

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL AND LIBERATING PASTORAL CARE**

#### **6.1. INTRODUCTION**

Having listened to what the participants said about their experience of poverty, their pastoral care needs and also their understanding of pastoral care, this chapter outlines the kind of pastoral care that would be appropriate for the context of poverty. It proposes a model of pastoral care that is both contextual and liberating. It also critiques pastoral care in terms of its response to the socio-economic and political conditions similar to those experienced by participants in this research. These are conditions that are shared with millions of other people in South Africa.

#### **6.2. CRITIQUE OF PASTORAL CARE IN ITS RESPONSE TO A CONTEXT OF POVERTY**

Most of pastoral care is often carried out as if socio-economic conditions associated with poverty are not its business. It has a reputation of only concentrating on individual and personal problems of those who are troubled, without caring about the root causes of such troubles. In this interest in personal problems, it only addresses the periphery and not what is at the centre of problems. This is what others such as Wright and Boff and Pixley

call the ambulance ministry or corn-plaster approach (Wright 1986:8 cf. Boff and Pixley 1987:5). In terms of this ambulance ministry pastoral care is only reactionary and responsive to the side issues and not the root causes of the problems and troubles of those who require and seek pastoral care, especially the poor. It has no appreciation of the fact that the root causes are to be found in socio-economic and political structures of society. The critique of Pattison is still valid that:

Pastoral care has a disregard of social and political dimensions(Pattison 1988:83).

While the researcher agrees with Pattison in his critique of pastoral care, a critique of Pattison is that he focuses on only two dimensions namely social and political. The researcher adds a third dimension, that is, the economic dimension, hence our reference to socio-economic and political dimensions instead of only socio-political dimensions. Pastoral care cannot afford to remain aloof from the socio-economic and political realities present in all our societies, especially those that are characterised by poverty. If pastoral care ignores these realities it only succeeds at discrediting itself.

The disregard of socio-economic and political dimensions is inherited from America and Europe, where it may not necessarily be a problem as a result of societies, which are marked by material conditions of affluence instead of the widespread poverty found in the developing countries.

It is a known fact that pastoral care as it is, is largely a Western dominated sub-discipline. This domination applies not only to pastoral care, but to all theology in general. Many of the theories and paradigms used and applied in the developing world are inherited from the West, especially the U.S.A and the U.K. This tendency to ignore socio-economic and political realities has even permeated the theory and practice of pastoral care in South Africa.

The researcher is in agreement with Msomi, De Jong Van Arkel and Louw who dismiss the Western dominated models pastoral care developed and practiced in Africa as carbon copy of European and American pastoral care (Msomi 1993:75; cf. Njumbuxa 1995:47; De Jong Van Arkel 1995:190; Louw 1995:29).

Msomi correctly points out that:

the weakness in the Southern African context has persisted far too long as if the African pastorate were a carbon copy of the European, British and North American one (Msomi 1993:75).

Thus pastoral care in South Africa is operating along the same lines and paradigms as those operating in North America and Europe. The same point is driven home by white theologians, who interestingly also recognize this Western domination of pastoral care, namely De Jong van Arkel and Louw.

De Jong Van Arkel states that:

as a result of this uncritical importation, pastoral theology and practice which is developed in South Africa remains subject to the tutelage and captivity of the first world (De Jong Van Arkel 1995:190).

This is correctly echoed by Louw:

Pastoral care is mostly oriented to the European and North American model (Louw 1995:29).

This dominance of the Western way of doing pastoral care leads to impoverishment of pastoral care. Eybers calls this “an impoverished and a half-hearted way of doing pastoral care” (Eybers 1991:3). This way of doing pastoral care is dismissed as irrelevant, inadequate and ineffective in the South African context. There may be value and some lessons that can be drawn from American models, but not necessarily without making efforts to adapt them and make them relevant to the South African context of poverty.

The theologians cited above note that pastoral care theories that are taught at South African universities and theological seminaries are imported into Africa without any effort at making them relevant or contextual for the context of the

developing world. Black pastors trained at a South African university or theological seminary may provide effective pastoral care in main centres of the West such as Washington, London Geneva or Bonn, whilst such a candidates for ministry may struggle in rural South African villages such as Pitsi-di-sule-jang, Nkidikitlana, Idutywa or Nkandla. (These are some of the most rural villages in South Africa). This is mainly because this kind of pastoral care does not take the African realities seriously. One of the most important realities of Africa is the context of poverty, which is compounded by other associated realities such as HIV and Aids, illiteracy, civil wars and crime.

In their critique of the discipline, Couture and Hester correctly points out that pastoral care makes caregivers good at addressing problems of the middle class. They state:

We are known to be good at middle-class, growth-oriented pastoral care, we know how to counsel in extreme life crises, we know how to care for the hospitalized and their families and legitimate ourselves with hospital staff, if not with bureaucrats (Couture and Hester 1995:53).

