

JESUS: THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF MINISTRY
"Theologies of Ministry in Contemporary Theology"
by
Stanley J. Menking

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Theology and ministry need one another in order to serve the gospel, the church, and the world. To keep them in creative tension so that each will attain their potential is a task for scholars and pastors.

Constraints

This is not easy for either to do. That is why it is important to recognize the forces and constraints with which each must contend. The three primary obstacles relate to the vocation of each, the structural arrangements within which each must labor, and the practical realities of their tasks.

The vocational constraints are real. Living in an age of the "knowledge explosion" and "specialization", it is difficult for any one person to excel in both the areas of theory and skill. Scholars must concentrate on their disciplines and in so doing are unable to have the time or opportunity to bring their scholarly insights to bear on the daily general practice of ministry. pastors who labor in particular places with individual strengths and interests tend to speak about theological issues of ministry from the limited perspective of their practical experience. These circumstances should protect both from arrogance and pride. Humility is the appropriate attitude for learning how to be about ministry in a way that brings the best of thought and practice together. In fact, it is essential to recognize these limits in order to be open to hear a word from the other side for and about ministry.

Structual difficulties abound. Those who are called to the ministry of scholarship live in two worlds: the academy and the church. Sometimes these two directly or indirectly reenforce one another. The problem is that this is not always the case. Scholarship does not always best serve the church by being

relevant and immediately applicable. Therefore, scholars can easily be dismissed by pastors struggling to survive much less be effective in their setting of ministry. While this is not true for all scholars or for all of the work of scholars, it remains a possibility that needs to be noted. Those whose ministry is teaching must often concentrate their time and efforts with those who have little or no experience in pastoral ministry. This makes it difficult for scholar/teachers because they are denied the opportunities to gain feedback from experienced pastors. No matter how active a scholar may be in the church, he or she will not experience the church from the role of a pastor. This is not to dismiss the relevance of scholarly work for ministry. It is to accept the limitations of the ministry of scholarship.

Likewise, pastors confront structural difficulties in relating theology to ministry. This is not because they neglected the theoretical in their theological education. Quite the opposite. Usually the practical has less opportunity for development in theological education. Then comes the "rude awakening" of being a pastor. A beginning pastor is confronted by tasks he or she is expected to know how to do. The reaction of the pastor then may be to blame him or herself for not choosing more "practical courses" or to blame the school for not providing or requiring these courses. The truth of the matter is that there is no point in blaming either. Learning does not flourish when one is unaware of a need to know or have a strong motivation to know. Likewise, it is difficult to learn a skill with few opportunities to use or to need the skill. It is more important to understand that when one leaves seminary it is not the end of learning about ministry. It is a change in where, how, and about what the pastor will now learn. The agenda changes emphasis from learning about theories of ministry to how to practice ministry. The structural hazard is that this

need will be so urgent the pastor will push theological inquisitiveness aside because of the need to know how to do ministry. That explains why ministers sometimes find their theology frozen into the theological forms of the era they attended seminary. For that reason it may take heroic efforts for the pastor to successfully contend against these structural realities.

Finally, both pastors and scholars must cope with real practical difficulties that hinder mutual interrogation of theology and ministry. Scholars must often cover the same material year after year with new students. No matter how scholars grow, they must continue to work with students where they are. At the same time their scholarly work is generally not stimulated by the needs of ministry in a direct way. Nor should they be. However, these practical realities of teaching and scholarship do not encourage the bringing of theology and the practice of ministry into contact.

Pastors, too, are confronted by the primacy of the immediate. This week's sermon, pastoral duties, and meetings demand, require, and deserve the best the pastor can offer. This takes time, effort, and energy. After all of this and trying to keep time for spiritual renewal and family responsibilities, there is little strength left to engage in extensive theological reading and reflection related to ministry. Even when the spirit is willing the flesh is often weak.

These constraints are real and should not be minimized. It does not mean it is impossible to integrate theological reflection and pastoral action. If each party can keep from being defensive about their insights and perogatives, the two can be brought together in a way that will benefit both.

Integration of Theology and Practice of Ministry

The career of a pastor does not facilitate the integration of theology and

ministry. To begin with a pastor, as a rule, must come to terms with a body of knowledge at the beginning of his or her ministry. Regardless of one's skills or natural gifts the church must protect the gospel from our strengths and our weaknesses. It does this through a process of theological education and the examination of those who offer themselves for ministry through denominational ordination procedures. The more brilliant, effective, and charismatic the one is who is preparing for ministry, the more important it may be for this to be done. Those who lack gifts and graces will not make it through this process. Those, however, who show the most promise may use their gifts poorly or well. Therefore, it is critical that those who believe they are called to ministry understand that this means they are to be servants of the gospel. In order to do this personal opinion as well as cultural, historical, and religious biases about the gospel need to be subjected to scrutiny and refined. This is no small task, and it will consume most of the energies of all in the preparatory phase of ministry. In fact, it is never really over.

How can one integrate theology and practice when one's theology is still taking shape and one has little experience in ministry, too? To expect more than a tentative first step when a pastor begins ministry is unreasonable. This first step is crucial for the beginning of ministry. It needs to be taken, but at the same time we need to recognize that integration is not the first step nor the second step, but the third step.

The second step is practice. One does ministry. It is often done with vigor and energy. Especially in the beginning. At long last a pastor can begin to be a pastor! Eager to start, the new pastor discovers that to be a pastor is to be on new terrain. He or she has to "learn the ropes." This is not easy. Nor is it done quickly and painlessly. It is clear one must go at least one

year simply to live through the annual routine of parish life. One does not become proficient in a year, but one at least has a better idea of what a minister does. Learning proceeds rapidly if only for survival reasons. Often it is a process of trial and error in which one learns as much from what goes wrong as what goes right. Still, the pastor is so busy trying to do minstry without being embrassed that there is little time to work on the task of integration. It is also premature. The new pastor is still developing the practice of ministry in order to have something to integrate with his or her theology.

In time the pastor becomes comfortable and develops competence as well as confidence in the practice of ministry. It is precisely at this point that there is a new temptation. As the pastor becomes accustomed to the duties of the office he or she may feel that theology was important for school but is not that important for the parish. Or she or he may decide that while it could be important, the urgent needs of ministry preclude turning back to theological issues in an intentional way. Whatever the reason, the results are the same. Integration is slowed, stymied, or stopped. The third step is not taken.

One of important contributions of the many doctor of ministry programs has been to serve as a catalyst and opportunity to provide the discipline and support needed for pastors to take the third step to integrate their theology and practice of ministry. It is a way in which they can gain help to end a schizophrenic existence of trying to live in two separate worlds -- theology and practice -- rather than moving on to the integrative step that will create a theo-logical wholeness in their practice of ministry.

Until this step is taken a pastor has yet to develop the depth and potential

of his or her ministry that will stimulate a new vitality, creativity, and integrity for both the theology and practice of her or his ministry.

A Theology of Ministry's Central Vision

When a pastor seeks to develop a theology of ministry, certain concerns will come to the forefront and require attention and reflection. The role of pastoral ministry plays an important part in determining the issues that will require attention and thought on the part of the pastor. One will be dominant and four others be secondary. I want to make some methodological comments about these primary concerns. For now I need to focus attention on the process and then subsequently on the products of the process.

Vision: A ministry must be shaped by a theological vision. This is the critical center for a theology of ministry. In examining each theologian included in this study the first task was to seek to discern the theological vision that shapes their view of ministry. The assumption was that this central vision would inform and mold the other aspects of a theology of ministry. Not all who read these theologians or the conclusions that I will make will agree with my interpretation. Perhaps the theologians would not agree with my presentation. Therefore, the reader needs to remember that the theologians are presented through the eye and mind of an interpreter no matter how rigorously the interpreter has tried to stand within the other's way of viewing the practice of ministry.

Nevertheless, they have a vision! A vision that does shape their views about ministry and how ministry would be exercised. Their visions stand within the boundaries of the historic Christian Faith. What may be experienced as new for some of us as we are engaged by their positions does not mean that because

what they say is new to us it is outside the perimeters of faith. What our experience may prevent us from discerning in our heritage may be opened to us out of other's experience of the gospel. The appropriate stance is first of all to listen, to hear, and to understand.

At a deeper level the issue is not where do we agree or disagree. It is whether we have an integrating vision of ministry that informs and shapes our practice of ministry as well as being honed and refined by our practice of ministry. These theologians, at their best, challenge us to be able to identify and articulate our vision in a clear and coherent fashion. They can serve as a stimulus for this to happen in our ministry as we recognize our points of agreement and disagreement with them. Therefore, the chapters in this book invite dialogue. This dialogue invites us to respond to the theologies of ministry that will be presented. It provokes us to have to state our vision of ministry that enables us to question or to affirm what we encounter.

Every pastor is a theologian in the community where he or she serves. The issues and tragedies, the joys and sorrows, the pain and happiness, the defeats and triumphs of everyday life cry out for a way to be understood and have meaning. This is the concern that people bring to the pastor as they struggle to place the experiences of life in a larger context of significance. They need to make sense out of life and to be able to cope with life. The minister as theologian is the "playwrite of meaning" in the community. He or she hears, observes, and participates in the dramas of ordinary life and catches the visions or the dimensions of the extraordinary in people's daily experiences. The people with whom the pastor shares life seldom ask, "What do the theologians think?" They want to know what the pastor believes! They are not convinced by the names of theologians and citations from their works. They assume the pastor

knows them. They want to hear a word from the pastor that arises out of his or her struggles with these same concerns. They want to see how a vision of faith forged in the pastor's struggle with life in their setting and on his or her faith journey can help them make sense of what is happening and make a life out of these experiences.

In one sense this is a relief! They do not expect us to be economists, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, politicians, medical doctors, historians, or technologists. Usually they will grant us our "amateur" opinions as they do with others who would seek to speak from their varied back-grounds on the issues of everyday life. They will, of course, invite us to share our opinions from time to time. We should not make the mistake of thinking our primary role is to be an expert on all questions from all possible perspectives that could be brought to bear on these cultural issues. That is the basis of relief.

At the same time, we are expected to discern the faith dimension in these issues of life. We are expected to help others struggle with the faith dimension in the everyday events of life. This distinction is important. Faith is not another compartment of life. It is another way of looking at life and examining it. It is here that there are high expectations of those who hold the pastoral office, and it is here that the need of a vision of faith is crucial for the performance of ministry. "Without a vision the people perish." Because of this need, pastor's intuitively know that their work as theologians is vital and crucial for their practice of ministry and if they do not fulfill this part of ministry one of the most significant contributions they can make will not be made.

Four Secondary Concerns of a Theology of Ministry

Secondary concerns is not used to indicate that other dimensions of a theology of ministry are not important. It is a relative term in the sense that they must be secondary to the central vision of a theology of ministry. In the event there is an absence of a unifying vision other aspects of ministry will take on a random pattern with little coherence and vitality. What is important is that the central vision be integrated with other concerns a theology of ministry must address. These concerns are the culture in which ministry must take place, the church from which ministry must take place, the ministry of laity and clergy who are the actors of the ministry, and for the ordained the specific tasks that fall to them because of their vocation responsibilities for ministry.

The first of these requires the pastor to be willing to interpret the culture in which he or she ministers from a theological perspective. It is true that those in ministry will often find much to criticise in the culture. If clergy are prone to any inclination it is to shout about what is wrong and be silent about what is right in the culture from their faith perspective. In fact while many clergy, if asked, would say that the mission of ministry is to transform culture, the picture they often paint of the culture would lead one to believe there is not enough good in the culture to warrant any hope of transformation. Rather, it would seem that one would have to start from scratch. Of course, this is only to judge by what is said and not by what is done. When one turns to what is done in the life of the minister and the tasks of ministry, there emerges a suspicion that an easy and comfortable alliance exists with many aspects of the culture. On these terms the question of the affirmation of wanting to transform culture may be called into question because how can one seek to transform a culture in which there seems to be so many convenient

marriages between ministry and culture.

The vocation of ministry invites one to move on beyond these immature responses of easy condemnation of or easy identification with the culture. The superficial fads of cultural soothsayers will be critically examined and not simply repeated. There will be a heightened sensitivity to the pain, anguish, and meaninglessness that can be found so easily when the veneer of the culture is scratched. The critical questions that will be raised will be more radical and far reaching than the chorus of criticism raised by despisers of the culture in which we live. The pastor will be aware that there are those who struggle with these questions and write or speak about them on a global and national level. There still remains the nagging suspicion that does not relieve the pastor of the responsibility of addressing the values of the cultural setting where he or she is in ministry. There is a new sense of urgency, seriousness, and sensitivity regarding this concern of pastoral ministry.

The pastor who seeks to understand, interpret, and share his or her conclusions with those in the culture is more exposed. They may feel that those who address the larger audience must grapple with the larger issues. This is not so. Those who minister on the national level can strangely enough find a support group and even be protected from engagement with those with whom they disagree. This is not possible for the pastor in the local church. They are more alone and at the same time more engaged in a real and vital way with others who do not share their faith perspective. It is at this point that the six theologies we will examine are instructive. While those chapters along with the concluding chapter will explore the content of these analyses, what matters here is that they can help us to see that the process is possible and by their example encourage us to assume this responsibility in our ministry.

The next secondary concern has to do with an understanding of the church as a community of faith. Ministry takes place in the secular community from the faith community. The pastor is not a pastor except as a part of a community of faith. One can be ordained and not serve a congregation and one can serve with a pastoral style and not be a pastor. However, the arena for the pastor has to be a community of faith, the congregation. The difficulty that the pastor confronts is his or her theological and biblical studies. The traditional biblical and theological images of the church are known. They have a significant history and have inspired creativity and obedience in the past. The problem is that the pastor will quickly turn to these images and then seek to find a way to work them into his or her theological position. That approach is neither appropriate nor productive. Instead, the pastor must ask the question of what the implications are of the primary vision of ministry for a working understanding of the community of faith. This means the images of the church will be different and varied because the vision is not for all places but one place, not for all times but one time. The congregation must be formed and embody the consequences of a theological vision. It is not enough simply to repeat formulas that came out of the vital faith and life of another period.

The pastor has to guard against the temptation of letting this vision slip into the background because of urgent and pressing needs. When this happens, the pastor runs the risk of becoming a good institutional technician who knows all the appropriate statements to make about the church. This is not to despise good technicians. The church is never well served by incompetence. However, a pastor needs to be a good craftsperson whose understanding of the church is fashioned and formed by and from a vision of ministry. It is integral to it and not an appendage of it. That is why the understanding of the church must be

determined by one's theological vision.

An additional secondary concern is a generic understanding of ministry that can be lived by both clergy and laity. On paper "the ministry of the laity" has been affirmed. It faces unique and long standing obstacles in order to be realized in our time. Nevertheless, a theological vision needs to inform and shape one's view of ministry so that it is possible to identify the part to be played by the clergy and the laity. Unless the pastor can integrate the issues of ministry with his or her vision of ministry all that will be possible is to repeat theological slogans that do not offer much guidance for the pastor's role vis-a-vis the laity.

Ministry is more than duties, credentials, and roles. It is a service of faith shaped by a vision of the gospel's promise for the world. Those who are servants of this promise and vision are in ministry. Those who serve as pastors can be helped to engage in the theological pastoral responsibilities for ministry of the laity and the clergy by seeing how this has been integrated into the theological reflections of the six theologies we will examine. That does not mean they should or must be followed. The pastor's responsibility is not to imitate the product but the process by delineating how his or her theological vision shapes an understanding and practice of ministry.

The final secondary concern will be subdivided into the tasks of ministry that a pastor is called upon to do. Here those who are ordained ministers must explore the implications of their theological vision as well as their theological understanding of culture, the church, and ministry for the daily tasks a pastor is expected to perform. It is never enough to seek to recall and repeat all one has read, heard, or learned about the various tasks of ministry. A

theological vision will challenge what is done, open new possibilities and responsibilities, and shed new light on these tasks and how to do them. It will impact, change, and possibly transform how one goes about ministry in the midst of the people the pastor is serving.

Likewise, these tasks are the litmus test of one's theology. This is not to capitulate to the pragmatic norm -- does it work. It is, however, a recognition that theory and practice have a synergistic relationship. The view that either theory must lead to practice or theory is simply the radification of what works in practice is too simple and unrewarding. Theory and practice are in dialogue in a creative constructive way. Their role is one of mutual correction and enhancement. Neither seeks to dominate because both must serve the other in order to be complete.

In exploring the tasks of ministry the pastor who takes theology with the seriousness that ministry requires will be breaking new ground for him or herself, for the people they serve, and possibly for others in ministry. While the motivation is to be faithful to and effective in one's calling, there are significant potential by-products that can emerge. To seek these by-products is not to ignore, neglect, or avoid ministry. It is an attempt to develop all the possibilities ministry requires and deserves.

Conclusion

In the chapters that follow an attempt is made to share how six contemporary theologians might express their insights for the practicing pastor. I have sought to rely on their writings and as much as possible limit the materials cited to primary sources of their work. There is no claim or guarantee that these theologians may not shift, modify, or refine their thinking. So it is a

snapshot. Nevertheless, it is a picture that can open us to issues we might miss if we limited our theological reflection to our own situation.

I have chosen Nouwen because his writings have spoken to many clergy and come out of a strong Roman Catholic, meditative, pastoral care orientation. Moltmann was chosen as a representative of Protestant European thinking as well as his being a theologian of liberation and hope. In choosing Seguno, Ruether, and Cone, three different voices in liberation theology were selected that highlight the important concerns in the world church today. Segundo speaks from a third world perspective and also out of his Latin American Roman Catholic heritage. Cone represents the concerns and issues of American black theology while Ruether permits us to look at issues from the feminist perspective with the added gift of her broad historical scholarship. Cobb is the voice for process theology which helps shed light on the issues of the post-modern technological and pluralistic world. Other theologians could have been chosen from these schools or some of my readers may have wished that other schools of thought would have been chosen. However, it is the conviction of this writer that other schools of thought can be adequately represented by the readers who will challenge as well be challenged by the suggestions that follow.

This work will conclude with a chapter in which I will seek to sketch out my own statement of a theology of ministry that can inform the efforts of pastors who must work out their theology of ministry as they prepare to serve Christ in the closing years of this century and the opening ones of the next.

SIX CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIES OF MINISTRY

CHAPTER I

IMPROVERISHED BENEFACTORS

Henri J. M. Nouwen's Theology of Ministry

"We are the imposters who speak the truth, the unknown men whom all men know; dying we still live on; disciplined by suffering, we are not done to death; in our sorrows we have always cause for joy; poor ourselves, we bring wealth to many; penniless, we own the world." (II Cor. 6:8-10, NEB)

In seeking to discern the appropriate questions rather than finding the right answers one begins to take ministry with the seriousness it deserves. For ministry means first of all to come to terms with oneself.

To be able to minister then is first of all to look within. "The inward man is faced with a new and often dramatic task: He must come to terms with the inner tremendum."⁽¹⁾ It is a venture to engage the creative and destructive forces that are at war within the human spirit seeking to claim it for their own. It is this awareness of the human condition that informs Henri J. M. Nouwen's suggestions and their implications for ministry.

The Model of Ministry: The Self-emptying Christ

Prayer is the recognition that we cannot live from ourselves nor be the giver of the ultimate meaning of our life. Every attempt to do this is destined to fail. "Whenever you pray, you profess that you are not God, and that you wouldn't want to be."⁽²⁾ Both life and its meaning must be received. Our freedom and perfection are to be found in our willingness to be led by another which always implies a willingness to empty the self. "You gradually make your life more a prayer and you open your hands to be led by God even to where you would rather not go."⁽³⁾ At the same time prayer remains a positive affirmation that God will lead and we can follow and discover life is significant.

Jesus Christ is the one who makes this understanding and way of living

possible. His self-emptying is the keystone of Nouwen's theology of ministry. In Jesus the one who had the possibility of clinging to his own life and fulfilling it, abandons this style of life and ministry. For Nouwen there is no other center for life and faith that can point the way out of the human predicament. This is clearly seen when he writes,

The core message of Christianity is exactly this message of the possibility of transcending the taking form of our human existence. The main witness of this message is Jesus who in the exposure of his vulnerability broke through the chains of death and found his life by losing it.(4)

This christocentric center of Nouwen's theology of ministry resides in the acts of Jesus Christ. In him both transcendence and vulnerability are present in the deed of his life. The emptying in obedience is complete: his death. The victory is his not as a right to claim but as a gift that God confers. Therefore, in Christ we can discover two central sources of faith and ministry: the possibility of self-emptying and the inspiring power to move us in that direction.

Nouwen is talking about a way of life -- the way of life Jesus Christ inaugurated. That is why he can perceive and understand the radical quality of life that Christ introduces into the world. "The self-emptied man is revolutionary in the real sense because he claims nothing -- not even his life -- as a possession."(5) If this also describes the Christian, it is only insofar as it is a reflection of what has been experienced in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This view of Christ is one of hope and promise. At its core is the assumption that evil's hold on life is not fatal nor final. It is a proclamation that evil is reversible. The resolution of the problem of evil is not eradication but redemption. Forgiveness is a possibility for us. This is not a naive opti-

mism nor an incredulous belief in the human powers to deliver the self from the ultimate ambiguities in life. Instead, the locus of this assurance is the man Jesus Christ.

The paradox is indeed that new life is born out of the pains of the old. The life of Jesus has made it very clear to us that the spiritual life does not allow by-passes...When Jesus asks us to take up our cross and follow him we are invited to reach out far beyond our broken and sinful condition and give shape to a life that intimates the great things that are prepared for us.(6)

This is faith's hard-nose realism that refuses to fix its eyes on anything but Jesus!

This fixation on Christ explains Nouwen's understanding of the difference between the two forms of existing: the form of power and the form of love. The form of power is a taking form. This acquisitive form of life can never possess enough of life's goods nor others' good opinions to silence the insecurity of the human heart. In the taking form we allow ourselves to be captives of our weaknesses so that they victimize us. The form of love does not find vulnerability and weakness a threat. It perceives that "new life is born in the state of total vulnerability -- this is the mystery of love. Power kills. Weakness creates."(7) This awareness is a gift we do not create but receive from God through Jesus Christ.

It is the same self-emptying Christ who helps us to see what it means to engage in a ministry that is marked by poverty. It is the life of Jesus that qualifies our understanding of what it means to be poor rather than our understanding of what it means to be poor permitting us to understand Jesus. Only Jesus enables us to be grasped by what it means to be an impoverished benefactor.

Whenever you willingly chose this poverty you make yourself vulnerable, but you also become free to see the world and to let the world be seen in its true form. For you have no need to defend yourself and you can tell loudly what you know through your intimate contact with him who is the source of all life.(8)

In Jesus Christ we see that while we have nothing to offer, we receive everything we need. What we receive frees us from possessiveness and transforms us into extravagant spenders of life for we can never exhaust the wealth we receive from Jesus Christ. This is a self-emptying way of living that finds its inspiration as well as its possibility in the one who emptied himself.

The Cultural Expectation: Acquisitive Possessiveness

Technology is a fact of life and its gifts are not to be ignored nor denigrated. However it has a price. This is not an inevitable price so the solution is not as simple as banishing technology from the human realm. Nor is the threat now the discovery that technology will not usher in an age in which all human problems are or will soon be overcome. The greatest cost of the technological era is the superficial attitude toward life that it encourages. Here superficiality is best understood for what it encourages us to forget: the inner life. It is superficial because it robs us of contact with the center of life.

One place where this trend is seen is in our hectic lives. We are busy and we are worn out by many activities. Yet we cannot silence the doubt that all of our activity "is more part of an impulsive reaction to the changing demands of our surroundings than an action that was born out of our own center."(9) Our culture is therefore busy at many things but deficient in opportunities to celebrate life. That is why prayer has gone out of vogue. We have lost contact with the inner life.

An acquisitive cultural milieu encourages an attitude that prevents one from

relinquishing what one has. This is not confined to the things we possess of a material nature but refers to our entire style of life. It would include our opinions, attitudes, and basic assumptions about how to confront the issues of life. It opens the door for pride to reign with a free hand creating a situation in which many of the controversies that clamor for our attention are simply a case of the pot calling the kettle black. For example, when intellectual pride tackles the pride of power or wealth the adversary relationship is based on the assumption that what I possess is superior to what you possess. There is little room for self-emptying in this atmosphere. One does not relinquish a position with any more ease than for others to give up power or give away wealth.

Technology, however, contains the seeds to temper, destroy, or deny this idolatrous use to which it is put. Nouwen sees this as a question for the minister but it is also a valid issue for anyone living from the acquisitive possessive assumptions of the epoch. "How can he remain a whole and integrated man in a milieu which is constantly changing and by its own nature repeatedly challenging his own commitment?"(10) When one lives from assumptions that neglect the inner life, the impulse is to ask and not to hope. We ask for answers to our illness or ignorance rather than wondering if the possibility of a more profound way of living is to be hoped for as a gift from these experiences rather than escaping quickly from them.

This way of living creates three habits that in the long run are detrimental to us. In the first place we live from a trading or barter system where our self-esteem is linked to the necessity of always having to be able to give something in exchange for anything we receive. If we have nothing to give, we may find it necessary to ignore or refuse a gift because our self-esteem would

be destroyed by such action. It also undermines our giving because it prevents us from appreciating and seeing that to give without receiving destroys the one who gives as well as the one who receives. This initially seems to be an illogical conclusion of the assumption that ours is an acquisitive possessive age. However, on reflection this stance makes perfect sense because the hidden assumption is that I do possess and therefore I can give and do not really need to receive.

The second habit that grows out of this position in which self-emptying would be highly problematical is the desire to avoid pain. This can be the pain of not having, the pain of not knowing, or the pain of not being able to do something. "Our culture has become most sophisticated in the avoidance of pain, not only our physical pain but our emotional and mental pain as well."(11) Pain is seen as an uninvited and unwanted intruder that destroys the feelings of competence and confidence we have able to acquire. It is seen as an enemy with the power to rob us of what we have rather than as an opportunity to discover a deeper dimension of what it means to be human.

The third habit that is detrimental to us in the long run is our insatiable demand for answers and our permanent impatience with questions. The very assumption of there being an answer to every question stimulates us to activity and action so quickly that we seldom take the time to discover the real question. An acquisitive age finally has difficulty in being a truly inquisitive age. It must avoid the profoundly unanswerable questions. "Only he who has a basic trust in the value of life is free to ask many questions without feeling threatened."(12) To take this step is to be prepared to enter a new world; to discover the vocation of facing the illusions of all ideologies without succumbing to nihilism and to be engaged by the awareness that "the

evil, sin, and violence which one sees in the world and in the other, are deeply rooted in one's own heart."(13) This is a radical and revolutionary step in any age but especially in a time of acquisitive possessness.

