EXPLORING THE FILTERING ROLE OF CORE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AND VALUES IN THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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1

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **What do you think people *mean* when they refer to one or more of the following?**
  - **"Christian social work" or . . .**
  - **"Christian social work practice" or . . .**
  - **"Integrating Christian faith and social work practice?" or . . .**

- **What do you mean by any of these terms?**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **I've heard these terms used in a number of different ways . . .**

  – **For the first part of this workshop, I'd like to share with you a taxonomy I've been working on that outlines 8 different ways that I've heard these terms used – that is, 8 models for integrating Christian faith and social work practice**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

1. *Latent Integration Model* - Christian social work practice is *any* social work practice that is conducted by a Christian . . .

- **. . . even if the social worker is not *consciously* or *explicitly* or *intentionally* attempting to relate her Christian faith to her practice . . .**
- **. . . Yet somehow, the person's faith still finds a way to "seep through"**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **Adaptation of C.S. Lewis on the topic of Christian literature . . .**
  - **What we want in not more little books about Christianity, but more little books by Christians on other subjects – with their Christianity *latent* (C.S. Lewis, "Christian Apologetics," in *God in the Dock* [194], 93)**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **Applied to Christian social work?**
  - **Christian literature (Christian social work) can exist only in the same sense in which Christian cookery might exist**
    - **It would be possible, and it might be edifying, to write a Christian cookery book . . .**
      - **Such a book would exclude dishes whose preparation involves unnecessary human labor or animal suffering - that is to say, its *choice* of dishes would be Christian.**
      - **But there could be nothing specifically Christian about the actual cooking of the dishes included - boiling an egg is the same process whether you are a Christian or not**

6

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **In the same way, Christian literature (Christian social work practice) would have to avoid dishonesty, cruelty, blasphemy (ethical lapses, belittling the faith of their clients) and the like . . .**
  - **But whatever Christian literature (Christian social work) chose to do would have to be done by means common to all (social workers)**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- As such, Christian literature (Christian social work) could succeed or fail only by the same excellences and the same faults as all literature (all social work) . . .
  - The success or failure of Christian literature (Christian social work) would never be the same thing as its obedience or disobedience to Christian principles
    - (C.S. Lewis, 1967, "Christianity and Literature" in *Christian Reflections by Eerdmans*), pp. 1-2

Meaning of Christian Social Work

2. *Christian Auspices Model* - Christian social work is social work practice that is conducted in a church, or a Christian agency or institution . . .

– Distinctive of Christian social work is the environment in which it is conducted . . .

• Christian social work is practice done by The Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, etc.

Meaning of Christian Social Work

3. *Motivation or Calling Model* - Christian social work is social work practice that is motivated or sustained by one's Christian faith

   - Focus is how one's Christian faith provides, confirms, clarifies, supports, or nurtures one's motivation (sustenance) for being a social worker, even (especially) during the most stressful and challenging of times

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- – Focuses on the belief of many Christians in social work that they are called to their vocation of social work
  - Christian social work here is viewed as a biblical call to justice and/or to meet the needs of the "orphan and widow" in society

- – Christian faith helps give social workers the ability to cope

Meaning of Christian Social Work

– Christians in social work often are motivated to serve/care for others as a heartfelt response to their belief that God first served/cared for them (I John)

– Christian social work practice is characterized by an orientation toward God – seeking to serve and honor, bring glory to God through this service

12

Meaning of Christian Social Work

4. *Excellence Integration Model* - Christian social work is social work practice characterized by a commitment to striving for the highest standards of quality/excellence

- Ultimate goal is God's approval, not merely the profession's approval
- "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Colossians 3:17)
- Focus on striving for the highest possible ethical standards in one's work

13

Meaning of Christian Social Work

5. *Christian Virtues and Service Model* - Christian social work is social work practice which manifests/embodies recognizable Christian virtues

- Focus here is not primarily on the application of Christian beliefs and ideas to one's work, but rather on who the social worker is (and is becoming) and how that influences her social work practice

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **In the Mennonite tradition, for example, there is often less of a great concern for doctrinal or intellectual integration, than for "loving witness through service"**

- **Focus here is on the development of the Christian virtues (faith, hope, and love, for example) in the life of the social worker, virtues which reflect the compassion of Christ as we do our work in the world**

