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# New Theology Review

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# Introduction

The minister in a post-conciliar Church is seen less exclusively as the one who brings God and more as one who helps discern God already present. How to discern God's presence in a Church and world which is increasingly pluralistic? The statistics may startle us. In the next few decades our nation and Church will continue to be challenged by increasing numbers of "minorities" in our society. By the year 2020, the so-called "new ethnics" will make up the majority of Catholics in the United States. By the year 2056, the "average" U.S. resident will trace his or her heritage to somewhere other than Europe. It will be a different nation and a different Church.

We have asked authors and keen observers of our pluralistic society to contribute to this issue of *New Theology Review* in order to shed light on the new contexts of our ministry. Robert Schreiter, C.PP.S., the founding editor of this journal, who teaches at the Catholic Theological Union and has lectured and written extensively on this topic, leads us wisely through the conflicts and opportunities of ministry in a multicultural world and calls us to create "linked communities." Peter C. Phan, a native of Vietnam and theology professor at The Catholic University of America, presents a paradigm for helping others encounter God in the particular cultures of today's "second wave" of immigration. It is a paradigm that helps spiritual directors to become intercultural bridge-builders. Terrence Merrigan, born in Canada and now professor at The Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, focuses our attention on Catholic theological education in a pluralistic context. He argues not for ideological pluralism which seeks to make the many into one but epistemic pluralism which promotes open-ended dialogue where respect is given to being a very particular one among the many. In our fourth essay addressing the theme of ministry amidst diversity, Stephen Dudek, a presbyter of the Diocese of Grand Rapids, Michigan, shares his experience and vision of replacing a church building destroyed by fire, which is the home of English-, Spanish-, and Vietnamese-speaking people.

Donald Buggert, O.Carm., professor of systematic theology at Washington Theological Union, explores how we are to understand the claim that God is our Father. His essay nicely situates that claim within the evolution of Jewish and Christian faith. Also included in this volume are our regular columns and a number of book reviews. We hope you will find in the following pages new insights and strategies for ministry in a rapidly changing world.

*Robert Schreiter, C.PP.S.*

# Just What Do We Want? Ministry in a Multicultural World

## SETTING GOALS FOR MINISTRY IN A MULTICULTURAL SETTING

Nearly everyone in ministry these days is aware of the complex tapestry of cultures that forms the backdrop to how we operate in our parishes, schools, and agencies. A multicultural setting is not something new in the Catholic Church; that has been the story of the American Church since the 1830s. However that first wave of European migration declined to a trickle in the 1920s, and for about fifty years we experienced the Church as consolidating its position in American society.

In the last third of the century, however, immigration has picked up once again. This time the new immigration comes principally from Latin America and from Asia and the Pacific. The immigration from Latin America and from the Caribbean has been particularly large, so much so that the United States is now the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. This population influx is about 80 percent Catholic. The Asian immigration is smaller but culturally even more complex. Percentages of Christians among the Asian immigrants tend to be higher in the United States than in their home countries (except for the Philippines).

In the first wave of immigration from 1830 to 1920, national parishes were the pastoral answer. These parishes catered to specific language and cultural groups, often providing not only pastoral service, but a wide range of other services as well. The national parish is not a favored solution today, for a number of different reasons. Immigrant populations often do not live in close proximity of one another and, when they do, are likely to move out of entry neighborhoods as their economic status improves. The attachment to a national parish can be profound, and when there no longer is a need for them, they are notoriously difficult to close down.

The path for ministry which is being chosen, whether consciously or not, is toward a single parish ministering to more than one cultural group. This presents a different challenge for those in ministry. At the diocesan level, where one finds offices for ethnic ministries, the challenge is to form policies and provide services which will help those in ministry be more effective.

It is not possible to give an overview here of the background or to trace the dynamics of ministry in a multicultural setting (see Schreiter 1992 and 1999). Rather, I would like to focus on an area which is frequently overlooked: just what do we really want? What are we trying to achieve? Can we set goals for this kind of ministry, even progressive goals which lead us into an ever more effective ministry in multicultural settings?

I would like to focus on what is often the implicit goal of ministry in these settings and then move on to a set of three progressive goals that can help shape a direction in our ministry in parishes, schools, and agencies, as well as provide the beginnings for policy formation at the diocesan level. The implicit goal is reducing conflict. The three progressive goals are: recognition of the other, respect for cultural difference, and healthy interaction between cultures. Let us look at each of these in turn.

## REDUCING CONFLICT

The implicit goal for most people engaging in ministry in these settings for the first time is to reduce conflict. The conflict can be on two levels. It may be, and often is, between two or more groups who experience tension in their relations with one another. The tension may show itself in resolutely avoiding one another, competition between groups for space and other resources, or outright conflict. The minister views this as a setting in which conflict has to be mediated so that people involved can "get along" or, even better, "fit in."

But there is another level of conflict: conflict within ministers themselves. Most feel uncomfortable and confused about what to do. They would rather the problem go away or that some solution present itself.

Conflict between groups is real, and often very hard to reduce. Sometimes it needs to be addressed immediately and with clear measures, especially if the conflict becomes violent, either verbally or even physically. But such conflict cannot be treated merely as a problem to be solved. It is about relationships that have to be formed, and building relationships takes time, patience, and a view of where we hope to end up.

Important to addressing this level of conflict is dealing with the other level—the conflict ministers feel within themselves. That begins by understanding that ministers, too, belong to cultures. Most people are not really aware of their cultures until they are confronted with cultural difference. The first reaction is usually that cultural difference is merely deviance from their own way of thinking and living. This reaction forms the response to cultural conflict that others ought to "fit in," that is, fit in to the minister's culture.

Oddly, it is more difficult to analyze one's own culture than someone else's. But without understanding one's own culture as one culture among many—however powerful and dominant it may be—one has little chance of interacting with others. One of the reasons why this is important is that one needs to feel secure in one's own cultural identity in order to deal effectively and healthily with other cultures.

One very useful guide to understanding the white, majority culture of the United States is Edward Stewart and Milton Bennett's *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1991). Written originally for foreign student advisors on college campuses to help orient students to American life, it bears reading as a kind of mirror which majority culture people can hold up to themselves in order to see how they appear to others. I have found that sometimes majority people react negatively to some of the depictions, but that only provides an opportunity to reflect upon how they in fact do appear to other people. It is a helpful tool for anyone wanting to become more effective in ministry in multicultural settings. It can sharpen awareness, and for non-majority cultures, it helps explain the powerful culture with which they must deal. It helps people realize that cultural difference is not simply deviation from their norm, but is a manifestation of a more complex interaction.

## RECOGNITION OF THE OTHER

How do we enter into that complex interaction? It begins by *recognition of the other*. In most multicultural settings, the first reaction is to try to avoid or ignore difference. This takes two forms. It sometimes takes the form of ignoring the presences of another group by rendering them invisible. In parishes we do this by assigning worship times for such groups at times when the church building is not otherwise occupied. Or we consign them to a space which is not central to worship, such as the parish hall or the school. Their language and music does not figure into the regular liturgical celebrations, and their food never appears in parish social events. Their special days are not acknowledged in the cycle of celebrations in the parish, and images special to them are not present in the church. At best, these groups are tolerated; at worst, they are ignored.

The other reaction is to cover over difference with a rhetoric of "we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Difference doesn't make any difference in our parish." It is of course true that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and are meant to live in unity and harmony. But the use of this rhetoric is frequently a way of ignoring the realities and the tensions that intercultural interaction often brings. In the pluralist situation which many cultures together brings, the only way to unity is through acknowledging the Church's catholicity—the many tribes and

tongues, peoples and nations which constitute the Church. This is important because, despite efforts to ignore cultural difference, it is the difference to which we are continually drawn in interaction. Difference in accent, clothing, and social patterns are too salient to be ignored. Sometimes that difference leads to stereotyping and prejudice, making generalizations about others. Sometimes it leads to outright hostility.

How does recognition happen? It begins with welcoming the other. Welcoming the other is an acknowledgment of their presence. That welcome is manifested in how we show hospitality. And it must be a hospitality that the other group can understand.

Majority culture Americans consider themselves to be a friendly, hospitable people. And that they indeed usually are. But to people from other cultures, the perception is more complex. While these Americans appear to be friendly and hospitable, the hospitality is superficial. This hospitality is like other features of American culture: business-like and goal-driven, likely to be turned off as quickly as it had been turned on. Hospitality does not form a relationship, but is a function of attaining some result. The hospitality that majority culture Americans offer must be intelligible to the other; it must be hospitality as they understand it. Thus, a cheery "Good Morning!" from the greeters at the church door does not reach very far. Ministers need to inquire into the cultural patterns of the people they hope to reach.

Recognition, then, is about relationships and building relationships. Respect for cultural difference, the next goal, builds upon recognition. This recognition, made concrete through hospitality, is ultimately a commitment to begin the journey toward a long-lasting relationship. That journey will be replete with side-tracks and may find itself in a rut from time to time or mired down in some problem along the way. But it is an ongoing commitment to learn, to understand, and to appreciate the other. It seems to me that, at this first stage, this is the meaning of being brothers and sisters in Christ.

## RESPECT FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

If recognition of the other is the beginning of the journey toward intercultural relationship, respect for cultural difference is a description of that journey underway. Tolerance may mean putting up quietly with difference, perhaps with the silent hope that eventually it will go away. Respect, however, means coming to the point that one values the difference in its own right, that it adds to the richness of our relationship and to the richness of the world. It means coming to see the cultural difference of the other not as a deviation from some norm, or a failure to reach a certain level, but rather as having intrinsic value.

The etymology of the word "respect" is to look or regard again. What marks growing respect is the continuing interaction between

ourselves and the other, an acknowledgment that what is "other" about the other is not going to go away. It implies also that this interaction with the other may lead to our changing how we think and act.

Milton Bennett (1993) has provided a useful model of this path toward this kind of respect, what he calls intercultural sensitivity. He sees people as developing from ethnocentrism—seeing one's own cultural as the center (and sole legitimate form) of all things, to ethnorelativism, where one respects and celebrates difference. (Ethnopluralism may be a more appropriate term for what he calls "ethnorelativism.") Overcoming ethnocentrism is the equivalent of the recognition of the other just described. In Bennett's scheme, the move out of ethnocentrism has three stages. The first stage is a *denial of difference,* in which one tries to ignore the other. The second is *defense against difference,* in which one reacts with stereotyping the other or in other acts of prejudice. The third is a *minimization of difference,* where one appeals to common humanity as transcending all difference; "it only matters that we are all one in Christ."

The move into ethnopluralism has three stages as well. The first stage is *acceptance of difference,* wherein one comes to accept that cultural difference will not be going away, and that one must find other ways to deal with it than denial, defense, or minimization. This is, if you will, the commitment to begin the journey of intercultural relationship. The second stage is *adaptation to difference,* in which one begins to change as a result of the interaction in intercultural relationship. This leads to the final stage of *integration of difference,* in which those interactions now constitute an irreplaceable part of one's own self: one would lose a sense of one's own identity if that cultural difference were to be taken away.

Bennett's way of describing the move from avoidance of the other to deep respect for difference can be used as a map to chart progress along this journey of intercultural interaction.

If the language of recognition of the other is informed by hospitality, the language of respect for cultural difference is suffused with the notion of the gift. One hears it frequently in ministry settings: the gift of other cultures or the gifts that cultures offer one another. It is a language in church use which goes back at last to St. Paul and his talk about the differing gifts of the community at Corinth.

As with hospitality, the language of gift carries cultural significance as well. If this language is employed in moving cultural groups to greater respect for cultural difference, one must be aware of the cultural meanings that the notion of gift can carry. In majority American culture, "gift" can mean something nice and appreciated, but it can also mean something somewhat superfluous to daily life. It can mean a luxury item which adds to the quality of life but is not essential to it. If re-

spect for cultural difference means the acceptance of gifts, gift will have to mean more than that.

In many cultures, giving and receiving gifts is about relationships. The gift is a symbol of the reciprocity that exists between two parties. Receiving a gift means giving a gift in return, and so on and on. In fact, there are cultures where receiving a gift requires giving a greater gift in return, and so gifts can even be dreaded. In the old Germanic languages, *gift* meant both gift and poison (see Gittins, 1989).

Respect for difference, then, entails engagement. It requires an interaction and growing relationship that do not brush difference aside, but engage it directly and frequently.

## HEALTHY INTERACTION

The third goal is healthy interaction between cultures. The word *healthy* is important here, since much of the interaction between cultures is often very unhealthy. It may be marked, on the one hand, by stereotyping, prejudice, unwarranted suspicion, racism, and even overt verbal and physical violence. On the other hand, it may be characterized by a stifling romanticism which glorifies difference as a lost ideal of one's own culture or a childlike stage which will eventually move up to one's own cultural level.

Healthy interaction is based, first, upon confidence about the value of one's own culture, and a sense of security that is not threatened by an encounter with difference. Its hallmark is a willingness to be changed by the other, to incorporate aspects of that otherness into one's own world in such a way that one is truly changed. The presence of that difference in one's world is not some antibody dwelling as a foreign substance within oneself, but something which is truly part of oneself—part of one's own identity.

Second, healthy interaction means that two cultural groups interact so well that they can point to each other's shortcomings. This is a very advanced stage of healthy interaction, since we all know how difficult that can be even among persons who share the same culture.

More common is a less healthy interaction between groups. There is a tendency to attribute failure or wrongdoing within one's own group to external factors that had an unfortunate effect upon behavior (such as "the devil made me do it"). The tendency to blame outside cultures for things that go wrong is especially strong in collective-minded cultures where any internal fault threatens group cohesion and identity.

On the other hand, if failure or wrongdoing happens in the other group, one's own group is likely to attribute that to the active will of the other group. The failure or wrongdoing happened because someone in that group wanted it to happen. As one can see, people tend to

be most generous in the interpretation of fault in their own group, and least generous with the faults of other groups.

Healthy interaction is a form of communion in which neither group loses its own identity, but has taken to itself elements of the other group. There is a sense of trust, that is, a security in one's own self and a vulnerability and generosity toward the other.

## IMPLICATIONS

The three goals sketched out here represent a progressive development of intercultural relationship, from an initial acknowledgment of other groups and a beginning commitment to journey along together, to sustained healthy interaction. What are some of the concrete implications connected with such a set of goals?

First, the tidiness of a scheme of progressive goals has to deal with the messiness of reality. Different cultural groups in the same parish or diocese do not fall quickly or easily into this pattern. Before beginning, it is important to see the obstacles to intercultural communication that a group might present. An obvious one is language. If people do not feel at ease communicating in another language (and that "another language" is likely to be English), then it is hard to get much going. For first generation arrivals, religious practice may be the major link to the lands they left behind, and it may be the only place in their week where they can be themselves, so to speak. Moreover, groups are not uniform internally. Second-generation members of a group may feel more at home with this kind of cultural interaction than their parents. They are usually comfortable speaking English as well as their first language, and they have grown up in constant interaction in school and the workplace. Their problems may be more of inhabiting a space between two cultures than reaching out to another culture.

Many parishes with multiple cultures really function as separate, parallel communities of the various groups. They are parallel in the sense that they rarely meet. For reasons of identity formation that can at times be necessary. What parish leaders need to work toward is at least to have *linked communities,* where certain events and functions coincide, in order to lead to greater interaction.

Second, a way of getting started toward greater interaction is to provide intercultural communication training for parish, school, and diocesan leadership. Majority culture people can feel their need for such training, but they often assume that non-majority leaders know all about intercultural communication already. This assumption is based on the fact that those people from other cultures have learned how to interact with the majority culture, or they exhibit significant ways of doing things different from the majority culture yet are able to maintain contact. To be sure, non-majority cultural people learn to in-

teract with the dominant culture, but may not know how to name those forms of communication, nor how to pass them on to other members of their group. It is a situation similar to that of thirty years ago, when pastoral counseling began to be taught in Catholic seminaries. Many parish clergy felt they needed to take courses in this area. What they often discovered in the courses was that they already knew and practiced a lot of counseling, but they now felt more confident about what they were doing because they could name it. We are at something of the same point today with intercultural communication.

Leaders in cultural groups are key to interpreting intercultural interaction to their own groups and between groups. That is why it is extremely important that they be involved in training programs.

Second, if there is a bottom line to many cultures in the one Church, it is about belonging and building relationships. We must welcome others so that they sense that they are more than guests who are expected to be quiet and to leave at the designated time. We must respect their difference as a positive value and interact with them so that they are fully engaged. Belonging is a fundamental human need, perhaps second only to survival itself. We are by nature social beings. Being made to feel not to belong by racism, fear of the stranger, prejudice, suspicion, or simple ignorance strikes at the core of who we are. To belong is to experience security and trust.

For that reason, any plan to enhance intercultural communication must begin with a commitment to build and sustain relationships. Majority culture Americans tend to be very goal-oriented. They like to reduce a challenge to a problem which can be solved. Intercultural communication is not something we achieve once and for all, and then move on to something else. Collective-minded cultures have a stronger sense of relationship as an end in itself than do individualist cultures, which tend to be more utilitarian in their relationships, seeing relationships as a means to an end. This must be kept in mind as programs are developed to enhance intercultural communication. Partnering among groups is not a short-term relationship to reach a goal, only then to be abandoned.

Third, intercultural cultural communication is about more than principles of communication and the exercise of them. It has to be imbedded in concrete cultures, specifically in three elements of cultures: language, customs, and material aspects of the culture. This is important not only in cultural interaction but also in the public spaces and spheres of a parish or diocese.

Language is central to cultural identity, and is crucial for the first generation to arrive in making the adjustment to a new culture. Even the second generation, which may be bilingual or even prefer English, attachment to the language may linger in hymns and certain prayers.

While no multicultural parish can hope to learn all the languages involved, their symbolic presence in public events is important as recognition.

Customs (special holidays, special events connected with the life cycle, special practices connected with common feasts such as Christmas and Easter) will often last longer than language use. Engaging in certain practices together creates solidarity in a group and indicates belonging. Incorporating customs of a group into parish life and urging all cultural groups in a parish to participate is an important kind of community builder. As was noted above, different cultural groups frequently operate as parallel communities in parishes. When that is the case, building bridges by participating in one another's customs is a way of building understanding and interaction.

Finally, there are the material aspects of a culture. Modes of dress, and especially food are the principal forms of material aspects. Certain images of Mary and the saints also figure into this as well. The presence of these in parish events is another form of recognition.

Fourth, at the diocesan level, policies and goals must be articulated. These policies must of course be commensurate with the cultural composition of the diocese and the human and financial resources which can be brought to the needs. Many diocesan offices are devoted especially to providing basic pastoral services, engaging in social work among cultural groups, and sometimes providing advocacy for them. These are all necessary functions. Along with these important functions, there needs to be an emphasis on education which will equip both majority and non-majority groups to have better intercultural communication, as has been already mentioned. To that might be added a common spirituality that can bridge the various cultural communities.

Many parish communities have found such spiritualities. Three biblical starting points most commonly called upon are Pentecost, the body of Christ, and the multitudes in the book of Revelation. Each has its particular strengths.

Key for most groups in the Pentecost image is all groups peacefully together hearing God's Word in their own language. The weakness is that they might not understand each other. The body of Christ image has the strength of being organic and not downplaying difference. But as Paul shows already in First Corinthians, it can be a hard metaphor to sustain. The multitudes of the book of Revelation have the advantage of having come through a great tribulation—which is often what the experience of a multicultural parish can be! Its weakness may be a kind of triumphalism that papers over lingering division.

However the case may be, images must be found to spark the spiritual imagination if we are to be faithful and effective in ministry to

many cultures. We need those bold biblical visions to challenge us to serve a Church so varied and so rich.

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*If cultural pluralism will be the issue on the main stage of the world for the next half-century, it will also be affecting every world organization, the Catholic Church included. . . . We as Church will have to face up to a future that is marked by cultural pluralism.*

—Archbishop Rembert Weakland

*Peter C. Phan*

# Spiritual Direction in a Multicultural Church Helping Others Encounter God in Their Own Cultures

In recent years a significant demographic shift has been predicted for the North American Catholic Church, especially in the United States of America. Jesuit Hispanic theologian Alan Figueroa Deck refers to it as the "Second Wave," that is, the emergence, within the first decades of the next century, of minority groups, in particular African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian, not only in the American population at large, but also within the Roman Catholic Church, among the laity as well as among candidates to the priesthood and religious life (Deck, 1989).

## DEMOGRAPHIC REVOLUTION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

According to *Newsweek* (July 12, 1999), the percentage of U.S. total population in 2005 will be: 71 percent White, 13 percent Hispanic, 12 percent African-American, and 4 percent Asian. In 2050 it is projected to be: 53 percent White, 25 percent Hispanic, 14 percent African-American, and 8 percent Asian. Among the ethnic groups, by 2005 Hispanics will be the largest. Again, according to *Newsweek,* the Latino population has grown 38 percent since 1990—to 31 million—while the overall population has grown just 9 percent. This dramatic demographic shift will of course have enormous repercussions on American political and economic life in which these so-called minority groups constitute a potent force as voters and consumers. Its effects on the American Catholic Church will be no less far-reaching since the overwhelming majority of the Hispanic and Asian population will be Catholic.

Signs of this demographic revolution occurred in 1992 when salsa outsold ketchup, but they are also plainly visible in any large metropolis such as Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Miami where all kinds of foreign languages are spoken, ethnic eateries abound, shops with non-English signs proliferate, clubs play unfamiliar music and dance, and people of color raise questions about race, ethnic identity, and culture. The Church, too, experiences this ethnic and cultural diversity in its midst and attempts to meet its challenges. An increasing number of

parishes are making efforts to respond to the needs of their members of diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, seminaries such as St. John's in Camarillo, California and Notre Dame in New Orleans; religious societies such as the Society of the Divine Word and Maryknoll; and theological schools such as Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, all have benefited from a noticeable upsurge in minority seminarians and students.

Needless to say, this demographic change presents serious challenges to American society and the American Catholic Church. There is the question of whether the United States, which as a country constantly redefines itself, will remain truly one nation with English as its "official" language and the Euro-American culture as normative for all its citizens. For the Catholic Church, the issue is whether its catholicity will be capacious enough to incorporate into its life the manifold and bewildering faith expressions of the new ethnic groups.

As for the newly-arrived Catholics themselves, the challenges confronting them are in part not different from those confronting the Catholic immigrants of the "First Wave" such as the Irish, Italians, Germans, and Eastern Europeans. Like them, the immigrants of the "Second Wave" have to cross the socio-economic and political divide separating them from the mainstream of the United States. On the other hand, unlike them, these recent, at times undocumented, immigrants, who are mostly poor and ecclesiastically powerless, have to overcome the gap within the Church itself which marginalizes them from the power centers now occupied predominantly by "First Wave" Catholics.

But this demographic shift presents the Church not only with challenges but with opportunities as well. The newcomers—Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Nicaraguans, and other Central and South Americans, Haitians, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Thai, Hmong, Filipinos, and others—bring with them rich cultural as well as religious traditions and increase substantially the number of church members (and not least, ministerial vocations) with which the American Catholic Church can be renewed and strengthened.

