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Quarterly Review (ISSN 0270-9287) provides continuing education resources for professional ministers in The United Methodist Church and other churches. A scholarly journal for reflection on ministry, Quarterly Review seeks to encourage discussion and debate on matters critical to the practice of ministry.

Falling within the purview of the journal are articles and reviews on biblical, theological, ethical, and ecclesiastical questions; homiletics, pastoral counseling, church education, sacred music, worship, evangelism, mission, and church management; ecumenical issues; cultural and social issues where their salience to the practice of ministry can be demonstrated; and the general ministry of Christians, as part of the church's understanding of its nature and mission.

Articles for consideration are welcome from lay and professional ministers, United Methodists and others, and should be mailed to the Editor, Quarterly Review, Box 871, Nashville, Tennessee 37202. Manuscripts should be in English and typed double-spaced, and the original and one duplicate should be submitted. No sermons, poems, or devotional material are accepted. Queries are welcome. A style sheet is available on request. Payment is by fee, depending on edited length.

Quarterly Review is published four times a year, in March, June, September, and December, by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry and The United Methodist Publishing House. Editorial Offices are at 1001 19th Avenue, South, Box 871, Nashville, TN 37202. Circulation and business offices are at 201 Eighth Avenue South, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202. Second-class postage paid at Nashville, Tennessee. Quarterly Review is available at a basic subscription price of $15 for one year, $26 for two years, and $33 for three years. Subscriptions may be obtained by sending a money order or check to the Business Manager, Quarterly Review, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to The United Methodist Publishing House, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Subscribers wishing to notify publisher of their change of address should write to the Business Manager, Quarterly Review, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

An index is printed in the winter volume of each year (number 5 for 1981 only; number 4 thereafter).

Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry

Summer, 1983

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Editorial: What Is Relevant to Ministry?

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Theology and Pluralism: Review of Analogical Imagination
Emery A. Percell
Back in the bad old days of the sixties we used to talk about relevance as something that was critical to the mission of the church. To be relevant then was to be connected with what was happening, with the immediate, with either fads or earth-shaking issues, depending on your evaluation of things.

Today relevance seems to have faded from view, like a suit of clothes that once made one the life of the party but would only look ridiculous if worn to the office. Nor is mission of the church talked of very much, perhaps because it got to be overinflated and then was too vaporous a substance to be identified. In a strange sort of way the whole course of events has been repeated in the recent interest in professional ministry. Like the discussion twenty years ago this one can be controversial but it has a different character to it. Whereas the old one seemed to be almost cosmic in its extensions, this one is sometimes dreadfully domestic in its intensity. It is true that ministry, like mission, is a term that keeps getting expanded until almost anything fits in it, like one of those unfortunate cows who during times of drouth eats wire and license plates and ends with a junk collection in its stomach. But the danger is not so much that ministry will become imperialistic as that it will just be an argument among the staff and the clients will be left sitting in the outer office until the “pros” can decide who should be doing what.

The question of what ministry is and what is relevant to it can easily be answered in a formal way, of course. If we take Alfred Schutz’s model in Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, then Christian faith is like a “thematic kernel” from which various “themes” are drawn like radii to the far edges of a “horizon.” One way to determine which themes are important is by...
"topics," or major subjects we are interested in. In this view the traditional religious disciplines are like the topics and they include not only subject-matter but particular methods for dealing with it. So we have theology as dogmatic, systematic, historic, and apologetic, and the discipline of biblical studies with its different methods for understanding texts. Following the topical approach we can eventually come to understand what ministry is and therefore what is relevant to it.

An illustration of how the topical approach works is given in the homiletical section of this journal. The resources in this issue depend on lections from Luke, and Arthur Landwehr shows how history, theology, and biblical studies enable a preacher to understand a text and preach from it. Being true to the text itself, which takes locale and particularity seriously, Landwehr develops a way of preaching to the congregation in which he serves. What is relevant to ministry here is the use of traditional disciplines to be effective and sensitive in a setting.

When we say these are religious disciplines then it may be inferred that ministry is defined by religion itself. That inference may be valid if religion is somehow wedded to the humanities and sciences but not if religion is taken to mean a universal substratum of humanity. The universal substratum had some pretty noisome aspects to it that had to be corrected by descendants of the supposedly wicked Enlightenment pagans. Everett Tilson gives one example in his essay "The Racial Issue in Biblical Perspective." Here the original religious meaning is rescued from the text in order to rebut profane readings that masked as religious interpretations.

Does this approach imply that professional ministers are those who must go around correcting misunderstandings of what religion, and therefore ministry, is all about? To be sure some such corrections must be made, especially when yahoos and know-nothings arise, as they have today. But there are things in the world that the church can find to affirm, too, as Kent Richmond shows in his essay, "Preaching in the Context of Pluralism." Here pluralism is taken to mean ideological variety, and every preacher knows how hard it is to deal with. Richmond, like Tilson, also reaches back to original meanings in proposing that preaching be considered an act on behalf of the
whole community of faith. Pluralism is then affirmed even though the preacher can and must at times question the values and attitudes of worshipers.

Relevance then must be a two-way street. The preacher must continually be asking whether views that are disparate from his or hers are consonant with the gospel. And professional ministers must always be open to the possibility they may need ministry as much as others. That is part of the point of William Willimon’s essay, “The Spiritual Formation of the Pastor.” Willimon claims that ministry is not defined by special spiritual acts but by its relation to whom it serves and its function within the community. What is relevant to ministry, then, is not so much christology as ecclesiology. Spirituality then does not narrow ministry but broadens it. This expansion does not mean that everything is relevant to ministry but rather that spirituality becomes part of all that the people of God does.

So far, then, the quest for relevance to ministry seems to lead to an affirmation of the traditional approach to disciplines or topics. If we want to understand real ministry, we must first of all understand the church. Actually, Willimon implies that we must go beyond the topical approach, as does Dennis Campbell. The latter recalls the original meaning of professional—one who dedicates a life to service. And Campbell does not mean merely serving the church, although he clearly states that ordained ministry is representative ministry; but ministry means meeting human need. The result is that relevance is determined partly by what the ministered-unto are doing. Ministry may need to concern itself with economics if the community is full of unemployed people. Or it may mean an interest in medieval crockery, if that is the obsession of a person with whom the professional is counseling. The content of ministry thus becomes defined by the objects of ministry, and the whole discussion is shifted from one that is formal to one grounded in “worldly” reality.

Another aspect of this-worldly ecclesiology is that of the worldwide church, and as Jean Lyles admirably demonstrates in her article “What to Expect from Vancouver,” all of us will be made keenly aware of that global aspect this summer when the World Council of Churches meets. It is safe to predict that what
many people will find "relevant" here is how evil it is for Christians to discuss the injustices of capitalism. It is reminiscent of the statement of Martin Luther King, Jr., that Congress and the public were so incensed by civil rights demonstrations they focused on the product of repression—the blacks whose rights were violated—rather than on the process of repression. You may remember how indignant some people were, even "ministers of the gospel," at the effrontery of demonstrators who raised hell over segregation. As we seek for relevance to ministry we will need to pay as much attention to the way things are happening as to what is actually said or done or not done. This effort will require imagination, which is why we need to be reading books like the one Emery Percell reviews in this issue. But then ministry was conceived in an act of imagination, and we will always be looking at the horizon and not at our shoelaces if we are really in ministry.

—Charles E. Cole
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM VANCOUVER

JEAN CAFFEY LYLES

A veteran observer of ecclesiastical conferences suggests ways parish ministers and others can interpret the news from the World Council of Churches Assembly this summer.

According to the date books of many church leaders, the Big Event of the year will take place July 24–August 10 in Vancouver, British Columbia. For the first time since 1954, a World Council of Churches Assembly will convene on North American soil. The 1954 assembly in Evanston, Illinois, associated with the era of Eisenhower and the Cold War, is well remembered by durable veterans of the ecumenical movement. But many of the younger church leaders at Vancouver will be attending their first WCC Assembly, and for them Evanston is history; it is one item in the litany that reads: Amsterdam, Evanston, New Delhi, Uppsala, Nairobi . . . and now Vancouver. Each name signifies not only a locale and a year, but also decisions made, actions taken, new directions and programs launched.

The assembly, which meets at approximately seven-year intervals, is the highest decision-making forum of the World Council, which now has 301 member churches in more than 100 countries. Besides these churches' 930 delegates, assembly planners expect the journalists, special guests, official observers, non-member-church representatives, spouses of delegates, staff persons, translators, interpreters, stewards, uninvited
protesters, and assorted party-crashers to bring the total to four thousand.

The "Bellingham Event," an assembly-related educational program to be held in nearby Bellingham, Washington, during the three-week meeting, will afford many pastors and laity a close view of the proceedings.

Despite suggestions from ecumenical enthusiasts that absolutely everybody will be in Vancouver in late July and early August, the reality is that space is severely limited. Not everyone who would like to go will be able to take an active role or be an observer at Vancouver. The majority of interested Christians in North America, as elsewhere, will have to experience Vancouver vicariously, relying on press and media accounts, on the reports brought back by delegates and observers, and on the WCC's own official records of the proceedings, to be published in the wake of the assembly. This article is intended as a guide to those who must look on from afar.

PREPARING THROUGH STUDY

In advance of the assembly, church people in many areas of the U.S. have had a glimpse of the WCC at work in the presence of visiting teams of delegates and staff persons. These visitors have fanned out all over the world in the months preceding Vancouver to visit local congregations of WCC member-churches, to talk with local church people, and to get acquainted with the various contexts in which Christians are living out their common commitment to Jesus Christ.

The visitation teams have proved a "tremendously valuable experience" for people who had no previous direct contact with the WCC, according to Lewis Lancaster, ecumenical officer of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Lancaster believes that the team visits have proved an effective antidote to recent widely publicized criticisms of major ecumenical organizations, including damaging articles in Reader's Digest. "People come across better than documents," he says, and face-to-face chats with, say, a housewife from Great Britain and a university professor from Nigeria who are "completely committed to the
same Lord” effectively counteract fears that anyone associated with the WCC is “wearing the hammer and sickle.” On the other side, WCC delegates from other countries, who may previously have formed their images of the U.S. from exported American TV mythology, are unprepared to see the “real America.” Such visitors have had their eyes opened to some of the problems of America: severe unemployment, poverty in Appalachia, racism in many places, the plight of migrant workers and Haitian refugees.

Another “preview” experience still available is that of reading and studying publications issued in preparation for the assembly. Materials published by the WCC have long had the reputation of being unreadable to the uninitiated (and many documents have deserved that reputation!). Several of the pre-assembly pieces, however, are remarkable for their clarity, verve, and readability. Others are less accessible and require more effort on the part of readers. As a rule, the prose of individual gifted writers sparkles; that produced by committee falls flat. The books are available from the U.S. Conference of the WCC, 475 Riverside Drive, New York. Although they were published for study in advance of the assembly, some will be informative and useful to readers who only discover them afterward. Here are brief descriptions of half a dozen:

*The Feast of Life: A Theological Reflection on the Theme ‘Jesus Christ—The Life of the World,’* by John Poulton (Risk Books, $3.95 paperback), is designed to involve Christians everywhere in preparation for the assembly. Poulton, an Anglican, is a canon at Norwich Cathedral in England. He takes as his starting point the reflections of twenty-five theologians brought together by the WCC, but the prose is his own, and he does not write in “committeespeak.” The book is “for ordinary Christians, not specially for their leaders,” he says. Poulton’s evocative, image-filled book probes the meaning of the Eucharist for modern Christians in a world where both forces of death and signs of life are evident. This book, like much WCC-produced material, stresses the corporate nature of sin, presupposing the necessity for corporate repentance and the renewal of the structures of society, along with an awareness that all are implicated in the death-dealing acts of governments. Like most
current WCC writings, it is informed by the insights of liberation theology about “God’s solidarity with the oppressed and alienated, the poor and the starving.” It points to grave disparities between affluence and poverty and is at least implicitly critical of the current economic order: “In the elementary action of taking bread and wine in communion, Christians in richer countries pledge themselves inevitably to working for a just and fair international economic system in which all may live and not starve to death” (p. 14).

Images of Life: An Invitation to Bible Study (Friendship Press, $3.50 paperback) is a companion to the Poulton book. This resource, based on the assembly theme, comes packaged with a set of fourteen pictures—images to spark the imagination. The chapters of the study are merely sketchy and suggestive outlines. They approach the biblical message through seven vivid “images of life,” each with a key biblical text: (1) the way of life, (2) birth, (3) the house of living stones, (4) the bread of life, (5) the treasure of life, (6) the crown of life, and (7) the water of life. The writers of the material were aware that the WCC Bible study will be used in a wide variety of cultural contexts; the suggested process is open-ended enough to make the studies useful for groups of very different backgrounds. There will be many answers to the question: “What does this image evoke for you?”

Among U.S. Christians, it is hard to imagine a local church that does not have at least one study group that would warmly welcome a seven-week Bible study based on these materials. One aim of the study is to connect the relevance of these images for a local congregation’s life-style to the concerns of Christians worldwide—and in fact to the situations of those of other faiths.

Acting in Faith: The World Council of Churches Since 1975, by Leon Howell (WCC, $4.95 paperback), is a lively, well-written, fact-filled account of what the WCC has been doing since the fifth assembly at Nairobi (along with a brief synopsis of earlier council history). For persons who know almost nothing about the history and the current structure and activities of the council, this may be the best brief introduction available. Howell, an American free-lance journalist who writes frequently for religious journals, has pulled an enormous amount of informa-
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...tion together in a readable form. The book would be even more useful if the author had added an index. I wish too that he could have reduced the use of acronyms (though the use of initials is all but unavoidable in dealing with large bureaucracies). "Alphabet soup" tends to be offputting to all readers except the bureaucrats. Quicker than you can say "the search for a just, participatory and sustainable society," most readers will find themselves lost in the maze of acronyms and turning to Howell's handy list of abbreviations for help in recalling what CCPD, CICARWS, ECLOF, and JPSS stood for.

The Winds of God: The Canadian Church Faces the '80s, by Rodney M. Booth (Wood Lake Books, $3.95 paperback), will serve to introduce the host country to the assembly. Booth, a Canadian journalist who works for the United Church of Canada, gives us Canadian history from a Canadian perspective—something, he gently reminds us, we have not gotten from the textbooks studied in U.S. schools. The book is an informal, often witty, always lively recounting of the story of Canada and its churches. Booth borrows Alvin Toffler's language of "first wave," "second wave," and "third wave" as an organizing principle. Many U.S. Christians are appallingly ignorant about Canada; this little book will help whet one's interest in learning more about the assembly's hosts and the challenges facing Canada in the eighties.

Jesus Christ—the Life of the World: An Orthodox Contribution to the Vancouver Theme, edited by Ion Bria (WCC, $3.95 paperback), is a set of essays by Orthodox theologians. I found them to be heavy, dense, difficult reading, and I doubt their usefulness for lay study groups. But pastors, theologians, and academics who are interested in relations between Protestants and Orthodox in the context of the WCC and who want to get a handle on Orthodox theological approaches might well find these essays useful.

Issues (WCC, $3.95 paperback) is a set of eight discussion papers, each bound separately, setting forth eight major concerns already identified as central to the Vancouver agenda. On the whole, these are disappointing pieces, and I am not sure I would inflict them on a lay study group. They are not drafted in a style that holds attention. The impression they give is that of a shapeless, unfocused laundry-list document produced by a
committee that wanted to leave no issue unmentioned. There is considerable overlap between some of the papers (one imagines that each drafting committee had at least one member lobbying for the inclusion of certain emphases). These are by no means finished products, and it is difficult to predict how the important issues that surfaced here will be shaped into legislation as the assembly unfolds.

SEEING IT FROM AFAR

During the course of the assembly, stay-at-home WCC watchers will be largely dependent on press and media to inform them about what is going on. The limitations of both television and daily newspaper journalism suggest that the picture the distant observer gets will, at best, be distorted and partial. Some of those limitations:

1. Time and space pressures. A TV stand-up reporter has one minute, thirty seconds to present the gist of a lengthy debate. Some of the complexities and subtleties important to WCC cognoscenti are bound to fall on the cutting-room floor. The newspaper reporter may be dealing with an editor who calls to say, “We’ve only got space for eight inches from you tonight.” That means that the next morning’s paper will carry a sketchy account of one action that took place at Vancouver the previous day, when perhaps there were half a dozen one would like to read about. Reporters covering conventions do not generally provide blow-by-blow coverage; their assignment is to pick the one most newsworthy story of the day. East Coast reporters will be working under a particular disadvantage: because of the three-hour time difference, an editor may be calling for their copy for an early edition as early as 2:00 P.M.

2. The audience. Mass media serve a general audience whose members are presumed to know very little and care less about the intimate workings of large ecclesiastical and ecumenical bodies. Newspeople assume a secular audience; therefore, a reporter will seek to translate the accepted churchly vocabulary into everyday speech understandable to the ordinary reader. Some of these translations and interpretations result in language that sounds “wrong” to ecumenical insiders. The awareness
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that one writes for a secular audience may also mean giving much attention to the nuclear disarmament debate and almost none to the presentation of a significant document on baptism, Eucharist, and ministry.

3. The nature of the medium. TV thrives on pictures that show action and conflict. A quiet but important discussion on admitting children to communion may get ignored in favor of a visual of a scruffy little band of protesters with picket signs outside the hall who have no direct relation to the meeting and no discernible impact on the debate inside. Print reporters, too, if they want their story to make the front page, may succumb to the temptation to play up conflict and clamor, while scantly less dramatic and harder-to-write-about happenings.

4. Lack of background. Any print reporter who has regularly covered church meetings recalls at least one occasion when a perfectly coiffed TV reporter, trailed by a retinue of camera people, sound specialists, and other technicians, showed up fifteen minutes late for a great debate of a hot issue and in a panicky whisper demanded that someone at the press table explain—quickly, for God’s sake—what is going on and What It All Means. The print reporters who show up early enough to bone up on the background details tend to sneer at the TV personality for not doing his or her homework. I am guessing, however, that in most cases the managerial folk at the TV station who make the assignments are partly at fault for sending the reporter out on short notice without adequate preparation. No one can be an expert on everything, and it is the general assignment reporter who is most likely to “get it wrong” on a religion story, or to ask the most inane question at the archbishop’s press conference. Fortunately, there will be dozens of well-informed religion specialists covering Vancouver.

5. The nature of the meeting. The three-week assembly will be divided into three parts. The first week will consist of major presentations and speeches. Much of the pomp and festivity that might “show up well” on TV comes here. During the second week, the assembly will work mostly in small groups. The third week will culminate in plenary sessions where the decisions will be made that determine council directions for the coming seven-year period. We can expect to see substantial
coverage of weeks one and three, and very little of the middle week.

6. **Headlines**. Many complaints about press distortion focus on misleading headlines. The reporter doesn’t write the headline that goes on his or her story; indeed, headlines may be written in a rush, on deadline. The head must fit a tight space rather exactly. If the headline writer gives the story only a superficial glance, the result may be a head that distorts the facts. When one sees a headline announcing, “Churchman condemns capitalism,” one should reserve judgment until reading the story; the critique in question may have been a more complex and ambiguous statement than the headline suggests.

7. **The pressure to produce**. On the day when there is really no news coming out of a meeting, what is a reporter to do? Conscious of the money it costs the paper to keep a correspondent on location on expense account, he or she will probably file a story anyway. That’s where press conferences come in. They are really only sideshows to the main event, but in the press they often get top billing, if a provocative question elicits a quotable statement from a powerful leader. A speaker’s off-the-cuff remark to two dozen reporters may, if it is sensational enough, overshadow what he said in his formal address—and take the space that might otherwise have gone into reporting some of the solid, intense work being done by diligent and weary delegates in dozens of small working groups—labor that will help determine council policy for years to come.

Despite these problems, the news coverage you get from Vancouver may well be adequate, competent, even distinguished. An estimated one thousand press and media people will be there. The Religion Newswriters Association, the organization of reporters who regularly cover religion for the secular press, will be holding its annual meeting during the assembly, and RNA’s members include some of the most respected religion specialists in the business.

Where will you get your news of the assembly? The major TV networks will send crews, so you may see a few snippets on the evening network news. Probably more satisfactory and detailed coverage will be available in newspapers and magazines.
Smaller dailies that can't afford to send their own reporters will rely on wire services. George Cornell, a forty-year veteran of the religion desk and now the "dean" of U.S. religion reporters in the secular media, is the Associated Press religion editor; he has covered previous WCC assemblies and knows the territory. Also worth reading: David Anderson, who covers religion for UPI. Readers may be able to encourage the editorial decision-makers on small dailies to devote more space to wire-service assembly coverage by expressing their keen interest. A secular-minded editor may assume there's not much reader interest in the event if no one calls to say otherwise.

Most major dailies will send their own religion specialists to cover Vancouver. Even if you do not ordinarily read one of the major metropolitan dailies that serves an entire region, you might consider looking for one of these on the newsstand or at the library for the duration of the assembly. Some of the most capable writers who can be expected to file stories from Vancouver are Kenneth Briggs or Charles Austin of the New York Times; Roy Larson of the Chicago Sun-Times; Bruce Buursma of the Chicago Tribune; John Dart or Russell Chandler of the Los Angeles Times; Virginia Culver of the Denver Post; Helen Parmley of the Dallas Morning News; Louis Moore of the Houston Post; John Long of the Louisville Courier-Journal; Jim Franklin of the Boston Globe; and Marjorie Hyer of the Washington Post.