15

Meaning of Christian Social Work

6: *Spiritual Growth Model* **- Christian social work is social work practice conducted with an intentional focus on supporting the Christian (or more broadly, spiritual) growth and development of one's clients, whether individuals, groups, or communities**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **The focus here is on supporting healthy, spiritual and religious growth of our clients ("clients" could be at the level of individuals, groups, or communities), generally in ways consistent with professional ethics**
  - **For some, this has meant social work conducted with the goal of evangelism in mind, which as given rise to some potential ethical concerns**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

7: *Filtering Role Model of Integration* **-** **Christian social work is social work practice characterized by the intentional use of core Christian beliefs and values as a filter to help sort out the types of social work theories and interventions one is willing to embrace and use in her work**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **Focus here is on the use of Christian beliefs and values to help the Christian in social work to *choose from among* available options . . .**
  - **. . . that is, options with regard to prevailing social work theories, priorities, goals, interventions, etc. that are *congruent* with the Christian faith**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

8: *Generative Integration Model* - Christian social work is social work practice characterized by the intentional use of core Christian beliefs and values to inform, shape, and contribute to her priorities, goals, understanding of root causes, and/or interventions in her work

Meaning of Christian Social Work

The focus here is on helping the Christian *generate* possible options - that is, options with regard to social work theories, priorities, goals, interventions, etc.) that are based (at least partly) on core Christian beliefs and values

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **For example, adapting C.S. Lewis (who originally was writing about economists and statesmen)**
    - **Some Christians — those who happen to have the right talents — should be social workers, and that their whole efforts in social work should be directed to putting "Do as you would be done by" into action**
        - **"Social Morality" in *Mere Christianity***

Meaning of Christian Social Work

Said another way . . .

- Its social work practice that is shaped and informed by core Christian beliefs and values when determining . . .
    - theories explaining human behavior, growth and development
    - root causes of the issue/social problem affecting one's clients
    - practice goals/desired outcomes for one's clients
    - the strategies or interventions employed in one's work

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **So what can be said about attempting to define Christian social work?**
    1. **Clearly, there are a multiplicity of ways to define Christian social work, as well as how persons' Christian faith potentially relates to their social work practice**
        - **No one size fits all!**
    2. **These eight models described above are by no means mutually exclusive. One can without threat of inconsistency affirm the validity of more than one approach**

Meaning of Christian Social Work

- **Having been fairly overviewish up to this point, let's pick one of these 8 models and dig a little deeper**
  - **But which one?**
    - **Which would you be interested in hearing more about?**

- **All 8 of them deserve more careful scrutiny**
  - **But I've only written a paper on one of them (#7): so guess which one we're going to focus in on?!**

Filtering Role Model
of Integration

- **Focus of remainder of this workshop will be on unpacking a variation on #7 – the filtering role model of integration**

- **The concern of this model of integration is to answer this question . . .**

26

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **How can social workers tap the resources of their Christian faith to energize and meaningfully inform their work . . .**

- **. . . and at the same time retain a healthy respect for the integrity and value of the knowledge base and practice wisdom that has been developed by the social work profession over the years?**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **The *Filtering Role Model of Integration* has been adapted from the work of Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff - *Reason within the Bounds of Religion* (1984) . . .**
  - So be warned: there will be a healthy does of philosophy immediately ahead – hang in there!

28

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **This *Filtering Role Model of Integration* focuses on the pivotal role of core Christian beliefs and values . . .**
  - **. . . and the way they act primarily *as filters* in the integration process, helping us sort out the types of claims and theories one is willing to embrace and use in her work**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **The gist of this approach goes something like this . . .**
  - **As social workers, we are called upon to evaluate a variety of claims every day . . .**
    - **. . . from relatively small, mundane statements of fact, to large, substantive theories and philosophical suppositions**

Filtering Role Model
of Integration

- For example, let's look at an article from *Social Work* that I had to read for my doctoral comps:
  - "Mental Illness Stigma: Problem of Public Health or Social Justice" (Corrigan, Watson, Byrne, & David, 2005)

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **This article makes a variety of claims within its pages, including:**
    1. Stigma harms people with mental illness
    2. All people (including people with mental illness) are fundamentally equal and share the right to respect and dignity

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **How do social workers typically evaluate such claims?**
  - Typically they weigh them against beliefs & values they already hold, including . . .
    a. Data beliefs: based primarily on one's immediate experience, observation, and/or empirical investigation
    b. Control beliefs: "beliefs as to what constitutes an acceptable sort of <claim> . . . on the matter under consideration" (Wolterstorff, 1984, p. 63)

