

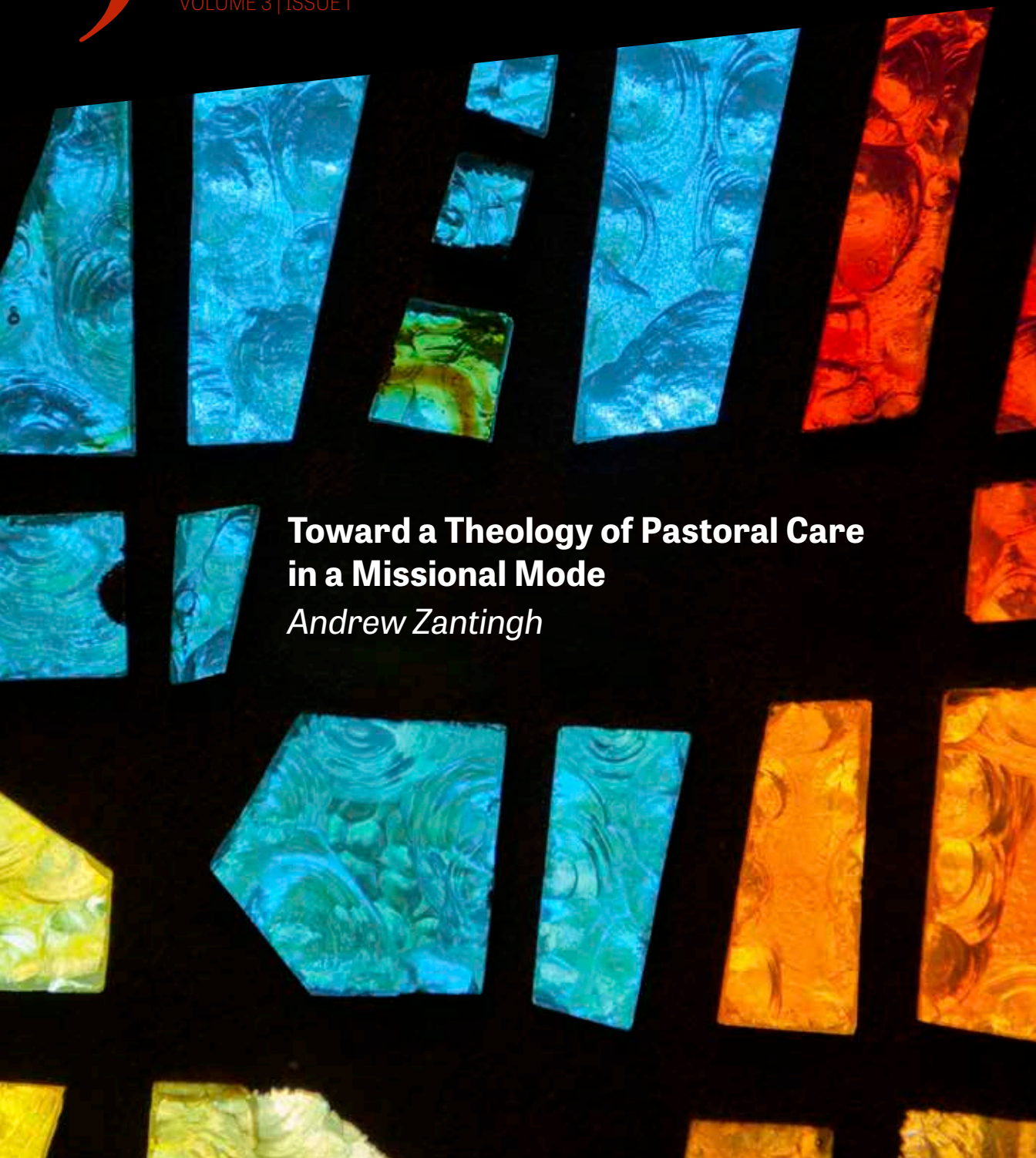
JBTS

VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 1

JOURNAL OF
BIBLICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL
STUDIES

**Toward a Theology of Pastoral Care
in a Missional Mode**

Andrew Zantingh



Toward a Theology of Pastoral Care in a Missional Mode

ANDREW ZANTINGH

Andrew Zantingh is a graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary and serves as Professor of Congregational Theology at Missional Training Center, Phoenix, and Lead Pastor of The Journey Church in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. As a lead pastor, Andrew has helped shift two churches in Canada to a missional Pastoral Theology, and he now mentors and coaches other pastors to be a missional leaders and disciplers.

