Article

A Spirituality Model

Martin Lambourne describes spiritual development, using the model in the Spectrum youth work training programme. By looking at it as a series of layers and sectors, he shows that this is a very dynamic model.

by
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The journey has to start with myself at the centre

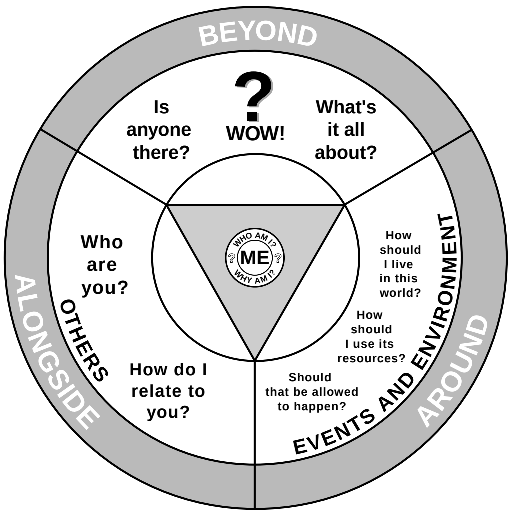
The *Spectrum* model

Why? has the potential to lead on to a quest for the reasons for my very being

Progression through layers

The model of spirituality in the *Spectrum* youth work training programme above suffers from a lack of perspective! This is because it is presented in two dimensions without any indication of the series of overlays which build towards the finished model. This lack of a feel for the progression through the stages of spiritual exploration and awareness means that the model fails to encourage the observer to begin at the beginning. It is difficult enough to get people of faith to move back and view the model from a point beyond and before moments of faith development to the more fundamental phases of spiritual awareness. Yet step back we must—if, as youth workers or evangelists, we are going to get alongside people and encourage them to engage in a spiritual journey which may lead eventually to statements of faith. Better still, if relating to children and young people, that we enter into the spirit of their journeys—which may be far more questioning than our own—and add a new cycle of wrestling and discovery, even a new vitality, to our own doing of theology or our faith journey.

In this article, I intend to walk through the layers of the *Spectrum* model, to try to indicate how and why it was built this way.



The spirituality layer

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My own understanding of the relationship between spirituality and faith includes the view that, if I strip away the area of faith development, I am left with a layer of spiritual quest which I hold in common with all humanity.

Within this fundamental spirituality layer, there are several areas of questioning occasioned by observations from within or outside myself. For the sake of tidiness I have arranged them into four sectors to help give direction to my journeying.

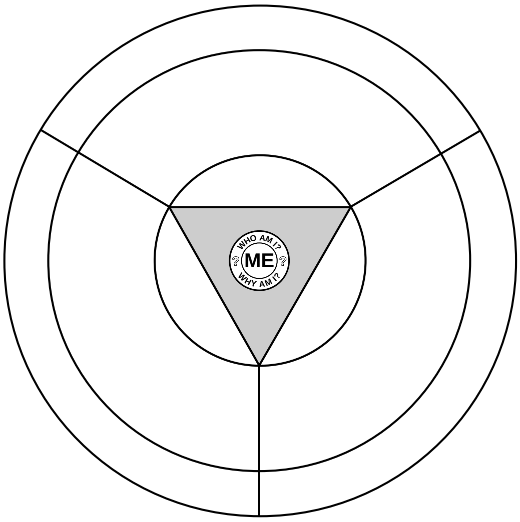

Fig 1

The first sector (figure 1)

- The journey has to start with myself at the centre. That is surely how it seems when I am a helpless bundle of new life needing to deal with the removal of hunger and discomfort, and—I suspect—this remains the fundamental perspective.

- Then, sooner or later, comes that wonderful three-letter question, WHY? This may begin as a way of working out the solution to my lack of food at what I see as the right time, or the insistence that I go to bed before I think I am ready for it—but it has the potential to lead on to a quest for the reasons for my very being. WHY am I?

- WHY is one of the magic words of childhood. It can signal my rebellion against the authority figure's dictates but also the sense that there is more to all of this than meets the eye. So I look around at the world and get cracking on what should be a lifelong quest—the journey of the whys and wherefores. If we take Jesus' word for it, it is a lifelong quest for what is more essentially being childlike (and a true disciple) than incessantly wanting to know why and how and I wonder…

- So I begin to make connections through my questing, to make sense of my senses. That brings me to the wide world of spirituality and to the large circle, which for convenience has been divided into three general areas—the AROUND, the ALONGSIDE and the BEYOND.