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **Let's go back to the first claim: that "stigma harms people with mental illness"**
  - **What might be an example of a data belief one might use to evaluate the validity of this claim?**
    - **A social worker might have observed firsthand (data belief) that landlords and employers often summarily dismiss her clients' applications for apartments or jobs as soon as they become aware that her clients are persons with a mental illness**

34

Filtering Role Model
of Integration

- **For claims like this – that "stigma harms people with mental illness" . . .**
  - **. . . data beliefs based on our *immediate experience*, *observation*, and/or *empirical investigation* are often most useful in helping a person decide whether or not to embrace such claims**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **There are other claims, however, for which beliefs based on our immediate experience and/or empirical investigation are not likely to be as decisive . . .**
  - **What would be some examples of such claims?**

Filtering Role Model
of Integration

1. Broad philosophical or metaphysical claims (like "God exists" or "that persons have free will")

2. Value claims (like "society should ensure that all persons regardless of race, age, or gender, etc. have access to adequate housing and health care")

Filtering Role Model of Integration

3. Claims of major theories (like "Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism is a more complete explanation of human behavior than Skinner's concept of operant conditioning")

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **The claim that "all people, including people with mental illness, are fundamentally equal and share the right to respect and dignity" appears to be such a claim . . .**

  - **. . . Although data beliefs are not irrelevant when evaluating such claims, there are other considerations that play an even more critical role here – "control beliefs"**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **For these types of claims, "controls beliefs" seem to be much more important for evaluating the credibility of these claims**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **So just what are control beliefs?**
  - **Deeply held beliefs that lead us to either:**
    - Reject certain *types* of claims (because they contradict or at least do not comport well with these control beliefs)

    OR

    - Support (or develop) other types of claims that do comport well with these control beliefs

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- In this way, our core beliefs - *and I would add core values here as well* - act as filters that lead us to reject or predispose us to support certain types of claims that are in front of us

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **Wolterstorff argues that the core religious beliefs (and values) of Christians can, do, and should function as filters in this way . . .**
  - **. . . just as the core religious (and non-religious) beliefs and values unavoidably do for all persons**
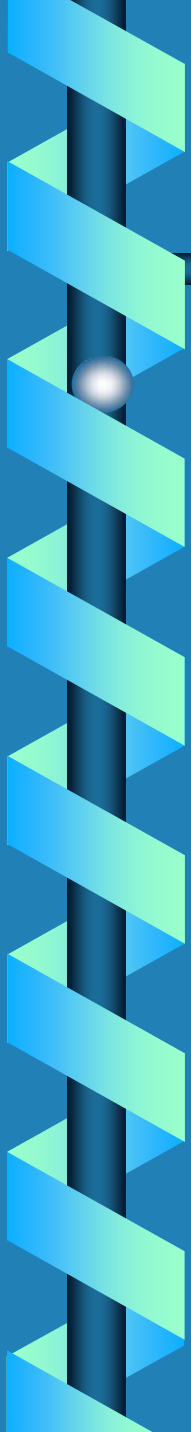
Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **Okay, the philosophy section of this presentation is officially over: you can breathe a sigh of relief!**

  - **Let's try to get a bit more concrete: what does it mean to say that core religious beliefs and values can, do, and should act as filters leading Christians in social work to reject or support certain *types* of claims they come across in their work as social workers?**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **Let's take an example – here are the facts . . .**
    - **Jane (social worker) has been recently transferred to an interdisciplinary team in a hospital**

    - **Team's client is Joe, a person with a serious bipolar disorder, who is in desperate need of a kidney transplant**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **The hospital doctors have determined that Joe will not likely live for more than 6-9 months without a new kidney**

- **Per hospital policy (in compliance with state law), persons may be excluded from consideration for the hospital's kidney transplant waiting list – or receive a downgraded priority status – if they have a mental illness**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- Joe meets all of the other criteria for a priority place on the waiting list

- The number of persons needing kidney transplants in the community is extremely large (some of Jane's other clients)

- Joe's interdisciplinary team has requested that Joe be given a priority place on the waiting list in light of his serious medical condition

47

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **Jane knows that advocating strenuously for Joe might have implications for some of her other clients – clients who don't have a mental illness**

- **Jane's dilemma: should she advocate strenuously for Joe? Why or why not?**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **There are two broad, competing claims vying for Jane's acceptance**
    1. All people, including people with mental illness, are fundamentally equal and share the same right to respect and dignity
    2. The worth of human life *varies* depending on a person's life circumstances
        - As an example of this latter claim, Peter Singer, a philosopher at Princeton, for example, has argued that all persons are not in fact equal (Singer, 1993) . . .