Abstract: For close to twenty-five years, I have been learning how to care for the congregations God has called me to serve. In this respect, I am like most other professional pastors who paid significant money to be trained by professional professors to gain the necessary skills and techniques to do specialized care in a congregational setting. In addition to being a pastor, I now also teach graduate level pastoral care courses for pastors. The following paper is my theological reflection on the task of training pastors to do pastoral care in a missional way. There are some significant problems with our current approach to pastoral theology. In this volume, Michael Goheen identifies three crucial assumptions that have negatively shaped pastoral theology's historical growth as a theological discipline: a theory-practice dichotomy, a professionalized view of the pastoral ministry, and a non-missional understanding of the church. My pastoral care experience bears out how these three assumptions have led to a faulty pastoral theology. In this article, I wish to offer an alternative approach to pastoral care from a missional mode. In doing so, I offer a solution which overcomes the theory-praxis dichotomy, that properly positions the role of the pastors as lead discipler, and one that correctly locates pastoral care in the context of a missional understanding of the church. I will do this by sketching the problem of pastoral care from ministry experience, by constructing theological contours that reframe pastoral care in the missional mode, by offering a concrete example of this kind of pastoral care in action, and finally by sketching a dynamic approach to theological education that can equip pastors for such care.

Key Words: Pastoral care, Pastoral Theology, Missional Theology, Pastoral Ministry

Introduction

A Critique of a Contemporary Approach to Pastoral Care

There are three assumptions that have given rise to a faulty approach to theological education as a whole and to the pastoral theology in particular. The first is the theory-practice dichotomy. My theological training would be considered top drawer academically, but my training clearly embodied this problematic dualism. The expressed aim of my seminary education was to help seminarians *to think theologically*, which came to mean the ability to think theoretically and abstractly about God, the Bible, God's people and the world. It was then the task of the practical theology department to take us "theological pit bulls" and turn us into "caring practitioners." The phrases in quotations were the actual words of my pastoral care professor. He had to teach us how to access our hearts through empathy—which enabled us to feel as well as think. But herein lies the problem. He had to try to put together inside of us what our education had artificially pulled apart into categories of theory and praxis. To put it in the vernacular, he had to try to get theology students "out of their heads and into their hearts." I remember covenanting with myself that if I ever got the opportunity to train others, I would try to heal the wounds created by this theory-practice lobotomy.

Two decades of professional ministry highlight the second problem with pastoral theology—that we assume it is the proper task of professionals to care for church members. After graduating from an American seminary, it was my aim to become a consummate professional, someone who could integrate theory and practice in a particular congregation in a Canadian context. In the mind of the members, I was clearly viewed as the trained professional who alone could provide the primary care to the church. So a second dualism, the clergy-laity distinction, persisted in both pastor and parishioners. This invisible divide provided an on-going recipe for congregational disappointment and disempowerment. If I did not provide care often enough, there was disappointment. Even if I trained elders, deacons and caregivers to provide care in my place, they felt disempowered by members' tacit expectations to be cared for by a professional. This invisible divide also fed my pastoral guilt over never caring enough and deepened my discouragement over never be able to be enough to meet the high consumer demand for professionalized care.

This error leads to a third problem I experienced in the parish—the church's non-missional self-understanding. I served both an established church and young church plant; and in both I discovered a similar mindset. The church exists for its own members—for the sake of itself. In the established church I served, the remaining members of this aging congregation were a highly introverted group who were singly focused on the survival of their institutional church. They were not able to articulate a purpose for their church's existence beyond the benefitting of its

own members—a clear expression of “sacred egocentricity.”¹ This inward-focused view limited pastoral care to the horizon of “members only.” In the church plant, the congregants could articulate a much more outwardly focused orientation for its existence in the community. But in actuality, pastoral care was largely determined and driven by consumer expectation of paid staff caring for the supporting community. In neither context was there truly an active missionary ecclesiology, an expressed and experienced reality of the church existing to care for the world.

In my experience of training pastors in Canada, the US and in Europe, it is clear to me that these problems in pastoral theology are perennial and persistent. These problems exist in the traditional church, and they persist in contemporary church plants. Collectively, they are inhibiting the church’s witness at best and contributing to its demise at worst. But our hope for a new church and a new creation are not tied to what humans can do, but to what God has done, is doing and will do to bring about the renewal of the church and the entire creation. God has promised to do this; we get to participate in this mission. This includes the renewing of pastoral theology.

Theological Contours for Pastoral Care

I now move from critique to construction. This construction task requires, in the first place, a robust theological framework of pastoral care. I suggest seven aspects of this framework that are critical for constructing a pastoral theology capable of equipping the church for its mission. These seven aspects are all unified in the gospel of the kingdom: God is restoring all humanity and all creation from the divisive effects of sin through the person of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit. This gospel is the hope for the renewal of all things and includes how we think about pastoral care. The starting point for a robust theology of care begins with this simple assertion: *God cares*. Caregiving originates with God, with His character and identity. Human experience testifies to the goodness of God’s character. Psalm 145:8–9 celebrates that “The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made” (ESV).