There is nothing wrong with doing the above-mentioned as long as it is not exclusive and also not at the expense of our care others such as the marginalized and the poor. They need pastoral care as much, if not more.

Couture and Hester say:

We never were very good at caring for the poor, the person of colour, the person in extreme life crises who could not afford specialized counseling, the outpatient or the person quickly released from the hospital and we have rarely attempted to articulate the interaction between the people for whom we care and the political, economic and social conditions in which they live (Couture and Hester 1995)

If that is true in the American context, it is worse in the South African context, where even those who are in hospitals do not have access to specialized pastoral care and counseling. The health care environment itself is sickening especially in the public sector, which mainly serve the poor, who cannot afford expensive care offered by private health care centres. It is general knowledge that the private health care sector, which has a reputation of quality services, is only accessible to the rich and the middle class. In addition, the clinical pastoral education and other psychotherapeutic services that American and Europeans are accustomed to, are not yet available in the developing world. Thus pastoral care and counseling continue to be “middle class” in a developing world context. We have more reason in the South African context to grapple with the question posed by Couture and Hester:

How can we extend God’s care to the most vulnerable in our midst?  
(Couture and Hester 1995:53).

Having critiqued pastoral care in general, there are areas of pastoral care that need closer examination such as individualistic nature of pastoral care, its psychotherapeutic focus, its tendency towards spiritualisation, its clericalisation, and associated professionalisation and its tendency to downplay socio-economic and political structures. In terms of this approach the focus is always on the clergy in their professional capacity.

### **6.2.1. INDIVIDUALISTIC PASTORAL CARE**

One trend that pastoral care shares with most of Western theology in general is its individualistic focus. There are a few exceptions to this individualistic focus as well as recent calls for abandoning this one-sided focus. According to Miller-McLemore, criticism of this individualistic focus has come in part from feminist theology and black theology on the American scene (Miller-McLemore 1996:18). Pattison correctly points out that pastoral care is trapped in individualistic practices (Pattison 2000:82). Individualism in this context refers to the focus on the individual who is the object of care (Buffel 2004:43). Writing in the context of individualistic American society, Couture says that the individualistic values in society have become the basis not only for personal and interpersonal lifestyles but also for national and international economic practices (Couture 1996:95). In this individualism, the focus is only on the person as an individual and his or her own personal problems and personal sin and salvation. Couture says that individualism has been

popularly and narrowly associated with personal growth and the breakdown of families (Couture 1996:97). Until very recently the courses offered and conventional textbooks that were used in pastoral care and counseling were mainly devoted to “individual counselling techniques for an array of problems” (Stevenson-Moessner 1996:11). This ignores all other significant components and relationships that should part of the equation. There is a disregard of significant others, the community, as well as the socio-economic and political conditions in which individuals find themselves. The same point is also recognised by De Jong Van Arkel who pointed out that pastoral care is influenced by individualistic lifestyles of Western Europe and North America (De Jong Van Arkel 1990:190).

This individualism is a negation of what Christianity stands for as a religion that is adhered to by those who believe in “the communion of saints or believers” as confessed in terms of the creedal statements of the church universal (catholic). It also flies in the face of the communal nature of an African community and its worldview. In terms of this African worldview the community and the network of relationships are at the centre, with the individual on the periphery, whereas in the Western worldview the individual is at the centre of relationships. Furthermore it is a contradiction of the Pauline understanding of the church as the “one body of Christ.”



According to St Paul:

Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made of different parts (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Again Paul says:

And so there is no division in the body, but all have different parts and have concern for one another. If one part of the body suffers, all other parts suffer with it. If one part is praised, all other parts share in the happiness. All of you are Christ's body, and each one is part of it (1 Corinthians 12:25, 26,27; cf. Ephesians 4:15-16).

Whereas the body of believers constitutes the body of Christ, Christ is the head of the body. The unity of the body is such that no body part will ever say: "I have no need of you". Each of the body parts has its role and they constantly interact with each other for the life and survival of the whole body. The members of the body (body parts) live in intimacy and are united into a whole. Each member participates in helping each other, for the benefit of the whole body (cf. Galatians 6:1). Therefore the tendency on the part of the affluent and middle class Christians who go about as if poverty is not their problem is unbiblical and contrary to the Christian understanding of the membership as the one body of Christ.

This individualistic tendency in Western theology in general and in pastoral care in particular, is foreign to both the African worldview, as well as the Christian understanding of the church as the one body of Christ. In dismissing this individualistic focus of pastoral care, Pattison correctly states that:

It should be appreciated that many of the things which affect the well being and growth of individuals for good or ill originate in the wide social and political order (Pattison 2000:82).

Many of the problems and troubles of individuals and communities have their roots in social and political structures that ultimately lead to individual problems, without implying that there should be no concern at all for individuals.