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **According to Singer, we should view and treat persons:**
  - **"... in accordance with their ethically relevant characteristics ... <including> consciousness, the capacity for physical, social and mental interaction with other beings, having conscious preferences for continued life, and having enjoyable experiences. ... All of these things make a difference to the regard and respect we should have for a being" (1995, p. 191).**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **So here's our question**: how might Jane go about deciding which of these two claims to embrace . . .
  - . . . knowing that this decision will have a significant impact on how she understands and acts with regard to Joe's situation?

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **These competing claims can be described as broadly philosophical and/or value-based in nature**
  - **As a result, it is not likely that *factual* beliefs based on Jane's immediate experience and/or empirical investigation will be decisive for her . . .**
    - Facts attempt to describe *what is*
    - Values/morals attempt to argue what *should/ought to* be

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **When weighing claims of *this* sort, persons tend to draw upon their core beliefs and values to help them decide what would be an acceptable *type* of claim – in this case, in a situation like Joe's**
  - **So what core Christian beliefs or values might one draw upon related to the completing claims Jane is evaluating in this situation?**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **One that comes readily to mind (embraced by most Christians through the centuries) . . .**
    - **. . . is that all persons are made in the image of God, and as a result, all human life is sacred *("Catholic social teaching", n.d.),* and all persons beings are of infinite worth (Keith-Lucas, 1985)**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **So if Jane was to use this core Christian belief/value as a *filter* for deciding which *types* of claims she would consider, she would likely:**

  - a) view favorably claims that affirm the view that all persons are equal in terms of ultimate worth and value

  - b) rule out claims that assign differing levels of worth or value to persons based on criteria such as the perceived quality of their lives, their perceived ability to contribute to society, or their overall life circumstances

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **In this case, given the two specific claims she is weighing, Jane would more likely . . .**
  - **a. rule out the claim that the worth of persons varies depending on various considerations related to the *quality* of a person's life**
  - **b. remain open to the claim that all people, including people with mental illness, are fundamentally equal and share the right to respect and dignity**

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- ## *Please note!!!*
  - This is *not* the same as saying that this first claim is a uniquely *Christian* claim . . .
    - It would be more precise to say that this claim is *congruent* or *comports well* with core Christian beliefs/values, whereas the second claim is/does not
    - Put another way – this would not (necessarily) mean that this is a *distinctively* Christian position, but at it is one that appears to be *faithful* to core Christian beliefs and values

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- ## So what might be the implications for Jane's practice?
  - Jane would likely feel compelled to argue before the hospital's kidney transplant committee that Joe's team's petition for a priority place on the kidney transplant waiting list *should not* be discounted or negatively affected by Joe's mental illness
    - To do so would be tantamount to saying that Joe's life is of less value and worth than persons who are not mentally ill . . .

- ## What would you do in Jane's place?

Filtering Role Model of Integration

- **Bottom line . . .**
  - Christians in social work should not be apologetic about allowing the content of their core Christian beliefs function as a filter when weighing claims and theories
    - Like all persons - regardless of their worldviews – Christians in social work ought to seek integrity, authenticity, wholeness and continuity between their overall body of beliefs on the one hand, and their commitments and actions on the other

Healthy Cautions

That being said . . .

- – **There are several points need to be mentioned to instill some healthy caution about what core Christian beliefs and values and values can (should) — and cannot (should not) — do with regard to their use in this filtering capacity . . .**

Healthy Cautions

Healthy Caution #1:

- **With regard to most important issues in social work, there is usually more than one claim that comports satisfactorily with core Christian beliefs and values . . .**

Healthy Cautions

- Core Christian beliefs and values do not usually spell out exactly which specific claims Christians in social work should embrace
    - Instead, the main contribution of these core beliefs and values is that they act as filters, leading Christian social workers to reject or support certain *types* of claims or theories

Healthy Cautions

- **Once a certain *type* of claim has been shown to comport well with core Christian beliefs and values, there is still work to be done!**
    - **Christians in social work in most cases will still have to weigh or evaluate *particular* claims with "the same capacities of imagination" (Wolterstorff, 1984, p. 74) as any other social worker . . .**
        - **. . . by making use of critical thinking, rigorous research (such as that embodied in evidence-based practice), and sober reflection on the world around them.**

