

Model For Spiritual Development

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A major awareness guiding counseling and supervision is development. We are certainly conversant with psychological development from the time of Erikson, and perhaps "faith development" from Fowler and Westerhoff. But spiritual development and its theological underpinnings has not been well thought out. Traditionally we have worked with the threefold division of "purgative, illuminative and unitive" ways, but even those views have not received solid theological grounding. Here I offer a theological model that can be integrated with the traditional views, but also with the pastoral experience of the ordinary client and pastoral counselor.

Jesus and His Day

Every developmental view has an implied norm and goal. James Fowler roots his stages in H. R. Niebuhr's "Radical Monotheism," John Westerhoff in the neo-Orthodoxy of Karl Barth and Liberation Theology. The view I am presenting is rooted in Jesus as held by tradition to be fully divine and fully human. He brings the new possibility of human "divinization" into history through his death/resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He reveals in the freely chosen gift of his life and death not only perfect obedience to God (Jn 14:31), but also God's own self-giving Love, freeing believers to a similar self-giving love through the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. As Christians, our development follows that of Jesus and the unique way he brought to humanity through his solidarity with us. What was unique about that divine love is seen in Jesus' life.

In Jesus' time, various groups applied the views of the Hebrew Scriptures to their situation. The Pharisees were lay people, stemming from the time of the Maccabees, who were zealous for the law and taught that only if it was perfectly kept would God's Kingdom come. They separated themselves off from "sinners" (non-observant Jews, Gentiles and tax collectors). Other positions were the Zealots, who looked for the kingdom through a holy war, the Sadducees (the priestly class), that was more secular in outlook and had accommodated to the occupying power, and the Essenes, who sought purity through separating from the ordinary people and formed their isolated community to be a "priestly people." The position that finally gained prominence, especially after the destruction of the temple, was the Pharisee party.

Jesus took a position very different from that of the Pharisees or any of the others. Where they separated from "sinners", Jesus sought sinners out. Where they insisted on their interpretation of the Sabbath rest, Jesus actually made a point of choosing the Sabbath for healing. When they asked him why, he said it was the sick (sinners) who needed the physician, and "My Father works until now and I work." (Jn 5:17) In other words, Jesus had a very different view of God from theirs. For them God was a "holy God" and demanded separation from all that was unholy. For Jesus God's "holiness" was

forgiving and healing love, which requires that we be like God by forgiving and healing. In order to understand this difference and how it structures our development, it is important to look more closely at Israel's history.

Stages of Development in Israel

I have looked at Israel's history from the point of view of shifts in their faith perspective, for it shows the uniqueness of Jesus' view, and hence that of Christians. This could be presented in several ways, but perhaps the simplest is to start at the beginning,

Genesis opens us to God's call of Israel in the call of Abraham (Gn 12:1-5). Abraham receives a vision from God calling him from Haran, his "father's home," to a land God would show him. He would then be blessed by God and become a blessing for all the families of the earth. Abraham responds and faces a long and seemingly fruitless life (to Egypt and back) till in his old age an offspring is given him and at the end a small plot of land to be buried on. God's promise takes root in Abraham's faithfulness through many trials. This initial faithfulness in response to God's call, this "basic trust" in God, I have termed *Initial Faith*. It is the foundation of all further development, which it anticipates, but provides only the beginning of full response to it. Abraham is not always "moral" in our sense. He deceives Pharaoh about Sarah being his wife. He sends Hagar away at the request of Sarah. Yet through it all he is "faithful." In the Yahwist's view, Abraham is God's beginning intervention to heal the sin of Adam and Eve. Where Abraham trusted God, Adam with Eve turned from obedience to God. Where they were exiled from paradise (the land of promise), Abraham is taken from exile and promised a land. As distrust in God was the beginning of alienation from God, one another and the earth, so trust in God is the beginning of reconciliation. But it is only the beginning.