Pattison contends that effective pastoral care, if it is truly to alleviate sin, sorrow and nurture human growth, must widen its concern and vision beyond the suffering individuals (Pattison 2000:82). This individualistic pastoral care is narrow-minded, limited and partial. It does not deal with the whole picture.

### **6.2.2. SPIRITUALISATION OF PASTORAL CARE**

Pastoral care, which initially was referred to as “soul care” or “cure of souls” (*see/sorge*) has the tendency to spiritualise every problem or trouble. Couture and Hester also point out that the discipline was previously called “the care of souls” (Couture and Hester 1995:46). In this tendency, material and non-

spiritual matters are left out of the foci of pastoral care. This is an approach that Furniss calls an “a-historical and a-structural” approach (Furniss 1995:3). In this type of soul care the focus is only on spiritual guidance and on personal salvation (cf. Harries 1991:4). In their critique of pastoral care Couture and Hester say that pastoral care is superficial and moralistic (Couture and Hester 1995:47). That is, it does not deal with real problems and their root causes most of which are to be found in socio-economic and political structures. According to Harries the church often focuses on praising God and winning souls for Jesus Christ. Harries calls this a “thank you Jesus” mentality that concentrates on salvation from personal sin (Harries 1991:4). Harries says that this kind of approach and focus overlooks oppression, injustice, poverty, and a host of other social ills (Harries 1991:4).

In this spiritualisation, reality is dichotomised and divided into the spiritual and material spheres, and pastoral care is only concerned with the spiritual. This is the kind of pastoral care that promises “a pie in the sky” that the researcher experienced in his childhood. This is what the participants in this research have gone through and which they share that with millions other South Africans who live in poverty. This approach maintains an attitude of “let us pray and one day things will be okay.” This is like focusing on symptomatic relief by prescribing “aspirin when surgery is needed” (cf. Eybers 1991:4). As the saying goes pastoral care fiddles while Rome is burning.

### 6.2.3. CLERICALISM OF PASTORAL CARE

Clericalism of pastoral care occurs when the clergy are made the only caregivers. In the context of this research, clericalism refers to an exclusive focus on ordained officials or pastors of the church. In this approach the laity (*the people*) are not given the place and role they deserve in the care of God's people (Buffel 2004:44). They are just passive recipients of service from clergy as professionals. What Hiltner said many years ago is still valid today:

the word pastoral has always been used as the functional extension of the noun "pastor" (Hiltner 1958:15; cf. Buffel 2004:44).

Pattison also laments this tendency of the historical pastoral care tradition, which revolves around the activities of the pastor or recognised leaders of the church (Pattison 1988:7). This is still the case in the theory and practice of pastoral care. This is a dominant approach in the case of the participants in this study. The context in which they live has a culture of dependency on the clergy, with the result that the pastor is the only one who performs pastoral care. This model is disempowering to the poor, who are waiting for a hero from outside their community and outside their experience of poverty.

#### 6.2.4. PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC PASTORAL CARE

As pastoral care evolved over the years, as dominated by Western society and its worldview, there came a time when pastoral care conversed with other social sciences, especially the psychological sciences. According to Couture and Hester psychology came to dominate American culture early in the twentieth century (Couture and Hester 1995:45). This was in the spirit of multi-disciplinary cooperation between the various fields with the result that, one field, psychology started dominating. This happened, as early architects of the discipline rose to meet the challenge offered by psychology to the church and theology (Couture 1995:11). Gerkin says:

At the beginning of the twentieth century the psychological sciences moved to the forefront of pastoral attention (Gerkin 1997:55; cf. Couture 1995: 11).

During this period, psychological and psychotherapeutic concerns unquestionably became dominant (Gerkin 1984:11; cf. Pattison 2000:19; Couture 1995:13). This explains why the dominant model of pastoral care became a psychotherapeutic one. One of the roots of the dominance of the psychotherapeutic paradigm was the Clinical Pastoral Education movement ushered in by Anton Boisen (Boisen 1936: Pattison 2000:19; cf. Gerkin1997:14). The focus of this model is on the psychotherapeutic relationship between the care-giver and the care-seeker (Furniss 1995:2). In this psychotherapeutic approach pastoral theologians and educators mainly

focused on one-to-one counseling, emphatic listening and the expertise of the pastor as prerequisites for ministry (cf. Miller-McLemore 1996:13,14). In a sarcastic way, Stone says that pastoral care and counselling became psychotherapy “with a twist” (Stone 1996:xi). As a result of this influence pastoral care subsequently compromised its theological base. Eventually pastoral care had “an identity crisis.” with no certainty as to whether it is a theological sub-discipline or a psychological science. This psychologically focussed pastoral care was according to Pattison unnecessarily narrow and sometimes straightened with consequences bordering on the disastrous. The researcher agrees with Pattison that this psychologically focused model is quite narrow and myopic as it also focuses on the individual and his or her psychological and personal problems at the expense of all other problems and root causes of such problems. For instance when the poor become sick and troubled as result of the harsh realities of the socio-economic and political conditions, focusing on their psychological make up and subjecting them to psychoanalytical tests and procedures will not help them in some dimensions of their problems. They need far more than that. It does not help the care-seekers if their problems and troubles are only addressed from a psychological perspective. The psychological perspective may be important, with some benefits but personal and interpersonal problems are much broader than that. In this multidisciplinary cooperation between pastoral theology and the social sciences, pastoral theology discovered fresh models of how to relate theory to practice. Miller-McLemore 1996:13). Miller-McLemore points out that:

Pastoral theology took up the helpmate both to its benefit and its detriment. In a word, although it avoided theological abstraction and academic trivialization, it was lured towards technique, theological vacuousness, and an individualistic, subjective orientation (Miller-McLemore 1996:13).