Healthy Cautions

- **For this reason, different Christians in social work - even when they share the same core Christian beliefs and values - will not all necessarily embrace the same *particular* claims.**
  - **Let's look at a couple of examples . . .**

Healthy Cautions

- **Example A:**
  - **Take two particular claims . . .**
    1. All persons (when they are born) are fundamentally equal in terms of worth and value, and maintain their worth and value regardless of how they live their lives

    2. All persons (when they are born) are fundamentally equal in terms of worth and value, but some, by indiscriminately taking the lives of others, forfeit at least some measure of the inherent worth and value with which they were originally born

Healthy Cautions

- Arguably, both of these claims are congruent with the core Christian belief that all persons are made in the image of God, and as a result, all human life is sacred and all persons are of infinite worth and value

Healthy Cautions

- **So it appears at least possible that Christians in social work who hold the same core Christian beliefs and values might embrace significantly different _particular_ claims consistent with these core beliefs and values**
    - **No doubt other particular claims congruent with the core Christian belief that all persons are of infinite worth and value can be found as well**

Healthy Cautions

- **Alternatively, it is also possible that social workers who do not hold core Christian beliefs and values might embrace the same particular claims as many Christians in social work . . .**
  - **. . . even if they embrace these claims for different reasons (that is, based on different core beliefs and values) . . .**
    - **How many social workers that are not Christians believe that all people (including people with mental illness) are fundamentally equal and share the right to respect and dignity?**

Healthy Cautions

- In fact, its also possible that some Christians in social work will agree with their non-Christian colleagues on particular claims . . .
  - For example, that all persons are born equal in terms of ultimate worth and value, and maintain their worth and value regardless of how they live their lives . . .

- While disagreeing with the particular claims held by their Christian colleagues . . .
  - For example, that all persons are born equal in terms of ultimate worth and value, but some, by indiscriminately taking the lives of others, forfeit at least some measure of the inherent worth and value with which they were originally born

Healthy Cautions

- **Example B.**
  - **Take two particular claims . . .**
    1. Persons with mental illness, because they are fundamentally equal in worth and value should have equal access to placement on kidney transplant waiting lists

    2. Persons with mental illness, although they are fundamentally equal in worth and value should have not equal access to placement on kidney transplant waiting lists because of their decreased ability to provide the level of medical self-care necessary to maximize the chances of a successful kidney transplants

70

Healthy Cautions

- **Arguably both of these particular claims are congruent with the core Christian belief that all persons are made in the image of God, and as a result, all human life is sacred and all persons are of infinite worth and value**
  - Yet the latter claim contends that empirically demonstrable differences in the ability of persons with mental illness to maintain a high level of medical self-care are extremely relevant – indeed determinative - when making the determination about appropriate access to kidney transplant waiting lists

71

Healthy Cautions

Healthy Caution #2

- Not all of the core beliefs and values held by Christians in social work will be derived solely or even primarily from their Christian faith . . .

Healthy Cautions

- **For no person is just a Christian - she also comes from a particular culture, belongs to a particular ethnic group, is a member of a particular socio-economic class, and likely affiliates with a particular political party, etc.**
  - **Identifying with and belonging to different groups typically involves embracing different sets of core beliefs and values, which play a role when evaluating competing claims**

Healthy Cautions

- **For example, persons core beliefs and values about who is ultimately responsible for supporting the poor in our society – government, individual citizens, private institutions, or the poor/family of the poor themselves . . .**
  - **. . . are often far more influenced by persons' political affiliation than one's Christian beliefs and values**

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

- **I've talked quite a bit about the role of Christian beliefs and values in this model of integration**
  - **But just what might count as some of these core Christian beliefs and values?**
    - **This last part of the workshop will present several additional examples of core Christian beliefs and values that might be useful as filters in the weighing of relevant social work claims or theories**

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

- **Alan Keith-Lucas is one of the earliest (and most prolific) Christians in social work to write about the integration of faith and social work practice**
  - **A small sample of Keith-Lucas' examples of filtering beliefs includes . . .**

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

1. Human beings are of infinite worth, irrespective of gender, race, age or behavior. At the same time, humans are created beings, one of whose problems is that they act as if they were not and try to be autonomous

2. Human beings have been endowed with the faculty of choice and are responsible for the consequences of their choices

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

3. Human beings are fallible, but at the same time, sometimes capable, with appropriate help, of transcending themselves and showing great courage or unselfishness

4. Love is the ultimate victor over evil, including force. Love, understanding and compassion are the source of well-being and acceptable behavior, rather than the reward for them

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

- **Graham Bowpitt's examples from his** *Social Work and Christianity* **(Bowpitt, 1989) and "Working with Creative Creatures: Towards a Christian Paradigm for Social Work Theory"** . . .