This song affirms that God’s care is focused on the human and non-human creation. God cares that human beings flourish and experience being fully alive to his goodness. God cares that all creation shares in the shower of His daily good graces. God’s inherent goodness is the bedrock and wellspring of all the care that exists in the cosmos. His goodness is precisely what our negative experience of life in this world causes us to question. But caregivers must cling to this profoundly deep faith commitment—that God is good and that He cares, even if our life’s experience is often far from it. Without this mooring in God’s character of care, the entire universe becomes a hostile environment we must either attempt to conquer or escape. With

1. Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part 3, 2*, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1961), 554–569.

this grounding in God's caring goodness, human beings can learn to rest assured and receive the care of God.

All creation, human and non-human, testifies to the reality that God truly cares. The creation is marvelously vast and intricate. Humans are fearfully and wonderfully made. All created reality is complex—a complexity that reveals the care of its maker and sustainer. To his complex imager-bearers, God shares his vocation by mandating them to become caregivers of each other and caretakers who cultivate communities that shape culture and realize the creative potential latent in the world.

The logic of pastoral care derives from this theological starting point: pastors care because God cares. As humans, we share God's capacity to care. As pastors, we are called to reflect His care in local congregations. God knows that our capacity for care has been greatly diminished by sin. But He cares enough to set out on a long road of redemption to restore humanity—including our care-giving capacity. That is how much He cares.

A second aspect of a theological framework derives from the long road of redemption that God travels in the biblical story: *God's care for his creation leads to his mission of restoration*. He does so by forming a people who will be restored to their full humanity and live as a light in the midst of the dark world. Early on the road of redemption, God focuses his attention on one single person named Abraham and his people in order to save all families and all creation. God calls a particular people out of Egypt, plants them into a new land and puts them on display at the crossroads of the nations. There God cares for His people and calls them to reflect His care for all peoples. God calls Abraham and his children into a vocation of care — for each other and for the sake of the nations. Within Israel, God set aside leaders (Levites, kings, priest, and prophets) with the task of equipping his people with the end goal of training people how to receive grace and extend that grace to all. Today, church leaders are called to shape a culture of care within the church. In particular, pastors must take the lead in reflecting God's care for and to His people. But the goal of this care is to equip the people He has chosen to grow into their full humanity so that they can be His display case to the world. This missionary view of the church acts as an essential corrective to our current view of pastors purposed to be paid professionals that serve paying members for their own sake and satisfaction. By contrast, pastors are called by God to show others how to live fully human lives so that they can take their turn in showcasing God's care for all people.

If the goal of pastoral theology then is to help all human beings be fully alive, then we need to understand human beings; we need an adequate anthropology. This is the third aspect of a theology of care: *God's image bearers are multifaceted creatures*. If people are to be restored to their full humanity, we need an understanding of humanity that enables us to grasp the multifaceted nature of humanity. The anthropology of Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd is extremely helpful here. He expresses the complexity of the human person as a unity in diversity

by employing a modal scale.² Dooyeweerd views the human person as existing in a rich variety of irreducible modes starting from the basic biotic mode on up to the creedal mode on top. In between, he suggests others modes such as emotional, rational, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, political, and ethical. This structured diversity has a radical and integrating center in the religious center, often called the heart in Scripture (e.g., Proverbs 4:23). This religious center integrates and gives meaning to all of human life either by directing it all to Christ or to an idol. Either Christ or a Christ-substitute will direct, unify, and give meaning to all the other aspects of human life. As faith is directed to Christ one is able to live in line with the creational intent of God, thus increasing the flourishing of life. But if faith is directed toward the creature rather than the Creator, all modes of human life are corrupted. [Diagram 1]

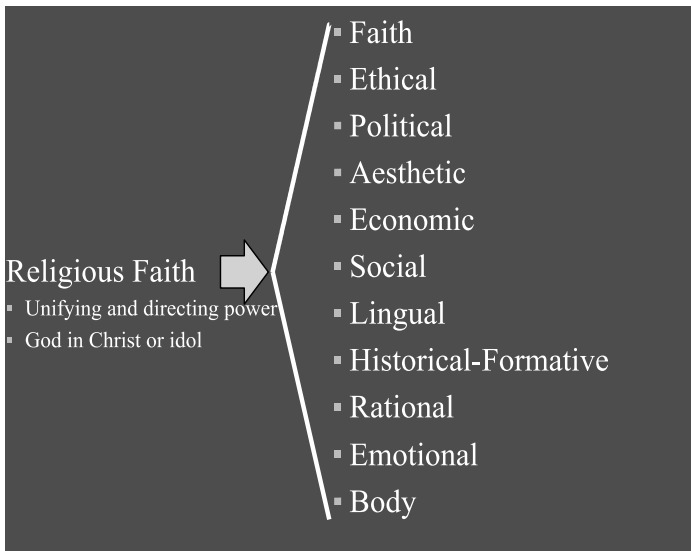


DIAGRAM 1

One need not agree with all aspects of this philosophical framework to see that this modal scale can help us see that we often over-simplify and reduce the nature of humanity, rather than embracing our complex or multifaceted existence. A good pastoral theology must have an anthropology something like the one offered above if we are going to appreciate the complex nature of human functioning. As pastors, we want to see humanity flourish at every level of their existence and especially at the religious control center of the heart. Moreover, such an anthropology enables us to understand the comprehensive and complex twisting power of sin, the theme of our next point.