While there are obvious benefits in this multidisciplinary cooperation of pastoral theology with other sciences, especially psychology, the model that resulted from this failed to “integrate political, economic and cultural features into its theory and practice” (Hunter 1995:21).

#### **6.2.5. PASTORAL CARE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES**

Not unrelated to the abovementioned, is the disturbing attitude of most pastoral care, that of ignoring socio-economic and political structures, which are often the source of individual, personal and societal problems. According to Pattison problems such as illnesses and diseases that pastoral care deals with have their origin in socio-economic and political causes (Pattison 2000:85). Hunter also critiques pastoral care in this respect. He says:

Although the concept of wholistic salvation easily included family and personal relationships, it did not incorporate political and economic dimensions into its theory and practice. Its tendency was to focus

chiefly on psychological and social dimensions of wholeness with only lip service to cultural, economic and political aspects of human problems and the practical actions appropriate to addressing them (Hunter 1995:20).

Many of the problems that members of congregations experience, that pastoral care deal with have socio-economic and political dimensions. According to Kalu the economic structures are the causes of problems, that is, they have poverty-creating nature (Kalu 2000:48). Many of the problems that warrant pastoral care are caused by socio-economic and political structures. In describing the problematic and causal nature of structures, Dickinson correctly points out that:

the basic problem of our world is structural or political. Structural properties like exploitation, penetration, fragmentation, marginalisation have to be added to the problematic, not only as an expansion of the problems catalogue, but in order to find the tools for causal analysis (Dickinson 1983).

Therefore while it may be important to offer relief in the short term, there must also be concerted efforts to transform those structures. Pastoral care cannot afford to ignore those socio-economic and political structures. Despite the complexity of the structures and the difficulty in changing them, they must be dealt with and be transformed (cf. Dickinson 1983:4). Poverty is structural and collective. Thus the poor are poor because of the way the socio-economic



and political structures are designed. According to Kalu:

People are made poor through exploitation by local and trans-national operators (Kalu 2000:48)

Thus people are not poor by accident nor by anything inherently wrong with them but by socio-economic and political structures. If pastoral care continues to ignore these realities it can only impoverish and discredit itself. To this end Furniss argues that:

Pastoral care needs to be oriented towards the empowerment of care-seekers so that they can change society; not towards adjustment of persons to the existing situation (Furniss 1995:61).

The point made by Furniss regarding care-seekers, “changing society” is very important in that things must not be done for others but one should rather accompany them in the journey to transform their society. Change is only meaningful, sustainable and successful if those affected are centrally involved.

### **6.3. THE NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT**

From the abovementioned areas where Western theology and pastoral care are critiqued, it becomes clear that there is need of a paradigm shift in theology in general and pastoral care in particular. In recent years the call for

a change of paradigm shift has become louder and louder, with inter alia the following theologians joining the much needed chorus for such a shift not only in pastoral care but theology in general, namely Gerkin; Pattison, Wright, Furniss in the Western context and Msomi, Njumbuxa, Louw, De Jong Van Arkel and Buffel, in the South African context (Gerkin 1987; Pattison 1988;2000; Wright 1986; Furniss 1995; Msomi 1993;Njumbuxa 1995; Louw 1995; De Jong Van Arkel 1995; 2000; Buffel 2004;2006).

There is without any doubt an urgent need of a paradigm shift in order to make pastoral care effective, contextual and liberating. Such a shift will liberate and empower pastoral care to respond appropriately to the needs of God's people, especially those who live and survive in a context of poverty. (cf. Buffel 2004:48; Buffel 2006:10). Adding his voice to those calling for a paradigm shift Louw states:

Pastoral care has to undergo a fundamental paradigm shift (Louw 1995:29).

The same point is supported by Brown and Hendricks:

In the African context, allowing the faith community to have such a voice to address the paramount issue may require a significant paradigm shift (Brown and Hendricks 2003:31).

The matter of paradigm shift is not an optional extra for pastoral care, but an

absolute imperative, if it has to effectively address the issue of care in a context of poverty. The shift in question is from a Western worldview to an African worldview, from an individualistic and psychotherapeutic to a communal and systemic approach (Louw 1995:29; De Jong Van Arkel 1995:193; Buffel 2005:10).