## CHALLENGES FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Spiritual directors, whether in official or private capacity, are of course not immune from these challenges and opportunities. Mostly Caucasian and trained in western methods of counseling and spiritual direction, they (still predominantly male) may at times feel confused and even overwhelmed by the cultural and religious diversities of their minority directees. These may be foreigners who came to the United States as refugees or students, most often with a limited knowledge of

English (hence, unable to express their ideas and feelings adequately) and unfamiliar with American ways of life. Or they may be natives such as African Americans and Mexican Americans but have grown up in cultures and religious traditions different from those of the directors.

Not infrequently these differences have caused mutual misunderstanding and hampered effective communication between directors and directees. Examples abound: For many North American spiritual directors, Asians seem to be unduly reticent in discussing sexual matters where frankness and openness are expected. They also tend to be excessively obsequious to authority figures, including spiritual directors. They would acquiesce to commands and requests, even when these exceed their capabilities, for fear of offending or disappointing their superiors. Moreover, their saying yes to questions does not always indicate agreement or acceptance, and their smiles are at times quite enigmatic. In moral matters, they tend to be more concerned with issues of individual ethics than with those of social ethics.

On the other hand, African Americans tend to privilege community ethics over individual ethics. Furthermore, they generally avoid discussing family matters with outsiders. In their mode of knowing they tend to be gestalt learners, deriving conclusions from relationships and emotional involvement rather than from logical analysis of abstract thought. Often they also subject their white spiritual directors to a series of tests to ascertain whether they are racially prejudiced. Hispanics tend to favor what has been called *religiosidad* or *catolicismo popular,* especially devotion to our Lady, over liturgical worship and biblical reading. They also tend to have an inordinately flexible concept of time that can be infuriating to those accustomed to strict punctuality and deadline.

These observations culled from conversations with spiritual directors (and many others could be added) are of course little more than stereotypical generalizations. Unfortunately, to the extent that they are true, they can impair or even block a fruitful relationship between the spiritual director and his or her directee.

In general, then, the new multicultural situation of the Church poses fresh challenges to spiritual direction. For spiritual directors in seminaries in particular, their tasks seem to be made more complex by the fact that they have to deal not only with the specific issues of spiritual direction in a cross-cultural context (which can be formidable in themselves) but also with the more complex problem of inculturation of minority seminarians. Indeed, for most of these (especially those coming directly from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa) entrance into the seminary is often their first significant encounter with a foreign culture. They have to adjust to a new language, food, climate, academic standards, seminary regulations, modes of thinking and feeling, ways of relating to others, and even religious practices.

Often immigrant seminarians do not know the local presbyterate from whom they would receive psychological and moral support, and they tend to be lumped with the priests and parishes of their own ethnic background and thus may be marginalized from the mainstream of the diocese. Difficulties in adjusting to any of these aspects of life are bound to affect the seminarian's spirituality, and of course spiritual directors cannot afford ignoring them.

## THE TWOFOLD TASK OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

The task of spiritual direction, as I understand it, is essentially twofold: First, spiritual directors seek to promote the directee's *experience of God* by helping him or her (1) discover and attend to God's self-communication not only in official and public channels (e.g., the Word of God or liturgical and sacramental celebrations) but also in myriad unexpected and less obvious ways (especially private prayers and personal circumstances of life); (2) respond in faith, hope and love to this personal and intimate self-disclosure of God; and (3) live out the ethical and spiritual implications of this relationship with God in daily life. Of course, the God under consideration is not a God of deism or even theism but the divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit. With each of these divine persons the directee enters into a specifically different relationship, that is, as son or daughter of the Father, in brotherhood or sisterhood with the Son, and by the personal power and grace of the Spirit (Barry and Connolly, 1982; Barry, 1992).

The second task of spiritual direction is to assist the directee to *discern* within his or her experiences, extraordinary as well as ordinary, what is of God and what is not of God. In other words, there is a need of testing the God experiences (discernment of spirits). With reference to their own cultures which serve as the necessary contexts of their experiences of God, directees should be urged to examine which aspects of their cultures promote and which aspects hinder a genuine relationship with God.

In what follows I will offer some general reflections on how these two tasks of spiritual direction, with particular reference to seminarians, can be carried out in the new situation of multiculturalism.

## EXPERIENCES OF GOD IN DIFFERENT CULTURAL CONTEXTS

### *Psychological and Spiritual Dimensions of Conversion Experiences*

Since many seminarians trace their vocations to a religious or "conversion" experience, spiritual directors would do well to help them understand not only the psychological and spiritual dimensions but also the cultural conditioning of this life-transforming event. As is well known, central to this experience are the person's images and concepts of God which are sensitive indicators of his or her psychological devel-

opment, personal maturity, and psychosocial well-being. These images and concepts are often very complex, combining features of a "benevolent deity" (e.g., God as wise, powerful, and righteous) with those of a "companionable deity" (e.g., God as loving, faithful, merciful, and warm) and those of a "stern deity" (e.g., God as remote, impersonal, punitive, and threatening (Spilka, 1990).

Cognitive as well as psychoanalytic psychologies have shown that these images may be the result of a long process of development from undifferentiated and concrete expressions to differentiated and abstract concepts (Jean Piaget, 1958) and even projections of a fatherly figure from the need for security (Sigmund Freud, 1961). It has also been shown that there is a correlation between the God images a person has and his or her psychosocial well-being. Images of God as loving and supportive seem to enhance self-esteem and foster the search for truth and the use of religion as a guide for everyday living (Spilka, Addison, and Rosensohn, 1975). On the other hand, images of God as controlling and vindictive are often associated with low self-esteem, poor personality integration, and misuse of religion for self-aggrandizement (Benson and Spilka, 1973). Furthermore, ethnic prejudice has also been shown to be associated with images of God as impersonal, distant, and uninvolved in human affairs. The image of God does not serve as a model or guide for one's attitudes and behaviors, nor is there any question of personal accountability (Spilka and Reynolds, 1975). Finally, distorted and negative God concepts have generally been observed among the severely emotionally disturbed (Lowe and Braten, 1966).

### *Cultural Conditioning of Religious Experiences: Modernity and Post-Modernity*

Given the importance of the psychological roots of the images of God, spiritual directors would be well advised to urge the seminarians to examine them. However, images of God are conditioned not only by the seminarians' more or less private psychological experiences but also by the wider, but no less influential, context of their cultures. The cultural factors of the seminarians' experiences of God should be attended to as well, and this imperative is all the more urgent when the cultural context of the director is quite different from that of the directee.

By culture here is meant a set of assumptions of a group or society, passed on from generation to generation, often unconsciously assimilated, determining a way of life shared by the members of the group or society. These assumptions embody meanings and beliefs, ethical norms for behavior, and customs and traditions and express themselves in institutions and systems as well as in symbolic forms of the most varied kind. They serve as the source of identity and solidarity for the group or society (Luzbetak, 1988; Kraft, 1996).

With regard to North American spiritual directors, it is safe to say that culturally they have been conditioned to a large extent by the assumptions of modernity and what has been termed post-modernity. As has often been noted, modernity is characterized by liberal individualism. This individualism has three forms: political (one person, one vote), economic (the free enterprise system), and religious (the Church as a private free association), and has produced what Robert Bellah calls a "socially unsituated self." As a result of this individualism, there are three dichotomies. First, between individual and *community:* to achieve self-identity the person must at some point set himself or herself up apart if not against the family and group in a "post-conventional, autonomous, or principled level" (Lawrence Kohlberg, 1968). Second, between community and *institution:* the community is sentimentally conceived as warm and nurturing in opposition to the cold and alienating institution rather than as constitutive of the institution. Third, between institution and *tradition:* the institution is seen only in its here-and-now existence, severed from its past tradition which is regarded as oppressive and limiting (Goizueta, 1995: 53–65).

In sum, modernity tends to put a premium on individual dignity, personal rights, autonomy of conscience, and creative freedom. Buoyed by scientific, economic, and political successes, this modern anthropology promotes human control over nature and history, distrusts all forms of authority, be it secular or sacred, and reduces ethical values and religion to the sphere of merely subjective and private choice. Since modernity arose in the West and achieved its most spectacular successes in Europe and North America, it tends to regard its "Eurocentric" culture as the norm and other cultures as underdeveloped, inferior, or savage. North American spiritual directors, despite their best efforts, cannot, for good or ill, fully escape the influence of modernity in which they have been reared and professionally trained.

Since the first decades of the twentieth century, however, certain ideals of modernity have come under fierce attack. After the two World Wars and with the threat of nuclear annihilation and ecological destruction, the naïve and almost blind trust in science and progress, in untrammeled and universal reason, in natural human goodness has been shattered. We are now disenchanted with the disenchantment of the Enlightenment and are said to be living in post-modernity. Though sometimes interpreted as a right-wing rejection of the Enlightenment, post-modernity is in fact an application of the modern project of ideological critique to modernity itself. In this sense it is not the end of modernity but the self-critical transformation of modernity itself. As a result, over against the claims of pure objectivity and absolute truth by universal reason, there is a preference for "weak thought" and epistemological relativity. Instead of "logocentric" metaphysics and "totalizing"

meta-narratives about the meaning of history, people of today are content with fragmentary and partial stories and autobiographies; instead of the universal and common human nature, there is only the socially situated self; instead of affirming absolute values and moral norms, there is a retreat to socially constructed rules and personal tastes and preferences; and instead of discoursing on the presence of God, there is an insistence on God's absence (Gallagher, 1998: 87–100).

North American spiritual directors too cannot fully escape this postmodern cultural *Zeitgeist,* however much they may try. Instead of ignoring modernity and its dialectical prolongation in postmodernity in blissful and pious innocence, it is best that they explicitly and consciously acknowledge the profound and pervasive influence of these ideologies not only in the secular world but in the Church as well. Furthermore, spiritual directors should be aware that their own professional training in counseling and spiritual direction may have been undergirded by tacit modern and postmodern presuppositions and that they themselves may be operating out of philosophical and theological assumptions inspired by modernity and postmodernity.

*Spiritual Direction in a Multicultural Context*

Spiritual directors should realize that it is into this modern and postmodern culture of the West that minority seminarians will be willy-nilly inculturated. This awareness is all the more necessary since the cultures of minority seminarians, despite the process of globalization, especially through the media of communication and the dominant capitalist system, have remained in most cases premodern rather than modern and postmodern.

It is in the context of both the Western culture of modernity and postmodernity *and* their own cultures that ethnic seminarians will undergo their God experiences. And it is the task of spiritual directors to help them negotiate this double baptism in these two cultural rivers. It is essential that there be a twofold immersion into not one or the other culture but into *both,* because the Spirit of God as grace and communion is present in both, because there are good and holy (as well as bad and demonic) things in both, and because otherwise ethnic seminarians would fail in their providential mission of being the bridge-builders for people of different cultures, of being in-between cultures, of being the hyphenated persons for the universal Church (Lee, 1995: 29–53).

It is this *bicultural and pluricultural* approach to spiritual direction that is called for today in the emerging multicultural Church. This approach profoundly respects the *otherness* of cultures, learning to know them as much as possible, evaluating them in their own terms, recognizing their values and beauty, discerning their weaknesses and sinfulness, resisting the tendency to regard one's own culture as the best and

the norm for all others as well as to consider the unfamiliar as a threat or inferior, and bringing all the good things of cultures together into mutual fertilization and enrichment (Rakoczy, 1992; Phan, 1994: 195–211).

Through this pluricultural approach of spiritual direction, ethnic seminarians will be able to learn that it is possible to encounter God in the cultures of modernity and postmodernity which perhaps they are tempted to demonize because they appear threatening to their premodern one. From modernity they can learn that each individual is not just a member of the human species but is unique in his or her own dignity and inalienable worth, with freedom, with rights and responsibilities. From modernity they learn too that the struggle for freedom against oppressive power, be it secular or sacred, is a noble duty and that science and technology can be harnessed for the well-being of humanity. And, of course, from the Christian perspective, it is clear that God can be and is encountered in all of these features of modernity.

Even the deconstructionist mood of postmodernity itself, with its suspicion against totalitarian claims, can be an invitation to maintain a healthy distance between faith and manipulative power systems, including the ecclesiastical one. Its silence about God and its emphasis on God's absence may be a necessary protest against the idols of theism (an ally of modernity); a rejection of rationalistically packaged, often deistic, conceptions of the deity; a veiled quest for the divine Mystery; and a yearning for analogical language, akin to negative theology, about the divine. And even though some forms of postmodern spirituality seem to be narcissistic and superficial (e.g., the New Age movement), there is in our time a nostalgic return to religious experience (which modernity despises as illusionary and alienating) and an unquenchable thirst for the non-measurable, the non-controllable, the transcendent. Once again, spiritual directors in tune with these admittedly ambiguous trends of postmodern culture will be able to take advantage of them to promote the God experiences in their directees (Graham, 1996).

*Familiarity with How God Is Encountered in Different Cultures*

On the other hand, minority seminarians develop their images and concepts of God from their specific ethnic contexts. It is of course impossible to discuss here how each ethnic culture conditions experiences of God and shapes them into a particular and specific configuration. Furthermore, even if it were possible to identify all these specific features, still a careful account must be taken of each individual's unique spiritual history that disallows the possibility of any two identical spiritual experiences. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary that spiritual directors acquire some familiarity, both through formal studies and personal exposure, with the distinct ways in which experiences of God

occur in the three groups—African-American, Hispanic, and Asian—that make up the majority of ethnic seminarians in the United States.

Performing this task successfully is a tall order for most Caucasian spiritual directors. It would require of them a new sensitivity and even a new spirituality. At the very least, they must abandon the deeply entrenched notion that Western culture is superior and normative for all others. In general, they must mightily resist the sevenfold temptation, in the words of Robert Schreiter, to demonize, romanticize, colonize, generalize, trivialize, homogenize, and vaporize the "other" (Schreiter, 1992: 52–53). More positively, they must learn as much as they can how African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians, in their own distinct ways, relate to the transcendent, view the world, understand themselves, organize their families and societies, and appreciate what is true, good, and beautiful. In this way, they will acquire some acquaintance with their world views, their philosophies, their folktales, their feasts and celebrations, their customs, their arts, their foods, their social structures, their moral values, and their religions.

Thanks to a knowledge of all these elements of their cultures, spiritual directors can understand how their directees encounter God in their cultures. In the light of this understanding they will then help their directees discover and attend to God's self-bestowal in myriad unexpected and unobstrusive ways, respond in faith, hope, and love to this personal and intimate self-disclosure of God, and live out the ethical and spiritual implications of this relationship with God in their daily lives.

But even to speak of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians as general racial or ethnic categories is unacceptably generic and vague. Little by little spiritual directors will learn to distinguish between and among different groups of African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians with their own distinctive sub-cultures, noting their subtle similarities and differences. Finally, they learn to see each directee as an individual, neither as divorced from the cultural context to which he or she inevitably belongs (for without this background we would not be able to see him or her *as* an individual), nor simply as an instance of his or her ethnic group (otherwise we would miss his or her indelible and marvelous uniqueness).

## DISCERNING GOD'S PRESENCE IN CULTURES

So far we have discussed the first task of spiritual direction, namely, promoting the directees' experience of God in their cultural worlds. There remains a second task, that of assisting the directees to discern within their experiences, extraordinary as well as ordinary, what is of God and what is not. To approach spiritual direction in an intercultural and pluricultural way does not by any means lead us to the morass of

epistemological and moral relativism, preventing us from making a judgment either on the cultures of the minority directees or on the behaviors of the directee himself or herself. Nor does the act of moral judgment necessarily connote intolerance, intellectual narrowness, and cultural imperialism. Here the second task of spiritual direction, i.e., discernment of spirits, is of paramount importance. Spiritual directors should help their minority directees evaluate not only the modern and post-modern culture of the West but also their own.

*Faith and Culture*

The fundamental issue to be considered here is the relationship between Christian faith and cultures. From the Christian perspective, based on the mysteries of creation, the incarnation of the Logos, Jesus' death and resurrection, and the Pentecost, this relationship, and hence the process of spiritual direction in a multicultural context, can be characterized neither by outright hostility toward culture (the conservative tendency) nor by a wholesale acceptance of culture (the liberal tendency)—not outright hostility, because culture is the creation of the human spirit under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, and not total acceptance, because culture, as any human work, is marred by sin and therefore needs redemption.

The attitude of spiritual directors as well as of their directees toward all cultures must therefore be one of critical discernment. As we have seen above, spiritual directors must help their directees encounter God in the expression of their cultures. On the other hand, they must also raise the possibility that the directees' cultures may contain aspects that are contrary to the gospel and therefore can block their spiritual growth. To help their directees recognize these, spiritual directors can ask them to find answers to the following questions. These are by no means intended to be exhaustive; they simply indicate some of the areas in which culture and the Gospel may come into conflict in the cultures of the three major ethnic groups.

HEURISTIC QUESTIONS

*i. Questions regarding the authentic witness to the Gospel within each culture:*

* Which demands of the message of Jesus seem to be strangest and hardest in terms of your culture?
* In which ways can the experience of racism (African Americans), *rechazo* [rejection] and *mestizo* [mixed race] (Mexican Americans), Communist oppression (Asians) be overcome by the Christian practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? Are there ways in which these historical experiences can be used as excuses for unacceptable behaviors?

* Are there any aspects of your culture that call for change and even rejection in order for you to be faithful to the Gospel? In which ways can the emphasis on kinship ties (African Americans), on the community (Hispanics), on the honor of the family (Asians) jeopardize the rights and responsibility of the individual?
* Are there any practices, e.g., in sexual and family ethics that are condoned by your culture (e.g., polygamy and premarital sex) and yet are contrary to church teaching?
* Does your culture so focus on the well-being of the individual and the family (Asians) that it neglects issues of social justice?
* Does the emphasis on the necessity of harmony, especially within the family (Asians) lead to ethical compromises?
* In general, can you identify life-denying aspects of your culture?

*ii. Questions regarding the structural aspects of culture:*

* Is your culture so dominated by patriarchialism (Asians), by *machismo* (Hispanics) that the rights of women are jeopardized?
* Does your culture so prize economic success (Asians) that it considers poverty as shame and failure? In your culture and society, are the poor systematically excluded from full participation in the community (Hispanics)?
* Are there social and political structures in your culture and society that favor one race over another?
* In what ways can you be counter-cultural in your society by a preferential option for the poor and the oppressed?

*iii. Questions regarding the relationship between culture and church life:*

* Does the emphasis on *catolicismo popular* (popular devotions) and *religión casera* ("homespun religion"), combined with a certain form of anticlericalism (Hispanics) detract from the Church's liturgical and sacramental life?
* How can certain spiritual practices derived from other religious traditions, e.g., worship of ancestors (Asians) be harmonized with the Christian faith?
* How inclusive is your culture with regard to people of other cultural traditions? In what ways can your culture reach across cultural differences and in this way contribute to the catholicity of the Church?
* Are there any aspects of your culture (e.g., religious classics, philosophical ideas, moral practices) that prevent you from arriving at an authentic understanding and practice of the Christian faith?

Are there any customs and popular feasts that are contrary to Christian faith, sacramental celebrations, and moral life?

## SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS AS INTERCULTURAL BRIDGE-BUILDERS

The negative tone of these questions is not meant to suggest that cultures should be approached with suspicion in spiritual direction. On the contrary, the two tasks of spiritual direction in a multicultural context—helping directees encounter God in their cultures and discern what is of God and what is not—are mutually complementary and should be carried out simultaneously. Both are necessary and neither can be neglected in Christian spiritual direction.

As members of a society and a Church that are becoming increasingly multicultural and as professionals whose mission is to promote personal and prayerful encounters with God in others, spiritual directors can no longer afford to be monocultural persons. Their challenge is to become intercultural bridge-builders. Like their ethnic directees, they live in-between cultures. With this threatening and yet enriching experience, they can in their spiritual direction contribute to the formation of a new person for a new age: culturally sensitive to the wide variety of world views and practices, able to discern what is good and demonic in them, committed to the promotion of equality and justice, attuned to the hidden presence of God in all cultural expressions, and working creatively, humbly, wisely to help others achieve the same psychological and spiritual dispositions. What David W. Augsburger has said of the cross-cultural pastoral counselor can be applied to the spiritual director as well: "a seeker of this God who loves the world, is at work and at love through out all the cultures of the world, and who prizes all of creation, creatures, and their re-creation" (Augsburger, 1993: 142).

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*Terrence Merrigan*

# *E pluribus unum?* Catholic Theological Education in a Pluralistic Context

The starting point for these reflections is a study which was undertaken, in the United States, nearly twenty-five years ago. The study was dedicated to the consideration of "ecclesiastically independent theological education," that is to say, theological education which is developed independently of any "denominational label." The institutions under consideration were Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley), Harvard Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary, University of Chicago Divinity School, University of Notre Dame Department of Theology, Vanderbilt Divinity School (Nashville, Tennessee), and Yale Divinity School (Lindbeck, 1976). It seems to me that Lindbeck's analysis of the situation in which these institutions found themselves nearly a quarter of a century ago, and his proposals for dealing with that situation, are remarkably relevant to the situation in which Catholic theological institutions find themselves today.

Moreover, the apparent discrepancy between manifestly Catholic theological institutions and those centers which are "ecclesiastically independent" is only skin-deep. In the first place, the schools targeted by Lindbeck are not ecclesiastically independent in the sense that they have no denominational links. All of them are possessed of a recognizable theological (and denominational) pedigree which has shaped their programs of studies. Second, the idea of "ecclesiastically independent theological education" is, in any case, not completely foreign to Catholic theological institutions, certainly not if those institutions are located in university settings (Catholic or otherwise). It is clear, for example, that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is convinced that some theologians and some theological institutions are rather too independent of the Church.

In what follows, I would like to reflect on Lindbeck's analysis of the American theological scene twenty-five years ago and to inquire whether there might be lessons for today. This reflection will proceed in two steps, each of which is divided into two sub-sections. In a first step, I shall (1) examine Lindbeck's analysis of the challenges facing theological education twenty-five years ago, and (2) ask whether there are parallels with our own situation. In a second step, I shall (1) examine Lindbeck's proposals for meeting those challenges and (2) ask whether

those proposals are relevant to us today. By way of conclusion, I would like to reflect briefly on what I call the paradoxical repercussions of pluralism and how we might live—and even thrive—in the midst of them.

## THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT THEN (1976) AND NOW (2000)

### *The North-American Context Then (1976)*

Lindbeck explains that by "theological education," he means "the academically and intellectually responsible transmission and development of particular religious heritages" (Lindbeck, 1976: 2, 78, 80). Elsewhere—and in anticipation of his most important work, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Lindbeck, 1984)—Lindbeck explains that a religious heritage is best understood on the analogy of a language, namely, "a vocabulary and grammar of symbols and patterns of thought, feeling and behavior which groups and individuals use to map the cosmos, to locate themselves in reference to the ultimate issues of life, death and meaning" (Lindbeck, 1976: 76, 1, 4, 15, 64, 66–67). In other words, a theological education aims to introduce students into a comprehensive tradition of interpretation, and one which is avowedly *particularistic* in character. The "particularism" of a theological education is its most salient feature, its raison d'etre. However, in a pluralistic context, it is also its Achilles' heel, the greatest threat to its survival.