To break the habits of our period is painful, and many would perceive it as the equivalent of suicide. To those who see the self-emptying Christ there is a faint recognition that what our contemporaries consider a "wound, which causes us to suffer now, will be revealed to us later as the place where God initiated his new creation."(14)

The Church: A Hospitable Community

Nouwen's perceptions of the church are more implicit than explicit. It would appear that most of his concern has to do with the individual and that if not in fact at least in emphasis he could be faulted for neglecting the corporate reality of faith. Carl Rogers offers the rationale for this method and Nouwen will come back to it again and again in his writings. "'What is most personal is most general'"(15)

The community of faith is not shaped by an attempt to realize some utopian perfection. That would evoke hostility rather than hospitality. Defensiveness and protectionism would be appropriate responses of a community that only invited the perfect or sought to produce the perfect. Instead, the community of faith is a hospitable community because it offers a place where those who feel unacceptable or have hidden unacceptable dimensions of their own lives are invited to join those who share the same struggles which may or may not have different identities.

A Christian community is therefore a healing community not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings, occasions for a new vision.(16)

Everyone gives and receives the hospitality to tell and to discover their own story. And in so doing it becomes a gift to both the host who listens and the guest who tells. Since it is a community of mutuality one finds at one time the role of host and at another time the role of guest as appropriate. But "receptivity is only one side of hospitality. The other side, equally important, is confrontation."(17) Confrontation is not accusation nor condemnation. It is the sharing of another story that gives us perspective on and about our story. It prevents self-pity because it is empathetic, not sympathetic. It is engagement where our stories become mutual invitations to move on to a new chapter rather than always reciting past chapters. This is the mark of the church as a caring community. "Caring is the way to the other by which a healing community becomes possible."(18) The hospitality of the community does not change people, but creates the climate in which change can occur.

The hospitality that creates the community of faith is distinguished by its extravagant openness. The community is primarily open to God and the future God is inviting us to enter. The community of faith understands that the possession that matters most is a promise. Today is not despised by or in the community. It only announces that it lives from and for God's tomorrow. This creates a sense of belonging in the community that does not alienate us from those outside of the community because it invites us to self-emptying rather than self-fulfillment. In this community we discover the gift of gaining our life by the power we receive to surrender our life. This very act of letting go enables us to embrace and be embraced by a community that boggles the mind. "Our community is often a very intangible reality made up of people, living as well as dead, present as well as absent, close as well as distant, old as well as young."(19)

The polarization of the church between a mystical way and a revolutionary

way is not possible when the hospitality of faith with its invitation of self-emptying claims our lives because these are seen as false options. Hospitality sees them as complimentary rather than contradictory. By themselves one would cut us off from God's world by confining us to the church and the other would cut us off from the community of faith by confining all our energies to the world. In fact both are really inhospitable toward the world. The one expresses this inhospitality by abandonment and the other by conquest. These ways are not open to the community of faith because

in Jesus the mystical and the revolutionary way are not opposites...His appearance in our midst has made it undeniably clear that changing the human heart and changing human society are not separate tasks, but are as interconnected as the beams of the cross.(20)

Style of Ministry: Participatory Openness

Professionalization of work is one of the marks of our time. While this has brought many advances to humankind as skills, standards, and performance have been upgraded, this tendency has worked at cross purposes with the basic understanding of ministry being the work of the whole people of God. Therefore, all of the inclinations of the laity to assume that the real work of ministry requires special preparation and training creates an attitude that sees them as excluded from real ministry. At the same time, with the professional clergy in a quandry about the utility of their vocation in a technological society there is a crisis of confidence among those who are expected to be best prepared and best able to offer guidance and direction. Their question is "when and where are we really pros?"(21)

This is a symptom of the more important question that has been silent in the technological epoch. That is the issue of the inner life. "The question about ministry (is) intimately related to the question about the spiritual life of the

minister."(22) If ministry buys into the assumptions of a having and doing age, then the questions of being will seem to be irrelevant and those who concern themselves with being will be seen as focusing their attention on peripheral concerns. Here then is the critical test. When the ethos of the age fills the air we breathe with the fragrance of the incense it burns at the altars of doing and having how is it possible for those who minister to find and maintain the criterion of being as the basis of evaluating ministry? "If professionalism is to be prevented from degenerating into a form of...manipulation, it has to be founded on the deep-rooted spiritual life of the minister as it develops out of his constant care for those he works with."(23)

This is no easy way because the forces within and the influences without are constantly maneuvering us away from this course. This is not said in anger or as an excuse. Rather it is recognition that these forces which erect the barriers to the exploration and development of the inner life are the same forces that are deceiving others and sapping their strength. The reason this question is urgent for those who minister is simply this. "If my spiritual life cannot grow and deepen in the midst of my ministry, how will it ever grow on the edges?"(24) Should the criterion of being be inaccessible to those who minister what can its reality be for those who do not! The intent of this is not to portray clergy as spiritual giants compared to the laity. It is to recognize that if those who have responded to the vocation that calls one to be responsible for the dimension of being in human life how much more difficult will it be for those whose primary daily labors are in the arena of doing.

This understanding of ministry fully embraces the character of the self-emptying ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a ministry to be followed faithfully with no promise of earthly success. It is both an act of faith and an act of

hope. But it is an act! What begins with this discovery is not only a new awareness of the self but a new way of perceiving the world and others in it. It is not that others or events have changed all that much. What is different is how we perceive them. The perception that comes from the self-emptying act permits acceptance and confrontation in a new way. Others are accepted, but by our living from this new perception they are confronted by another option. For some this will be a liberating moment but for others it will be a frightening prospect. It is not possible for those who minister to expect that they will be universally accepted and loved any more than it is possible for them to believe they can save anyone. All the minister can do is offer his or her life "as a guide to fearful people."(25)

This is not to suggest that this struggle to empty oneself comes quickly or easily. It is a struggle we cannot complete on our own nor in our lifetime. We need the example of Jesus Christ, the power of God, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the guidance of others who are on this pilgrimage. We know we will be tempted to make even self-emptying into something we do or have rather than the essence of our living. However, "gratitude makes us recognize that slowly, but definitely, we are being prepared to be persons who can offer our own pains as a source of healing for others."(26)

What has been said is true for the laity as well as the clergy. The temptations of and the call to ministry are identical for the laity and clergy in kind even if not in degree. "Ministry in no way is a privilege. Instead, it is the core of the Christian life. No Christian is a Christian without being a minister."(27) Both must come to realize that we are standing in the way of our own ministry if we believe we have nothing to offer or it can only be offered when we no longer have any needs ourselves. In the life of ministry we are

freed from that by the Christ who permits us to be "wounded healers".

Every human being has a great, yet often unknown, gift to care, to be compassionate, to become present to the other, to listen, to hear and to receive. If that gift would be set free and made available, miracles could take place.(28)

Here the self-emptying takes a double focus. We give up our claim that we need no help. We need to receive the gifts of others for our sake and for their sake. Like Jesus we must at times let someone bathe our feet in precious oil. We also give up our excuse that we can give no help. At times we may discover we help not because we have answers but simply because we express our joy and our despair with others.

The meaning of ministry in the best sense is marked by self-forgetfulness rather than self-regard. The contemplation and engagement of one's inner life would be misunderstood if the result of this was excessive self-concern. Ministry focuses on the need of the other. Not a neurotic need that must be fulfilled because those who minister find the meaning of ministry in doing and having. The needs of others are often unknown, undiscovered, or unseen until those who minister come in touch with these realities in the lives of others. When this new awareness emerges. Those who seek to help discern these needs in others they would have otherwise failed to notice. Some of these needs they learn about are in the lives of those who seek to help and not just in the lives of those they believe need to be helped.

At the same time this does not mean one slips into the other extreme of believing that ministry depends entirely upon our efforts. This would be to fall into the trap of acquisitive activism in another way. The difficulty of assuming that ministry depends completely upon us is that we will become exasperated and exhausted before anything worthwhile can be accomplished. The

real danger of this approach to ministry is that we will end up busy and embittered. Busyness may become the activity used to silence the inner voices of bitterness by either drowning them out or not giving them an opportunity to get a word in edgewise. However, "being busy and tired is quite something else from being useful.(29)

Ministry finds a new focus that describes the vocation of the clergy and the laity as they follow the self-emptying way of Jesus Christ. "Ministry is the profession of fools and clowns telling everyone who has ears to hear and eyes to see that life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be entered into."(30) This is the role and function of impoverished benefactors.

The Practice of Ministry -- Imitatio Christe

Preparation for ministry is not the clergy mastering the mysteries of God, but it is rather the clergy allowing themselves to be mastered by the mysterious God. This is the practical implication of understanding ministry as following the self-emptying Christ. It is an imitation of Christ par excellence. What the consequences of this impoverishment should be in terms of the benefits it provides for the practice of ministry is the issue we need to examine.

Proclamation: The greatest temptation proclamation faces is the clamor for answers that comes from a results oriented culture. The challenge of proclamation is to gain space for the right questions to be heard. Easy answers to superficial questions would be false proclamation no matter what the reception. Preaching seeks to enable the hearer to engage the human situation. It is "the task of every preacher to assist men in their ongoing struggle of becoming."(31)

Having said that is one thing; doing it is another. It is clear to Nouwen this is not possible unless the preacher has a relationship with his or her

inner self as well as with those to whom the word is proclaimed. Here the self-emptying is for the sake of the hearer to hear a message addressing the questions of life in the form and language in which the hearer experiences them.

In order to do this those who preach must become available to those who hear. One is to seek to excel in identifying with the pain and suffering of the people to whom one preaches in order to know what to say and how to say it. One does not seek to speak to all people in all places at all times. These illusions must be abandoned. Those who preach are required only to speak to those with whom they minister. This living with as well as speaking to is the way in which "a preacher is...willing to give his (or her) life for his (or her) people." (32) However, there is no confusion that this need to empty the self is ever completed because the one who set these conditions still sets the standards.

Nobody can ever claim to be a real preacher in this sense. Only Christ could, since only He entered into full dialogue with those He loved by laying down His life in total availability. (33)

Celebration: If preaching is to help us confront the human situation as it is, then the role of worship is to assist us in discovering how to celebrate when our illusions have been banished. We will not seek to manipulate spiritual events to create the atmosphere, feelings, and emotions we desire. This is a temptation of a culture that must have and do.

"In our impatient culture, it has indeed become extremely difficult to see much salvation in waiting." (34) The waiting of faith is celebration because it is a waiting in hope. Hope that the God who has spoken will speak again. This hope is based upon our willingness to empty ourselves of the desire to control the time of our own self-fulfilment. While we wait, we celebrate life as a

gift even when it is experienced as pain and suffering.

Those who commit themselves to lead worship cannot help a people shape and mold a time of celebration by importing models from other situations nor by persuading the people to use the forms that the leader finds meets his or her needs. Once again the leader must empty her or himself of the desire to impose these forms upon others. Instead, through participation in the people's existence the leader must discover the indigenous possibilities available for celebration. The vision of Christ leads us to empty the self so that our will will be captive to Christ and we will seek to be obedient to God's call. This is what worship is and what it celebrates! However

No one can claim...to be such a celebrant. Only Jesus could because only He was obedient to God and creation unto death... It is on the Cross He became the celebrant of life in the full sense. (35)

Nurture: The nurturing process of the minister must be a dialogical arrangement that promotes the realization of the visions of and for those who teach and who are taught. "As teachers we have to encourage our students to reflection which leads to vision -- theirs, not ours." (36)

Those who teach do not have better answers. Instead, they more fully understand the questions and which questions cannot be answered but have to be embraced. At the same time, there is a recognition that living and confronting the painful but unanswerable questions of life is unavoidable.

The teacher cannot exchange the arrogance of having the answers for the arrogance of knowing the questions. Nor can the teacher cling to a superiority that assumes the learner will never surpass or supersede his or her mentor. This is the painful self-emptying of the minister as teacher. He or she needs

the wisdom to receive the gifts that those who are taught can confer on those who teach. "He who wants someone else to grow...should first of all be able to recognize that person's gifts and be willing to receive them." (37) This is not to imply that students are more open than teachers. What it does mean is that in the community of faith the clear lines between those who teach and those who learn are often blurred and that resistance to self-emptying can be found on both sides of the pedagogical dialogue. Therefore, all must be tutored by the one whose self-emptying took him to the Cross.

Jesus can be called Teacher in the fullest sense of the word precisely because He did not cling to His prerogative but became one of the many who have to learn. (38)

Care: The perplexities and demands of pastoral care should keep anyone from claiming to have the answers to the tragic ambiguities of life that without rhyme or reason reward and punish the just and the unjust. The inclination to protect, to prevent, and to provide a means that allows people to escape the folly of their ways or the unpredictableness of life is not pastoral care. The role of the minister is neither to depreciate nor dismiss the dilemmas people confront. The pastor cannot permit the people to expect that she or he can give answers or by some divine deed take away the risk and pain of human life. Such a contract is a bad deal because no minister can fulfill the bargain. More often what the pastor must say to the ones to whom he or she ministers is, "how can I repay you for the way you have ministered to me and allowed me to witness the meaning of faith in a human life." For all who minister soon learn that the paradox of ministry is "that we will find the God we want to give in the lives of the people to whom we want to give Him." (39)

It is when we find we have nothing to say as we experience the pain of another's suffering in our heart, when the painful questions are already on our

lips before the other asks us why, when the tears are in our eyes while they are on the cheeks of those to whom we seek to minister that we discover somehow this silent standing-with has more healing power than any profound or brilliant words. The awareness that one has not faced the pain alone has a healing power that overcomes the pain of those moments. At these times the self-emptying may seem to be a sign of failure because we feel hollow and not just empty. But in these moments care will have been born and provided. This will not happen at all times and with and for all people. This serves to remind us that ultimately we remain followers and not leaders for

only Jesus can be called pastor in this sense. He cared for many people in their most individual needs...But when asked about the source of his knowledge, He said; "My teaching is not from myself; it comes for the One who sent me.(40)

Social Action: It is sometimes a pious and passionate sense of outrage that propels us to work for justice in the world. But too often these efforts are stillborn because they are infected by the taint of exploitation that they seek to irradicate. At times it is a contest with those in authroity, sometimes it is an idealization of those who suffer injustice, and at other times it is a way our conscience allows us to exercise power. These efforts more often than not fail because they do not create self respect in those they seek to serve for a very simple reason. "I don't let (them) have the joy of giving."(41) This style of seeking justice destroys the well-being of those it seeks to help. All of the material rewards it offers can in no way compensate for the loss it imposes.

"He who wants to bring about change has first of all to learn to be changed by those whom he wants to help."(42) There must be a self-emptying of all assumptions of what is best and how it can be most effectively achieved. It is

not a case of those who would be served being told but of their telling those who come to help how they might best be of service. Only those who learn this can have any utility for those who are not receiving a fair shake from the current arrangement of power. It is only those who allow themselves to be told who will ever discover not only their own limitations but the possibilities beyond imagination that can be realized by their efforts to help. At the same time there is the discovery that acts of self-respect toward those being helped releases the gifts of the oppressed for the whole society. When this takes place, it will remind us that we always are in need of self-emptying as we follow the one who promised this new way would bear fruit.

For in the midst of all (our) work (we) keep hearing the words of the One sitting on the throne: "I am making the whole creation new.(43)

Leadership: It is unfortunate that Nouwen failed to deal with the issue of congregational leadership in his work on Creative Ministry. It is a serious omission because of its importance for ministry and the energies it demands of the minister. Nevertheless, in his work The Wounded Healer suggestive ideas for this task are expressed and building on the structure of his theology of ministry one can presume to suggest what might be said.

The authority essential for leadership is the authority of compassion rather than position. This does not mean Nouwen would endorse unstructured chaos. Yet even where authority and responsibility can be assigned this is not enough. There must be compassion for those who are served. This is not a condescending compassion but one in which "nothing human is alien: no joy and no sorrow, no way of living and no way of dying."(44) This compassion has authority because it has the power to forgive the weaknesses and frailties in the other since they have already been discovered in the heart of the one who

leads.

This style of leadership does not allow one to lead from a distance. "The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there."(45) This comes as no surprise to those who see this style of leadership lived by Jesus Christ. His self-emptying obedience unto death was an announcement that if we want to lead we have to follow his leadership. The prerogatives of power and prestige that usually accompanies leadership must be given up.

It is not enough to lead. One must be followed. But to be followed one must admit the need for as well as accept the gifts of those who would follow. Once again there is the discovery that what is given up is of little worth compared to the gifts discovered in those being led. As we have noted with each of these tasks of ministry we see that our impoverishment is never complete when compared with Christ, and the benefits we can offer the community of faith are meager compared to the gifts offered by the world's poorest benefactor: Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Nouwen has not offered us techniques about ministry as much as a way of looking at ministry. However, wherever this ministry is to be carried out it will always bear some similarities because its source is in the one who became poor that we all might become rich, Jesus Christ. In order to minister we must first receive Him, accept ourselves as we are, and receive the gifts others can provide to enrich us before we will have something to offer that is worthwhile. It is in giving up, self-emptying, that we find the openness to receive these gifts so that they can become available again to others.

The main conviction underlying all of what we have been trying to say is that we will never be able to give what we cannot receive.(46)

CHAPTER II

Suffering's Promise and the Promise of Suffering"

Jugend Moltmann's Theology of Ministry

Hard pressed on every side, we are never hemmed in; bewildered, we are never at our wit's end; hunted, we are never abandoned to our fate; struck down, we are not left to die. Wherever we go we carry death with us in our body, the death that Jesus died, that in this body also life may reveal itself, the life that Jesus lives." (II Cor. 4:7-10 NEB)

Suffering is not new to the world. However, suffering presents some unique concerns for those in ministry today. As humankind has gained knowledge and banished old superstitions, it has not experienced the elimination of suffering from forces of oppression. More often than not, humankind finds itself the victim of new tyrannies. Those of its own making. Now suffering is more intolerable. The suffering remains and the broken hopes, dreams, and promises make it difficult to bear.

How is one in ministry to proceed in this environment? Faith perceives that at its core the issue is theological. It is a question about God. A poignant question raised by suffering people and when people suffer, "Is God deaf?"

The Suffering God

At heart this question is really, "Does God care?" This question is central to those who in their ministry must day after day encounter the pain, agony, and suffering of human beings. "Suffering remains, even for the believer, a cry to which there is no ready-made answer."(1)

Old answers, that God's giving humankind freedom exposed us to the possibility of suffering or that God causes suffering directly by being its source or indirectly by not preventing it, do not take either suffering or God seriously. Suffering is a theological problem and only then an anthropological problem.

God takes the plight of suffering seriously because it is his problem since it is his creation that suffers. God is not indifferent to suffering. He is not detached. He hears, sees, feels, and suffers because the suffering of and in creation was not his intent for creation.

How is it possible for humankind to sense God's nearness in their experience of abandonment, and how is it possible for God to be near his people when their forsakenness separates them from him. "Is there a theological experience in which God is against God and, for God's sake, is judged with God?" (italics mine). (2)

The dilemma of God is to keep faith with his promise at creation, to maintain fidelity with his character as love, and to evoke hope in humankind. Creation and consumation are not isolated from one another. Creation lives as much from promise as its beginning. Suffering is seen as the voiding of the promise. At the same time, "An absolute God would make us indifferent. The God of action and success would let us forget the dead, which we still cannot forget."(3) God must keep his promise to keep his character, while, at the same time, acting in a way that is compatible with his love. For God to love means that God becomes vulnerable as humankind is vulnerable. Therefore, to affirm that God loves is also to be aware that God suffers with, and for, as well as because of his creation. Love is passionate. If God is to maintain his promise to fulfill creation, he must embrace suffering. (4)

It is this very gesture that can create hope. That is why "the crucified Jesus becomes God's eternal signature."(5) The issue for faith is not "can God suffer?" but "will God suffer?" God has answered "Yes." In so doing, God was resolving his dilemma as well as ours. It is at this point we discover that the

central issue for faith in Jesus is not just his role for us but his role for God. The issue of the Trinity is not one of peripheral speculation but central to our hope. Basically, wounds are only healed by wounds. "Only a suffering God can help."(6)

To seek to grasp and be grasped by the suffering God is to take both the world and God seriously. If this were not the case, we would treat the world's sufferings superficially and, at the same time, trivialize ministry. It is not our role in ministry to defend God, but to seek to be sensitive to the dynamics in God as the issue of human suffering is resolved for God.(7) In fact, "we must first ask: What does Jesus' death mean for God whom he called 'my Father?'"(8)

Jesus' death is unique! What is unique is his radical abandonment by the Father. His cry, "Why have you forsaken me?" is stark and real. The cause of Jesus' death was ultimately the Father. "The torment in his torments was this abandonment by God."(9) He was put to death by the Father! The one who had given his life for the Father was forsaken by the Father. This is the deepest suffering of Jesus.

How, one might ask, does this resolve the dilemma of God to abandon the "Son" to this fate? Everything hinges on this. God is not delivering the son up to abandonment, but God is embracing abandonment himself.(10) This event is marked with a paradoxical quality that confounds simplistic solutions to human suffering, but does justice to the suffering of God and humankind. In identifying with the Son, the Father also identifies with us. Suffering is experienced as forsakenness and abandonment. In the Son our sufferings also become God's sufferings. What is banished is not suffering but meaningless suf-

fering. Apathy dies because love comes to life.

The resurrection is not the resolution of the dilemma of God. Rather it is the proclamation that the dilemma of suffering has been resolved for God in the Cross of Christ. In this announcement we discover that the despair of human suffering has been overcome. It is now the resurrection of the crucified Jesus and the Cross of the risen Christ that are forever linked to one another. We are empowered to leave inadequate and immature visions of God and to participate in a significant relationship with him as well as share a significant mission with him. Suffering is transformed. It is no longer seen as being abandoned by God, but participating in the sufferings of God with God. Suffering now has a promise because of God's promise. This promise, because it is God's, will now open one to new suffering and to suffering in a new way. This will be a new kind of suffering because it will be participation in God's suffering.(11)

The Culture: The Denial and Banishment of Suffering

Modern culture, which benefits from many significant technological and institutional achievements, finds itself experiencing them with as much disappointment as satisfaction. We pursued a dream, a promise, a hope. In many ways our expectations have been achieved. However, modern culture also accepted the promise that suffering could be banished. It has not seen this promise fulfilled in spite of many changes. Suffering, therefore, is experienced today with an important difference. We continue to suffer as others have, but because we believed suffering should or could be banished, we suffer from a sense of being betrayed. This experience is not just a cultural crisis, but a spiritual crisis.

We know we cannot return to simpler days when the pace was slower. At the

same time we lack the confidence we once had that we could resolve all the issues in life. The anguish of this experience creates a sense of pain and suffering that encourages apathy in order to anesthetize the pain. The failure of premature hopes to be realized now may blind us to the promise that is still present and possible in change.

The "old styles" of living no longer have the power to sustain us. That we must fight to defend and perpetuate them is a signal of their loss of power. The recognition of this is painful, and the necessity to work out new "life styles" is one that causes suffering. "A new 'style' of life has to be worked out, because a person cannot live without style, which is to say formlessly." (12) This is the deepest pain we experience in our culture. To seek to banish or deny this, regardless of the strategy, is to choose death rather than life.

When one discovers that hopes cannot be achieved, the inclination is to make the best of things. When one cannot hope, the tendency is to protect what one has. Therefore, change is experienced as the destabilization of life. That is why Christian faith is not as concerned about "the ideological glorification of things, but rather...the institutional stabilization of things." (13) The structures of existence are protected in the name of promoting life and preventing suffering. The problem with this claim is that it is not true. Rather, it perpetuates the suffering of those who suffer in the present. It leads to the denial of the suffering of others in order to prevent the suffering of the self. However, this only reinforces the structures of death, because the creative forces that could establish new forms of life are rejected.

Modern culture has chosen a special way to deal with pain and suffering. By becoming a society of producers and consumers, it has banished the questions of

meaning from the every day commerce of life. Everything in life must be treated as a problem to be solved rather than a mystery to be embraced. "Neither intellect, morals, customs, notions, tradition, race, position - nor even religion - are necessary in order to make the sociality of men possible."(14) These matters are simply relegated to the private sphere and banned from the public sphere. "Modern" developments do allow a place for religion. When religion has sought only to address the pain and suffering in the private realm and ignored the public arena or has sought to capitalize on this inclination by dominating the private realm, it has capitulated to modern culture. The reason this is true is because the premise of contemporary culture has not been questioned but accepted. Religion can flourish in this arrangement and fill a significant role in this structure of modern existence. The pain and suffering it sees and seeks to meet is real, and this ministry is useful to those who benefit from it. It is precisely this private ministry that allows people to continue to function in the public realm as producers and consumers. It is socially useful!(15)

Society and its members pay a high price for the luxury of this arrangement. Life becomes sterile. What both society and the church suffer from under this arrangement is a "loss of nerve." The consequence of this could be a "fatal loss of courage with its passion for living" (italics Moltmann's).(16)

The contrast is whether the future is seen as extrapolating the trends of the past into the future or living in anticipation of a future that represents a break with the past. For at their best, both faith and modern culture know that the "future does not result from the trends of world history."(17) It is the unexpected surprises, discontinuities, and innovations that create new forms and styles of life.

The first attempts to discern trends seeks to minimize the risk of loss. A second option takes a different approach to life. Not trends but visions shape the future. Therefore, one who lives in this stance seeks to maximize returns. Possibility rather than necessity is the dominant motif of those who do not want to "play it safe." It is the trademark of those of faith.

It can be seen by this analysis of culture that it is not possible to construct a neat arrangement in which culture avoids suffering while faith embraces it. What is clear, however, is that the forces within us and outside of us are powerful deterrents to embracing suffering. Therefore, there will be times when the suffering that is the price of the benefit of the new will be paid by those of culture and, at other times, by those of faith. For both culture and faith the new is not born painlessly.

The Congregation: The Suffering Fellowship and the Fellowship of Suffering

Those who minister in the local congregation are not on the fringes of the issues which will determine the future of the church. "The local congregation is the future of the church. The renewal of the church finally depends upon what happens at the grass-roots level" (Moltmann's italics).(18)

The church will never escape reflecting the peculiarities of its time and setting. If this did not happen the historical character of faith would be denied and, lacking that point of contact, the church would be incomprehensible and irrelevant in its setting. Nevertheless, the primary issue for the church remains whether it reflects Christ. "The question is not whether the church is modern, relevant, and interesting, but how the crucified one is Lord, as the leader of life and of freedom, and, consequently, how Christians follow him and hope in him."(19) The church is a community that lives from the hope inaugu-

rated by the suffering Jesus. It suffers because its hopes are unrealized and it hopes it can embrace the world's suffering in order to be faithful to Jesus.