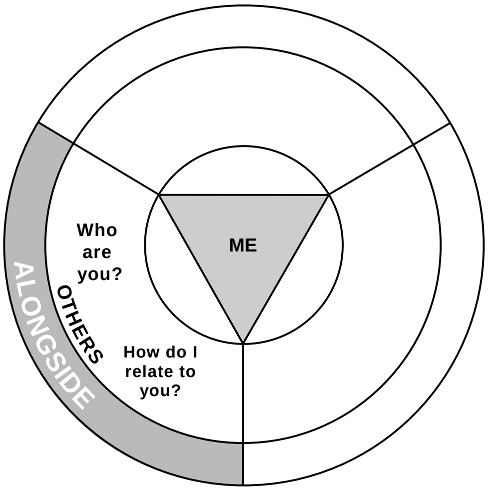

Fig 2

The second sector (figure 2)

- There are people ALONGSIDE me from the moment I am born. At first I am not interested in anything other than why they are not giving me all their attention to satisfy all of my needs all of the time. But that does change. And sooner or later I will be asking why they are there at all and indeed why you are you and I am me—and not the other way around! Why are you different from me and in what ways are we similiar?

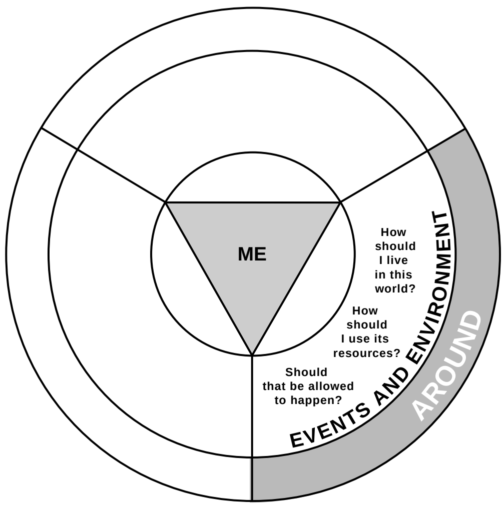

Fig 3

If I strip away the area of faith development, I am left with a layer of spiritual quest which I hold in common with all humanity

WHY is one of the magic words of childhood

I begin to make connections through my questing

Why are you different from me and in what ways are we similiar?

Some of the answers are BEYOND me!

Religious faith tends to emerge from reflections on matters around 'Who am I?' and 'Why am I?' and 'Is there anyone out there?'

Others may arrive at different conclusions from mine, yet from similiar experiences, questions and influences as well as from different ones

The spiritual quest is one which everyone engages in from their early years

The third sector (figure 3)

- I am trying to make the connections—because that's the way I am and I need to find answers which make sense of living alongside parents, friends, neighbours and even enemies. But they, like me, live in this world which is all AROUND me.

- So what do I make of this world which is a source of wonder and beauty, but also red in tooth and claw? I have to sort it out and keep on revising my sorting out because things will happen which challenge the conclusions I have come to and I will be presented with new experiences of this world which say: This doesn't make sense. Why do such terrible disasters happen? Why is there such rich diversity on this earth? Why, why, why?

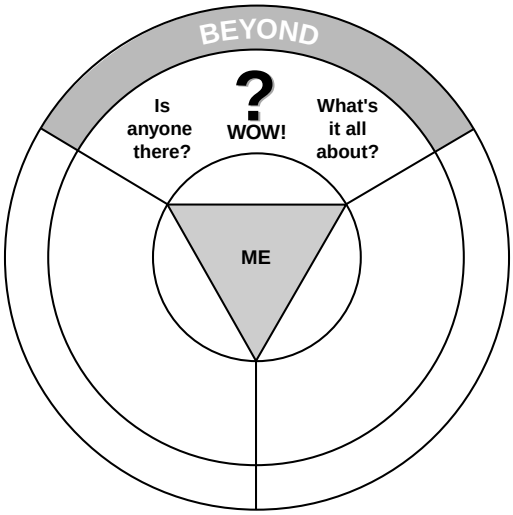

Fig 4

The fourth sector (figure 4)

- Some of the answers are BEYOND me! Some of this world is beyond me too, because it is a world of ideas and sensory experiences and thoughts which cannot be seen and touched and rooted to a spot. There are lots of things in life which raise questions like: Is anyone out there? What is life all about? Such questions, put together with those which are raised by my living on this planet alongside my fellow human beings, form the stuff of which faith statements are made.