Writing in 1976, Lindbeck identified two major shifts which were affecting the traditional role of theological institutions. The first of these concerned the *public* addressed by such institutions; the second concerned the *content of the programs* on offer.

With respect to the *public,* Lindbeck observed, first, that the traditional link with the churches was in decline. Theological institutions were no longer as important to the churches as direct suppliers of ministers, teachers, and scholarship. At the same time, a new public was beginning to appear, namely, students who were drawn to the study of theology "not because they are seriously thinking of the ministry or teaching religion, nor even because religion is personally important to them, but simply because they find it interesting." Many of these, Lindbeck noted, "are attracted by non-Western religions," and many "do not use their theological education as laymen [and women] in the churches." Indeed, "for a fair number," the study of theology "represents the last serious involvement with organized religion" (Lindbeck, 1976: 32, 56, 61).

It was inevitable that the decline of the relationship with the churches, and the emergence of a new public, with less-focused interests, would have an impact on the *programs* on offer. Lindbeck highlights above all the tremendous expansion of religious studies components in what

had once been clearly-defined theological programs. Lindbeck perceptively observes that the shift to more religious studies "need not be curricular. It can occur through a change in research interests, mood and milieu. And the milieu, needless to say, is altered when professional ministerial (M.Div.) education weakens or disappears in the university centers" (Lindbeck, 1976: 10, 38, 41).

Religious studies can be either particularistic or generic in character, Lindbeck notes. In the first case, one makes use of the descriptive and explanatory approach which is typical of religious studies to acquire competence in one particular tradition. In the second case, one employs the same approach but now with a view to identifying features common to many traditions. Lindbeck observed that the second, generic approach was expanding most rapidly in North-American institutions (Lindbeck, 1976: 38–39, 17, 28–29, 33, 35, 36, 38, 41, 93 n. 20, 94 n. 22). This expansion was making itself felt especially in the proliferation of elective courses, a tendency which was contributing to the notion of theological education as "broad, fluid and ambiguous." Indeed, Lindbeck declares that "the shift in balance from theological to religious studies constitutes the greatest structural alteration in the place of religion in American higher education in the last 150 years, that is, since the beginning of distinct divinity schools in the first decades of the 19th century" (Lindbeck, 1976: 5, 35–36).

The upshot of these two shifts, i.e., with respect to the public and the programs of theological institutions, can be summarized as follows:

> Proportionately less of the work of the university center is directed toward the churches and more toward the academy. . . . The divinity schools are becoming more like departments in faculties of arts and science (or like miniature general education faculties) (Lindbeck, 1976: 13).

On the credit side, this has led to theological institutions being "better integrated into the university," an increase in their academic status, and a greater feeling of belonging among students and faculty. On the debit side, however, "the gap between [theological institutions] and the churches has widened," and their contribution to the life of the churches has become less obvious (Lindbeck, 1976: 13).

*The North-American Context Now (2000)*

A study of Catholic theological education which appeared in 1997 would seem to indicate a remarkable parallel between the situation described by Lindbeck in 1976, and the situation in which Catholic theological institutions find themselves today (Carey & Muller, 1997). Among the challenges facing the latter, the contributors to the study highlight

the following: the growing laicization of theology; the tendency to approach theology from an ecumenical—and inter-religious—perspective; the emergence of a student body which is socially diverse and often religiously illiterate, as well as being intellectually unprepared for theological studies; the emergence of curricula which are highly specialized and characterized by "an unintegrated elective system;" and the eruption of "highly controversial and public institutional disputes over academic freedom," which have "brought to the fore the issues of ecclesial communion, ecclesial authority, and a legitimate freedom for theological research and reflection" (Hellwig, 1997: 73–74; Wister, 1997: 161–63; Schuth, 1997: 169–71).

There is, in other words, a striking isomorphism between the situation described by Lindbeck in 1976, and the situation described by Carey and Muller in 1997. Is it possible that Lindbeck's response to the situation then, is also relevant to the situation now? This is the subject of the next section.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE THEN (1976) AND NOW (2000)

### *Meeting the Challenge Then (1976)*

Lindbeck's response to the challenge confronting theological education in 1976 was to appeal for a greater commitment to scholarliness, particularism, and pluralism (Lindbeck, 1976: 53, 57). In his words:

> . . . The work of theological scholarship . . . should be unashamedly academic, unmistakably particularistic and, in this post-Protestant and increasingly post-Christian era of American religious history, genuinely pluralistic whenever this is feasible (Lindbeck, 1976: 18–19).

One of the great merits of Lindbeck's study is his willingness to put flesh on the bones of this paradoxical appeal. Let us look briefly at his discussion of each element.

By *scholarliness,* Lindbeck means that theological education should be "academic, not occupational." That is to say, unless an institution is dedicated specifically to ministerial formation, its main focus should be the promotion of intellectual competence, and scholarship in the field of religion. Those institutions which are able to do so "should capitalize on the strengths provided by their university connections." The object of scholarliness is to enable students "to think theologically" just as training in mathematics enables them "to think mathematically." Lindbeck provides a detailed discussion of the way in which a scholarly theological program ought to be organized. The stage of initiation is one in which the student is "basically receptive," and the range of electives is limited. The object is to acquire basic skills, which will enable

students to proceed to the second stage in which they can opt to pursue either research or more practice-oriented undertakings (e.g., the ministry). In both cases, Lindbeck insists, "scholarly aptitudes and interests" are indispensable (Lindbeck, 1976: 14, 64).

Scholarship and *particularism* are not mutually exclusive, Lindbeck insists. The advocacy of a particular tradition of thought need not mean the loss of intellectual respectability and academic credibility. There is no inherent contradiction in defending a particular vision of (religious) truth in a pluralistic setting. What counts is the ability to argue one's case convincingly, in line with scholarly conventions. Of course, this does not mean that theology's place in the academy will be undisputed. If it is to be faithful to its own identity, Lindbeck argues, theology must be prepared for "collisions with what the world or the academy consider reasonable and proper." The only other option is capitulation to shifting (and possibly destructive) cultural norms (Lindbeck, 1976: 66, 80).

A far greater threat to particularity, Lindbeck felt, was the tendency to replace specifically theological studies with the generic brand of religious studies discussed above. This movement was prompted by two factors in particular, namely, student interest and the concern for institutional survival. In an effort to ensure continued funding and support, Lindbeck observed, theological institutions "have been tempted to become all things to all people, simultaneously advertising academic quality, practical training, personal religious searching and self-fulfillment, revolutionary potential, conservative value, ecumenical outreach and cultural breadth. . . . As long as students, faculty and money keep coming in, it is perhaps impossible to recognize the threats this poses to educational quality and coherence" (Lindbeck, 1976: 5).

Ultimately, the loss of particularism is detrimental even to the broader study of religion. Evidence seems to indicate that students who are unfamiliar with any particular religious tradition are less capable of serious engagement with religious issues in general. "There is often a peculiar abstractness, a failure of feeling and of interest in the concrete realities to which . . . scholarly studies refer" (Lindbeck, 1976: 60).

In an ideal world, institutions would be able to provide both a thorough grounding in particular traditions and a truly interdisciplinary program of religious studies. But this world is not for tomorrow and, in the meantime, choices must be made. As Lindbeck rather bluntly puts it: "If a given institution does not have the resources to mount distinct generic and particularistic programs, then it should decide which it shall be." Lindbeck warns that the movement from the particularistic to the generic may ultimately be self-defeating, in an age which shows signs of disillusionment with "the homelessness of mass society and reflects a longing for historic roots and communal tradition." Moreover

—and this is especially relevant to Catholic institutions—the price of the abandonment of particularism may well be increased polarization. As Lindbeck explains:

> The consequence for American religion of the weakening of particularism in theological education is likely to be increased polarization. To the degree that [institutions] fail to transmit intellectually responsible versions of the historic traditions, "fundamentalist" reactions can be expected to gain ground among [those] interested in maintaining their religious identities. Church members would view the [institutions] as subversive and would either withdraw support or strive to reassert ecclesiastical control and to interfere with scholarship. . . . Thus the long-standing anti-intellectualism of much American religion and ministerial training would be reinforced. Ultimately, all that would be left would be fundamentalisms of various kinds and new forms of religious consciousness (some of which are fundamentalist in temper . . .) (Lindbeck, 1976: 4, 11, 41, 53, 60).

In brief, the temptation to "widen or alter the concept of theological education," should be carefully scrutinized, and short-term goals should not be uncritically pursued (Lindbeck, 1976: 5).

Lindbeck is insistent that particularism need not give rise to parochialism, as long as it is balanced by a healthy dose of *pluralism*. In the light of what has been said already, it is clear that Lindbeck does not understand "pluralism" to mean a grounding in generic religious studies. He means, instead, that theological education should promote knowledge and awareness of all those religious movements which have achieved "significant institutional presence in the American mainstream" (Lindbeck, 1976: 67, 15). Such knowledge and awareness can be promoted by developing optional programs which provide an initiation into those (other) traditions which are relevant in a given context. Here, too, choices will have to be made in view of local needs, and the availability of funding and expertise. Lindbeck is well aware of the practical difficulties involved in combining particularism with pluralism, but he insists that the ideal, at least, ought never be lost sight of (Lindbeck, 1976: 57–58, 67–75, 106 n. 75).

Lindbeck's threefold appeal was inspired by a concern to preserve and promote the distinctive character of theological scholarship in a manifestly pluralistic culture. It seems to me that both his concern and his proposals are still relevant. Let us reflect briefly on this suggestion.

*Meeting the Challenge Now (2000)*

In discussing the nature of the challenges facing Catholic theological institutions today, I drew upon the work of Carey and Muller. I would like to do so again in reflecting on possible responses to those chal-

lenges. Here, too, the parallels with Lindbeck's study are striking. In the concluding essay of the 1997 study, Earl Muller addressed the points which had been raised by contributors. I would like to group Muller's reflections around the three points raised by Lindbeck.

Of course, no one contests the idea that theological education ought to be characterized by *scholarliness.* The problem is the determination of the precise meaning of this term, in a time when there is no uniform theological methodology and a pluriformity of theological specializations (Boadt, 1997: 256; Wood, 1997: 280). Muller observes that "work needs to be done on establishing a broad consensus on the criteria of Catholic theology which could begin to bring some methodological order to the current disarray and allow professionalization to proceed in a way authentic to Catholic theology" (Muller, 1997: 360). As Muller points out, "the respectability of theology departments vis-à-vis other academic departments depends in large measure on the establishment of disciplinary criteria and the construction of programs posited on those criteria." In this regard, it is fitting to recall Lindbeck's earlier warning that one of the greatest threats to the future of theology is the temptation to "widen or alter the concept of theological education," in an effort to ensure institutional survival. There may be short-term gains in "keeping the notion [of theological education] broad, fluid and ambiguous," but the long-term consequences may be the loss of scholarly credibility (Muller, 1997: 360).

The temptation to "fluidity" is, of course, also relevant to the matter of *particularism,* that is to say, Catholic identity. Muller insists on the need for theology to be part of the academy, but he also points out that theology cannot allow itself simply to be defined by the academy. Theology is undeniably a critical and rational enterprise, but it is an enterprise that is undertaken with a view to the community of faith. Hence, Muller observes, "we cannot presume that the academy will recognize as legitimate every element or criterion which makes theology to be authentic." Muller points to the "oversight of theologians by the hierarchical magisterium" as an example of such criteria. "Sometimes," he points out, "it will be necessary to refuse to be intimidated and to resist the demands of the academy." The same is true of theology's relationship to the broader society. "Dialogue with the culture is important," Muller insists, "but we cannot assume that the culture will be transformed simply because theologians are in dialogue with it. It is important that we do not lose our nerve in the face of indifference or even hostility" (Muller, 1997: 362–63). Here, too, Muller echoes Lindbeck to the effect that theology must be faithful to its own vision of truth or risk capitulation to shifting cultural norms (Lindbeck, 1976: 80).

Of course, theology cannot be oblivious to such norms. It must take account of the signs of the times. One such sign, which has already

assumed the status of a norm, is respect for plurality. The theology of the future must incorporate the new understanding of *pluralism* which has emerged in this century. It is striking that a particularist like Lindbeck is so intent on giving pluralism its due. But Lindbeck is also a pragmatist. Hence, he recognizes that most theological institutions cannot do everything and that choices have to be made. Muller, too, acknowledges that an authentic theological vision will be "open to all cultures." But he also recognizes that "what is being expected of theology in terms of the integration of society and culture is enormous. If the Middle Ages are any indication," he observes, "it is the task of centuries, not of decades. The obstacles are formidable and the resources are restricted." Hence, "what is called for, if discouragement is to be avoided, is the development of broad strategies for dealing with 'the impossible'" (Muller, 1997: 371).

With regard to such strategies, Muller remarks that one of "the most valuable things an institution can do, if it has not already done so, is to clarify its mission statements and the values it wishes to encourage throughout the institution" (Muller, 1997: 364, 371). In other words, before it begins to address the question of its relation to a pluralistic world, a theological institution must address the question of its own identity.

Once again, therefore, the theme of particularism makes its presence felt. Indeed, it appears as if this theme is the pivot, the key to understanding the two other themes of scholarliness and pluralism. By way of conclusion, I would like to say a few words about the importance of particularism in an age characterized by religious pluralism.

## *E PLURIBUS UNUM?* CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A PLURALISTIC CONTEXT

In an article published in 1993, Peter Donovan makes a distinction between two forms of pluralism, which he describes as "epistemic" and "ideological" pluralism. Epistemic pluralism involves the recognition that divergent views must be tolerated. In fact, it goes beyond mere tolerance to embrace the conviction that the cause of truth is best served by an open and honest exchange of views. Epistemic pluralism is clearly not incompatible with commitment to a particular faith tradition, although it has to be acknowledged that the world's faiths can claim little responsibility for the actual emergence of this essentially Enlightenment principle. Ideological pluralism, on the other hand, involves a commitment to pluralism as the only acceptable model for truth. For ideological pluralists, particular religious traditions may be necessary but they are, by definition, inadequate. The difference between both types of pluralism has been succinctly expressed by Donovan. While epistemic pluralists maintain that pluralism is "a way to

finding truth," ideological pluralists insist that "pluralism is the truth" (Donovan, 1993: 220; Morris, 1990: 194–96, 201 n. 46; Ward, 1990: 24).

There is no place for genuine particularism—and therefore no place for Catholic theological institutions—in a context defined by ideological pluralism. It is therefore essential that the Catholic willingness to embrace pluralism be preceded by a critical reflection on the type of pluralism on offer.

Ideological pluralism is the pluralism which desires to make the many into one, the pluralism which seeks to level out differences in the name of some vague notion of universal truth. In my opinion, this is the sort of pluralism which is usually operative when theology is invited to "expand its horizons" and become more like religious studies. What makes this sort of pluralism so insidious is the fact that it begins by ostensibly promoting particular traditions. It claims to value every partner to the dialogue. Indeed, it invites every conceivable partner to participate in the dialogue. But it also claims to know the outcome of the dialogue. And that outcome is said to be some point beyond all particularity (Merrigan, 1997: 686–707).

Epistemic pluralism, on the other hand, promotes open-ended dialogue. It allows for the possibility that truth might be disclosed in the particular. Epistemic pluralism does not require of a partner to the dialogue that they concede their individuality before the discussion begins. Instead, it encourages the partners to the dialogue to become more and more themselves. And, of course, as all of us know, becoming ourselves means, among other things, learning to live with our limitations.

Perhaps, in our pluralistic age, the future for Catholic theological institutions lies not in seeking to be all things to all men and women, but in simply being ourselves—in being a very particular one among the many.

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*Stephen Dudek*

# Building a Home for a Multicultural Parish: Lessons Learned

## A FIRE AND A NEW SET OF QUESTIONS

On December 12, 1995, St. Francis de Sales Parish in Holland, Michigan, faced the task of building a new home for God's people. A fire accidentally destroyed the church, which this community of English, Spanish, and Vietnamese speakers called "home." Two years later a new church emerged, designed to sustain the faith life of three unique communities and to promote among them cross-cultural understanding and dialogue. The new home rises as a prophetic voice against a culture of standardization. Designed specifically for a culturally diverse context, it promotes unity without uniformity. Both ambiguity and clarity are held up as values within and beyond its walls as it speaks of the mystery of God in whose image all have been fashioned.

How do you build a home for the Church when it is a culturally diverse community? What should this home look like and what sort of a process should be utilized? How do you incorporate into this process a wide array of approaches to being Church by its members, immigrants from across the globe? These and similar questions are being asked by parishes as they prepare to build or renovate in culturally diverse contexts. The story of one culturally diverse parish's reconstruction in the midst of tragedy may prove helpful for other communities.

## CULTURE, FAITH AND THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Reflection on the critical issue of identity in multicultural communities is essential to achieving appropriateness in church design and effectiveness in ministry. Critical reflection on a community's identity as a multicultural parish is a necessary first step for both building a community of faith and constructing a home in which that community will be housed. The interplay between culture and faith involves four critical relationships. Each must be taken into account when building or renovating a church in a culturally diverse context. Comprehending each relationship helps a multicultural community arrive at a clear understanding of its purpose and identity.

### *The Transcultural Dimension*

The first relationship involves exploring the nature of what goes beyond any one culture. We call this *transcultural.* Many aspects of Chris-

tianity such as initiation, sharing meals and forgiveness transcend the experiences of any one culture. This transcultural dimension makes worship possible in "heterogeneous" settings and even within what is perceived as the most "homogenous" of contexts.

Building or renovating a church for a multicultural community requires a deep appreciation for the transcultural dimensions of liturgy and faith and an astute awareness of their limitations. This appreciation makes the design and placement of primary elements such as the altar, ambo, and font possible. Multicultural parishes by their very nature are communities of faith centered upon transcultural experiences that bind the world's people together as the body of Christ.

*Contextualization or Inculturation*

A second relationship which needs to be taken into account involves adopting specific cultural values into the practice of faith. We call this adoption of values and patterns *contextualization* or *inculturation*. Where inculturation is lacking, identity is neither respected nor is its promotion encouraged. In building or renovating, reverence must be shown for all cultural groups within the parish, as well as for what is proving to be a new culture, the multicultural context itself.

Reverence is exhibited for self and others as a mutually enriching two-way process. For example, a plaza, suggested by our Hispanic community, was incorporated into our church's design as a way to interact with and come to know people who are unable or unwilling to enter the church itself. For some it serves as a space for transition and welcome while for others as a culturally appropriate place to engage in evangelization. An important design element of our new home is that it has touched and enriched the lives of all parishioners.

Found carved into the altar, ambo, and ambry are the fruits, flowers, and plants significant to the peoples who gather for worship at St. Francis de Sales. Parishioners were given the opportunity to write down elements of God's creation which were significant to them for a wide variety of cultural and historic reasons. People in culturally diverse parish contexts need to be able to say, "I am at home here in this church" as well as "This place helps me be all I can be." All groups long to make sacred space their own while at the same time benefit from the faith-stories and values of others. The goal is to find appropriate ways for the gospel to become contextualized. Parishes in multicultural contexts are prophetic voices which speak against a culture of standardization as they promote unity without uniformity.

*The Counter-cultural Dimension*

A third critical relationship between faith and culture has to do with the ethical imperative of being *counter-cultural* and usually has to do

with standing apart from an accepted practice or belief. Here faith challenges un-Christian cultural patterns. These undesirable patterns are acknowledged and clarity of identity results from the establishment of new boundaries which set us apart from common practice.

A home for a multicultural community of faith tells the story of how all people are drawn into the circle of God's love. How and where people are seated, the design of the furnishings, acoustics as well as the selection of honest materials, all invite people to stand apart from many accepted practices and beliefs in accordance with gospel principles. Churches designed for multicultural faith communities are uniquely and prophetically positioned to be counter-cultural voices through which the Spirit keeps alive the promise of Pentecost.

*The Cross-Cultural Dimension*

A final and key critical relationship between faith, culture and subsequently, "identity" involves sharing between cultures. The term "cross-cultural" is used to describe this sharing across cultural boundaries resulting in mutual enrichment and change. The church building itself becomes the text for telling stories and the sharing of beliefs and values across cultures. An image of Our Lady of Guadalupe or the Vietnamese Martyrs can become a familiar point of connection to the past and a bridge to the future for some, while for others, it becomes a window into another culture. Recognition that knowledge is partial and all understanding of the gospel is culturally bounded opens people to the immensity of God's love and the complexity of divine wisdom.

## EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Five strategies were found to be particularly helpful for designing, building, and remodeling in a culturally diverse context. These strategies when integrated into planning processes, even where cultural diversity is not readily apparent, encourage healthy dialogue, facilitate participation and ownership, and promote a spirit of reverence toward sacred space. Implementation of these strategies helps parish leadership effectively move theory into the realm of practice. As strategies they also encourage a parish to move from identity-centered reflection to evangelization and mission.

*Acknowledge Grief and Loss*

Grief is apparent in most culturally diverse parishes. Economic factors, demographic change, immigration, prejudice, and perceived insecurity push and pull people into and from neighborhoods in an ever more globalized world. New immigrants grieve the loss of their birth land with its language and comfortable customs. Long-time residents in established neighborhoods grieve the loss of what was formerly a familiar

and stable environment. Add to these factors additional grief-producing realities which often accompany building and renovation efforts in multicultural contexts. Fires and natural disasters, the consolidation of parishes, shortages of priests, and other pastoral ministers and economic woes all contribute to and intensify grief. Quickly it becomes apparent why it is essential to acknowledge both grief and loss in a culturally diverse context.

Taking time to ritualize congregational grief helps encourage healing and acceptance while promoting a healthy environment for building and planning. St. Francis de Sales parishioners felt the need to ritualize their loss, especially since it involved intense and unexpected grief, piled upon a layer of long-term, low-intensity grief, the unacknowledged reality of many a culturally diverse context. Early in the planning process parishioners were asked to express their hopes and fears regarding our rebuilding efforts. Intense grief was clearly evident especially among minorities and the poor. Not only were people grieving the loss of their church but also one more loss was added to the crucible of grief, which for them was life itself.

Prior to the demolition of our church, an all-night vigil and multilingual sung evening prayer was held in its burnt out shell. People were invited to stop by the church site after each of the weekend Masses and were encouraged to light a candle or leave a few flowers as a prayer gesture. A wooden carved crucifix rescued from the blaze was placed in a central location. Positioned on either side of it were candelabras grotesquely twisted from the heat of the blaze, as well as large shattered earthen vessels blown apart by frozen water, complements of fire hoses and mother nature's chill. The prayer service took the form of a funeral wake. Time was provided for people to share some of their memories of the Paschal Mystery celebrated in the church and adjacent facilities. Many memories were humorous like those which involved toddlers collecting bingo chips; while others provoked tears like the ten-year-old girl who shared with us the experience of her mother's funeral. When time is taken to ritualize grief and loss, bridges are built which help people connect the events of the past with the present and their hopes and dreams for the future.