The church must always acknowledge that its suffering is never original. Only Christ on the cross experiences the utter loneliness of abandonment by God. In our suffering we suffer with Christ. For us suffering need not be a problem for faith but can be an invitation to faith. "As a forerunner (Christ) paves the way. The way is laid open for his successors. Christ experiences death and hell in solitude. His followers experience it in his company."(20)

The martyrs have always had a special place in the life of the fellowship. They remind us of our mission and the power of the promise of Christ. The congregation knows deep within its heart that its significant achievements have come from sacrifices that demonstrate a power that death and suffering cannot intimidate nor conquer. They stimulate the survival of faith because they remind the congregation of the source and promise of faith.

We shall therefore have to understand the apostolate essentially - not merely fortuitously - as active suffering and as suffering activity. The church is apostolic when it takes up the cross...(The church's) apostolic succession is the succession of the passion of Christ.(21)

The congregation does not invite suffering. That would be pathological. The congregation does not evade or avoid suffering. That would be apostasy. The congregation accepts suffering. That is faithfulness to the suffering Christ with whom it has fellowship.

The congregation is called to be a community in which the world may see and experience the friendship that Christ has inaugurated. It is a sign that there can be a community in which the enmities and conflicts of the world need not determine the relationship of every human community. This is the by-product of

the contagious friendship that Christ stimulates among those who follow him. "Christ lives and acts as a friend and creates friendship." (22) Of course, this friendship exposes one to suffering in two ways: suffering when friendship is absent and suffering when it is offered because the pain of the other now becomes my pain.

The congregation must "be ready for friendship with the friendless." (23) This is a recognition that Christ is not only found in the fellowship of those who profess to follow Christ. The Christ who ate and drank with sinners and in his ministry identified himself with the outcast and the oppressed asks the congregation also to find fellowship with him in and through them (Matthew 25). This is not done solely for the sake of the other or for Christ, but for the sake of the self and the congregation as well. All of these dimensions complete the "fellowship circle" that keeps the congregation alive and vital. These marks set it off as living both from the promise of the crucified Christ and in and for the mission of the risen Lord. It is fellowship with the Christ, others who follow the Christ, and the oppressed for whom Christ suffers.

By living from this promise the discovery will be made that this is often misunderstood by the world which does not have access to the promise that sustains the congregation in mission. Those of the culture may therefore seek to control, contain, restrain, or oppress the church because of its witness. The church regrets this when it happens, for its intention is to express a divine friendship towards the world. However, the suffering this creates for the church when its friendship is misunderstood is not interpreted as a sign of failure or defeat. It is accepted as an opportunity to be in fellowship with the suffering Christ as well as suffering humanity.

It is always important for the church to remember that it does not accept this condition of suffering as the final way life should or will be. The church is not the kingdom so the congregation looks beyond the sufferings of the present to the victory of the kingdom. Therefore, the congregation is not a community of tears but a fellowship of joy.

Ministry: The Suffering Vocation and the Vocation of Suffering

The call of God in the crucified and risen Christ is not a word that announces that suffering is over but that suffering need no longer be meaningless. Suffering is no longer a sign that God's promise has been invalidated. One, therefore, can accept suffering as a consequence of ministry: ministry is the vocation of standing in the world with the suffering God and the suffering Christ. To describe ministry in these terms is to make the categories of clergy and laity secondary. This vocation is the hidden source of unity in the variety of callings our gifts and responsibilities lead us to accept.

The life style of faith is one marked by the capacity to suffer and a willingness to suffer. It does not claim that it has the power on its own to embrace the possibility and actuality of suffering, but rather its capacity for this is derivative. This power comes from the "crucified God."

What holds the promise and mission together is love. This love is marked by a capacity to suffer. There is no way to identify with the God of love and avoid the sufferings of God. That is why ministry must be seen and accepted as the vocation of suffering and the suffering vocation.(24) Suffering deepens rather than defeats love, for it participates in the sufferings of God who has entered into our suffering.

The consolation in suffering for those who see it as the ministry of faith

does not mean faith simply accepts suffering as the fate of the human race. No explanation will convince those in the ministry of suffering that this is the inevitable lot of humankind because of some logic of life or history. "For love finds the suffering of others insufferable."(25) The vocation of faith then becomes that place in our daily lives where the suffering of God and the world converge in our decisions and actions. Faith cannot escape this suffering because it realizes that to do so would be to lose love. To lose love would only leave us with empty lives and death would be the colossus dominating the future.

How does one avoid discouragement and taking matters into one's own hands to put an end to suffering? If the goal of faith's suffering style of life is to end suffering, why not work long and hard to terminate all suffering? "Patience is the greatest art of those who hope."(26) Because faith lives in hope, it can risk suffering love and thereby suffering love becomes a confirmation of the power of faith and hope to evoke and sustain the vocation that participates in the suffering ministry of the abandoned "crucified God."

Those who embrace the vocation of ministry accept the fact that "human life must be risked if it would be won."(27) It is the reversal of the "wisdom of experience and logic." Suffering does not contradict nor cancel faith's risk. Instead it completes, confirms, and consummates faith.

Thus its suffering proves to be stronger than hate. Its might is powerful in weakness and gains power over its enemies in brief, because it gives life even to its enemies and opens up the future to change.(28)

Clergy and laity alike struggle with a very significant issue, which, on the surface appears to be different, but at heart is the same. How is God calling me to be sensitive to the suffering in the present arrangement of things, and

what suffering must I be prepared to embrace to enable a new future to open for those who suffer? There is one vocation: the ministry of suffering. There are many roles in which vocation can be carried out.

This awareness of ministry as the vocation of suffering helps the church to see that the discipleship of suffering needs the contributions of those who are seeking to be faithful in their various roles in the world. Both the questions and answers of the laity, as they struggle in their roles to be faithful in their ministry, are important to the church. They open up great promise and possibilities because it will "enable us to bridge two gaps -- the one inside the church which divides the clergy from the laity, and the one outside which divides the church from the world."(29)

The Promise and Possibilities of the Ministry of Suffering

"A theology of the cross is a practical theory."(30) It is not just simply something to talk about but a way of going about ministry that has very practical consequences for the practice of ministry. It is these we want to examine in a brief way in order to sketch some of the implications that arise out of the promise of suffering and suffering's promise.

Proclamation: Proclamation cannot be confined to preaching. Preaching, however, is one form proclamation takes. Preaching, in order to be proclamation, focuses on the advent of the future, the coming future of the crucified Jesus. In fact this announcement is a part of that coming. It is the announcement that even our suffering can be a revelatory moment that yokes us with Christ. The proclamation is that Jesus Christ is more real than our sufferings; that they are not a closing door but an opening door into the future Jesus has introduced into the world.

The language of preaching cannot divorce or separate itself from the everyday language of the people of God. In order to be both promise and summons, it must not only see the suffering of the world but understand and use the language of this suffering. If the God of the cross participates in the suffering of a broken and pain filled world, then the words that announce that suffering cannot ignore the language of suffering today. Proclamation is an invitation to participate in the ministry of "the crucified God."

Proclamation is provocative. It provokes faith and hope, suffering and opposition. It brings suffering into life but breathes life into suffering. It is therefore an exercise of the ministry of suffering that points to the promise of suffering and suffering's promise.

Celebration: Worship is "the messianic intermezzo" that protects us from two abuses of worship: using it as an escape mechanism or a sanctified gripe session. It is a feast that celebrates; it celebrates the triumph of "the crucified God." To celebrate by ignoring suffering would be to capitulate to the forces in our culture that would seek to keep the celebration of the community of faith as a private act. Suffering is therefore a central element of celebration. The suffering Christ who provides the inclination to celebrate will also through celebration provides the impetus to embrace suffering.

This understanding has practical implications for worship. Lament, complaint, pain, and sorrow become as appropriate for prayer as praise, adoration, and thanksgiving. We offer our cries of pain for the suffering and the forsaken to the suffering and forsaken Christ. However, prayer is not a placebo that permits us to escape alleviating the suffering of others or the possibility of our suffering. "Prayer...rather makes love ready to accept pain."(31)

In terms of baptism, infant baptism is called into question. Baptism must be linked to faith, and faith cannot be a representative act for another. Christian baptism is a sign of the advent of the hope of the suffering Christ in the life of the believer. It is the beginning of a life that sees the promise in suffering and accepts the possibility of suffering in living from and for that promise. Therefore, it is a community event for adults who accept both the discipline and the promise of suffering.

"The Lord's Supper...is first of all Christ's meal, and only then the meal of the church."(32) It is the meal in which the host, the crucified Christ, who is the friend of all who suffer, invites all to join him. How can the one who was abandoned in order to be with the abandoned, suffered in order to be with the suffering, and was rejected in order to be with the rejected, host a meal that excludes anyone? How can the church celebrate its hope for the end of suffering and keep the suffering from the one who kindled and keeps that hope alive?

Nurture: The central issue of nurture "is a struggle for the future of history and for the right way of recognizing, hoping, and working for that future."(33) The practical implication of this for the content of nurturing is not just knowledge about the riddle of suffering. It is rather preparation for as well as growth in the discipleship of suffering. It is a wrestling with the issues of life and faith so that one is willing to be engaged by "the crucified God" in the world's suffering, and drawn by the promise of the risen Christ to see these events not as tragic ends but promising opportunities. It does not dismiss suffering or treat it lightly, but it also knows that suffering no longer has the last word. That word is the promise of the one who suffered and triumphed in his sufferings.

Care: Much of the pain of suffering comes from its threat to the meaning of our lives. Our circumstances in life do not enable us to measure either our feeling of security or insecurity. That is why pastoral care does not look at the circumstances alone but the person in the the circumstances. The anxious person may seek to protect his or her life, but discovers it cannot be protected. Life remains vulnerable inspite of all we can or would hope to do.

The resolution of this theological crisis is to be found in a God who abandons the power and prestige that protects in order to assume a role that exposes him to risk. It is the suffering God who liberates the security seeking person because God alone through weakness and suffering allows and enables others to be open to suffering and to love at the same time. It is not strength that heals but weakness. This has the ability to free us from a neurotic quest for security and allows us to embrace the uncertainty of suffering.

Suffering does initially create the impression of abandonment. That is why those who suffer need both compassion and company. In the context of pain one may assume that they are forsaken by God. The prespective of the ministry of suffering is that they have entered into God's situation. Now it is possible for them to see what could not be seen before: the suffering God and the suffering of God. The one who suffers becomes a surrogate to the world of and for God. "The suffering people understood him because they felt they were understood by him."(34) Instead of pushing us to the edge of life, suffering puts us at its center. Others may push the sufferer aside to evade the issue, but the sufferer is at one with the situation of God and humankind. The sufferer is in touch, not out of touch, with the everyday character of life.

In ministering to the weak or suffering, it is not the role of those who

follow a God who chose to be weak and suffering to assume they must be strong and have no pain in order to minister. In those to whom we minister is to be found the suffering God. We serve others better because in them we serve God and ourselves by letting those who suffer bring us into the fellowship of suffering.

Social Action: Much of what can be said about the ministry of suffering as care can be said of social action. The source, strategy, and outcome all have a common focal point in the suffering of God. The difference is application.

The God who forsakes power to become weak could not be expected to serve as an endorsing agent for the powerful and ignore the weak. The God who becomes weak in order to free humankind from false securities could not be thought to seek only to banish and destroy the powerful in order to give their power to the weak. The suffering is more radical than either of these human tendencies that accept the structures of privilege as valid. God calls these very structures of privilege into question. The issue is not who will possess them but how will power, whatever form it takes, be used by those who have it: economic, military, political, social, or intellectual. The future that God creates is not to confirm our privileges but to inaugurate an age where all have privileges.

Every age has discovered that "the poor will always be with you." Faith does not confuse the cosmetics of poverty with the face of poverty. Poverty of spirit "cannot therefore be overcome simply by victory over economic need, political oppression, cultural alienation and the ecological crises...It can only be healed by the presence of meaning in all events and relationships in life" (35). Ministry in the name and service of suffering discovers that because God has identified with the victims of society's successes and failures there is no

event or circumstance in which God cannot be encountered. It is a hopeful development because all privileges based on the suffering of the poor have no permanence and contain within them the seeds of discontent that can lead to the destruction or renewal of the social order. For this reason, those who minister in the name and form of suffering find their suffering is caused by both the animosity of the rich and the misunderstanding of the poor. The minister's inability to idealize either party will put him or her out of step with both parties from time to time. The ministry is "cruciform ministry" because it can neither abandon the poor in spirit nor the poor in wealth.

Social action, therefore, springs from hope but may lead to suffering. In either case there is a divine discontent. Those who are oppressed are not to be forsaken. Those who are oppressors are not to be forgotten. Both are to be confronted with a future which holds the promise they seek but is not in the form they wish to find it. This way does pose the possibility of suffering, yet those who suffer for the future do not suffer alone. They suffer with "the crucified God." Their suffering has meaning because it provides the way of hope for those who are reluctant to see and embrace a new future.

Leadership: Many might conclude that ministers "suffer" administration as a necessary evil, but many do not view this suffering as ministry much less as redemptive. However, "these so-called institutional questions are questions of faith and are of the greatest theological importance. They cannot be solved pragmatically" (36).

Power exercised in the name of Christ and his service will not of itself mean that one's leadership is either effective or accepted. Ministry can no longer be exercised from above but must be from below. It must be of the people

and not for the people. Those who are chosen to lead the community of faith in its service of "the crucified God" cannot assume an autocratic stance in relationship to the people they serve. That would introduce a contradiction in the life of the body that would betray its origin and deny its promise (37).

Suffering is a point of identification of the church with its Lord and as such reminds the church of the source of its life, the courage of its deeds, and the hope of its witness. The church that suffers serves Christ. The witness of faith that is most authentic is one that stands with and is open to the "suffering God" and the "suffering world."

The leadership that the minister must provide is one for freedom and not subjugation. The task of the clergy is not to gain control or manipulate. Instead it is to voluntarily sacrifice oneself for the freedom and freeing of the other. It is an act of the power of love and not the love of power. The pastor "is slave to the task of liberating all for their true humanity" (38). In this sense the pastor shares in the ministry of the suffering Christ. This liberation is not just for those outside of the congregation but inside as well.

The pastor's leadership role is born out of suffering with the people, in discontent about the possibilities that are open but not realized, and the hope that calls the people to give up the present for the future. Therefore, the key leadership task for the pastor is working with and leading people in the congregation toward the future faith promises. The pastor's role is also to help those in the congregation who suffer because of the distance between the kingdom and the church. Suffering because of the practical "short-fall" between profession and practice in ministry is another way that pastor and people are brought into the ministry of the suffering God. It is a risky venture to seek

to close the gap, but it is a necessary one. It is not one always easily seen nor readily accepted. The leadership responsibility of the pastor is to encourage the congregation to discern that while "this can lead to a break with the churches as we know them up to now,...it cannot lead to a break with Jesus" (39).

Conclusion

Suffering is a pervasive human experience. The fact that humankind experiences suffering does not mean that suffering is accepted as the norm. Human suffering has not been ignored by God nor has God remained aloof and detached. The one who could avoid it has chosen in Jesus Christ to be exposed to the experience of the worse suffering of all: meaninglessness. This is seen in the "godforsaken crucified Christ." However, this very act becomes the negation of the negative. Suffering is not overpowered and banished. It is embraced and redeemed. It becomes a way of uniting us with God and our neighbor as well as pointing the way to the future God calls us to receive.

It is this vision which pushes those in the professional ministry to offer themselves and at the same time pulls them toward a future they cannot resist. It offers a promise of suffering that can be embraced because it confirms suffering's promise as suffering with "the crucified God."

CHAPTER III

HAVE NO FEAR FOR THE GOSPEL!

The Theology of Ministry of Luis Segundo

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it was all leaven. (Matthew 13:33)

"We must stop fearing that the gospel no longer has the power to attract human beings."(1)

Living in a fast changing world in which all that seems secure and in place is being called into question, it is easy to view that as calling the gospel into question. A church that has sought to save souls from the world discovers that people are more concerned about the future of the world than the future of their souls. Therefore, we believe the gospel has lost its power to claim the allegiance of the modern person.

The time we live in is not just a time of transition. All times have been times of transition. That is not new. We live, serve, and minister in a time of transformation. We are right to fear whether we can meet the demands of these times, but of one thing we can be sure: we need have no fear for the gospel. So it is also a time of hope.

A Call to Be the Gospel Minority

The gospel is for all, but not all will find it to be a way of life. Does this fact threaten the universal claim of the gospel? No! What is at stake is not how many believe the gospel, but do any live from it. If any live from it, its future is assured for at one time it hinged solely on the one who hung alone on a cross. "The truth that brings freedom is not a matter of theory but a matter of praxis."(2) The gospel is a way of life before it is a theory of truth or a truthful theory. Its validity is not that vast numbers affirm it but

a minority who trust the way of life it offers live from this truth.

"Concupisence...is not acquired by a voluntary act, it is received with the reality of being a human being...it is a negative tendency that paves the way for sin, something that inclines us toward sin."(3) It marks the beginning of living in the reality of "mass man" rather than in the faithful minority.

"Mass man" is a special term. What it conveys in this case is the willingness to choose the easy way, the way that requires the least energy and effort. Because we choose the way of minimum effort "we seldom excell either as saints or sinners."(4) The term "mass man" is more descriptive than pejorative because it is impossible to be a part of the human community and not have dimensions of our lives where we function as "mass man", letting others take charge for us and act for us. It is this tendency that links us to the inclination towards sin-slavery in our lives and causes us who trace our spiritual heritage back to the Exodus to recall that we, like them, "continually tend to shun the liberation (we) have received."(5)

"All sin is anticomunitarian."(6) It is the destiny of persons to be in community with God and others. Therefore, to view sin as individualistic is to fail to take it seriously and to be tempted to deal with it superficially. "The Christian God is a God who loves and who, as such, needs to be loved." (7) "Mass man" does not object to a God who loves. This God is required by "mass man." However, that is not community. Instead, it turns God into a commodity to be consumed. God wants a response of love because he needs community with his creation. When this love is not returned, he is short-changed by his creation. "God's unique action liberates man from the limitations in which he is imprisoned by the human condition."(8) God enters into community with us even in our

sin in order to provide us with the way to be in community with him and others. He does this in part because he is community. "The God that Jesus revealed to us is a God who is a society."(9)

Jesus Christ's mission is not to extirpate a few from the disaster of history. It is not a rescue mission. It is a restorative mission, and, therefore, must work itself out in history. His mission is "to save all human beings, not only every individual but all together."(10) To do this he needed to reintroduce us to God and also pave the way for us to recognize his true identity as well as his vocation. The eloquent liberation of Jesus' deeds became signs pointing toward redemption. His choice of death, which ignored the demands of the masses, was seen as the only way that "would allow his message to reach maturity."(11)

Liberation is another word for grace! However, if salvation is for all persons and for the whole person, how can it leave so many untouched?(12) In quantitative terms salvation is not complete. In qualitative terms it is fulfilled. There will be strong tendencies to substitute the quantitative "mass" approach because of impatience with the qualitative "minority" process. This in part stems from the acceptance of the quantitative criterion as normative. It ignores the Biblical faith that could affirm that the trends inaugurated by Jesus Christ are now more universal than the trends inaugurated by "Adam." This claim does not threaten Christ's uniqueness but attests to his power. He has turned history from a saga of enslavement to a story of liberation. All are now living in the epoch of grace.

Conversion and "mass behaviour" are incompatible. For to treat people as part of the "mass" is to deny their personhood. "A person does not 'function',

a person decides."(13) Therefore, any attempt to overlook, ignore, or deny that a decision is involved for those who respond to grace is a failure to see that the call is for a gospel minority, not majority. What does it mean to be liberated when one lives in a "Christian" environment? It means what it has always meant, a new birth! "Grace not only heals but also elevates."(14) Conversion is not only the healing of our brokenness that has isolated us, but grace moves us to a higher plane of community, with God and with neighbor. How then can a faith that views conversion in these terms claim to be a universal faith? Its universality lies in its being extraordinary and not becoming ordinary. That is why conversion is always a necessity to follow the gospel. The gospel "becomes universal insofar as it fulfills and carries out its extraordinary function, which is nonetheless essential for man's evolution."(15)

It would be a mistake to assume that the distinction between "mass" and "minorities" is either elitist or paternalistic. It rather represents an essential polarity in the human community. At different times and places we may find ourselves at one moment in "mass" behaviour and another moment in "minority" behaviour. In the process of human history the benefit of mass behaviour is the conservation in quantitative terms of the achievements of past minorities while the benefit of the minority is the qualitative breakthroughs that will open new vistas and possibilities for the "masses." To be a gospel minority is to be a servant minority. It is open to all and for all but requires a converting commitment for it to be a reality.

That is why the church faces not a time of transition but transformation. It comes to the realization that if it seeks to serve the gospel in quantitative terms instead of qualitative terms, the reaching of the masses and not the creating of a leavening minority, then "the church ends up witnessing against

the gospel message."(16)

A Gospel Minority in a Mass Culture

Having lived for centuries in cultures basically shaped and formed by the church, the realization that culture no longer will support faith is therefore experienced as a profound loss and not as a gift. As yet there is little appreciation that "the assaults on her have liberated her from the temptations of 'Christendom.'"(17)

The cultural trends that are decisive in reshaping the environment in which the church labors are the pace of change, uprootedness, consumerism, and pluralism.

The pace of change is not a new discovery. What is new in Latin America is that in a few day's travel people are moving culturally 5,000 years. This is not simply geographical migration but a vivid symbol of value transformation. The values of the past have no relevance and therefore no power in the new milieu. It is the death of a value system that cannot survive the high transitoriness of modern life.

Uprootedness is a second cultural trend that is essential for the survival of modern culture. This has not simply changed the circumstances in which we live. "We are confronted with radically different human beings."(18) This explains modern culture's breakthroughs that permit us to rise above nature as well as its mass quests for a new security to replace the lost security people felt when they had strong ties to nature.

A consumer society is the third trend that shapes our culture. The problem that this poses is not materialism but superficiality. Materialism has always

been a problem because people have always had to deal with basic material needs. Modern culture runs on mass consumption. The solution is that the most important questions are given time when we are at leisure. They are not to invade the consumer affairs of life. We are a technical society in the worst sense because we can only function with neutral technicians. "To borrow a metaphor, they join human trees at the leaves rather than at the roots."(19)

Pluralism is the final trend. No culture can survive by totally suppressing questions of ultimate values. Modern culture has handled the issue by privatizing and relativizing these questions. That is why pluralism is an important trait of our culture. Function, not conviction, defines our public relationships outside the sphere of our private world.

Were culture to follow these trends with consistency to their logical conclusion, they would be self-defeating. "There is no politics without masses. But neither is there any politics without minorities."(20) If we wish to reshape the world we live in, the minority must convince the masses of its case. Otherwise, the minority remains an isolated minority rather than a leavening minority. "Every social system functions, or is created, through an interaction between masses and minorities."(21) At this point we should learn from the inner dynamics of culture itself of the necessity for the leavening minority.

The trends in culture always give weight to conservation. The moments of opportunity can only be grasped by a minority. Usually they are those who are not the beneficiaries of the present "mass" system. It is hard for society with its self-forgetfulness to remember "that what seems normal to us today is the result of some novelty in a past day: that its newness has been stripped away by dint of habit and custom."(22)

Therefore, the culture requires a dialectical rhythm for its survival. Should mass patterns stifle all minorities in order to protect society the opposite will happen. Society will atrophy and die. Should minorities abandon the quest for the mass processes and masses to achieve their goals they will remain ghetto anachronisms. These lessons confront the church with a new way of discerning what it means to be proclaimers of the gospel and faithful stewards of God's creation. "While the Gospel does accept the whole dialectical process, it expects the Christian community to perform a function that is equivalent to one of the two poles: the minority."(23)

"In the modern world no environment can give us Christianity readymade."
(24) This is the legacy of the passing of the Constantinian epoch. The word of the gospel is now one word among many. The community of faith can no longer expect the culture to create the climate for faith to emerge.

Faith, therefore, may seek two options as a way of dealing with culture that hold little promise. One would be to endorse the mass culture. While no one completely escapes this for we must acknowledge "our image of God quite logically reflects the conditionings of Western civilization,"(25) it has no future. The other option is to accept the arena the culture leaves to religion - the private world. Certainly there are many needs here and countless opportunities for service. But this ghetto existence has no future as long as it is isolated. It is a minority but not a creative minority. It resolves the tension by withdrawal. The third option for faith and the world is to accept the gospel as "minority gospel" because its mission is to be a leavening gospel.

The world does not shatter (our) faith, it opens up unsuspected horizons to it. And with these horizons (we) will understand the enormous importance of (our) mission and exclaim serenely: "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."(26)

The Gospel Minority Community

The issue of faith is not that we are ceasing to be a minority but that we lost sight that the church "has been, and would always be, a minority amid its contemporaries."(27) This stems from the limitations Christ imposed upon himself, his followers, and the conditions required for discipleship. The only advantage we have today is that the cultural trends are destroying the conditions that made the illusion of Christendom plausible.

"Ever since the day when Constantine turned Christianity into the official religion of the Roman Empire, thus transforming it into Christendom, the Church has run the danger of being converted wholly into mass Christianity."(28) When individuals existed as members of groups, societies were closed, and communities lived in geographical isolation, mass movements were not questioned because they were the norm. In this environment birth rather than conversion was the path of entry into the church. Faith was not the product of a painful process but a fact of one's social milieu. "There were no pagans, just good and bad Christians."(29) The problem this would pose for the church was clear. "A growing number of 'Christians' were incorporated into the Church without ever being evangelized."(30)

What makes the church both universal and particular is the call to faith. No one is barred from the call due to any ethnic or cultural conditions.(31) It is a truly open community. It can appeal to one and all. However, it is a community that requires a decision to live from and be an agent of the liberty that grace offers in Jesus Christ. To embrace the call is to be called to be open to the entire human community. However, this liberating dimension was lost in the cultic practices of the church. It let its view of universality become captive to "mass religion." In winning a form of universality it lost the uniqueness

of a particularity that would have given it a distinctive universality. "The church paid a price here for its new universality."(32)

Because univerality has been defined in terms of numbers, the church will always feel an ambivalence about the demands of the gospel. If these conditions are preached, the church will be a minority community and by the world's criteria it will cease to be universal. However, the church is liberated from these fears when it discovers its universality is qualitative. Then "the only real explanation is that the universality of salvation is bound up with the church's function of service to the rest of humankind."(33) That is a peculiar vocation of a minority community that is also marked by its universality of openness.