The next major stage of Israel's call, the most important step in her history as a nation, is the Exodus. She is called forth as a nation from Egypt to serve the living God. She is given a law and a leader, Moses, and a similar call to return to the Promised Land. She fails repeatedly, first by serving the golden calf, then by not believing in God's power to overcome a "giant" enemy, and has to remain nearly 40 years in the desert. Yet through her "hidden" life, she gains strength to enter the land, and to fight back those who would threaten her faith. The disparate tribes are united by a common law, by the arc of God's covenant and later the temple, and by a God-given leadership -- first the Judges, then the controversial Kingship. Here their faith becomes rooted in a common tradition handed on from generation to generation, a common law, a common center of worship. I have called it *Familial Faith*. It began with looser organization, and moved to a committed and unified sense of national identity whose center was worship of Yahweh. The book of Deuteronomy, with its "one law" and "one Moses" and "one temple" highlights the direction of total commitment implied in this stage. It is "life" to keep the law, "death" to abandon it. They must "choose life" (Dt 30:19), but unfortunately, they do not.

Their efforts do not bring fulfillment. The next major stage of their journey is the most devastating, but also the most rich in promise. Instead of serving Yahweh, they use

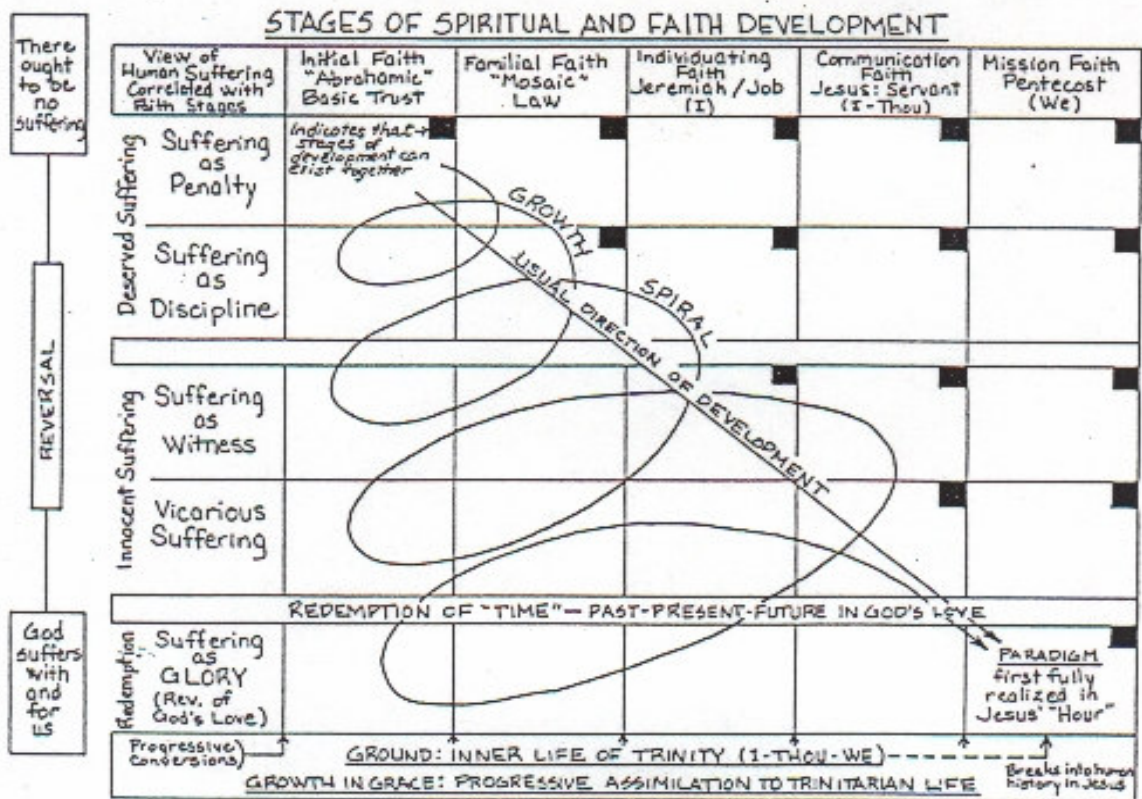
their kingship to find security in other nations (as the prophets from Amos to Isaiah proclaim). They are thrown into another, more total, exile under foreign power. Yet, when their human hope is most devastated, when God has abrogated the covenant made to their fathers, the exilic prophets proclaim that Yahweh's unconditional faithfulness again breaks through, now in an even deeper way. Yahweh promises to "put a new Spirit in you and make you keep my statutes." (Ez 36:27). Now the covenant is not simply to the nation as a whole (to the "fathers [and mothers]"). Now "each shall know me from the least to the greatest." (Jer 31:34) In the midst of the chaos they have made their lives, Yahweh proclaims, "Do not look behind, Behold I create all things *new*" (Is 43:18-19). I call this *Individuating Faith* for it is not mediated through the family or tradition (as important as these still are), but through God's Spirit in each individual person (See Ez 18). What is implied here is a kind of "innocent suffering," like that of Jeremiah and more fully interpreted in the Book of Job and Tobit as God's faithful face the attacks of their communities. But there is also a more positive "interiorization" as Israel gets in touch with its feminine "soul" in the emergence of Sophia. Carl Jung's analysis of individuation is helpful here, for his insight into the deep self involves dealing with our shadow side through innocent suffering, and integrating the inner counter-sexual (the anima/animus) as we open to the "crucified Christ" as center of the Self.