*Discover Ways to Tell a Shared Story*

Common stories unite families and communities and provide them with resources with which to name and construct reality. In a multicultural context common stories are particularly important as a way of providing stability in an environment where ambiguity reigns. A high tolerance for ambiguity is an important attribute in the culturally diverse context. Equally as important are common stories which help people discover shared meaning and common values.

Incorporated into the outside prayer garden, which leads to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of our newly rebuilt church, is an archway designed by a well-known sculptor. The steel from which it was fashioned was rescued from the church's roof structure during its demolition. Both oxidized and charred, the garishly twisted beams speak of the intensity of the inferno to which they were exposed and the baths of water which followed. The archway acknowledges both past and present grief which often lingers and periodically bursts into our lives. The sculpture is entitled STELE-ELATION. It is a monument made of iron, born in the crucible of grief, transformed into a joyful expression in the curves of its new found body. It communicates a common story lived and experienced by a very diverse group of people. It is both an acknowledgment of grief and a clear recognition of our need for shared stories. Our unique stories are important but so too are shared experiences which in a most mysterious way help us overcome the limitations that language, race, gender, and age frequently place in our path.

*Overcome Ethnocentrism and Promote Intercultural Dialogue*

The world we live in, interpret, and create comes to us by way of a culture, which surrounds us but is difficult to describe. It has been said that culture is like the water that fish swim in, only when it is absent do they realize it is not there! The same is true for us. All people see the world from their cultural perspective. But rarely do we acknowledge that fact unless we are truly intentional about it or are forced to step outside our culture and into another. This is important in the building and planning process since blindness in the area of ethnocentricity easily results in distortion, domination, and disintegration when it comes to others' input and their taking ownership of the process and its results.

Whenever possible, intercultural dialogue is to be encouraged and designed into the planning and building process. The natural tendency in multicultural parishes is to minister using a parallel-tracks approach where each ethnic group worships, catechizes, and functions as Church in a way that affirms individual group identity but rarely promotes true dialogue across cultural boundaries. The richness of the multicultural context is lost, to a large degree, by such an approach. While acknowledging the necessity of providing culturally and linguistically relevant worship, catechesis, and outreach, intercultural dialogue is equally important if we are to navigate an increasingly globalized world while taking seriously the Pentecost imperative.

Conflicts arise within multicultural parishes when unfamiliar values, experiences, styles, and tastes as well as differing approaches to popular religiosity, combine with economic realities in a parallel-tracks environment. A natural tendency might be to avoid or overlook conflict, yet by doing so opportunities are lost for understanding and true

intercultural dialogue. The goal of intercultural dialogue in the building and planning process is not to create an ethno-relative or ethno-neutral environment, but rather to create an environment where ethnocentricity yields and dialogue is encouraged with new and equally valid cultural perspectives.

*Provide Opportunities for Silenced Voices to Speak*

In every parish community there are silenced voices longing to speak. Within multicultural contexts certain ethno-linguistic or socio-economic groups can find themselves silenced by the dominant majority. It can also come to pass that long-standing groups within a parish begin to feel as if their voice is slowly being silenced with changing demographics or the arrival of new immigrants. Creating systems that encourage the voiceless to speak out is important when building or renovating a church.

The acceptance by our parish's Euroamerican community of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as the only depiction of Mary within the church is an acknowledgment that silenced voices are being offered a chance to sing anew. Previously, our church possessed three different statues of Mary. The last to arrive some thirty years ago, the one depicting our Lady of Guadalupe, barely made it in the back door of the church. Located in the farthest corner high above the assembly in almost total darkness it spoke of abandonment and exile. While annually it was brought down and placed in a position of prominence from December 3 to 12, after her feast it was banished once again to almost total darkness! The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe in our new church has a place of prominence near the entrance and is approachable. Now on their wedding day brides and grooms of Euro-American descent readily place flowers before her along side those previously presented by their Hispanic and Asian counterparts!

While criticizing the proposed image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, our parish's Mexican-American community acknowledged, for the first time in a public way, the presence of new Latino groups. A number of well-intentioned people asked whether the tricolor Mexican flag could be present in the artist's next rendition. But with that a small previously voiceless group of Latinos from other countries began to ask if Our Lady of Guadalupe was not the patroness of all the Americas? Would not Chileans, Nicaraguans, Colombians, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans want to see her as one of their own? It did not take long for the parish's Mexican community to acknowledge it would not be appropriate to include their beloved flag in this sacred image.

Silent voices, when attended to, help confront ethnocentricity. After much research and input from our Vietnamese-speaking community, a talented artist presented her color rendition of the Vietnamese Martyrs

for their reaction. Immediately she was told it reminded them of another Asian country of which their memories were not so pleasant! She was also instructed to remove a number of offensive elements which were not fully understood by most Westerners! The final rendition has been met with broad support including that of the Vietnamese community. Prayers and offerings are reverently presented before the lamb on the throne (Rev 5:1-14) and representatives of the 117 martyrs depicted in striking color. New immigrants from Vietnam, along side their sponsors who arrived a generation ago can regularly be seen in prayer before their palm-embraced ancestors, in what is perceived by all, as a culturally relevant work of art.

*Make It the Work of People's Hands*

In an age of specialization it is increasingly difficult for parishioners to build their own church. Issues of liability and safety as well as time constraints and the complex nature of modern construction all impede a local building effort. But when a home for the Church becomes the work of someone's hands, it becomes his or her own and the process helps promote intercultural dialogue and build community. When building a church for a multicultural community of faith, opportunities should be sought out to involve large numbers of people in clearly defined aspects of the project. For some people it may be the only way they can contribute to the effort due to limited financial resources. For all involved, the process is an effective method of bridging cultural boundaries.

Volunteer labor was utilized by our parish in many aspects of the rebuilding process. Selective demolition took place in areas deemed safe by the general contractor. Volunteers hauled out rubble by the ton from areas of the building's lower level which were to be incorporated into the design of the new plan. Over fifteen-thousand bricks were salvaged, and by hand were individually cleaned of mortar to ensure an appropriate brick match in sensitive areas of the reconstructed church. On a weekly basis large numbers of volunteers were involved in cleaning the work-site. They were also involved in landscaping, the installation of cabinets, and the crafting of liturgical furnishings and vestments. Migrant farm workers labored alongside college professors with doctorates while senior citizens engaged in tasks with teens on work-release from the local jail. In the end and probably well before the completion of the building, it became the church of all the above because it represents the work of many human hands.

## PRACTICAL ADVICE

Our parish learned many practical lessons from this experience. The following suggestions may prove helpful to others in similar situations.

The advice given, while by no means peculiar to multicultural environments, is especially helpful where diversity is the norm.

Attentiveness to practical realities contributes greatly to the success of all endeavors, especially in complex parish contexts. Practical matters such as organizational structure, living with financial constraints, finding qualified professional support, and issues relating to spiritual and mental health are by no means secondary elements to the building process. A parishioner stated it most eloquently when she said: "When we finish this process we should be better off not only because we have a new home for the church but because we have grown through the process." What follows is practical advice shared for the purpose of creating healthy systems and structures that in turn contribute to healthy processes.

*Specialists Are the Best Surgeons*

Hire a liturgical consultant who has cross-cultural experience and understands the four previously mentioned critical relationships involving culture and faith. While many parish priests are knowledgeable when it comes to liturgical theory and may actually have considerable building experience, designing a church, particularly in a multicultural context requires the expertise of an experienced liturgical consultant. What takes place at the time of building or renovating a church can be likened to major surgery. As parish priests we are good at what we do, but most of us are general practitioners. When surgery is called for, find a specialist! Only a well-trained liturgical consultant who understands both liturgical theory and group process is qualified to perform surgery on sacred space. Pastors in a culturally diverse context play a key role in ensuring that all voices are heard and that intercultural dialogue takes place. This is a massive undertaking in and of itself and does not allow for additional responsibilities better left to trained specialists.

*Decision-Making: Broad-based, Quick and Nimble*

Develop a multi-tiered process for decision making, which allows for both broad input from large numbers of people and at the same time is nimble and practical for making everyday decisions. We used a three-tiered system which included English, Spanish, and Vietnamese reactor groups, a culturally diverse building committee, and a smaller executive committee. The reactor groups were open to anyone who was willing to learn and who was committed to attending five or six meetings. They provided a safe context where members of each linguistic group felt comfortable speaking up to offer suggestions. The twelve-member building committee was comprised of individuals selected for their expertise in business, engineering, law, construction,

and communication. It provided a forum for cross-cultural dialogue and in-depth analysis of key considerations. The executive committee was comprised of three members of the building committee. All had considerable control over their schedule and were willing to donate significant time to the process and to meet at short notice. This committee engaged in the day-to-day follow up needed to ensure timely completion of the church.

*Good Stewardship Involves Limits*

Multicultural parishes tend to exist on the margins of life. Financial resources are usually limited and often scarce in multicultural contexts. Every effort must be made both to establish a realistic budget, which stretches people beyond what is comfortable, and then to ensure that all parties live within it. Since time is money, care must be shown to make effective use of time spent in dialogue and deliberation. Discussions can continue endlessly where knowledge is lacking on liturgical principles and where clarity is absent with regards to the previously mentioned four critical relationships. Good stewardship of resources involves knowing when and how to educate and promote dialogue and when to put an end to debate.

*Celebrate What You Have Accomplished*

Find ways to share your newly constructed or renovated church with the greater community. Well-designed churches and the communities they sustain boldly speak, better than any mission statement, to a parish's priorities and values. Celebrate your newly found identity which results from building or renovating a church in a culturally diverse context. The Rite of Dedication provides a wonderful opportunity to engage a multicultural community in a boldly prophetic ritual act of celebration. Creating unity without uniformity, upholding clarity as well as ambiguity, speaking out against a culture of standardization and in favor of authenticity is nothing short of a new Pentecost. Once Pentecost was celebrated in Jerusalem; now Pentecost is celebrated wherever and whenever the Church becomes a home for all people.

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*Donald Buggert, O.Carm.*

# God the Father in the Trinity

In his 1994 Apostolic Letter *Tertio millenio adveniente (As the Third Millennium Draws Near),* Pope John Paul II dedicated the past year of 1999 to God the Father. In paragraphs 49 and 50, he compares Christian life to a pilgrimage back to the Father. As Christian theology has always maintained, the Father is the one from whom all has come and to whom all returns. He is "the whence" and "the whither" not only of all creation but even of the Son and the Spirit. In the words of the Christian tradition both East and West, the Father is the source *(pege, fons),* the origin *(arche, origo)* and the principle *(aitia, principium)* from whom come the Son and the Spirit and back to whom all returns through the Son and in the Spirit. And so in the earliest centuries of the Church, as even today, Christians prayed to the Father through the Son and in the power of the Spirit. The Father is the origin and end of all, the alpha and the omega (Rev 1:8, 21:6).

In this article I wish to discuss the meaning of the term "Father" as applied to God as the first person of the blessed Trinity. The question I am addressing is: what do we Christians mean by *Father* when we say: In the name of the *Father,* and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? Who is this Father?

## TWO INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Before entering directly into the topic, I wish to make two important introductory comments which will be presumed throughout the remainder of the article.

First, in *Christian* discourse or usage, the title or image of "father" as applied to God can have four somewhat distinct but related meanings:

a. Father can refer to the covenant God of the Jewish Scriptures, the God whose name is YHWH, the God in whom Jesus trusted, to whom he prayed, whose Reign he proclaimed, and whom he himself called "Abba," which may well be a term of affection or endearment meaning something like "dad," or "pops."

b. A second aspect of the meaning of God as Father in the New Testament and subsequent Christian theology is the notion of God as creator. So, for example, in early creedal statements, to say "I believe in God the Father" is to say "I believe in God as creator." That meaning of Father came to be stated expressly in the creeds of both the East and West when they were expanded to say: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker (creator) of heaven and earth."

c. A third meaning of God as Father is God as "the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ." While for Jewish theology, God is the Father of Israel and of all faithful Israelites, and while for the New Testament this same God/Yahweh is our Father, nevertheless, for the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, God is the Father of Jesus in a unique way. There is a unique relationship between Yahweh (God) and this particular Jew, Jesus. For the New Testament writers, Jesus is Son in a unique way. He is *the* Son or the *only begotten* Son (John 1:14). With this third meaning, we are now on our way to a *properly trinitarian* usage of the term "Father" (i.e., God as Father of Jesus Christ, his *only begotten* Son).

d. Finally the fourth meaning in Christian discourse of God as Father: within Christian *trinitarian* discourse, Yahweh (the God of Judaeo-Christian faith) not only has a unique relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, so much so that Jesus is his unique son; he also is as Father the ultimate source of the Holy Spirit. With this fourth meaning of Father, Yahweh as Father is not only the one who brings forth or (to use technical language) "begets" his one and only Son (the perfect image and therefore revelation of the Father), this same Father brings forth or originates ("spirates") his powerful Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the gift of God's powerful, creative, enabling love to creation. Only now with this fourth meaning of the term (the Father as source of Son *and Spirit*) do we have the full *trinitarian* meaning of God as Father (i.e., the Father is the source, the origin, and the principle of the Son and the Spirit).

In this first introductory comment, I have presented four usages or meanings for the term "Father" as applied to or predicated of God in Christian usage. But it is important to remember that we are not talking about four different realities here, four gods or four "fathers." There is only *one* God and *one* Father. The God of Israel, Yahweh, is also the God who is Creator, is also the God who is the Father of Jesus and the Source/Origin of the Holy Spirit. In trinitarian usage this God is called the first person of the blessed Trinity, God the Father.

Second introductory comment: As is perhaps obvious from above, while the fourth meaning of Father (i.e., as source of the Son and Spirit) is the proper *trinitarian* meaning, it does not exclude but rather includes the first three meanings. Therefore, talk about God as Father in the Trinity will have to include the first three meanings. As is also probably obvious, one cannot talk about the Father in the *trinitarian* sense without also talking about the Son and the Spirit, for the Father in the *trinitarian* sense is not the Father without the Son and the Spirit. Another way to say that: if one tried to talk about the Father in the *trinitarian* sense without talking about the Son and the Spirit, one really would have nothing to say, since the Father *is* Father (origin, source, and principle) only in relation to the Son and the Spirit.

## YAHWISTIC ROOTS OF CHRISTIAN TRINITARIANISM

What do we Christians mean by "Father" in the trinitarian sense, "Father" as the first person of the blessed Trinity, "Father" when we say "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?"

To understand the meaning of God as Father within the Trinity, we must first return to Israel's experience of God as Yahweh, and hence to Israel's covenant theology. The clue and the starting point for understanding our Christian trinitarian faith, and hence our faith in God as *Father,* is our own Yahwistic faith. If we Christians are truly to understand and appreciate our Christian experience of God (i.e., as God-Father, God-Son, and God-Spirit), we must remember that we first of all are Jews in our faith and therefore believe in the God of Israel, Yahweh. The God in whom we believe and confess as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not a *different* God than Yahweh, the God of Israel, the God whom Jesus called "Abba." It *is* the God of Israel, the God of the Jewish Scriptures, the God whose name is YHWH.

We must continually remember that our Christian understanding of God is not in the first place different than the Jewish understanding of God. It is merely a more nuanced or developed understanding of that God based upon and made possible by the experience which the first followers of Jesus, who were Yahwistic Jews, had of Jesus. It was because of the experience that the first followers had of Jesus (his life, his ministry, his death, and his resurrection) that they began to develop or further articulate, or make more explicit their Yahwistic faith. Therefore, our Christian understanding of God (as Father, Son, and Spirit) is continuous with Israel's understanding of God. This continuity is very important if we are to understand our Christian faith in God as God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Because in the history of theology we have at times become unanchored from our Yahwistic roots, we have not only created for ourselves unnecessary problems in trinitarian theology (i.e., in our *Christian* understanding of God), we have also constructed trinitarian theologies or Christian understandings of God which do not always speak to us. Needless to say, we also unnecessarily alienated ourselves from our Jewish brothers and sisters whose God is also our God.

### *God "here with us"*

What are these Yahwistic roots? In Exodus 3 we have the well-known scene of Moses going to Mount Horeb/Sinai and God's appearing to him in a burning bush, commissioning him to be the liberator of his people from slavery in Egypt. When Moses asks God his name, God responds with the name, YHWH (Exod 3:14). Given the context of the narrative and the covenant theology of the Pentateuch as a whole, the

meaning, though not the translation, of the name, YHWH, is: "I am the one who will be there with you," as the Yahweh of verse twelve explicitly states: "I will be with you." The name, YHWH, is a promise, the promise to be here with us. The God of Israel, whose name is YHWH, who frees his people from Egypt, who forms a very personal, intimate, loving bond or covenant with his people, is the God who is and who *promises to be* "here with us," to be a God *for us,* a loving God, a saving God, a God who draws near. Yahweh is a God who says: "I will be your God and you shall be my people" (Jer 7:23, Ezek 11:20).

This is not an impersonal God, an indifferent God, a distant God, a God removed from us, a God who does not care. This is a God who is and promises to be "here for us." This is a God whose love for us, whose "being here with us" is depicted through images such as father, mother, shepherd and groom. As Israel's experience of this covenant God develops, Yahweh, the covenant God, becomes also the creator God. Yahweh is not only God of Israel but of all creation (the second meaning of Father mentioned above). Yahweh's being here with us begins with creation itself, the first of Yahweh's saving deeds.

Two more comments must be made regarding this Jewish understanding of God as Yahweh. They are very important to understand the development or expansion of Yahwistic faith into Christian trinitarian faith and hence to understand the meaning of God the Father in a trinitarian sense.

*God of the Future*

First, Israel has a very historical understanding of God. Israel's God has a *history* of being and becoming "here for us," of being and becoming God *for us,* of being and becoming the loving, saving God. Not only does Israel have a very historical understanding of God, a God who becomes more and more God *for us,* she also has a very *eschatological* understanding of God. *Eschaton* is a Greek word which means "the end." For Israel, since God's very *being* is to be "here for us" (i.e., to be saving or loving, God is not "all that God can be" until God fully saves, until God is fully victorious over God's creation). This is the meaning of the biblical symbol "the Reign of God" or, more precisely, the "Reigning God" (the *Malkuth Yahweh*). Only in the end will God be fully "here for us," fully victorious and fully reign over God's creation, bringing it to the paradisal peace, harmony, and fulfillment which he willed for it from the beginning.

This Yahweh of the Covenant, therefore, who leads, rescues, and cares for his people, who creates all (the heavens and the earth), is a Yahweh whose history of becoming more and more God *for us* is completed only when Yahweh fully reigns. And when Yahweh fully reigns or saves, i.e., brings creation to its fulfillment, then that will be the end

of time and history as we know it. Then God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). Hence theology today often speaks of God as the God of the absolute future. Israel's God is a God of the future, a God of the promises. "I *will* be there with you." "I *will be* your God." This is a God who comes at his people and his creation from the future, luring his creation and people more and more into the future, bringing them more and more back to himself until he fully reigns. And so for Israel all of creation and human history are, as it were, on a journey or pilgrimage back to Yahweh, the God of the absolute future.

*God of Immanence: Word, Wisdom, and Spirit*

Second, on the one hand Yahweh totally transcends his creation. He is its creator who alone can bring it to fulfillment. On the other hand, the transcendence of this God is not such that it excludes God from God's creation or keeps God distant from God's creation. That is not possible, since the very being and meaning of this God is to be "here with us," to be a God *for us.* Therefore, while Israel's God is very transcendent or other than his creation (Yahweh cannot be reduced to creation), nonetheless this Yahweh is very near and involved in his creation, for Yahweh is the one who is "here for us."

To bring out this nearness of God or immanence of God to God's creation, Israel uses various symbols in speaking about God. Of the many symbols of divine immanence in the Jewish Scriptures, three are very important for understanding the continuity between Yahwistic and trinitarian faith. The first two become in the intertestamental period very interchangeable and mean basically the same (i.e., the Word of Yahweh and Wisdom of Yahweh). The third is the Spirit of Yahweh whose meaning is very similar to that of Word or Wisdom. These symbols of divine immanence tell us how Yahweh becomes "here with us."

Yahweh creates, reveals and saves through his Word or Wisdom. The Word/Wisdom symbol expresses both Yahweh's eternal *plan* to create, reveal, and save, as well as Yahweh's actual creative, revelatory, and saving *presence* and *activity* outside himself. Another way to say that is that Word/Wisdom bespeaks not only Yahweh's eternal plan or desire to be a saving God, a God *for us*. It also signifies the actual *self-expressive activity* of God outside God's self through which Yahweh becomes more and more a creating, revealing, saving God, more a God present to creation and expressing or revealing himself in creation. These two symbols of Word and Wisdom are, of course, applied to Jesus to depict his unique relationship with Yahweh. Jesus is both the Word and the Wisdom of Yahweh (John 1:14, 1 Cor 1:25, 30). I will return to this theme below.

So Yahweh is a God who is a God *for us,* a God who has an eternal plan/desire to be here with us through creating, revealing and saving.

Yahweh is not only the transcendent Yahweh. Yahweh is also the Yahweh who through his Word/Wisdom can and does turn towards us, get outside of himself, and draw near to us in creating, revealing, and saving. Through his Word or Wisdom Yahweh becomes "here with us," becomes for us the saving, loving God which Yahweh is in himself. To use a metaphor of Irenaeus, the second bishop of Lyons, the Word/Wisdom of God is like a "hand" of God which allows God to get outside himself and become for us what God always, already is in himself, a saving, loving God.

Yahweh, however, has not only his Word or Wisdom. Yahweh has also his Spirit. The Hebrew word for Spirit is *ruach,* breath or wind. And this breath or wind of Yahweh is a mighty breath, a powerful breath. That is why in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures the "power of God" is so often used in parallelism with the Spirit of God. The word for power in Greek is *dunamis* from which we get "dynamite." Our God, Yahweh, not only has one hand through which he can reveal or express himself in creation; he has another hand through which he makes himself present to creation, and that is his Spirit.

Yahweh's Spirit or breathing is a mighty breathing, a powerful breathing, a creative breathing. So often when we see the symbols of the Spirit and power of Yahweh in the Scriptures, something big or explosive is going to happen; something new is going to happen. There is going to be creation and new creation, life, and new life.

Another dimension of the symbol, Spirit of Yahweh, is that this Spirit or power of God is experienced or understood as coming unexpectedly from the future. The God of the future (Yahweh) comes at us unexpectedly with his powerful, creative, life-giving, enabling Spirit in order to give life and new life, to create, "shake up" and recreate, so as to bring about his Reign so that the God of the Future can become all that God can be, a loving-saving God.