The primary issue for the church is directed to those who are outside. If these lines are blurred the church is not clear where to direct its mission. What is demanded is a commitment to responsible self-giving to God and for others. Here the interplay of minorities with the masses is seen in its gospel power. In this sign-bearing function those outside the gospel "hear resonances of the message that can change their existence even though it may not covert them into Christians."(34) The church may lose the masses if it decides to articulate its message. Were the church to sacrifice its message in order to save a place with the masses even the world would lament for the church as well as for itself. It would sense that in gaining the masses the church would have lost the minority message of the gospel. The world would sense correctly that it had lost the leaven for the loaf of its life.

This understanding of the church in the light of the gospel criteria and the cultural needs will mean a radical alteration of its life. The assumption that

the church is fashioned to benefit those who belong to it no longer has any support. Evangelism can no longer be viewed as winning adherents to the church and swelling its ranks. Rather, it must be viewed as a call to openness to the community we have with God and others. It means to accept the call to participate in the process of liberation so that those who are oppressed in body, mind, heart, and soul may be set free. It is a call to accept the legacy of the minorities of faith in the past whose achievements have meant advances in humankind's liberation and accepting the challenge to be a part of the heroic minority of the present so that the masses may live at a new level of freedom tomorrow.

The Minority Gospel and Ministry

If the present is perceived in terms of the necessity of and the opportunity to witness to the liberty Christ has conferred, then this is a wondrous epoch! To be in the ministry of the gospel minority is to be given a significant life as well as ministry.

To speak of ministry is to talk about a way of life. However, before doing that it is essential to acknowledge that the call to be part of a heroic minority is a call to ministry for all believers and not some believers. The question of vocation does not revolve around what we do but who we are. It is a journey through life that finds us being ever more open to community with God and others. How laity and clergy carry out the tasks this creates in their daily life will vary. That it is the vocation of each person to do this will not vary.

To say this is the nature of ministry is not to say it is either easy or automatic. Not all of our actions proceed from the freedom grace has offered.

Nor is any act of ministry (life) free from egotism. Therefore, the obligation of ministry and living is the same for the person of faith. "We must continually seek to fashion and recover the nearness of others as neighbors."(33) This is the overriding issue that serves as a backdrop for any discussion of the shape of the ministry of the laity or of the clergy.

"Everything that the Christian receives is immediately turned into a responsibility."(36) This is a view of life that shapes the ministry of the laity. As a member of the heroic minority it means that the gift of faith confers obligation rather than privilege. The gifts of life, of faith, of love all lead to one conclusion: service of God for the neighbor. The result is that laity still must struggle to see their historical responsibilities as ministry. Here faith has an ally in the modern world that is slowly eroding the power of "mass religion" and demanding that the human historical struggle be taken with seriousness. Lay holiness must cease to be measured by the religious categories of the "mass religion" of Christendom in order to respond to the maximum standards of the gospel rather than minimum requirements for church membership that often leave one's public life in the world untouched.

In their daily lives the laity are constantly engaged in this faith struggle. Sometimes they succeed and sometimes they fail as they are tempted to choose the easy way of treating people as functionaries and things rather than as persons. The extent to which they are able to overcome this as they deal with people, issues, and structures will measure their effectiveness in the ministry of love.

The struggle of the clergy as Christendom disintegrates raises the question whether they have any worth, purpose, or function in today's world. Liberation

from the ethos of Christendom is a terrifying experience more often than an exhilarating one. Clergy have not been equipped to work with people who are free. They were trained one way and are now told it was a mistake! Likewise, can one just write off countless numbers of people who have been told that what they believed is now no longer good enough? What will happen to the weak who may be crushed by these changes? "Once again we sense a fear that the gospel message on its own has little to say and even less to attract people...It is lost on the rich because they are rich, and the poor because they are poor."(37) These fears are real and cannot be ignored. They represent a crisis of faith that is interrelated to the transformation of Christianity from a majority movement to a minority contingent whether it is heroic or not.

The clergy sense they have lost their place in society and with that there is a feeling of unfulfillment in their work. They feel they are misunderstood and saddled with rites and institutions of another era they would not choose nor construct today. They perceive the old answers have little to say, the new answers do not make sense, and they feel they lack the ability to create their own. Those outside the role think the office is important and would like to remold it in their image and the clergy are caught in the vortex of competing claims. "It is not a crisis in the priesthood. It is a crisis in the internal coherence of the Church."(38) It is the point where many issues seem to cluster in the process of the transformation from "mass religion" to "minority gospel."

It highlights the changing relationship of clergy and laity for the future. As with all changes it is slow, difficult, and will take time just as it took time to create the edifice of a mass religion. One decisive change is that if the clergy seek to work only with a passive and a captive laity, ministry will shrink to the edge of life. The increasing number of options open to the laity

as Christianity becomes a minority faith will enable them to be free from the clergy. Even if this were not the case, the minority gospel would encourage and demand this of the clergy. In a sense this struggle is not limited to the clergy. Therefore, the challenge of those who minister - clergy and laity alike is that their service must be dialogical.

The dialogical approach is essential for the ministry of evangelization at the deepest levels of faith. It is essential to insure that the basic questions "Who are we?" and "What are we?" are always asked. Only in this way can faith maintain its authenticity and not become a mass ideology. The questions of the nonbeliever are also important for us. The proclamation of word and deed is not only a summons to the nonbeliever, it is a call to a more complete conversion of the believer. "Thus the dialogue with the nonbeliever becomes an interior one inside the believer himself." (39) In the end the dialogical nature of ministry is a recognition the minority exist to serve and not to abandon the majority. Therefore, we need not be paralyzed by the transformations that must take place in our understanding and practice of ministry. It will be a time of adjustment but not despair. We need have no fear for the gospel, for from the beginning it has shown it has the power to survive the breakdowns and breakups of our worlds. Its "victory will always be the same. A quantitative death is followed by a qualitative victory." (40)

The Tasks of the Gospel Minority Ministry

Faith must seek to be effective. This is its message for those who would accept the mantle of the professional ministry. This will require a commitment to a call and a commitment to excellence in living that call. That is what it means to be in the profession of ministry.

Evangelism: "The Christian faith is not a knowledge given for the personal profit of the receiver; it is granted so that he may give something to others."
(41) This is the essential for the practice of ministry. Everything starts or ends at this point. Therefore, central to the role of the clergy is responsibility for evangelization. However, we need to be sure that we understand the marks of this in terms of qualitative rather than quantitative criteria. This style of evangelism will have three dominant marks. The first is that it will stay close to the essentials of faith. One cannot assume people know the gospel. In fact we must go to the heart of the matter because people do not know they do not know! The second critical mark is that it must be good news. This will require that we listen to others not only to know what to say but to understand what God is doing in the lives of others. We cannot have prefabricated canned formulas to dispense. That would mark an end to witnessing and signal the beginning of propaganda. The final mark is to allow the hearer to arrive at his or her own conviction in his or her own time and way. It is not enough to learn rote answers. The answers must carry the conviction of a personal decision. The purpose of the witness is not to create others in our image but allow them to be created in their own unique way into God's image. Anything else would not create freedom but take it away.

To accept evangelization as central to ministry is to accept twenty failures for every accomplishment. It is to resist the temptation to count baptisms or conversions, for the only thing that counts is when those who respond to the gospel become a part of the minority that carry the gospel to others. It is to resist all the temptations to accept the minimum and abandon the maximum.

"Perhaps now we can see the fallacy involved in the idea that we can 'facilitate' the work of grace, that we can make it easy, that we can give it 'a

little push.'"(42) That era is gone, and we may hope forever.

Proclamation: Preaching must be dialogical in the sense that it addresses the questions of life or the issues of faith as they are engaged by the issues of life. Preaching's purpose is not to silence doubt or unbelief but to hear them. For from them will the clues be found as to what is crucial for preaching. "The truth which the Church possesses is constantly in danger of becoming mere words if it is not fleshed out in dialogue."(43)

In order to preach, the clergy must understand the human journey for liberation (i.e., grace and salvation) in its historical manifestations. It is the task of preaching to relate the incarnation to what is unfolding in history. "The pastor...is someone who knows how to read the plan of God in our contemporary history."(44) All of this is preparation for the task of preaching which is a "'significant re-expression' of the gospel...Thus it continually 're-creates' the gospel."(45)

Preaching must arise from a personal conviction in order to elicit personal conviction. It does not share an idea but it announces a way of life. It does not command but invites. The clergy are gospel-creators. "They...no longer proclaim a stereotyped message to others. Instead they...proclaim the impact of the 'good news' on their own lives, and the wholly new orientation it (has) produced."(46)

Worship: Nowhere is the crisis of "mass religion" experienced in such a practical everyday way as with prayer, the sacraments, and the liturgy. It is not enough to say that they remain signs to technical modern humankind that immediate utility is not the ultimate criteria for worth. The gift that makes prayer vital to faith is living in the presence of God. We learn we are not

abandoned by a remote unmoved deity. We discover that our sufferings are God's sufferings, which is seen most clearly in Christ's life and death. This is not a promise for another world or another life. It is an awareness that the life in history we share is also the history of God in which "no love is lost."(47)

In mass religion large numbers of people participate in the sacraments but their participation is as individuals and not as a community. The majority ironically is individualistic, while the role of the sacrament is to sustain and empower a minority community. It commissions for service in the world and, therefore, is a more open society than those services in which there is mass participation. The crisis of the sacraments is a crisis of faith that will not be resolved by new forms but by a new place in which they will serve the community's need to be in service to others.

Prayer, sacraments, and liturgies do not allow us to escape the struggles and hopes of the world. Instead, they help us to discern and serve God and others in human history. They prevent us from using our worship to be antimunitarian and compel us to remember as well as serve the Christ who "turns the very history of man into liturgy."(48)

Nurture: The church of the masses confronts two major difficulties. On the one hand most laity have not "learned how to learn" so the possibility of continuing the task of "re-expressing the gospel" is stymied. On the other hand, clergy have been taught theology out of books so that when they confront laity who are trying to develop personal convictions by reflecting on their personal life and the Christian message clergy are "seen more as an obstacle than a help."(49)

Faith does not affirm an absolute formula but it does develop in the

minority an absolute process. "Faith, then, is a liberative process. It is converted into freedom for history." (50) One is claimed by a message and explains that claim so others might understand what one believes and why one lives the way one does. This does not mean the scriptures and tradition are ignored or abandoned. It only means they are not repeated by rote.

We will never be able to reduce the faith to a specific book or page of the Bible, to a specific Creed, or to a specific dogma. All of these things point out the road to be travelled by faith, but they never provide us with the journey completed. (51)

Administration: The way the community organizes and carries out its institutional life, with its attending responsibilities for the clergy, must be shaped by its mission to create minorities who share a conviction to serve humankind so that the vision of the life of liberation may become real to them. It is clear that any church order based on a "mass religion" concept that seeks to offer protection and security will be uncomfortable with this approach. Therefore, we do know that the church must avoid being a quantitative mass with such minimum standards that its size is its only distinctive feature. Likewise, we do not create a small elite group that turns in on itself to protect it from a hostile setting.

The institutional forms will be shaped for service and mission to free individuals and structures. Both within its own community and in society at large it will seek to husband its energy for those activities that will support evolutionary advances for liberation. Time for maintenance and providing security to the masses must be kept at a minimum by the clergy so that there will be time and energy left for creating and supporting the minority in mission.

The structures we seek to create to be effective need not be distinctive. What matters is a qualitative distinction. We need to remember that institutions

are born in moments of creativity and times when a vital minority is at work. They do not arise out of chaos. Instead, they surprisingly begin to emerge at those points where past transformations have triumphed! The new minority emerges because it now perceives more complex and rich possibilities beyond what has been achieved. It is not a word of attack against the order; it is a word of liberation that announces the new possibilities open both to and because of that order.(52) Here the minority sees a vocation to create forms for service that have not existed before. It "feels responsible for bringing something qualitatively new into history."(53)

The role of the clergy is to be that of presbyter or elder. The purpose of this is to encourage the community of saints to maintain the vocation of its heritage of being a creative minority in the service of the Word and world. This means the clergy will share this task with mature laity, will maintain dialogue with those outside the community, will be attentive to the times and places God's liberating work is perceived, and will seek to make those creative breakthroughs to serve as pioneers for the "masses" enabling them to achieve a more liberated life in the future.(54)

Pastoral Action: The key location of the church's ministry is in the local congregation. Here in the interaction of clergy and laity the shape of ministry is formed and carried out. Where it takes its minority role with seriousness it can be a creative pastoral care and social action agent. It can be both because these dimensions of ministry are two sides of the same coin. The church, because of its minority option, is able at times to resist the temptation to use people. It is able to sense that "the oppressed themselves should be the agents of their own pastoral activity."(55) Seldom do the oppressors, benefactors, and revolutionaries make this claim. Nor would one expect to hear them say that the

oppressed many not only be their best agents but may be significant as bearers of the world's future; even for their oppressors, benefactors, and revolutionary saviours! When faith affirms that, it has affirmed the worth and dignity of those it serves with pastoral action.(56)

Since the ministry of pastoral action is linked inevitably to the context of ministry, we must acknowledge that the shape of the role will be different in times of stability or conflict. In times of stability the minority gospel community must work to break up stereotypes that still permit dominion over the weak, estranged, and exploited. Since no social order will ever fully realize the kingdom of God and since all orders will have elements of its life that have "mass" characteristics, the leaven of the gospel minority will be crucial. In times of conflict the minority will be pressured by the protectors of the existing order as well as the protagonists of the new order to "sacralize" their positions. While the tendencies of the gospel minority will be with the thrust to re-order, its endorsement will never satisfy because it is always a qualified one. It must stand against all stereotypes. Therefore, even its support of change is never adequate to those who seek change because their new stereotypes never go far enough to liberate all or liberate fully.

There are five key questions the church must answer as it seeks to meet the needs for pastoral action of those who suffer and are oppressed. They are:

- 1) Is the church the only possible group capable of offering aid?
 - 2) Does the aid and other work of human promotion undertaken by the church effectively reach everyone regardless of their ideologies and religious creeds?
 - 3) When churches in foreign countries (or outside communities) do send aid, could these be handed over directly to representatives of the recipient communities?
 - 4) Could lay people take charge of these human development tasks
-

that are now in the hands of bishops and priests?

- 5) Would the church still continue to lend its support to these institutions if they were taken over by non-Christian leaders?(57)

The central concern is recognizing that one who comes to serve "is not someone who comes to talk: he is someone who comes primarily to listen."(58) Is there esteem for those being served? Is there a resolve not to impose my culture but to collaborate with them around a new vision? Do my methods facilitate this process or work against it? Every dimension - goals, intentions, methods, and results - must be examined to see that it liberates and does not enslave.

These are difficult standards to meet. Amid the countless demands of human need for liberation we must all conserve our energy. We cannot be the gospel minority for everyone and in every situation! This is so because of our human finitude and sin. Therefore, we will all at times be part of the "mass" that by sins of omission fails to heed the criticism and heroism of new minorities. The resolution of this dilemma is not increased activism. We can never be active enough! Therefore, in our very efforts to serve as liberators we will discover not only the needs of others for liberation but ours as well, along with a common need of all of us for the Liberator whose work is grace.

Conclusion

We do not need to fear for the gospel! It has a future because its future is God's future. Its impetus is the liberating work of God's love which can never be lost. Where this love is proclaimed and lived it will create new minorities that are shaped by the future of God liberating them from the constraints of present inhibiting enslavements. Our confidence is that the God who hears the suffering of his people and journeys with them will create his

gospel minorities in this world. The appearance and work of Christ and his ministry is a gesture and sign of that covenant. We do not need to have fear for the gospel!

Since ministry will be finally judged in qualitative rather than quantitative terms, we know that the "majority mass" criteria is no longer relevant to what the gospel requires and the world needs. We sense that even in a "mass religion" and "mass society," the needs for minorities and the inspiration of minorities will never end.

The adventure in gratuitous living, this pageant of redemptive grace opposing sin, is essentially a minority affair - as is life, as is man, as is the play of ideas...It is extraordinary... because the triumph of love throughout the evolutionary process is never a quantitative one. It is a minority affair without being an elitist one.(59)

The minority do not fear for the gospel because the gospel creates the minority. We recognize that the vocation of the gospel and of the minority is that the world may be saved. Therefore, we do not fear for the gospel because "love is never lost."

CHAPTER IV

I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW

John B. Cobb Jr.'s Theology of Ministry

"Behold I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5)

From one of his early writings in 1965, when John B. Cobb, Jr. wrote, "To me it appears that the struggle to restore the meaningfulness of the word 'God'... is a matter of importance for the health, even for the survival, of Christian faith,"(1) to the present time, the issue of belief in God and how to speak about God have been central to his theology and ministry.

The loss of old cultural buttresses for faith combined with the painful questions that emerge from human experience push the question of God to center stage. "The pain, suffering, injustice, and transitoriness of the world both intellectually and existentially call forth radical questioning about God."(2)

However, it should be acknowledged that this discussion is shaped by the event of Jesus the Christ. What will be "said about God is already Christological." (3) It is a Christological doctrine of God. It is the doctrine of a God who is creating and becoming through the realization of the promise, "I make all things new."

God the Creator

In our time believing in God is difficult. Cultural and historical circumstances seem to erect obstacles to belief in God. Much that goes for belief seems to offer little that would elicit a life or death commitment to the serious searcher. This is the climate in which Cobb's theological work takes place. His work, therefore, is critical because the outcome will be significant for faith and the world.

In A Christian Natural Theology (1965), he begins to explore the contribution that Alfred North Whitehead's work offers to the theological task of being able to affirm "I believe in God." To spell out in detail Whitehead's philosophy along with Cobb's analysis of it is beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore, it is our limited purpose to identify crucial elements of Cobb's thought as it relates to what it means for him to say "I believe in God."

The understanding of the immutability or the impassibility of God is guilty of two serious errors. First, it is not faithful to the Biblical affirmations of faith in God. The Biblical faith says God is affected by what happens to the world. "The acceptance of the notion of divine impassibility undercuts the Biblical witness to the love of God."⁽⁴⁾ The second error is that if God exists but does not continually shape or is not continuously affected by what happens in the world then life ultimately has no meaning. It has no future.⁽⁵⁾

Central to Cobb's thought is Whitehead's two characteristics of God: the primordial nature and the consequent nature. God's aim is consistent. This does not change. God's intention for creation is that the potentialities it has will find fulfillment, and the joy and peace that are the consequences of that intention may be discovered and received as a gift. In this regard God is a principle of limitation as well as possibility. Everything must have it antecedents. Since everything in creation has human, historical, or "divine" antecedents, the ultimate antecedent will be experienced as a limitation. This understanding of the primordial nature of God does not pose major problems in itself. Those who believe in God have often accepted this understanding. Those who have not believed have simply challenged it or rejected it.

It is when Cobb uses the category of the "consequent nature of God" that the

new possibility of what it means to believe in God emerges. "God is understood as being affected by the world." (6) This is a key mark of God's creativity. What we see here is not a static hierarchial relationship with the world but rather a dynamic process in which God is affected, takes up the new consequences of creation that leaves its impact upon God, and now this becomes the frame of reference for the human situation. Therefore, the relationship does not change while the context does for "the initial aim of each occasion is derived from God." (7) It is at this point the claim of faith, "I make all things new", has a new significance. The process of creation continues so that each moment is experienced as both limitation and possibility. The source of both is God. (8) There is no perishing in God and the term "everlasting" now describes a possibility for God's creation. This happens because no events are "lost", and, therefore, meaninglessness of our failures and successes is thwarted. (9)

"Whatever we do makes a difference to God." (10) God cares for creation. Our lives matter to another, and this other will not perish. This is what it means to know that God loves us and cares for us. Indifference to our joys and sorrows is not God's relationship to creation. There are no simplistic solutions. Success is not assured once one is aware that God is affected by creation. Yet everything has changed! This is a God who is pictured as "the love that lures us into adventure." (11) Life's possibilities are heightened. The suffering and joy of God and the world are intensified. Both now matter ultimately.

Novelty gains a new importance when "all things are made new." Novelty is not a threat but an opportunity. The act of creation does not only bring order out of chaos. That does not do justice to creation or give serious attention to the world and the consequent nature of God. Order requires novelty to stay

alive! For Whitehead "the decisive feature of life is novelty and not the repetition of past patterns." (12) The source of novelty is God. This is a function of God's primordial and consequent natures. Here these natures converge. "Thus God is the One who calls us beyond all we have become to what we might be." (13) The future is open. This is the promise of both creation and redemption.

The power of God is experienced as persuasion rather than coercion. This exercise of persuasion is invitation. Invitation to enter into God's struggle to create and realize the potentialities of each moment so that new potential can emerge in the future. This call, however, is also a call that risks vulnerability, hurt, pain, suffering, and failure. At the same time even these are made new because the One who persuades us to live open to the future, promises that even these painful experiences will be made new. They too will be a source of growth and blessing.

In the end this is a gift of grace. Those who come to this stance in the Christian tradition trust that Jesus the Christ is one who encourages the openness to receive the gift of grace as well as to live for the future that grace makes possible. We do this because in faith we perceive creation Christologically. The creator in whom we believe is not an immovable impassable cause of events. The Creator-Lord of history is "a lover of the world who calls it ever beyond what it has attained by affirming life, novelty, consciousness, and freedom again and again." (14) The call "I make all things new" is experienced as invitation and promise.

An Epoch of Quiet Gods

Belief in God has for some become a problem because there appears to be no place for God in the daily affairs of our life. At the same time our culture is

noted for a large number of small gods, none of whom seem to speak often or have much to say to the people of this post-modern world other than to echo their own words.

Much of contemporary culture hears the word "God" as an empty sound. The symbols of religion and God may still be used, but the reality which they once embodied for many who uttered the name God is no longer there. The words are hollow. This is not only true for those outside the community of faith. In many cases "it has become the problem of the perceptive minister in dealing with (her)/himself and (her) his own understanding of (her) his ministry." (15) It is difficult for us to conceive that many once were willing to put people to death or to die for affirmations we do not always understand. "They have become mere speculations,...They are not disbelieved; they are simply ignored." (16) We can, it appears, run our cultures with or without God. "The power of mythical thinking was broken and a new sense of structure of existence emerged." (17) The result of this was a new sense of freedom and of individuality. We cannot return to a former "mythical" era of thought. History does not move back nor can faith find any hope in working for the return of a previous epoch. It cannot create symbols, but only receive them.

One mark of our culture is the combination of relativism and pluralism. It is impossible to make absolute claims and be taken with absolute seriousness. This is new! Our culture accepts the assumption that all positions and affirmations are affected by the conditions of the one who makes the affirmation. The purely objective statement of truth is impossible to make or to be heard! Therefore, all affirmations about God are assumed to be conditioned by the circumstances of the one speaking.

"We must learn to live, to think, and to love in the context of this ultimate insecurity and uncertainty."(18) To live in the ambiguity of revelatism may be too much for some. They may simply acquiesce to the uncertainties of history and say nothing matters. However, others like Camus may say they elect to live as though it matters. In either case both must wrestle with relativism in their daily life. Therefore, there will be a pluralism of responses.(19)

In some instances the relativism of the West is baffled by the tenacity of other cultures shaped by other convictions of God. However, time seems to be on the side of the pluralistic forces of the West as its technology and the assumptions necessary for it to be effective infect other cultural configurations.(20) Faith should not view this cultural perception as a threat to its affirmations. Rather, it should recognize in it a precondition for as well as a product of faith itself. Faith can affirm pluralism because of its Christological understanding of God. It is not our task to protect the old cultural forms of faith that other ages found meaningful. Likewise, it is not our task to destroy the old. Instead, faith perceives the "the new not only frees us from the old but also frees us for it. It establishes the world as it transforms it."(21)

Of course, all cultures seek to have religions mirror rather than transform them. Our culture is no exception to this inclination. The cultural forces that seek these endorsements are even stronger in our time as relativism and pluralism pose stronger threats. Preservation and not transformation is the vocation culture assigns to religion. These forces are strong even in believers, maybe even stronger, since they care both about culture and faith. Therefore, while the prophetic principle that destroys "every other picture of God" (22) may be exhilarating to some, to most it is exhausting and threatening. To those who believe against great odds this is experienced as a need to hold on

to something since there appears to be so little left to support their life and faith. To those outside of the faith stance these concerns seem to have little apparent relevance to the issues of everyday life.

Belief in God is not a required presupposition for dealing with the issues of a technical scientific culture. This means the speech of faith is not culturally self-evident. Speculative philosophy seems to offer little help to a culture generally indifferent to philosophy. It is in the historical scientific area that faith's affirmation of God must be made in order to engage modern life. These are the intellectual methodologies that have increasingly dominated other human intellectual endeavors since the sixteenth century. Natural science has revolutionized the thought and life of civilization far more pervasively and far more extensively than any other movement.(23) However, the hopes for science's gifts to humankind no longer seem as promising as they once did, for the demons that sometimes replace the ones that have been swept aside appear to be worse than those they displaced.

History cannot be turned back. The honest person will, therefore, have to refuse to deny or escape the questions of existence and its meaning even if the way to the past is closed, the present is problematic, and the future uncertain. The problem this presents to the church and the culture in the present is that the assumptions of the secular world filter out the religious dimensions of human experience. If these assumptions remain dominant, Christian belief is very difficult to sustain. If they are challenged and called into question, a new vision may be possible. Cobb uses Whitehead's philosophy for this new role.

Such an understanding of the world may be able to reform and revitalize remnants of the still effective vision of the world as creation. It might even bring into being a new Christian vision for those among whom the old one is evaporated.(24)

There is one final problem that modern culture cannot escape as it seeks to discover meaning for itself and those who live in it. This "problem is not injustice, physical suffering, or mental anguish...the final problem is not death... the deepest problem is temporality."(25) If in the end nothing really endures and failures are not final nor successes permanent, what will happen to a zest for life? Of course, people can continue as though the faith affirmations of the past were in effect, but even this effort cannot last forever. It will collapse of its own weight.(26)

The modern culture shaped by forces that have no place for God as Creator must assume the role of meaning-giver to those who live in the culture. However, these new gods are quiet. They do not make all things new but make all things old because they lack the power to transform the present into the future. It is this dead-end that may explain why apocalyptic modes of thought bring our age closer to the Biblical ethos. We have reached a cul-de-sac. Ironically, this may also be a ray of hope for our culture. It may be ready for a vision.

The Open Community

The response of the so-called liberal and conservative sides of the church are shaped by the cultural context. The conservative critique that not everything new is necessarily good has enough validity to make the stance somewhat tenable. However, the consequence is to cease to believe in the God who is before us and always calling us to the adventure of transformation. The liberal response has sought to maintain contact and credibility with the modern person. There is much in this response that has merit. However, the liberal response has lost the critical tension necessary for transformation to remain possible.

The church must be seen as always in the process of becoming. It must be a pilgrim people because it serves a God who is always calling them forward. It is not our task to protest or adapt but to be a community open to the transforming work of God in Jesus Christ.