2. Cf. further, Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 253–259.

The fourth aspect of our theological framework is that *sin is much bigger and more complicated than we often realize*. Sin is not just bad behavior: it is a power. G.C. Berkouwer speaks of sin as a “seductive power,” an “active, dynamic and destructive force,” and a “power that seeks to rule and to ruin everyone and everything.”³ Sin is also parasitic. It feeds off of and twists our God-given life and creational functions. Sin is itself a non-entity, a non-being with no ontological existence apart from something like a living human host.⁴ Sin resides in the human heart and hi-jacks all good human desires and distorts them into inordinate love of created things. This reality, called idolatry in Scripture, causes humans to behave in all kinds of dehumanizing ways and to experience all manner of dysfunction. Sin is also pervasive: it affects and pollutes every mode of human existence. The end result is that sin is just plain painful. Human beings groan and are filled with pain; there is no simple or easy cure for what ails us. In response to this pain, pastors must carefully try to understand the unique and complex nature of each person’s ailments before attempting to alleviate their suffering. If our view of sin remains too small and too simplistic, we simply will not be able to provide a proper diagnosis or cure. Our care is impacted by this reductionist understanding and will suffer as a result.

But to further complicate matters we need to see that Paul’s view of evil, for example in Ephesians 2:1–3, moves beyond the individual. Here he speaks of evil in terms of three realities: the sinful nature, the world, and the powers. [Diagram 2]⁵

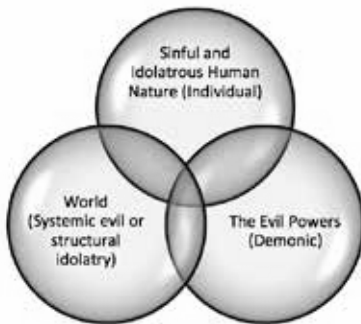


DIAGRAM 2

The first is the *sinful nature*—corrupted human nature that gives humanity a powerful propensity for sin. The second is the *world*. This is not to be confused with the good creation. Rather it is human culture as it has been formed and organized around idolatry. The flesh or sinful nature is the propensity of each individual toward idolatry

3. G.C. Berkouwer, *Sin*, Studies in Dogmatics. Translated by Philip C. Holtrop (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 235, 240, 259, 262.

4. There is a long history of reflection of sin in terms of *privatio* that goes back to Augustine. Augustine said the evil “has no existence except as a privation of the good” (Confessions 3.7.12). See Berkouwer’s discussion, *Sin*, 256–267.

5. This diagram is borrowed from my former New Testament professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, Mariano Avila, who used it in his opening convocation address in 2013.

while the world is culture that such people create to serve other gods. Just these two together would create such a colossal and complicated mess that no amount of human effort could ever clean it up. But now consider a third reality: *the powers*. They are the demonic powers who harass and hurt human beings and incite them to the personal and systematic vandalism of shalom. These powers act in and through the oppressive cultural systems or the world. As N.T. Wright put it: “For Paul, the powers were unseen forces working in the world...through the oppressive systems that enslaved and tyrannized human beings.”⁶

Paul’s understanding of sin is the overlapping of these three powerful realities with a central “sweet spot”—or perhaps “sour spot”—that could be considered “hell on earth.” Apart from Christ, according to Paul, that is where we live, and move, and have our pastorates. If this is an accurate picture of how evil impacts reality, then it is not difficult to draw this conclusion: the world and its caretakers are so complicated by sin that any care response to save what has been spoiled by sin must be simultaneously complex and comprehensive, both deep and wide.

The good news is that the nature of salvation in Jesus is as far as the curse is found. Salvation restores every aspect of human life—and this is our fifth point. *Salvation is much bigger, deeper and wider in scope than we often believe.* Salvation is far bigger than just saving souls; it is instead the restoring of human beings to their full humanity. Pastoral care is far more than just soul care; it is care for the full human person so that they may again flourish in every dimension of their created nature. Jesus himself testifies to the comprehensive scope of his calling to care for all humanity in Luke 4. Here Jesus reveals that the Spirit of the Lord is equipping Him to lead the long-awaited turn around beginning with the people who need that care most: the poor, the prisoner, the sick, and those pressed down by injustice. This reiteration of the Messiah’s mission from Isaiah 61 would have certainly resonated with oppressed Israel. Yet the recipients of God’s care and concern are not only for people like Israel who find themselves in political exile, actual prisoners in danger of losing their sight during unending dark nights of unjust exile. The intended recipients of this salvation are to be understood in the most comprehensive sense possible, in the sense of all sinners suffering from all the corrupting and complicating effects of sin upon human life. People need salvation from sin in every sense —politically, emotionally, physically, morally, economically, and so on. And for Luke salvation has just this scope.⁷ This is more just soul care of soul salvation. The salvation envisioned here is a reversal of sin’s effects on creation’s crown in every respect, as far as the curse is found, so that all creation can share in this freedom from sin’s frustration.

6. N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986; reprint, 2008), 77.

7. E. H. Scheffler has studied the word “salvation” in Luke and concludes that salvation has at least six dimensions: spiritual, physical, economic, political, social, and psychological in *Suffering in Luke’s Gospel* (University of Pretoria: Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 1988).

This salvation being discussed here is more than just a special focus of care for God's special people. Jesus makes sure that the scope of the servant's saving work is not limited here to just Israel by including direct references to foreigners like the Canaanite widow and a Syrian military commander who become beneficiaries of God's healing grace. Jesus clearly connects God's favor now present in his work as the power to renew Israel in its calling so that that they might care for all nations, and not just behave as the sole beneficiaries of God's care. According to Luke's gospel, Jesus' restoration is to be understood as a comprehensive work—in Israel and through them to all peoples. This is the proper missional perspective that ought to frame all pastoral work. It is not just soul care for God's special people. It is not less than that, but it is far more. Pastoral care is more than just to care; it is the care for the full human person as members of a missional body called to care for the whole human family.

Imagine for a moment how this big view of salvation and mission might impact a specific person and through that person others. Imagine the person as a diverse complexity that is unified and directed by their religious center. Imagine Jesus' saving power touching the human's heart, dislodging idols, awakening faith and re-directing life back to God. Imagine this same grace freely flowing from the heart into all other modes of that person's existence restoring order, true direction, and healing to all these created areas. Imagine this saving work start to impact how this person then lives in all arenas of life. See this re-creative power flow through this person into the created structures of marriage, family, and the workplace. See this re-creative power rearranging this person's private and public life under Christ's Lordship. Imagine the powerful witness this person's life could become to those around them because Jesus is not just saving their soul, but renewing their entire heart and life. Imagine this human being becoming fully alive in Jesus and imagine the impact of this one life on the larger human family. Imagine shalom spreading to the entire creation, restoration flowing as far as the curse is found. This is the scope of Jesus' kingdom mission. As pastors, we get to help steward this salvation in the lives of God's people for the sake of all people. Can we imagine this?

A note of caution is warranted here. Being faith-filled caregivers is not to assume that we will ever fully experience human beings becoming fully restored in this era of redemptive-history. And so we must add a sixth aspect to our theological framework: *restoration must be seen in light of the already-not yet nature of the coming kingdom.* Because the kingdom is already here but not yet fully arrived, human beings have not yet and will not yet reach their full human potential.

On the one hand, we must believe that the kingdom has come (cf. Matthew 12:28). The power of God is present for the healing of all of human life. Pastors must believe that in the gospel there really is healing power to deliver people from the on-going effects of sin and evil. Pastors must be trained in the practices that bring freedom from these powers of the old age. Without these tools, both pastor

and congregation will not be properly equipped to engage in God's mission in this world. On the other hand, we must not believe that the kingdom has fully arrived. We will continue to suffer from the squeeze of the sinful nature, the world, and demonic powers. We will continue to suffer all forms of dysfunction up to the reality of death and its accompanying grief. We should not preach or practice a theology that assumes the powers of the old age have already passed away, for they are still present and powerful. People still choose to participate with them resulting in real pain. Good pastoral care responds fully and faithfully to this pain with the Spirit's power, even though there is not yet full restoration despite our most faithful efforts. This is sobering, because it means we must learn to suffer with people in patience and in hope of the full salvation still coming in Christ.

We conclude this section on theological contours with a last one that puts pastoral ministry in proper ecclesiological perspective: *the church is a sent people*. The church is a community called and commissioned by Jesus to be a distinctive people, a people fully alive to their true humanity in a dead and dying world, a display people who showcase what it looks to be truly human and invite others into this life-giving reality. The church is sent with the authority of Jesus to make disciples, learners of the way of Jesus, who themselves learn to make disciples who also make disciples. Multiplication of the life of Jesus is clearly in view here. Pastors are called by God to lead and equip the church in its continuing mission to make disciples of all nations. It is essential to understand the key role the pastor plays in the fulfillment of this mission. Pastors are not intended to simply provide soul care to congregational members for their own sake. Instead, they must be equipped to live into their "sentness."

Lesslie Newbigin's model of ministerial leadership is extremely insightful here as it directly combines the three notions of leadership, discipleship, and mission. In his discussion of John 20:19–23, Newbigin rightly claims that Jesus is speaking to the disciples neither as exclusive church members nor as exclusive leaders of the church.⁸ Rather, he addresses them as both members and leaders. Both share the same calling. The church is commissioned to make disciples; and leaders are called to lead and equip the church to fulfill its disciple-making calling. To state this simply: leaders exist to enable disciples. Pastors then are lead disciple-makers, not simply caregivers. As Newbigin puts it "ministry in the Church is so following Jesus on the way of the cross that others are enabled to follow and to become themselves leaders of others in the same way."⁹ Care is part of disciple-making.

This umbrella of lead discipleship is the proper umbrella for understanding the place of pastoral care in the missionary church. In my judgment, pastoral care is about removing barriers in people so that they may be faithful and fruitful in following

8. Lesslie Newbigin, *Ministry*. Unpublished paper, 1982; *How Should We Understand Sacraments and Ministry?* Unpublished paper, 1983.

9. Newbigin, *How Should We Understand Sacraments and Ministry?*, 9.

Jesus. Sin and all its effects constantly threaten to ransack people and sideline them from the family business of making disciples. Pastoral care is the ministry of diagnosing what ails people and carefully restoring them to health through the gospel *so that* they can continue to learn to follow Jesus for the sake of the world and teach others to do likewise. Without placing pastoral care in its proper context of missional discipleship, the church's care ministry becomes disoriented and functions as an end in itself. This is precisely where the contemporary church in the West finds itself. But as the church rediscovers its sent-ness as God's missional people sent to make disciples, pastoral care takes its rightful and critical place in healing people for the sake of mission. Without this ministry of pastoral care, disciples simply get taken out by sin and evil, and fail to become a living example of Jesus for others to see and follow.

An Example of Pastoral Care in a Missional Mode

Before moving to pastoral care in theological education, a concrete living example might be helpful to illustrate the theological framework sketched thus far. This is a true story about the Carlson family and their missional calling in their neighborhood. The inclusion of this story provides a living illustration of how critical care is to the disciple-making mission of the church. It offers a glimpse of what pastoral care operating in a missional mode might look like.

The Carlson family is a young family of six, two parents and four children, living on a rather typical city street. This couple, in their mid-thirties, has been intentionally disciple toward incarnational mission by a local pastor and his wife. This pastoral couple established a long history of caring for the Carlson family through pre-marital classes, the wedding ceremony, and the birth of each child. This same pastoral couple came alongside the Carlsons through critical periods of grief (the loss of a parent) and crisis (a child diagnosed in vitro with heart trouble). The pastoral couple imitated for them a lifestyle of care and intentionally trained to follow their lead. As a result, the couple started to lead their young children into an intentional life-style of caring for each other and for the neighbors on their street. The missional engagement began in earnest with Mrs. Carlson inviting young mother with children to have coffee in her home on Thursday mornings. In this welcoming space, these neighbors learned to care for each as they followed the host mother's lead over a period of months. The coffee time built into regular rhythms of weekly open homes, special holiday street parties, and contributed to an overall shift towards care in the culture of their street.

But then a crisis developed. One single mother of three fell ill with cancer. Her life was threatened. She was forced to plan the adoption of her children. Moved to compassion, the Carlsons made regular visits to the home to care for the family. The relationship of trust deepened. Mrs. Carlson grew in her confidence to minister to

others in Jesus' name. So she asked if she could pray for her friend. Her dying friend agreed to receive prayer. But on the way to the palliative care facility, Mrs. Carlson became very anxious. Her faith had grown, but she was feeling her inexperience and inadequacy. So she invited a member of the pastoral staff at church to accompany her. The staff soon arrived and modeled some simple steps for healing prayer. Mrs. Carlson joined in and eventually took the lead. Later, she visited routinely and prayed on her own repeatedly. Within a few days, the terminally-ill woman revived and returned home to resume a reasonably normal life.

Notice some of the contours of pastoral care at work here. The pastors cared, but they were not paid to simply care for members. They took the lead in caring for their members in order to equip them for God's mission of disciple-making. They intentionally made disciples who made disciples who in turn cared for others in Jesus' name. Furthermore, the effects of sin certainly loomed large in the sick woman's situation. She was confined to a bed of physical, emotional, relational, and financial need. There was no simple fix to this sin-sick situation. But into this complicated situation, Jesus's salvation came through the multifaceted care of Mrs. Carlson and her family. Through their example, disciples of Jesus were being made of the children in both families. In addition, the neighbors watched the Carlsons and observed what God was really like through the lives of His people. In fact, people from several nations from around the world had been gathered on that street to witness this intentional act of caretaking. The Carlsons and their congregation were and still are on display. Their faith is carefully shining forth. This is the already of the kingdom being lived out at street level.

But at the same time, the not-yet of the kingdom was painfully present. The cancer returned two years later with a deadly vengeance. The single mother died, and her children were adopted. The Carlson family struggled with deep grief and great existential questions. Then to complicate matters, the pastor who discipled the couple also died from cancer. Mr. Carlson was especially close to this pastor, and his grief was further compounded when he lost a good friend at work in the environmental waste management business. Mr. Carlson began to struggle seriously to stay engaged at work, at church, and in his neighborhood. He was sidelined by grief and greatly in need of pastoral care. His wife knew it, but she was filled with her own grief and was staving off depression. God's kingdom mission seemed to be sidelined. If we consider the Carlsons to be the sharp point of the kingdom spear in that neighborhood, then sin and suffering had blunted the couple's passion for serving God there. Faith had been eclipsed by fear and doubt. Care had been clouded by anger and apathy. The not-yet of the kingdom was squeezing the life out of this Jesus following family.

But the story was and is far from over. Another pastor from the same church noticed that the family was regularly absent from the Sunday gathering. She touched base by means of a caring text and a follow up phone call. Mrs. Carlson responded in kind and acknowledged their need for care. What happened next was even more

complex caring into a complicated context. But the pastor had been trained well. She knew the dynamics of grief; she knew that grief comes in like a storm of madness and breaks with tears of sadness. In her visits, she helped the couple move from mad to sad, from anger to grief. Thanks to her sensitivity and the Spirit's work, the storm clouds of grief blew through. Her empathic listening helped them gradually move from despair to hope. The pastor set up regular times to help them visit their grief in order that they might heal. She did all this because she genuinely cared for them out of the care she herself had received from the Father. She did all this, not because no one else could do it, but so that others could learn how to do it as well. The good news is that the Carlsons are being restored again to being attentive care-givers to their children, their neighbors, their co-workers, and to the environment as well. This is just one example of how a faithful and fruitful process of pastoral care unfolded. It resulted in a people equipped again to participate in God's mission.

Teaching Pastors to Care in a Missional Mode

This story demonstrates clearly the critical place of pastoral care in the process of preparing people for their missional calling. The task remains to teach pastors to offer pastoral care in this kind of missional mode. How can we equip them to care so that they might equip others to take up their calling?

We begin with a discipleship process for doing theological education. Discipleship is an intentional process of a lead learner imitating the life of Jesus so that the follower may learn this life in the process. Discipleship can be done in cohorts of people who travel together with the lead disciple. An added benefit of cohorts is that it allows for learning from each other along the way. Jesus' practice of investing himself for three years in a cohort of future leaders is worthy of notice and imitation. I am not proposing that this process can only involve one missional leader teaching a group of people all the theological disciplines in a live-in situation, for there can and should be contextual adjustment. But the process ought to allow for imitation and not just information, for action with the missional leader that also allows for reflection. Perhaps a change of life-style for theological educators might be required if they are going to actively engage in the very mission they wish to prepare their disciples for.

The primary reason for doing theological education through discipleship is that it is a cure to the current theory-praxis dichotomy. If we continue to believe that best way to do theological education involves theorizing about ministry and then expecting the student to apply that theory in internships, then we can continue to limit learning to the classroom environment. Disciples will be made through this disintegrating process. Disciples can even be mass-produced through this model. These people will likely go on to function as resident theologians in churches that expect their pastors to do all the care ministry. But these pastors might never engage in

God's mission or develop a life-style worth imitating. They themselves have not been led in a way that equipped them for mission; and therefore they will not be equipped to lead others to do the same. Lead disciples are made through intensive, intentional, life-on-life interaction over time. Lead disciples cannot be mass-produced. Because of its intensive nature, making lead disciples who make disciples must start slow. But it eventually picks up speed through multiplication. This is the life-style Jesus commissioned us to lead, a life that leads to equip. Doing theological education in this discipleship mode is the cure for theory-praxis dichotomy.

I could easily be misunderstood here as impatient or mistakenly viewed as anti-intellectual and opposed to academic scholarship or qualified professors. But this would be a mistake and a misunderstanding of my position. The church will continue to need a sustained and deep theological reflection of its experiences of ministry and mission in the world, but the academic reflections must be combined with our born from actual experiences and directed back into the service of the mission. Professors of theology who train pastors must have a life-worth imitating, not only in terms of their scholarship, but also in terms of their own discipleship journey. What needs to change is not the rigor of our theological reflection, but our overly abstracted reflection detached from missional praxis and our rigid educational structures that deliver a static formation process, which does not effective disciple-makers make. Going forward, we will need to be flexible experimenting with models that help us make disciples in the missional mode. It will likely take numerous iterations to develop a theological education that integrates reflection and imitation, but those engaging in this enterprise are worthy of their calling.

It is within this context of discipleship that pastoral care can find its rightful place. As mentioned earlier, pastoral care is a dynamic process of finding out what ails our disciples, removing those barriers to fruitfulness, and restoring them to health *so that* they might take up their place in God's mission to make disciples of the world. The Carlson's example above demonstrates what a dynamic process this is. Pastoral care in the missional mode must teach lead disciples how to diagnose the dynamics operating in the lives of people, marriages, families, and church families if they are to be going to be effective in equipping a people for mission

The theological reflection on humanity and on sin discussed earlier helps us gain insight into the human's complex condition and for the need for equally nuanced diagnosis. Diagnosis begins at the level of human behavior. Dooyeweerd's philosophical anthropology helps us understand the direct connection between the diversity of human behavior and its center in the heart. An individual's outward behavior in any given area of life or mode of existence never lies. It reveals the direction of the heart and the idols that live there. Idolatry creates all kinds of inordinate desire, distortions, dysfunction, and dehumanizing behaviors. If we learn to read behavior, we can carefully help expose these dynamics, displace these false

loves with a greater love, and help people develop healthier rhythms of life rooted in grace and freedom.

Furthermore, if we understand human life as mired in the triad of the sinful nature, the world, and the demonic, we gain further diagnostic help for the individual living in community. The sinful individual always functions as a part of a much larger communal-field of idolatrous distortion and demonic involvement. People come by idols honestly from their family of origins and society at large. Displacing these idols requires leaders to do good work to carefully expose the idols that are communally owned. Sin-sick people struggle to become healthy if there is no change in their marriage and family, or if there is little understanding of their larger communal and cultural situation. The dynamics involved here are incredibly complex, but there are very helpful insights provided by psychology, sociology, and other social-scientific disciplines. Psychological terms like co-dependency, differentiation, shame-based families, transference, and many others function as indispensable tools that explain and expose hidden realities operating below the surface that contribute to unhealthy patterns of life. The insights of family system theory can help us understand the tacit sinful scripts that reinforce harmful behaviors in nuclear, extended and church families. Understanding anxiety as emotional pain and how it often functions to sabotage change in the church's emotional system enables pastors to lead through the necessary change without becoming themselves hurt and reactive. Understanding the importance of emotionally healthy spirituality and leading others through a process of growing up can only help to form a showcase people. All these realities involve hidden, invisible dynamics that must be properly diagnosed if they are to be exposed and healed. And the social sciences may provide helpful insight. At the same time—although we can't enter this topic now—we must also be critical of the humanist religious vision that often drives these insights.

Perhaps the most difficult dysfunction to diagnose is the presence of the demonic that oppresses at all levels of human life. This is in part because the demonic prefers being invisible and operating out of plain sight. But it is also our collective and categorical denial of the demonic in Western culture that remains the main reason why we fail to realize and deal with the demonic and their devices. But there is hope even for secular humanists who deny the reality of the powers. To paraphrase the great Reformation hymn of Martin Luther: "Although this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us; we will not fear for Christ has willed his truth to triumph through us." Our theological training ought to help our disciples recognize the presence and power of the demonic power operating both individually and corporately, and to deal with them decisively.

In the individual, the demonic works to enslave through individual adherence to idolatry, and is often manifest in addictive and compulsive behaviors. The demonic also inhabits areas of wounds or unforgiving disposition, but can be easily evicted once a person is led through the cleaning process of forgiveness. Leaders must be

trained in facilitating inner healing processes that can send the demonic packing and can restore people to following Christ with greater freedom. In the corporate sense, the demonic encourage the creation of cultural idols and ideology which also create distortion, dysfunction and dehumanizing behavior. For example, consumerism is culture patterned on the service of the consumptions of goods and experiences. It forms the whole of human life and promises fulfilment. As Jane Collier has put it: "Precisely because the culture of economism is a quasi-religion, with a pretense of encompassing the totality of life and of bringing happiness and fulfilment, we find ourselves obliged from a Christian point of view to denounce it as dehumanizing idolatry..."¹⁰ The cure here is to lead leaders in learning how to use intentional discipleship, rhythms and practices to shape a contrast community that can withstand the spirits of the age and live as an alternative to people caught in the grip of the powers. In this way, God's people can become dynamic participants who cooperate with the already present and vastly superior power of the Spirit for the sake of freeing captives currently living under the curse of consumerism.

But the not-yet of the kingdom is a dynamic in our reality that also cannot be denied. The illustration of the Carlson's situation demonstrates that healing may but does not always happen. When death occurs, good grieving must follow. Leaders can facilitate this grief through the dynamic of empathic listening. Empathy is not sympathy, that is, simply feeling sorry for people. Nor is it identification, that is, relating one's own similar experience to the grieving person. Rather it is entering another's emotional frame of reference through active listening. Empathy is a capacity that all human beings have, but it also must be developed and deepened through intentional training, the imitation of others and routine practice. When empathy is properly employed, grieving individuals can be moved over time from despair to hope. When empathy is practiced in community, belief survives and belonging thrives. When leaders lead their own grieving disciples through the valley of the shadow of death to the others side, these disciples are no longer stuck or sidelined by their grief. They can eventually get on with the mission of getting others to the other side of grief as well. One day, we know that even death will be no more. But until that day, pastors must be deal with dynamic reality of grief that pervades all human experience.

The treatment here of the content of pastoral theology is obviously not intended to be exhaustive, but illustrative. This is just a sampling of the kind of subjects that need to be incorporated into a dynamic process of theological discipleship and reflection. Far more work needs to be done to fill out this skeletal sketch. But it is offered with the intention of providing some initial insight into how one might re-imagine the process of pastoral care in a missional mode.

10. Jane Collier, "Contemporary Culture and the Role of Economics," in *The Gospel and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hugh Montefiore (London: Mowbray, 1992), 122.