One can never predict how much or how little space Time or Newsweek might allot to a major religion event; but the work of both Dick Ostling of Time and Ken Woodward of Newsweek is well-thought of by their peers.

For in-depth coverage, along with informed analysis, religious publications—weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies—will be the most useful resources. United Methodists will, of course, want to read the extensive coverage in the weekly United Methodist Reporter. (Probably no U.S. publication will cover the meeting more thoroughly. For the WCC's Fifth Assembly at Nairobi, UMR's coverage filled so many columns that some readers learned even more than they wanted to know about the event.) For the busy church leader whose reading time is limited, Newscope, a weekly newsletter, will give concise summations of the most significant happenings. For editorial
comment and thoughtful interpretation, I will plan on reading what Rich Peck has to say in Circuit Rider, along with Arthur Moore's pieces in New World Outlook. One also needs to know what the WCC's severest critics are saying. The organization's most vocal Methodist critics can be found in the pages of the unofficial Good News magazine.

Among other outstanding denominational magazines, I would look for good coverage and commentary in A.D. (United Presbyterian and United Church of Christ), Presbyterian Survey (Presbyterian Church in the U.S.), Presbyterian Outlook (an independent journal serving both UPC and PCUS), and the Lutheran (Lutheran Church in America). I would expect to find perceptive assessments in Reformed Journal (published by Eerdmans), Partners (the LCA clergy journal), and the Witness (an independent left-of-center Episcopal publication). A different angle of vision will be supplied by the weekly National Catholic Reporter and by the Canadian church magazines—Canadian Churchman and United Church Observer. Among the conservative critics, New Oxford Review (Anglo-Catholic) and Richard John Neuhaus's Forum Letter (Lutheran) should be the most provocative and readable.

Inevitably, readers will want a view of the proceedings that goes beyond a merely denominational perspective. Journals such as Christian Century and Christianity and Crisis (both liberal and supportive of the ecumenical movement) and Christianity Today (a conservative critic) will be excellent sources of information and opinion.

Perhaps the most reliable reports of all will come from your friends and neighbors who attend Vancouver. Find an assembly delegate or observer from your area to speak to your congregation about the event—but do not limit your choices to delegates of your own denomination. Do not overlook the perspective that could be offered by the spouse of a delegate who saw the whole thing from the visitors' gallery, or by the college student who served as a steward and thus had a unique view of the inside workings.

Finally, the WCC's own documents reporting on the assembly will eventually be made available. They will be "must" reading for those most concerned about the ongoing work of the council.
It would be risky to predict exactly what may emerge from a major decision-making forum that brings together an international diversity of participants who differ in religious traditions, cultures, nationalities, and world views. But here are a few things to look for.

1. *Dominance of the Southern Hemisphere.* When the WCC was founded, it was primarily a European and American enterprise, with few churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America represented. As new member-churches have joined over the years, the body has become more truly a *World Council.* As churches in Europe and North America decline in membership, they are increasing in the Southern Hemisphere. (U.S. and European churches still hold the economic clout, however, because of their financial contributions.) Like the U.N. General Assembly, the WCC Assembly has become a forum where Third World voices can be heard. The concerns of African, Latin American, and Asian churches are prominent on the agenda. Liberation theology undergirds policy decisions: “God is on the side of the oppressed.” Not surprisingly, the international economic order comes in for sharp criticism. Often critiques of Western materialism and militarism are painful for American ears. Rodney Booth’s observation about Canadian Christians in *The Winds of God* applies equally well to Americans:

   … many Christians in Canada are carrying an incredible load of guilt simply for being who they are. When the Good News keeps coming at you as bad news you have either to be a masochist or deeply committed to stay with it.

2. *Discomfort.* The tensions between the separateness of Christians and the gift of unity in Christ which they claim will always be present at a WCC Assembly. There will be social and ecclesiological issues upon which the representatives of more than 300 churches in 100 countries—Orthodox, Anglican, Reformed, Pentecostal, Independent, Old Catholic—cannot agree. The fact that they are not all able to participate together in the Eucharist will, here as elsewhere, be a painful reminder of
disunity. Five languages will be used—English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish—but even though simultaneous translation will be available, cultural differences are such that delegates will often misunderstand one another. Leon Howell, in Acting in Faith, quotes Alan Brash, of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand, [who] has written that no church is entirely comfortable in the WCC, nor should it expect to be. Living and working with people who are not like us, Brash says, in doctrine, worship, life-style, cultural background, language, political persuasion, "is always uncomfortable." An Orthodox writer referred to it as "a permanent tension."

The planners' decision to have a foot-washing ritual at the closing worship (instead of a Eucharist) is a symbolic example of the compromises entailed in living with these differences.

3. The big issues. Astute council insiders suggest that there may be some tension between advocates of the two most pressing issues to be debated. Which of the two will get prime attention? If the WCC Assembly follows the lead of major church meetings of recent months, the call for nuclear disarmament could overshadow everything else on the agenda. But other voices are cautioning that pronouncements on the arms race must not be allowed to muffle the prophetic word that needs to be uttered about economic justice.

4. Relevance of the theme. What does it mean in today's world to say that Jesus Christ is the life of the world? Is it an arrogant, triumphalistic statement that shows a lack of respect for the beliefs of the adherents of other world religions? Is it a futile slogan for those who live in the awesome shadow of death-threatening weaponry? You can anticipate that one of the less dramatic aspects of the assembly for the news media—daily Bible study in small groups—will be one of the most deeply felt experiences for participants as they ask such questions, and as they explore the meaning of their common commitment to Christ and to each other.

5. A larger role for women. U.S. Protestants who have come to expect that careful attention will be paid to the avoidance of sexist language in church publications, festival liturgies, and
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM VANCOUVER

legislative gatherings may go into culture shock when they realize the lack of progress on these matters in WCC circles. But the council's recent study on the "Community of Women and Men in the Church" has sparked new initiatives to challenge male dominance in the council. One of the hardest-fought battles at Vancouver will come over a proposal to ensure a guaranteed percentage of representation for women on major WCC structures such as the powerful Central Committee. Because some denominations have adhered to suggested guidelines in choosing assembly delegates, there will be more women at Vancouver than at any previous assembly—an estimated 32 percent.

6. Prophetic voices. In early stages of preparation, assembly planners played down keynote addresses and major speakers, putting out the word that they were not looking for "big names." Nonetheless, it is often the invited speakers who set the tone for what is to come and capture the imagination of the listeners. Some who were present at Nairobi continue to recall the dramatic utterances of American theologian Robert McAfee Brown and Jamaican politician Michael Manley. Even a relatively obscure prophet, having just given a riveting address to a spellbound assembly, may thereafter be known as a "big-name speaker," even if he or she was not that before the speech!

7. A dramatic convergence. The faith-and-order agreement on baptism, Eucharist, and ministry announced at a 1981 meeting in Lima, Peru, has not yet received the widespread attention it deserves. The document has been sent to the churches (including the Roman Catholic Church, which was a full member in this particular theological dialogue) for their responses and action. The presentation and reception of this significant statement at Vancouver might well be one of the assembly's most moving scenes. Certainly this agreement by the churches is of great historical significance.

8. An awareness of the setting. Not only does the Vancouver meeting encourage us to get better acquainted with the Christians of Canada, neighbors we have too long ignored, as the first WCC Assembly on the Pacific Coast, it will raise our awareness of Pacific peoples and Asians who are part of the Christian family. And no doubt our attention will be directed to
the Pacific's role as an arena for atomic testing and other preparations for war, and the baneful effects of such activities on the people whose home is the Pacific.

9. Internal matters. Pre-assembly rumblings indicate that there may be talk about restructure of the WCC's Geneva staff for greater effectiveness, as well as action to give the New York-based U.S. office of the WCC a clearer purpose and direction than it has had in recent years.

10. Hallway chatter. At large church meetings, there is often more interesting news to be found in the corridors than in the plenary sessions. WCC General Secretary Philip Potter will be retiring from his post not long after the assembly. Since there is no obvious heir to the job on the scene, one may be sure that speculation about a possible successor to Potter will be one of the favorite indoor sports of the hallway sages at Vancouver. The very person who would be perfect for the job may receive the "high visibility" at Vancouver that will bring him or her to the attention of the search team as a potential leader with the necessary gifts and graces.

11. Other issues. To judge from the preliminary issue papers, we will be hearing many other questions discussed at Vancouver: How can the church communicate credibly? How can children be involved more meaningfully in the life of the Christian community? How shall the churches share with the poor the good news of Jesus Christ? How should Christians witness to their faith in a pluralistic world?

The view one gets from Vancouver is inevitably incomplete and blurred; observers-at-a-distance will have to work at getting the full story eventually. Their participation in the process is likewise severely limited. But clergy and laity who care what happens at Vancouver should realize that their daily prayers for the participants during the eighteen-day gathering are a not insignificant contribution. Another important contribution comes as one makes oneself available to serve as a channel of information—listening, reading, talking with returning delegates, digging up resources, ordering films and books, making opportunities for members of the local church to hear and learn and experience some bit of the event called "Vancouver."
THE ORDAINED MINISTRY AS A PROFESSION:
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON IDENTITY

DENNIS M. CAMPBELL

Why do ordained ministers sometimes complain of encroachments on their private lives? Because they have forgotten that ordination is more than a way to make a living. The ordained have a unique identity.

In what ways, and to what extent, is ordained ministry a profession? Attempts to answer this question often spark controversy because they carry implications for theological education, for steps toward ordination, for self-understanding on the part of ordained persons, and for the practice of ministry. Because the question of ministry as profession is so fundamental, it is worthy of regular reconsideration.

It is useful to consider the background of the contemporary dilemma in order to achieve some distance from our modern assumptions. "Profession" was used originally in early medieval Europe in relation to religious orders. "To profess" was not only to make a profession of faith, but also to take upon oneself the vows of a religious order. In response to a profession of Christian faith, the "professional" committed his or her whole life to service.

The religious orders were not concerned exclusively with religion, however. Medieval European culture considered all of society to be properly under the purview of the church. There was no distinction between what we now call the sacred and secular realms. The religious orders engaged in all arenas of

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culture. They were major international institutions which transcended local customs and advanced Christian civilization throughout the Western world. The church, through its "religious professionals" provided society with educators, artists, experts in jurisprudence, men and women who served the sick, and political advisors and leaders, as well as theologians and priests.

"Religious professionals," provided these diverse services because they were the only ones who were capable of doing so. There was no secular, professional middle class. The medieval universities, which were church foundations, became the centers in which expertise in specific disciplines was developed. Various disciplines were represented, but especially divinity, law, and medicine.

Gradually the vocations of divinity, law, and medicine came to be regarded as unique "professions." At first these "professionals" were clergy. Almost all students were required to take at least minor clerical orders. By the sixteenth century, however, the word profession was used in reference to men who were not ordained but who practiced these disciplines. The use of the term laity to refer to those untrained in any one of the professions is indicative of their clerical foundations. Originally, the term laity was used to distinguish nonordained persons from the clergy. It eventually came to refer to those not belonging to a profession.

There were university-trained lawyers and physicians in the late Middle Ages who were not "religious professionals." These persons were not, however, divorced from the church. They shared the common values of Western Christianity. While the learned professions did not remain exclusively clerical, their Christian roots decidedly shaped the way they were conceived and practiced.

In this classical conception of a profession much emphasis was placed on the service rendered by the practitioner. The important thing about a profession was that expertise was placed at the service of individuals or communities who needed it. This is what distinguished the professional from the artist, scholar, banker, or businessman. The artist or scholar attended to a discipline for its own sake. The question of applicability or practicality was not primary. If others enjoyed or learned from
the results of their work, that was fine. The work was not, however, fundamentally shaped by the needs or concerns of persons.

Other persons were not the purpose of business activities either. Businessmen were anxious to be practical because their success depended on the response of customers. But business was never regarded as having the customer's well-being as its first concern, thus the adage, "let the buyer beware." The purpose and success of a businessman was defined by profit and monetary achievement.

The uniqueness of a profession was that it concerned itself, in the first place, with human needs of individuals and communities. Professional persons brought knowledge, skill, experience, and imagination to practical problems. They both cared for specific cases and addressed themselves to long-range problems of the common good. The tradition of ordained ministry as a profession results from the fact that it was ministry which gave rise to the classical understanding of a profession.

Today the idea of what it is to be a professional bears little resemblance to its medieval heritage. The idea has been secularized. The medieval cultural synthesis, in which all of society was understood in relation to Christian theological categories, broke down. Along with it went the idea of profession as Christian service. Profession gradually came to be associated with occupation. A profession is something one does to make a living. This secularization of the meaning of profession is one aspect of the general secularization which defines contemporary Western culture.

A profession is a full-time occupation which conforms to certain criteria. The criteria usually include such factors as: the requirement of baccalaureate studies in the liberal arts and sciences, advanced study in a professional school, expertise at applying esoteric knowledge to practical problems, and codes of ethics. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, a profession exercises autonomous judgment about who enters it and who remains within it. A profession is self-regulating and controls access to practice. Professionals insist that only they are capable of judging each other. A profession thus claims exclusive right to discipline its own.
The development of a secular idea of profession was of enormous significance to Western culture. It freed the professions from clerical dominance. But it also left them without the religious foundations which provided shared values concerning meaning and purpose. The secularization of the meaning of profession has resulted in particular confusion about ordained ministry as a profession. The relationship of Christian ministry to the secular idea of profession is ambiguous. On the one hand, ordained ministry conforms to many of the criteria of definition. But, on the other hand, ministry does not fit the secular model. This is true especially in regard to the meaning and purpose of vocation, and the source of authorization for identity and practice.

A secular model of profession concerned primarily with competence, requirements for entry, rights, and privileges cannot encompass all of the dimensions of ministry. Nevertheless, for at least the past thirty years, there has been a trend toward making ministry more "professional." According to this view, ordained ministry is one profession among several, including law, medicine, architecture, engineering, and perhaps journalism or teaching. While a major stream of thinking among Protestants has always viewed ministry as a learned profession, perhaps the dominant reason for recent emphasis on the professional nature of ministry has been less a concern for tradition and more a concern for practice. The argument is that the professional model improves the quality of the practice of ministry.

The thinking of the churches, theological schools, and the clergy reflects the idea that the standards used to judge theological education, candidates for ordination, and pastors should be more rigorous. This movement is not unique to ministry; the same thing is going on in law, medicine, and other professions. In all cases, the goal is to improve practice. What has not been clear is that, with good intentions, but without rigorous theological analysis, the church has adopted the secular model of profession. The manifestations of this adoption have shaped theological education, the process of entry into ministry, and the self-understandings and expectations of clergy.
Among the manifestations is the tendency for learning to take precedence over call. Education is easier to judge than authenticity of response to the Holy Spirit. Increased emphasis is placed on education and, in most churches, graduation from a professional school of theology is mandatory.

Theological schools are dominant in the professional model because they are perceived as vehicles for raising the standards of ministry. As centers for teaching and research, they take the academy as their model and seek acceptance by their academic peers. Elaborate accrediting procedures accompany professionalization. Professional schools are the rule in law and medicine now, too. During the twentieth century, these professions eliminated alternatives to professional schooling. It is no longer possible to "read for the bar" or be licensed for medical practice through apprenticeship.

Continuing education carries the importance of education and the significance of the professional schools beyond the professional degree. Advanced study in settings which provide structured, accredited programs is intended to enhance the clergy's ability to be effective in ministry. Some professions now mandate regular continuing education. Evidence suggests that continuing theological education will grow in importance and have increased impact on the nature of M. Div. preparation.

Another indication of the professional model is the attempt to define competence in ministry in terms of objective criteria rather than the more traditional, but nebulous, concern for the "cure of souls." If ministry is a "real" profession, then there must be standards by which judgment can be rendered. Sometimes this results in emphasis on the "skills" of ministry, sometimes on the externals of statistics, community involvement, or public recognition.

There is interest too in growth and development through professional associations such as the Academy of Parish Clergy. Modeled after academies of other professions, excellence in ministry is promoted through research, journals, and conferences.

All of these manifestations of the professional model for ministry derive from the conviction that they will improve the quality of ministry. Judicatory committees take pride in
reporting the increased difficulty of reaching ordination. New expectations and requirements are constantly being instituted, and instruments to evaluate clergy effectiveness are being devised.

Many of the fruits of the professional model are very good. Greater care in the training and certifying of clergy serves the church well. Rigorous expectations witness to the importance of ordained ministry and of those who serve in this way. The increased emphasis on ordained ministry as a profession is not without some practical and theological problems, however. Affirmations about the professional character of ordained ministry can be both confusing and wrong when they give the impression, to ourselves or to laity, that it is professional standards which give us our credibility, authority, or identity.

A serious problem is that there is now general confusion about the meaning of profession and skepticism about the ethical aspects of professions. Popularly, professions are thought of as high-status ways of making a living. They are high in status because, for the most part, they are demanding but satisfying, contributive to society but lucrative for the practitioner. There is skepticism about the professions today. "Professional" may suggest technical competence applied in an insensitive way resulting in large sums of money for the practitioner. "Professional" means little more than "lay" or "amateur." The "pro" is one who has enough skill to make money doing something most people cannot do. It is not uncommon to find people for whom "professional" conjures up ideas of malevolence or greed.

Another problem has to do with the ordained minister's self-understanding. I frequently have ministers tell me that they resent their parishioners' intrusions into their "private" lives. "What I do with my private life, when I'm not at work for the church, is my own business," they say. Looking upon the ministry as a profession among other professions fosters this attitude. On occasion, an undergraduate will tell me, "If I don't get into law school, I'm going to divinity school." I am always cautious when I hear such a remark. It may be an invitation for thoughtful discussion about ministry. It may, on the other hand,
be the time to urge reconsideration. Ordained ministry is not a profession to be entered as an alternative to something else. The idea that the "private" or "personal" life of the minister is not the business of the church, or the notion that ministry is a "way of making a living," has caused unhappiness for many pastors. No matter how much some ministers would like to have it otherwise, the laity of the church do not see ministry this way. Our personal habits, appearance, marital status, family life, attitudes, and values are of interest to the church. I do not believe such interest is necessarily a matter of simple nosiness or hardened prejudice. Whether one is a woman or a man, married or single, young or old, a parent or childless, is not the issue. I know of persons in all these categories who are accepted and effective pastors. The issue is the authenticity of the total life.

Authenticity of ministry is a theological matter. Perhaps here the laity of the church perceive something that clergy perpetually need to ponder. Christian teaching permits no easy separation between one's faith and one's work. Faith moves toward wholeness. The wholeness of the Christian faith brings together all aspects of life. One of the major problems the church faces is helping persons understand that commitment to Jesus Christ obliterates distinctions between what we do in the various segments of our lives. Thus a Christian physician practices in response to his or her prior and primary profession of faith. There should be no discontinuity between one's work in the world and one's spiritual life.

The attempt to distinguish one's "professional life" from the rest of life is particularly impossible for one who has been ordained. Perhaps the reason we have the problems we do in regard to the meaning of ministry results from lack of attention, especially on the part of Protestants, to the theology of ordination. Confusion about the meaning of ordination results in identity problems. Ordination is a sacramental act of the church and not professional certification. In the act of ordination the grace of God's Holy Spirit is given through the church. That act does not recognize educational achievement, psychological soundness, or even the gifts and graces for ministry. Other acts of the church recognize these qualifications. Ordination results in a changed person because, in the church's act, God's grace
alters the identity of the one ordained. From that time forward, the ordained person is claimed by God and God's church. The minister's identity derives from ordination.

Ordination requires willingness to take upon oneself the burden of permitting the church to participate in definition of the self. Once ordination has taken place, one is accountable to God's faithful community. Ordination makes one a representative figure.

A representative figure is one in whom the self as self becomes secondary. I remember the first time I was called to the home of a parishioner who had died. A physician, whose father and brother were clergy, was in my study when the call came. "Remember," he said, "what they want is not a friend. They have plenty of those. They want a pastor." I came to understand his comment as both true and profound. It did not matter who I was in my individuality when I arrived at the house. What mattered was that I was the pastor. In that moment I came to a new sense of what it was to represent God and God's community. Ordination results in the modification (not the elimination) of individuality. The gift of God's Holy Spirit in the act of ordination alters the self-as-self and results in the powerful reality of the self-as-representative figure.

Where do these reconsiderations and reflections leave us in regard to ordained ministry as a profession? Ordained ministry is not a profession if by that we mean simply the dominant secular use of the term. It is not one way, among many others, of making a living. Attempts to view ministry in this way are confusing sociologically and, more significantly, wrong theologically.

Ordained ministry is a profession if we think in terms of the original Christian meaning of profession. In this sense profession involves advanced learning as well as skill in the application of that learning to real issues and problems of individual and corporate human need. But it also involves the conviction that one's professional activity is in response to God's grace and done on God's behalf for the needs of the world. This way of thinking is applicable to other professions as well. Such analysis on the part of the church could offer new insight for
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Christians who are professional men and women about the meaning and purpose of their work.

The key to the problem of identity for the clergy then cannot be our self-understanding as professionals. Our unique identity derives not from our professional status, even in the classical Christian sense. Our identity comes from our ordination. Ordination, that mysterious and wonderful gift of God through and to the church, tells us who we are.

FOR FURTHER READING


Carroll, Jackson W. and Wilson, Robert L. *Too Many Pastors? The Clergy Job Market*. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980. The authors provide statistical evidence concerning clergy supply and demand. They find that, while the picture is mixed, and churches differ, American Protestantism may have more candidates for ordination than full-time ministerial positions. There is still need for superior candidates, however. A fine chapter on ordination is included.