The trends of our culture work against the mission of the church and the needs of many in our society. The success in granting freedom to the individual that is a crowning achievement of our society has been a mixed blessing. Atomized, separated, and isolated individuals carry out a wide range of transactions with many people, but lack a significant number of important relationships to enable them to overcome a sense of isolation and estrangement. Freed from many of the bonds we at one time experienced as restrictive we have become prisoners of impersonal systems. We cannot go back nor can we always transform and humanize the large systems modern life requires. We need voluntary communities that are marked by possibility and not constraints. In some ways this need is fortuitous for the church. "Since its origin the church...was a voluntary community in which interpersonal relations were experienced chiefly as liberting rather than restricting."(27)

For Cobb the need of this kind of community is experienced vocationally as well as personally. Presonally he experiences this with prayer. "I have learned that in my prayer life I need the support of a praying community. I lack the strength I once had, or thought I had, to go it alone."(28) This is an expression of need. In terms of his vocation as a theologian it is a necessity of the vocation. The theologian is a theologian-in-community. His or her work can never be done in isolation. It is for and with the community. This does not mean, however, that the theologian must always reflect the community's present perspective.

The theologian's task is to articulate the unspoken experience of the community. By naming, articulating, and bringing to speech the deeply held convictions and longings of the community others can say, "that was what I was trying to say." The concepts make the reality to which they point available to shape the community and nudge it forward in the adventure of transformation. Cobb, of course, would accept this as the role for all in the community. It is the role for the theologian, liturgist, preacher, pastor, or church member. "In fact we exist in and from and for one another. The Christian ideal of wholeness is for personal wholeness in a whole community."(29)

There might be cries of hurt, anger, or the pain of anxiety that says God should remove this freedom and give us the promised peace. Such an option would be the use of power as coercion rather than persuasion. It would neglect the awareness that human hurt and frustration make God as well as humans its victim. The community of faith in the end cannot be based on human utilitarianism. It can only survive because the God who called this community into existence still invites us to participation in the transformation of creation toward the fulfillment of its potentiality.

"Faith in God and hope for the future (are) deeply interdependent."(30) The community of faith must therefore live open to both the future and to God. In some ways these may be synonymous. This is the reason that the cultic life is so central to the church. This is not to say that the church only needs preaching, worship, and the sacraments. It does mean the church will find it difficult to be open to Christ and God's future without these cultic acts. Nor is this to suggest that all must hinge on the leaders and participants in the cultic acts. There is much that is mundane and uninspiring in many sermons, worship services, and observances of the sacraments. That is not the point. If

it were, we would focus on human ability and not on the transforming power of God in Christ. It is only to say the church must live from as well as speak about grace.(31)

The church will be a transforming community when it is a community that is transformed as it moves into the future God gives it. By living from and for this future, open to and for transformation, it offers humankind another alternative and possibility for understanding and living.

The church is a supportive community that promotes individual freedom without short-circuiting the individual's growth. It is able to do this because it is an open community; open to the future and to God. This openness is not simply a confirmation of who we are. Instead, it is a call from the God who is continually making all things new and invites us to be a part of this joy and adventure of faith. It is a call to the ever-recurring novelties of creativity that make possible new orders of freedom and fulfillment in the future. It is to be the community that trusts "Christ to transform us in unforeseeable ways rather than to predetermine what kinds of changes will be allowable."(32) This is the open community God and faith make possible.

Being Made New

The Christian, no matter what his or her vocation, is confronted by a common issue in the daily work he or she pursues. Is the vision of faith true? How does my work live from that vision, share that vision, and serve that vision's realization? With the cultural atmosphere less supportive of the Christian vision of life than it has been at times in the past, even those who engage in theology and the ministry of the church cannot escape this issue about their work.

The contemporary Christian does not ridicule modern life nor disparage its accomplishments. However, one does perceive that it is often uninspiring, unexciting, and empty. It lacks awe, mystery, and finally a promise that we or what we do ultimately matters. Of course, the emptiness of the modern vision does not validate the Christian vision.

It is Cobb's conviction that it is possible to mold scientific knowledge of the world, human self-awareness, and our religious and aesthetic experience into "a comprehensive synthesis that points to the reality of God." (33) This conclusion may not be shared by others inside or outside the circle of faith. However, Cobb has faced the problem, engaged it, confronted the modern situation, struggled with some of its most provocative, seminal, and cogent thinkers and emerges as a believer still. Not as a protector of the faith once delivered but a devotee to the God who has, does, and will call others to faith and to be faithful in their callings.

Work then is not seen nor experienced as that which separates us from the Creator God. Rather, it is in our work that we are to be open to know that God is at the center of our daily life. We are known to God and God will be affected by what we do. While our relationship does not hinge on what we do, what we do matters to God. "My work is a spiritual discipline through which I prepare myself to be more effective in the service of God." (34)

Ministry is living from grace in our daily lives. The issue is not outer conformity but the inner redirection of the self. This requires something beyond the self, a divine initiative. The function of ministry, therefore, is a stance of being open to be remade. It means the self cannot be in control. Thus "spiritual existence is radically self-transcending existence." (35) It

lives from God's grace.

The grace of God is what makes ministry possible. God makes all things new and makes us new. The mark of that newness is that we are "freed from preoccupation with (self), and...enabled to turn to others with a disinterested concern for their welfare." (36) Cobb describes this experience of grace as a struggle in his daily life. If only he could write another book on the right subject, or get an idea across, or help a few more students he could be somebody and fulfill his mission. "Only by contributing...can I justify myself." (37) This is not gospel. If he heeds the gospel he knows none of these are necessary. That does not mean he stops doing them. But he may find a new freedom in doing them. "God is gracious to us. Therefore, we can be open and cease to try to justify ourselves...Indeed, God is nothing other than Grace itself." (38)

In the modern and post-modern epoch in which human responsibility is so paramount and important, the Christian view of God as gracious has often been seen as subversive to the needs of culture. On one hand we are chided for overconfidence that breeds complacent inactivity. If this is the result, it is a misunderstanding of grace. Grace does offer peace without denying the seriousness of human problems and our obligation to address them. On the other hand, Christians may be chided because they seem to be no different than their secular counterparts. Responsibility for the world is an awesome obligation. When one looks at the record of human action, it is clear why it could induce paralysis in both believer and nonbeliever. Maybe more so in the believer because evil is taken seriously and the harm that can be done in the name of doing good is never underestimated.

The minstry of faith is to acknowledge grace and human responsibility. "God lures, urges, and persuades. We decide."(39) In our freest actions it is possible to discern the action of God. God opens up new opportunities to us that we had never dreamed of. God is at work in us and others on behalf of the new that is needed. All that we do is taken by God and made into something beyond what we could imagine. "Insofar as we allow God to do so, God makes all things new...trust is thus true responsibility."(40)

In this discussion of ministry as being made new we have not placed any emphasis on the ordained or non-ordained because these questions are secondary. There may be some advantages to both parties. The ordained may have the benefit of trying to struggle with what God is doing in the world today and how we can be open to what God does. However, the laity who labor in the world may be more sensitive to what God is doing in the world. It is more a matter of perspective. That explains why Cobb affirms that our theology, to be authentic, must affect the reality of life.

"Our urgent need is to learn how to keep ourselves open throughout life to ever continued growth. To say this is to say that our problem is to achieve genuine surrender to the working of God in our lives."(41) Growth that is the essence of life is not adding to what we have but the transformation of who we are. Novelty, therefore, is not the introduction of mere change. Novelty is the introduction of the new that transforms the past. It is, of course, easy to mistake change and the unique for the transforming novel event. There are no advance guarantees so that the novel can be easily identified and discerned.

We cannot know in advance what we will become! Faith is marked by adventure. We do know we must let go of who we are. The hands that grasp the old to

retain it cannot be open to receive the gift of the new. This "movement of transcendence" invites, encourages, entices, but does not command. There is a promise of breakthroughs, roads that hold a promise even though we do not know where they will lead. This awareness is based on a trust that God cares, loves, and knows us. Therefore, we can embrace the new.

Those who are open to this ultimate call, whether they be lay or clergy, and seek to respond to this call to be recipients and harbingers of the new where they are, are in ministry. They seek to serve the God who promises to make all things new by acting on the trust that they too will be made new and make the new available to others and the world.

Servants of the New Vision

The practice of the tasks of ministry all have their origin in a common vision. "The world is simply seen as God's creation, and this vision is the starting point for worship and prophecy alike." (42) However, it is not adequate only to point to the vision. The issue for the practice of ministry is how to live from that vision in the daily life of the community of faith.

Celebration: Worship must be central. It is here that the vision must be expressed in ways that capture the attention of the distracted and rekindle the convictions of the tired. Somehow it must direct attention to two key claims. They correspond to the primordial and consequent natures of God. They have to do with God's grace that encourages us to follow the vision and God's care that helps us discern how God is at work in creation to renew it.

The worship service must concentrate on the centrality of God's creativity. The hymns sung, the prayers prayed, the scriptures read, the creeds affirmed

need to develop and articulate the vision of God as creator and the world as God's creation. It must keep that vision at the center even when it is aware of individual hurts and collective needs. Worship will overcome the self-centeredness of our finitude and the complacency of our opinions by reminding us that God speaks to us through others; of our inclination to focus on what is wrong by reminding us of the generous gifts we have received; of our wish to give up on public issues that seem so intractable by calling our attention to the memory and promise that God has and will overcome injustice. Worship invites us to experience the tension that renews, invigorates, and inspires. It is experienced as tension because it interrupts life with the novelty of grace and invites us to participate in the adventure of faith.

Worship provides a place and time for the new to engage us. It is a place to come with excitement and a time to approach with expectancy. Here even in the familiar, the known, the remembered, there is an anticipation that the newness of grace will work to renew God's creation which includes us. We can never do too much for worship or expect too much from it. At the same time "we don't have to succeed,...because the word of worship, the last word of the gospel, the last word of reality is grace."(43)

Proclamation: If God does not coerce but relies on the power of persuasion, it is clear that argumentation and condemnation are not appropriate modes for the message of grace. This does not mean one should abandon reason and the rigorous use of logic in proclamation. These, however, will always remain in service of the proclamatory task in which the primary objective is not to command but to announce, to make known.

Cobb's theological position gives him permission to be free from the forms

of the past in order to be open to their content. He also works out of a theological position that permits him to see and name grace wherever he can find it. The sermon can draw upon personal experience, secular sources and writers, and even upon theologians. What matters is that the sharing of the gospel story with conviction permits the proclaimer to use other stories. The meaning of these stories is shaped by the perceptions that the story of God's work in Christ opens to us. "To find the meaning of our lives through Jesus is to be free. The story by which we live has already set us free."(44)

Preaching the story of God's creative work must begin where people are and must make sense. Preaching is a creative, not a repetitious act. It is a living event and not an event where theological clones dispense the same story every time. What makes the story authentic is not its language but that others are grasped by and grasp a vision of the new that renews their lives. "We are free...to use whatever language most clearly communicates what we find."(45)

The new and the possibility of the new is announced in preaching. Proclamation is an act of grace as well as a word of grace. It demonstrates the freedom of grace precisely through its freedom to draw on the Biblical tradition, the theological heritage, personal experience, the issues of today, the insights of those who wrestle with the new as well as a linguistic freedom to seek clarity and simplicity so the new can engage and be embraced. Each sermon becomes a new event in the service of the One who makes all things new.

Social Action: Social action is being open to receive the new and to be open to the world in a new way. Now the line between my interest and that of the other is viewed as artificial. The other's interest must become my interest. It is not my task to convince the other of the correctness of my vision. God's

vision has already disclosed that my vision is limited. It may be that the other's vision shares the same fate. That, however, is for the other to discover.

I can no longer block out the needs of the other. To do so impoverishes me by inhibiting my growth. Social action is one way faith lives out the radical openness the gospel of grace makes possible. As a result I must listen to the other, must care about the other, and must find new ways to serve the other that will promote the other's good as well as my own. Ministry of service has a broader scope, for in these relationships God is either enriched or diminished by what happens to creation.

The adversary mode of encounter is no longer appropriate. The issue is not who will win but how can all remain open to the novel so that when it appears creative transformation is a possibility for all the participants, for the world, and for God!(46)

Administration: Cobb's theology invites us to be open to administration as a place for ministry and to see secular resources as legitimate creators of the new that the world and the church both need to accomplish their mission.

Authoritarian leadership has no place in the practice of ministry. If the powerful God uses persuasion on the weak and powerful alike, it is clear that when clergy and laity work in the administrative arena of the church power is inappropriate if it is used to force others to acquiesce to one's position. It is true that the efforts of the church "to avoid the association of faith with...authoritarianism have been only partly successful."(47) What matters here is that the inclination is correct even when we fail to achieve it. It remains the standard that judges our work and promises a better way.

The purpose of administration is not to control others. The administrative function is to be open to others, to be open to God, and to encourage and support a climate of openness. Cobb feels that ideas do have the ability to evoke change and that the change evoked by them will be longer lasting than those accomplished by force. Openness in administration is finally openness to God. It is the search for discernment that will permit the community to discover the new and novel way God is at work making all things new. "God is thus the one who frees us to transform the past rather than merely repeat it."(48) God gives us freedom to choose to be free in each situation for the possibilities of the future that will now transform the present. There is no specific formula that insures this will happen. What does matter for administration is the awareness that this is the attitude that alone is appropriate by the standards of grace for the administrative responsibilities of ministry.

One could imagine that this could create a rather fluid, uncertain, unstable environment in a church and its ministry. However, novelty is always yoked with order. Either alone would be destructive to the spirit and the institution. Novelty and joy seek to create and must create institutional forms to embody the new or the new will be lost and not perserved. "Effects pass quickly if new disciplines and structures of community do not sustain them."(49) These structures, systems, and techniques are not of themselves antithetical to God. God the creator has always worked to bring order out of chaos. We are not captives to a particular technic but there is no theological reason to rule out the use of any method a priori.

Pastoral Care: It is in the practice of pastoral care and counseling that Cobb has written most directly. God is the difference between pastoral counseling and counseling, but the problems of the lack of cultural supports for

belief in God in the everyday affairs of life creates an obstacle rather than a cultural resource for this task of ministry. This is more likely to be true when the word "God" is used because it is more difficult to dig out assumptions hidden behind this word that affect the process. The strength of Cobb's position is that the pastor has to work through what it means to believe in God. This is what makes this task both promising and personally threatening.

Cobb sees three helpful answers. God is "no-thing." The positive benefit of this negative affirmation is that it prevents us from identifying the things important to the self with God. The second view is that God is creator. Contemporary men and women have a problem with this view because they view it as a question of the distant past while the problems that threaten to undo them are here and now. Finally, God as incarnate is the most promising view. It forces one to see creativity as process and God as present, caring, and affected by creation. It is an understanding that "we have to do with God all the time."
(50)

The role of the pastor is to promote openness to growth. The counselor discerns that "it is always God who is the call to growth and the giver of growth." (51) There are no promises of success nor the absence of pain. Growth is neither guaranteed by the former nor automatically blocked by the latter. The pastor should seek to find ways to bring individuals into a community of those open enough to receive the counselee and able to nurture and promote that gift of openness.

Pastors above all will know that they are at most midwives of God's grace. They do not cause the growth. It is not for them to predetermine where the growth will lead. They can counsel rightly only if they trust God. (52)

Prayer: Finally, we turn to prayer. Here again, in this most intimate

dimension of faith, the issue of who God is and how we experience God in our existence is central. Because God the creator is also God incarnate, it means we do not need to escape the self to pray. This does not mean we are identical with God. Rather prayer "must be to align ourselves with the directions in which God is already drawing us." (53) This may mean being aware of our bodies, feelings, reason, imagination, wills, and spirit. This is not to imply that all of these are always in tune with where God is directing us.

Prayer is not a distinctive Christian act. "The real issue is whether we are praying in order to achieve merit before God and man or whether our prayer grows out of faith." (54) To pray is to be alone before the One who promises to make all things new. In a way it is a frightening thing to do. It is to be ready to admit that we are not all we should be, want to be, or what God would have us be. It is to discover that all our securities and hopes offer little security and little hope. It is to acknowledge one's poverty and trust that grace will still enrich. "The results of prayer...are never predictable beyond the fact that they will involve some change and forward movement." (55) Grace makes prayer possible and prayer is the act that demonstrates the promise of grace is trusted. It is its own reward.

Conclusion

John B. Cobb, Jr.'s theological work is probably his strongest case for his theology. He has addressed what he believes to be the central and most difficult issue, what does it mean to believe in God. Coming out of a pietist background of missionary parents, he has lived open to the many possible theological positions available. He has sought to be open to Whitehead's philosophy as a way of grappling with the theological issues of our time. In his writings

he has wrestled with the complexities of Whitehead's thought with a lucidity that helps others to understand Whitehead's gift. He also can take the risk of sharing himself, of writing with simplicity in a way that is marked by depth of insight and thought. The stance of openness his theology encourages is demonstrated in an unobtrusive humility that surfaces from time to time in his work. In other words the way in which God is incarnate in his ministry commends his vision to others. We may not be able to follow him exactly because our experience is not identical with his. Nor would he be desirous of this or flattered by it. He would assume that the One who makes all things new would make something new of our ministry. He would be pleased if his theology and ministry helped make that openness possible.

What he would promise for our ministry is clear. "To be responsible in this context is not finally to shoulder an unendurable burden. It is to share in the divine adventure in the world."(56)

CHAPTER V

ALL ONE IN CHRIST

Rosemary Ruether's Theology of Ministry

"There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

"The oppression of women is undoubtedly the oldest form of oppression in human history."(1) "History has been the holocaust of women."(2) These two hard hitting affirmations point up how long-standing the wait has been for the advent of feminist theologies. Those who believe that all that is involved is changing words and watching one's language fail to appreciate the significance of the contribution of feminist theology. The promise of the gospel -- in Christ all can be one -- can bring this holocaust of oppression to an end. Of course, this will bring pain as well as joy, despair as well as hope, hurt as well as healing, as the gospel transforms men and women and their relationships.

Dualism Supplants Dialectic

Central to Ruether's thought is her view of redemption.

There are three views of redemption that correlate with certain social situations. The first is an apocalyptic view that is the product of an oppressed people. It arises out of despair. It is the hope for redemption of those without power who must be redeemed by an outside power that overcomes the forces that oppress. "The apocalyptic mood is one born in despair."(3) The second pattern is the "inward journey". This is the mystic road that announces that redemption is now available, but it is outside or above the present social system. This is "salvation by economic dropout."(4) It leads to utopianism which indirectly challenges the present systems by opting out of them in order to live from another reality. The final view of redemption is the "great Master

Plan." If the first two meet the needs of the cast-out and the dropout, this approach to redemption is for the insider. "Redemption is evolutionary because it is the religion of possession, power, and confidence." (5) This does not mean redemption has arrived, but it is working its way out in the affairs of human history.

This typology of redemption is instructive. It is clear that theological models are socially conditioned. Social conditions impact visions of redemption. The issue for faith is not which one is correct! The issue is how a new future can be found for all of them. "A new future cannot be found without a willingness to stand in radical judgment upon our self-mythology and the structures of self-aggrandizement built upon it." (6)

Feminist theology could more easily opt for an apocalyptic model or elect to drop out through the "inward journey." Masculine theology might opt for the evolutionary form of redemption. These predictable models, however, only perpetuate the problem because they all accept a dualism that lacks biblical support.

Liberation must liberate the oppressed and the oppressor. Only that will be a truly redemptive event. The language of domination must end. The dualistic structures of awareness that create and sustain this language must be challenged and exposed. This task is awesome. For "women seek a reconstruction of relationships for which we have neither words nor models." (7) This is the essence of the problem of dualism that has dominated faith's thought and language. What is needed is repentance. The need for repentance is for men and women alike. Both have been shaped by the system of dualistic domination.

The source of the church's dualism can be traced to two tendencies in the

early life of the church: Jewish apocalypticism and Hellenistic gnosticism.(8) These movements were the expression of oppressed peoples. The genius of Christianity is that it had the power to speak to those who were oppressed and they responded. Once the church became "the official religion" of the state the dialectical tension with Judaism was transposed into a dualism of domination, and not until the mid-twentieth century were the assumptions and consequences by which the church sought to dominate the synagogue called into question.

Every religion in antiquity moved from a naturalistic to an otherworldly religious hope somewhere between the 6th to 2nd century before Christ. This was the environment in which Christianity had its beginnings. The goodness of creation and the place of redemption put these two views in tension and conflict. By the second century the church was trying to cope with these two tendencies. In Greek thought, it was held that spiritual reality is unitary (monistic). Duality is the mark of matter. From this it was clear that God could not be dual nor could the human spiritual image be bisexual. It was one short step then to identify maleness with "monism" and femaleness as secondary. Therefore, the monk or virgin was redeemed from duality. Soon women's identity began to be equated not only with nature but with sin and death. What happened was that the male-female dialectic became a soul/body dualism. Therefore, "this definition of femaleness as body decrees a natural subordination of female to male as flesh must be subject to spirit in the right ordering of nature."(9)

It is clear what this meant for redemption of women. Women could only be redeemed by transcending their femininity and being transformed into a male! A woman had three roles open to her: whore, wife, or virgin. In the role of whore she was the symbol of the "carnality" all were to overcome. As wife, she was a submissive body to her spiritual head, her husband. As virgin, she transcended

her femininity and was elevated to wholeness by denying or destroying her femininity. It is little wonder that Ruether concludes, both on historical and theological grounds, that "the frequent claim that Christianity elevated the place of women must be denied."⁽¹⁰⁾ "The possibility for the liberation of women (was repressed) by equating soul-body dualism with male-female dualism."⁽¹¹⁾

The irony of this development is that it was a departure from the ministry of Jesus. All one has to do is read the gospels and see the prominent place of women in Jesus' ministry. He speaks of the faith of widows and outcast women. Women travel with him, he is touched by them, he talks to them, he gives them new rights for divorce, Mary Magdalene and other women are the first witnesses of the resurrection. There is little evidence in his ministry that a dualistic view determined the place of women. Jesus' understanding of discipleship as servanthood strikes at the heart of a dualism of domination. The theological motifs that were dominant in the New Testament epistles, lost their power to carry on the transformation that Jesus had started. The time may now have arrived for the gospel to have an impact in which the promise that there is neither male nor female but all are one in Christ may be a possibility for this world and not just an eschatological promise for the next world.

Cultural Buttresses of Dualism

The legacy of the dualism that Christianity offered and at times imposed on the world, indicates that it is not only the bearer of hope but it is also part of the problem. At the same time, the issue is more complex than to be able to say Christianity is the cause and effect of the dualistic problem in the modern world. Life and history do not lend themselves to such simplistic analyses and

solutions. It is an examination of the more complex relationships that must be explored.

While anxiety may cause dominant groups in any social structure to fear that those who are subject to their "role" may sometime challenge that role, this is generally not the case. As a rule the "oppressed" will turn their frustration inward not outward. The perspective of the dominant group often shapes the ideology of the dominated group. This is simple historical fact in human affairs. Therefore, "most images of God in religions are modeled after the ruling class of society."(12) That women would be conditioned by this after centuries of living in an environment in which the male was dominant should be no surprise.

There is always a price to be paid in any system of domination. The price may not be equally borne by the oppressed and the oppressor. However, each pays a price. For what is now being called into question by the feminist movement is the very structure of our everyday relationships that touch every facet of our individual inner life and our corporate outer life. We will have to move from the categories of "activity" and "receptivity" to one of "reciprocity."(13) This change will be required of both male and female.

The roots of Christian faith are to be found in a revolutionary messianic hope. In time Christianity was co-opted into the later Roman Empire. The dialectical tension between the world and the messianic promise was reduced and translated into a worldly tension between those of faith (who had power) and those of unfaith (who did not have power). However, the revolutionary seed in this faith could not be destroyed. It would appear time and time again in heretical movements, new ventures such as monasticism and visionaries, and in left-

wing movements within the reformation. The ethos of domination the culture supported and faith endorsed, was never a perfect fit. The ministry of Jesus, the creativity of the spirit, and the commitment to other visions by many individuals had the power to test and question these motifs of domination. A gospel that gained its foothold in a world where oppressed people could only hope for apocalyptic deliverance could not be purged of those revolutionary elements. This revolution, however, could not have an impact until Christendom, whose permanence seemed to verify its perceptions and claims, was called into question. "Strictly speaking, this potential in the Christian worldview could only be released in a post-Christian world."(14)

Ironically, the cultural enslavement of the gospel was to be broken by new cultural forces that challenged Christendom. In Europe this point-of-view emerged out of a theoretical doctrine of progress. These forces "found a ready soil in America, for the American experiment from its very foundation had a certain millennial drive."(15) Finally, the theological ferment of Latin America will provide the cultural context in which this vision can be worked out. Those who live and work out of the European and American context will, whether they are male or female, operate from a perspective of privilege. Only in the context of an oppressed people can a theology be written from the perspective of the oppressed.

Having acknowledged that there are cracks in the cultural buttresses that support dominating/subjecting dualism does not mean the structure is ready to collapse. Breakthroughs which may be offered as justification that the present system is not closed miss the point. The critique of the system is more radical. Can the world survive with a system of activity/receptivity when reciprocity is required? That is the source of the bite in Ruether's observation that

"women's liberation is therefore impossible within the present social system except for an elite few."(16)

This can best be illustrated in Ruether's patristic studies. The ascetic anthropology of the fourth century saw the female as the symbol of the sexual and bodily enemy that needed to be subjugated. In this climate the ascetic way offered freedom to women. The church would support a commitment to virginity against family and culture. In this decision women took charge of their lives, threw off traditional female roles, pursued efforts at self-development in communities presided over by women. The ascetic regimen was rigorous. It was not a life style of comfort. Elegance and luxury were banished, clothing was harsh, bathing was shunned, women slept on hard mats, and gossip was replaced by the study of scripture. In all this they were equals of men for they shared the same lot with male ascetics even if they lived in separate places. These women became scholars, managers, community builders, and overseers of self-supporting communities of learning and charity. These achievements call the system of dominating dualism into question rather than affirming it. A system is not confirmed when an elite few of the subjugated enter the ranks of privilege. Their being the exceptions is precisely what calls the system into question!