The promise of individuating faith seems never to have been fully realized in Israel. Instead of awaiting God's Spirit after their return from Exile, they returned to the "familial" way of viewing things and even increased the Law in an effort to avoid any further destruction from Yahweh. As we will see, faith development is not always forward, but is more cyclical as we return to the unhealed past when challenged to move forward. In Israel, this "cycling back" gave rise to the Pharisees who were so prominent in Jesus' day. We must wait for Jesus and the Holy Spirit to bring us to two further stages of development.

But before we turn to those stages, we need to see how Jesus "recapitulates" the earlier stages of Israel's faith. As St. Irenaeus argued, only what was "assumed" was redeemed. Jesus progressed through the same stages of growth as Israel, only in the God-intended way, and it is "in Christ" that each Christian believer is empowered to live those stages. The initial stage for Jesus was his very birth and his mother's faithful "yes", the New Testament correlate of Abraham's faith. He also was called from home and into Egypt. His family also was led by dreams (like the OT Joseph) and faithfulness to God's call. His "familial faith" is best articulated in Luke's account of the "Finding in the Temple." He stays back to learn from the elders (to "be in his Father's house") but then freely "submits" to his parents while he grows in wisdom, age and grace. Till 30 he lived a "hidden" life, learning the Scripture and the ways of God in ordinary life. His "individuating faith" is seen in his leaving Mary for the baptism of John. He experiences the Spirit coming personally on him: "You are my beloved Son" he hears, and is empowered to go into the desert to live through Israel's temptations, but in a way totally faithful to God. Thus, he is both differentiated from the tradition, but also reconnected to it in a totally new, individuated way.

At this point he opens up a new stage, what I have called *Communitarian Faith*. Grounded in God's love, he proclaims that the Kingdom of God *is* here, the promised time *has* come, and by calling disciples and 12 apostles he symbolically announces a renewed Israel. He is sent to "create community" through the power of the Spirit. This is not just "belonging" to an already existing divine community, but is a move to rebuild the community as God's "new creation" (that is as presupposing the creative divine experience of individuating faith). Jesus' parables show this change of perspective, and make clear why he was so misunderstood by those still seeing with "familial" eyes. When the scribe asked Jesus "who is my neighbor?" he was asking "who belongs to my "familial" community?" Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan concludes by revising the question: "who *was* neighbor to the one who fell among thieves?" That is, who *created* neighborliness? The key to creating such "unconditional" community is forgiveness of enemies -- a unique teaching of Jesus. If God has extended unconditional love to humans -- which seems to be what the presence of the kingdom means -- then Jesus' (and our) call is to extend love and forgiveness to everyone who will receive it, and to "forgive 70 times 7 times" those we are related to in God's love. His disciples could only understand this by the help of God's Spirit after Jesus' death, but Jesus was already living that faith during his life, and attempting for form a community that also lived by it.

Finally, with the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the full, universal, implications of Jesus' death were made manifest. Now the message was to be given not only to fellow believers but to the whole world (Mt 28:19). It was to be a free gift from God, an overflow of divine love, to all who would repent of their disbelief and receive God's forgiveness. I call this *Mission Faith*, and even though there is a touch of it whenever we meet God, we cannot really sustain this gratuitous love without the foundation of the previous stages. Thus, each stage builds on the preceding yet reintegrates the preceding on a totally new level. Jesus' coming did not break from the Old Testament, but "fulfilled" it. In him is the "yes" to all of God's promises (2 Cor 1:20). Each stage is actually more completely fulfilled as it is integrated in the succeeding stage. The Lamb is resurrected "with his wounds glorified." Nor do we simply go forward, but as Israel showed after the Exile, we can also regress to a previous stage and either get stuck in it or get further healed in order to move forward. The following chart illustrates how the stages relate to each other.