Glasse, James. *Profession: Minister*. New York: Abingdon, 1968. This book is a classic statement of the argument that the historic and sociological definitions of a profession can and should be applied to ministry.


Lynn, Kenneth S., ed. *The Professions in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963. This book is a collection of essays, written from the point of view of members of the respective professions, exploring the present state and future shape of their
vocations. There is an excellent chapter on professions in general. James Gustafson writes on the clergy.

Mackie, Steven G. Patterns of Ministry: Theological Education in a Changing World. London: Collins, 1969. The author shows how patterns of ministry have changed in the past and are changing still further today. He questions the traditional roles of ministers and laity and asserts that new patterns are needed in which all Christians share.


Nouwen, Henri J. M. Creative Ministry. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971. Several of Nouwen’s books are relevant to the question of ministry as profession. This one addresses it specifically, attending to the relationship between professionalism and spirituality in the ministry.


Scott, Donald M. From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750–1850. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978. The author argues that in the period between 1750 and 1850 the New England ministry developed from public office to a more specialized role, serving a more limited clientele. The importance of this book for the purposes of this essay is that it provides a specific historical case study of the ministry viewed as a modern profession. Moreover, the New England model influenced the whole nation.

THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THE PASTOR: CALL AND COMMUNITY

WILLIAM H. WILLIMON

“I fear that the current call for a special clerical spirituality could be the latest episode in the ever-present tendency to clericalize the church.”

The peculiar burden of the pastoral ministry has recently led many to a greater attentiveness to the life of the Spirit. Seminarians, with some notion of what their vocation has gotten them into, ask for courses in spiritual formation. Ministerial spirituality is the “in” subject at pastor’s schools.

In this article I ask: What does it mean for a pastor to be formed by the Spirit? I am dealing with the prior question, the foundation for any exploration of ministerial spirituality. My prejudice is that some things take care of themselves, in this case, the spiritual formation of the pastor, as long as we are standing in the right place and looking in the right direction. My goal is to put us in our place.

What does it mean for the Christian called pastor to be formed by the Spirit?

As I read the New Testament, one gets the Spirit in order to do something with it. The Spirit is not offered for a warm glow and a grin. The Spirit is there so we might do what God wants done. The Spirit comes upon Mary, Jewish peasant girl, making her God’s singing handmaid. Zechariah, geriatric though he is, is filled with the Holy Spirit so he can prophesy. When the Spirit

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descends at Jesus' baptism, it is a sign that his ministry has begun.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," Jesus tells them at homecoming in Nazareth. Why has he got the Spirit? "He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). As it was for Mary, Zechariah, Jesus, so it is for us. Hear this early baptismal hymn:

you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9, emphasis added).

In baptism we receive the Spirit in order to be equipped. We are chosen so that we may declare the deeds of God. And of course, the "chosen race" here, the "royal priesthood" is the baptized, not simply the ordained.

For Paul, the presence of the Spirit is known by the "fruits of the Spirit," fruits which are ecclesial in nature, the conditions necessary for the church to be the church. The Spirit is ecclesial, functional, and activist, given to enable the church to do God's will. So to be disciplined, formed by the Spirit, is not simply to be, but to do.

Therefore, one cannot talk about the spiritual disciplines of pastors without first asking what, by the Spirit, pastors are for.¹

What is it that pastors are called by the Spirit to do? Questions about the minister's spiritual life must be secondary to that question. The danger of talking about the minister's spiritual life is that we might take the discipline, formation, and gifts of all Christians and lay these upon a presumed upper class known as clergy. Why should we clergy claim that our vocations require more attentiveness to the Spirit than any other Christian's vocation?

The best way to decide what ministers are for is to examine what the church says and does when it makes a minister. In its rites of ordination, the church designates its clergy.² Ordination
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makes leaders for the church. I have therefore examined rites of ordination in the Western church. The statement in the old Lutheran ordinal is typical:

ministers of Christ are His ambassadors and as such are to preach the Word and administer the Holy Sacraments. They are appointed to wait upon and serve the Church, which is the bride of Jesus Christ, . . . to offer before Him the prayers and supplications of His people; to feed, to instruct, to watch over, and to guide the sheep and the lambs of His flock, whom He hath purchased with His own blood.

Ordination rites indicate that all the baptized share the gifts of the Spirit, the command to evangelize, witness, heal, and serve. But some Christians are designated for the task of equipping the saints, caring for the church, building up the community, representing the church as a whole. In ordination, the church puts some of its folk under orders; it makes officials "community people."

The essence of the pastoral ministry is its "officialness." The pastoral ministry is a function of the church's mission. The pastoral ministry derives its meaning from what needs to occur within the church.

The history of the church contains a long, sad story of how the gifts, graces, and duties which were once part of every Christian's baptismal inheritance were gradually given to the ordained Christians alone. I fear that the current call for a special clerical spirituality could be the latest episode in the ever-present tendency to clericalize the church.

In his criticism of the medieval priesthood, Luther said the church is forever acting as if priests are the only Christians who need the Spirit, the only people called to witness, the only royalty of Christ. We must ask Luther's question again in our own day: Are the clergy the only "wounded healers" (Henri Nouwen)? Are pastors the only "sacramental persons" (Urban Holmes)? Are ordained Christians the only "symbol bearers" (John Westerhoff)? No. Ordained persons are a species of a broader genus called "ministry." Any spirituality of the ordained ministry must be derivative of ecclesiology if it is to make sense.
Against medieval definitions of the priesthood, the Reformers asserted that the essence of the clergy is not in some character indelibilis conferred at ordination. The only "specialness" of the clergy is its "officialness." The clergy is not an upper crust set over a plebeian laity. The essence of the priesthood is essentially relational (whom it serves) and functional (what it does), not ontological (what it is).

The ordained ministry appears to have arisen spontaneously from "below," out of the church and the church's need for leaders. At the same time, rites of ordination claim that it is "from above," a "gift of the Lord" (Eph. 4:8-11; I Tim. 4:14). The ordained ministry is not a status. It is a function. Any polity or theology of ministry, any clerical spirituality which denies this ecclesial base is in error.

I have not read three contemporary writers on ministry who say this clearly enough. When people talk about pastors they cannot resist searching for some peculiar, special attribute that belongs only to pastors and thus legitimates their existence: wounded healer, living reminder, clown, empathetic listener, chief goal setter, resident dreamer, guru, celibate, prayer expert, male, straight-A seminarian, or other individualistic, natural, or acquired trait that somehow makes a priest "special." This compulsion for speciality implies that the church's need for leadership, service, and edification is not special enough; that the church's authorization needs something else added for it to be holy.

In the ordination rite, hands are laid upon the candidate's head and the church prays an epiclesis, a prayer for the Spirit. This spiritual giftedness is needed to enable the pastor to care for the church. In the words of the prayer for a bishop in the Apostolic Tradition, "... that thy servant whom thou has chosen as bishop may feed thy holy flock, may exercise thy sovereign priesthood without reproach serving thee day and night; ... and offer to thee the gifts of the thy holy Church."*

Ask yourself: What is the difference between a pastor who visits, preaches, baptizes, and any other Christian who does these jobs?

The essential difference is in the officialness. My congregation has a dozen laypeople who read Scripture aloud in Sunday
worship better than I, four dozen who visit shut-ins better than I. The difference is that when I do these things, I do them as the "community person," at the authorization of the whole church.

When a pastor visits, teaches, preaches, baptizes, the church "reads" his or her actions differently from the same actions done by an unordained Christian. The pastor bears the burden of our tradition, edifies the body, keeps us together in the church, represents the whole church.

We pastors are community persons, officials of the church. Any Spirit we have is forming us for this task. Certainly the pastor must walk the journey of faith personally, like any other Christian. But ordination impels the pastor to walk with the whole church in mind. All talk of clergy which neglects the ecclesial origin of the pastoral ministry is dangerous. Permit a historical example: In the Middle Ages, as tension between the church and the world relaxed, monasticism became a kind of second baptism. The monk became the ideal Christian. Gregorian reforms modeled the parish clergy as resident monks—special, celibate, totally devoted holy men temporarily residing within a congregation. The Council of Chalcedon condemned "absolute ordination." But by the late Middle Ages, free-lance, roving, monkish, clergy-at-large set the tone for all clergy. The relation between ministerium and ecclesia waned.

Amidst the collapse of priestly morality, Christians then talked of the need for "spiritual formation" of the minister. What was their model for this spirituality? The monk. The way to reform clergy, they reasoned, is to give clergy more features of monastic spirituality. There is talk of a priestly "state of grace"; it is not an office, it is a "state" now. Ministry becomes a personal possession, a holy power. A minister is an "alter Christian," a little Christ, a divine mediator through which grace and wholeness trickle down to the lowly laity. The basis of ministry shifts from a christological/ecclesial/pneumatological base to a solely christological one. (This reduction had disastrous consequences in the Vatican's argument against women priests.) Spiritual formation becomes one-dimensional: the individual soul related individually to God. The basis of the church is christological—Christ is Lord of this body. While Christ's ministry is a model for the church's ministry, I am
arguing for a renewed stress upon the ministry of the whole church as the source of the church's ordained ministry. In other words, I am trying to shift the argument about ministry from a debate over who looks most like Christ (christology) to a discussion of who best serves Christ's church (ecclesiology).

While we rejoice at the personal, inner "call" of someone into the ministry, historically, such private, inner calls from Christ have more in common with the call to the monastic life than to the ancient presbyterate. That is how we get people in seminary who do not want to be pastors. They want to be Christians. The ancient monastic novitiate has thus become seminary. But clergy are not monks. And so Karl Barth says he is suspicious of any effort to cultivate spiritual expertise, particularly among the clergy. As far as life in the Spirit goes, Barth wrote shortly before his death, we must all be "beginners," amateurs.

Can you see why I am concerned that the two most popular writers on ministerial spirituality today are Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton? We pastors are community persons, not free-lance monks. The Spirit calls us to tasks which are ecclesial, relational, and communal, not personal, professional or universal.

And it is precisely here, in this talk of my being a "community person," that I stop talking about the gifts of the Spirit and begin thinking about the discipline of the Spirit.

You see, I'm not a "community person" by natural inclination. Tell me I have some charismatic flair for leadership. Praise me for the art of my preaching or the empathy of my pastoral care, just let me share myself and pour out my feelings, urge me to become a spiritual virtuoso, but please do not yoke me to the body, do not marry me to that unruly bride, do not force me to find what I do and therefore who I am among those who gather at Northside United Methodist Church, Greenville, S.C.

Let me free-lance ministry, give me a degree and tell me I am special, encourage me to tack up a shingle, allow me to set up office hours, call me a professional, teach me some exotic spiritual gnosis that makes me holy, but do not hold me accountable to the church. I love Jesus and I want to serve him.
But he married beneath his station. For me, the real scandal of ministry, the ultimate stumbling block, the thing I avoid and fear the most, is the church. Like many of you, I set out to serve God and ended up caught among those whom God served. My problem, my difficulty with the Spirit is that it wants to tie me to the church. The pastoral ministry is so tough, its demands so great, its dependence upon the Spirit essential because such ministry is a function of the church.*

Why have I dwelled so much on the purpose of ministry? Because I am convinced that the spiritual formation of the pastor must be sacramental, corporate, ecclesial. Pastors are at the mercy of the Spirit, not for personal gain but rather to enable them better to serve the church. Prayer, Bible reading, meditation, devotional exercises are as essential for pastors as for other Christians but the ultimate goal of ministerial devotional life must be to yoke me more fully to the body. How? First, to take me back again and again to my call, that authorization which put me where I am and told me what to do.

I always begin by asking seminarians, how did you get here? Their responses? They tell stories of Sunday school teachers, scoutmasters, little old ladies and men who first led them toward ministry. The testimony of one young woman was typical:

I read the scripture one Sunday as a lay reader. That was all, just read it. After the service a woman came up to me and said, “Dear, you read so well. Your reading of that passage did something to me. You should be a minister.”

That is all. But does the call to ministry ever become more holy, more special? In all ordination rites in the Western church, in the scant but obvious data on the ordained ministry in the New Testament, I hear this simple, mysterious, holy beginning: Dear, you should be our minister.

Is it enough?

When I was in seminary James Dittes presented his research on possible psychological reasons for why people go into the ministry. According to Dittes, as children many pastors were what he calls, “little adults.” The “little adult” is the child who is
the resident adult. The “little adult” is the child who is always 
the classroom monitor when the teacher leaves the room, the 
school patrol boy or girl, the child who enforces adult values. 
The “little adult” may be respected or even admired by other 
children, but rarely will this child be popular. Dittes’s thesis is 
that “little adults” are attracted to the pastoral ministry. As 
pastors, they now enforce God’s values among wayward adults 
just as they enforced adult values upon wayward children. 

One student, upon hearing this, blurted out: “You’ve just 
demolished my call into the ministry. I thought God called me. 
You’re telling me that my ‘call’ was little more than my reaction 
to other people?”

“Has God stopped calling ministers through other people?” 
asked Dittes.

We are called to leadership in the community of Jesus Christ 
through the community. The call gets no more binding and 
significant than that. Not on a mountaintop or in a cornfield but 
in the church. And so Calvin speaks of the “twofold call” to the 
ministry. God calls, but the church must also call. Wesley 
distinguished the “inner” and the “outer” call. Take it as you 
will, the point is that outside the need of the community, any 
personal, purely individual call is incomplete. As I keep close to 
God’s community, I keep close to my vocation and the necessary 
spiritual disciplines of my vocation, hearing again the voice that 
first bid me say yes.

Another spiritual discipline: I must be renewed by remembering 
my Lord as my model. Here I am, seeking a better appointment, a 
pension, a benevolent bishop, and an all-electric parsonage; and 
there he is: with basin and towel, tray of bread, cup of wine red 
as blood. This is the christological counterpart of the ecclesiolo-
gical basis for ministry I have been advocating. He “emptied 
himself, taking the form of a servant... he humbled himself 
and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 
2:7-8).

The night an imposing bishop named Tullis laid his hands 
upon my head and called me preacher, the Spirit got hold of me, 
not when the choir sang “Come, Holy Ghost,” not in the 
sermon, not even in the presence of family and friends. It was 
when the bishop, speaking these ancient words in the service
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said: "How great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they unto whom you are to minister are the sheep of Christ, for whom he gave his life." There I was, wondering: Will the church sufficiently recognize my superior training and talents? Will I get a washer and dryer at my next parsonage? But the words were that the ones who are given to my care are the ones for whom he died.

Therefore, the inner discipline of the minister means the discipline of keeping close to the body, close to the ones for whom he died. This discipline takes different forms for different people. For me, this means disciplining myself to knock on doors, sit down at the kitchen table and visit. I find nothing about pastoral work more distasteful than visitation—and nothing more essential. Why must it always be me making myself available to them? He kept close to those he came to save, beside them from his baptism in the Jordan to the breaking of bread. He had his lonely times apart, his monastic closet of prayer; but in the crush of the crowd, amidst the multitude, at table with them in argument, beside their beds of pain, in prison, on the cross he becomes the model for ministry, pastoral and otherwise.

Finally, a chief spiritual discipline for the pastor is corporate worship. You would expect me to say that. But I am talking not as a liturgist but as a pastor. I have tried to sketch a view of the ordained ministry which is ecclesial, corporate, and therefore sacramental. Ministerial spirituality must have the same look. I do not mean to relieve the pastor of the baptismal burden of lifelong spiritual formation and Wesleyan personal pursuit of holiness. My point is that such formation must be appropriate to the peculiar nature of the pastoral vocation.

Private devotions have their place. But I have chosen to talk not about private devotions because, for the community person, the pastor, such private devotions are but meager preparation for Sunday, the community day where our real formation and discipline take place.

Sunday is helpful in keeping my categories clear. I am the deacon, the server. I wait upon the church by leading its members to God, by pointing to the Presence in our midst, by feeding and being fed, by preaching the Word and listening to
the Word. Some mornings, to keep things in focus, amidst opening mail, planning meetings, answering the phone, and worrying about the budget, I practice inner discipline by walking into the sanctuary, envisioning myself doing those tasks which remind me of who I am. On Sunday morning in the pulpit, behind the table, at the lectern, handing people bread, I find myself doing explicitly that which, in other pastoral activities, often remains implicit and inferential. Here is where my vocation is made visible, ecclesial.

The first stirrings of the ordained ministry in the New Testament are tied to service at the church’s liturgical assembly. Even Paul’s apostolate was diakonia, service, not authority (II Cor. 1:24; I Cor. 3:5; Rom. 11:13; and other places). The church has leaders—but not as the world conceives of leadership. “It shall not be so [as it is among worldly leaders] among you” (Mark 10:43 and parallels). We are to lead not by “domineering over those in your charge,” says I Peter, but by “being examples to the flock” (5:3). First Peter also reminds us that it is the laos, the people, who are called to be priests, kings, royalty, holy, (2:9-10). The clergy is called to be servants of the people, not the people called to be servants of the clergy. A sacerdotal clergy desacralizes everybody else. If we can get a “professional” for a minister why would anyone else in the church want to minister? We clergy never get beyond being deacon.

Why do you think so many of us avoid the liturgical functions? Why do we seek some other “specialness”? Why do we demean our preaching, poorly prepare for our worship leadership, or trip out on some personal spiritual high in private devotions? Because behind the table, before the Book, who we are becomes visible, explicit, embarrassingly public. In this scandalous kingdom, the leaders wait on tables, serve others, wash feet, act foolish, build others up, cling to a faith which is social, ecclesial, corporate.

It gets hard out there. And it would be comforting to believe that there is some spiritual calesthenic, some technique that could help us cope. No. The way to keep going is to remember who chose us, who named us, who ordered us, formed us into this cruciform faith. We may get discouraged, confused by the
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myriad demands and temptations in the church. So what do we do? We give thanks that ministry need not be self-sustained. Our job is to think about God and God's people, not about the state of our spiritual life. Fortunately, God's self-assigned job is to think about us. We cling to our vocation, we are reminded: "you didn't choose me, I chose you." Thank God it is not a profession; it is a vocation.

In a field education seminar, a young man recounted an episode in a hospital room with an old woman dying with cancer. He had been at the church only two weeks, and confessed, "I was a bit anxious about my first terminal patient."

One morning she said, "Preacher, I want you to pray for me," He tensed up. Prayer. Well, he thought, I have not solved all my unanswered questions about prayer. I am not too sure.

"What would you like me to pray for?" he asked. (He had had C.P.E. at Duke.)

"I'd like you to pray that I'll be healed, of course," she said.

"Failing at that, I want you to pray that I won't suffer if I'm not healed."

Oh no, he thought. Faith healing. It has come to that. What can I say? How can I keep my integrity? He hoped a nurse would appear so he could exit.

"But, but I'm just not too sure about what I believe about prayer," he said.

"Not sure, eh?" she said. "Well, we're sure, so you just close your eyes and hold my hand and pray. You'll get the hang of it."

And he, Duke-educated, attractive, smart, closed his eyes and held that old lady's frail hand and prayed.

"You know," he said, "she was helped. I could see it. Something happened in spite of me."

And the bishop laid on hands, and the church stood and sang Veni, Creator Spiritus, and thereby the church made, and God gave, a new preacher.

I said to that young man, "Someday, at some depressed little church, or worse, some big successful church, you're going to need to remember how you got here, you're going to have to be a pastor even when you don't feel like it, you're going to need to remember who called you and why—someday you'll need to
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remember. So don’t forget that little old lady who helped ordain you.”

Do not forget.

NOTES

1. In reflecting on the crisis of ministerial identity, H. Richard Niebuhr wrote: “Whenever in Christian history there has been a definite, intelligible conception of the ministry, four things at least were known about the office: what its chief work was and what was the chief purpose of all its functions; what constituted a call to the ministry; and what was the source of the minister’s authority; and whom the minister served. “The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 58. My thoughts on ministry are organized so that I attempt to speak to each of these conditions.

2. The ordination service for bishop in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus is the basis for later rites. See The Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus, ed. Gregory Dix (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1937; reissued by Henry Chadwick, 1966). Examination of this early rite reveals the following:

The entire community and its clergy chose the bishop. The person must respond in free will. The local church tests the faith of the bishop to be certain that it is apostolic, Episcopal laying-on-of-hands with epiclesis shows that, although the community chooses, it is not a purely congregational, autonomous choice.

Because the new bishop is chosen by the body of Christ, the new minister is seen as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Ministry (as Schillebeeckx notes) is “from above” (the Spirit) because it is “from below” (the church).

In this service we search in vain for any of the alleged attributes of clergy which were ascribed in later years. So little is claimed for ordination. But then, reading on in the document, we note how much is claimed for baptism!


5. My assumptions about ministry imply (as, I suppose, do all concepts of ministry) a specific ecclesiology. I see the pastoral, ordained ministry as primarily service (leadership) in the church. One of the sources of present confusion about the nature of the ordained ministry is our inadequate ecclesiology. For instance, the United Methodist Discipline states, “Pastors are responsible for ministering to the needs of the whole community as well as to the needs of the people of their charge” (Para. 438.2, The Book of Discipline, 1980). Is it accurate to say that ministers are ordained to serve the world at large? If so, what does that say about the ministry of other Christians? Are the distinctions between the church and world or ordained ministry and the general Christian ministry so blurred? It is highly presumptuous for the church to assume that the church’s leaders are also to be the world’s leaders. The church I have in mind is more exclusive than the extravagantly inclusive statement in the Discipline indicates. All Christians are to work with Christ in serving the world at large. Ordained Christians have, as their additional vocation, service to the church in particular.