## THE CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT OR EXPANSION OF YAHWISTIC FAITH

The first followers of Jesus, as well as Jesus himself, were Yahwistic Jews. They believed in the Yahweh of Israel. This Yahweh was a God who could and did express himself or get outside himself in creating, in revealing, and in saving. This Yahweh was also a God whom Jesus and his first followers experienced as a mighty God, a powerful God, a God coming at them from the future, empowering them to bring about a new creation, to bring about the Reign of God.

### *Jesus: Word, Wisdom, and Spirit*

Because of their experience of Jesus (his life, his death, and especially his resurrection), the first followers of Jesus began to further develop or

articulate their Yahwistic faith. They began to talk about *Jesus himself* as the Word or Wisdom of God and therefore also the unique Son of God, and the Spirit as not only the Spirit of Yahweh, but also the Spirit of the risen Christ.

They talked about Jesus as the Word or the Wisdom of God because they experienced in his life, his death and his being raised the complete or total expression and enfleshment of God's plan to create, to reveal, and to save. He *is* the plan or the "mystery" of God enfleshed as one of us (Eph 3:5; Col 1:27), the perfect expression or image of the God who is and promises to be "here with us" (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15). And hence he, as a historical human being, *is* the fulfillment of the promise which Yahweh is, the promise to be "here with us" (2 Cor 1:19-21). He *is* "the here with us" who Yahweh is and promises to be. And so he is called the Word and the Wisdom of God.

As the perfect expression or image of Yahweh, he is also the Son of the Father, Yahweh, in a way that no one else is son or daughter. And Yahweh is his Father in a way that he is not Father to anyone else. And so now to call Yahweh "Father" is to continue to say all that was said about him before as Father, but it is also to say that in Jesus, he has fully expressed himself in history as the God who is "here with us," as the God who is *for us*, as the God who is the saving, loving God of the covenant. Jesus is the fullest historical expression of the "here with us" who is Yahweh.

Hence, Jesus is called "Emmanuel," God with us. In Jesus God the Father is not only present to his creation, is not only "here with us." He is so present, so much "here with us" that in Jesus he has become *one with* his creation, which is the basic affirmation underlying the technical and traditional term "hypostatic union." In that total embrace of his creation, in that total becoming one with his creation which is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God has fully expressed himself and has brought his creation to completion or fulfillment, which is salvation (i.e., to be brought back to God). And what Yahweh did fully in Jesus (lovingly embrace and bring back his creation to himself) is itself a promise of what God wishes for all of his creation, to embrace it and to bring it back to himself. This brings us back to the third symbol of divine immanence or presence, the Spirit of God.

More must be said of these first followers of Jesus and the experience of God which they had in Jesus. Precisely because they were Jews who believed in Yahweh, they believed also that Yahweh was a mighty God, a powerful God, a God whose Spirit was a Spirit of new creation, a mighty power from the future through which Yahweh would bring his creation to completion. Since in Jesus, especially in his resurrection, they believed that Yahweh had brought his creation to completion (i.e., saved it), they came to say that this creative Spirit of Yahweh was fully

at work in Jesus, anointing or (in Greek) "christening" him, as the Spirit had anointed the prophets before Jesus. It was this creative power of Yahweh's Spirit at work in Jesus that more and more empowered him to become the Christ (the anointed one). Just as through his Spirit Yahweh brought about the first creation (Gen 1:2), so now through this same powerful Spirit at work in Jesus, Yahweh brought his creation, the creation which was Jesus, to fulfillment by becoming one with it. In Jesus through the creative empowerment of the Spirit, the plan (Paul's mystery) for all of creation was fully realized or expressed.

Moreover, in being raised from the dead through the powerful life-giving Spirit of Yahweh, Jesus not only returned to the Father. He himself was so filled with the Spirit or power of God that he became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45), the unique channel or instrument through which Yahweh sent forth this life-giving Spirit or power into the world. Thus in the New Testament, the Spirit of Yahweh is also called the Spirit of Christ, sent forth by both Yahweh and Christ into the world to continue to do in creation and history what it fully and perfectly did in Jesus (i.e., brought creation to its completion by bringing about the Reign of God, especially in Jesus' being raised).

And so the Spirit is now sent forth by Yahweh and the risen Christ to more and more bring about the Reign of God in creation or to more and more "christify" that creation, i.e., bring it to its completion so that Christ can return it to the Father who can then be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). This Spirit of Yahweh, present and active now in and through the risen Christ, is the loving and empowering "being here" of Yahweh with and within us, just as it had been with Jesus so that as Jesus we too can be "christened" or anointed and hence returned to the Father.

All of creation, therefore, is on pilgrimage back to the Father. It was created through his Word/Wisdom and in the power of his Spirit. Through these two hands of God it will be returned to the Father, the beginning and end of all.

## CONCLUSION

When Christians believe in God the Father in the trinitarian sense, they do not contradict but merely further articulate their faith in Yahweh. To believe in God the Father is to confess that our God is a saving God, a God whose being it is "to be here with us," to be self-communicative love, a love that cannot contain itself, a love which is overflowing. Because it is, there is a creation, a creation which is created by love and as loved, as embraced by the gift of God's self-giving love, the Holy Spirit. The only creation there is, is a creation always already embraced by this self-diffusive love. This loving, creative, self-expressive work of Yahweh reaches its never to be surpassed high point in the human, Jesus, who is God's perfect self-expression, and hence called

Son, Word, and Wisdom of God. But this powerful creative love of God as Holy Spirit is at work in all of creation, embracing it, yearning to heal it, yearning to bring it back to God, who as Father is not only the source and origin of this powerful creative love, this powerful Spirit but also the goal of all creation.

To say that our God is Father in the trinitarian sense is to say that our God is a God who through his hands of Word and Spirit can "get outside himself" and become *for us* what he truly is, a God of love, a God of salvation.

To believe in God the Father is to believe that all of creation and human history is sacred because it is created by, embraced by, fulfilled by, and restored to God. This we have seen fully in the gift of God's powerful Spirit at work in Jesus. Because of him and his resurrection, we Christians proclaim that the Spirit of God the Father will be ultimately victorious in creation and history because it was fully victorious in Jesus, the Son. To believe in God the Father is to be an eternal optimist, despite all the sickness and suffering, despite all the tragedy and injustice, yes despite even death itself, because to believe in God the Father is to believe that God, the Yahweh of Israel, through the powerful presence and work of his Spirit, has become in Jesus one with this creation of ours. Henceforth, from that moment creation not only received its infinite depth but belongs eternally to God, the God who in the end will be all in all, who in the end will reign over all, who in the end will be revealed to all as the God he claimed to be, the God fully revealed in Jesus. Our belief in God the Father is belief in the God "who is here with us," the God whose name is Yahweh ("I will be there with you").

It is that God, that Yahweh who is the Father of the blessed Trinity, the one who was fully with us as one of us in Jesus and who remains with us in his Spirit. Through that Spirit he can bring us home to himself beyond all injustice and all suffering, beyond all loneliness and pain, beyond every tear and even death itself. To that Father be glory through his Son and in his Spirit.

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

*Daniel McLellan, O.F.M.*

# Ministry for a New Culture

In a provocative article entitled "Religion and the Shape of National Culture," sociologist Robert Bellah argued that the Protestant regard for the sacredness of the individual conscience has been tightly woven into our culture. This, together with what he calls a near exclusive focus on the relation between Jesus and the individual and a prevailing economic belief that a free market is the solution to all our problems, has made it hard for Americans to understand the idea of the common good, much less engage in conversation about it. Few of us are securely plugged into anything. Our institutions are weak, providing us with little or no sense of solidarity. He quotes Robert Wuthnow to say that we have become a culture of "loose connections" (Wuthnow, 199).

Bellah believes that the remedy for this is an infusion of what Andrew Greeley has described as the "Catholic imagination." Bellah calls for the reconstitution of our cultural code through greater attention to the sacramental life, in particular the Eucharist. Absorbing the Eucharist and becoming Eucharist for others, Bellah concludes, is the way to open up our cultural code so that the sacramental imagination will have a more pervasive influence over our lives.

As president of a Roman Catholic school of theology for ministry, I would like to see the Church's ministry play a critical role in this project of opening up our cultural code. But before the ministry can have a lead in the work of infusing the culture with the "Catholic imagination," those who exercise pastoral care need to do some reconnecting themselves. Bellah states that what needs changing is deeper than ideology or policy analysis. And he claims that the very concreteness of sacramental worship is difficult even for American Catholics to understand. Restoring an appreciation of the sacraments as actions "that pull us into an embodied world of relationships and connections" will require a ministry that believes that such relationships and connections are the center of gospel life. If the culture is to become less individualized through the power of the sacraments, then the world of religion must become less private and domestic. Pastors can deepen the impact of our sacramental celebration and call us to a greater sense of the common good if theirs is a ministry that is politically focused, professional, and marked by piety.

## POLITICAL FOCUS

The Church is an extension of the Lord because like the Incarnate Word, the mission of the Church is to share in the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the world. The Church is called to speak a word of salvation to such a world. This proclamation is compromised in an individualistic culture such as ours when ministry is respected to the degree that it cultivates a private spirituality and is disconnected from meaningful public discourse and public decision-making. This proclamation is compromised when we are slow to develop clear and effective ways of preaching and teaching the kinds of values needed if a critical duty of discipleship, making the kingdom of God a reality in the world, is to be fulfilled.

In the last several decades as religion became more and more marginal to the things that matter to people, the Church's ministry became part of the problem by gradually withdrawing from the public square. The political character of ministry increasingly diminished as ministry became more therapeutic. Scripture, the Church's social teaching, and preaching remained a part of the curriculum for ministry, but the courses considered more practical were those that enhanced skills for counseling and good listening. Unpuzzling the culture or understanding the world of work receded as goals of effective ministry.

The task of infusing the culture with the "Catholic imagination" will need a leadership that has rediscovered a political focus. This will not be easy. "Political" has gotten an unsavory connotation. In a culture of "loose connections," we treat government as a necessary evil. Conventional wisdom too readily believes that the "political" person is manipulative and partisan simply because that person is busy about the affairs of our public life. We need to reassert the fact that political action is engagement in the affairs of the *polis,* the city, the community. Political action is action that witnesses to our social nature, to the fact that it is not good for us to be alone. Humankind is meant for community, and communities need organization and order. Promoting the development of connections that make for a just social order is a care pastors need to reclaim as central to ministry. Ministry meant to deepen the sacramental imagination will need to be a ministry that sees a role for itself in the processes of good citizenship.

A place to begin the work of helping ministers redevelop a political sensibility is the educational environment itself. Every school of ministry pays attention to the place it holds in the ecclesiastical world and in the world of higher education. It matters to schools that they do the things that gain the confidence and esteem of church leaders and fellow educators. These are appropriate concerns. The same interest needs to be given to securing the confidence and esteem of the communities

in which schools for ministry are located. Many of us promote ourselves by advertizing the benefits that come from education in Washington, Chicago, Boston, or Berkeley. But would the reverse be true? What kind of citizenship does the teaching and learning community exercise?

Promoting a political role for the school for ministry will also promote a change in the way ministers perceive their congregations. A congregation of adult men and women is not simply a gathering of spouses or parents. These adults are also workers and citizens. They are protagonists of a life beyond the home. Ministers can promote the infusion of a sacramental imagination when they acknowledge the complexity to which that imagination needs to be applied. Ministers also need to rediscover the tools of pastoral care that equip a minister to have a credible political presence. The Scriptures, preaching, the history of the Church, and mission keep the student for ministry aware that an essential practice of pastoral care is public leadership.

## PROFESSIONAL

When I was a formation director for my religious congregation, I began each year by stressing the professional nature of our life and work, and each year, the men found it hard to digest my message. In their minds the professional is the company man in the grey flannel suit, the embodiment of bourgeois values.

Professionalism has nothing to do with self-service and mediocrity. Precisely the opposite. The professional is one whose knowledge and skill is publicly recognized as necessary for public life. Professionals are graduates of specified programs of study, are tested for proficiency, and examined for character. Licensing and certification attest that the professional has both character and competence for the public's expectation. Before one practices his or her craft, a profession is made to work on behalf of the common good. Associations of professionals set standards for excellence. Procedures are established to retain and support qualified practitioners and to eliminate those whose character and competence fall below grade. And professionals are accountable for who they were and what they did.

Recent episodes of ministerial sexual misconduct have caused tremendous dismay and disappointment among people, a sign that the public holds ministers to a particular standard of character. Ministers realize this. But ministers also need to realize that public trust and respect depend not only on character but competency. The lack of confidence some have for the ministry as a public responsibility is in some measure due to the irrelevance of the ministry to the everyday lives of people, an irrelevance rooted in a lack of competence. Ministers who lack knowledge to address the challenging issues of the day from the

perspective of the Church's rich scriptural and theological tradition diminish the professional standing of the ministry in the public eye.

Competence is not only a matter of having appropriate knowledge. Skill in bringing that knowledge to bear on the things that matter to people is also needed. We are familiar with the distaste people have for physicians who treat diseases and not persons. A physician's inability to bring a patient into the process of his or her own treatment is a disability. So too with the ministry. A ministry sensitive to the need for connectedness is also sensitive to the need for people to think through the difficulties and questions necessary for solid connections to be made. One of the necessary skills of a ministry able to promote a Catholic imagination is the skill of helping people to think theologically. The art of pastoral care is enabling a community to make sense of its life with God as that life is lived in the complexity of history.

## PIETY

Dictionary definitions given for piety include "pretentious" and "sanctimonious." Among the Romans, however, *pietas* defined a sense of duty and devotion. The comparable Hebrew word is *ḥesed* or "steadfast loyalty." Rome did not put Christians to death because emperors found their theology distasteful. Christians were executed when they refused to participate in the public rites that marked one as a dutiful and devout citizen. In Christian spirituality piety is a gift of the Holy Spirit promoting affection for God and loving regard for others.

If a Catholic imagination is to take hold of our culture, there is a need for piety. A culture of solidarity is a culture that has the capacity for steadfast loyalty, devotedness, and duty. It is a culture free from the fear of commitment, a fear that keeps us individual and incapable of the common good.

One who knew this well was Vaclav Havel, the playwright who became president of Czechoslovakia after the "Velvet Revolution" (and subsequently the Czech Republic after the Republic and Slovakia decided to go their separate ways). Havel gave the customary New Year's Day presidential address to his country in 1991. Noting that in years past the country's Communist leaders had trumpeted the grand accomplishments of socialism which everyone in the country knew to be false, Havel said that he would tell the truth, and this is what he said:

> . . . . we live in a contaminated moral environment. We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different from what we thought. We learned not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves. Concepts such as love, friendship, compassion, humility, or forgiveness lost their depth and dimension, and for many of us they represented only

> psychological peculiarities, or they resembled gone-astray greetings from ancient times, a little ridiculous in the era of computers and spaceships . . . (Weigel, 1992).

Havel told his fellow citizens that the sad legacy of their past forty years was a sin they visited on themselves. Holding the people responsible for their own oppression seemed like a case of "blaming the victim." But Havel went on to tell the story of a green-grocer who everyday put the sign "Workers of the World, Unite!" in his window, not because he believed it but because it was his declaration that he was afraid and wanted to be left alone. As a result he helped create a "web of mendacity," a culture where appearances tried to pass for reality. The action of the green-grocer had been multiplied over so many thousands of times that fear was the order of the day. It built a culture of the lie.

Mendacity is a serious threat to ministry. The fear of offending the sensibilities of a bishop or superior, the fear of public opinion, the "bad conscience" developed when the undereducated minister lacks confidence in the power of his teaching all create an appearance that is a lie.

The piety needed in a ministry that will lead us in developing a sacramental imagination is not sanctimony or pretension. It is the devotion and duty of the apostles who were not afraid to confront the traditions of their ancestors for the sake of this new thing God was doing. It is the steadfast loyalty to truth exemplified by the theologians of our own century who, despite their silencing, made it possible for Vatican II to help the Church engage the modern world. It is the duty of the many martyrs of the developing world who refused to abandon justice or live a denial of human dignity by complying with political and economic systems that savaged the poor. This is the piety that refuses to accept appearances for reality. The piety needed for a ministry that will help our culture reconnect is a piety that makes us bold, free from the fear that keeps us trapped in worlds of our own convenience and comfort.

## CONCLUSION

Havel said that his people needed to name the situation they had created. They had to come to realize what they had done to create the oppression under which they lived. And if they did this, he said, "hope will return to our hearts."

Bellah gives voice to a yearning felt by many. The human person is built for community and solidarity. Because the culture of "loose connections" is ultimately a denial of who we are, it is a lonely culture. Pastors who are steadfastly loyal to the truth, who see themselves accountable for a witness that is competent, and who do not shrink from

public leadership will be the ones who minister to us the hope that our hearts desire.

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*Daniel McLellan, O.F.M., was recently inaugurated as the fourth president of Washington Theological Union.*

*It is the ministers of evangelization who come from the North American cultural reality who first of all need to be evangelized in relation to the materialism, individualism, and hedonism of North American culture. To the degree that we neglect to evangelize North American culture, we will never truly evangelize the Hispanics in this country. Rather, we will impose the values of North American culture in the name of the gospel.*

—Virgil Elizondo

GETTING DOWN TO CASES

*Sharon Henderson Callahan*

# Hospitality: The Key to Recognizing the Prophetic Dimension of Diverse Populations

*Gloria Duncan has been a lay catechist at St. Gabriel's Parish for seven years. During that time, she has been quietly and persistently working to invite Mexican farm workers in the apple orchards to visit St. Gabriel's. Finally, Gloria was able to gather seven people who wanted to study Scripture. She found Bibles in Spanish and reserved a room for them on a Tuesday night in February. Unfortunately, the room Gloria had been given was unheated during the week. Some of the farm workers, she learned the first night they came, were illegal aliens. Gloria was astounded by their devotion to the study of Scripture. They huddled in a circle with their coats on around a single candle and spoke quietly in Spanish sharing together their reflections on the Gospel of Mark. When Gloria asked the secretary who maintains the parish schedule for another time for the group to meet, she was informed that rooms cannot be allocated to individuals who do not contribute or are not registered with the parish. There could be no exceptions to the policy, the pastor informed Gloria later, because there was hardly enough room in the parish for the activities of the regular members. When the local Baptist church offered its facilities to the Bible study group, Gloria had more than one dilemma.*

* * *

*Patricia Wilson taught Spanish at the local high school. She was also a trained musician who had volunteered to help with music and liturgy at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. Because she was interested in having the choirs sing with guitar as well as organ, the music committee recommended that she work with the Mexican-American people in the parish in order to develop a choir that could sing at the Spanish Masses. As a white, educated woman, concerned with helping the poor, Patricia readily embraced the challenge of developing a music program for Mexican-American parishioners. Her aim was to establish a Mexican-American choir that would sing "good liturgical music" to enhance worship in this rural parish. Because of her ability to speak Spanish, Patricia expected that people would trust her more quickly than they did. Even though she herself felt marginalized in the parish because of her age and musical sensitivities, Patricia failed to recognize at the beginning how her position of power (her education, color, and talent) also marginalized the Mexican-American community. Once she relaxed her cultural pre-dispositions about*

*timeliness and regular attendance, Patricia was able to trust their love of music and their commitment to celebrating faith. While the quality of the music did not reach her expectations, Patricia learned how active participation in worship fashioned a believing community. Not incidentally was she transformed by their lively expression of faith.*

* * *

*The sacrament preparation programs in Holy Innocents Parish were the responsibility of Cecelia Gallagher. Trained for her work by the pastor of the parish, she was a faithful lay volunteer who had worked her way through various levels of volunteering. Cecelia eagerly embraced archdiocesan policies and applied them to the parish with a certain legalistic rigor. So, for example, she had worked with the Catholic school teachers and the religious education director to ensure that the parish comply with* all *the new Archdiocesan Catechetical Guidelines for preparing children to receive sacraments. She gathered a group of catechists and told them of the significance of First Communion within the Sunday liturgy. Cecelia introduced the new archdiocesan practices to the parents, stressing that no special cultural variations would be allowed at First Communion in order to symbolize the unity of faith and practice. Felino did not understand the new rules. All his brothers had worn the traditional Filipino white suit for their First Communion. Just before the service, Felino changed into the brother's white suit that fit him best. When she saw him enter the sanctuary in a white suit, Cecelia Gallagher sent a note to the pastor suggesting that Felino not receive First Communion.*

## I

The vignettes describe everyday situations occurring in most parishes. They also lift up some of the complexities of ministry across cultures. In each circumstance, traditional patterns of faith or worship or new church rules for Christian practice are in tension with the need to honor diversity. These tensions are seldom easily resolved because resolution usually requires a deeper transformation and more systemic change. Keeping rules or seeking uniformity or enhancing the musical norms of faith communities are not necessarily unacceptable aims, but they are not easily reconciled with a commitment to welcome the stranger and honor the gifts of the one who is different. These stories encourage the basic signs of Christian hospitality in order that what is different might function prophetically to expand the vision of the dominant culture.

Roman Catholic parishes today often determine membership through registration cards and annual contributions. Rarely are facilities open

to those who either are not registered or cannot pay a rental fee for the rooms. Many new immigrant populations (from Latin and South America, Asia, and the Pacific Islands) do not recognize the emphasis on registration as attempts to foster community. In fact, the custom of Mexican Catholics often mitigates against registration and thereby affects their inclusion in parish communities. Policies of registration, measuring support, administering sacraments only to those who attend regularly and are recognized by the priests and lay ministers *all* inhibit and sometimes threaten already marginalized people. Sooner or later, the parish secretary at St. Gabriel's will need to assure people in the parish that everyone has equal and easy access to what is owned in common.

The inability of St. Gabriel's Parish to bend its rules to make room for a group of people who desired to study Scripture created an intolerable situation for at least the Mexicans who were illegal aliens. They could not register with the parish in order to have access to a room without at the same time putting themselves in double jeopardy. Because the staff was inflexible about the rules governing the use of the parish building, the people of St. Gabriel's missed an opportunity to discover and be transformed by a commitment to study Scripture not readily found among church-going folk in the dominant culture. At another level, the inability to find space deprived these Mexican farm workers of an experience of hospitality that would have diminished their experience of being marginalized by affirming their belonging to a Catholic faith community.

Making space available is a simple action with profound significance. In my experience in multi-cultural ministry, the dominant culture often fails to honor diversity in our midst in seemingly insignificant actions or small decisions handled routinely. The pastor at St. Gabriel's may not have wanted to challenge the power of the schedule-keeper on this issue because he intended to question her authority on another matter closer to his passions. On the other hand, the pastor may not even have understood fully the impact of his concurrence with the secretary who kept the calendar. What is required in order to receive diverse gifts is an attitude of hospitality and flexibility in the use of power. While a seemingly simple solution, the act of finding a room for a Bible study group of Mexican farm workers points to larger realities that beg for systemic transformation on the part of Christian faith communities. If the parish welcomed these Bible students, they would also become more aware of the plight of the Mexican worker: housing, wages, language barriers, fear of deportation, education, health, etc. By receiving the faith stories, the values carried in song and poetry, and the significance of family held by these workers, the people of St. Gabriel's would enter into a relationship by which they might be changed.