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

1. People are the climax of God's creativity and therefore the result of a purposeful act of will, not mere outcomes of an impersonal evolutionary process with all its deterministic implications

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

2. A facet to the Christian view of human nature that social workers have traditionally found particularly hard to stomach is the sinfulness of humankind, particularly the understanding that sin affects every aspect of our humanity at every level (individual, family, community, and society)

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

3. Because people are made in God's image, they possess many of the attributes of the Creator - intellectual, moral and aesthetic. Of greatest importance to social work, being made in God's image means people have capacity for self-determination and moral responsibility. They can make moral choices, and are held accountable for them.

82

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

4. All persons are potentially redeemable by a re-creative act on the part of the Creator. All persons can be restored by the power of God's grace by a process in which we are active participants, and which transforms every aspect of our beings.

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

- **Catholic social teaching represents a body of social and moral principles articulated in a variety of documents and writings from the Roman Catholic Church**
    - **Some core Christian beliefs from Catholic social teaching *("Catholic social teaching", n.d.)* include:**

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

1. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency including food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, and education . . .
   - . . . human dignity can be protected only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met with respect to one another, to our families, and to the larger society

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

2. The goods of the earth are gifts from God, and are intended for the benefit of everyone . . .

– . . . we have a responsibility to care for these goods as stewards and trustees; how we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, a sign of our respect for the Creator

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

3. The deprivation and powerlessness of the poor in a society wounds the whole community, which can only be healthy if its members give special attention to those who are poor and on the margins of society

Example Core Christian Beliefs and Values

4. Persons are social beings who realize their dignity and rights in relationship with others in community . . .

- . . . the obligation to "love our neighbor" includes both an individual dimension, but also a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

- **Based on some of these examples of core Christian beliefs and values gleaned from Keith-Lucas, Bowpitt, and Catholic social teaching, what would be some of the *types* of claims that these core Christian beliefs and values might tend to filter out?**

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

1. Claims or theories that view people as *completely* determined by physical, psychological, social or economic forces outside their control

   – These do not comport well with the basic Christian belief that persons are creative, morally responsible agents accountable to God and each other at the individual as well as societal/ structural levels.

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

- **For example, B.F. Skinner's behaviorism has a great deal to teach us about shaping and changing human behavior . . .**
  - But to the degree that it claims all behavior can be exhaustively explained by environmental and genetic factors alone, it remains incompatible with some of these core Christian beliefs and values

91

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

2. When providing support for people in need, there is enormous value in focusing on the strengths, assets, and potential of individuals, groups, and communities . . .

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

- **Yet at the same time . . .**
  - Claims or theories that presuppose unrealistically high expectations regarding the human ability to prevail over persistent individual and social struggles - without acknowledging the deep and pervasive influence of the human condition . . .
    - Do not comport well with the Christian understanding of human finitude as well as the effects of persons' profound estrangement from and disrupted relationships with each other and with their Creator

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

- **For example, Rogers' humanism has a great deal to teach us about the value of treating others with unconditional positive regard when building relationships with and engendering the trust of our clients . . .**

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

- **But to the degree it claims that "if individuals . . . are accepted for what they are, they will turn out 'good' and live in ways that enhance both themselves and society" (Rowe, 1996, p. 75) . . .**
  - **It remains in tension with some of these core Christian beliefs and values**

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

3. Claims that presuppose a clear-cut distinction between worthy/deserving persons and unworthy/undeserving

   – These claims do not comport well with the Christian belief that because all persons are made in God's image, all persons have inherent dignity and worth and are therefore deserving of social workers' respect, support and services

Types of Theories in Conflict with Christian Beliefs/Values

4. Claims or theories that are based on the position that some people in society are beyond all hope for help or a better life - for example: "once a user, always a user"

   – These claims do not comport well with the Christian belief that God's love makes possible the healing and transformation of even the most destitute, desperate and destructive in our communities

Meaning of Christian Social Work

Coming Back Full Circle

- **So what does it mean to integrate Christian faith and social work practice – that is, Christian social work mean?**

  - At least one answer to this question . . .

    - . . . Christian social work means thoughtfully engaged in tapping the resources of one's core Christian beliefs and values to help sort out the types of claims and theories one can faithfully embrace as a professional social worker

98