6. Dix, Apostolic Tradition.

7. See Schillebeeckx on the writings of Jose Clichove (1472-1543) in Ministry, pp. 58-69.


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"The problems and challenges posed by our pluralism affect me most at the point of my primary task as a pastor, the preaching of the gospel of Christ."

Lyle E. Schaller has made a distinction between two types of churches: ideological and behavioral. Ideological churches tend to be those which place a premium upon "a member's ability to articulate his or her religious beliefs and personal religious experiences." They tend to be "built around a strong authority figure" and are generally "intolerant of those who do not share the same doctrines, values and beliefs." The behavioral church, on the other hand, tends to "place a greater value on how people live their faith rather than on a member's ability to articulate a particular doctrinal position" (Yokefellow Institute, Parish Paper, August, 1982).

It is probably safe to say that most of us who are a part of the United Methodist Church have more in common with the behavioral definition than the ideological. Although it would be foolish to push these definitions too far, as United Methodists we are fond of our "Wesleyan quadrilateral." The recognition that tradition, experience, and reason throw as much light upon the formation and articulation of our faith as does the Bible tends to make us much more a "behavioral" fellowship.

The by-products of our behavioral orientation are many. We are able to include within our family persons of many theological

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persuasions who find our traditional tolerance to be much in keeping with the gospel of Christ. We are enabled to be open to the changes taking place in society around us, to embrace them when they add to the quality of life, and to bring to them a prophetic word when they appear to be dehumanizing, rather than "building up of the body of Christ." The presence in our midst of conservative as well as liberal persons serves to keep a healthy tension within us which adds creativity to our ministry. We are helped by being able to view many sides of an issue. It is not at all uncommon to find the position taken by one annual conference on a social issue directly contradicted by the position taken at another conference in a different part of the nation. In short, we are a pluralistic church in which reality, as we perceive it, is made up of many definitions of ultimate being, principles, or substances.

As a parish pastor, I find our pluralism to be a mixed blessing. While I celebrate our tolerance and inclusiveness, I am concerned at the suspicion, even hostility, engendered by our failure as pastors to understand and interpret to our congregations the nature and effects of our pluralism. Even in the congregation that I serve—a highly educated, professional group of persons related to our nearby university and medical institutions—I have experienced the loss of members who, dismayed at a position taken by the annual conference, have felt it necessary to move to another, often ideological, congregation. It is not enough for us to say, as I have heard it said, "Well, you are better off without those people." I suspect that the church is not better off without them. They do not make their decision to change lightly; it is done only after deep concern and much theological reflection, qualities that are of real value to the community of faith.

The problems and challenges posed by our pluralism affect me most at the point of my primary task as a pastor, the preaching of the gospel of Christ. A simple exercise in audience analysis helps to make the point. As I collect my thoughts and research for each week's sermon, I am aware, as are most pastors, of the congregation to which that sermon will be delivered. There will be persons in that congregation whose ideological orientation leads them to listen for a word they can
consider authoritative. There will be others whose behavioral bias will pick out only those elements of a sermon which seem workable. Both groups, however, when they feel that a sermon has called their particular biases into question, will tend to fall back upon one of the effects of pluralism, a relativism which will enable them to say to the preacher, “Well, that’s just your opinion.” If, in the context of a sermon on peace-making, I quote from an issue of *Sojourners* to the effect that our nation has stockpiled nuclear weapons far in excess of what could wipe out the entire world, I can be sure that someone will share with me an article from *Reader’s Digest* that points out our nation’s alleged “window of vulnerability.” There will also be another group of people present who are aware of both of the above positions, and the fact that influential voices speak for both sides. They will likely reflect another of the effects of pluralism, confusion. Donald E. Miller has noted:

> We are becoming increasingly aware of different belief systems. . . . To the observer it appears that there is little agreement . . . in the realm of values. . . . Peter Berger has argued that pluralism breeds a philosophical relativism in which the average person stands confused as to whether any single voice among the contending opinions lays claim to the truth. (“The Future of Liberal Christianity,” *Christian Century*, March 10, 1982, p. 267.)

Most of us are aware of the confusion that exists in the minds of persons with whom we are in ministry. People admit to an inability to know what to think about events, to a feeling of impotence that inhibits involvement. “How in the world do you know what’s right anymore?” is a question often heard. “If those who are supposed to know what to do really don’t know, then what can I do?” is another. We feel discomfort at a lack of answers; we are reminded of our limitations. It becomes easy to do nothing, to play it safe, to wait and see. Even in that, however, we experience little satisfaction, for we are never free from the suspicion that, as Christians, we ought to be “plugged in” at some point, involved in the influencing of events and the effecting of change.

Pastors are uniquely affected by pluralism. Not only do their words and the Word seem open to question, but the profession
itself appears blurred. The proliferation of all "sorts and conditions" of "helping" professions has caused many pastors to experience an identity crisis. A young hospital chaplain with whom I spoke recently reflected his struggle as he asked, "In the midst of all of these healers, who achieve tangible results, what is the nature of my profession?" Paul Pruyser has written of the tendency of clergypersons to take on the role of amateur psychiatrist. There was a time when the role of the pastor was clearly defined and carried an authority all its own. With the development of other professions that have taken over tasks that were once the province of the clergy, some pastors find themselves adrift in a sea of uncertainty.

From the beginning, it has fallen to the pastor to bring the Word of the Lord to the uncertainty and anxiety of the age lest, as Moses feared, "'the congregation of the Lord' " should be "'as sheep which have no shepherd' " (Num. 27:17). Into the pluralism, then, steps the pastor, raising yet what seems another feeble voice amid the relativism and uncertainty of the time. The question facing the pastor-preacher is the same one that occupied the minds of another people in another time. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137:4.)

Perhaps we begin best with an act of confession. Some of the uncertainty that we feel as preachers is the result of our own misunderstanding of the task confronting us. We have often grown to believe that "we" must bring to "them" an authoritative word from the Lord, but that has led to a fracture between pulpit and pew at worst, and more than a few snickers at the preacher's pompousness at best. Preachers are no more immune to an exaggerated sense of their own importance than the rest of the race. A recognition that it is God who works through "the folly of what we preach" (I Cor. 1:21) serves to bring up short those of us who sound, as the late George A. Buttrick was often heard to remark, as if we are "looking for a vacancy in a stained-glass window." It also brings hope to those who labor faithfully, week after week, and who find the homiletic task to be incredibly difficult, draining them of every ounce of creativity and commitment! The recognition that God works through our efforts serves not to release us from the
challenge of "rightly handling the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15) but enables us to live with our efforts. Having said that, it seems to me that there are some approaches to the task of preaching in a pluralistic church that are of value.

Pluralism tends to make the preacher acutely aware of his or her limitations and humanness. One will hear pastors say, "Well, I realize that I’m only a preacher, but..." implying that they are something less than others. It is not that we are not proud of our calling (within, of course, the limits of ecclesiastical humility), it is rather that pluralism seems to erode areas of expertise to the point of uncertainty about what is uniquely "our" province and what is "theirs." We appear to be but one more voice in the midst of a cacophony of voices clamoring for attention. Rather than learning to live with and work through that uncertainty, we often apologize for intruding where we are not certain we belong. As preachers, we are not called to have the last word on a subject, perhaps not even the most definitive. With some of the issues of our time, the best that we can do is to approach them in love, reflecting an honesty derived from our struggle with them.

Once we are able to accept, indeed celebrate, our humanness, we are led to another means of dealing with pluralism, identification with those to whom we preach. Much has been written in recent years with regard to the division between pulpit and pew. We have been reminded that ministry is a shared task, not a task allocated solely to the person ordained. The search for a word from the Lord in this age involves a struggle that is shared by lay and clergy alike. A great many bruised feelings might be avoided by recognizing that we do not search in isolation for answers to contemporary problems.

Not alone among recent writers in the field of homiletics, William Willimon reminds us that

... all of us, including the prophet, stand under the biblical judgments and demands. ... Prophetic preaching is most believable when the preacher makes it clear that he or she is involved in the same ethical dilemmas, the same struggles with the will, the same temptations to moral timidity as other Christians. Such preaching is effective because it is also confessional—and honest. (Integrative Preaching, Abingdon Press, 1981, p. 82.)
And while we are admitting our struggle with the issues, why not also be open to including our listeners in that struggle? Often sermons are presented as a fait accompli, with little indication of the toil that may (or should) have gone into them. They are often presented deductively, beginning with the ending and working their way back again to that ending. Many of us were taught: "Tell 'em what you're going to say; say it; tell 'em what you said."

That sort of approach to preaching may have been helpful at one time, in a day when people were less well educated than they are today. It has little in common with people whose lives are occupied daily with criticizing, analyzing, and evaluating the events and persons that are a part of their routine, a routine made more complex by the multiplication of options implied by pluralism. We live, for the most part, inductively, struggling to work our way through competing loyalties and claims to conclusions with which we can live, at least for the time being. Some are even able to revel in that process, finding great meaning in the struggle itself. A sermon which, for example, suggests that there is meaning to be found even in an event as painful as the death of a child may well be correct, but unless that sermon provides evidence of the agonizing path through which one has passed on the way to that meaning, it is difficult for listeners to feel that the preacher genuinely understands their pain. Frederick Buechner has felt this and knows the preacher as the . . . poor, bare, forked animal in his cassock . . . . What word can he speak with power enough to empower them waiting there? But let him take heart. He is not called to be an actor, a magician, in the pulpit . . . . He is called to be human. . . . [to] make real to them the human experience of what it is to cry into the storm and receive no answer, to be sick at heart and find no healing. . . . if the preacher does not speak of that and to that . . . anything else he tries to say by way of hope and comfort and empowering becomes suspect. (Telling the Truth, Harper & Row, 1977, pp. 40-41.)

When the pastor is able to bring his or her hearers through the struggle that led to concluding that there is life to be found even
in the presence of death, that sermon has a reality, an authority, that it would not otherwise possess. Instead of the usual comments that we often hear on "nice sermons," we are more likely to be greeted with questions like, "How did you know that I was feeling that way today?" I have also discovered that, rather than the radical disagreement that meets some of our more prophetic offerings, I hear comments such as: "I really don't think I agree with you, but I can see that we are struggling with the same kinds of problems." We can leave it there and trust God to work through the "fear and trembling" that we all share. An openness to revealing our own struggle with the competing claims of pluralism, and to including our parishioners in that struggle, gives us common cause with those of a more liberal bent among our hearers who, while wanting to celebrate our pluralism, nevertheless find it to be confusing. Those of a more conservative nature, while rejecting pluralism, can at least be assured that their position has been considered.

Finally, if pluralism tends to erode areas of expertise, shading one profession into another, causing us to wonder what area uniquely belongs to the preacher, does it not also free us to recapture our roots, and to look there for authenticity? In another context, Paul Pruyser has written meaningfully in this regard, recognizing that it is a jarring note when any professional person no longer knows what his basic science is, or finds no use for it. . . . Yet the anchorage points of professional thought and action must remain clear to provide a base of identity and a source of replenishment. . . . pluralism in the helping professions has been so zestfully promoted, and is now so well established, that the time has come for some consideration of each profession's specificity and distinctiveness. (The Minister As Diagnostecian, Westminster Press, 1976, pp. 28-29.)

Whether right or wrong, whether we are comfortable or uncomfortable with it, we pastors are still seen, preeminently in the minds of those to whom we speak, as those whose province it is to interpret the Scripture. That challenge is incarnated in many ways through the various tasks that are part of the pastoral ministry, but it emerges most clearly in the task of
preaching. Rather than perceiving ourselves devoid of authority in the wake of pluralism we ought rather to celebrate pluralism's having freed us of the self-imposed need to "be all things to all people" and be about the business of speaking to the uncertainty of the times. As Fred Craddock put it,

a real prophetic pulpit today waits upon the release of the minister from a shackling hypercaution about interpreting the Scriptures as the Word of the Lord to our situation. . . . And there could hardly be any clearer go-ahead signal than the recognition that the New Testament itself arose out of the continual interpretation of the Gospel for new situations. (As One Without Authority, Abingdon Press, 1971, p. 121.)

Rather than being reduced to inactivity by the pluralism of our time we ought to see in it the challenge to develop new forms of interpretation, new hermeneutics. Rather than questioning our identity, we ought to see ourselves uniquely able to speak to and through the anxiety of the time. Werner Koch, dubbed the "grandfather" of the emergent peace movement in Germany, has suggested that "in the atomic age in which we live, the Sermon on the Mount is the only real politics to do" (Sojourners, Feb. 28, 1982, p. 28). Who can better bring those words of Christ—words which present genuine hope in a time whose future has been called into question—than those of us who struggle daily to understand and live by them? Therein is to be found our "specificity and distinctiveness." As for any sense of authority beyond that, it is worth remembering that when the question was raised with Jesus, he left the distinct impression that he didn't feel it to be worth his time (Mark 11:27 ff.). Neither is it worth ours! In short, while the pluralism of the time and of the church may be seen as a mixed blessing, at least one of its blessings can be found in the opportunities that it offers for growth in the pulpit.
THE RACIAL ISSUE IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

EVERETT TILSON

An analysis of texts often used to support racism shows that many supposed biblicists actually deny the clear meaning of Scripture.

The Bible makes numerous references to African countries and peoples. It likewise contains reports of frequent conflicts between Israelites and Africans. But in no place does it ever suggest race as the source or focus of any of these clashes. In fact, the only race ever mentioned in the Bible is a footrace.¹

Various Old Testament passages express hostility, occasionally even in God's name, toward certain peoples among Israel's national enemies. Other Old Testament utterances counterbalance these reflections of hatred with anticipations of an end to enmity among human beings and nations. Typical expressions of New Testament faith celebrate this conquest of enmity through God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.

Where enmity still exists, and the New Testament does acknowledge its continued existence, it stands as a solemn reminder of the refusal of God's love and the defiance of God's will. It likewise serves as a measure of both the failure and the challenge of the fellowship of Christian believers.

Numerous biblical teachings have moved the major branches of Christianity to call for an inclusive church in an inclusive society. Yet many Christians remain unconvinced by this

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summons. And some of them continue to quote the Bible in support of racial discrimination.

In this article I shall follow up a critical look at the favorite passages of these undaunted holdouts from Christianity's consensus on this issue with a review of the biblical grounds for enfleshing Christianity's vision of a racially inclusive church in a racially inclusive society. For while there may still be room for question among Christians as to whether the Bible yields the goal of integration or liberation, the Bible leaves little room for question concerning the essential character of the summons of the Lord to whom it bears witness. It is primarily not a call to debate but a call to action.

BIBLICAL PROPS FOR DISCRIMINATION

Numerous biblical quotations and several alleged biblical teachings have been used in defense of racial discrimination, but only a few of these have appeared with marked regularity in racist literature. Therefore we may safely limit our investigation to the interpretation of such favorite quotations and themes. This will by no means indicate the limits to which such use of the Bible has sometimes gone. It should nevertheless quite adequately demonstrate the astonishing ingenuity and dubious reliability of this whole approach to the Scriptures.

Genesis 9:18-19 and chapter 10 (see also Acts 17:24-26) often get quoted in support of the idea that God has established boundaries, by continents, for the Mongoloid (supposedly descended from Shem), Negroid (supposedly descended from Ham), and Caucasian (supposedly descended from Japheth) races, respectively. These passages have been favorites with those who argue for the forced return of all blacks to Africa. Proponents of this view conveniently overlook the fact that the vast majority of blacks in America did not come to this country by choice. They likewise do not mention the fact that the general application of this principle would also send most American whites back to Europe. Happily for those of us, black and white, who like it here, neither science nor the Scriptures lends much encouragement to this view. True enough, science has yet to give us an account of the exact ways in which natural processes
work to produce different races. But no reputable scientist has yet traced the origin of the three major racial groups (as the foregoing interpretation of this passage would seem to require) to a common set of parents within a single generation. Even more embarrassing challenges to the sanctity of these supposedly racial boundaries come from the Bible itself. Abraham, a Shemite, descended into Egypt, presumably a country of the Hamites (Genesis 12). Then, according to the Gospel of Matthew (2:13-15), Joseph, at the direction of "an angel of the Lord," fled into Egypt with Mary and Jesus in quest of refuge from Herod. If Abraham and Jesus crossed these allegedly racial boundaries, why should we observe them?

Genesis 9:20-27 has long been employed to justify the condemnation of blacks as slaves and the objects of discrimination. The curse of God on Ham, it is argued, is irrevocable; and it applies to all members of the black race, since Ham is assumed to be their progenitor. Even a casual analysis of this passage, with the help of a good Bible dictionary, would demonstrate that this interpretation rests on a patchwork of incredible errors. The evidence shows: (1) the curse is pronounced by a man, Noah, and not God; (2) when Noah pronounces the curse, he is not sober but drunk (at any rate, he does not curse the one who has given him occasion for offense); (3) the victim of the curse is not Ham but Canaan; (4) the descendants of Canaan, despite Noah's condemnation of them to slavery, continued to be masters over Palestine for some seventeen centuries; (5) the Canaanites were not blacks but whites.

In any event, the prophets and the New Testament make shambles of the principle on which the above interpretation, even if correct, obviously rests. Ezekiel denounces use of the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:1-20; compare Luke 3:8). Titus 3:9 pours contempt on the kind of concern underlying this whole practice: "But steer clear of foolish speculations, genealogies, quarrels, and controversies over the Law; they are unprofitable and pointless" (NEB). As if this were not enough, a check of the peoples from whom such biblical figures as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Solomon took wives against the Genesis table of nations reveals the presence in their ancestry of
numerous connections with Hamitic peoples. When Aaron and Miriam begin to murmur against Moses for his marriage to a Cushite woman, they are rebuked by the Lord (Num. 12:1-8). One might also note in the genealogy of Jesus the name of Rahab, possibly a descendant of Canaan (Matt. 1:5; see also Gen. 10:18-19; Josh. 2:1 ff.), one of the four sons of Ham (Gen. 6:10)—the one, in fact, on whom the famous curse fell!

A close study of Gen. 11:1-9 reveals its use as a racist text to be equally burdened with wholly erroneous assumptions. The writer of this narrative traces the confusion of tongues to humankind’s rebellion against God, not to an attempt to integrate the races. Nowhere is it suggested, as the racist interpretation of the passage would require, any coincidence between linguistic differences and racial boundaries. And history, it should be noted, offers little convincing support of any such coincidence. The people of India and China, the purity of whose racial stock is surpassed almost nowhere, speak so many different languages and dialects that they often find themselves unable to converse with others from their own country who may live only twenty miles away. In the United States, on the other hand, blacks and whites, despite racial differences, speak a common language. Appeal to this passage as proof of God’s establishment of segregation by an act of special providence can only be construed as an insult to God. Who are we to say that God, if he or she had been so vitally interested in the separation of the races, could have produced no better plan of separation than one that does not separate? Besides, we must ask, does not Pentecost (Acts 2:5-13) dramatize the purpose of God in Christ to reverse the effects of the separation at Babel?

The call of Abraham to live in separation from certain peoples (Genesis 12-15) is also frequently cited as a biblical warrant for racial separation. Since this call likewise includes a demand for Abraham’s separation from his own kinsmen and countrymen, it is difficult to see why, in the absence of any mention of race, one can read it as a prescription for racial separation. Moreover, when we consider the explicit repudiation throughout the New Testament of the requirements of circumcision, the mark of Abraham’s separation, we can only view this reading of the
passage by Christians as a shocking betrayal of the writings and faith of the New Testament.

Some champions of human separation on racial grounds view Lev. 19:19, which puts under the ban any mixture of breeds of cattle, seed in a field, or fabrics in a garment, as sort of a golden text for their cause. Yet even children know that any suspension of such mixtures in animal or plant husbandry would obviously effect a revolution. Any merchant with so little sense as to stock 100 percent wool suits with 100 percent wool linings would soon go 100 percent bankrupt. Any application of this passage to race would obviously presuppose a ban on all mixtures of color in animals, plants, and fabrics. But who on earth would think of outlawing Dominique chickens, orchards with both Grimes Golden and Virginia Beauty apple trees, or the use of pheasant feathers in female headdress? The obvious answer is nobody. Even the people who use this text as a sanction for the racial separation of human beings, which it never mentions, do not practice the separation of animals, plants, or fabrics, which it expressly enjoins. Since Jesus derived the second half of the Great Commandment from Lev. 19:18, it is not at all surprising to see people turning to the Book of Leviticus in search of light on the problem of race. But the use separatists make of Leviticus 19 is instructive. Whereas Jesus ignored verse 19 but quoted 18, separatists ignore 18 and quote 19. Even more surprising is their disregard of verses 33-34 of this same chapter, for these verses prescribe the proper treatment of Israelites by non-Israelites—and with no suggestion whatever of any distinction between Caucasian strangers and Negroid strangers. Verse 34 reads: "The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

Many racial separatists derive biblical support for their demand for racial purity from Ezra's demand for the abandonment of Gentile wives by their Jewish husbands (Ezra 10:11, 44). Before following in their footsteps, a Christian should not overlook these qualifying facts: (1) Ezra's demand stems from concern for religious rather than racial purity (Ezra 9:1, 14); (2) the authors of Ruth and Jonah, not to mention the Apostle Paul, explicitly reject Ezra's program of separation from
Gentiles; (3) Jesus and his followers rejected the law on which Ezra based his program; (4) according to the genealogies of Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus himself would be expelled from the people of God; (5) the books of law themselves record numerous marriages between Hebrews or Israelites and foreign peoples (Gen. 16:3; 38:2; chapters 41-50; Exod. 2:21; Lev. 24:10; Num. 12:1); (6) Deut. 21:10-18 prescribes the conditions under which Israelites can legally take certain foreign women unto themselves; (7) parties to mixed marriages of the above sort include such biblical luminaries as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon; (8) Isaiah anticipates the day when the universal worship of Israel's God will bring an end to the separation of Israelites from non-Israelites: "In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt [descendants of Ham] and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage'" (Isa. 19:24-25).