II

The willingness to be changed by the other who is different is one disposition necessary for effective ministry across cultures. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are all changed by encounters with the other. That is how globalization is different than colonialism. Welcoming the stranger is a process that curves back upon its origins. This possibility of being changed by the difference of another is what I mean by the prophetic dimension of authentic hospitality. The mutuality of influence at the center of this process is also similar to what St. Thérèse of Lisieux once called the "evangelist's gamble." The evangelist has no guarantee that his understanding of faith will remain unaltered after an encounter with someone he or she is seeking to convert. "How can anyone expect that the person who is listening to him should be ready in principle to change his life and way of thinking if he, the evangelist is not notionally prepared to submit to the same discipline?" (Thérèse of Lisieux, 1949: Letter LXXIII, July 14, 1889). If St. Gabriel's Parish had welcomed the Mexican farm workers Bible study group, they too may have been changed.

The story of Patricia illustrates so wonderfully the conviction of Thérèse of Lisieux that we must be willing to be transformed by our encounter with difference. Most of us who have found ways to change our attitudes toward those who we perceive to be different have had some experience like Patricia. We have been able to encounter otherness as gift and sign of the splendor of God's extravagant creativity. The idea of being transformed by a stranger is both the consequence of and a prelude to effective ministry in a multicultural context. Like many ministers committed to social justice and education toward conversion, Patricia demonstrated a willingness to work with a marginalized population. One can presume that Patricia's own experience of marginalization made her more willing to be transformed by her experience with this particular Mexican American community of practicing believers. And her experience of that community was prophetic in her life in the sense that it expanded Patricia's vision of the world. One can imagine that Patricia's experience of being transformed by the other may have led her to lobby for more appropriately scheduled bi-lingual Masses, initiate small group conversations about prejudice, and encourage the parish to explore multiple ways to pray and image God.

III

Cecelia's story is a little more difficult to respond to because it puts obedience to church authority (at least as she understands it) in opposition to an attitude of welcoming diversity. We may presume that the

pastor did not honor her request to deny Felino his First Communion because he had violated the rule by dressing traditionally. Even if the request was denied, these families preparing their children for First Communion would not have experienced the Church through Cecelia as a community willing to honor their diversity. Her story also lifts some of the complexities of lay ministries. We have no assurance that every lay person who finds himself or herself in positions of leadership within a particular faith community or diocesan structure has come to understand that people are more important than rules.

Someone less committed to following the archdiocesan rules may have been prompted to respond with a different set of important questions. Whose norms regarding what is "right dress or behavior" undergird the catechetical guidelines? What evidence is there that uniformity of dress fosters community better or more quickly than honoring diversity? What if the guidelines had been written by a team that included the wisdom of multiple ethnic and racial groups? What if reverence for the other was so profound that difference was assumed to be a gift of God? What if multiple spiritualities were embraced so that people in a congregation could freely share the rosary, Stations of the Cross, walks in natural settings, centering prayer, daily Eucharist, and devotions to Guadalupe? What if congregations were expected to include images that reflected multiple spiritualities and nationalities? What if ministers assumed they were to receive the other rather than exert power over the other?

Ministry in parishes embracing multiple cultures challenges each person to re-examine entrenched rituals. Those who embody biblical hospitality genuinely welcome the "stranger" in a spirit of humility and service. They are able to freely invite the "other" to share resources, to contribute to the faith of the community and to build trust. These ministers learn new languages both verbal and non-verbal, invite all to reflect on new policies, and explore the traditions of others so they can discover new and flexible ways to incorporate multiple expressions within the guidelines. Expressions of hospitality begin the process. Understood in this way, hospitality is an essential part of living the Christian life. Like the exchanges between Abraham, Sarah and the visitors or Elisha, and the widow or Jesus and the Syrophoenecian woman, acts of hospitality create miracles.

Hospitality to the stranger opens the door to belonging, mission, justice and mercy. Sometimes this also means addressing the issues of contribution, stewardship, commitment to social justice, and "standards" imposed as indicators of those who "really belong" to a faith community. The work of embracing the other in mutuality challenges us to live new ways of hospitality, belonging, mission, justice and mercy. The work begins with simple actions, openness to being transformed, and a

good heart. It also requires humility and commitment. Most of all, it is important to believe that an authentic multicultural ministry that honors the prophetic dimension of diversity is possible. It is, in fact, our call.

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*How are we to welcome today's newcomers? Eight of the twenty nations that are now the principal sources of immigrants have a strong Catholic tradition: Mexico, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Colombia, Peru and Poland. We need to look at how we welcome these people to our parish life, so that they are seen and heard among us and can proudly display their own religious symbols and images.*

—Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza

KEEPING CURRENT

Scripture
Liturgy and Preaching
**Systematic Theology**
Church History
Cross-cultural Studies
Spirituality
Moral Theology
Pastoral Theology

*Michael J. Scanlon, O.S.A.*

# Postmodernism and Theology

Despite the very frequent observations on how vague or slippery the notion of postmodernism is, it seems that the term has been generally accepted by the academic community. As Paul Lakeland in his *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997) puts it, postmodernity is "a way of saying 'our time, not some other'" (1). And our time is different from the cultural emphases that characterized modernity. This semester I am offering a course on Postmodernism and Theology which attempts to address the following issues: (1) Postmodern Theology as a Discipline; (2) Postmodern Theology (God-talk); (3) Theology, Deconstruction, and Ontotheology; (4) Postmodern Theological Anthropology; and (5) Postmodern Christology. This article will highlight significant aspects of these issues.

(1) *Postmodern Theology and Theology as a Discipline*

The major concern here is to distinguish postmodern from modern theology. Modern theology replaced traditional theology's "hermeneutics of authority" with a "hermeneutics of experience." The modern "turn to the subject" in philosophy (Descartes and Kant) was appropriated for theology first by Friedrich Schleiermacher who grounded the discipline of theology in the interpretation of the religious aspects of personal experience. This shift to religious experience was paramount as well in Catholic Modernism, the abortive attempt to modernize Catholic theology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Successful modernization of Catholic theology was delayed for decades until the reception of such theologians as Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, a reception quite influential on Vatican II. Rahner's universalization of the experience of grace as the Self-communication of God

in the Spirit was received by many recent and contemporary Catholic thinkers as both liberating and exhilarating after their protracted dogmatic slumbers [For a current appreciation of Karl Rahner's theology of Mystery as "postmodern" and "non-foundationalist," cf. Fergus Kerr, *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997) 159–84].

But just as Catholic theologians embraced the modern liberal way, postmodern thinkers discerned a crisis in the conception of theology as hermeneutical [cf. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Crisis of Hermeneutics and Christian Theology," in Sheila Greeve Davaney, ed., *Theology at the End of Modernity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991] 117–40]. In broad strokes one might say that "the linguistic turn" has shown the historicity of both modern religious subjectivity and traditional theological authorities. The "turn to the subject" no longer provides the pre-cultural *(a priori)* foundation for theology once we recognize the linguisticality and historicity of the human subject embedded in social, cultural, and political contexts.

(2) *The Postmodern God*

Blaise Pascal would be pleased to see that the postmodern God is the biblical God, not the "god of the philosophers." Of special note here is the work of Jean-Luc Marion [cf. his *God Without Being* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991)]. Marion recalls Plato's insistence that the Good is beyond Being and moves in a postmodern, postmetaphysical path to think of God outside the horizon of Being altogether but inside God's Self-revelation as *Agape*. He explores the apophatic tradition (with focus on Pseudo-Dionysius), relates it to the cataphatic tradition, and proposes a "third way," a doxological path to God. Marion is in close conversation with Jacques Derrida whose "religion without religion" has brought him to a rigorous exploration of both negative theology and the prophetic/apocalyptic strands of the Bible [cf. John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington, Ind.: University Press, 1997)].

The foreword to Marion's book was written by David Tracy who claims that all of the modern options for theology were determined by the *logos* of modernity, its powerful notion of intelligibility. Tracy concurs with Marion that postmodern speech about God must become *theology* over against modern theo-*logy,* while he insists that postmodern advances must not merely jettison the genuine achievements of modern theology: the notion of panentheism and the relational God-talk of Hegelian, process, trinitarian, and modern feminist theology. The central meaning of postmodern contemporary thought on God is its radical interruption of the modern *logos* as it allows for the return of the

eschatological God, the hidden-revealed God of the memory of suffering, the suffering of all those ignored, marginalized, and colonized by the grand narrative of modernity, the narrative of modern man's progress in an idealized Western civilization. Postmodern theology with its new forms of language, rendering excess, gift, desire, prayer, has mediated the return of the reality of God to the center of theology [cf. Tracy, *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994) 36–46].

Currently of special interest are those thinkers who hold that a proper postmodern theology must be "post-secular." The secularization of the West was a consequence of the privatization of "religion" since the seventeenth century. As reason was placed on a secure and universal foundation, religion was dismissed because it was "local"—a matter of historically contingent traditions. Recall Lessing's "ugly ditch" between "the necessary truths of reason" and "the accidental truths of history!" With the end of modernity we find that there is no ditch, that modern universal reason is another tradition [cf. Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)]. The postmodern becomes the post-secular. Post-secular theologians make use of postmodern thought in tactical or pragmatic ways but refuse any possible contamination by secular thought. John Milbank's "neo-Augustinian" vision is a good example. Theologian Graham Ward goes as far as to claim that "only theology can complete the postmodern project. Only theology can truly occupy the postmodern condition" [Graham Ward, ed., *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997) xxxiv].

(3) *Theology, Deconstruction, and Ontotheology*

If postmodernism is a slippery term, deconstruction is even slippier! Here the major figure is, of course, Jacques Derrida, who has written, as we have seen, on negative theology, but whose chief contribution through his deconstructive thought is to offer an answer to the theological demand for a "non-metaphysical theology" [cf. Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989)]. Hart follows Derrida in interpreting the Adamic myth as a sort of explanation of the genesis of philosophy. He presents metaphysics as an infralapsarian phenomenon. Although Adam's sin was chiefly moral in character, it was also a trespass of the linguistic sign—a desire for unmediated knowledge. Accordingly, a discourse is metaphysical to the extent to which it claims that presence to consciousness absolutely precedes representation. For metaphysical discourse the concept is fashioned as a moment of pure presence with the sign representing the presence in its absence. Here we find a clarification of one of Derrida's

more (in)famous remarks: "There is nothing outside of the text." Derrida is insisting that there is no knowledge, of which we can speak, which is unmediated. Deconstruction comes into play theologically when God is used to ground our accounts of phenomena, which happens when we regard God as the highest being and the ground of being. Deconstruction offers a critique of theism, to be sure, but it is directed to the 'ism' rather than to the 'theos'; it offers a critique of the use to which 'God' is put, but does not make any claim whatsoever about the *reality* of God. This clarification is useful in any discussion of "ontotheology."

The literal meaning of the word "ontotheology," the conflation of the philosophical notion of Being and the Self-revelation of the God of the Bible has roots all the way back to patristic theology. While Tertullian cried, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Augustine and most of the early Fathers identified God with eternal, immutable Being. But the current, pejorative use of this term stems from Heidegger's identification of modern metaphysics with ontotheology. As critique, ontotheology does not aim at those theistic theologies which affirm that there is a Highest Being and that nothing can be properly understood apart from this Highest Being. Ontotheology names those attempts that permit God to enter the scene only in the service of the human project of mastering the whole of reality—what Augustine would call *uti Deo.* The critique of ontotheology is directed not at *what* we say about God, but at *how* we say it, to what purpose, in the service of what project. As a project of intellectual mastery, ontotheology presupposes and practices the primacy of theoretical reason. But the goal of theology is never a theoretical system; its goal is concrete Christian existence, the *praxis* of the believer as a distinctive mode of existence. Authentic theology is a practical discipline. Ontotheology is *hubris,* the idolatry of trying to put God at our disposal. The critique of ontotheology would have theology be *theo*-logy [cf. Merold Westphal, "Overcoming Onto-Theology," in John Caputo and Michael Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999)].

(4) *Postmodern Theological Anthropology*

Both the philosophical and the theological postmodern critique of modernity begin with a massive assault on the "turn to the subject" with its cognate issues: universal reason, historical progress, and androcentrism. Some of these postmodern thinkers employ a rhetoric of hyperbole evident in such phrases as "the death of the subject" or "the end of the self." Their target, of course, is the foundational subject of the Cartesian *cogito* or the Kantian transcendental self. Their critique appears at times "innocent;" they jettison modern concerns without re-

mainder, without caring to salvage the grains of truth and value in those concerns.

A postmodern theological anthropology must retrieve the biblical notion of the self as person, the responsible self in relation to others. This retrieval has much to gain from the postmodern critique of the modern self which found its center in consciousness, in thought, in private interiority. Perhaps the most common characteristic of postmodern anthropology is its insistence on the linguisticality of human existence. Premodern anthropology (e.g., that of Thomas Aquinas) explored the essential structure of human being in terms of "human nature" with its specific powers of intellect and will. Instructed by the contemporary emphasis on language as the key to understanding the human, we might say that human nature is the given potential for human existence, but this potential must be nurtured by a linguistic induction into the human community. lt is language that makes human knowing and doing possible. Aristotle got it right—we are animals that have the *logos* (word *before* thought, making thought possible), and his social anthropology follows—as linguistic animals we are political animals (we need others to talk and to listen to). Speech makes intersubjectivity the matrix of personal subjectivity.

In his project of retrieving human subjectivity in the wake of the postmodern critique of the monological, autonomous self philosopher Calvin Schrag explores the notion of the "decentered self" within the context of communicative praxis. This "decentered self" is, of course, the Christian ideal of losing oneself to find oneself. The "self-centered self" is the classical definition of the sinner. In a postmodern approach that refuses merely to jettison human subjectivity, the modern question, "What is the Self?" yields to the question, "Who is the Self?" The "what" question is the metaphysical search for the unchanging, essential core of the human being. The "who" question invites a story for an answer, a temporal narrative filled with changing situations. It is the social process that is responsible for the appearance of the self as a kind of "multiple personality." In this process the "who" emerges in its different roles, its different relationships, its different responsibilities. These "different selves" of our different involvements in language and life against the background of multiple social memories, various customs, habits, and institutional practices revolve around a "responding center," a personal sphere of interest and concern whence things are said and done. The "who" is a shifting center of initiative and response in the ongoing human "conversation."

But conversation requires tongues, and tongues come with bodies. For postmodern anthropology, embodiment together with temporality is an essential characteristic of the "decentered self." Through the emphasis on the linguisticality of human existence the human body is

rediscovered as basic symbol. The body is the self-manifestation, the self-expression of the human person, the concrete "medium" through which the human person becomes a reality in the world. In the sacramental economy of Catholicism "to express" is "to effect." By bodily self-expression the human being enacts itself in a lifetime. Body is the basic human sacrament through which the human person effects itself in freedom through interdependence with the embodied selves of other human beings in their common commerce with the world.

This "common commerce with the world" raises the question of ethics, and postmodern thought has often been charged with ethical relativism. An "innocent" critique of modernity would dismiss the Enlightenment's tradition of human emancipation through reason. While we can no longer presuppose a "universal reason," other approaches to the search for the human good are available. A dialogical approach to the search for truth and goodness should replace the monological methods of modernity. Relativism is not inevitable. It is quite difficult, however, but we must learn to live in critical openness to the cultural and religious pluralism of our time. We will learn that it is only through engaged encounter with the "other" that we will come to a more profound understanding of our own tradition. "Postmodern thinking, if it means anything at all, means a philosophy of 'alterity,' a relentless attentiveness and sensitivity to the 'other'" [John Caputo, "The Good News about Alterity: Derrida and Theology," *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (1993) 453].

Perhaps the most radical formulation of the problem of "the Other" comes from the French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas [cf. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley, eds., *Re-Reading Levinas* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991)]. His vocabulary immediately reveals his postmodern distance from autonomy, the great ethical ideal of modernity which he replaces with "heteronomy"—ethical living is constant openness, constant obedience, to the summons of the other—especially to the oppressed, the excluded, the marginalized ("the widow, the orphan, and the stranger" of Exod 22:21). Against the Western tradition which emphasizes reciprocity, likeness, and symmetry in "personal" relationships, Levinas emphasizes the lack of reciprocity, unlikeness, asymmetry wherein I, in responding to "the other" *(l'autrui)*, am always responsible for (to) "the other" *(l'autrui)*, regardless of the other's response to me. A supererogatory ethics, indeed!

(5) *Postmodern Christology*

In his *Jesus Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), Roger Haight has produced a postmodern christology. Claiming that "christology in the second half of the twentieth century has moved away

from christology from above, away from placing a doctrine or a theology of the Trinity at the source of christology" (330), Haight interprets current movements in christology as evidence of a gradual appropriation of a postmodern consciousness of historicity and pluralism: Jesus research and narrative christology, liberation, political, feminist, and inculturated christologies, and christologies addressing religious pluralism.

Central to Haight's approach is his insistence that Jesus is the subject matter of christology; all statements about Jesus Christ must have some connection with Jesus of Nazareth. This insistence becomes especially interesting when Haight considers the Logos as a symbol for God, effective in the world, in reference to Jesus (e.g., in the Prologue of John). It seems obvious that the Logos has been interpreted in trinitarian language as a "real being," distinct from God—alongside God, under God. This hypostatization of the Logos has been responsible for the most serious problems in christology and in trinitarian thought. "Once the Logos is hypostatized, one has the problem of the second God" (476). Personally, I agree with Haight, but this interpretation is likely to provoke significant discussion!

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LITURGICAL PREACHING

*Edward Foley, Capuchin*

# Which Lent to Preach?

Major feasts and liturgical seasons of the church year are moments of remarkable promise and challenge for the liturgical preacher. The recently concluded Advent-Christmas cycle, for example, provided many preachers with unusually rich ritual contexts that unquestionably contribute to the homiletic moment. Treasured musical settings, a heightened visual environment, and even fuller churches on such occasions can energize the preacher in many ways that ordinary Sunday fare simply does not.

At the same time, the great liturgical festivals and seasons can generate their own particular anxiety for the preacher. For example, assemblies often have higher expectations for the homilies of Christmas, Easter, or Pentecost than for the Sundays in Ordinary Time. Furthermore, the increased presence of occasional church-goers during high seasons can put added pressure on the homilist to evangelize effectively. Finally, preachers often have increased expectations of themselves at these times and wonder if they can rise to the occasion or say something fresh about the mysteries at hand.

Lent is a season of similar promise and challenge for the homilist. Yet, apart from the usual energy and angst that mark the preacher of other high seasons, there is a further pastoral and homiletic challenge that arises at this and no other time in the church year. For in Lent, the homilist and other liturgical leaders need to decide not only what to preach, but what readings to proclaim and preach.

In some circumstances worship leaders are allowed to make decisions about omitting one or another reading at Mass (see, for example, the *Directory for Masses with Children*, n. 42). At other times, the liturgical leadership is given the opportunity to choose between alternative readings for various ritual Masses or Masses for various needs and occasions. These options, however, seldom exist on Sundays, solemnities or during the great liturgical seasons. Rather, it is ordinarily presumed that the three readings from the Lectionary appointed for a given Sunday or solemnity be employed. This is so as not to obscure the "proper character of the liturgical season or needlessly interrupt the semicontinuous reading of some biblical book" (*Introduction to the Lectionary*, n. 78).

One of the only stipulated exceptions to this "read what's appointed" rule for a major liturgical season occurs during Lent. As noted in the *Introduction to the Lectionary,* the gospels of Cycle A have a very important relationship to the rites of Christian initiation. Thus, the Cycle A reading can be employed during every Lent, especially when candidates for baptism are present (*Introduction to the Lectionary,* n. 13). The relationship of these readings for the initiatory process is so strong that the Lectionary further notes that when those key rituals for the elect (the scrutinies) are celebrated outside of Lent, the readings are always taken from the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, Cycle A (*Lectionary for Mass,* nn. 745–47). This is to underscore the fact that it is not the Lectionary which sets the rites of initiation, but initiation which establishes the Lectionary.

While some preachers may think that is a non-issue, a decision about which readings to preach in Lent is not one to be overlooked: not to choose is, in effect, to choose—but to do so badly. For those concerned about the time needed to make an informed decision about which readings to employ during Lent, early 2000 provides an unusual respite in the liturgical calendar and ample opportunity for this reflection. Ordinarily we only have a few Sundays between the end of the Christmas cycle and the start of Lent. In 2000, however, the Christmas cycle ends on January 19 and the First Sunday of Lent does not occur until March 12. The long stretch from the Second to the Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time—from mid-January to mid-March—provides ample opportunity for planning Lent and its preaching.

It may seem like an extra burden, but the process of selecting readings may actually have a number of beneficial side effects for liturgical planning and preaching. This is true, in part, because responsibly selecting readings for Lent puts the preacher in a necessary dialogue with others in liturgical planning. Although various documents presume that both preaching preparation and liturgical planning are accomplished collaboratively, this does not always happen.

Over the past few issues of *NTR,* I have tried to stress in this column that liturgical preaching is a dialogue. I have emphasized that the assembly is the subject matter rather than the object of preaching. Liturgical preaching—like the very liturgy which serves as its defining context—is not a product the preacher provides for the assembly, but a dialogue which the preacher forges with the assembly.

It is difficult to imagine that the preaching event can be appropriately dialogic if the preparation for that event is not also dialogic. This means the preacher must engage with other central liturgical ministers and planners as well as receive input from the assembly. It is a vision embedded in *Fulfilled in Your Hearing,* but one seldom explored. The

need to select the Lenten readings is an opportunity for preachers to change that pattern. It is particularly important to talk with the people who coordinate the RCIA, or those who are doing any other kind of Lectionary-based catechesis in your community. It will also be necessary to speak with the people who select the music for worship which needs to be in harmony with the readings and other texts of the liturgy.

The most appropriate way to carry on this dialogue with the people in your community who work in RCIA, catechesis, music, and liturgy is through a single meeting. The beginning of February is not too early. In that meeting the members of the group need to ponder a few key questions, particularly about the community that will be hearing the readings. Consider, for example, how often elect have been present in the community during Lent over the years, and how often the Cycle A readings have been proclaimed in worship. Also recall the strong correlation between the readings in Cycle A and the scrutiny prayer texts. Together with the proper prefaces that match the gospel readings, they provide an unusual constellation of key images for planning and preaching. Such considerations might lead you to opt for the Cycle A readings this Lent.

At the same time, the group needs to consider the need for opening up for the community which Vatican II called "the treasury of the Bible." The appointed Lenten texts for Cycle B, for example, offer a variety of readings which occur at no other place in the Lectionary. These include powerful texts such as God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9 (the First Sunday of Lent), the sacrifice of Abraham in Genesis 22 (the Second Sunday of Lent), Jesus cleansing the Temple in John 2 (the Third Sunday of Lent) and the promise of a new covenant in Jeremiah 31 (the Fifth Sunday of Lent). It may be that the Cycle A readings have been overused in your community, and these Cycle B readings need to be revisited.