Implications for Supervision and Spiritual Growth

1. These stages give a pattern for individual and community. As led by the Spirit "into all truth," each of us and the church progress in our own unique ways through these stages. We can see from the Twelve Step program that we need a breakthrough to trusting a higher power, a repentance for the sins we have committed in our relationships and making amends (healing of familial faith), a committed spirituality (individuating faith), such that we can communicate it to others (communitarian/mission faith). We can only "see" from the stage we are presently in, so we need to understand the characteristics of each stage, to support people in whatever stage they find themselves to help their healing, as well as point out clues to emerging successive stages. By accepting where we are we facilitate change.

2. It is also true that we do not simply advance. When difficulties arise, we can go back to preceding stages to be further healed, or negatively to be protected from change. The early church was outgoing and evangelistic. Gradually, the spiritual gifts began to lose their connection to love and community (see 1 Cor, Matthew, etc.) and focus was put on Jesus' Word and authority. This was a healing for the familial stage among pagans who had little preparation for this stage. This was the church we Catholics knew till Vatican II. Now I believe, we are being called further, to discover again

personal gifts and learn to unite with different communities (the call of communitarian faith). People are in different stages (different parts of ourselves are in different stages) so we need guidance and discernment.

3. The stages are cumulative: Each stage is foundation for the next when it is rightly experienced. The more we trust, the more we will trust our family and church and the freer we will be to trust our individual experience of God. When trust is wounded (as with Judah), then it is hard to trust God or the prophets. One regresses to past structures for security. Thus, the way most helpful for people to develop a more collaborative form of ministry is to provide healing for earlier stages. Thus, writers like Matthew and Luke built the newness of Christianity on the tradition of Israel and did not cut off from it. As Jesus, we need to differentiate in relationship, for cut offs only suppress our unhealed wounds, and they resurface in future relationships.

4. Each stage is needed for full development. We never simply get beyond earlier stages. Thus, a strong sense of familial belonging is important as a foundation for individual freedom, or what we find is individualism, not individuating faith. It follows, as John Westerhoff has pointed out, that a parish should have something for each group -- a study group for those learning the tradition, a "searching group" for those in individuating faith, and a "ministry group" for those called to help create community. The more developed cannot live without those in earlier stages. We have to have learners if we are going to have teachers.

5. Transitions will usually be painful: Since we are wounded in many ways, transitions between the stages are like a dying to the old and rising to the new. It is not easy to leave the security of known ways and risk being guided by God's call from within. Before ordination, I went through a depression that shook my self-confidence. It caused a deep upheaval till I understood it as a shift from familial to individuating faith.

6. Finally, transitions will affect others and the larger community: Family therapists point out that a change in any member of the system will be met by others in the system who resist the change. That is also true of subgroups within larger groups. Some years ago, Leo Mahon from Chicago was training lay ministers in San Miguelito. His methods were working well within his own parish, but when the minister needed training in the seminaries he ran into difficulty. The bishops were not in favor of his changes. If we are going to help the whole system grow (ourselves included) we need to have the whole system in mind and take appropriate measures.

An Example

Sandy (fictitious name) had come to our healing team a couple times. She was seeing a counselor for early sexual and possibly ritual abuse. The third time she felt a need for deliverance prayer; it seemed that she could not bear to face the abuse of her brother and as we prayed she felt more and more confused (a sign that something needed addressing). I asked her what was going on for her, and she said "It's not fair. I didn't ask to be put in this family!" What we picked up was that she was taking our prayer for

her brother as a burden for her to perform, when she really needed support herself. She was interpreting her work as a kind of "ought" (familial stage) that good Christians would surely do, and she felt overwhelmed because she herself had no deep "parental" support (initial faith). We prayed that she would let God parent her, and give her Joseph and Mary as her family (she needed healing in initial faith), but we also let her know that as she changed, her family would be healed. Her healing was not selfish but a gift for the family (to respond to her sense of "familial" obligation). If we had told her "she shouldn't resist what God chose for her" it would be another obligation and make things worse. That "true" statement would not be discerning, since her development was not in a position to respond positively to it. What she most needed was a healing of the earliest stage -- basic trust in God's "mothering" love. Her sense of "relief" and reunion with God indicated that this was "consolation". We have to see the consequences (the long term fruits) to be confirmed in this view.