Advocates of the separatist doctrine like to appeal to Jesus' command on one occasion to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They conveniently overlook the fact that obedience to this injunction would spell the end of missionary activity to any Gentiles, white or black. They likewise ignore Jesus' replacement of this commandment with a later commission to bear witness to the gospel to all people in every place (i.e., Acts 1:8). More amazing still, they take no account of the proclamation of the gospel by the apostolic church to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles on a nondiscriminatory basis (Rom. 10:12; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11-22). These same oversights characterize the use by racists of Jesus' reluctance in responding to an appeal from a Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30; compare John 4:7-42).

The failure of first-century Christians like Paul to attack slavery is sometimes given as a precedent for toleration of the status quo in race relations. Paul's advice to Philemon, in counseling him with respect to the proper treatment of Onesimus, a runaway slave about to be returned to him, calls into question this view of Paul's stand on slavery. In verses 15-16 he wrote Philemon thusly: "For perhaps this is why you lost him.
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for a time, that you might have him back for good, no longer as a slave, but as more than a slave—as a dear brother, very dear indeed to me and how much dearer to you, both as man and as Christian’ (NEB). This and other such passages prompted P. T. Forsyth to say of slavery: ‘The New Testament does not destroy it, but its gospel does.’

It is sometimes argued that God’s choice of Israel serves as proof of the divine subordination of certain races. This argument rests on two mistaken assumptions: (1) that the people of Israel can be identified on racial grounds; (2) that this choice carries with it privileges without price. The prophets challenge this first assumption by interpreting rebellion against God, irrespective of race, as cause for exclusion from the benefits of God’s promise to Israel. By making participation in these benefits available to all on the sole conditions of faithfulness to God and loving service to neighbor, irrespective of race, Jesus and the apostles deny all possibility of identifying the people of God on racial grounds. All major contributors to both Testaments stand the second of the above assumptions squarely on its head. God’s choice of Israel, along with the privilege of becoming the object of God’s love, carries with it the responsibility of service as the agent of God’s love and purpose. Just as God’s love manifests itself to all without regard for race, we are prohibited from being choosy in determining the objects of our love. That this role entails no special privileges or immunities is amply attested by the experience alike of the people of Israel and Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament repeatedly assures us that we can expect much the same treatment as they received as the reward for our service as the agents of God.

BIBLICAL WARRANTS FOR RACIAL INCLUSIVENESS

The practice of racial inclusiveness within Christianity has certainly not kept pace with its articulation of racially inclusive pronouncements. Yet our churches’ proclamations on the issue of race, even in countries such as our own, in which for generations public statutes lent sanction to racially discriminatory practices, have for decades been remarkably free of reservation and ambiguity. And these declarations have often
been as implicitly critical of the Christian bodies from which they
came as they have been explicitly critical of the societies they
were indicting. At times they have even put Christians in the
embarrassing position of bearing witness against themselves.

The action taken by the Methodists at their Christmas
Conference of 1784 concerning slavery marks a case in point.
That action heralded both the substance and source of more
recent racial pronouncements from the churches. After ac­
knowledging “the impropriety of making new terms of
communion . . . , excepting on the most pressing occasions,” it
nevertheless decreed that “no person holding slaves shall . . .
be admitted to the Lord’s supper, till he . . . complies with these
rules [calling for the emancipation of slaves] concerning
slavery.” It cited, as the rationale and inspiration of that
demand, “the golden law of God on which hang all the law and
the prophets.”

As in the eighteenth century when slavery was the issue, so
also in the twentieth century when segregation became the
issue, we American Christian whites had once again to admit
that we were in rebellion against “the golden law of God.” To be
sure, a few of us managed to hew out biblical props with which
to shore up the status quo, but most of us were as embarrassed
by this hermeneutic as we were by the practice whose cause it
served. In short, even if grudgingly, we had to admit that the call
to action with which the Bible confronts us is a summons to work
for a racially inclusive human community.

The grounds for reaching this conclusion have varied from
group to group, but they have typically featured considerations
to which the following five propositions (from which flow
implications of great significance for combatting racism) call
attention.

PROPPOSITION 1: PRIDE OF RACE, LIKE PRIDE OF ANY OTHER MARK OF HUMAN
DISTINCTION, IS A DENIAL OF GOD’S GRACE AND A BETRAYAL OF THE CHURCH’S HOPE.

The Bible betrays an awareness of the differences that divide
people into separate groups. It knows of the division of peoples
by language, culture, nation, and geography. But it acknowl­
edges only one difference of decisive significance for the
conduct of human life. And that is not the difference that
separates people by language, culture, nation, and geography.
The only difference of ultimate importance for human existence is the difference that separates creatures from Creator, humanity from deity, the peoples of every race from the God of all races. And that difference is not one that divides people, but one that unites them. It makes them one in their absolute dependence on Another for their very existence.

From this conviction the biblical writers draw inferences that compel us to narrow the ground for human boasting. Three of the conclusions to which they force us are noted below.

*No person of any race has a valid human ground for boasting before God.* "Into this general picture," Paul writes the Corinthians, "I have brought Apollos and myself on your account, so that you may not be inflated with pride as you patronize one and flout the other. Who makes you, my friend, so important? What do you possess that was not given you? If then you really received it all as a gift, why take the credit to yourself?" (I Cor. 4:6-7 NEB.) The author of Ephesians, following the standard Christian practice of identifying God the Redeemer with God the Creator, further contracts the ground for boasting before God by declaring salvation itself to be a work of grace. "It is," he declares, "God's gift." Therefore, he concludes, "there is nothing [this precludes the use of sex and class as well as race as a ground for boasting] for anyone to boast of" (Eph. 2:9 NEB).

*The use of race or class or geography or any such thing as a ground for boasting before God may provide the occasion not only for the chastisement of the boasting ones, but for the divine transfer of their privileges into other hands.* "I will no more have pity on the house of Israel," "declares Hosea's God, "for you are not my people and I am not your God" (Hos. 1:6, 9). Whenever the people of the covenant substitute biology for character as the basis of their claim before God, they are warned never again to say, "'We have Abraham as our Father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Luke 3:8). In the kingdom of God, this same evangelist quotes Jesus as saying on another occasion, "some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last" (13:28, 30).

No doubt some of the early Christians took comfort from these oblique references to Jews. But Paul was not one of them. In no uncertain terms he reminded the Christians in Rome that, before
God, the new Israel of God had no more ground for boasting than did the old Israel of God, and that, should they repeat Israel's folly, they were doomed to repeat her fate. His words (Rom. 11:19-21 NEB) leave no room for doubt that covenantal membership is not an irreversible status but a dynamic and alterable relationship: "You will say, 'Branches were lopped off so that I might be grafted in.' Very well: they were lopped off for lack of faith, and by faith you hold your place. Put away your pride, and be on your guard; for if God did not spare the native branches, no more will he spare you." If Paul's other words hold special meaning for veteran oppressors, these have special significance for their recently emancipated victims. They stand as a solemn reminder that, just as pride permitted old covenanters to yield place to new covenanters, it can likewise turn new covenanters into old covenanters.

Divine acceptance hinges on many factors, but race has nothing to do with any of them. The biblical writers are remarkably democratic and inclusive in identifying the qualities that enable human beings to live in a right relationship with God. There is not one set of requirements for one people and a different set for others. The requirements are the same for all people. On this point Paul invokes a reminder from Scripture: "Scripture says, 'Everyone who has faith... will be saved from shame'—everyone: there is no distinction... because the same Lord is Lord of all" (Rom. 10:11-12 NEB). Acts 10:34-35 slightly varies the requirements, but its author likewise steers clear of any sort of qualification for a right relationship with God that involves arbitrary or invidious distinctions. "God," he declares, "has no favourites but... in every nation the man who is god-fearing and does what is right is acceptable to him" (NEB).


The ancient Israelites' belief that they enjoyed a special relationship to God may well have taken root and flourished in henotheistic soil. However, once they had left behind this primitive theological heritage for a monotheistic theology, they lost little time in setting the stage for the transformation of biblical faith into a religion inclusive enough to match the
universal sovereignty and mission of their God. They proceeded to assert our oneness not only in the creative and redemptive love of God. They also asserted that God has made us all targets of the gospel to which that love commits us. They left us with a three-pronged heritage for defining and proclaiming the gospel in nonracist terms:

There is no human being of any race who does not bear in his or her person the image of God. The priestly version of creation employs "the image of God" (Gen. 1:26-27) to refer "always and only to the species as a whole." "To be human is to be made in the image of God." So inasmuch as "the divine image characterizes and defines the species as a whole," we cannot employ race as a ground for "denying to an individual or group the full and essential status of humanity without contradicting "the word of [God in] creation.""

There is no person of any race for whom Christ did not die. The New Testament writers make bold to assert not only that Jesus' death has meaning for everyone (Heb. 2:9), and that the sole condition for its appropriation is not race but faith (John 3:16); they are equally insistent that "God was in Christ" even on the cross—yea, most especially on the cross!—and that there God suffered, not only with and as a human being, but because of and for humankind. As they see it, we cannot employ race as a ground for denying any person's full humanity without contradicting the Word of God in redemption.

There is no person of any race to whom proclaimers of the gospel do not owe the duty of its proclamation. The New Testament evangelists almost turn the motivation of the Lord's patience (as given in II Pet. 3:9) into the sanction of impatience for Christian disciples (Matt. 28:18-19 as in The Great Commission, and many other places). They leave no room for doubt that we cannot target candidates for the gospel on the basis of race without contradicting our Lord's charge to Christian evangelists.

**Proposition 3:** Any sort of exclusion from or discrimination with the Christian fellowship, save on grounds of faith and conduct, marks a betrayal of the example of Christ and the apostles and the purpose of the church.

If we would ascertain how Jesus and the apostles would have handled our race problem, we have only to look at how they
handled their race problem. To say this is, of course, to deny that
color is the exclusive or even primary basis for today's exclusivist
and discriminatory practices against certain races. It is to agree
with those who contend that "the 'race problem' with which
[we] have to deal is not so much a biological as a sociological
problem in which theological, cultural and psychological factors
all play their part." Since these were the very same factors that
framed "the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14) between
mainstream Judaism and sinners, publicans, Samaritans, and
Gentiles, we not only have warrant for speaking of primitive
Christianity's "race problem" but we are also justified, as I have
already suggested, in looking to their practice and teachings for
guidance in our search for the solution to our race problem. On
this score the New Testament writers speak with a single voice.
Just as they bear emphatic witness to the progressively inclusive
character of early Christian practice, they are also clear about the
conclusions to which this practice leads.

Despite laws forbidding association with sinners, publicans,
Samaritans, Gentiles, our Lord and his disciples associated with all
these people. Official Judaism evolved an "elaborate system of
spiritual quarantine regulations" for keeping law-abiding Jews
from law-breaking Jews like the sinners and publicans of the
Gospels. It felt that "segregation" alone could preserve it from
extinction." Yet Jesus, judging by the frequency with which his
critics assail him for associating with people of this ilk, simply
"became notorious" for his disregard of this taboo.

If possible, the Samaritans fared even better at the hands of
Jesus and his followers (see John 4:7-9, Acts 8:5-6, and other
places). The apostles acted out the most far-reaching implica­
tions of Jesus' choice of a Samaritan as the hero of one of his
best-known parables (Luke 10:30-37) by turning to Samaria in
search of new recruits for the gospel. By that action, they
launched a movement for integration with a people from whom,
for the better part of five centuries, their parents had remained
segregated.

That left only the Gentiles outside the pale, but Jesus' followers lost little time in stretching their revolutionary policy
to include them, too. Acts notes the worship in several local
churches of Jewish and Gentile Christians on an integrated
basis, without any hint whatever of any sort of discrimination
(11:20; 13:1, 43-48). Along with the suggestion of a similar
practice by Roman Christians, Paul provides the rationale for
participation in this wall-shattering revolution: "There is neither
Jew nor Greek . . . slave nor free," he declares, "for you are all
one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

It is the purpose of God in Christ to unite all people on earth and in
heaven. The New Testament writers do not treat hope for the
church triumphant as an excuse for deferring the pursuit of
Christian unity in the here and now. Quite the contrary, they
employ it as a sanction for its earthly embodiment (see John
10:16; Eph. 1:3-10; Col. 1:17-18).

The absence of love for any fellow believer marks a denial of the love of
God. The author of I John escalates the scope of the refusal of the
love of neighbor into a capital offense. The person, claiming to
be "in the light," who nevertheless hates "his brother" is not
only a victim of self-deception and hypocrisy (2:9-11); such a one
has forsaken "the children of God" to join "the children of the
devil" (3:10). And that person becomes, as a consequence, "a
murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life
abiding in him" (3:15). Admittedly, this putting of the matter is
extreme for even the New Testament writers; yet the difference
is one only of degree. Certainly they would echo the contention
that, just as we have been made children of a common parent
through Christ, we have likewise been made brothers and
sisters to all other Christians, irrespective of race, color, or creed.

All people, irrespective of race, national origin or economic status, are
titled to a cordial welcome and equal treatment in the house of God.
The New Testament demands the witness of the Christian
community to the form of life expected of the world to come,
declares Amos Wilder, because the world to come is already
here. If true, there can be no doubt that we Christians are
summoned to pattern our life after a model that precludes any
sort of artificial and arbitrary separation. On this point the
language of the messianists of both Testaments is indisputable
and crucial. "'And . . . foreigners . . . I will bring to my holy
mountain,' " declares the God of Isaiah, "'for my house shall be
called a house of prayer for all peoples' " (56:6-7; compare
66:22-23). "I looked," writes the author of the Apocalypse,"and
saw a vast throng, which no one could count, from every nation, of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9 NEB; compare John 6:39).

**PROPOSITION 4: SELF-DENYING SERVICE TO PERSONS IN NEED, IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE OR PARTY OR ANY SUCH THING, IS THE IDENTIFYING MARK OF CHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS.**

Despite the particularism of his religious heritage, the Jesus of Matthew's Gospel never mentions race or nationality in his list of requirements for appropriation of the life in the kingdom he heralds. He offers it, not to the smug and self-satisfied, but to the poor who mourn, weep, act mercifully, seek peace, and welcome persecution ahead of compromise (5:3-10); not to those who were born aright, but to those who live aright (5:17-20); not to the legalists who never fail to bring their gift to the altar at the appointed time, but to those who love even the people who look on them as enemies (5:23-24); not to those who love only their own kind, but to those who love even the people who look on them as enemies (5:43-48). In short, salvation in Matthew hinges, not on external gifts open only to the privileged few, but on personal gifts available to all.¹⁰

Christian reflection on Jesus' life and practice has yielded a broad consensus concerning authentic Christian living itself. This agreement touches on many things, but it highlights, in addition to the significance of Jesus' life for us, the relative importance of words and deeds and the use of special gifts.

*Christ's ministry of crossbearing service gives us the model for the conduct of life as well as the central theme of Christian worship.* The life of Jesus focuses attention on the work of the God whose glory we contemplate in worship. Needless to add, such worship inevitably sets us at odds with racism's model for the conduct of life. Whereas racism bids us seek greatness in domination, we are called to follow one who found greatness in service (Matt. 20:26-28; 21:14; Luke 4:18-21; Rom. 12:16); whereas racism demands that others lay down their lives for it, we are called to follow one who bids us lay down our lives for others (I John 3:16; 4:8-11). However, in all these things, we are called to do nothing that the caller himself did not do before us. Yet we cannot be excused for doing anything less, either, for we "are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (I Cor. 12:27).

*Words of lofty praise pale into insignificance beside deeds of lowly
service. In Jesus' parable of the last judgment (Matt. 25:31-46) the righteous and the wicked alike are surprised by the verdict. We are not given the reason for this reaction. But imagination enables us to plug the gaps. Quite likely, the wicked were surprised because they had performed all the religious duties of the typical righteous. They were so anxious to pursue any hints of the appearance of the Son of Man that they refused to turn aside for the cries of the desperate. The truly righteous, on the other hand, were so attuned to the cries of those in need that they never bothered to consider the possibility of those cries masking the Son's appearance. Two factors enter into the judge's identification of the righteous. One is their indifference to the identity of the people to whom they give help. They see them only as human beings in need. They ask no questions about their color, creed, caste, or character. Nor does Jesus leave much room for doubt as to the inference we are to draw from this failure. If we would be judged as righteous, we must be equally indifferent to questions about the color, creed, caste, and character of the hungry, thirsty, sick, and imprisoned people who come to us in need. The other factor behind the judge's decision is undoubtedly the fact that the righteous crowned their noble sentiments with deeds to match. They are commended neither for what they perceived nor for what they believed. They are commended, rather, for what they "did." The author of I John 3:17-18 gives us the perfect commentary on both this parable and its spokesperson: "But if a man has enough to live on, and yet when he sees his brother in need shuts up his heart against him, how can it be said that the divine love dwells in him? My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk, it must . . . show itself in action" (NEB).

Any gifts that set us apart from other human beings in ability have been bestowed on us by God that we might unite ourselves to them in service. The Bible sees the human person not as one individual among others, but as "an individual-in-community." Accordingly, it treats our variety of gifts not as an excuse for the highly gifted to lord it over the less gifted, but as the occasion for interpreting life as "a mutual relationship deriving from inequality." Rightly viewed and properly used, the gifts that set us apart in native ability, be they mental or physical, will
bring us together in loving care for each other (Luke 12:48). "Whatever gift each of you may have received," I Pet. 4:10 (NEB) commands us, "use it in service to one another, like good stewards dispensing the grace of God" (compare I Cor. 12:14, 25-27).

PROPOSITION 5: THE EXPRESSION OF HATRED FOR ANY HUMAN BEING FOR ANY REASON, RACIAL OR OTHERWISE, MARKS A FAILURE OF LOVE FOR GOD.

The assertion that all persons are created equal, insofar as it refers to individual native endowment, is patently absurd. It likewise enjoys little support in the Scriptures. The Bible does not teach that all human beings are equally able or useful. Its teaching is that all human beings are equally created and equally loved by God. Although the love of God revealed in Jesus did not originate with him, multitudes did not become aware of this love until they encountered it in Jesus. And this same Jesus, who tells us of a God who blesses the good and the evil alike, calls us not to imitate our neighbors in the bestowal of love, but to imitate God (Matt. 5:48).

By implication we are asked to ponder the possibility that others may not become aware of God’s love until they see it in us; that we cannot fulfill our mission from God’s man for others until we become God’s people for others; in short, that each of us is called to become Christ to the neighbor.

If this be our summons, it naturally follows that general social contempt for a fellow human being does not exempt us from the responsibility of treating that person with love and respect. In Christ we have been granted custody of God’s indiscriminate love, and we are expected to distribute it with the same reckless abandon that attended its distribution in Nazareth of Galilee. "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view," declares Paul (II Cor. 5:16, 19-20), for "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them [if not their trespasses, over which they have some control, then surely Christ would not count against them their race, over which they have no control!], and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." (Compare Rom. 12:2; I Pet. 3:8; 1:21.)

If Paul has here established our true identity (i.e., as "ambassadors of Christ"), it also follows that affirmations of love
When we read the Bible from the viewpoint of God's Word made flesh in Jesus Christ, the divisions of human beings by race pale into insignificance beside their bonds of union. The demands of faith push these accidents of birth into the background. The impulse to go apart on the basis of race yields place to the necessity to draw together on the basis of grace.

True enough, Christ and the apostles do not provide us with a clear example of conquest over the temptation to separate people on the basis of race. But they did encounter the temptation to separate publicans, Samaritans, and Gentiles. And they faced that problem head-on in decisive combat. What is more, by facing and solving it as they did, they gave us more than a precedent for breaking down the middle wall of partition between blacks and whites. They gave us, at the same time, an example and sanction for breaking down every wall of partition that separates one group of God's people from another group of God's people.

NOTES

1. The black-white issue, because it stands at the center of this country's race problem, will be the primary focus of this article.


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Preaching during the summer months is a unique challenge to the pulpiteer. One might quickly add that it is a challenge seldom faced by pastors who head for cool, dry climates for vacation, or plan extended continuing education programs which take them away from the doldrums of heat, humidity, and a marked drop in church attendance. There are times when one asks if it is not in the best interests of all simply to close for two months. But that temptation is quickly dropped for fear that the faithful few will trickle off to the church down the street and never come back!

Furthermore, the temptation to quit is a strange commentary upon what we conceive to be the power of the gospel and its proclamation in every season. The summer months might provide an opportunity for doing something new and exciting both liturgically and homiletically. Years ago summertime became the occasion for great revivals, a renewal of commitment to Christ and the church. Today no such summertime themes exist. Religious entertainment is found no longer in the church, nor in the tent down the street, but on a television screen within the air-conditioned privacy of home. Whereas, at the very least, renewal required some kind of public affirmation of either making one’s way down the sawdust trail to the altar, or raising one’s hands for prayer, now the commitment is deeply internal, horribly private, and exclusive of the community in which this story is told.