Less important than the decision one makes about which readings to proclaim and preach is the process employed in making that decision. Ideally there should be integrity between that process and the preaching it enables. Since the liturgy is a dialogic act, the liturgical preaching and the process which generates it should be as well. Such collaboration is often a boon for the preaching. Those who coordinate the RCIA, for example, often have insights about the various rituals for the elect which could enhance the preaching. The musicians cannot only provide ideas about the music accompanying the rites, but even help the preacher think about weaving music into the homily itself.

Preachers do not have to go it alone. Lent 2000 provides the opportunity to change any lone-ranger patterns that have developed for the homilist over the years. Start by engaging a few key people around the issue of which cycle of readings to proclaim. In the process, get input

on your preaching. It could be the beginning of a whole new style of homily preparation that is both collaborative and life-giving.

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*The next millennium requires a new kind of politics, focused more on moral principles than on the latest polls, more on the needs of the poor and vulnerable than on the contributions of the rich and powerful, more on the pursuit of the common good than on the demands of special interests. As Catholics and as voters, this is not an easy time for faithful citizenship. . . . Sometimes it seems few candidates and no party fully reflect our values. But now is not a time for retreat. The new millennium should be an opportunity for renewed participation. We must challenge all parties and every candidate to defend human life and dignity, to pursue greater justice and peace, to uphold family life and to advance the common good.*

—Administrative Board of U.S. Catholic Conference

# BOOK REVIEWS

**Preaching Better: Practical Suggestions for Homilists.** By Ken Untener. New York: Paulist Press, 1999. Pages, 130. Paper, $10.95.

This book springs from the pastoral experience of Kenneth Untener, bishop of Saginaw, Michigan. In 1975 Father Untener was appointed to teach homiletics part-time at St. John's Seminary near Detroit. To facilitate his teaching, he began to ask people what they liked or did not like about homilies and jotted these remarks in a pocket notebook. Along the way, Untener sorted these comments into twenty-five basic categories. In 1993 Bishop Untener implemented a plan in which he meets with priests, deacons, and lay homilists where their homilies are examined in order to "console, offer tips, and try to figure out how we can preach better" (2). *Preaching Better* reflects his gathered homiletic comments from the people in the pew and insights gleaned from his homiletic program in Saginaw. It is meant as a practical guidebook of what to do and what not to do in the pulpit. The book's title is surprising since the same title was used by Frank J. McNulty for his preaching book in 1985, which was also published by Paulist Press.

There are two features in *Preaching Better* that this reviewer appreciated. First, there is the attention given to the hearer of the homily. In the homiletic triad (preacher, homily, hearer) it is the hearer that is most neglected by homileticians. Normative liturgical documents contain such phrases as "the concrete circumstances of life" or "the special needs of the listeners," but there is never an exploration of such pastoral phrases. That is why Untener's sensitivity to the hearers of the homily is so refreshing. It reminds us of one of the reasons that Gregory was called "the Great." Shortly after his election to the episcopacy of Rome, Gregory wrote his *Pastoral Rule* (591) which also was a guidebook for preachers to pay attention to the heterogeneity of the liturgical assembly.

Untener opens up his old pocket notebook and offers blunt comments from the people of God, e.g., "He's a good speaker. It's just that he's got nothing to say"; "It was an interesting thought. Too bad it got in the way of everything else you were saying"; "He's interesting, even entertaining, but it doesn't come from him. It's all cut-and-paste." The author also does not hesitate to offer his own pastoral tips: "Many a mediocre homily was one step away from greatness: editing"; "No matter how well a homily (or any talk) is going, don't think they're enjoying it as much as you are."

The second feature that makes this book delightful reading is the bishop's pulpy analogies and metaphors, e.g., "The purpose of *writing* is to build a bridge from thought to words. The purpose of *editing* is to inspect the results and make some adjustments"; "the homilist comes into a kitchen that is filled with the smell of something already cooking, and it is the Lord who is doing it." Faith has always depended upon analogies and metaphors. The author not only gives us homiletic tips, but masterfully demonstrates his preaching

through his imaginative writing. The only analogies that this reviewer found overworked were the ones from his golf game.

Readers should not expect to find insights from contemporary homiletic scholarship nor in-depth reflections on normative liturgical documents in *Preaching Better*. For example, in chapter two "What Is a Homily?" Untener never answers the question because "Defining a homily can become abstract, complicated" (11). The ministry of preaching is always larger than what any given group of hearers think it is. The biblical/liturgical homily has a history with a rich tapestry of views, theologies, and theoretical constructs that are vital to the discipline and the praxis of homiletics. Mary Collins, O.S.B., is an astute observer when she notes that "the lack of sound theory may underlie the chronic weakness in liturgical preaching that persists despite the church's conviction that the homily is a constitutive element of our eucharistic praxis."

I recommend that homilists read the practical wisdom from hearers of the homily and the helpful hints of a caring, creative bishop found in *Preaching Better*. It is certainly not a substitute for homiletic theory but a delightful and quotable companion in the dialogue.

*Robert P. Waznak, S.S.*
*Washington Theological Union*

**Companions in Hope: The Art of Christian Caring.** By Robert J. Wicks and Thomas E. Rodgerson. New York: Paulist Press, 1998. Pages, iv + 228. Paper, $16.95.

An excellent addition to the field of pastoral care and ministry, this practical compendium is for the ordinary person who wants to be available to others in a listening and caring role. The authors' caution at the beginning of the book to watch for and to recognize those special times when helping others is best relegated to a helping professional is well placed. However, the breadth of examples they provide to encourage concerned Christians to engage in the service of caring is perhaps the best feature of the book. Ample case studies and vignettes introduce and explain clear and useful points about caring. The usual tendency toward jargon and oversimplification is avoided in the treatment of listening, being supportive, dealing with developmental crises, and healthy confrontation. Readers of this volume truly get a sense of the enormous number of resources available to them, yet the scope of the book focuses on the everyday, often daily, means of being present to the pain of another.

*Companions in Hope* can be a lay manual for helping others. The two main themes, listening and caring, are presented in successive iterations. The authors employ the scriptural metaphor of "standing on holy ground" as a way to be in relationship with others. This metaphor is extended throughout the section on listening because it implies an association of trust. Other references made to the Scriptures help to identify problems that arise in a caring relationship and explore ways to integrate Christian tradition.

Wicks and Rodgerson describe a careful, almost step-by-step, progression of how to envisage caring in an ordinary helping relationship. They are careful to point out that intentional caring is not a form of psychotherapy which is the process of seeking some change in one's personality. Intentional caring, in fact, is being present to another so that he or she is able to view life in a new way. Having a "conversation with a goal" is the way the authors clarify what they mean about caring in an intentional way. The use of questioning, responding, and knowing when to refer gives the reader a whirlwind tour through a basic introduction to pastoral care.

The image of hope invoked in the title is an apt description for the process of listening and caring. It suggests that God's profound presence can indeed make the most significant difference in the midst of any problem. The underlying theme in this book posits that when our God becomes as big, as real, or as compelling as the crises we face in our daily lives, then we will have the ability to begin the process of healing, conversion, and/or transformation.

The section on caring for the caregiver highlights the dangers of being in a helping relationship. In the words of the authors, there is "a purity and a pathology" in our desire to help others. The tendency to respond to God's action in our lives can be complemented with a desire to "fix" something or "play god" for another. It is helpful to read this section slowly and deliberately as a guide for being in a helping relationship. The authors remind the reader that the intensity which comes from interacting with others in caring sometimes obfuscates the truth that it is truly God's grace that heals. Pastoral attending is but an aid in the process.

The concluding section of the book titled "Common Questions about Caring" offers an excellent sampling of issues that caregivers commonly encounter. Overall, Wicks and Rodgerson provide a cogent arrangement of critical issues in caregiving for the Christian who wants to intentionally be available to others. Likewise, any student beginning a formal education in pastoral care and theology would find this book helpful.

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**The Old Testament and the Significance of Jesus: Embracing Change—Maintaining Christian Identity.** By Fredrick C. Holmgren. Foreword by Walter Brueggemann. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999. Pages, xviii + 204. Paper, $16.00.

The author of this book, Fredrick C. Holmgren, is a professor of Old Testament at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. Walter Brueggemann's foreword situates the work against the background of the political domination and the interpretative practices of supersessionism by Christianity against Judaism which have been almost completely unexamined in the Christian community. In response to the failures on the part of Christianity toward Judaism, a direct response is needed. More than that, the close, careful, patient work of

exegesis must address a rereading of texts that have been misread by the light of Christian supersessionism.

Brueggemann identified three important areas of Holmgren's study. (1) Holmgren's concept of "creation/depth" exegesis fits earlier texts to later times. He reviews the ways the New Testament community, the rabbinic community, and the Qumran community legitimately engaged in imaginative interpretation of texts by which the text is opened in order to serve subsequent communal claims. (2) Holmgren provides an extended exegetical reflection on Jer 31:31-34. While the text can be read toward Jesus, it is not necessarily focused in that direction, and thus a mandated move toward Jesus is not tenable. (3) Finally, Holmgren's discussion of "Jesus in the Creeds" opens the way to think back to the Church's formula and back behind those formulations to where there is common ground with the forms of emerging Judaism.

The author's position is, that in the light of modern scholarship, the Church needs to address three concerns in the present Jewish-Christian dialogue: (1) the manner in which Christians approach the Hebrew Scriptures, (2) areas of commonality and differences with Judaism, and (3) New Testament witness concerning Jesus Christ who is the Church's reason for existing (xvi). For him an encouraging aspect of this new emphasis on the part of both conservative/evangelical and mainline scholars is the stance that embraces change while holding to the importance of maintaining Christian identity (xv). Holmgren attempts to have us grasp the concept that a community of Jews who knew the God of their Scriptures came to see in Jesus the same God at work in the same way. The Christian tradition today must come to grips with the theological implications of that event.

Holmgren's approach to the task he undertook is deep, well balanced, and insightful. In dealing with prophetic denunciation, he makes the point that the accusations of the prophets are a case of Israel's ability to practice, endure, and canonize self-criticism, which reflects a remarkable spiritual maturity (1).

In discussing the search of Jewish Christians for Jesus in the depth of the Old Testament, he points out that early Christians did not discover Jesus as the result of an initial study of the Hebrew Scriptures. Rather, from their meeting with Jesus in their time period, they looked back to the Old Testament to gain an understanding of what had happened in their experience. They used a "believer" or "depth" interpretation to give it voice for a new time and a new situation. They knew Jesus by experience, but they needed the words and imagery of Scripture to articulate their knowing (13). He cites texts from the New Testament to explicate his thesis, and shows that depth of creative interpretation arises out of a faith stance; it is believer exegesis. It was the focus on Jesus rather than on Torah that created a significant difference for Christians.

Holmgren cites prominent scholarship from various traditions, thus integrating into the work a wide background of research. Along with indices of names, subjects, and scriptural references, the book is a fine resource for graduate students and professional biblical scholars, as well as for educated readers who engage in the enterprise of exegesis and interfaith understanding.

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**Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men.** By Joan D. Chittister. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pages, xii + 187. Paper, $20.00.

Much has been published in the recent past on the topic of feminist spirituality. However, most of it has been directed to women. Maintaining that feminists come in two genders, Chittister writes for both women and men. She does this under the rubric of feminism which she states "regards the human race as one humanity in two genders and sets out to make the fulness of humanity available to both of them." Her book rests on three premises: (1) what is feminine is defined by women themselves and not by male-biased society; (2) exclusively male values or norms must be exposed as inadequate; (3) spirituality rides on an understanding of these claims. She maintains that true spirituality will release "the feminine dimension in both women and men." Those acquainted with Chittister's ardent commitment to feminism will not be surprised by these fundamental positions. Through the book she contrasts the values and attitudes of feminists and masculinists. She maintains that the first are committed to "peace, freedom, respect, compassion, and mutuality," and she believes that the hope of the future rests with them. She accuses the second of "power, force, control, and domination," and she places the responsibility of the various forms of factionalism at their doorstep.

The topics that she treats in her chapters reveal both her social consciousness and her critique of the currently reigning dominant worldview; Feminism—a cornerstone of spirituality; Culture—the foundation of Spirituality; Patriarchy—the old worldview; Feminism—the new worldview; Christianity and Feminism—a mirror image; Reason and Feeling—a new way of thinking; Power and Empowerment—a new strength; Aggression and Nonviolence—a new road to peace; Pride and Humility—a new self-acceptance; Universalism and Otherness—a new focus on the subject; Authoritarianism and Dialogue—a new level of consensus; Competition and Compassion—a new game of winner gives all; Vulnerability and Strength—a new paradox; The Patriarchal Woman—internalized oppression; The Cosmic Vision of Creation—a circle not a pyramid; Feminism—a revolution of the heart. The perspective of each chapter is captured in the introductory artwork of Nancy Earle, an illustrator whose lines are forthright and whose colors are brilliant, a style that suits the book perfectly.

The book is vintage Chittister. That is both its strength and its weakness. The reader will find here a critical eye that can pierce through "the way we've always done it," revealing the biases in that point of view, along with a creative spirit that suggests a new and inclusive way of living in the world. She is fearless in her challenge of a world where some are relegated to silence, abuse and marginality, and insightful in her suggestions for transformation. She situates spirituality squarely in the historical, sociopolitical world of real women and men, not in some ethereal realm of transcendent spiritual concepts. She does not deal with external rituals of performance but with interior attitudes of the mind and heart.

Those who have read Chittister through the years will appreciate her insights, but will find very little that is new. Furthermore, her use of "masculin-

ist" and "feminist" is somewhat problematic. In several places in this book, one can get the idea that the criticism is of men rather than a male-preferred attitude, which can be held by both men and women. In the earlier years of this third wave of feminism, the terms offered a very clear distinction between patriarchy and the alternative that was being proposed. However, they were explicitly associated with male and female and, though Chittister uses them to mean exclusive and inclusive respectively, the earlier meaning survives. This makes their continued use problematic today, when we have become more nuanced in our critique. Admittedly, our vocabulary has not kept pace with our insights. Perhaps in her next book, Chittister can help us in this venture.

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**Balm for Gilead: Pastoral Care for African American Families Experiencing Abuse.** By Toinette M. Eugene and James Newton Poling. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998. Pages, 226. Paper, $16.00.

Domestic violence and abuse in mainstream American society is a difficult subject to discuss openly and practically. It is even more difficult among cultural minorities, especially African Americans, because of the pressure of racial loyalty. Toinette Eugene and James Poling face this difficulty head on in their frank, scientific, and pastoral book.

The authors bring an unusual set of credentials to this troubling issue. Toinette Eugene is a Roman Catholic, womanist ethician and cross-cultural consultant; James Poling is a Presbyterian, a professor of pastoral care and a pastoral counselor.

Their book follows the basic format of practical theology. First, they describe the current condition of domestic abuse in black families. Then they examine its historical roots, offer a pastoral (womanist) analysis, and make specific suggestions for the praxis of individuals and churches.

At the heart of their analysis is an appreciation for the distinct role the black church has played in African-American life. On the other hand, the black church has not adequately faced the fact of family and child abuse within the African-American community. Eugene and Poling acknowledge this shortcoming and draw upon the relatively few scientific studies available to analyze both historical and contemporary causes. Not surprisingly the twin evils of racism and sexism, set within the context of class discrimination, are at the core of the problem.

This generic assessment is personalized through six graphic vignettes which become the reference point for pastoral analysis and suggestions for pastoral intervention with the victims and survivors as well as the perpetrators of abuse.

The governing pastoral principle with victims is to believe persons who claim to be abused, and provide for their safety until a full assessment can be made. Too often church leaders tend to dismiss accusations or excuse the

accused, leaving the victims feeling even more alone and unwilling to trust anyone in authority. Ongoing support for victims should include time and opportunities to mourn the broken relationship with a domestic abuser, to heal the damage which has been done, and to reconnect in relationships without violence.

The primary principle with perpetrators is accountability. Since perpetrators are highly manipulative, they will appeal to the forgiving instincts of family members and pastoral leaders. What is needed is a firm and fair application of justice ranging from cooperation with the legal system to support for treatment.

Drawing on the role of the black church and recognizing the need of victims for support, the authors suggest eight ways that congregations can provide safety and healing. One of the most important is to avoid misusing the Bible, e.g., by preaching a false sense of forgiveness, a superficial reconciliation which endangers the victim, and an unqualified doctrine of honoring (abusive) parents and accepting the male as head of the family.

Although this book is written in the context of black family life, its analyses and pastoral recommendations are applicable to any situation of domestic abuse and violence. Similarly, although the book is written for pastors and church ministers, its clear, non-technical style of presentation makes it appropriate reading for anyone who may face this problem. Finally, the honesty and courage of the authors in confronting this issue offers perhaps the most valuable pastoral lesson of the book: nothing is gained by hiding the truth.

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**For This Land: Writings on Religion.** By Vine Deloria, Jr., with an introduction by James Treat. New York and London: Routledge, 1998. Pages, 311. Paper, $19.99.

*For This Land* brings together twenty-nine essays written over the past thirty years by prominent American Indian activist, lawyer and educator Vine Deloria, Jr. Arranged by American Studies scholar James Treat into five thematic sections and rough chronological order, these essays offer a somewhat disjointed but nevertheless trenchant critique of religion in America. Deloria's periodic analysis of the religious dimension of public life argues authoritatively for "tribal wisdom" in a reformation of mainstream culture.

Deloria is uniquely suited for the kind of cross-cultural criticism he provides. In a retrospective essay, he recounts his own religious history (an account that is developed further in Treat's helpful introduction), indicating the personal ground for his public life. Raised in a mixed-blood community on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, the son and grandson of priests in the Sioux Episcopal Church, the great-grandson of a Yanktonais medicine man,

and graduate of a Lutheran Seminary, Deloria eventually became both a leader in the movement for tribal self-determination and an insider-critic of Protestant missionary activities. His essays powerfully reflect this dual heritage, producing an often biting critique of institutional Christianity while championing "the Indian way."

The usefulness of the book for students of religion and culture or theology and church history largely depends upon the thrust of each section. Section One, "White Church, Red Power," brings together some of Deloria's earliest commentary on religion and social reform. Writing in the midst of the Indian protests of the 1970s, Deloria criticizes the failures of denominational Christianity, points to the deleterious effects of a secularized Christian worldview in the West, and examines the misunderstood role of tribal religion in social protest. At times measured and thoughtful, at times harsh and direct, these essays set an activist tone for the entire book.

Section Two, "Liberating Theology," introduces the philosophical core and theological direction of Deloria's work. His Native American critique of liberation theology and his analysis of religion and law both stress the shortcomings of the Western way of interpreting experience. His proposal for a truly "liberating theology" involves one freed of secularized religious concepts of a lawful universe and open to non-Western ways of envisioning reality.

"Worldviews in Collision" takes us deeper into the metaphysical ground of Deloria's cross-cultural criticism. In several essays he examines the relation of traditional religious views of reality to post-traditional secular ones. Deloria's combined Christian and Indian background becomes evident in a Tillichian-style analysis of the religious situation which sees Native American spirituality as conducive to a revitalized public theology.

"Habits of the State" offers a uniquely Native American critique of "civil religion" in the U.S. Here Deloria examines the deleterious impact of recent court cases on tribal religious practices and points to the ineffectiveness of recent legislation to protect tribal religious freedoms. In his final essay, written in 1992, Deloria expresses the overall thrust of his writings on religion. "Traditional religions," he observes, "are under attack not because they are Indian but because they are fundamentally religious."

In the last section, "Old Ways in A New World," Deloria most clearly lays out the positive role tribal wisdom can play in renewing religious values. Commenting on the "religious classic" *Black Elk Speaks,* and assessing the religious significance of the American Indian experience of exile, Deloria describes the relevance of the traditional Native American sense of the sacredness of time and holiness of place.

In general, Deloria's double-edged criticism of American culture can profitably be read with the religious criticism of Stephen Carter or the black theology of James Cone. His insider-outsider position, and his forceful and knowledgeable advocacy of tribal religion, create a prophetic voice in the current analysis of religion in the public square. The segmented nature of this particular work calls out for a more cohesive, systematic treatment.

*William A. Durbin*
*Washington Theological Union*

**Formation of the Moral Self.** By Johannes A. Van der Ven. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pages, xiii + 410. Paper, $45.00.

This welcome book is a magisterial assessment of the many factors and dynamics that contribute to moral education and formation. It grew out of a course given by the author at the University of Chicago in 1994 and was refined subsequently in dialogue with colleagues. Van der Ven teaches in the department of empirical theology at the Divinity School of Nijmegen University in the Netherlands and is a key expositor of the developing discipline of practical theology. As such, he sees as his role to provide an exhaustive examination of all areas of cultural study that contribute to an empirical description of and a critical theory for understanding the genesis of the moral life.

Twenty years ago, when the moral development theories of Lawrence Kohlberg were widely examined and discussed, the complaint often arose that moral stage theories were too thin. Kohlberg's attempt to explain the evolution of moral cognition in terms of the effect of cognitive dissonance was not persuasive for many. However, Kohlberg did largely shape the emerging quest for a clear and comprehensive account of the genesis of morality: he persuaded most scholars that a developmental account was feasible, and he motivated certain colleagues to undertake steps to elaborate fuller and more sensitive descriptions of this development.

Now *Formation of the Moral Self* appears, offering a comprehensive overview of the multiple dimensions of moral education. It will be difficult to convey briefly the scope and organization of this complex work. It strikes me as being more a handbook or encyclopedia than a classroom text. Striving for completeness, the author introduces almost more detail than even a conscientious reader can assimilate without sustained and repeated study. In any case, here is an overview of the volume and a few highlights of special interest to this reviewer.

The author situates moral education within what he calls the paradigm of interactionism, meaning education structured by the interdependence of personal and environmental factors. Within this interactive context, there arise seven modes or types of moral education, all alike interpreted as forms of moral communication. Two modes of moral education that are called "informal" (meaning contextually induced) are discipline and socialization. Four other modes are "formal" (meaning the object of explicit educational processes); these are transmission, development, clarification, and emotional formation. The final chapter addresses education for character and reviews the major themes of contemporary virtue studies and character ethics.

Some of the flavor of the author's treatment of these seven modes of moral education can be evoked by noticing that in the first chapter he examines communitarian theory (Etzioni) as a way to shape his understanding of meaningful discipline; in treating socialization, he summarizes and develops Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory. The chapter on transmission is shaped (in part) by following Ricoeur's thoughts about what is good, just, and wise. In the chapter on development, the author engages in an extended philosophical critique of Rawls's conception of justice which provides the conceptual context for Kohlberg's moral stages, and he proceeds to reimagine the nature of moral

stages in consequence. In treating emotional formation, Aquinas's theory of the passions plays a major role, even though the author finds this perspective wanting in the light of phenomenological and behaviorist critiques. In this same chapter are rich and provocative discussions of shame and guilt and of sex and love that promote deep and critical reflection even as they take some distance from the Church's traditional teaching on these points.