Another case (we will call *Carol*) dealt with discernment in a loving relationship. Relationships are essential for our own growth and healing, so we cannot simply bypass this issue, but they are often very complex. We need to ask when the relationship (friendship, marriage, celibate relationship, etc.) is in God, and when is it questionable or simply not in God? (see the articles on "Trinitarian Love and Male-Female Community," and "Healing Gender Wars" for more explanation of this issue). Carol was single, but never totally "at home" in her single life. She met a man, who she felt very attracted to but he was of another faith (Moslem) and he had a different view of relationships than she had. He was very good and "wise" and she began to wonder whether God might be calling her to a more permanent relationship. I suggested that she stay open to how God was gifting her in this relationship, but look at the beginning, middle and end (that is, at how it progressed and what fruits resulted). What she found was that little by little she was spending more and more time thinking about him and less time thinking about God and prayer. She was being drawn into concerns about her house and the possibility of having a family (which she humanly wanted), but it did not seem to be leading her to greater inner freedom and union with God (the goal of all our growth). Ultimately, she felt called to end the relationship, and she has felt a greater inner peace and commitment to God since, and also has experienced new energy for ministry.

What might have been happening here? Carol was likely experiencing "individuating faith" and the emergence of her "animus." Since the "animus" leads one to "God within" it is experienced as very important and sacred. However, if the animus relationship is mistaken for a real relationship, it will end by making us more "self-centered" and "exclusive" and less open to God and others. We might only discover that over a period of time. I have developed 4 *principles* to determine what is a true relationship in the Spirit, and what the result of some projection: 1) can you sacrifice the relationship to God (as Abraham did Isaac?), 2) as it grows does your relation to God and others grow?, 3) have a director who has experience of such relationships, and 4) trust the process (do not simply take ego control either to end the relationship or to continue it). Such relationships are a mystery of God and we need to continue in the tension till God makes clear what to do, at the same time as acting appropriately according to one's state of life, and that of the other.

Another area Christian therapists might be discerning is whether a particular is compatible with Christianity. For years I taught a course in C. G. Jung and Theology Or what about Freud? homeopathy and other alternative medicines, etc.” What is important to say first of all is that no truth can be against God, and there is nothing that accomplishes good that is without *some* truth. Thus, it is not an "all or nothing" question. It is not a question: "Is Jung Christian?" so I can read him or not, but "Has Jung revealed truth that I need to take into consideration in my Christian faith?" and “Am I in a position now in my Christian walk to profit from that encounter?” Jung is not responsible for my faith, I am. Jung is responsible for his own faith or lack of it and that is between him and God.

Further, if we place the therapy in the particular stage of development that best "fits" it, then we can see more clearly how it may help us clarify what is going on in that stage, and how it might help or hinder advancement to full union with God. I put Jung in the stage of "Individuating Faith" and I see his insights as very important for that stage, but at the same time as possibly a block to advancing to the further stages of communitarian faith and mission. (See my "Jung and Christianity: An Interpersonal Perspective"). What might be helpful for a certain stage, may well become an obstacle for further stages if we stop there. The law stage (familial faith) was very important for Israel, but it actually became an obstacle for the further revelation of Jesus when it was held onto as the final word. On the other hand, those who attack Jung too vehemently seem blind to their own aggressive animus and shadow. They could well use his insights into the need for acknowledging our own shadow and learning to "die" to our ego for our greater Self. Individuation *is* needed, but it must be integrated in the larger picture of Jesus' redemptive work.

Conclusion

Jesus is "head" of his body, the church. We, his members, fill out what is missing in the sufferings (and joys) of Christ for the good of the church and all people. What this article offers is a stage model to indicate the steps in this process, for if we simply look at the final goal, we will be giving another *Law* (now the "law of Christ") that people will take as a new obligation (as we have done in the Christian Church for many years). We will fail to see how God's Spirit is the ground of all growth, and cooperating with God's Spirit is the role of counselor and client.