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Lessons in these homiletical resources are taken from Seasons of the Gospel: Resources for the Christian Year (Abingdon, 1979).
I propose that this summer become an exception to the usual downbeat of the heat. Have worship outside, sing a capella, hook up a strong public address system so that everyone can hear—and do something different from the pulpit! Lectionary readings for July, August, and September are taken from the Gospel according to Luke. For our purposes we will use the five Sundays in July for models. There will be four questions that we will want to ask the Gospel writer: What story does he tell? How do we read it? What does it do to us? And where does it take us?

These four questions should move us from serious exegesis to the eisegesis of the sermon, more acceptably called the hermeneutic. This means that Luke’s story and the context in which that story is to be proclaimed must converge in the story or the message the preacher gives. In order to pull this off with the utmost of integrity it is important to understand thoroughly what that convergence is, and the realities of the congregation to which that story is to speak.

As an innovation, preachers may want to encourage people to bring their Bibles for the summer months, to follow along in the reading of texts, and to follow an outline of the pericopes that are to be preached from each Sunday. This approach will require a great deal of preparation but may be well rewarded with both sustained attendance and vital interest.

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST CHURCH CONTEXT

First Church, Evanston, Illinois, is among the oldest institutions in the Chicago area. It was founded in 1854 along with Northwestern University and what is now known as Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. During the Civil War, Evanston represented the end of the line for those riding the freedom trains of the underground railroad from the South. Blacks became homeowners, businessmen, and domestic servants for the posh North Shore.

Evanston is the place where Frances Willard fought for women’s rights and in which the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union was founded by her followers. Unti just a few years ago, it was a city in which one could not buy an alcoholic drink or a bottle of liquor, and today the former still cannot be bought.
This of course provided great frustrations for European guests who came to Evanston for the World Council of Churches meeting in 1954!

Since the early days of this century, First Church has had prominent pulpits, not unlike those of Riverside Church, New York. Ernest Fremont Tittle overshadows the pulpit like Harry Emerson Fosdick did at Riverside. Even though those who followed in his footsteps had their own forceful pulpit identities, they stand in the shadows. First Church remembers Tittle for his pacifism and great pastoral ministry. Harold Bosley is remembered for his intellectual and academic skills in the service of proclamation and in particular his ability to deal with controversial issues from the pulpit. Dow Kirkpatrick served in providing a major link to the changing currents within the Third World and its influence upon contemporary American theology and church life. All were controversial in their own way, yet all were concerned with the application of the gospel to life.

One basic ingredient has held this diverse congregation together through the years, however. That is the tradition not only of great preaching but of deep pastoral concern through the pulpit itself. A calculation of the sermons preached over the years would show approximately a 15-20 to 1 ratio of pastoral to controversial sermons. Great themes like hope, faith, love, and justice impregnate the preachments down through the years. Timely concerns were met by timeless truth.

Like other churches, transition for First Church during the past twenty years has been somewhat traumatic. More and more downtown-oriented, less suburban and residential, First Church has faced declining membership and finances until the past two years. Young single adults, young married couples, university students, and others are beginning to make their way to the church once again. Professors from the seminary and university, and denominational staff from the nearby United Methodist headquarters make up an influential share of the congregation.

On any Sunday morning one finds the poorest sitting next to the richest; the most-educated next to those with little education; those with deep revolutionary strains in their bones and those whose commitment is to the status quo; young and
old, men and women, black and white. Its diversity is one that is at times overwhelming, sometimes frustrating, sometimes a solid joy. It is a church whose great thick walls protect the frightened, encourage the disheartened, lift up the depressed, give hope to those who have nowhere else to go. It is indeed a cathedral!

The congregation's sense of community amidst this diversity is found in its worship together. If community is not found there, it is nowhere else to be found in spite of the multifaceted programming that has been developed. How the Gospel of Luke and the story Luke tells will converge with the people at First Church remains a challenge. So we begin our work.

LOOKING FOR THE STORY

The Gospel of Luke will be familiar to many people in the congregation. They will have had opportunities to learn its contents from noted professors in the nearby seminary. Others, possibly the majority, will be as illiterate of the Gospel as those in any congregation. Some have studied the earliest manuscripts; others appreciate the fine nuances of the Gospel, while others have barely opened their Bibles. This preacher's great concern will be to grasp the total story in contrast to a mere grappling with texts. We will not work backward from text to pericope to section and then to the whole but quite the reverse.

There are many advantages to this approach, not the least of which is becoming fully acquainted with the "big story" to allow it to penetrate the nervous system completely. The story must become known thoroughly, to the point that the pieces can be understood even when the lines of exegesis are not sharply drawn.

GETTING TO KNOW LUKE

Luke, according to Frederick W. Danker, is a historian-theologian of rare political acumen. He uses the secular historian's approach to his materials. Unlike later historians whose concern is with objectivity per se, Luke has made a basic commitment to the one about whom he writes, Jesus has proclaimed that he and
his preaching are a fulfillment of God's salvation as given in the Scriptures of old. In his person and his preaching he inaugurates the year of God's favor spoken of in Isa. 61:1-2. The year refers to an era or period which is beginning. Jesus is the eschatological and prophetic herald of the new mode of release, sight, and liberty spoken of by Isaiah. It is furthermore noteworthy that his presentation of himself as such not only charms his fellow townspeople at first, but also offends them deeply (see Luke 4:18-30). This interpretation indicates the radical nature of the kerygma being announced by the Lukan Jesus. Jesus has been at the center of God's plan of salvation since the beginning. Jesus presents his mission in the light of the Jewish Scriptures.

Even though it is not likely that Luke knew Jesus directly, it is very clear that his self-understanding corresponds to the faith of those who are to carry on the message and work that Jesus initiated. Luke thinks that his is a better understanding than others because time has gone by, the community has taken shape, and some have experienced the ongoing presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. In understanding Luke we must not neglect the fact that he was the author of Acts.

An example of Luke as historian is Luke's concern with the relationship of John the Baptist's mission and the ministry of Jesus. He is the only evangelist to report John's counsel to tax collectors and soldiers. He realizes that the beginning of Jesus' mission, as Mark relates it, is historically incomprehensible. He therefore tells how Jesus read from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth and stated that the prophecy had been fulfilled. In his view, Mark's Passion narrative did not adequately emphasize nontheological factors, and therefore he lists precise charges brought against Jesus: He was overturning the nation, forbidding the payment of taxes to Caesar, and calling himself an anointed king.

Historical Perspective: Luke makes no claim to originality, nor does he claim a divine revelation superseding all previous accounts. His main purpose is to set things right in this Gospel (1:1-4). He believes himself to be in a better position than his predecessors to explain the events of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection. The first stage of eyewitnesses consisted of those who had been with Jesus most intimately, the Twelve. Later we
learn that the apostles were those who were with Jesus from the baptism to the Ascension. This second group, ministers of the word, pass on the eyewitness tradition by preaching. The final stage in which Luke finds himself standing is that of the compiler of tradition. With the advantage of hindsight the compiler is able to see what is more important and worthy of being preserved. Though Luke stands within that third phase, he intends to surpass all the rest by "following all things closely." He is able to give both an orderly and truthful account of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

Luke understands himself as living at a time when true remembering needs to take place. He wishes to recover and reformulate the roots of Christian faith so that a certainty and continuity of Christian faith from beginning up to the present can be established: from Israel through Jesus to the church.

Luke does not blush with the idea that this is not an original creation. Rather, it is "the" gospel—the one piece of good news as the Christian community has received and proclaimed it, the good news of Jesus Christ, the same good news which the other Gospels proclaimed. But there is an element of originality—it is the gospel "according" to Luke. The one good news is presented with a particular slant of its own—that of Luke.

_Historical Objectivity and Jesus:_ We speak of objectivity in history probeings. The fact that Luke gives miracles an importance they do not possess for the contemporary mind does not hinder his objectivity. It must be noted too that he is not primarily a historian but an exponent of the gospel in history. His business is to state his facts, not with his heart outside the faith, but with all that passionate significance they had come to possess for the society being redeemed. He adapts the gospel to the larger needs of humanity.

Luke relates his narrative to the history of the Roman world by connecting the birth of Jesus with the decree of Caesar Augustus ordering the registration of the whole Roman world. During the reign of Augustus the census was to be carried out in the province of Syria, which included Judea and was under the governorship of Quirinius. It was important for Luke from a theological standpoint to specify that Jesus was born in the rule
of Caesar Augustus in a time of the Pax Augusta. The Pax Augusta will meet the Pax Christus later.

Later Luke fixes dates through connecting the Christ-event with the rule of Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. The trial process through which Jesus goes tells us that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. These specific names are important to Luke's story. These names are the very ones which are the powers of the world. Luke is concerned with a salvation history that has at its base a fundamental plan for human beings which is dramatically being played out in the person of Jesus. There is a divine necessity about which events are taking place.

Luke's message speaks of Jesus, born a Palestinian Jew in Bethlehem, of Davidic descent, who was raised in Nazareth. Jesus' supreme dedication is evident from the beginning to the end. "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" His virginal conception, his unique spirit-guided ministry, his special relation to his heavenly Father, the Resurrection from the dead, his Ascension—all round out the story.

It is not unusual then to see the word fulfillment used by Luke on many occasions: fulfillment of prophecy as it brings about the plan of salvation. This inbreaking of divine activity in human history includes bringing salvation to people outside God's chosen Israel. This is a major shift of emphasis requiring a re-ordering of attitudes toward divisions within human society. It is clear that Luke's story allows for no other salvation from any other, or by any other name. The christological titles he uses are messiah or Christ, Lord, suffering messiah, Savior, son of God, son of man, servant, prophet, king, son of David, leader, holy one, righteous one, judge, teacher.

Geography plays an important role in Luke's narrative. The city toward which Jesus sets his face is Jerusalem. Before reaching the city of destiny Jesus goes through Samaria, in which Luke locates much of his teaching and healing as well as controversy. Whether Jesus had a Samaritan mission is debatable. It is obvious that Luke's concern is to impress upon his readers the fact that Jesus comes to all people and in particular the outsiders. Whatever the case, Jesus in setting his face toward Jerusalem is determined to face his destiny. Though
the Samaritans reject Jesus because he does face Jerusalem, Jesus does not reject them.

**Jesus' Message:** Luke understands Jesus as the kingdom preacher par excellence. "When the first proclamation of the kingdom of God is made in Luke (4:43), Jesus is there made to add significantly, 'that is what I was sent for.'" As Betz has put it, 'the kingdom has come with the kerygma'... and Jesus is its herald.3 This is not a lecture on the nature of God's kingship or God's kingdom. Jesus' announcement is one of an event. "Realize that the kingdom of God is near," he urges. At the same time he unashamedly speaks of the presence of the kingdom in his own person and acts: "The kingdom of God is among you."

If Jesus is the kingdom preacher par excellence, it is clear that he sends his disciples out to do the same kind of preaching. In contrast to Mark, who records that the disciples were sent out on a mission to call people to repentance, Luke tells us that they were sent out specifically to proclaim the kingdom of God. As Fitzmyer reminds us: "Even though the kingdom is the first topic of proclamation, the topic of the disciples' preaching is more frequently expressed in *ho logos tou theou*, 'the word of God.' Or occasionally *ho logos tou kyriou*, 'the word of the Lord.' It is used by Luke as a brief way of summing up the fundamental Christian message."4 Implied in the phrase "word of God" is an address by the revealing and saving God to human beings from whom a responsive faith is sought.

We have learned an important piece in Luke's story. The kingdom is not extractable from the person of Jesus; Jesus is understood in terms of the culmination of God's dramatic acts by beginning at the beginning.

The next piece of this story centers more closely on the identity of Jesus himself. Chapter 9 is of no little importance in the Lukan Gospel. Its structure is determined by the "big omission," followed by the lengthy travel account. The Markan material that Luke borrows centers in the identity question. Herod's question, "Who is this about whom I hear such talk?" is pivotal to Luke's story. In the rest of the chapter Luke supplies a whole series of answers to the question, some of which involve christological titles.

To have an identity, a person must be in time. Luke is
meticulous in linking the Christ-event and the Christian proclamation of it to persons, places, times, institutions, and epics of world history. He does not call his writing "euangelion" but "diagesis." He avoids using the word proclamation, preferring the word narrative. This term was current among Hellenistic writers and historians.

Luke enjoys certain words and expressions: the perfect verb egeneto, "it happened," followed by the word and or accompanied by a finite verb, or an infinitive. He also employs the preposition "in" with an article and an infinitive to indicate that something was done or said while something else was going on. Events often take place "in the presence of," enopion, e.g., in the presence of persons. In this way he demonstrates his concern with historical connections and historical witnesses.

Jesus as Benefactor: Finally there is a Lukan metaphor which we must examine. Danker tells us that Luke’s basic metaphor is "benefactor." Jesus is the "benefactor of all benefactors." The qualities and powers of a benefactor are peace for individuals and peace for the world, and the ability to have the power to bring together word and deed. Luke interprets Jesus in terms of the Roman-Hellenistic benefactor of his day. But unlike politicians whose deeds can ever rise to the level of their rhetoric or whose performance may not be in conformity with expressed principles, Luke observes that Jesus brings word and deed to such a level of coincidence and concurrence that he is unique in the history of politics. Jesus, then, in the world of politics is his own man.

Luke extends this metaphor to tell us there can be no benefactor without a kingdom. This benefactor who heads the kingdom is one who also prepares the way for those who would be citizens of the new age. He calls them to repentance and confession of sins as the beginning experiences for receiving the beneficence of salvation. This kingdom is characterized by God’s peace. Peace is what distinguishes this kingdom from all others. Luke uses the word peace more than the other Gospel writers combined.

The kingdom of peace stands against the tyranny of things and the tyranny of social class. Those who enter the kingdom are asked to give their lives unreservedly to the beneficent
benefactor. In this kingdom of peace the oppressed will be relieved, the captives set free, and those enchained by social patterns, custom, and economic necessity will be emancipated.

The benefactor rules over a citizenry whose membership in this new kingdom obligates them to become beneficent in the manner of their benefactor. Luke calls for no anarchy. Rather he desires to narrate the Christian facts from the beginning within the context of Christianity's legitimate predecessor, Judaism. Luke the investigator and reporter of tradition claims to be a true evangelist. This claim is properly sustained by his faithfully reproduced statement which has been credibly attested to him by his authority or from information he has elicited in response to his inquiries. The political paradigm of benefactor and kingdom is a legitimate one through which to do his witnessing.

The benefactor theme runs through the heart of such parables as the good Samaritan, the lost son, the lost sheep, and the conversion of Zacchaeus. These stories span the whole of human pathos. The action of the benefactor pulls together both word and deed, a unique experience in the world of politics. This benefactor can fulfill his promises. His power is not dependent upon alliances with the elite. There are strong strains of judgment toward the wealthy, a sentiment strongly expressed in the song of Mary, the preaching of John, and the opening words of the Savior's discourse at Nazareth. The shortened form of the Beatitudes and the "woes" attached to it, the parables of the rich man's death, and the story of Dives and Lazarus are but others.

Jesus the chief benefactor has followers who are to be no less benefactors than he. Following Jesus involves more than imitation. Luke's story insists that the Holy Spirit is essential to the chief benefactor and those who follow him. More than any other Synoptic evangelist Luke has made the Spirit an important feature of the Gospel and its sequel. Luke speaks of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the spirit of Jesus, and the Spirit of the Lord. The presence of the Holy Spirit is what makes Jesus more than a good example, his followers more than imitators, and Luke's narrative more than history.

People respond to this story in several ways: faith, repentance, conversion, and baptism. Following Jesus the benefactor,
witnessing to the risen Lord, and praying are the things disciples do. Like the benefactor, disciples are to be concerned about the right use of material possessions. Luke shows a keen awareness of the chasm between the rich and the poor, and the importance of life-style in the new kingdom.

The benefactor creates a community that is to be no less beneficent than he, and just as vulnerable to the hazards and risks of the new politics as he. Because Luke stands in history as he does he envisions a certain organized and communal life for Christians. The followers of the benefactor develop Christian community—a beneficent community. The words εκκλησία and κοινωνία enter the Lukan vocabulary. Luke makes it very clear that the Christian community, though structured, is changeable and fleeting in character. The benefactor calls the community out of the world into the new kingdom. Those who were missionless now have purpose. Together they experience the fellowship—κοινωνία—of peace. All of this is prompted by the Holy Spirit who makes real the benefactor Jesus to them and in them.

The effect of the story is to obtain the redemption of the human situation once and for all. Christ brings about salvation, forgiveness of sins, peace, and life. This is the experience of those who understand themselves “to be with Jesus.” With these themes in mind and a sense of the ethos with which Luke approaches his story, we now turn to the pericopes for the five Sundays in July. Our approach will be to look at the texts in detail; and then ask the questions: Which story does Luke tell? How do we read it? What does it do to us? Where does it take us?

**SUNDAY, JULY 3, 1983**

Exegesis of Luke 10:1-12, 16-20

Verse 1: “Seventy-two” (NEB). That is the word of some ancient authorities, whereas the majority use the number seventy. In either case it is likely that seventy or seventy-two refers to the passage in Genesis 10 which numbers the nations of
the earth—the Hebrew Bible having seventy nations and the Septuagint seventy-two.6

Verse 3: "I am sending you like lambs among wolves . . ." (NEB). Does the image of the lamb imply a specificity on the part of the disciples? Is this a follow-up to the admonition of Jesus for them to "love your enemies; do good to those who hate you" (6:27)?

Verse 4a: On this mission it is not necessary to have a second shirt, or footwear other than the sandals in which they walk. Wallet, bread, money, and any of the other usual traveling needs are absolutely unnecessary. Those going need make no special preparations.

Verse 4b: "Exchange no greetings on the road" (NEB). This command violates Oriental custom, which urges travelers to speak so that one may know who is on the road. Greetings can also offer self-protection and the opportunity to become a neighbor to someone in need. There is no time for such amenities.

Verses 5, 6: "Peace be to this house!" This is not a greeting to match the social requirements of good etiquette. When the disciples give this benediction it is to have objective value for those who receive it.

Verses 7, 9: They will indeed be met by those friendly to the message and are to accept hospitality with gladness and thanksgiving. When that is not the case they are to shake the dust from their sandals.

Verse 11: "The very dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off to your shame" (NEB). This may be an allusion to the fact that Jews considered the soil under the feet of the Gentiles to be polluted. Therefore this statement is a strong one. It may be saying that the Israelites who are unfriendly to the kingdom are no better than the heathen.7

Verse 16: "Whoever listens to you listens to me" (NEB). The work being undertaken is an obvious extension of who Jesus is and what Jesus does.

Verse 17: "The seventy-two came back jubilant" (NEB). Why wouldn't they? They had seen the devils submit to the power Jesus had given them. The world they touched was being turned upside down.
Verse 18: Jesus too rejoices in the success of their mission. No doubt this comment is a reflection upon his own temptations in the wilderness when he saw the power of Satan defeated. In principle, Satan's day is over! What concept did Jesus have of Satan? Did he perceive a dualism in the universe? Certainly this is not intended by Luke. But that there are forces at work that would destroy people is evident.

Verse 19: The word *serpent* has been symbolic of Satan's power ever since Genesis 3 was written. Jesus finds in the work of the disciples divine verification for his choice of them.

Verse 20: The results of the mission are proof to the disciples that they are part of the realm of God, the reign of God. The book in which names are enrolled may refer to the book of life spoken of in Exod. 32:32, Isa. 4:3, and Rev. 20:12, 15.

*Which story is Luke telling?* He is telling the story of what the disciples of Jesus were empowered to do when they were sent into mission. That this story is for the whole world is evident by the symbol of seventy or seventy-two. What they had heard and seen Jesus do enabled them to face reality themselves.

It is important to note that they were not sent on this mission, nor were they ready for it until the serious question Jesus posed to them in 9:20 is answered. Who did they think he was? When that question was answered they were ready to take next steps in the appropriation of their discipleship. Following their answer he invited them to follow him with his face set toward Jerusalem.

On the way to Jerusalem they were to go through Samaria. This was the land in which theological arguments proliferated. On which mountain would they worship? Jew and Samaritan had strong differences of opinion on that question! The disciples felt the ribs of resistance in Samaria. Their presence was not particularly welcome. At one point they became so angry at their insulting reception that they wanted to use the power of Jesus to call fire down from heaven and burn up the village that had heaped such indignities upon them.

Now they were on their own. The hour of testing had come. These neophytes who had never entered a rabbinic school or synagogue study were the bearers of a new authority, the
authority of Jesus and the proclamation of the kingdom of God. Their words were to bear both good news as well as judgment.

The words the disciples spoke bore in them the power of Jesus himself. Their reactions were nothing less than ecstatic. Even Jesus saw the fall of Satan like lightning from the sky. The temptation to spiritual pride and arrogance was great; therefore Jesus warned that the greatest joy was to be found in having their names written in heaven.

_How do we hear it?_ There are several points that strike one as this passage is more closely examined. The first is the sense that time is passing swiftly. One may sense an almost breathless quality in this pericope. Not only are the disciples engaged in hectic activity but their message has in it the quality of an early warning system of an impending great happening. The kingdom of God was among them. All the good stuff of life was available, but it contained both the good news and the bad news.

The second point was that there was not time to worry about any kind of orthodoxy, whether it be religious or social. The disciples were to eat whatever food was provided, heal the sick, and say, "'The kingdom of God has come close to you'" (Luke 10:9 NEB). They were to move ahead "'with their hands to the plow and with no inclination to look back.'"