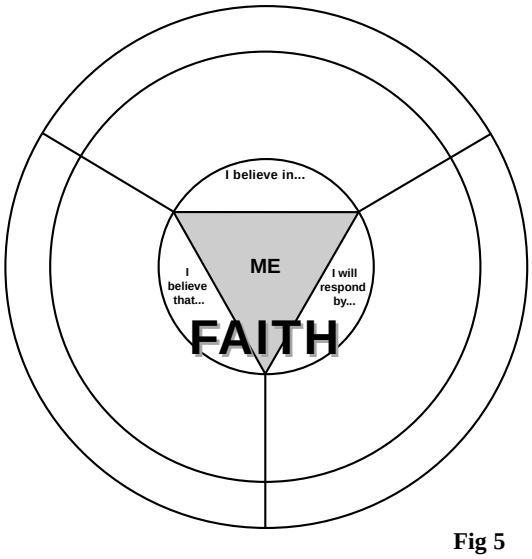

Fig 5

The faith layer (figure 5)

Which takes me to the inner circle of the model, to the conclusions I reach to all of these questions, where I hear myself saying things like, 'I believe that all people have a right to freedom of thought', 'I will respond to the destruction of the rain forests by campaigning for environmental renewal', 'I believe in a God who redeems the world'. They are expressions of the values I am committing myself to and the faith statements which I am standing on at this moment in time. They may change, because life will demand that I keep on evaluating them against new realities, and they are not necessarily religious faith statements—and that's another story.

Statements of belief need not have a religious overtone. 'I believe in the right to have adequate health care for all' is reflective of people of all faiths and no faith, in the religious sense, who come to conclusions which lead to faith statements and/or value statements.

Religious faith tends to emerge from reflections on matters around 'Who am I?' and 'Why am I?' and 'Is there anyone out there?' as well as from the influence of others who share their faith with me in a way which helps me make sense of myself and my world. It may also involve what we call a conversion experience. What cannot be denied, and needs to be acknowledged, is that others may arrive at different conclusions from mine, yet from similar experiences, questions and influences as well as from different ones.

The spiritual quest is one which everyone engages in from their early years—though we may not label it as such. The step from

exploration to belief and value statements is taken by most of us. The step further into religious faith statements is a further parallel move which some will make. It may be conditioned by the above process but also by the cultural/religious community settings which have influenced us.

But the outcome of any one person's journeying will inevitably have its differences, as the example in *Spectrum*[1] tries to illustrate (see box below).

All of this difference needs to be recognized if we intend to encourage spiritual journeying—because for many their quest may not have been labelled spiritual and certainly not religious. To try to suggest to such people from the outset that such a label must be attached may be tantamount to saying, 'If I were you, I wouldn't start from here!'

On the other hand, to deny people the acknowledgement of their own spiritual quest, however different it may be from our own spiritual/faith quest, is to deny them the affirmation of their own humanity and personhood and their right—if we hold such a value base—to journey differently if they wish and come to faith conclusions which are theirs and not ours.

Martin Lambourne

[1] © *Spectrum* Management Group (NCEC, 1996)

Editor's note

In the next edition of *Viewpoints* Martin will be exploring the relationship—as he sees it—between faith development and religious faith development. He will look at Christian faith development but also seek to challenge some of the assumptions we make about other faiths and their validity. This will be one of a group of articles arising from a conference of Asian Christians in which he participated in Indonesia recently.

For many their quest may not have been labelled spiritual and certainly not religious

Two imaginary musings of different people lying under the stars alone and contemplating the night sky…

(a)	b)
(a) 'Look at that great big universe!	b) 'Look at that great big universe!
People are out there now, unravelling its secrets…	How little I am in it all…
What achievements we are capable of: landing on the moon; probing the solar system…	In fact, why am I here on this planet? There must be a reason…
Who knows what we will yet be able to do in our conquest of space?	Maybe some great 'Being' out there has a purpose for my being here and now.
I believe that people's potential to harness science is unlimited...	I believe that God is out there waiting for me to get in touch.
I want to be part of this ongoing story of achievement...'	I'm going to make the connection … in fact, I'm on my way…'