The African worldview is communal and systemic and at its centre is a network of relationships. Van Arkel says:

According to the systemic paradigm, the individual is part of a whole rather than the whole consisting of parts (De Jong Van Arkel 1995:33).

This approach does not imply that the individual no longer counts, but on the contrary it implies that the person is not seen as an island, isolated from the realities and relationships surrounding him or her. Therefore adopting this systemic approach is critical to the relevance and the contextual nature of pastoral care (cf. Buffel 2006).

#### **6.4. THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL CARE METHODOLOGY (GERKIN AND PATTISON)**

In terms of understanding the poor, their needs and their experience of poverty this research relied on members who are poor. In terms of pastoral care methodology, the researcher finds three methodologies helpful in developing a contextual and liberating model, namely:

- Liberation theology methodology
  
- Gerkin's hermeneutical narrative methodology and
  
- Pattison's socio-political dimension of pastoral care

#### **6.4.1. METHODOLOGY OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

Having listened to the poor articulate their understanding of poverty and their pastoral care needs the researcher is more than ever before convinced that pastoral care cannot afford to ignore liberation theology and particularly its methodology. This raises the question of whether liberation theology, which arose and became popular during 1960's is still relevant today. Some people, who dismiss it as a superficial or passing fad will even pose a less optimistic question: Does it have a future at all? A while back, Segundo reiterated a question often posed by critics of liberation theology: What will remain of the theology of liberation in a few years? He went on to justify the continued existence of liberation theology by saying that liberation theology represents a point of no return (Segundo 1977:3; cf. 1985:3). He said:

It is an irreversible thrust in the Christian process of creating a new consciousness and maturity of faith (Segundo 1977:3; cf.1985: 3).

Liberation theology is here to stay, for as long as there are socio-economic

and political conditions that warrant it. Whoever wants to do away with liberation theology must first do away with those conditions. The thesis of this research is that as long as there are socio-economic and political structures that result in the kind of poverty that is prevalent in the developing world and in particular in South Africa, liberation theology will continue to be necessary and relevant. In fact, it will remain an imperative instead of an optional extra. The question will rather be: What brand of liberation theology? A brand will be defined and coloured by specific circumstances and the particularity of each context.

The strength of liberation theology chiefly lies in its methodology. This methodology makes it possible for theology to respond to various circumstances and is therefore not as prescriptive as classical Western theology, which has claimed to be a universally valid norm (West 1995:16; cf. West 1999:12). Theology, like knowledge, is seldom universal or uniform but should be contextual (cf. Miller-McLemore 1996:21). This methodology makes “an epistemological break” with Western theology, according to which theology was the first act. In this epistemological break, theology is no longer the first act, but the second act. The first act is the experience of faith, that is, the praxis (West 1999:13; cf. Gibellini 1987:5; Cone 1985:147). In the context of this study the first act is the experience of poverty, the socio-economic and political conditions and the existential questions that the poor forever raise.

#### 6.4.2.GERKIN'S METHODOLOGY

As indicated in the first chapter, this research values the methodology of Charles Gerkin, which he calls, “the narrative hermeneutical model” (Gerkin 1987:111). This model was developed in contrast to the therapeutic pastoral care model that was dominant and popular in America and went on to infiltrate all Western pastoral care. This model developed in a context in which human life was “psychologised” (Gerkin 1987:12). That is, human life is always examined from only a psychological perspective, as if all human problems only have psychological roots. Gerkin concedes that his narrative hermeneutical model was influenced by Anton Boisen. He was drawn to and intrigued by the central organising image of Boisen’s work, which maintains that just as the historical and biblical texts are read, equally “the living human documents” must be read and studied (Boisen 1936; Gerkin 1984:31; cf. 1987:15). Boisen advocated the study of “the living human documents”, which meant careful and systematic study of the lives of persons struggling with issues of the spiritual life in the concreteness of their relationships (Gerkin 1984:37). In the context of this research “the living human documents” that are to be read and studied are the poor. The concept of “the living human documents” is further enriched by Miller-McLemore, who prefers to call it “the living human web,” due to the limitations of “the living human document” (Miller-McLemore 1996:21). She proposes the term “the living human web” as a better and appropriate concept. She also proposes that this be a central theme of pastoral theology (Miller-McLemore 1996:16). Stevenson-Moessner concurs and says that “the living human web” better represents an

understanding of the person in relationships (Stevenson-Moessner 1996:7). According to Stevenson-Moessner this relatedness includes not only other persons but connectedness with society, family systems, public policy, institutions and ideologies (Stevenson-Moessner 1996:7). This connectedness of “the living human web” has socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions. The poor are not passive objects but active participants in the struggle for liberation from all socio-economic and political structures that oppress them and keep them poor. The professional exegete, that is, the pastoral caregiver accompanies them in their march to freedom from oppression and poverty. An important feature of the hermeneutical model of Gerkin is the recognition of the care not only of the individual but the whole family (Gerkin 1987:118). One could even add the bigger family, that is, the broader community in which pastoral care is developed and practiced. Furthermore one needs to add that we do not only study the living human documents but there is also a reading of the realities and conditions as entrenched in the socio-economic and political structures. In this respect, the inclusive narrative-hermeneutical model of Gerkin has a lot in common with the African worldview, which is also inclusive.