Third, power has been given to them. Jesus bestowed upon them power that is of cosmic significance. "'Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the One who sent me'" (NEB). They are in direct line with the Father who has sent the Son, who sent the disciples. The one who sent Jesus is the very one who sent the disciples and empowered them. That empowerment is what created the vision of Satan falling like lightning out of the sky.

Fourth is the impression of the center of authority. This authority is found in two places: "'... in your name Lord, even the devils submit to us'" (NEB); and finally, Jesus' admonition that "'you should rejoice ... that your names are enrolled in heaven'" (NEB). The power was not in them, it was not theirs to take. It was a power that had been given to them in the name of the Lord. No other name would suffice. Later Luke, in Acts, will say, "'there is no other name under heaven given
among men by which we must be saved’ (4:12). The crucial point is that their work was to be done in the name of the Lord and that their names were to be enrolled in heaven.

What does it do to us? This passage contains the first instructions for mission. There is in it a mandate and a responsibility. One is the responsibility of speech. These disciples are going to be heard. Their words are going to make some angry and some upset. It may even be that some will be so upset that they will do bodily harm to those who are speaking or inflict upon them certain disgraces. Witness to faith requires the willingness—no, the mandate—to articulate the faith.

What they are to speak has been defined for them. They are not to give their personal biographies on how one day a man came along while they were fishing and told them to drop then-net. That is not the story! Even their actions which are welded to their words are spelled out. “Eat the food, heal the sick, and say the kingdom of God has come close to you.” What in the world could be so upsetting about that triad? If one looks at what life in the kingdom of God is to be like as illustrated in the ministry of Jesus in the first eight chapters of Luke, one can begin to see that it completely disturbs the status quo of the sick, the Pharisaees, the Levites, the tax-collectors, and sinners. Their understanding of religious law, their relationships with one another, are turned upside down. The kingdom that is among them is Jesus himself. To separate the kingdom from the one who proclaims it is impossible.

Where does it take us? One of the contemporary problems is that the disciples who have followed in the footsteps of their predecessors are attempting to exorcise the demons of this world in every other name than in the name of the Lord. Radical understanding of the Christian faith requires that the name of the Lord not be amended by Marxism, psychoanalysis, capitalism, or any other hypothetical construct. The name of the Lord needs no second names, nor any propping up. One of the highlights to be featured in this sermon must be the meaning of “in your name, Lord.”

The theme of names continues to the comment of Jesus about their names being written in heaven. Names are crucial in our society. We look at the list of those who have endorsed a
particular position to see whose names are on it. There is little difficulty in getting people to donate money, sometimes huge sums of it, as long as there is a brass plaque with their names on it somewhere. A name chiseled in stone or a building with a name on it says that the donor has identified completely with this institution or cause.

We are careful who uses our names, which causes we give our names to, which positions our names support. "Rejoice that your names are enrolled in heaven." To be willing to place my name in identification with God's work of redemption, and to know that God claims my name, takes me to places I might never travel.

The final piece, which is not a part of the pericope but which is very important to it, is Jesus' statement: "'Blessed are the eyes which see what you see.'" Blessed are those who get it!

**SUNDAY, JULY 10, 1983**

*Exegesis of Luke 10:25-37*

Verse 26: Jesus directs this clever lawyer back to his own sources and forces upon him the judgment in answer of his own question. That a learned theologian should ask a layman about the way to eternal life was ridiculous.

Verse 27: The lawyer knows the answer. He dips back into familiar texts from the Scriptures of old and in particular Deut. 6:5, and Lev. 19:18. This formula is the consensus of the rabbis in the summation of the 613 commandments of the law, 365 of which are negative and 248 of which are positive.

Verse 28: Jesus approves the insight of the lawyer; however, the lawyer is not satisfied. For whatever reason, whether he disapproved of Jesus' attitude toward tax collectors or his words about foreigners, the outsiders, now he is going to ask, "'Who is my neighbor?'" It is a legitimate question. It was generally agreed the term *neighbor* connoted fellow countrymen and proselytes.

Verse 30: A man on his way from Jerusalem down to Jericho
hallowed resources

fell among robbers who striped him. This familiar story brings
to the hearer the question of what one does in the face of the
suffering and need that exists in the world. The priest and Levite
in the story, though they come upon the beaten, battered man
first, by their own religious tradition might be required to care
for the stranger, but they do not in fact stop. They leave the task
to someone else. In this case it is the Samaritan traveler who
does what is needed to bandage wounds and bathe him with oil
and wine.

Verses 36-37: Jesus again recognizes the lawyer is on top of
the issue when he gives the right answer. "Go and do as he
did" (NEB). This passage is consistent with Luke's basic
theological position that the gospel is for outsiders, and that
sometimes its demands are acted out by the least expected, in
this case the Samaritans. This truth illustrates the scandal of the
gospel that created so much difficulty for Jesus.

What story does Luke tell? This passage of Scripture gives us an
immediate clue to the story being told by Luke. Here is an
occasion to discredit Jesus by drawing him into a legalistic
argument. One of the major issues of the day was the question of
what one must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus constantly speaks
of life in the kingdom, of the age to come, of the reign of God,
and so it becomes a natural question to pose to him in particular.

If one takes the theme of the benefactor, we might seriously
suggest that the benefactor is like the Samaritan. The benefactor
is able to put together his words and deeds. This is a most
unusual twist to the story, for the audience would have expected
the third person coming along not to be a Samaritan but an
Israelite layman. A religious half-breed is not only the hero but
also a type of benefactor. He turns toward the very people who
are poor and despised, helpless and insignificant.

With the summation of the law coming from the lips of the
lawyer it is clear that Luke is telling us that Jesus was not the first
to combine the law into the Great Commandment. The
uniqueness of the gospel consists not in its ethical teaching as
such, but in the person of Jesus who gives new depth to that
teaching and in so doing transforms it. Love for God and the
definition of neighbor come to mean something quite different
after the life and death and Resurrection of Jesus from what they had meant in the Scriptures of old. How do we read it? We will read it in terms of the characters involved in the drama. Great hesitation should be exercised in immediately identifying with the Samaritan. The priest and the Levite are not looked upon as insensitive, calloused individuals. This is not an anticlerical story. The priest and the Levite might well have regarded the unconscious man as dead. Therefore they had a religious obligation not to touch him and defile themselves.

For whatever reasons—tradition, inculcation of habit, deep religious convictions—the Levite and priest are not able to see the activity of God they are to pursue when the need stares them directly in the face. We need to identify with these two before we jump to be with the “good guy.”

There are many reasons we have for behaving the way we do. The most impressive acts are those we claim to give religious significance. We not only have an inward peace about doing those things, but an accompanying glow in knowing that we are “right.” Propriety in religious matters ranks in the upper echelons of our spiritual hierarchies.

God’s “benefaction” goes beyond the boundaries placed by religious tradition or dogma. The religious persons in the story had every right to define neighbor in the narrowest possible way—as fellow countrymen, proselytes, and other “insiders.” Jesus clearly uses the outsider as an illustration of God’s activity. In doing this he was capturing part of the tradition they had lost. Israel was the outsider, but God called Israel God’s own people. Later it was Rahab the harlot to whom God’s grace came. Now it is the Samaritan.

What does it do to us? This is more than a call to develop paramedic skills. It is rather a continuing development of what it means to be a disciple and follower of the benefactor. The Samaritan-benefactor does what Jesus had done throughout the record of his earlier ministry. This is to say that even a Samaritan can be a benefactor when the need arises. Like the true benefactor, Samaritans are able to bring together their resources in the service of other human beings who are their neighbors.
"Neighbor" takes on a new meaning in the face of these Samaritan-benefactors. One can see their faces, their eyes filled with concern, their hands reaching for cloths for binding the man's wounds, oil and wine to cauterize and cleanse the lacerations. What this does to us is to play back the videotapes of our daily lives as we have looked into the faces of anonymous neighbors whose needs were as great as this one. The Samaritan-benefactor needs to be translated into the benefactor that each of us is to be.

Where does the story take us? This action which breaks old patterns of separation does not stop at the roadside. The Samaritan-benefactor takes the battered man to the nearby inn, where he reimburses the innkeeper for immediate care and promises to return to pay him more money if necessary.

This last action is an important one. The dynamic analogy to our own situations can be stated in many ways. One thinks of how we witnessed so emphatically and intensely against the Vietnam War. But what of the later events in which human carnage continued and the injustices were perpetuated? We left things at the roadside! The story must take us to the point of asking questions about our own spiritual formation. Will this story become so much a part of our own self-understanding that we will view the world differently? "Blessed are the eyes who see what you see."

It is interesting that Jesus encourages and affirms the response the lawyer gave to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" "The one who showed him kindness," he says (NEB). The text does not say the one who showed him love, or the one who gave compassion, but simply, "the one who showed him kindness."

There are those who in all sincerity desire to love God with their heart, soul, strength, and mind and their neighbors as themselves. But there are a number of inhibitions, some of them religious, some of them political, some of them ideological, that keep us from doing this completely.

Three questions might be raised from this story. What does loving God with our total being mean? What are the things that keep us from loving God with our total being? What answer do we give when Jesus says, "Go and do as the Samaritan did"?
Verse 39: Martha has a sister, Mary. They are as different as night and day. One might assume that Mary is the youngest because Martha appears to be responsible for the comfort of visitors and feels free to complain about Mary's lack of motivation in taking care of the duties that come to the host. Mary is not trying to get out of work, however, but "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." She is giving him her undivided attention.

Verse 40: Obviously Martha is upset by the fact that there are so many things to do, so many preparations to be made, and so few to help. No doubt there were more people to care for than Jesus. He had friends, at least twelve of them, who were no doubt going to be in and out. Once people heard that Jesus was in the vicinity there would be those who would visit out of curiosity. No wonder Martha is distracted!

Verse 41: "'Martha, Martha, you are fretting and fussing about so many things; but one thing is necessary'" (NEB). There are variant readings of this passage. Some witnesses read, "But few things are necessary," or "one alone." Others omit "you are fretting." What is clear is that Jesus is attempting to state in as hospitable terms as possible the reality of the situation. The twofold use of Martha's name suggests the warmth and personal concern he has for her. At the same time the address suggests that he really does want her attention.

Verse 42: Whether Jesus believes that following the simple life with its casual style is the thing to do, or whether he is making a claim for the spiritual above the material is not so easily determined. Might he be suggesting that there need not be so much food? If we continue to take seriously the themes with which we began we will tend to say no to each of these alternatives. The new life found in the kingdom, a life in which Jesus is present, is important. It is that claim against all other activity that is the most pressing. To sit at the feet of the Lord is to be attentive as a student. This story tells us that there is only one goal worth the effort and that is the one Mary has chosen to pursue.

Which story does Luke tell? This is not an easy story to interpret. Origen suggested that Martha was a kind of Jewish Christianity while Mary represented a type of Gentile Christianity. Or that
Martha depicts the practical way of life while Mary the contemplative. The simplest approach may be the best. Mary hears the issue and leaves it all, cancels all other obligations to follow Jesus. It is best to understand this story in light of the radicality of the call for those who put their hands to the plow and do not look back; those who leave the dead to bury their dead. If Luke told us in the previous pericope what must be done to put first things first, here he tells us what is to be first.

How do we hear it? Several catch phrases jump immediately to one’s consciousness and stimulate the creative juices. “Martha was distracted with much serving...” One could preach a whole sermon on the thousands of distractions we allow to become the substance of our lives. The more important things in life are left by the wayside. One thinks in the more mundane realm of writing a book, taking a trip, doing something one has considered to be extremely important but for some reason has never quite got to it. Too many distractions.

The radical claim in this passage is that everything is distracting but one. It is obvious that there is no way to make this an amendment to our present life-styles. This rather requires the kind of behavior exemplified in Mary. Martha is running all over the house, trying to get tea, making refreshments, attending to every detail so that everyone can be comfortable. There must be some virtue in that! Virtue yes, but Luke is speaking of priorities!

Martha does not quite understand what it means to have Jesus in her house. Martha is jealous, if not jealous then envious, if not envious then just plain angry. Mary is seated as if she too were a guest. But this is to misunderstand the whole scenario. For us that will be one of the major points of contact—that like Martha we tend to misread what is actually happening in front of our eyes.

What does this story do to us? This story forces us to do some serious self-examination not only of our personal lives but also of our life within the church. Martha was obviously distracted by her busyness and even had the audacity to complain to her guest that her sister was not helping out. This tape is replayed time and again. In the church it is the major complaint of those few who do everything. In the rooms of our own personal houses it
is the basis for the antagonisms we feel when we work hard to get our children through college, pay for the house, and hope to have some vacation time and one day be free again. It may be this isolation of effort that so many feel that contributes to the impulse to split—both from the church and from the home.

The implication is that Martha blames the Lord for this busyness because Mary is not helping. Why does not Jesus set the matter straight with Mary? He is able to make the blind see and the lame walk, and later he will raise their brother Lazarus. Why can he not get her sister to shape up, the way Martha would like to see her shaped up? Blaming the Lord for so much of the misery of our lives is not so remote from many within our congregations. "If it weren't for you," is a game played in the sanctuary and in the home. Why cannot the Lord shape people up in both places so that we can get the real work done?

There are constant tensions that prevail within the family of faith or the family at home when this attitude is present. In the church during the past twenty years great tensions have been experienced, many times to the demise of the Christian family. Factions emerge over issues that loom large on society's horizon. The church becomes polarized or factionalized so that the divisions and splintering tend to destroy the household. To take positions is important, especially those that are at the center of our survival and the survival of others.

There is, however, the attitude on the part of each group that it has been endowed with the correct perceptions of the way life really is when one is a committed Christian. Some will say we must not involve ourselves in the world's affairs and unless you believe as they do that you are a long way from the kingdom. Others hold the opposite view, that unless you are deeply involved in the struggles of the world you are simply imbibing in cheap grace.

Neither position can be held in Luke's perspective. It is the Lord who shapes us up. We live by faith in the Lord who brings the kingdom and whose life cannot be separated from the kingdom. Therefore the positions we hold, no matter how passionately, must always find us in the proper posture, which is sitting at the foot of our Lord.
One can make one's own application of this insight to the problems of the home and family. The conflict of values, the lack of centering of life, brings about its own fragmentation. Jesus' language is straightforward. Nothing matters except one thing. Fretting about too many things, overcrowding the agenda, is destructive. The personal relationship that Mary is developing with Jesus is the only one thing that matters and that part Mary has chosen instead.

*Where does this story take us?* There is a strong argument throughout this story for the necessity of centering one's life and the life of one's church community. There must be that center of one's existence around which other things may take place with meaning and purpose.

During the past five years we have seen numbers of young single adults returning to the church. One of the things that we have asked is, "Why are you coming to this church?" Their answers vary, but with one major theme running through them all. "We want our lives to be based somewhere . . . anchored . . . to be at home . . . to be centered . . . to be in community." It is clear that in contemporary culture we have an indeterminable number of things to do. Every advertisement suggests that we ought to participate in whatever is being promoted. Our consciousness is divided into thirty-second segments and with that division has gone the ability to possess a consciousness that has continuity to it. Our attention spans are narrower than ever.

Every self-help program promises more than it can produce. Yet we seldom ask the basic question of what all this activity means, where it is taking us, why we give our lives to it. This is another lesson in the school of discipleship—life must be centered. Not just anywhere, but in the one who can bring in the new life, the new world.

Though Christopher Lasch is no Christian apologist, his book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, is filled with contemporary examples of the depreciation of what it means to be human by the extravagant claim that the self can be central. One of the indictments he makes in it is that much of our religious practice is simply an extension of this basic fixation. This story takes us out of that world!
Verse 3: This is a literal petition that we be given each day that which is necessary for the sustenance of life. This portion includes enough bread for tomorrow. That bread which transcends our essential natural needs is included. Therefore we can speak of both the bread which we daily eat but also the heavenly spiritual, nonmaterial bread, the bread of life, and without stretching it too far, the Eucharist. The "us" reminds us that this is a corporate prayer not meant for the solitude of the individual but for the body of disciples, the nucleus of the future church. Luke's version of the prayer, much shorter than Matthew's, has five petitions, compared to Matthew's seven.

Verse 4a: "'And forgive us our sins, for we too forgive all who have done us wrong'" (NEB). Forgiveness is one of the first of God's gifts to those who follow Christ. It is the first act which the Christian gives to others. God's forgiveness becomes the ground on which each person receives it and shares it. This gift of God flows to us as we become lifelines of forgiveness to others.

Verse 4b: "'And do not bring us to the test'" (NEB). Some witnesses add, "but save us from the evil one." James tells us that God tempts no one (1:13-14).

Verse 5: One must be careful not to miss the humor in this introduction to the parable. Though journeys were made at night to avoid the heat one must not assume that this was an ordinary event.

Verses 7-8: A fuller translation would include something like this: "shameless persistence and insistence. . . ." The hero of the story will not take no for an answer.

Verses 9-10: "'Ask . . . seek . . . knock. . . .'" These are three metaphors for petitionary payers. There is no qualification or condition to this statement.

Verses 11-13: The ground for such confidence is drawn with the analogy of relationships within the Jewish family.

What story does Luke tell? We continue with the theme of the
benefactor whom God sent. Luke is telling us the story of community. Disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. Obviously they do not want John's disciples to have anything over them. This is a corporate understanding of prayer. Jesus is not teaching them individual spiritual disciplines but corporate discipline. They are to have no hesitation about speaking to God as Jesus did and to use the familiar address of Father. We are reminded that this expression of address is linked to Jesus' usage of the word Abba, which is a common expression in the family.

There may be some who might ask whether Luke's prayer or Matthew's is the original. Many scholars are inclined to the view that both versions come from Jesus. Both of them fall into recognizable, though different, meters used in Hebrew poetry. The petitions are not necessarily related in sequence to one another. Though the prayer may not be original with Jesus the meaning of Father, kingdom, temptation, and forgiveness have distinctively Christian content. By now Luke is focusing ever more sharply on the person of Jesus as the meaning of every particle of the story he is telling.

Following the Lord's Prayer with the parable of the importunate friend may be an expansion of "give us each day our bread." It takes seriously the community we have mentioned. Luke's point is simple. If a friend will not be roused because of the sheer need for bread in the middle of the night, that friend certainly will finally get up if you pound on the door long enough and are persistent. If that friend will eventually go against his own inclinations and oblige you, so much more will God your perfect friend be ready to supply all your needs. Jesus the benefactor provides that opening for humanity to be totally free before God. This is the ground for Jesus' confidence in the efficacy of prayer.

How do we read it? Jesus' assertion that prayer will be answered is unequivocal and without hesitation or qualification. The conversation of prayer is to be exactly that. One is able to determine one's desires only in the posture of petitionary prayer. This section continues to refer to the prayers of the earliest community. Prayer when offered in the name of Christ has the power to get a response from God. Could it be that God
condescends to wait upon the requests of those called by God's name before God's purposes are carried out? In prayer the church cooperates with God.

The radical "ask . . . seek . . . knock" trilogy is so often misinterpreted and misread to mean that we walk around severely disappointed if we have not got our wishes. Part of the conversation with God in prayer is to allow the deep within us to speak freely so that we can hear what is being said by those parts of us that remain quiet and sometimes hidden from our consciousness. Sometimes we are not wanting to ask for that which we hear ourselves request. The blatant narcissism of this conversation often becomes embarrassing. But that ought not to matter to those who take their discipleship seriously. Our most embarrassingly frank moments can be understood by this Father who listens to all kinds of stupidities. In this conversation we are able not only to communicate with God but to listen to the dialogue that takes place between our inner being and the benefactor we have come to know.

What does this story do to us? It is a story that many resist, or accept only if evangelicals or charismatics. The conversation suggested is too personal, and possibly too revealing, whether the suggestion is carried out by individuals or communities, because this is the kind of prayer that reveals the innermost secrets of those who compose the community and exposes the deep desires within the human heart. Protestant tradition has tended to be remote in its understanding of this story. Carefully we have skirted anything that touches upon mysticism, forgetting that there are great strains of Christian experience within the family tree to keep us ever mindful of the personal dimensions of the community's relationship to God.

In a highly intellectual and analytic atmosphere surrounding most academic settings this story will be hard to hear, let alone incorporate. The community has every reason to think itself to be mature and beyond the silliness illustrated in this story. The community has no reason, however, to think that it can ever deepen its own witness and be empowered in the manner of its Lord until it is baptized into this silliness.

Is God less benevolent than an earthly, good father? It is a ridiculous suggestion. God in the center of creation has placed
points of identification to which the one God sent can lift up for all to see. Blessed are you who see these things!

*Where does this story take us?* This story must take us beyond the usual speculations of whether Jesus really meant what he said, or if he really said what Luke says he said. The authority of this pericope rests with the writer. Many scholars today doubt that one can get behind the writer in any effective way. To seek the word behind the word is not our task. Rather we must ask ourselves whether we in fact are going to find in this pericope something we need in order to be disciples empowered in the manner of our Lord.

There is first the question of whether we will allow prayer to be practiced among us in such a way that it frees us to do the things Jesus did and more. Too long we have looked upon prayer as an escape from the world, the way an ostrich faces danger. There is no question that Jesus considered prayer to be central to his ability to carry on the work of the Father who sent him. At the most critical times in his ministry we find Jesus leaving the crowds and finding a place of solitude so that he might talk with God. He knew the importance of telling God his own desires: “Let this cup pass from me.” He also knew what it meant to surrender those desires in order to do that for which God sent him: “Not my will be done but yours.”

Again we must not jump to the conclusion that Jesus’ prayers were highly individual. In every report that we have of his prayers he has an audience. His prayers take on a corporate nature when we understand that his disciples were involved in his prayers even if they never uttered a word. They were to participate in the human struggle between one’s inner self, the community’s inner self, and the doing of the Father’s will. Even though they on occasion fell asleep while Jesus prayed, there is every indication that theirs was the responsibility and opportunity to become strengthened in and prepared for mission by praying with Jesus.

We might begin to recover the meaning of prayer by using the conversational mode as did Jesus. The prayers in the church might be less concerned with formal beauty and turned to the beauty of natural conversation. There is much to be said for
extemporaneous prayer within the community in contrast to the contrived prayers that so quickly hide the poverty of our spirits. Prayer groups within the congregation in which Jesus' model becomes the style is another way of letting this story take us somewhere. These then do not become simply another opportunity for the refinement of inherent narcissism but a way of allowing the Holy Spirit to open us to new realities in Christ.

SUNDAY, JULY 31, 1983

Verse 15: The obsession of any person for material acquisition can be so great as to blind people to all the other great concerns of life. Abundance of material goods is no measure of the worth of a person, nor is it in any way to suggest the achievement of human fulfillment. Against death and the issues of life thereafter, a person who has material wealth is as naked and defenseless as one who is poor. Greed continues to rank itself among the diseases of our times. Goodspeed translates this: "A man's life does not belong to him, no matter how rich he is."

Verse 16: Greed leads one simply to hoard increased wealth that comes from investments. This is the case with this rich man. He provides larger rooms for his possessions, stocks up for the future, and therefore assumes that his tomorrows are secured. He gives advice to himself. In the best of narcissistic pathology, he tells himself, "take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Verse 20: And so he goes to meet God in the unexpected event of death. Unexpected for him because he had no thought that death should be so close. But death is not unexpected when one scans the obituaries, which include both young and old alike. He has his money, how much of it does he leave? All of it! Who gets it? The important point is that he leaves it.

Verse 21: "That is how it is with the man who amasses wealth for himself and remains a pauper in the sight of God" (NEB). All that wealth of this kind can inspire is egoistic confidence. Jesus will put in stark contrast another kind of world. He admonishes his disciples not to worry about a thing.
Verse 23: Jesus is concerned that the disciples commit themselves to a life of faith and trust that the Father will provide for them as the Father has provided for him. Jesus' analogy and appeal is simple: He turns to the creatures around him, the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and suggests that with greater care God watches over the disciples. The providence of God which watches over the birds can be trusted to protect the disciple who at the call of God faces hunger and privation. There is no need to be anxious under such circumstances. Jesus humorously enlarges on the point: there is not a person who worries about height who is able to grow taller, so why should the disciples fret over how their bodies are cared for when they know the benefactor of the universe!

Verse 27b: Solomon is the most splendid figure found in the Scriptures of old. God can be trusted to look after all, even those who risk being reduced to rags in God's service. Questions of food and drink may concern pagans who do not know the heavenly Father, but for those who know him, such concern and suspense are needless. There is only one thing to do. "The knowledge that these things come from the father as his gifts to his children, that they come not capriciously but out of his perfect knowledge of man's needs and his perfect love for his children, this is the true antidote to anxiety and fear."17

Verse 31: When things are focused on the true center, well-being is the result. The reign of God, the objective end of God's redeeming purpose for humankind, is the one thing for which the disciples are called to live.

What story does Luke tell? This section of Luke gathers together some sayings of Jesus that serve as the basis for the ministry of the church. Here we have instruction for the leadership of the Gentile churches.18 This parable gives them guidance concerning unnecessary anxiety over the things that are to follow as they pursue the work of the kingdom. There is the call upon the church to allow God to do what is necessary in creating the conditions upon which they are to carry out their apostolic mission. It is not our part to do the work of the Creator. This point is driven home in Jesus' reference to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Anxiety is the result of attempting to do the work that only God can do.
Luke stresses that the church and the kingdom are not the same. The church is the place in which the reign of God becomes evident by God’s grace. It is the task of the church not to build the kingdom but to witness to the fact that it is coming and to receive it as it comes. When the church puts itself in the position of believing that it is to bring in the kingdom and that its task is to do God’s work in redeeming humankind as well as the work of creation, anxiety is the result. “Set your mind on the kingdom and all these other things will come.”

How do we read it? We are in a period in which there continue to be great stresses and strains upon our lives. The economic crisis, international political crises, moral crises—there is hardly a dimension of human existence that does not deserve the crisis description. Much of it has to do with what we expect to receive from life. “What are we going to get out of it?” is the primary question with which we put everything to the test. The security we seek through the complete control of our lives cannot provide the security we really need. After we have almost everything in place there remains the insecurity that can only be satisfied by being rich toward God.

In one way this story is a replication of Genesis 3, in which Adam and Ishah (also known as Eve), desire to possess the security that would make them independent of their daily talks with the God of the garden. There is within us a deep need for the security that only being rich toward God can bring and at the same time a propensity driving us in the other direction toward a self-assertiveness that breaks our ties with God as the meaningful other in our lives.

Seldom do we see anxiety in other than psychological categories. Here Luke offers us the opportunity to read it differently. Anxiety is a form of pride, a desire to do for oneself what can only be done by God in gracing us with God’s eternal presence. This is no theoretical construct for Jesus. It is the basis from which he continues to draw his daily life. It is precisely his immersion in God’s presence that takes away anxiety and at the same time allows him to face the realities of life, whatever the dramas that may come his way. There is an anxiety that nothing can cure except one’s stepping into the new life under the reign of God.
The dual reading of this passage moves us from individual to community. Churches that constantly protect themselves exhibit the same anxiety as individuals, except that such anxiety is reinforced by community. Not cultivated is the sense that the God who called us together to be the church is also the God who sustains us as the church, and who also calls us to the future reign of God. We must read this passage with a concern for individual and community spiritual formation if we are to be empowered with the qualities of the benefactor who calls the community together.

What does the story do to us? It challenges us to a new stance of faith. The story allows no opportunity to “have faith” or to “possess a great faith.” The verbs are not active. The activating of a relationship is demanded here. Older language would have called it “trusting in God beyond all else.” In dynamic conflict with that notion is our own trust in things. We are coming to the point in our culture in which we will be trusting the computer more than we will the judgment of humans. More and more the computer will control the activities of our minds and the way we will develop our life-style. The dehumanization process will continue unless there are some intentional exceptions. Trusting the machinery around us will make us more like the machine. What we trust is what we become like.

This story tells us that the riches of a person cannot bear the facing of life as we live it. There is no good reason under heaven why one should trust the produce of one’s efforts. It is all too fragile and temporary. This story invites us to take that step of trust which will enable us to live from the reality of God in our lives. This is a reality that is introduced to us by Jesus the benefactor, the one who brings together word and deed.

Our fears of not being accepted, our gnawing dissatisfaction with where our lives have led, our haunting conviction that there must be something more, all of these and any other feelings are both personal and corporate. We sense them about ourselves and we also can see them in terms of the church. The church has a life, has convictions, has dissatisfactions, too. This story tells us to be “rich towards God.” This admonition can only be regarded as a possibility if the kingdom of God is sought. And this does not mean packaging it in ideologies or personal
piety, but seeing the kingdom in terms of the benefactor whose ministry covers all the stages of human life.

Where does this story take us? Who knows? In a society such as ours in which one-third of the world uses two-thirds of the world's resources, dramatic changes are demanded. Each year the World Bank makes its report on the condition of the world. Each year the news continues to be depressing. Devastation of human life continues on a global scale, with few spots of hope in warding off the continual debilitation of human resources. The rich have built their storehouses not only of food dumped upon the Nebraska landscape but silos that house the powers of global annihilation. Luke's challenge remains dormant unless someone picks up the story.

NOTES

4. Danker, pp. 8-41.
5. Danker, p. 15.
7. Major, Manson, and Wright, p. 368.
12. Major, Manson, and Wright, p. 556.
13. Major, Manson, and Wright, p. 556.
14. Major, Manson, and Wright, p. 556.
15. Fuller, p. 59.
17. Major, Manson, and Wright, p. 405.
18. Fuller, p. 43.

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BOOK REVIEW

THEOLOGY AND PLURALISM

Review by Emery A. Percell


Is it possible to write a systematic theology that is both faithful to the gospel taught in Scripture and tradition, yet also faithful to the human situation that is thoroughly pluralistic in character? The question is not one of mere academic interest; it has importance for providing a theological foundation for the mission of the church in a world where political and cultural isolation are virtually impossible.

Words such as unique, absolute, once for all, are still used to describe the claim of the gospel in exclusive terms; terms that are christological for Protestants and ecclesiological for Catholics. Most of us feel the power of those words, for which scriptural warrants can clearly be made. Yet it is also clear to most of us that people in other religions do have authentic religious experience and traditions that are venerable. Langdon Gilkey has stated the dilemma of a thoughtful Christian well:

Surely, then, I must continue to affirm my own tradition and continue to stand there, if we are to speak meaningfully with one another; and yet at the same time I cannot, for the same reason, deny the truth and grace in his or her position. At that point, I am forced to try to understand theologically how to make sense of such a weird amalgam of an “absolute” position in my own “faith”—with an amalgam that characterizes both of us in dialogue.1

But can we engage in mission based upon the absolute position of the Christian church and still engage in authentic dialogue? It is a

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tough question that almost always leaves us on one side or the other. It is a painful problem in the church. On the one hand we have missionaries who have gone to foreign countries proclaiming that it is only the truth of Christ that frees and transforms human life. As a result national cultures have too often been destroyed. Inner city missions have, similarly, counted "decisions for Christ" without addressing the larger human problems. On the other hand, I think of the "fraternal worker" who went out to teach in a mission school; to do the work of Christ's teachings in deed, and upon retirement, went to worship in the Hindu center because "Hinduism recognizes that there is truth in every religion." I think of the conference benevolence programs that do not evaluate their work in terms of the gospel, but, utilizing the same rationale, have become little more than social welfare programs so as not to force our beliefs on anyone else. The saving word is kept silent, and the transforming power of the gospel is lost. Is it possible to write a systematic theology that can support a practical theology of mission where the authenticity of the gospel and the integrity of a pluralistic world are both honored?

David Tracy does not speak directly to the problem of "mission," but he does answer the question, as just phrased, affirmatively in his book The Analogical Imagination.

It is not easy to place Tracy in any continuum of theological positions addressing the problem. He does not seem close to the older liberal tradition of Ritschl and Harnack who, with a thoroughgoing relativism, looked for a synthesis solution. Yet Tracy's conclusion on "relative adequacy" does seem close to the conclusion reached by John Hick, who only recently wrote almost anachronistically that the process of salvation/liberation/human perfecting takes place with equal effectiveness in all religions. Tracy certainly, however, would not agree with Hick that none of the theistic arguments succeeds. The fervor of the evangelicals, such as Carl F. H. Henry and G. C. Berkouwer, is more than matched in Tracy's thorough insistence on the particularity of the transforming truth of Christ. Yet Tracy would not agree to the objective truth of the Scriptures that is addressed "to all humans of whatever diverse cultures" with Henry, or with Berkouwer in the expectation that the church will emerge triumphant in the risky dialogue with other religions.

Between those extremes in the theological continuum lie Johann Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg and the liberation theologies of praxis. Tracy is influenced by them and shares their conviction that truth must be, is by nature, transforming. Yet they are not much concerned about the problems of pluralism and insist on the
power of the Christ-event to transform all of human society. Metz differs greatly from Tracy when he writes: “Today theological pluralism too often expresses no more than a mindless capitulation to the sorry status of theology itself.”

Tracy is admittedly influenced by the process theology of the post-Barthian liberals: Gilkey, John Cobb, and Schubert Ogden. Cobb seems close to Tracy’s concept of the “classic” when he criticizes Metz for pulling back from sharing memories with other religions and lifts up the enriching memories of Marx, Gautama, Hillel, et al. Tracy, however, does not go as far as Cobb goes when he says that a Christian “overview” is both possible and necessary for providing a critique of all other systems of our world. Tracy is not sure, as Ogden is, that, as a cognitive claim, the truth of God in Christ is decisive and irreplaceable.

Since Tracy is a Catholic theologian, one might expect him to be influenced by Karl Rahner. He is also, colleague and personal friend of Hans Küng. He does not, however, share their concept of the church as a sacrament for the world, a pilgrim people that will lead the world to God by its sacrificial leadership beyond whatever contribution other religions may make.

What is more important than trying to place Tracy correctly in a survey of theological approaches to the problem of pluralism is to recognize that he approaches the problem from a different perspective. While all of those cited above, except for the liberation theologians, see the problem clearly as a rational dilemma, Tracy proposes a phenomenological approach where pluralism is an aspect of public discourse; and truth is not so much either correspondence or coherence but rather disclosure and transformation.

Tracy centers his argument around the phenomenon of “the classic,” a model that provides us with a solid contribution to theological scholarship. A classic is a text, work of art, symbol, event, person, etc., that mediates truth. Two characteristics of the classic are important in defining it: permanence and surplus of meaning. A classic endures and is recognized as a classic in generation after generation; a classic has meanings (truths in their normative mode) for a later generation, meanings that were not mediated to the earlier generations. A classic, then, never runs out of meanings. A religious classic is one that speaks to the human situation at the “limits” or boundaries of existence and conveys the truth of the whole: A Christian classic is one that conveys in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ the truth of the love of God. It speaks not to a limited “reservation of faith” but to the whole public of society as well.
To summarize Tracy's argument all too briefly: systematic theology is hermeneutic in character because its function is always to interpret the Christian classics for the contemporary world. The most important characteristic of the classic, for Tracy, is its radical particularity. He notes how each classic is unique, personal, and striking in its singularity. Yet all classics are public and speak with integrity in a pluralism that contributes to the development of new classics and fresh meaning.

The particularity of the classic, Tracy argues, rests upon the intense, absolute, and totally involved experience of its author with that which can be nothing else than the truth that discloses an objective reality of the whole and transforms his or her life. The particularity of the Christian classic rests upon the “intensification” experience where the truth of God in Christ is given immediately to the interpreter as gift in both manifestation and proclamation.

The classic, itself, however, Tracy argues, is only relatively adequate. There are two reasons for this. One is the dialectical nature of intensification. Each author comes to the moment of disclosure with particular, though socially structured, experience. The dialogue with truth is therefore necessarily individual. But more importantly, the classic is an expression in genre, form, structure, etc., that always and necessarily stands at some distance from the disclosure. The “distanciation” does more or less justice to the originary disclosure and is subject to certain criteria of adequacy, which Tracy proposes. No theology, however, not even the Scriptures, is fully adequate. Interpretation is always needed.

Implicit in the argument is a hierarchy of classics and a process of teleological development of human understanding. Tracy argues that the Scriptures, particularly, a “canon within the canon,” are the chief classics of Christian theology, but other classics from the Fathers down to Barth and Tillich are part of a continuous theological treasury. He welcomes the pluralistic world of our time because, in the wider marketplace of ideas and interpretations, the truth of God, the disclosure of the whole that is love, will become ever more available to transform human life and culture until all will be free. Pluralism is not only a given, Tracy argues, but is essential for the continued development of culture and meaning.

Each classic, particular in character, will make its contribution to human understanding through an analogical method of noting “similarities in differences.” Tracy is much concerned to avoid a synthesis type of method to meet the challenge of pluralism. The particularities of the classic can only contribute to human understand-
ing if the integrity of the differences is respected. The analogical imagination is a teleological vision of genuine pluralism that unites unique and particular individuals in transformation toward the proper and desired end of what it means to be human.

I have hesitated to put this summary of Tracy's argument down because it cannot do justice to the imaginative and provocative argument in *The Analogical Imagination*. If it piques the reader's interest so that he or she dives into the book to understand what "the classic" is all about, my purpose will be served. The argument is complicated, but Tracy is a clear and forceful writer; even poetic at times. The reader with some background in Hans Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur will find it easier going; but the book abounds with ideas and perceptive insights that will fuel the sermonic engine for weeks. The book is a solid piece of scholarship; but it is also a treasure for thoughtful preachers. Perhaps one quotation concerning proclamation and narrative as New Testament genres will illustrate my point:

> We need proclamation to hurl at us, often "like a stone," an unsettling, provocative word of address that upsets, shakes, questions us, which both judges and heals by its stark disclosure that the event occurs now. We need the narratives to shape the what as the story of this Jesus proclaimed as the event-ful that, Jesus Christ, in a manner faithful to our own experience of the story-like character of life itself, with its tensions and surprises, its shocks and achievements, its disclosures of authentic and inauthentic life (307).

In his argument, Tracy insists on both the particularity of the transforming truth of God in Christ and also the necessity of pluralism in the human quest. Does this provide a systematic theological foundation for the mission of the church? In my opinion, it does not. There are three problems.

First, "particularity," though intense, is an individual experience; it does not imply an absolute or universal truth. Truth itself may well be universal and absolute. The intensive experience of disclosure, however, can only infer that and is itself limited to the individual entering into the intensification. The disclosure of the truth in Christ is absolute for the Christian individual, but becomes only a claim for truth in the public forum. It is basically a problem of authority.

Tracy does insist on the necessity of intersubjective tests of relative adequacy, but that can only apply to the interpretation, not to the gift of truth itself. Such is beyond critique. The problem is not Tracy's alone. Gadamer has the same problem in what he sees as the charismatic character of Being carried by the text. The truth, for
Gadamer, finally, can be truth only to the one to whom it is disclosed. The concept of the classic is a concept of authority. It stands in an authoritative tradition. However, Tracy makes it clear that he thinks the classic has authority only because of the gift of truth it mediates. Its authority is self-legitimating and so charismatic. The classic, even Scripture, has authority only if it is recognized as such by the individual interpreter. The fact that a classic might be widely recognized as such may do much to recommend it, but whatever traditional authority it may have acquired, it is still dependent upon the charismatic authority of the gift itself.

Tracy does emphasize the social nature of human experience and knowledge in that the first “moment” of intensification is the socially defined and acculturated interpreter who enters into dialogue with the classic. A social theory of truth and authority might help, but the treatment of intensification would surely be changed and the particularity of the classic would lose its force. Tracy’s own definition of truth is more personal than social; more of beauty than of knowledge; more essential than functional.

The problem of the mission of the church, then, is that the scriptural insistence on the absolute and universal character of the gospel has no authority. Does the Christian classic not mediate a truth that Christ is the way, the truth and the life if it mediates any truth at all? Well, perhaps those passages of an exclusive and universal gospel are not accepted in Tracy’s “canon within a canon,” but they should be dealt with. The particularity at this point appears arbitrary to me and should not be.

There is a second problem in Tracy’s christology. Christ is specified as the primary “classic event” for Christian systematic theology; the focal analogue which is re-presented for and interpreted by every Christian. In the hermeneutic process, however, the Christ-event is treated as the content of the truth disclosed. I think it cannot be both. Tracy says that the Christ-event is the only “fully adequate” classic. How does he determine that?

The primary difficulty is in naming Christ as classic event. By definition, the classic is the expression of an originary truth, not the truth itself disclosed. Between the disclosure of truth and its expression, there is necessarily a distanciation. What happens to the orthodox understanding of Christ if there is any distanciation between two persons of the Trinity? What sort and degree of distanciation is involved in the Christ-event? Tracy does not make the mistake of separating the natures. He always holds the whole Christ-event in Jesus of Nazareth together. But the problem is there.
I am not sure that Tracy needs to name the Christ-event a classic. It sounds good, but his analysis of the classic is primarily an analysis of texts. Some of the same methods may undoubtedly be used on works of art and even symbols. But classic events and classic persons need, I think, a different treatment. I am not convinced by the argument from Christ as "classic event." It seems to me that he can name Christ as the gift once given and the present giver in the disclosure of truth and strengthen the argument.

Finally, the analogical method itself is problematic. In any method of comparison, the difficulty turns around criteria of adequacy. Tracy suggests that there are criteria to judge the classic character of any interpretation. But there are also criteria to judge between classics—literary criteria of interpretation, coherence, existential meaningfulness, etc. Finally, for Tracy, however, the test is functional: whether the classic in question has had transformative effect in human history, for the gift of the truth of Christ will be transformative. The functional criterion he takes is freedom as defined largely in the theologies of praxis.

In using an analogical method, however, a theologian, like any other thinking person, must recognize other than Christian classics as also meeting the functional test. There is no way that Christianity can be anything but a mediator of transforming truth.

Tracy implies as much when he shares his vision that salvation will depend upon our understanding each other:

The actuality of variety and the demand for authentic particularity unite as the environment of all. An analogical imagination may yet free us to a communal conversation on behalf of the kairos of this our day—the communal and historical struggle for the emergence of a humanity both finally global and ultimately humane (453).

It is a noble vision, and the analogical method may enable us to use our particularities to build an ultimate humanity; but that is not necessarily Christian. The "kingdom of God" is not just a particular understanding of an ultimate humanity, at least in the scriptural sense. With his argument based on "the classic," Tracy does avoid the reductive uniformity that plagued the earlier liberals who attempted a pluralistic theology. But the analogical method, even when used with imagination, will prefer the commonality and use the differences to enrich that commonality. I seriously doubt that one can do serious and groundbreaking theological work using primarily the analogical method.

Tracy's arguments are both fuller and more complex on these issues
than I have been able to indicate here. The power of his own experience of the truth of Christ comes to us vividly. The problems of the classic and the analogical imagination deserve full discussion, but they do not, at this point, provide a solid, systematic foundation for a practical theology of mission.

NOTES

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