of his sheep. . . . In a word, in the community of Christ alone the salvation of Christ is to be received.”

Martin Bucer, *On the True Pastoral Care*

“Nay, after conversion we need bruising, that reeds may know themselves to be reeds, and not oaks; even reeds need bruising, by reason of the remainder of pride in our nature, and to let us see that we live by mercy. And that weaker Christians may not be too much discouraged when they see the stronger shaken and bruised.”

Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*

“The goal of spiritual care should never be a change of mental condition. . . . I do not provide decisive help for anyone if I turn a sad person into a cheerful one, a timid person into a courageous one. That would be a secular—and not a real—help. Beyond and within circumstances such as sadness and timidity it should be believed that God is our help and comfort. Christ and his victory over health and sickness, luck and misfortune, birth and death must be proclaimed. The help he brings is forgiveness and new life out of death.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care*

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.”

Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*

“To speak pastorally with another certainly does not preclude getting involved in every conceivable profane subject. But it must be done in such a way as to bring God’s Word into force as the great proviso over this talk. The conversation must quite concretely move in the direction of revealing the relation in which all things stand to the Word of God.”

Edward Thurneysen, *A Theology of Pastoral Care*

“The cure of souls . . . means helping another by making clear to him that he is ordained a witness of Jesus Christ and that he is usable as such.”

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*

“Forgiveness in the Christian sense is not the same as forgiveness in the therapeutic sense. Christian forgiveness is being pardoned of sin by gratuitous love. Forgiveness in the therapeutic sense is being accepted even in our weakness and folly. In therapeutic forgiveness we forgive in order to be healed. In Christian forgiveness we forgive out of gratitude for God’s forgiveness of us. Forgiveness in the biblical sense does not cancel the judgment upon sin but brings one through judgment. . . . Forgiveness is not a technique to achieve inner healing, but healing will certainly follow the assurance that our sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ.”

Donald Bloesch, *The Church*

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