The cultural legacy women face is the by-product of a dualistic view of male/female relationships. There is little promise of healing or wholeness for either male or female in this structure. Therefore, liberation of women (oppressed) must also be liberation for the oppressor (male). There will be a need for different stages of liberation. There must be subjective liberation in consciousness, social liberation in practice, and the creation of a new vision of a society of relationships built on reciprocity. "Our model of relationships must cease to be hierarchical and become mutually supportive, a cooperative

model of fellowship of life systems."(17)

There are no assurances that a culture wedded to the past will collapse. There are no quarantees that a vision of a culture of reciprocity will be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat. There are no inevitable laws of life that insure that cultural dualism will capitulate before the attractive promise of a new epoch. "Hence there enters an entirely new possibility that (we) might refuse this ascent, and thus refuse (our) own future and the future of the world."(18)

The Community Lives Forward

It is not the role of the church to preserve the culture of the past, even if that culture has served as its womb to bring it into the present. This does not mean the church lacks gratitude. To have a loyalty to the past is to maintain a fidelity toward the future that those who preceeded us sought to bring to life. The church is always a forward looking community. It lives from and for a vision that proclaims that the dualistic structures of domination and subjugation are interim structures. They have no future because they are pre-kingdom. Their days are numbered even if we do not know how many they have left. It is our mission to be mid-wives for the age of reciprocity. We are to be a foretaste of what this kingdom will be like.

Needless to say, there have been times when this message has been inconvenient, awkward, and a nuisance to the church. Still it has not been able to silence this claim for the message of scripture, the power of the spirit, and the concern of sensitive persons have from time to time glimpsed a foretaste of the Kingdom and discerned that the social order and the church were not shaped by that vision.

The Anabaptists represent a case in point as their vision was more radical than Luther's. He challenged the church. They questioned Christendom! They recovered an apocalyptical view that understands that the church lives from a future it anticipates and not a present that embraces it. For this community to exist, however small it might be, was a threat. It announced that structures that had emerged over centuries based on dualistic domination were not eternal but temporal. As such, their days were numbered!

Karl Barth's crisis theology was correct in seeing that a "cultural protestantism" could not safeguard the vision of the future of the biblical faith. However, the absolute transcendence of crisis theology left it silent when it came to assuming the task of creating a new social order. It had no forward vision. The theological work of the Reinhold Niebuhr is more helpful. His theology resists the identification of the Kingdom of God with "progress" in history. The prophetic tension is not lost. The community can never stop looking forward and responding to the vision of the Kingdom. In the "secular" theologians, the church's role is that of vanguard and not rear-guard. It is a radical stance that seeks to overcome the last elements of dualistic Hellenism and help the church break out of the privateness of personal life so that the church can once more be a redemptive community.

What makes the church unique is not that it is the only place where a vision of the new future shapes an understanding of the present. What is unique about the church is that here there is rejoicing for all those places where the future emerges whether it is known or not known by others.

The church must move to an understanding that it is an eschatological community. Otherwise it will continue to oscillate between the two options a

dualistic frame-of-reference allows: sectarian spiritualistic docetism or institutional absolutism. One so elevates the spirit that the historical forms of its existence are trivialized and discounted. Historical responsibility is abdicated. The other so stresses the institution that it identifies historical forms with eschatological hope so that transcendence and the critical prophetic perspectives are lost.

In docetic flight the church ignores the historical struggles of the human community. In terms of the issue of feminist theology, there would be no issue because in the Kingdom this issue will not exist. In institutional aggrandizement, the church is only concerned about its future. Therefore, on the women's issue, it will be very pragmatic at best, temporizing at worse, and reactionary at its very worst.

This issue is heightened in Ruether's analysis of the relationship between the synagogue and the church. These two institutions were rivals and have been rivals since the days of the early church. Pharisaic teachers did oppose the church. They were also the church's strongest rival. This was the sect the Christians encountered in the diaspora. The church took an adversarial attitude and lost the dialectical character of its position. In the dialectic stance, judgment and hope apply the same way to all people. Dualistic perceptions distorted this view to the physical danger of the Jew and the spiritual danger of the Christian when the power of the state was yoked to the church. "By applying prophetic judgment to 'the Jews' and messianic hope to 'the church,' Christianity deprived the Jews of their future...By the same token, the Church deprived itself of the tradition of prophetic self-criticism."(19) Dualism banished dialectic. The community of faith diminished its capacity to live from and for God's future.

Before concluding this section a few comments are in order about Marianology as it relates to the church. As far as an image that could be seen as help to the liberation of women, especially in the church, it has been of little or no help.(20) In fact when Mary was exalted the status of women declined. It seems to have a reverse impact on the fortunes of women. Marianology did not create a forward looking eschatological community. It simply underscored the trends of a dualistic world-view.(21) When the Protestant Reformation swept Mary out, it did not mean a larger place for women in the church.

By exalting Mary, the mother, we have perhaps deprived that Mary, who was not his mother but his disciple and friend, of her just accomplishment: being the first to understand the resurrection faith that is the foundation of the church.(22)

The church finds itself today in a cultural diaspora. It is tempted to look back for a golden age or epoch. That is an understandable inclination, but it remains an attitude of unfaith. The church always looks forward because the Kingdom in which there will be neither male nor female but all one in Christ is before us and not behind us. This is especially important for white western males to acknowledge. The blacks, Asians, and Latin Americans do not see a previous golden age in the church or in society. And women who may have shared the benefits of a society in the west dominated by white males do not look back with nostalgia on a lost golden age or a vanished paradise. Their lack of fulfillment has kept and keeps the awareness of the church as a forward looking community alive almost as much as the message of the gospel.

A Reciprocal Ministry

"The femininity of the Church does not mean that its leaders can be women."
(23) In this succinct statement we see how a dualistic worldview that creates a hierarchical structure of domination frustrates the eschatological foretaste of

God's promise at the heart of the life of the community of faith. If the issue were only women's ordination, that would be sufficient cause to address the concern. However, the issue is deeper and, therefore, the challenge of women's ordination is more radical. It is one symptom of a generic disorder.

The church' position has given up its leavening role in two different ways with similar results. On one hand it has been domesticated by endorsing, supporting, and adopting the standards of the status quo. The world may prefer ministry to follow this pattern but it does the world no good. It misleads the world by silencing the prophetic critique it always needs to hear. On the other hand the church has not wanted to lose the transcendent so it preserves it by creating a separate sphere for it. This response may appear different at first, but the consequences are the same. In both cases, the prophetic alternative is shunned. The plight of a ministry based on this dualistic worldview is that the vision of reciprocity is closed off.

Ministry emerges from the eschatological community. It is to mirror that community no matter where it is. "The God whom Jesus is speaking about is One who creates a community of equals, a community of brothers and sisters."(24) Ministry in and by this community is not for the acquisition of status but for the surrender of privilege and status in order to carry out ministry. This understanding constantly calls even our structures of service into question because they become from time to time structures of privilege and status.

Ruling-class males appropriated dominate/subordinate images as a way of providing sanctification for their role by attributing the same role to God the father. This, of course, should be no surprise since those who possess power and privilege usually enjoy this status and are inclined to view it as God-given

or ordained. What is to be questioned is that the church could permit this image to obliterate completely the "servant" image of leadership and ministry. "Jesus, however, refers to God as father in such a way as to overthrow this hierarchical relationship of rulers over the ruled." (25) Ministry is to be modeled on the diakonia of servants and women.

This is what makes the ordained and lay ministry of the church revolutionary. They are against the social order! They live for and from another norm. The world perceives this ministry as the end of the privileges of the old age. However, those who see their ministry as one of reciprocity and not rule see it as the beginning of a new order and a new age. One group looks at what will be lost; the other sees what will be gained. This issue generates a great deal of heat because it is an accurate reading of how radical a critique it is and how radical the transformation is that it invites us to embrace.

Clergy/lay relations have been patterned on the basis of a hierarchical structure. The pattern which has pervaded the church has been male clergy dominated where laity function as passive recipients. In the twentieth century, this model has had a detrimental impact on the clergy as the church has lost its role either of the buttress of the status quo (secularism obviates the need for that) or it has been privatized. Now the clergy and the church find themselves in "the feminine role in relation to the real power structures of society." (26) Only reciprocity offers a future for mutually supportive clergy/lay relations.

Any discussion of ministry and feminist theology has to deal with the ordination of women. One could certainly make an historical case that the ordination of women has not been the church's practice. Today, tradition lacks sufficient creditability to carry this case. Even a biblical argument is deba-

table. One reason being that the entire process of ordination was still evolving with the church structure that only emerged after the biblical period. Paul, who is often cited by many to provide biblical arguments against ordination of women, has, according to Ruether, a radical theology of redemption and a practice of ministry with women that makes it difficult to prove that a Pauline view of women would exclude them from ordination. The theological assumptions of his position carry implications that when carried out provide a rationale for women in the ministry. A final argument against the ordination of women is some-times made on the basis of the order of creation. Such a position, however, would result in impugning women's "essential humanity and capacity for baptism as well." (27) In the end what is at stake is whether one accepts the structure of existence to be one of dualistic domination or dialectical reciprocity.

The issues of ordination for women are complex. Is it enough simply to be ordained and in the process accept male-shaped images of the clergy in which dualism has been the predominant motif? Would women lose more than they gain? "Or must women, by their very presence, reshape the ministry into forms that are more open, pluralistic, and dialogic?" (28) If women in gaining access to ordained ministry "buy into the system," will they have lost their opportunity to reshape the images of ministry? In other words, if ordination is only a way for women to be liberated from their oppression, they will not have helped the church become the community of the future.

This will be a complex task for women. White women may simply want the power and status of the white male. At the same time, the black woman has difficulty joining forces with white women because the experience of oppression as a black is more acute than that of being a woman. Ministry for ordained and

unordained women is not easy as the complex web of the dualistic domination operating in the social order impacts all in many unknown and sometimes unpredictable ways.(29)

In the end it is what women stand for, more than what they stand against, that will enable their witness to reshape and reform the church and the world. Our hope at this time is that the church and the world will finally accept as well as recognize the larger promise of this witness. "It is women operating from a stance of 'radical obedience' rather than dissent who are likely to make the greater impact on their male colleagues for their claims cannot be so easily rejected."(30)

Reciprocity in Practice

The practice of ministry is expressed in pastoral and prophetic forms. Since the prophetic form cannot be institutionalized, it is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it must be acknowledged for it keeps the transcendental horizon open to the church and for the world. "The pastoral ministry, where life is nurtured in its ordinary life processing is the normative ministry of the church."(31) This is where most of us live most of our lives, and it is here that the church's ministry touches the daily lives of most people. Ruether gives us some glimpses of what this might mean, but, for the most part, it will be necessary to extrapolate practice from her premises.

Proclamation: For preaching to be reshaped in the light of feminist insights it will be necessary for those who preach to examine the biblical text with a new hermeneutic. The text is not read in a vacuum but out of a context as well as within its own context. The person who preaches would be well advised to construct two interpretations of the text, one on the dualistic domination model

and the other on the dialectic reciprocity model. Only by looking at texts intentionally from these two perspectives will our assumptions be exposed so we can deal with them in interpreting the texts.

Preaching will revolve around the themes of creation that affirms the world and redemption that reaffirms the world. There will be a creative tension for those who preach. They will be blocked from endorsing the status quo of the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary, but unable to escape into some private realm of the inner life. Servanthood that frees the servant and those served will be the style of life these sermons present. The one who preaches will use the sermon as a time to share the collective experience of the community in living from its vision of reciprocity.

There will be an intentional effort to illustrate sermons from the experience of women. This will require more work in learning the stories of faith of women since their contribution has been neglected in the past. The style of the sermon will have to shift from the mandate of the preacher to invitation from a fellow traveler. While the sermon may contain the words of one person, it will represent the collective search of the entire community. It will presuppose involvement with those with whom the witness is shared. Preaching does shape consciousness in spite of the despair of the clergy about the value of the sermon in changing people's lives. In time rigorous biblical scholarship, sensitivity to those who are served, and the invitation to the promise of new freedom will make an impact.

Celebration: Worship must become celebration. It must be a festival of the future, the Kingdom. It cannot ignore the places of hurt and pain. The victims of dualistic structures will be those who dominate, living in fear and anxiety

that they will lose what they have as well as those who are dominated, unsure if they have value, worth, and can contribute to others. The pains of transition will be confessed, shared, and named. The hope and promise of redemption will keep confession from making worship morbid. Lessons, hymns, and anthems of victory of the Kingdom will be used.

There will be a place for laity as well as clergy, women as well as men, to participate as leaders in the service. Even the "holiest" of acts -- the sacraments -- will have a more prominent place for laity. Questions will have to be asked as to how clergy can model the servant role in the service and how people can serve one another. Such things as the clergy receiving communion last from a layperson would emphasize the celebrant as the servant of the community. These new forms cannot be imposed even if the intent is to dramatize the motif of service. The worship service must evolve out of a dialogical interaction of laity and clergy with a cross-section of the congregation representing the laity.

The architectural arrangements will present restraints to be worked around. It is neither practical nor necessary to redo the design of all sanctuaries. Instead, the real challenge is to discover the way the community of tomorrow can concretely incorporate worship practices into the present design. Being an eschatological community at worship is more important than coming up with the architectural style of the moment. The community will sense that however avant-garde its facility may be when it is designed and built it will always be dated in time and incomplete when judged by its eschatological hope.

Social action: In the area of social action, Ruether's writings lend themselves to many more explicit positions. She sees quite clearly from her under-

standing of redemption that those who have been oppressors are not to be identified completely with "unredeemable sinners," and while those who are oppressed may be victims they are not "redeemed saints." The social action that a feminist theology calls for is a more radical change than an exchange of the haves and the have-nots.

Effective social action does not take pride in "lost efforts." One does not accomplish the mission of the Kingdom by losing. It must not only critique, but seek to transform the structures of society in the name of survival. The goal of faith is for love to be realized and not just idealized. However, at the same time it must maintain the tension of a separate identity. No historical achievement can fully realize the Kingdom. It will be "in tension with not only the currency of the old society, but any new society which it itself may help to create." (32) This is to accept the consequences of faith that sees redemption as a goal to move toward but never to be fully realized.

The locus of most of this social action will be with one's own people. The place where we are called to be the bearers of the new is with our own. It is there we have access, an intuitive sensitivity, and a presence that will enable us to give a witness with our words and deeds. The victim of any system is not the cause nor the cure of the problem. It is with those who hold the reins of power. That is why those who have access to power have the most difficult task. It is the mediating function that enables both sides to reject them and their efforts. It is a unique opportunity even though it is thankless and never finished. "This cannot be done once-and-for-all, but only again in each new situation." (33) It is truly a servant ministry for it offers no glory or grandeur. It simply must be done if the reciprocal process is to work.

Management: Ruether's pragmatic administrative wisdom fits her theological frame of reference. A dominating authoritarian leadership style will have little place in the practice of ministry. A more participatory, shared, and delegating leadership style is appropriate. The opportunities for leadership must be open to all and should be based on gifts. Leadership is not the occasion for reward but the opportunity for service. "The designation of leaders is in order to activate and develop the ministry of the community, rather than to pacify it in relation to themselves."(34) The empowerment that comes with leadership is the empowerment of others not the leader.

The primary act of administration is to live from a vision and to seek to realize as much as possible of this vision in a given moment. It is to seek to act wisely so that real change for the better is possible. The administrator is the agent of reciprocity between the present and the future! The minister as administrator will, however, be "resisted by the revolutionary poet because, in giving the revolution flesh, he limits it, confining it to a new but specific kind of possibility."(35)

The one who acts as an administrator is caught between those who believe things are going too far too soon and those who think the administrator's efforts are too little and too late. Caught in this dualistic vise the administrator seeks to transform the issue into a reciprocal dialectic in order to realize some new elements of the future in the present. Only those who serve the administrative needs of the church can appreciate how much effort is required to produce a few results for the Kingdom through this dimension of ministry.

Witness: The witness of faith is that those who sought to dominate now seek

to serve. Those who sought a place in the dualist system now see the system as defunct. Our humanity is now redefined by new categories. The witness of this new way of life in the community of faith and the lives of the members of the community begins to demonstrate that people can live from a reality that is on the horizon.

Living out of the dialectic of reciprocity the church becomes a witnessing community. The world sees something different; not a carbon copy of the world nor a disengagement from the world. Rather, a community and a people seeking to live another way in this world is encountered. One should not assume this is a strategy for church growth. Some may be frightened by this witness because it challenges their assumptions. Others may view it as subversive because it challenges their place in the present order. Regardless of the reception, it is a witness to a new future that is available and possible. Its validity is not measured by its reception or acceptance.

Nurture: Education will play a very important role in a ministry built on feminist perceptions. While consciousness is not everything, it is an extremely important dimension of ministry. Ignorance imprisons us because it blocks our awareness of how our points-of-view have been historically conditioned and how much of our history has been denied us that could enrich our lives. It is incumbent upon those who have been able to write history from the perspective of their place to read that history from another perspective and place in that history. We must learn the histories we have suppressed. This cannot be learned from our reading the history of the suppressed written by the suppressors. We accept this requirement of reciprocity because we understand that the price of dualism is our ignorance of the other that diminishes us.

However, the primary educational task must start with theological reflection on our ministry in the community of faith. People must be identified who have the gifts and should be trained to teach. Clergy need to learn about educational models based on the adult learner. Seminary education must cease to be simply the place for the clergy to learn. This "is designed to maximize the schism between clergy and laity." (36) As long as this knowledge gap exists there will be a paternalistic relationship between clergy and laity. Reciprocity is only possible among people who have some parity. If the system of education continues as it is, the laity will remain second class participants in the local congregation.

Pastoral care: Pastoral care poses some unique problems. It raises a fundamental issue that is at the heart of all pastoral care. Can we hear the other? It is true that not all issues we face as human beings are male and female issues. Yet, if one ponders the issues, it becomes clear that in the structures of our society all issues may be impacted by our being male or female. Is emphatic understanding possible when a climate and culture of reciprocity does not exist? Do we always filter the words we hear through the interpretive categories of a dualistic male/female cultural relationship? The only answer is that one does not know and ought to assume that there is a strong probability that this happens.

Therefore, there are two creative options open to those in ministry. The first is to make available female and male pastoral care where it is needed and desired. Where it is not available nor sought, the second option is the necessity to check our interpretations and understandings with the person to whom we minister, with colleagues, and with clergy of the opposite sex. We may not be able to "bracket out" our assumptions completely, but we must be aware of

them in order to be effective.

We will have to bear anger and pain as well as nurture and encourage pride. People will be moving into the unknown and uncharted. There is risk and uncertainty. There will be pain as well as healing. The pastor ministering in the style of reciprocity needs to be aware that this ministry is not only for the clergy. It is the ministry of the whole people of God. Therefore, this ministry will be shared with others by forming groups to help people deal with particular issues. The pastor will be the servant of these groups and a learner from them. It "is truly a venture into a terra incognite...it must simultaneously create the therapy for a new selfhood of women and men appropriate to a humanized world."(37)

Conclusion

There is much in feminist theology that is not unique to it, but there are enough suggestions that emerge from the feminist perspective that can make ministry more effective in theory and practice so that the church's life can be enriched by it.

Feminist theology is an affirming force. It believes the gospel can change people's lives. Equally strong is its confidence that by following the gospel we will bring hope into the world. "Christianity again and again proves its ability to mediate new breakthrough experiences. By bringing history into constant collision with eschatology, it makes history itself dynamic."(38)

CHAPTER VI

THAT OLD TIME RELIGION IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME

James H. Cone's Theology of Ministry

"You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

To most, especially to whites, it seems that James H. Cone has made a bold, radical, and new theological statement. He has certainly not sought to assuage fears of whites. That does not come within his evangelistic agenda. His task is more concentrated and more important.

On one hand he has sought to reclaim the faith of the past black community. It is a heritage that sustained the black community so that blacks could know "freedom-in-bondage." That is the "old time religion" that was good enough for his forebears, and is good enough for him. On the other hand he has an apologetic responsibility in his own community. He must face the question as to whether to be black and to be Christian is not to have one's identity defined by whites rather than blacks or the "gospel."

If the "old time religion" is still to inform and empower the black community, its past must be correctly understood and its relevance for today adequately perceived. The "old time religion" must be good enough for the past and the present.(1)

Freedom to Be

American blacks have had to deal with an "identity crisis" throughout their time in this new world. Blacks have often only had the choice of accepting a self-image of those who enslaved them or in protest against that image still discovered that their protest was also shaped by the view it was protesting against.

For a black to live in a white world is to grow up with absurdity. There is no direct correlation of individual actions and social consequences. The most damaging response is for the victim of these absurdities to accept the perspective of whites who "blame the victim." "Because religion defined the somebodiness of their being, black slaves could retain a sense of the dignity of their person even though they were treated as things." (2) "Black power" is the continuation of this task in a new historical context. It's role is to affirm the "somebodiness" of blacks.

The quest for affirmation is undertaken "in the expectation that my own (black) existence will be clarified." (3) This is a strong antidote for the problem in the black community of defining the self by the dominant white views of a culture that has oppressed blacks. This only leaves two options open: denial of blackness by blacks that leads to their destruction or denial of whiteness that will lead to the destruction of whites. Whites and blacks alike should perceive that until the black "accepts himself as a being of God in all its physical blackness, he can love neither God nor neighbor." (4) For Cone the issue is more than liberation of blacks. It is the meaning of the biblical faith. It is crucial for the black Christian community to see their struggle as part of a larger and longer divine drama.

When the black community reads the Bible and hears the story of the "mighty acts of God" in both Old and New Testaments, it hears the story of a God who acts to set people free. That is the dominant motif. The God who liberates cannot be the God who creates or endorses slavery! "God is a God who frees slaves: Israelites in Egypt, Africans in the United States." (5) God does not abandon, ignore, or forget the oppressed. In Jesus Christ he identifies with them and on the cross he experiences their pain so that their suffering becomes

his suffering. At the same time it is not enough to say God suffers. The resurrection is a sign of victory over this suffering. The oppressed are set free because the meaning of their lives is now shaped by God's participatory victory over the forces of oppression.(6)

The God who seeks to set his people free is setting the oppressed free from their oppression and the oppressors free from their oppressing. He has the interest of both at heart when he sides with the oppressed!

Jesus Christ is at the center of "the old time religion." He is at the center because he is the one in whom God's mission to announce freedom to the oppressed was begun and continues. While this freedom includes historical and economic freedom, it is more than that. Jesus is the "oppressed one". In his birth he is united with the outcasts, in his life he seeks out and serves the rejected, in his death he joins all of the oppressed whose lives are snuffed out, and in his resurrection he continues his ministry of liberation that discloses his entire ministry to be that of setting people free. "Through him the oppressed are set free to be what they are."(7)

From the perspective of the oppressed there is only one stance of Christ and culture that makes sense and would be authentic: Christ against culture. Christ is always on the side of the oppressed and is the inaugurator and instigator of freedom! This is not to claim virtue for the oppressed. It is rather the recognition that oppression destroys the oppressor and the oppressed. To end oppression is to make freedom possible for all. This is the "old time religion". Now the "suffering that arises in the context of the struggle for freedom is liberating. It is liberating because it is a sign of Jesus' presence in our midst."(8)

There are two realities that are inescapable for theology: the suffering of Christ and the suffering of blacks. Freedom and suffering cannot be separated. Freedom confronts, challenges, and must convert. Its suffering is a re-enactment of the drama of the crucifixion! Black theology along with biblical theology rejects the notion that "black suffering is the will of God." (9) Suffering is not regarded as normative even in one's experience of suffering with God for justice. The eschatological hope enables one to accept and embrace the suffering because it is no longer the determinative force in one's life. It is not accepted in resignation but volutarily embraced as the way God's suffering and the suffering of the oppressed work together to bring freedom to the world.

The hope that sustains the life of freedom is not based on calculations of probable success or failure. The source of this hope is the crucified and risen Lord who introduces a new logic into the dimension of human history. It is a promise that those who may have to die for freedom do not die in vain. Instead, they make freedom possible because their witness is testimony to its power. Those who live from this hope know that the reality of oppression lives on borrowed time. Its days are numbered. Those who say these acts of liberation are futile miss the point. The point is that the life of faith is not shaped by the reality of the world but the power of the gospel.

This willingness of black people to die is not despair, it is hope, not in white people, but in their own dignity grounded in God himself. This willingness to die for human dignity is not novel. Indeed it stands at the heart of Christianity. (10)

In the end this hope is more practical. It alone is the way the power of the gospel will break through the chain of cause and effect that leads nowhere to open up the possibility of freedom for all. It is a very "old time reli-gion", but one that has been setting people free and inaugurating freedom

for centuries. In this time and place blacks are the bearers of this promise of freedom. But the promise offers hope to both blacks and whites, oppressed and oppressors. It sets both free!

A Courageous Saga Against Oppression

The history of blacks in America is not a story of freedom but a struggle against oppression. To ignore this history and its impact on black theology is to close one's eyes to the gift of faith the black church has to offer the whole church. Since "one's praxis in life inevitably shapes one's theological perspective,"(11) it is essential that we understand the black experience from the black perspective. Before one can deal with the issue of faith and culture in America one has to listen to the saga of the black struggle. Then one will have a better sense of the power of the "old time religion" that sustains those on this pilgrimage.(12)

The unquestioned and overriding fact of life for the black community was and for the most part still is the necessity to live in a racist society. Barred from economic resources, denied political power, and often denied the protection of due process, the black community has lived on the edge of life and death for almost all of its time in America. This undeniable fact of existence has been deeply ingrained in the heart, mind, and psyche of every black. There is no point in saying this point-of-view is not the whole story. It is the black experience. Whites must listen to blacks on this. Otherwise, there will be no hope for whites as well as blacks.

The black experience in America was and will always be affected by the historical fact of slavery. No matter what distinction whites may make between good and bad slave masters, from the black experience "there are no assets to

slavery."(13) The black community felt little allegiance to the "laws" of the whites who made and kept them slaves. Escape, insurrection, or subtle forms of defiance were the ways blacks continued to affirm their worthwhileness, pride, and hope for freedom. Since whites were not lynched, beaten, and enslaved the existential experience and memory of total vulnerability are not part of white history. Here whites must listen and learn.(14)

In the area of religion the dominant white views did not challenge the existing structures of society. In the first half of the the 19th century churches admitted they could not resolve this issue and when they confronted it the churches split. Slaveholders at first would not allow slaves to be baptized. It was an act of integrity on their part. That they only permitted it when they were promised that Christianity would make better slaves reveals where their priorities were. In making that change they exchanged integrity for hypocrisy. Of course, what they failed to realize was that the promise could never be delivered and their original fears were well founded. Christian faith does not undergrid but erodes the foundation of slavery. Slavery could have only survived if Christianity had been banned from both the white and black communities.(15)

In the music of the black community the spiritutals and the blues became the forms of expressing the experience of oppression. The spirituals were the songs of the slave era, and the blues were the songs of the "Jim Crow" era. In the spirituals the striving and longing for freedom were expressed in religious symbols. From their outward appearances the Christian religion seemed to be that of the white masters. It was not! "The respected slave was the one who successfully challenged the roles of white society."(16) In an era of the post-civil war period as blacks lost their freedoms and the black church bought into

the oppressor's value system the blues arose as a means to cope with the pain, problems, and absurdity of the black experience. "Historically and theologically, the blues express conditions associated with the 'burden of freedom.'" (17) With the emergence of "black power" a new period has begun that shares more in common with the pre-civil war days. To the white community this may appear to be a step backwards. In reality it is a step forward.

At the center of this historical and cultural struggle is the search for black identity and the need of the black community to refuse to allow blackness to be defined by anyone but blacks. Black must become a sign of pride rather than a mark of disgrace! What blacks need is to define and claim their own identity on their terms and not on white terms. "To be free means to be free to create new possibilities for existence." (18) Freedom comes from within the black community and consciousness rather than from outside as defined by the white community.

There are really only two options open to the black community. To accommodate or to protest. The first robs the blacks of an identity in which they can have pride and permits whites to live from self-destructive illusions. Protest offers a way for blacks to claim their existence and offer that to the larger community. It alone offers a path toward dignity for blacks and regenerative renewal for whites.

Are the worlds of the black and white community separated by an insurmountable barrier that offers no new possibilities than those of the past? No. "Clearly there is a basis for speaking across cultural lives, namely, the Bible." (19) The biblical God who has a history of identification with the oppressed for the freedom of the oppressed and oppressors is the source of hope

that these cultural conditions can be bridged. The "old time religion" still offers the best hope for blacks and whites.

The Fellowship of Suffering

It is difficult to overestimate the part the black church has played in the black community.

The black church taught me how to deal with the contradictions of life and provided a way to create meaning in a society not of my own making. In the larger "secular" black community, this perspective on life is often called the "art of survival;" but in the black church, we call it the "grace of God." (20)

In the end the church must return again and again to Jesus Christ who fulfilled the call of God by becoming one with the "outcasts" and "rejected" of society. "The church's task is to be the embodiment of salvation that it has encountered in Jesus' death and resurrection." (21)

This is not just a community that suffers in history, but it is a community of faith that is apprehended by the God who elects to share those sufferings in order to free his people. "When a black slave suffered, God suffered. Evil was not just his problems; it was God's problem too. That is why he could not believe that God willed slavery." (22) Black suffering, while individually experienced, was not directed at individuals. It was against the black community and some individuals happened to be exposed, vulnerable, or available. Suffering was to be inflicted on all blacks! Blacks were even denied the dignity of suffering as unique individuals. This strategy of oppression forged a fellowship of suffering that the gospel also created by its call to follow Christ. There was too much deep pain and too many destroyed relationships for the black church not to prize their fellowship as well as seeing their suffering as partnership and not separation from God. (23)

In the black community the church was against culture. There were no other viable options. This stance has biblical credibility and historical precedence. "To hear God's promise means that the church cannot accept the present reality of things as God's intention for humanity." (24) Heresy, therefore, is not simply a question of "right belief". It is a question of "right action". Is the church by its deeds in fellowship with culture (oppressors) or with Christ (oppressed)? A racist culture offers no other options! (25)

It is the pre-civil war black church that stands as a paradigm for the fellowship of suffering. The "old time religion" of this community is the plumbline to test the authenticity of the black church today, and the American church, too. The names of Richard Allen, Daniel Payne, and Highland Garnet are the saints of the black church. These leaders, supported by the black church, saw the incompatibility of the gospel and slavery.

What are the major marks of the church that is a fellowship of suffering with God and the oppressed? There are three: preaching (kerygma), service (diakonia), and fellowship (koinonia).

It may seem that the message of the first mark, "you are free" and "let my people go," contains an inconsistency. The message, however, is the same: God's freedom for his people. The church must proclaim the liberation of God for oppressed and oppressor. We must all live as the free persons we are; claiming our dignity and affirming the dignity of others. What is clear is that the gospel inaugurates freedom and is the death knell of oppression.

The second mark, diakonia, indicates it is not enough to hear the message of freedom. One must become the servant of freedom in the service of freedom for others. The church cannot stay aloof from the struggle. It must continue the

movement of the incarnation. That is what it means to say, "Christ is black because he is oppressed, and oppressed because he is black...If the church is to join Christ...it too must go where suffering is and become black also."(26)

Finally, the church must be fellowship, koinonia. This fellowship of suffering cannot be carried out in isolation from those who suffer. The call to be the church is to join Christ in a ministry with as well as for the suffering. The purpose of the fellowship is to contribute to the freedom and liberty of the oppressed. For whites this means that fellowship with the oppressed is difficult because those who are white cannot forsake the privileges they have had and have because they are white. Often when the white church has sought to "rescue" the oppressed it has been a white dominated enterprise. Therefore, it is clear that the experience the white church needs, as it joins the black church in the quest for freedom, is to say to the black church that it has much to learn from the black church and its experience.

Both must remember that they are judged by Jesus Christ.

Both have marked out their places as havens of retreat, the one to cover the guilt of oppressors, the other to daub the wounds of the oppressed...Both have taken the road marked "the good life," avoiding the call to discipleship, which is the call to suffering and death.(27)

"The old time religion" of the early church and the pre-civil war black church alone remain as paradigms worthy of the church today that is called to be the fellowship of suffering.

Ministry as Trusting Obedience to God

Before blacks are either laity or clergy they are blacks in a white society. They must decide how to view themselves and how they will live vis-a-vis a white culture that is racist in outlook. No black can escape this decision because it

is the reality in which the ministry of all blacks must be carried out.

Ministry can only begin as a response to God. The context is white society. The point of reference, however, is not the society but God. "Complete obedience belongs only to him, and every alien loyalty must be rejected." (28) This is a decision that everyone can understand and must make. It is a decision that was made by slaves in the past who lacked formal learning. It is a way of living and not just an act of knowing. For blacks to deny their blackness is to say "no" to their unique ministry of liberation. "Obedience always means going where we otherwise would not go; being what we would not be; doing what we would not do." (29) Ministry is not based on the world's response, but upon the divine promise and call.

Preservation of existence is really a "bogus" promise. The powerless must rely on God because they have nothing else. In this sense they are not the disadvantaged, but have an edge on others. Black slaves set an example. "There was only one possibility for authentic human existence. And that was to live in freedom for the future." (30) God calls us to this ministry and will sustain us in it. The "old time religion" understood this. Its power was in the fact it knew that death could not destroy it!

Ministry is characterized by action and by hope.

The free man is the oppressed man who says NO to oppressors, in spite of the threat of death, because God has said Yes to him thereby placing him in a state of freedom. (31)

When one's ministry emerges out of this orientation, judgments based on numbers are misleading and calculations based on prospects of success are superfluous. The issue of ministry is not life or death. It is freedom or bondage. That is why the paradigm for ministry is the slave epoch. Here the issues were crystal

clear. The choices were stark. The response of the slave is the example of and for ministry: "they were liberated from bondage of the present and free to be for God's future."(32) In the deepest sense both blacks' and whites' survival hinge on this commitment to be obedient.

Ministry is concrete and not abstract. It is "a vocation that is always bound up with the liberation of victims of servitude."(33) No one is truly free until all are free. The promise of the gospel is not that we are liberated to escape and abandon the poor and the outcast. Rather the promise is that we will be empowered to embrace and serve the poor. This is not the idealization of the poor, but it is the realism of faith. Its source is the God who identified with the poor. This service to the poor preceeds with a double sensitivity. A sensitivity to the poor and to the Christ. This sensitivity creates the openness and humility to make our service useful to both!

Reconciliation is taken seriously. It is reconciliation in terms of the future of freedom and not the past and present oppression. Any effort to seek reconciliation that would crush black dignity is unacceptable. For whites and blacks alike it would be a disservice. Blacks must not be asked to apologize for being black! That would be apostasy! Reconciliation must presuppose the dignity of blacks in order to be ministry.

The implication of this for ministry and reconciliation is that whites cannot define the relationship. This is part of the problem. The history of blacks and whites has one consistent element whether white attitudes were hostile or benevolent: whites defined the terms of the relationship. This is so much a part of the societal system that it is almost impossible for whites to see it. If there is to be an authentic ministry of reconciliation, the rela-

tionship of whites and blacks must be determined by blacks.

The ministry of reconciliation of the black oppressed community is not to perpetuate the structures of oppression and change the cast of characters. However, in Christian ministry "the oppressed must therefore fight against the oppressors in order to fight for them."(34)

To recognize that liberation is for oppressors because it is for all people prevents hate and revenge from destroying the revolutionary struggle.(35)

This is not programmatic propaganda, but it is the wisdom of faith that is creating a new order in which freedom will come to all, oppressed and oppressors.

Ministry arises out of the conviction that God elects to stand with rejected outcasts. In twentieth century America that would be to be black. That is the "old time religion" we call the gospel. In many ways neither oppressors nor oppressed are comfortable with this understanding. It means that the ministry of the oppressor must surrender privilege and prerogatives that are the benefits of being part of the oppressive system. It means that the ministry of the oppressed must become more vulnerable. Escape and accomodation are no longer viable options. "Humanity's meaning is found in the oppressed people's fight for freedom, for in the fight for liberation God joins them and grants them the vision to see beyond the present to the future."(36)

Living from and for Freedom

Doing rather than knowing is the key issue for the practice of ministry. It is not that we lack a knowledge of the claims of faith. We have always known more than we have been willing or able to put in practice. The claims that faith makes possible cry out for implementation as well as recognition. In the

case of black ministry it confirms Ludwig Feuerbach's observation that "thought is preceded by suffering." (37) This ministry arises out of the suffering of the black community and its quest for freedom. The practice of ministry as perceived from this perspective is a gift to the whole church. Rather than examining the tasks of ministry we will examine them as they cluster around the three marks of the church that have already been discussed: kerygma, diakonia, and koinonia.

Kerygma: "Black Theology cannot create new symbols independent of the black community and expect black people to respond." (38) This is the particularity of the kerygmatic ministry in the black community. Only secondarily is it a ministry to the white community, and it can only accomplish that ministry by excelling in its primary responsibility.

The purpose of preaching is announcing the era, age, and epoch of freedom God has inaugurated in Jesus Christ. Those who are encountered and engaged by this message must decide. Will they say "Yes" or "No" to it? "Preaching in its truest sense tells the world about Christ's victory and thus invites people to act as if God has won the battle over racism." (39) Those who accept it find new power and strength. Those who turn away from it or reject it condemn themselves to live in a dying age.

The language of preaching cannot be prescribed by those outside the preaching context. It must be proclaimed in the images and idioms indigenous to its hearers. It is judged by its opening up the possibility of freedom that creates a new way of living for the hearers. It empowers as well as informs. It is not a word for all times but a timely word that continues the mission of the "old time religion." This event is in community and is dialogical. "The

'Amen' is the congregation's witness to, and participation in, the proclamation."(40)

Story telling is central to the proclamation of the freedom of God. The message is not a set of abstract principles nor eternal truths. It is a story of God's work in history to free his people. It is God's story, it is a people's story, it is historical. The telling of the story creates the next chapter in the story of freedom. Therefore, what is crucial for preaching is the "ability to relate those biblical stories to contemporary black stories." (41) The story enters their world rather than the hearer being required to leave his or her world in order to hear the story. This story is not independent of the one who tells it. The storyteller's life is staked on the story!

When this story is told as it was meant to be, the oppressed are transformed, taken into another world and given a glimpse of the promised land.(42)

The words of preaching are never the last word. They are provisional words. This protects the one preaching from assuming the Word and the words of the preacher are identical. At the same time the preacher does not suffer from a "loss of words" because God can use the words of the story of faith so that the Word will be heard and create new stories of freedom and liberation.

Diakonia: "Black theology believes that the problem of racism will not be solved through talk but through action."(43) Action is diakonia. The pastoral care needed in the black community is for liberation from oppression. Social action and pastoral care are almost identical for a people who are the victims of oppression. It is to offer those who suffer an opportunity to be a participant in the cause of liberation rather than a passive recipient of charity. This, of course, can be viewed as a bitter pill or heady wine for the oppressed. It is a bitter pill for those who do not want to take the risks of freedom. It

is heady wine for those who accept the challenge because they may conceive their task too narrowly.

The gospel is a social, economic, and political reality! It cannot announce the freedom of God and not touch these dimensions of existence. It announces that all people are of worth, God does not forget or forsake the oppressed, he will judge the oppressors, and that his future is the reality of tomorrow. That is not a message to support the status quo. However, we cannot create this future according to our wishes. This future is being created according to the grace of God. It depends on God, and God is dependable. "Salvation is the bestowal of freedom for the unfree, redemption for the slave, acquittal for the convicted, and deliverance for the captives."(44)

The evangelistic task of the service and deeds is that the witness of words must be supported by deeds. "Its language must be backed up with relevant involvement in the affairs of people who suffer."(45) That is clearly seen in the fact that black ministry has been involved in the American saga in the struggle for the abolition of slavery and civil rights. There may be disagreement on means, even in the black community. Cone acknowledges a difference between his view and Martin Luther King's view on violence, but both seek the same results of ministry. "The task is what King demonstrated so well in his life and thought; to try to replace inhumanity with humanity."(46)

For our deeds to create the world of freedom in the concrete realities of day to day existence is difficult. Only because it is service for the freedom God has given and it lives from his promise is it possible to continue to do deeds of love that create the possibility of freedom. Human resources alone will not suffice. "People get tired of fighting for justice and the political

power of oppressors often creates fear in the hearts of the oppressed."(47) That we in ministry go on and continue the struggle is in itself the most powerful witness for freedom. It raises the question of what power sustains the oppressed so that the thirst for freedom is never extinguished and the desire for liberty cannot be bought off with the benefits oppressors can grant or hardships they can inflict. The one who calls us with his promise of freedom assures us that he will keep us free and keep his promise regardless of how others respond to our diakonia.

Koinonia: Ministry initiates one into a new koinonia of freedom. It is the fellowship of the future. It is a fellowship that is demeaning to none. "It is not the intention of the black man to repudiate his master's dignity, but only his status as master."(48) The promise of freedom is that freedom is not a scarce commodity that only a few can enjoy. It is a commodity that can be enjoyed only if it is available to all.

The gathering of the worshipping community is to be a sign of a possibility for the world. This is seen in the songs of the black community. "In the spirituals, black slaves combined the memory of their fathers with the Christian gospel and created a style of existence that participated in their liberation from earthly bondage."(49) The spirituals arose out of a fellowship of suffering and created a fellowship of freedom!

"These songs emphasized the inability of the present to contain the reality of the divine future."(50) These songs are the music of the fellowship of the future. They create as well as announce the fellowship with a future. All other fellowships are fragile, fleeting and will fail. This alone is the fellowship that knows the reality of freedom from bondage and freedom-in-

bondage. This "old time religion" was forged on the anvil of suffering and the promise of freedom. This hope kept past generations free-in-bondage and now enables people today to be free from bondage and to continue this struggle for freedom. This struggle could not be sustained without these songs of faith and freedom.

The story of the fellowship is not a closed story. That is the style of an oppressive society. The fellowship of the faithful lives from another reality. It accepts that the black story is important, valid, and has a contribution to make. But it is not and cannot be the only story. "When we refuse to listen to another story then our story becomes ideological, that is, a closed system incapable of hearing the truth."(51) The black story is an important story. It is a story that offers a gift to others besides blacks. It is a story of vision, pride, dignity, courage, faith, and hope! Participating in that story creates an openness to the stories of others that expands the possibilities of fellowship. In the black community the stories are the stories of freedom: freedom from suffering and oppression, for meaning and opportunity.

All communities need leaders and all leaders must exercise leadership in community as well as for community. The substance and style of leadership that this view of koinonia encourages is one that recognizes the close relationship of leaders and followers. Leaders can never be self-appointed. A leader is in the end a leader because he or she has been chosen by the people and is accountable to the people he or she leads. Leadership comes as a result of participation in the community's struggles. The ability to lead will arise out of the willingness of the community to follow. Therefore, leadership is not the result of a private calling as much as a public affirmation by the community. It is leadership in koinonia.

The community that was born out of the dream for freedom and was bonded together by the struggle for freedom cannot be a fellowship with oppressive leadership structures or practices. The fellowship is not leaderless, but the leaders of the community are servants of creating freedom for others, including those who follow them.

The foundation of the tasks of ministry, be they related to kerygma, diakonia, or koinonia is always the same: the liberating work of God in Christ who calls us to a ministry that liberates and does not oppress.

When this event of liberation occurs in thought and praxis, the words and actions of the oppressed become the Word and Action of God. They no longer belong to the oppressed. (52)

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been my purpose to set forth James H. Cone's theology of ministry. Its intent has been to understand his position and to share this position in a way that would seek to set forth Cone's answers to questions that are central to a theology of ministry. I think we can better serve the gospel at this time by being open to dimensions of the gospel that white experience has not discovered. There will be ample time for intense critical dialogue in the future.

We need to see how the black church has had to discover dimensions of the gospel to enable them not only to survive but to refuse to surrender their quest for freedom. That story is a significant story! It is a story that future generations, both black and white, will honor by remembering it and realizing its aims. It is a testimony to the gospel and its power as well as the black community. It is also recognition that any ministry that ignores the story of faith of the black community, black or white, will offer the people they serve less than they need and less than the gospel offers.

Cone's theological work is a doxology to his predecessors in faith.

I was told this story by my mother and father, and it was recited again and again at Macedonia A.M.E. Church in Bearden, Arkansas. They told this story as the truth of their lives, the foundation of their struggle. I came to know this story as the truth in my own struggle in situations of trouble. Jesus is now my story, which sustains and holds me together in struggle. I cannot and have no desire to "prove" my story. All I can hope or wish to do is to bear witness to it, as this story leads me to an openness to other stories. Through this process, I hope to avoid imprisonment in my own subjectivity and perhaps to learn how to hear the truth when spoken by others and to speak the truth when called to give an account of the hope that is in me. (53)

JESUS: THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF MINISTRY

CHAPTER VII

JESUS: THE PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF MINISTRY

Stanley J. Menking's Theology of Ministry

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2 RSV).

Jesus' ministry is the only original ministry. All other ministry is measured by his ministry. Jesus' ministry is not exclusive. He invites others to share his ministry. He seeks to continue his ministry for others in and through the lives of his followers. Those who follow not only attribute the inspiration for ministry to Jesus but also affirm that their ministry at best never equals his ministry. Jesus' "yoke is easy and his burden is light" because those who minister in his name always discover they minister with Jesus as well as for Jesus. Therefore, Jesus is both the cornerstone and the capstone of the ministry of those who commit their lives to follow his way. He is the pioneer and perfecter of ministry and invites us to join the pilgrimage of his ministry to the future that he promises.

The Pioneer

The appearance of Jesus announces that we are not to judge the validity of his ministry by our concepts of God. It is our concepts of God that are called into question by Jesus. Enough has been said and written about the subtle ways we project our needs and interests into our view of God. In these terms what we mean by God is the "deification" of our human points of view. Therefore, the danger in "religious" circles is to err in the opposite direction. Transcendence is defined as the opposite of humanity. Of course, that too is a way of

viewing God that makes our humanity normative. It sets the conditions of describing God by our human tendencies! Jesus' ministry is the attempt of God to define what it means to be God on God's terms. Transcendence is not distinguished by being like or unlike humankind. Transcendence is the free decision to expose oneself to the pains of the other in order to give the other a new future. Jesus' appearance marks a beginning of the redefinition of our understanding of God for "if you have seen me you have seen the Father."

This is what it means to announce that Jesus is the incarnation of God. Through the centuries the church has sought to use the symbols and images of the world to explain the conviction that Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us." With the passing of years terminology that sought to convey that experience and conviction has become problematic. The language of the heart was moved to the logic of the mind and the message of the presence with us of the one who gives us a new future lost its power to bring our lives in touch with Jesus' ministry. In reflecting on how the church has sought to express its experience of the presence of Jesus we discover we are not required to explain those terms to satisfy the questions of our minds but to make use of them in order to remain open to the possibility of experiencing the presence of Jesus for our own life and ministry.

A new norm has entered human history. It announces that we can find meaning and fulfillment in our lives. This is a gift that is offered to us. It is to discover who our neighbors are in God, and who God is in our neighbors. That is why we serve both. There are two movements -- a self-emptying and an adoptive restoration. "He who loses his life will find it." Jesus inaugurates this process of faith. He reaches out to others, and gives himself away. In giving he creates an emptiness in his life. This very emptiness creates the need for him

to receive resources from beyond himself. He allows his life to be restored by the creator so he will continue to have something to give to others. This is the rhythm of faith. The redeemer surrenders the privileges he has in order to remain who he is. In so doing the creator gives back to the redeemer what he had, the prerogatives of God. The creator adopts Jesus, because Jesus in surrendering his claims is acting like the creator. His mission is the creator's mission to seek the lost. The pattern of ministry has been established.

Jesus must struggle with how to define his ministry, and he refuses to take actions that seek only his own good because he has come for the good of others. The temptations are instructive at this point. Jesus experiences the enticement of using his powers to avoid the risks of his humanness and to surrender his mission to inaugurate the new age by laying claim to the old age. He avoids seeking to save his life in a way that would lose its purpose. He denies the use of a miracle that would serve only his needs. He does not turn stones into bread for himself even though he will later feed thousands with a handful of loaves and fishes. He does not avoid or escape the hazards of life. He will not ask God to intervene, to be a deus ex machina, even when he is dying on the cross. Not his safety but the new Kingdom's beginning is primary. Nor does he capitulate to the inclination to use his power to compel a commitment from others that must be freely given. The attraction of his way is not in what it can command but in what others will freely commit themselves to do. He recapitulates the human experience without surrendering his allegiance to his God-given mission.

Jesus initiates the new era by what he says and does. The new age seeks a toehold in human history through the life of one fragile human being. All that

he speaks and every deed that he does must seek to give the "new age" a voice and presence so it can begin its leavening work to introduce a new option for the future for others. He teaches with authority but confounds those who hear because he does not speak from the premises of the old age. Those who have a stake or an interest in the dying age do not have "eyes to see" or "ears to hear." They try to put this "new wine" in "old wine skins," and it bursts the aged assumptions by which people try to salvage some meaning in life. Those who have been excluded in the old order hear that they are to be the chief beneficiaries of the new order. They are to be invited to the banquet that will mark the reign of the new. Those who lived without hope are given hope. Those who were the beggars of alms are to have riches of love lavished upon them. Those who were "nobody" have become "somebody."

Wherever Jesus goes he is an agent of wholeness in a broken world. He drives out the demons of the mind and spirit by bringing a peace to tortured troubled people. He touches bodies, is touched by others, speaks words of healing and hears words that expect healing. The lame walk, the deaf hear, and the blind see. The Kingdom is not only for all but all who enter become whole. Even the dead are raised, and the living are promised a life that death cannot destroy. God is the God of the living and not the dead. Jesus announces that the days of torment of the soul are over when he says to individuals, "your sins are forgiven" and to the world, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." He gives people permission to live from the new reality with his injunction, "Go, and sin no more." You may live from the Other (God) and for others (neighbors). This will fulfill the law as well as give abundant life.

The conflict between the old age of self-regard and self-preservation and the new age of self-emptying and self-less service is inevitable. All of the

forces of the existing order of Adam will enter fierce battle with the new order of Christ. Those who give their lives to the new have to give their lives for the new. The new age will be available to others only in the resolute witness of those who follow the one who gave his life on the cross. Those who are so persecuted can rejoice. Not because they suffer in the ministry of their lives but because they know why they suffer and that their suffering continues the ministry of Jesus in order that the creator's will "will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The new age of the possibility of peace within and among persons must be judged not by its reception but by what it makes possible. To judge Jesus' death by the norms of the old age is to misunderstand his ministry. It is not judged by the number of adherents nor its public popular acceptance of the moment. The criteria of worldly acclaim means little. What matters is that in his death Jesus meets the powers of the old age head on. It fails to triumph by the promises it offers and the threats it keeps to break Jesus' commitment to act for others -- for God and the neighbor. He confronts the threat in an ultimate way -- the experience of God forsakenness and abandonment. The Other from whom he received his ministry and the others for whom he gave his ministry give him no word of hope in the dark hours of his death. His ministry is finished and finalized without a hint that the new age is now assured of its beginning by his willingness to die for it. No one who subsequently participates in this ministry of Jesus will ever know that darkest of hours. His experience of the darkness of the demonic sheds light on our most trying times. Our ministry is of Jesus and for Jesus, but it is always after Jesus and, therefore, with Jesus.

Jesus' coming into the world is an invitation to others to join his mission and take part in his ministry for others. That is one of the meanings of the

resurrection and the sending of the Spirit. Those who respond by saying Jesus is the Christ are announcing that they have seen the new and can now make a commitment to "feed his sheep" and "do greater things than he did." By their commitment to live from and for him they multiply his deeds and words. The miracle of the loafs and fishes is repeated as others discover where they can find the bread of life that does meet the human hungers of life.

"He is risen" is the affirmation that the seeds of the sower of life has spread across the terrain of human history are bearing fruit: forty, sixty, and a hundredfold. With these words new life begins as rebirth after rebirth takes place. Every struggle with the powers of death -- for the old age of self-regard must die many deaths and dies slowly -- becomes an opportunity for resurrection. Each occasion is another moment in which the powers of love and life that Jesus released can demonstrate their power and do their work to overcome the old order.

These times are signs that Jesus has kept his promise to send the Spirit. We call the Spirit holy because it helps us to see and to live from and for Jesus and the new Kingdom that began with his ministry. We are not alone in our ministry. We have a guide, a companion, a comforter, an empowerer. The companionship of the Spirit keeps us in the community of the creator and the redeemer. Rather than taking us from our neighbors it leads us to our neighbors to offer this community to them. In them we will discover the Christ who has sent us to them. We become stewards of the new age so that the ministry of Jesus as harbinger of the new age will remain available to all and benefit all.

One sign of the consequences of the announcement, "He is risen," is the community that is formed in his name. Those in the community know that not every-

one who cries, "Lord, Lord," is living from the community of the new age. However, those who do the will of God are a part of that community. Where two or three of those are gathered together in his name there is a community that reaches out beyond itself toward God and the neighbor and remains open to receive gifts from beyond from God and the neighbor. It is the mystery of the new community that when it seeks to serve the "least of them" it is ministry to Jesus as much as carrying on the ministry of Jesus to the neighbor. This ministry looks to its pioneer, Jesus the Christ, and seeks to contribute to his rather than its own ministry so that Jesus' ministry will continue.

Settlers

Most of us most of the time live not as pioneers but as settlers. We have followed the options opened up by the pioneers that show promise and we take advantage of what is valuable in their discoveries. There are a few times when the "lemming" instinct takes over and we follow a "false" pioneer. Even these occurrences do not invalidate the main point. We are following in a crowd. It reminds us why our usual response is to be cautious and hesitant about following visionaries. Most are wrong! The "wait and see" attitude offers a way to sort things out so that settlers can make the best choice about which pioneer to follow.

When Jesus predicts his rejection and death, he understands that the settler instinct will resist the pioneer. That "he must die" demonstrates his willingness to verify his claim that there is a new way of living by his commitment to die for his vision. He is the "good shepherd" who does not abandon his responsibility for the flock!

The pioneer of faith helps us understand the dynamics in our culture. In

the culture and the culture's values in us the decisive struggle between the old way and the new will take place. This is partly concealed from us because the culture enshrines the pioneers of the past. Heros are never as significant in the present as they will be in the future. As time passes some grown larger than life. Some fade in significance and others are from time to time rediscovered. At first, this may make us feel that cultures are fickle and unpredictable. However, there is a logic that makes sense out of the fortunes of the heros of the past. The needs of the settlers in the present are determinative. The pioneers of the past serve the purpose of conserving and enhancing the "old."

Religion fulfils a role here. It is often viewed as a bulwark against change. It protects the hard won gains of past pioneers. This is no small accomplishment for the culture. When experience is blessed by a divine imprimatur, tradition is given divine sanction. However, the forms the spirit has created may lose their vitality. Keeping the forms does not insure that the Spirit will still be present. The state also functions on the side of order which is often the outcome of the accomodations with the latest struggles in the body politic. The politics of the state are regulated for the benefit of the settlers of the established order and not the pioneers of the coming order.

In every area of life this tendancy is at work. In the schools, the arts, the economy, and even recreation. The role of education is to conserve the old order in each discipline. In the arts the old forms have a following and are marketable. The ear and eye are atuned to its sounds and forms. In the economy the system is structured to conserve the assets of those who are the "haves." This is true in a capitalist, socialist, or marxist economy. The principle is the same. The quarrel is always over who should be the beneficiaries regard-

less of the arguments as to which system will be open or able to help the most people. Even recreation is in the service of the old order. It may gain support from the old order because it provides perks to the privileged or because it helps people to be more productive and loyal because they enjoy its "fringe benefits." In all of these sectors of society there are heros -- former pioneers. Their heroic struggles are remembered and their triumphs over great odds are applauded. But there is little call to imitate their quest for the new in the present age. Instead, we are urged to imitate the form of their achievements rather than live their style of life.

Our culture is marked by the illusion of change. The enormous achievements in technology give the impression that change has been qualitative when it has only been quantitative. Because so much has been done to alter our style of living, it seems that we are living in "a new age." However, many of these changes are cosmetic. It is not that what has been done has made us "materia-lists." Probably all ages have been materialistic. "Materialism" is an attitude toward life and not the amount of "things" we have. The deception of technology is that it leads us to believe it can transform the old into the new. What its achievements do is to tempt us to overlook the fundamental issues of being human.

The achievements in health have enhanced life but have not banished death. Therefore, the issue of our mortality remains. Technology has given us many comforts to make life easier but not necessarily more meaningful. The culture has found ways to insure that the basic needs of most people will be met through various welfare systems, but it cannot give people dignity. We are awash in information. We can know more than we want to know or can absorb. Yet all this information does not guarantee insight. Our age is one in which the world has

been linked by communication systems that give us near instant access to what is happening everywhere. It has not led to agreement on what these events mean nor are we much better at hearing one another. We strive to give people work and keep unemployment manageable, but we cannot give people a sense of vocation and pride in what they do. We have managed to create a way of life that keeps the outer benefits of the old in tact at the price of inner emptiness.

We have increased the tempo and heighthened spiritual anxiety. The superficial changes occur with such rapidity that most feel they are anonymous. We do not count but are simply counted as another replaceable part in the machine of human society. We spend time tinkering with gadgets but have difficulty getting in touch with and owning our feelings. We live in crowds but community illudes us. We have countless interactions but few relationships. We live in the dread of obsolence. Our knowledge has a limited life span and utility while the wisdom of our living has little value in the cultural coin of the realm. We are busy with many things so we can know what is "current" at the moment while the enrichment of our spirit is denied or ignored. We often experience a deep loneliness but seldom a refreshing solitude. When we are left on our own we are left with a self we know little about. The uneasiness we sense is deeper than the tempo of change. The speed of change brings to the surface a spiritual anxiety that we believe we do not ultimately matter. In a computerized age we can know when every "sparrow falls." What we fear is that no one cares about the sparrows that fall. We long to be cared about.

Fear is the dominant driving force in our lives as we live for the old. We are not driven by the courage that comes from a vision of the new although deeds to serve the old will at times be characterized as couragous. The redistribution of wealth which is underway leads to calls for sacrifice, new forms of

cooperation, and laws to protect present advantage. It is an effort to cling to the privileges that cannot be successful. Even if a strategy of "enlightened self-interest" were followed it might only cut our losses but not insure that we will be able to dominate the future as we have the recent past. The democracy of knowledge undermines monopolistic inclinations to preserve the privileges of the beneficiaries of the old order. While this may lead to new extraordinary efforts to support the educational enterprise in the culture, it can keep no promise to preserve the advantages of the beneficiaries of the old order. The irony of our time is that most efforts we take to conserve and preserve the old order prove counter-productive. Instead of providing us the security we seek, our insecurity is heightened. The security we seek is not to be found in the old but the new. Sometimes we are unable to see this, but most of all we lack the courage to be pioneers and leave the comforts that are available to settlers.

Approaching life as a problem we fail to perceive that the basic struggle between the old and the new is the struggle between good and evil. We may use the terms good and evil but we do it in a very superficial way. The depth and radical presence of evil in our own lives is often denied and avoided. It is projected on to others and then they are banished in the hope that evil will therefore be overcome. When the old order banished Jesus, it was unwittingly banishing evil because Jesus understood what they were trying to do. He perceived that "with his strips they would be healed" even though their act of self-preservation functioned from the rationale that is was "better for one to die than all."

This failure to take evil seriously in the interest of preserving the old has the effect of "relativizing the divine." The role of the divine is limited

to preserving the old. Therefore, the presence of evil in the self cannot be discovered and we remain under its control. We become imprisoned in the self. We are closed to new possibilities because they are viewed as threats and not as opportunities. Since we want to live on a level of life where we are in control, life becomes flat no matter what we do. Excitement is no substitute for mystery and awe. For that reason the cultural veneer of civilization by which we seek to control the evil forces in the human situation are unprepared for the shock of the demonic when it bursts these flimsy bonds. Our dreams are realized and we discover the nightmare with which we must live. The old is passing away but now we see that our attempts to make it new are doomed and like a sinking ship it will take us with it to its grave. If we are bitter, it is because we believed the old could give us a future when it had none to offer but was only seeking to use us to lengthen its life.

The culture dismisses the "radical new" of the Kingdom that Jesus inaugurates. It does so by its claim that an "otherworldly" lifestyle will not last nor work in the "real world." The "real world" is, however, a transitory world, a dying world, a world with no future. People cry for bread and it gives them a stone. They do not get that which gives them life but that which has no life. There is a "religious" impulse that seeks to restore, renew, or revitalize this world. But the only hope is in death and resurrection, not transformation, not renovations: death of a way of life that is not open to the God who summons from beyond where we are and calls us to reach out beyond ourselves to God and to others. We must leave Egypt to reach the promise land. We must wander in the wilderness to reach the promise land. We must surrender the old to make room for the new. We must lose our lives to find life. The more excellent way is not the development of what we have but the receiving of what we do not have.

We are called to cease living the life of settlers and prepare to embark on a journey to follow the pioneer.

Sojourners

Those who have heard the promise of the new possibility to live open to those beyond the self -- God and the neighbor -- are drawn together. They are now sojourners on a common pilgrimage. They have been invited by a common predecessor who summons them to follow a common way, his way. Therefore, being attracted and drawn to a common destination they discover they have company and are a part of a community called the church. It is a community that Jesus has entrusted with the mission of living from the new he has disclosed. It is a community that is given the resources of the spirit of Jesus the Christ so that all may know they have other options for their lives.

This community has all the marks of other communities. It has its stories, its heros, its norms, its sense of purpose, its sacred symbols, its rituals of memory and renewal, its division of labor, its values, and its important places. At the same time what marks it off is its allegiance to a pioneer Lord who has announced that the old promises no longer bring security or personal fulfillment. It stands as a light in a dark world to show the world that the new option that Jesus has disclosed is viable and possible.

The church does this by continuing the presence of Jesus, by being an extension of his incarnation. As God revealed himself in Jesus, God continues to announce that revelation through those who follow Jesus and gather into traveling enclaves in history. This community seeks to be everywhere because it is open to and for all. It also is drawn everywhere to see what God is doing. Therefore, this community is always marked by being on the move in both time and

space. It knows it has not fathomed nor discerned what the new can be until it moves beyond the constraints and limitations of where it is.

It is not a community of tourists. It does not make expeditions to observe. It goes to live with others because it lives from another, Jesus. The church does not seek to know but to share the lot of others. Yet in its identification with a new people it struggles to shape its response so that it is faithful to the One who has sent it forth: Jesus the Christ.

Its mission is to point beyond itself. It points to the One who has summoned it to move beyond where it has been. It points beyond what is to what may be. It looks forward to the day where it will cease to be an immigrant presence and become an indigenous reality. It anticipates the possibility of the indigenous community developing the new openness of Jesus in ways the immigrant can never do. It hopes for this because the community of faith anticipates how this response will enrich its life and the world's life as the presence of Jesus continues to do its wonderful work.

Just as Jesus' presence in the world became an invitation so another mark of the sojourner community is its role as a summons or invitation by providing the world another option.

The invitation is for all. There are no qualifications one has to meet before he or she can be eligible for an invitation. Jesus has already issued the invitation. The sojourners only continue to repeat the invitation. "Come as you are." It is a community in which concealing who you are prevents you from becoming a part of the community and receiving the blessing of becoming who you may be. To disguise how one lives from the old will only prevent one from embracing the new. Disclosure is encouraged by the community because all need

the examples of others abandoning the old in order to embrace the new. One cannot do this alone, but it can be done in the company of fellow travelers.

Once one becomes a part of this community he or she immediately hears the command, "go." It is experienced as a call to "forget what lies behind." It is a stimulus to grow -- to experience continual rebirth. It is to "press on" in the journey of faith. This is not just for one's self-realization. It is a call to be available to and for others to serve their needs. To serve others and give to others is not to interrupt the journey. It is the journey. The community stops when touched by needs of others as Jesus stopped when the woman touched his garment. It takes the time when it finds "the Samaritan along the road." Its journey is not measured by the distance it covers but by the extent to which it reaches out beyond the self.

The sojourners are martyrs, witnesses. They cannot forget the crucifixion and the injunction to take up the cross. They can never forget that the call is both to the sufferings and the joys of the way of the new. Those who follow the new will find themselves in the uncomfortable position of having to challenge the customs and traditions that have been a part of their lives. They will be accused of treason and wonder if they have not betrayed their natural communities. There will be times when the temples must be cleansed! They will have to say "but I say to you" and "my brothers and sisters are those who do the will of God." It is a painful step to take because it means the possibility of rejection and separation. This is not what the sojourners look forward to as the old and new confront each other in the daily decisions of how one must travel the road of faith. The line will have to be drawn to limit the place and power of the structures of the present social order. Whatever the institution may be it will at some time overstep its bounds. Only by opposing these intru-

sions can the sojourners of faith help these institutions to remain legitimate means and not become illegitimate ends. As Jesus was silent before Pilate he was announcing that Pilate had power over him but did not have the power to take away the mission and meaning of his life. He recognized an institutions place and by his silence kept it in its God given place, even when it resulted in his death.

Those who sojourn toward the new will have few illusions. To act on Jesus' call is to face rejection that can be as mild as being treated as irrelevant to as stark as being put to death. The differences are of degree but not kind. Those who follow the pioneer of faith also know that the sterility of the old is disclosed when those who sojourn refuse to let its norms shape their life journey. The promises of the old do not entice and its threats do not intimidate because these are seen as the last gasp for breath of a dying age. The martyr is willing to live from and for the new. Even when this means giving up one's life, it does not destroy the hope the new has given. The lives of sojourners are surrendered in order to offer life to all, even to those who oppose them. It is the final inclusive act of the sojourner's invitation to others to follow the way into the new "that cannot be taken away."

The sojourner community is a sign to the world that it now is possible to live from the power of the resurrection. The future belongs to the new open community and not to the many old closed communities. The former enrichs all while the later impoverishes all. The sojourning community is marked by its conviction that the new is extravagantly generous. There is encouragement that gives courage to those in this community to continue the journey for all and on behalf of all. This community is not marked by doubt but certainty -- life has overcome death, the new has triumphed over the old. Jesus shares his victory

with those who follow him. It is a community of confidence. It knows to whom the future belongs. It need not live a protective style of life. It does not have to speculate about tomorrow and hedge its bets. It has the assurance that "nothing can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus." The community cares for all. It does not forget what it is like to be trapped in the fears of the old because it still struggles with these fears. They are not underestimated. The community knows that caring can break the grip of the old and enable the new to take root and grow in the lives of others. Finally, it is a community that calls others to join its victory parade through human history. It derives no satisfaction from seeing others living outside of the joys of this journey of faith. The sojourners will only be completely joyful when all others find the fulfillment that eludes them in their journey of life. The "body of Christ" must, as its Lord, give its life for others. It does this for the God who came in Jesus as well as for the neighbor whom Jesus seeks to reach to give the gift of God's love that will someday attract all to the journey in which "Christ will be all and in all."

Pathfinders

The role for ministry that seeks to follow the pioneer of faith, Jesus Christ, is to be a pathfinder. Having been claimed by the promise of a future in which one can live beyond the self and for others each person, lay or clergy, seeks to discover and carry out the implications of this where he or she is. The pioneering work of Jesus opens up a new world. Those who follow have a vocation. It is called ministry, and its purpose is to make the new available for all.

Those who see this way of life as their calling or vocation will, of course,

do many things. Their work will be done in many ways and places. They must be the incarnation -- the presence -- of the future of God and God's future where they are. Being very diverse and very scattered makes the contribution of each crucial. Not only are the established forces of the old way very entrenched, the old has the capability to absorb many of the benefits of the new without surrendering commitments to the old. It can change its style without altering the substance of its life.

The substantive issues must always be first for those whose ministry is to follow Jesus into God's future. This is critical because what is required is a conversion at the inner core of one's life and not just a cosmetic change of external costumes and customs. Therefore, the substance of ministry will be characterized by three traits: vigilance, perceptive discernment, and a deep sense of purpose.

Those in ministry will have come to terms with themselves. They will not underestimate the power of the old in their lives. They will not use the old as a scapegoat, but are willing to face up to the human situation that the travail in the world is first of all "a warring in their members." They know they will have to say, "get behind me Satan." To live for the new is always a struggle and our own resources are never adequate. Time and again we will hear, "O you of little faith," and we will have to cry out, "who will save me from this body of death." Vigilance will mark the life of those in ministry as they seek to realize that "it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

Those in ministry will be perceptive. They will not judge by appearances nor by the criteria of the old age. As pathfinders they will appreciate that others will not understand, much less believe, that the way they go about their

roles in life makes sense or can be fulfilling. Pathfinders come to terms with the fact that they will be a minority. Their work is the work of the few for the many. There is an awareness that even in life this is so. By the time most accept the new, the pathfinding work has already been completed and pathfinders are breaking new ground on other new frontiers.

Finally, the last inner mark in the character the new creates will be a deep contentment, an inner peace and calm. The meaning of life will not be measured by the current index of success. Often there will be little to show for all that one has done, and the possibilities for discouragement and despair are very real. How to renew and restore confidence becomes crucial. Only focusing attention on the pioneer Jesus will provide help. The pathfinders will recall that the Jesus they follow has preceded them and therefore stands with them. That is what it means for them to affirm "Christ is risen."

These traits of faith will create a style of life for those whose calling is to be a minister of the new. They may take various shapes and forms but the essentials of the style will have several things in common: receptive seeking, participatory sharing, and selfless caring.

To live from and for the new is to live open. It is to struggle to express the reality of the new in one's living. Therefore, those in ministry ask what is Jesus calling, inviting, and enabling me to do. This is not always finding another place, but it is seeing in a new way. It may not be necessary to exchange what one does, although it may at times involve that decision. Most of the time it will be a change in the way one perceives what he or she is doing. Those in ministry are characterized first of all by receptivity. They do not see their primary mission to be that of bringing Christ into the situations of

life where they find themselves, but to be able to discern and discover how Christ is already present and at work. Then those in ministry can begin to hear how the Christ who has come to dwell in them wishes them to serve others in this place at this time.

The vocation of ministry calls us to participate in the lives of others. Its form is to live for others. It communicates that it is possible for people to live for others. This living for others is not simply available to those who reach the "generative stage of life" in their chronological or psychological development. It is open to all at all ages. Likewise, it is not just a way to extend ourselves through the lives of others. It is a ministry to nurture others in the discovery of their gifts and potential. Service to others is not a process of reproducing oneself. It is the work of an artist who discovers what is there and brings it to life so that others can discover what has been hidden. Serving the new that Jesus inaugurates must lead to the emergence of the new as the gifts of others are discovered, recognized, nurtured, and realized.

The third distinctive aspect of this style of living Jesus makes possible is the capacity to share. This is not expressed in the common understanding of the term that we are to give something we have to others. It is more like the implication in the word sharing that means we take part, participate, or enter into the lives of others. It is not what we have to give that makes their lives better or what they have that makes our lives better that is of primary importance. It is that we participate in each others lives in order to discover that we both need what the other has and that our greatest gift to one another is our need for the other. It is a recognition that these gifts cannot be given and received until each shares freely his or her life with the other -- most of all

feels free to disclose needs. Until this moment is reached the community the new requires cannot be born. That is why the style of ministry is to recognize those we serve meet our needs, too.

The vocation of faith does have consequences for those who accept the mantle of ministry. Those who have committed themselves to this way of life discover it will combine suffering, sacrifice, and satisfaction. How do those whose role is that of pathfinder bring them together?

The suffering of those in the vocation of ministry is, of course, their suffering. The suffering, however, that is the most difficult to bear is the suffering of others. Suffering is no longer appraised by what happens to the one in ministry but by what is happening to others. It is not pity nor sympathy, but empathy. The suffering of the others becomes the suffering of those who serve. How those in ministry respond to these sufferings varies. When they act to alleviate the suffering, they never forget that they do it for themselves as well as for others. They know the God of the new does not will that people suffer. Sometimes all they can do is stand with and support others in their suffering. The pain cannot be removed but those who suffer are given the assurance that they do not suffer alone; others and the Other have not abandoned them. We do not add to their suffering by burdening their spirits with the absence of companionship. At other times those in ministry will suffer for the other because those they care about do not see, recognize, or confront their deep pain that is destroying their lives and others around them. This suffering is most difficult because it may require of those who minister to suffer at the hands of those they serve in order to free them of their suffering. Only a deep conviction that in doing this "one bears the cross of Christ" and "is deemed worth of suffering with Jesus" can sustain those in ministry.

Sacrifice is easier to understand even if it is still difficult to do. At the same time it has the same purpose as suffering in ministry. It is sacrifice that makes the new possible for the other. It is not the purpose of the sacrifices of ministry to allow, to enable, or to permit others to survive in the old order and way. That would only help people to accomodate their living to the old. The critique that reformers and revolutionaries are not speaking for all the people they seek to help only underscores that point. They do not claim to be helping people make it in the old order. They live from the vision of the new order. The delicate issue is how can one know that those who claim they are serving the new order are not serving only themselves or some false vision. There are three tests, that while not foolproof, do provide useful clues for discerning an answer to that question. The first is the willingness for those who claim to help to sacrifice privileges not only in the old but also the new order. The second is whether or not others are willing to make sacrifices for the new order by following and living from the vision of the new. The third clue is that the new is allowed to do its creative work surprising even the reformers by what becomes possible. The new goes beyond the reformers dreams so that their final sacrifice is to surrender their vision as not being adequate to contain the promise of the pioneer, Jesus the Christ.

The final trait is satisfaction. It is a satisfaction that comes beyond the sufferings and sacrifices. It is a new vision that enables one to treat the costs as insignificant. The outcome far exceeds our contribution. It remains a gift that gives us joy. It is a glimpse of the promise land. It is the anticipation that after our efforts others will be able to go far beyond what we have done or could do. It is the awareness that even for those who commit their lives to follow the pioneer that "eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has

perpared." For those in ministry this is neither speculation nor fantasy. We know what has happened since the pioneer Jesus hung alone on a cross in order for the new age of living beyond the self to begin. Our meager achievements in the service of that future pale in comparison, but that same power is at work in our ministries that was at work in his and we hear, "well done good and faithful servant." The yield of our efforts in his name far exceed our wildest hopes. It is this that far outweighs what others perceive as unreasonable and insurmountable costs.

Guiding

Those called and commissioned to serve the church as pastors of a congregation are expected to be guides. They have prepared for this role by their willingness to be equipped for guiding others in their faith journey. In their biblical, historical, theological, and practical preparation they have sought guidance to guide. They cannot rely solely on their experience alone because it will always be too limited. A simple example of this is gender. The experience of men and women is different. This provides each with gifts and limitations. All who are given the responsibility of guiding have to accept these constraints. They do know that what qualifies them to serve is that they have intentionally prepared to guide, remain open to hone their ability to guide, and are continually aware of their need to be guided.

Prayer: Prayer is a stance before it is an act. It is a way of seeking to be aware of how the new is appearing, expressing itself, and working in the world and lives of others. "To pray without ceasing" is not an injunction that drives one to spend as much time in the cloister as possible. It is an invitation to be attentive at all times to the way God's surprising work is taking

place. One does not want to miss it. It is a sensitivity to a dimension of reality that can be easily missed or dismissed as we all try to maintain the the time consuming routines of the old way.

Naturally, it is necessary for the pastor to take time for private prayer, meditation, reflection, thinking, and studying. No one has enough inner resources to give at all times and never receive. To seek to live that way would create an inner contradiction in the life of the pastor. In a very short time there would be nothing to give! Today it is called "burnout." One would be functioning in ministry by rote and conditioned reflexes. One can do this giving with no time to receive for a while, and there will be times when this will be unavoidable. However, to use being busy as the measurement for effectiveness in ministry is to ignore the pioneer of ministry who had to find time to be alone in order to receive so that his ministry could continue.

Every act of ministry is an act of discovery for those who minister. This is only possible for the guides who cultivate the attitude of receptivity in their private and public lives. Without this we simply become "blind guides." In the beginning we lack breadth of understanding because of our meager exposure to life through ministry. In time we may lack depth of insight. Our years of experience prevents us from seeing that it is still limited experience. Our vision is obstructed by our experience because we simply try to fit the new into old categories of our past experiences. The reality is that we often are unable to help the healing of others because "of little faith." Our lives our closed by and to our experience. We do not expect, discern, and live from the new that never completely corresponds to our experience. Therefore, we must cultivate the openness of prayer in our own lives if we are to fulfill our vocation as guides with those whom we serve.

Proclamation: The primary mission of proclamation is to announce the availability of the new. It is possible to live beyond the self as it is and the circumstances as they are. It is a word that announces that even if it appears that nothing has changed (externals) everything has changed (internal). It is a recognition that what matters in the long run is the inner life, the life of the spirit. It is the vitality of the inner life that determines the future of the external world. The new works as leaven.

Pastors exercising their role as guides through preaching must avoid simply repeating the expressions of the past and imitating the expressions of the present. Both of these temptations make it difficult to hear the new word. We miss the substance of the new by focusing attention on the forms it took in the past or by copying present forms that seem to communicate a sense of meaning in the culture. This applies even to biblical forms. The latter is very difficult for the pastor. Because of the central place of the Bible in faith and especially for preaching, the most difficult task for the pastor is to hear the new in the words that are so familiar. Those who are responsible for guidance in the community of faith must find ways to hear the text anew. This may be done by reading new translations, studying new commentaries, or learning from new biblical scholarship. It may also mean hearing others, laity and clergy, share their perceptions of the text. Or it may be hearing the text with those whose life experience enables them to hear the text in a different way: women, men, minorities, the oppressed, the young, the old, those from other cultures, or the handicapped to mention a few possibilities. All this means is that we do not underestimate the new in the text that is often only discerned by those whose life situation enables them to be grasped by a new dimension of the text. Those who guide seek out the insights of others in order to avoid limiting the Word to

the constraints of their narrow vision.

The text always relates to the times. The time of its first expression and the time of its re-expression in the sermon. It always seeks to invade the times with the announcement, "you have heard it said of old, but I say to you." The text is not the servant or prisoner of the times. It is the servant of the new time, the time of the Kingdom that has come in Jesus the Christ and is coming. It is a word for the times, all times. The trick for the guide who preaches is not to condemn the times in which they proclaim but to announce that we can now move beyond our time, the old, into another time, the new. What matters is not what time we live in but the time we live from and for. The task of the pastor is to seek to allow the word of invitation to be expressed in his or her proclamation. One listens to the text and the times in order to hear the new word. Those words cannot be acquired en masse but must be received by the guides who seek to hear the new word for those they serve as guide as well as for themselves as guides.

Those who guide through proclamation utter a provocative word. It provokes the hearers to commit their lives to the journey of living from the future of God. The style of the words of the proclaimer is friendly. It is not a caustic or antagonistic style even though the words are hard words to hear. The struggle of the hearer is not to be with the style of the language used but with the summons in the language to leave the old and the known for the new and the untried. The word does this by being permissive. It indicates the hearer may live from the new. It grants permission. You are not locked into the old patterns. They do not have to have power over your life. It is a word that announces new possibilities. It is a word of en-couragement. It gives the courage to do because it announces to the hearer that he or she can make the

break with the old. The old has lost its power to hold us in its grip. Finally, it is a word of promise. If the announcement were only to say "you may" and "you can", it would seem to place a burden on the hearer "to do." The word would be experienced as a command and not a promise. The word promises that "with God all things are possible." The announcement is that "you will." This promise is not the promise of the guide but the promise of the pioneer of faith, Jesus the Christ.

The words of the guide may be marked by faithful originality, but the guide knows that the original word is not his or hers. It is the word that God has spoken in Jesus the Christ. That is the word that is announced in the proclaimer's words. It is a promising word to speak.

Worship: When the community gathers to celebrate under the guidance of the pastor, it comes to remember and to receive again a vision of the new reality that enables all to live beyond themselves by being open to the neighbor and to God. Because the worshipping community celebrates the availability of the new it is a community marked by joy.

Its singing is to be lively. What matters is that the community is able to sing its songs of joy in a strange land. Those who guide will do all they can to help the people "make a joyful noise to the Lord." New songs will be composed and learned. This is done because the new is always seeking ways to express itself anew in song. Music will help the people express their joy whether they are singing or listening to others sing. The message of the music will focus on the joy of the new.

Worship comes from and creates community. It is fellowship based on the new order. The seating is open to all. