FIVE PATHWAYS TO WHOLENESS

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Explorations in pastoral care and counselling

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To Joy and our much loved grandchildren:
Luke, Verity, Ruth, Maya, Ciara and Ethan

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Foreword: mind the gap

'Life is not simple, nor love inevitable,' wrote novelist Niall Williams.[1] Not that we need telling. We already know this to our cost and frustration. The search for what we hope will bring happiness, fulfilment and what we mean by 'wholeness' is anything but straightforward. Cul-de-sacs and wrong turns abound. But we are nothing if not determined. The greater part of life in our Western world is shaped around the endless pursuit of this.

We do our living in the gap between the world we find ourselves in and the one we long for. We never quite lose a restless sense, deep down, that what we are is not who we *truly* are and that what we are *not* is who we truly *are*. In fact, we learn this from the earliest stories of childhood. All those ugly ducklings who were actually beautiful swans; the scullery maids who were really the king's true love; the toads who were handsome princes. All that life trapped under a spell of lost or stolen identity, waiting for the release of one whose kiss is true.[2]

This means that alongside the pursuit of our desires and dreams of wholeness, we must build relationships with our frustrations, pain and incompleteness. Finding a place to start is itself a challenge. It may be the single least helpful feature of our world that, at the press of a button, *everything* is accessible from *anywhere*. There is a kind of rootless vagrancy about the way we pursue what we need in life. If we seem to get nowhere it may be because we struggle to start from *some*where. Psychotherapist Adam Philips describes a society that lives 'on the compass of our excitement'. That leaves us endlessly reactive to the latest distraction or stimulation. The cost of this is everywhere apparent. And do we even know how exploited this leaves us? Life comes marked by high levels of anxiety, dis-ease and varieties of consumptive disorders. The result is profoundly dehumanizing. But a world driven by technology approaches our pain as a 'problem' to be 'solved', while a culture shaped around markets only really knows how to approach 'wholeness', like happiness, as a consumer product – for those who can afford it.

Into such a raw context of confusion and need this book lays out the foundations of the Christian understanding of wholeness and explores the pathways that lead there. And what does this word 'wholeness' *not* include? It certainly contains much more than we usually allow it to. Hurding is a compassionate but probing observer of human journeying, within and beyond Christian faith. No pathway is allowed to become narrowed to private ends. Rather the word grows with the telling. One of the most challenging chapters explores the social understanding of 'wholeness', including reflections on multicultural society, gender relationships and the deepening crisis of global ecology.

A significant feature of this book is the careful attention Hurding pays to history. The development of therapies, beliefs and approaches to wholeness are all carefully traced, set in their historical context and critically evaluated. There is important wisdom here. To know where we are and where we need to be going, we must pay attention to where we have come from. Pathways to wholeness (rather than poorly mapped trails of fleeting therapeutic fashions) will always be a work of remembrance. That is the reason the Bible gives such priority to the work of remembering. As Hurding himself knows well, a good counsellor or guide will always be a careful historian. So he offers clear and accessible maps that trace the very varied approaches to human healing and flourishing, sets them in their contexts and guides us in reading them critically for their gifts and their shortcomings.

Another quality of this book is the place of people in it. Very early in the book, Hurding notes that however clear the map it is no substitute for actually making the journey. There is no theory in this book that is not found embedded in lived experience. And this is core to the Christian approaches to wholeness. The word 'wholeness' always take flesh. So people and their stories weave their own pathways throughout this book. Hurding's evident care for the people he has listened to for so long reminds me of a counsellor who would call someone's story their 'personal holy scripture'. It must be received with reverence and respect – as something holy – not least because the Christian conviction is that God's grace weaves pathways, known or unknown, in the depths.

Finally, this is an exploration of human and Christian wholeness by someone who has lived with long-term, often critical, health problems.

'Wholeness' by any popular understanding of the word has eluded him. Hurding knows from personal experience that 'wholeness' is not a problem to be solved. Nor is it available over the counter. He writes with the gentle patience of one who knows that even the most urgent questions of life need to be asked slowly and cannot be forced into quick answers. I think he would approve of Raymond Carver's asking himself whether he has found what he wanted from life. Yes, he says. And what was that? 'To feel myself beloved on the earth'.[3] The heart of Christian wholeness is found here. And if that is true, then, because 'we love confusedly, we fallen ones', 'the journey of life is for setting love in order' (p. 3).

Hurding begins the book by talking about his boyhood love of maps. Map-making is a work of painstaking observation and careful exploring. Such is this book. It is a loving, faithful exercise in charting the complex and uneven terrain of human living, believing and relating. There is only one thing better than being given a map for a journey. It is to have an experienced, wise guide to make the journey with. And that is what we are offered in these pages.

David Runcorn

Preface

A conversation in the summer of 2012 with John Turner, colleague, friend and former Director of Network Counselling in Bristol stirred me into approaching SPCK with a project for a new book. To my delight, Lauren Zimmerman, Alison Barr and their fellow editors responded enthusiastically to the synopsis and sample chapters of *Five Pathways to Wholeness*.

I have taken elements of the outline of Part II of an earlier book, *Pathways to Wholeness*, and revised, updated and rewritten the material. This has proved to be a most rewarding experience. Ironically, my desire to offer more on what it means to journey towards wholeness has been fraught with personal health problems, including frequent angina and breathlessness, in spite of a quadruple bypass in 1993, as well as the aftermath of chronic brucellosis, an undulating flu-like condition, the struggles with long-term diabetes and progressive renal failure.

Looking back through over 50 years since qualifying as a doctor in 1959, it is good to remember and acknowledge the many influences that have shaped my thinking and practice. Within general practice during the 1960s, I became committed to offering 'long appointments' to some of my more depressed and anxious patients, following the psychoanalytic approach fostered by Michael and Enid Balint at London's Tavistock Clinic. In my work as a student health doctor at the University of Bristol in the 1970s, my prime specialist commitment was to spend most weekday afternoons counselling students, engaging with an array of problems, including identity crises, exam nerves, difficulties in relating, struggles with gender issues, depression, anxiety, psychotic breakdown and drug addictions. Also during the 1970s, I worked in psychotherapy in the Department of Mental Health's outpatients and then, on through into the 1980s, I attended a number of workshops in transactional analysis, psychodrama, family therapy and client-centred psychotherapy. This included a stretch of blindness over two years, a complication of diabetes, which forced my retirement from student health. This was a time of huge readjustment,

discovering an unexpected value in attending training workshops with my good psychiatric friend Richard Winter. On one memorable Saturday he and I were the only men along with about 50 women engaging with a 'hands-on' day of psychodrama. Much of the role-play in small groups proved hilarious as I stumbled round the hall within my band of friendly, supportive women, none of whom I had previously met.

Another important influence on my approach to counselling and psychotherapy in the 1970s was the Christians in Psychiatry group, under the aegis of Monty Barker, consultant psychiatrist in Bristol. Here, a lively gathering of psychiatrists, social workers and counsellors met to debate current issues in our respective professions. Psychiatric colleagues from this group included Glynn Harrison, Jan Truscott and Richard Winter.

Further, during the early 1980s, once I had been obliged to leave student health, I became involved with Care and Counsel in London, one of the first Christian counselling organizations to form during that period. A group of us met regularly, at first in London then later in Oxford, to discuss the burgeoning interest in the integration of theology and psychology. This nexus became good friends and included David Atkinson, Myra Chave-Jones, Joy Guy, John Hall, Richard Winter, Liz Shedden and Roger Moss. At that time we pioneered a series of weekend workshops on the integrationist theme. The first of these was based at the London Bible College in 1983 and then at Trinity College in Bristol in 1985, moving on to biennial conferences at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire, beginning in 1987, where clergy, counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers, pastoral carers and spiritual directors met, discussed, prayed and worshipped together. These conferences continue to this day under the title of 'Continuing the Journey'; the latest, in the spring of 2012, was on the theme of 'Minding the gaps: finding edges, holding tensions', in which 'those things which divide as well as unite us – issues of difference and similarity, individuality and community, separateness and connection' were explored.

Largely inspired by my years with Care and Counsel and involvement with the early Swanwick conferences, I contributed to the setting up of Network Counselling in Bristol, launching its first training programme in 1986, under the directorship of David Mitchell. Now known as Network Counselling and Training, this organization still

prospers, offering professional counselling and university-validated courses in counsellor training, being affiliated to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the Association for Christian Counsellors.

Also in the 1980s, I attended university-based conferences in pastoral studies, learning from, among others, the practical theologians Elaine Graham, Don Browning, Paul Ballard, Stephen Pattison and David Lyall. In the early 1990s, I trained and became qualified as a registered user of the Myers-Briggs® Type Indicator and also engaged with a course of training in spiritual direction.

In 1980 I started as a visiting lecturer in pastoral care and counselling at Trinity College in Bristol, and in time I was able to extend my commitment there to take a Masters' class in pastoral theology. I finally retired from the college in 2000. During these 20 years I greatly valued the inspiration and encouragement of a number of colleagues, including John Wesson, John Bimson, David Gillett, Jackie Searle and David Runcorn.

I would also like to express my thanks for the gracious support of David Runcorn, in writing the Foreword to this book, Wendy Bryant, and the clergy team here in Portishead – Andy Bryant, Christine Judson, Tina Hodgett and Jeremy Putnam. These have been generous with their time to Joy and me during this more restricted stage of our lives. There are others, too, I would like to thank, those whose identities have been obscured for the sake of confidentiality, who have helped directly and indirectly with this book's gestation.

I am very grateful to Alison Barr, my editor at SPCK. She has been most helpful and affirming in her advice and a pleasure to work with. I express my gratitude, too, to my other editors at SPCK, to Lauren Zimmerman and Rima Devereaux, as well as my copy-editor, Kathryn Wolfendale.

Finally, I give a very warm thank you to Joy for her patience, love and encouragement amid my preoccupations in writing this new book.

1

The journey charted

> The need to create reliable cognitive maps of the world has been carried to the point where the person prefers the map to the territory, the menu to the meal, the model to the reality.
>
> (David W. Augsburger)[1]

As a child and a teenager I was greatly intrigued by maps and map-making and learned to read the contours and symbols with delight, thus visualizing the territory. At times, though, a particular map proved inadequate for the reality of a landscape. In my teen years a much-loved cousin and I cycled and camped in, to us, an unexplored part of mid-Essex, relying on an old map of the area. Imagine our surprise when, topping a hill, we faced what looked like a large inland sea spread before us, inundating the hedgerows and fields that our map depicted. This proved to be Abberton Reservoir, constructed in the years since the map was printed and, once discovered, a favourite haunt for my early birdwatching years.

It is a tendency in our modern world to systematize, categorize and try to make maps that seek to unscramble the complexities of everyday life. In seeking to chart our journey into wholeness we need to take heed of David Augsburger's words given at the head of this chapter, in which he points out the folly of preferring 'the map to the territory', akin to favouring a menu over the rich sensations of enjoying a good meal, or of celebrating, say, a Dinky model of a vintage car more than the real thing. In seeking to delineate five pathways in our Christian journeying, we need to remember that the realities and complexities of what it means to be human will always question and challenge the simplifications of our cognitive maps.

Even so, the most fundamental point to make as we begin to chart the way forward is to say that we need others on life's journey – not

only in that our sense of personal identity is defined by our relationships, but that to learn to be truly human necessitates, at least from time to time, the value of another or others to guide, support and encourage us. Here we are in the heartland of the New Testament's injunctions towards 'one-anotherness': 'Outdo one another in showing honour' (Rom. 12.10); 'Instruct one another' (Rom. 15.14); 'Be kind to one another . . . forgiving one another' (Eph. 4.32); 'Bear one another's burdens' (Gal. 6.2); 'Love one another with mutual affection' (Rom. 12.10).

And so, as we shape our map of pathways to wholeness we will keep in mind the formative part that the Bible plays in the story of the Church's care for others. That has been the case throughout Christianity's history, but there is now a fresh impetus to discern the place of Scripture in the Church's response to human need. As Herbert Anderson puts it in *The Bible in Pastoral Practice*:

> New perspectives on interpreting the Bible and new approaches to pastoral care promise new possibilities for connecting the Bible and pastoral care in authentic ways. At the same time, there is a new awareness that pastoral care is ideally situated to answer the vital connection between the Bible and the moral dilemmas of our time.[2]

We will consider our way forward under three main headings: first, pastoral care, which is, as it were, the very landscape that we seek to map; followed by a pastoral theological method, giving us the tools for both our map-making and engagement with the terrain; and finally mapping the pathways, in which we will focus on the key to the ensuing map in terms of, for example, the use of Scripture, metaphor and spirituality.

Pastoral care

Margaret,[3] in her mid-forties, came to see me in an agitated state to say that her husband Colin was physically and verbally violent towards her and their two boys, Simon and Andrew, now in their teens. Margaret and Colin were members of their local church and had, for a while, taught in one of the children's Bible classes. Under sufferance, Colin had agreed to go with Margaret to see their curate, but when challenged about his vindictiveness towards his wife he had been

'livid, and walked out'. They had also been to a nearby Christian counselling service but, once again, Colin gave up on the interviews, leaving Margaret to attend by herself. In the light of all this, Tessa, another member of the same church, had encouraged Margaret to see me for advice.

Margaret declared that Colin 'will brook no contradiction' from her or the boys. Recently, Simon and Andrew had begun to express independent views and their father 'saw red'. Andrew, the younger of the brothers, had begun to show hatred towards his father.

What place does pastoral care have in this story? Here there is a network of caring within a church and para-church context. The curate, Tessa and the Christian counsellor who supported Margaret, all played their part. My own comparatively brief advisory role entailed a liaison with her counsellor, seeking the possibility of family therapy for Margaret and the boys, and a discussion with her concerning her need to see a solicitor in the face of Colin's violence.

The notion of pastoral care is as old as human need and the calling to respond to that need. Within the Judaeo-Christian tradition the impetus to care for others lies in the revealed nature of Yahweh – who 'defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien' (Deut. 10.18, NIV) – and the unfolding perception of God as Trinity, three persons within the one godhead, interrelating in perfect love and calling the emerging Church to respond to the summary of the 'entire law': 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Gal. 5.14). This neighbourly love is to be all-inclusive, boundary-crossing and tailored to precise human predicament: Jesus urges his followers to love their enemies; he exemplifies a love that breaks Judaic taboos towards Samaritans, women, children and work, even healing work, on the Sabbath; and he challenges God's people to respond to the communal needs of hunger, thirst, homelessness, lack of clothing, sickness and imprisonment. It goes without saying that such wide-sweeping compassion includes within its compass love towards family, friends and fellow believers – the last, at times, the most difficult to love, since there may be little or no 'natural' affection involved. Leanne Payne is realistic about the high calling of Christian love when she writes, 'We love confusedly, we fallen ones; the journey of life is for setting love in order.'[4]

It would be incorrect, though, to equate Christian love with pastoral care, as the latter is simply one manifestation of that love. Perhaps

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