The concluding chapter on education for character is in certain ways a summary of the author's central concern. Interestingly, he is greatly influenced by Aristotle's solution that the good life entails the pursuit of happiness. His discussion of practical reason, as the faculty that links desires and passions with authentic human goals, leads to an examination of the virtues. Another major theme in character formation is narrative: society's stories provide models for the moral life that mirror, inform, and shape character.

The product of this lengthy exercise is a marshalling of resources for critical perspectives on moral formation that no one seriously interested in this area of study can afford to overlook. The author's erudition and breath of interest, his fine capacity to summarize large swaths of social and philosophical theory, and his confidence in moving through complex issues are most impressive. On the other hand, his vision is eclectic and he draws upon sources that seemed to me occasionally arbitrary and of dubious authority. His penchant for dividing and subdividing aspects of his seven modes of moral education leads in places to a diffusiveness that can dishearten the reader.

In sum, though, here is the work of a pioneer. This is a serious and valuable synthesis of the dynamics of moral education from a theologian who is competent and erudite in both the social sciences and philosophy. Others may pave the road more smoothly, but Van der Ven has the distinction of having blazed the trail.

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**With Hearts on Fire: Reflections on the Weekday Readings of the Liturgical Year.** Joseph G. Donders. Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999. Pages, 340. Paper, $19.95.

In the book of Isaiah, Yahweh promises that just as the rain and snow which come down from the heavens do not return without watering the earth, bringing growth of the seed and bread for the eating, so too "the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do." However, as every gardener knows, when the soil is tended, the rain can penetrate it more readily. This book is skillfully designed to help our minds and hearts be better able to receive the message of the Scriptures, so that we may be part of the carrying out of Yahweh's will.

Although there are numerous commentaries on the Scriptures, and many others that reflect on the Sunday readings, this volume is unique. It offers reflections on the weekday gospel readings for each of the liturgical seasons,

Advent-Christmas, Lent-Triduum-Easter, and Ordinary Time. (Some of the Easter reflections focus on the readings from the Acts of the Apostles.) Each reflection is presented on a single page, with information about the liturgical time of the reading and the relevant scripture passage. The reflections are pithy, clear, and thought-provoking. They are intended for use by homilists and daily Mass participants, and certainly could be used for meditation by anyone seeking to grow in faith, especially catechumens.

In his introduction Joseph Donders describes the lens through which he approaches his work. "In the weekday readings we see Jesus busy evangelizing, healing, and reordering the world around him. . . . During weekdays we are asked to join him in completing his work." In these reflections the theme of preaching the coming reign of God is dominant; Donders continually invites us to see how this preaching calls for our participation in a more just reordering of our world. However, this is not done in a moralistic way. A deep humanity informs the text, a knowledge and appreciation of human nature which helps to highlight characteristics of a very human Jesus, while asking us to look at our own experience, and, to use it, too, as a key to the readings.

Donders's scriptural scholarship subtly informs the text, bringing fresh insight to well-known passages. For example, the admonition to the Syrophoenician woman, that the children's bread not be given to the dogs, is understood quite differently when one realizes that the translation calls for the diminutive, "little dogs" or "puppies." Donders envisions Jesus speaking here with a smile —which invited the woman's response. So, too, thinking of the "pure of heart" as those especially working toward a just world order opens new dimensions to this Beatitude.

Professor of mission and cross-cultural studies at Washington Theological Union, Donders understands the need for inculturation invites us to evaluate the American culture in light of the gospel, always keeping in mind our own younger generation. His use of poetry, personal stories, survey findings, and quotations are all examples of such inculturation.

Daily use of this volume would deepen understanding of the Scriptures and draw one's mind and heart toward sharing in the work which Jesus began.

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**Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology.** By Gordon W. Lathrop. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999. Pages, ix + 236. Cloth, $29.00.

In his earlier work *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), Gordon W. Lathrop, Lutheran theologian and liturgical scholar, examines "both the *use* of strong symbols for the sake of communal orientation in the world and the *strong critique* of symbols for the sake of Jesus Christ" (vii). In *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* he concentrates on the symbol "assembly." This work is among many others that explore inculturation of the gospel message within the social context of believers in liturgical assembly. Lathrop's

purpose is the renewal of congregational life for the visible unity and healthy mission of the churches. His method is to do liturgical theology from what is done in actual worship. Hence, if primary liturgical theology is what the actual experience of worship says of God, secondary liturgical theology is reflection upon this *thing* that liturgy *says*. Pastoral liturgical theology, Lathrop's project here, is turned especially toward the continuing reform of worship.

The issues of the identity of the One Church of Christ, unity of the churches, and mission of the Church shape the contents of the three parts of this work, each concluding with suggestions for pastoral practice. Part One, *A People: Church in Liturgical Perspective,* explores the meaning of "assembly" in the actual practice of worship, and the relationship of diverse Christian assemblies. Lathrop asserts that the localization of the liturgy sets the politics of baptism in dialogue with local politics, the story of the scriptural Word, its judgment and its forgiveness, in dialogue with local memory, the economy of the Eucharist in dialogue with the local economy. Such dialogue transforms, reorients, inverts and sometimes rejects certain elements of local culture. Regarding practice, Lathrop negatively critiques "staged" alternative, friendly and non-threatening worship experiences for an "audience," rather than those that recognize the function of worship to transform culture.

Part Two, *One People: Liturgy and Church Unity,* sets forth the ecumenical rule of prayer, the teaching and the worshipping that constitute baptism in all our churches. Lathrop emphasizes the work of the World Council of Churches' Lima Document, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry,* by asserting that the norm for ecumenical dialogue around Eucharist is (1) the gathering, reading of Scripture, preaching, and interceding, (2) setting out bread and wine together with *eucharistia,* and (3) eating and drinking, and collecting for the poor (in most churches). This common pattern or *ordo* critiques both sacramental and non-sacramental churches. Lathrop rightly maintains that this ancient pattern provides the concrete ambient for mutual encouragement to see these things as more central than any local tradition (such as Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, etc.), precisely because these things enable our common participation in Christ. Regarding practice, Lathrop intriguingly wonders about the possibility of several churches using a common baptismal font.

Part Three, *Holy People: Liturgical Assemblies amid Earth's Peoples,* provides a "method of juxtaposition" by which the churches might evaluate the myriad cultural symbols and "break" them on the gospel by measuring them against the ancient patterns of Baptism and Eucharist. The "method" provides lucid, penetrating questions by which cultural symbols might be "broken" for the sake of Christ, that is, transformed, subverted, or possibly rejected (203).

Both *Holy Things* and *Holy People* will be among the texts in my courses that explore inculturation, the visible unity of the churches, liturgical theology, and the function of symbols to recreate our world in Christ. Lathrop's scholarship reveals a broad grasp of the issues and literature, as well as of the catholicity and force of the liturgy for the peace and salvation of the world. Readers can find here a case for the liturgy as source of moral knowledge and ethical behavior.

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**Affirmations and Admonitions: Lutheran Decisions and Dialogue with Reformed, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches.** By Gabriel Fackre and Michael Root. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998. Pages, xi + 124. Paper, $16.00.

This book is a collection of six essays which were originally delivered as the 1997 Hein-Fry Lectures at eight Lutheran theological seminaries. Fackre, a member of the United Church of Christ, provides the first three essays and Root, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), offers the second trio along with an informative afterword.

Fackre begins by proposing that in the ecumenical dialogue Lutherans offer a unique contribution to other churches in their understanding of justification which links both the "haveability" of the infinite by the finite and the "simultaneity" of being both righteous and sinner at the same time. If this is what Lutherans can tell others, Fackre next acknowledges that Lutherans can hear from other traditions that justification by faith must also be viewed "in the context of the majesty of God *over us,* and the effects of the justifying grace of God imparted *to us*" (21). In his third lecture Fackre reflects on the role of the local congregation in reaching ecumenical unity. Beyond formal ratification of statements, there must be implementation of agreements in the local context. This is a worthy concern for pastoral ministers to acknowledge and seek to implement its challenges.

A pleasing contrast to Fackre's mostly reflective presentations are the more systematized essays by Root which directly discuss three ecumenical proposals which were later voted on at the Churchwide Assembly in the summer of 1997. In the afterword, Root provides us with the outcome of the voting. The first is the Formula of Agreement which, having passed, declares full communion between the ELCA and the three Reformed Churches—Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA), Reformed Church in America (RCA), and United Church of Christ (UCC). This unity is not a merger, but communion, and the long road begins for this to be realized in the lives of local churches. The second proposal is the Concordat of Agreement which sought to establish full communion between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church. This Concordat missed the required two-thirds majority for acceptance by six votes. Two resolutions did pass, which pledge to continue conversations to bring a new proposal to the 1999 assembly. The third is the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification seeking to affirm a consensus in the basic truths of the doctrine of justification between the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church. The book went to press before the Vatican called for clarifications, which have now been added to the Declaration in an Annex which was signed on October 31, 1999. The Declaration does not lead directly to communion but only to agreement on the basic points of justification.

In his three essays on these proposals, Root develops significant points for all ecumenical dialogue. He explains that far from being static, unity arises within a movement. It is "the movement of Christ and the Spirit through word and sacrament, received by faith and at work in the common life and mission of the one church they create" (74). Root insists that ecumenical proposals not be judged as to whether there is consensus on every theological detail, but "only

that consensus needed for the common life to which we are called" (82). Root formulates his criterion to judge ecumenical proposals in the form of a question: "Will a proposal allow the churches regularly and in a comprehensive range of situations to carry out together all those activities they believe are essential to the identity of the church as church without violating their understanding of the identity of the church?" (99).

My biggest difficulty with this book is that it is immediately dated, given its focus on specific proposals. Yet, this series of lectures adds insight and clarity to the ecumenical enterprise. Those interested in keeping current on these and other ecumenical proposals of the ELCA will find up-to-date information on the Internet at www.elca.org/ea/.

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**Whispers of Liberation. Feminist Perspectives on the New Testament.** By Nicholas King, S.J. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998. Pages, 189. Paper, $15.95.

The author, the dean of studies at St. John Vianney in Pretoria, South Africa, wrote this piece during a sabbatical leave at the Jesuit seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts. While there he audited classes in feminist theology given by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza at Harvard. Presumably the context explains the peculiar deference to radical feminist critics by an author whose readings of the New Testament reject the challenge posed by their methodologies. The first section presents the author's explanations of feminist theology. Chapter 1 describes feminist hermeneutics and concludes with a plea not to be afraid of feminism. Chapter 2 treats the issue of using inclusive language for God. Chapter 3 introduces a gallery of feminist critics and theologians, most of whom never appear in the book again. The summaries of their work read like weak lecture notes aimed at persuading students to read the syllabus, in this case, the bibliography.

The second section of the book consists of six chapters in which the author reads his way through the typical collection of women in the New Testament passages and a conclusion. Chapters are devoted to each Gospel with Luke-Acts treated as a single work, to Paul's letters and to the conventional Household Code material in the post-Pauline epistles. The reader quickly discovers that the author's point of view is not feminist analysis or criticism. It is an apology for the New Testament as a text addressed to women. King comments in the conclusion, "my tendency throughout this book [is] to 'defend' or 'save' the New Testament text as not inherently hostile to women, it is the 'word of life' for all" (185). At the same time, he alludes to Schüssler Fiorenza's view that the Church should be the "fellowship" of equals exhibited in the ministry of Jesus (186) but does not address its consequences for ecclesiology.

The heart of the book lies in the chapters devoted to the New Testament. The author provides his own translations of the text, which are often tendentious. He defends his policy of translating words from the stem *diakon*—"to serve, aid, support, to wait at table" as "deacon"/"deaconing" with a claim that it

"was certainly at this stage in the history of the church well on the way to becoming a technical term for a hierarch" (98). To have Jesus' mother addressing "the deacons" in John 2:5 is particularly jarring. The author defends it on pious grounds as well: "'Do whatever he tells you' is not a bad motto for disciples, and we have already seen reason to suppose that the disciples are invited to be 'deacons' or 'servants'" (98). Bad linguistics, bad exegesis and weak ecclesiology. Exegetes will find similar problems with almost every passage. Some insights are grounded in scholarly discussion; other statements ride roughshod over the complexities of the text or seem unaware of debates between feminist critics.

Of course, the author states that he does not intend to write for theologians or exegetes. The aim of his translations and comments is "to hint at how one might pray or preach these passages with sensitivity to women" (53). In other words, this is really a book for pastors, retreat directors, or others working with the New Testament stories in a pastoral context. As such, its clear, unencumbered and apologetic style makes easy reading. The focus on individual gospels and passages makes it possible to pick up any one of the chapters without reading the rest. For such an audience, particularly those afraid of feminism, this book provides a useful resource.

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**The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation.** By Maxwell E. Johnson. Collegeville: Pueblo Books/The Liturgical Press, 1999. Pages, xxii + 414. Paper, $39.95.

With grace of style and clarity of argument Johnson achieves his objectives in writing this sizable tome: a comprehensive textbook on Christian initiation, featuring extensive extracts from primary and secondary sources along with critical evaluation of the rites and their theological interpretations. Formerly a professor at St. John's University, Collegeville, and now at the University of Notre Dame, Johnson explains the origins of the book in his teaching a course on Christian initiation to undergraduate theology majors. This occasioned the annual problem of having to require the students to obtain a burdensome number of books to integrate the ritual texts, history, and pastoral practices that together comprise the theology of the rites. Those three sources—textual, historical, and theological—solidly structure Johnson's approach to teaching an intended audience of not only undergraduates but also masters level theology students and pastoral ministers. All of these constituencies will be challenged by the breadth and depth of Johnson's work but, I suspect, also grateful to stick with him, as are any students who come to realize they are being instructed by a dedicated, competent, but demanding professor.

Johnson thoroughly, but not ploddingly, moves from the origins of Christian initiation in the person and ministry of Jesus and the early Church, through the pre- and post-Nicene developments in both East and West (wisely addressing

the former first), on to medieval and Reformation (Protestant and Catholic) developments, to arrive finally at the contemporary initiatory practices in the churches, attending both to their achievements and remaining problems. In so doing, he provides a valuable service not only to his student-readers but to his fellow liturgical theologians by both marshaling the most recent scholarship (appending an extensive bibliography) and proffering numerous astute and suggestive insights into the material. Examples would include his demonstration of the importance of Jesus' practices of table fellowship and foot-washing, as well as his baptism in the Jordan, not only to the origins but the present reform of Christian initiation; an exceptionally clear and persuasive tracking of the implications inherent in the Roman practice of a second (episcopal) post-baptismal anointing and its problematic relation to hand-laying; seemingly original insight into the mystagogical element in Luther's approach to initiation and catechesis; a lucid stating of the question concerning the extent of initiation appropriate for infants and the implications for other rites that follow therefrom; and, indeed, much more.

A commendable and generally successful feature of the book is its ecumenical perspective. Johnson shows Christians in the various churches of the West and East how they can learn from each others' rituals and theological interpretations of initiation, in both their strengths and weaknesses. One aspect of Johnson's own analysis of current ecumenical problems could stand strengthening. In his discussion of such questions as the confirmation of Christians who join other churches and inter-communion among Christians in general, greater attention to issues of apostolic succession and authority would be pertinent.

By guiding readers through the history and theology of the Christian rites of initiation—and doing so in a way that sustains crucial pastoral questions throughout—the book functions as a companion to the collection of readings on Christian initiation that Johnson previously edited, *Living Water, Sealing Spirit* (The Liturgical Press, 1995). Both volumes, of course, do not address all methodological approaches and possible issues concerning Christian initiation; that would make them not only conceptually but physically unwieldy. Johnson only acknowledges, for example, the burgeoning field of ritual studies. Others might introduce criticisms of Christian initiation being raised by feminist liturgists. Johnson has, nonetheless, appropriately mapped out the extent of his study and provided an enlightening exploration of the ritual and interpretative sources of Christian initiation that will undoubtedly serve a full generation of students, as well as scholars of the literature thereafter.

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**Preaching Basics: A Model and a Method.** By Edward Foley. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1998. Pages, iv + 44. Paper, $12.00.

Much like a young preacher earnestly determined to communicate the depth of his passion, Edward Foley allows his rhetoric to get in the way of a valuable

message in *Preaching Basics,* a work that is explicitly passionate about "improving the quality and consistency of liturgical preaching, especially in the Sunday assembly."

Published as a workbook, complete with twelve pages of reproducible exercises at the end, *Preaching Basics* is designed to develop the model and methods of liturgical preaching outlined in *Fulfilled in Your Hearing,* the American bishops' landmark document on preaching, a document that Foley claims was never fully embraced either by bishops or preachers. Thus he begins by arguing for the passion that the preacher needs to have: for the Word of God, for the liturgy and for the baptized assembly. Distinguishing liturgical preaching from other types of preaching (evangelization, catechesis, and *didascalia*—the type of preaching one would hear on a retreat or day of recollection), the author also characterizes various "non-forms" of liturgical preaching that too often make their way into a Sunday homily. In this category he unfortunately lumps together such obvious anomalies as public exegesis, local ecclesial news broadcasts, and political lobbying, with caricatures of preaching on the feast being celebrated, explanation of church doctrine and moral exhortation. Although he goes on to acknowledge that each of these concerns, even while failing to take the liturgical event as its starting point, nonetheless has its validity, Foley might have done better to illustrate, somewhere in the book, how some of these topics could validly be an integral part of a homily that is authentically liturgical.

In the core of his book, Foley presents a model for homily preparation in which he describes five "conversation partners" with whom the homilist must interact: the lectionary, the "liturgical bible" (i.e., non-scriptural texts, ritual actions, and objects, spaces and the liturgical calendar itself), world events, the arts, and the human story. What is most striking and most important is the attention he pays to the liturgical bible, an attention which, as he points out, is called for in both the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the General Instruction on the Roman Liturgy, but which many homilists have tended to overlook. Building on this model, the author presents a method of homily preparation that calls for an extended period (five to six weeks before a liturgical season or group of Sundays) of collaborative preparation among all the homilists of the parish, a few "thoughtful articulate parishioners" and perhaps some members of the parish council and staff. Although Foley acknowledges the need for adaptation to individual circumstances, his language and style grow significantly prescriptive in this section: preachers "need" to undergo "conversions" to method, to time, and collaboration; collaboration is a "non-negotiable" in the preparatory process; the preparation group "must choose a single direction" for preaching strategies; and each preacher in a parish is expected to follow the broad parameters decided upon by the group. Foley uses the simile of a recipe to describe how his model (the "ingredients") and method (the "directions") are related; he goes so far as to include an example of an actual recipe (for Hilde's Chocolate Mousse) to illustrate his point! One wonders, however, whether homiletic method can be reduced to the instructions in a recipe. When one looks at the various methods of homily preparation that are proposed in other books with a similar purpose, such as Alvin Rueter's *Making Good Preaching Better* and Bishop Ken Untener's *Preaching Better,* as well as *Fulfilled in Your Hearing* itself, one is struck by the different ways in which

homilists can successfully combine the various elements that are necessary to create an effective liturgical homily. Similarly, while collaboration is clearly important and desirable, is it really a "non-negotiable," without which a homilist cannot possibly give an effective liturgical homily? Finally, the proof of any recipe is how it tastes, not how it reads in the cookbook. Both Untener and Rueter, for example, clearly based their work and their suggestions on real-life pastoral experiences; one would presume that *Preaching Basics'* method has been field tested in a number of parishes and by a number of different personalities; however, if that is true, we are not told so, nor are we told how well it worked.

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**Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals.** Edited by Reinhard Hutter and Theodor Dieter. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdman Publishing Company, 1998. Pages, viii + 295. $26.00.

This collection of 11 original essays and one response is an interesting example of both international (Hutter at The Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and Dieter at the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in France) and ecumenical cooperation and reflection from both American and European scholars, predominantly from the Reformation/ Lutheran tradition. The editors note three explicit agenda for such an ecumenical dialogue: 1) to learn and appreciate each other's strongest and weakest points; 2) to be challenged by the other's strengths and to address one's own weaknesses; 3) to identify and engage in the other's problems. The focus of engagement for this dialogue are two recent and critical encyclicals of John Paul II: *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae.* The articles address several common themes: use of Scripture, philosophical and theological issues, ethical method, as well as addressing some specific problems, e.g., capital punishment. Overall, the authors give clear exposition of a particular facet of one of the encyclicals, analyze and evaluate it from their own perspective and occasionally from various Catholic sources, and then clearly lay out their conclusions. The Foreword provides concise statements about each essay that identifies its main point and the concluding essay by Catholic ethicist James Keenan, S.J. provides a very helpful evaluation and response to the essays. For those not that familiar with Reformation or Lutheran theology, both of these essays should be read first to help situate one's self.

Each of the essays is a model of a carefully crafted analysis and sympathetic critique of the Pope's thought. Of particular interest in several of the essays is the thematic analysis of the Pope's use of Scripture. While all are heartened by his use of Scripture, some are less than happy with how he employs it and his approach to the hermeneutics of Scripture. Additionally the use of natural law provides a traditional bone of contention for several to gnaw. But the critical point made by many is the tension (abrupt shift?) between Scripture and natural

law in various arguments by the Pope. While some essays rehearse familiar argument about Protestant and Catholic ethical methods, these essays in general take several helpful steps beyond the status quo and engage in a helpful analysis. There is also a very interesting discussion over the concept of intrinsically evil acts and the role of teleology in ethics, familial nubs of contention in Catholic ethics, but given a broader perspective when viewed through Reformation lenses. The themes of freedom and personalism also receive extended commentary in several essays and again present different and helpful perspectives in teasing out various nuances of papal thought.

Thematically the essays also help locate the encyclicals, as well as other ideas of John Paul, in a broader historical, philosophical, and theological framework. For example, Risto Saarinen critiques the Pope's understanding of individuality and the unity between the individual human person and human nature as Averroistic in nature. I have not heard that particular critique of papal thought before, but the argument is exceptionally well made and shows the necessity of recognizing that contemporary solutions to problems do have historical roots that must be acknowledged. Another particularly deft piece of analysis comes from the Anglican Oliver O'Donovan who notes that "Whatever conservative social and moral norms he [John Paul II] defends, he accepts the deconstruction of the nexus of ideal and symbols that once made them intelligible" (236). O'Donovan then queries whether the Pope's moral policies are compromised by such an ambiguity in this thought.

This collection is a very thorough, careful, and extremely helpful analysis and evaluation of John Paul's thought. Seeing this from another perspective allows one to develop a much more adequate evaluative perspective of one's own. The book is clearly for use in graduate schools and may benefit professionals with ecumenical interests. Some of the translations seem a little awkward but when there is a difficulty in translation, the original is provided in a footnote. On the other hand, some lengthy footnotes are not translated. The book generally reads well and is important both to ecumenical ethics as well as the continuing study of the thought of John Paul II.

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