Gerkin’s model recognizes that human experience is important in that it helps the pastoral caregiver to have as his starting point human experience (Gerkin 1987:13). That is, it begins where the people are. It responds to concrete human experience. This is what liberation theologians refer to as the hermeneutical starting point of theology, in this case, of pastoral care. In our research the experience of the poor is the hermeneutical starting point.

Although Gerkin's narrative hermeneutical model of Gerkin takes "the living human documents" seriously, it is not strong on the socio-economic and political dimensions of the poor. It can therefore only be complemented by another model, that is, that of Pattison, which will be dealt with in the next paragraph.

#### **6.4.3. PATTISONS METHODOLOGY**

Pattison advocates a model of pastoral care that he calls effective, by paying close attention to people, the human situation and the world in which we live (Pattison 2000:16). He makes a case for the kind of pastoral care that is inclusive to the extent that it even includes socio-political pastoral care (Pattison 2000:83). Pastoral care must be as inclusive as possible. It also needs to include socio-economic and political dimensions. This socio-and political concern of pastoral care should be at the centre of ministry according to Pattison (2000:83). This socio-political dimensions of life have not been a major concern for American and European writers (Pattison 2000:83).

The only weak link is the exclusion of the economic dimension, hence this research refers to this, rather as the socio-economic and political dimension. The root of this weakness can be traced back to the areas referred to above that is individualistic, psychotherapeutic and the spiritualisation of pastoral care which were at one stage dominant in Western pastoral care in particular and Western theology in general. These approaches gave rise to a narrow understanding of pastoral care. According to Pattison pastoral care has to be



pluralistic, variegated and flexible (Pattison 2000:8).

## 6.5. HOLISTIC AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL PASTORAL CARE

The socio-economic and political conditions that are experienced by participants in this research and that are shared with millions of other black and poor people. These conditions can only be addressed pastorally by a holistic and multidimensional model of pastoral care, which the researcher proposes. This is the model that takes seriously the following as experienced by the participants in this research:

- **Multidimensional nature of pastoral care:** The proposed model takes seriously the socio-economic and political dimensions of life as experienced by God's people, especially the poor. The experience of the poor, that is, their religious praxis is the hermeneutical starting point of pastoral care. This is in concert with what liberation theologians call the first act in the hermeneutical cycle. In this proposed model it is recognised that many of the personal problems have their roots in socio-economic and political structures of society. For instance, many of the illnesses and diseases of society are linked to the socio-economic and political structures, which are responsible for the continuation of poverty. Therefore the proposed model has many dimensions, which have to be kept up in mind in pastoral care.

- **Need for a radical paradigm shift in pastoral care:** There is need of a radical paradigm shift, that is, from the Western worldview to the African worldview, from the individualistic to the communal and systemic. Pastoral care has no choice but to undergo a paradigm shift. Pastoral care has to move away from all approaches where the problems are dealt with only superficially. There is no more room for the ambulance ministry, which Eybers calls a “quick fixes” and a Biblicist approach (Eybers 1991:2). For example, if a drunk man is shooting people randomly and causing untold harm, it will not help to only take those who are shot into the ambulance to the hospital. The drunkard (mad) must be disarmed and be removed from society and even the accessibility of firearms must be looked into so that such an experience is avoided in the future. Problems are dealt with holistically instead of piece-meal. This is in line with the holistic pastoral care that is advocated by Eybers amongst others (1991:3).
  
- **Role of the poor:** The proposed model is also marked by recognition, that care-seekers are not mere parcels or passive objects that “must be pitied and helped”. They are masters of their own destiny. This kind of pastoral care must be oriented towards the empowerment of the poor and the oppressed. Classical pastoral care has often offered “an aspirin instead of surgery”. It merely helped them to adjust to the existing situation instead of empowering them to transform society (cf. Furniss 1995:61). Pastoral care has to help establish an environment

of empowerment in which the poor themselves play a central role in uprooting the socio-economic and political roots of their problems and troubles. This is an equipping and empowering ministry, in which we allow the persons whom we are ministering to, to take the lead with regard to articulation of their needs and strategies to find ways of addressing those needs.

- **Mutual care of believers:** The model also recognises the central role of the people of God in participating in mutual care for each other. There is no longer any room for a pastor-centred church nor a pastor-centred ministry. The people must have ownership and total participation in the ministry of pastoral care. All that professional pastors do is to equip the believers to empower them in this ministry, which should be in line with “the priesthood of all believers.” One could even talk of “the pastor-hood of all believers.” According to Stevenson-Moessner, members of the congregation can be mentored and trained in pastoral care (Stevenson-Moessner 2005:20). This activates the reality of the “priesthood of all believers,” which is a focus of the book of Hebrews. When a lay person is trained in the task of caring, this is a valid form of discipleship (Stevenson-Moessner 2005:20). This model takes seriously Martin Luther’s belief in “the priesthood of all believers.” The community of believers is also a community of primary caregivers, as the congregation participates in the “social ecology that cares for individuals and other members of society.” (cf. Couture 1996:99, 102). This is in line with the suggestion of Stevens and Collins that the

church needs a gracious conspiracy of the pastor and the people of God to bring about a systemic change in the church (Stevens and Collins 2000:xiii). According to Stevens and Collins the church needs an organisational conversion in order to liberate both the clergy and the laity. It also has to take due cognisance of the significant role that has to be played by all of God's people in making the world a better place in which to live. A better place in which healing, caring, sustaining, guiding, reconciliation and liberation takes place (Buffel 2004:49). In the spirit of liberation theology, the people are the ones who have to grapple with life's harsh realities and therefore are the ones who determine the agenda of theology, in this case the agenda of pastoral care is that they have to mutually extend care to each other (cf. Gutierrez 1983:vi). Members of the church have to minister to each other, and not be ministered to by only the clergy (pastors). Patton argues that the church is not a community gathered around a minister, but a community of many ministers (Patton 1993:3). The ministers should just play the role of facilitators of networks of care rather than as only chief sources of care (cf. Miller-McLemore 1996:14). According to Stevenson-Moessner members of the church can also be mentored and be trained in pastoral care (Stevenson-Moessner 2005:20).

- **The Role of the church:** Furthermore this model recognises the role of the church with regard to its solidarity and “political commitment” to journey with the people of God who bear the brunt of the impact of the socio-economic and political conditions. According to liberation

theologians it is not the church that frees the poor. The church is an ally of the poor (cf. Kalu 2003:49). The church has to be the church of the poor (Gutierrez 1974:287). It has to adopt God's preferential option of the poor. If the God is on the side of the poor the church cannot afford to be on a different side. Equally pastoral care as a discipline has to be on the side of the poor. According to Lernoux it has to suffer with the poor and on their behalf (Lernoux 1990).

## **6.6. CONCLUSION**

Having considered the reality of poverty as experienced by the poor, this chapter proposed a model that learns much from liberation theology, and from two pastoral theologians, Gerkin and Pattison. From liberation theology, this research benefits especially from the methodology of liberation theology. It also grapples with concrete human experience of poverty, and oppression is the first step and theological reflection the second. This research values Boisen's analogy of "the living human documents," which must be read and interpreted in similar ways that historical and biblical texts are read and interpreted. This research goes further, however, by arguing that the poor are not as passive as the historical and biblical texts. They should be active participants in the common ministry of caring for each other. They are not dependent on the pastor. The pastor is important for as long as he or she equips the saints. As for the model of Pattison the interest is in pastoral care that takes seriously the socio-political dimension of life as experienced by the

people, and in this case the poor. The research adds the economic to complete the socio-economic and political dimension. The model proposed in this research is coined the holistic-multidimensional model of pastoral care. For it looks at the bigger picture and is holistic and has many dimensions, hence, multi-dimensional.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

#### 7.1. INTRODUCTION

This final chapter provides a conclusion as well as recommendations for further research. These are the recommendations that come about after due appreciation of the fact that pastoral care cannot longer continue to ignore the socio-economic and political realities of the care-seekers.

#### 7.2. THE REALITY OF POVERTY

Having journeyed through the literature, this research listened to some of the poor and what they said about their experience and understanding of poverty, and they articulated some of their pastoral care needs. It also listened to what they thought the role of the church is in their context of poverty. To the participants, poverty is an existential reality and not merely an academic dilemma. It is a trap from which they cannot easily extricate themselves. They are poor not because of any inherent weakness on their part. Nor is it because of laziness on their part. In fact, many of them work very hard in order to survive and escape from poverty. This poverty is like a “cruel trap” (Smith 2005:ix: cf. Terreblanche 2002:263). This trap is entrenched in the socio-economic and political structures of the South African society. Smith had this to say about these structurally entrenched conditions of poverty:

the very conditions of poverty makes it very likely that poverty will continue tomorrow ... it is not a temporary problem that people can eventually escape from through sustained efforts (Smith 2005:11; cf. Mveng 1994:157).

Their poverty seems to be inherited from their parents, who were also very poor. It is their hope that things will be different for their children. They work hard towards this hope, by giving their children education to which they had no access. They share this reality with millions of other South Africans. In their experience of poverty, the poor struggle to have access to the following: food and clothes, school fees and transport costs to school, housing water and electricity. They struggle to have commodities that the rich and middle class take for granted. From their articulation of what poverty is, one could draw the following definition of poverty:

Poverty is a condition in life in which the individual or the family is unable to afford the basic needs such as food, clothes, water, and electricity, medical costs, education related costs such as school fees and transport and housing

The reality of the South African situation is that like wealth, poverty is not evenly distributed. The socio-economic and political structures are still designed in such a way that the majority of blacks are the ones subjected to poverty. As Wison and Ramphele pointed out many years ago, the roots of



the current poverty and of ongoing impoverishment go deep into the past (Wilson and Ramphela 1989:204). This reality of poverty is inherited from the past. Though, the irony is that after twelve years of political liberation, the majority of those who are poor are black. It is for this reason that apartheid and its legacy are the some of the major causes of poverty. The present government of the African National Congress (A.N.C) is also blamed for the continuation of poverty, despite promises to the contrary. In addition the following are cited as causes of poverty:

- Lack of education (illiteracy)
- Low wages
- Unemployment
- Failure of the private sector to create job opportunities

Poverty in South Africa is unique and it is characterised by the following:

- The width of the gulf between the rich and the poor, that is, the degree of inequality. South Africa regarded as the most unequal in the world
- Poverty existing as a consequence of a deliberate policy to keep black poor and under white domination
- Material poverty in South Africa is reinforced by racist policies that were an assault on people's humanity. Apartheid may have gone but its legacy continues and is likely to continue for a while (cf. Wilson and Ramphela 1989:4; May 1998:1; Bruggemans 2003:16).

South Africa is generally regarded as a middle class income country, that is, a land of plenty yet the majority of Africans are excluded from enjoying this relative wealth of the country (cf. Dickinson 1983:3; May 1988:1; Smith 2005:5)

### **7.3. A HOLISTIC AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL PASTORAL CARE**

This research critiques both Western theology in general and pastoral care, which are found to be impoverished, irrelevant and inadequate in the South African context, especially the context of poverty. It is a known fact that pastoral care is a Western dominated enterprise, which is not effective, relevant and contextual to the South African situation. As a result of this Western domination, the pastoral care models that are in operation are characterized by a paradigm that focusses on individualism, psychotherapy, spiritualisation and professionalism (clericalism). This paradigm is inconsistent with the African worldview that focusses on communalism, relationships, mutual care and ubuntu and is also systemic. In terms of the models of pastoral care inherited from the West, the socio-economic and political realities are relegated to insignificance, as they are not in the terrain of pastoral care. This is with result that problems are dealt with superficially without any care for the root causes of those problems.

Eybers dismisses pastoral care methods used in the South African context as “quick fixes,” Biblicist, superficial and inadequate (Eybers 1991: 2). Though he said that so many years ago, what he said is still valid today. They fail to

approach problems of their black parishioners holistically and with a multi-dimensional approach.

This research therefore proposes what is referred to as holistic-multi-dimensional model of pastoral care which takes the following seriously:

- African world view, and its communal and systemic approach to life and its problems
- The socio-economic and political dimensions of life, with the recognition that poverty is structural and if the problems of the poor are to be dealt with effectively, the socio-economic and political structures are also to be tackled and transformed
- Liberation theology and its methodology according to which the *Sitz im leben* of the poor is taken seriously. Their religious praxis is the first act in the hermeneutical cycle
- The poor as the living human documents, which are not only read and interpreted but are taken seriously and regarded as central to the liberation process. The poor are to play a central role in the transformation of society. They are to be involved in the “functional priesthood all believers” (Stevenson-Moessner 2005:21). They are not just merely passive participants.
- The preferential option of God, which should also be adopted by the church and also by pastoral care. The church should also be the church that is politically committed to the poor and is in solidarity with them

## 7.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The research makes the following recommendation for future study:

7.4.1. Having focused in this research on qualitative research, the study makes a recommendation that a quantitative study be undertaken that will be interested in the quantification of the variables involved in contrast to the qualitative interest in the depth of the issues. The qualitative research by its very nature can help us to quantify and even able to claim representativity for all the poor in a particular context.

7.4.2. Future research must recognize the need to conduct research that focusses on the role of laity in pastoral care in addition to the training methods for lay training in efforts to empower them to:

- train others in mutual care and help them take ownership of pastoral care. In addition it frees them from the dependency on clergy as professionals.
- build up sustainable structures that reflect on the harsh realities and problems of the poor and make efforts to address them from a pastoral care perspective
- empower the poor in terms of analytical skills that offer them capacity to understand the socio-economic and political structures that continue to keep them poor despite their best efforts at escaping poverty

The research concludes by pointing out that pastoral care has to be liberated together with the clergy and laity so that it can be effective, contextual and liberating. Pastoral care can only be contextual and liberating if it takes the context of God's people seriously. It also has to take seriously the socio-economic and political structures that perpetuate poverty and other conditions that make people sick and troubled. The holistic-multi-dimensional model is offered as a contribution in that direction.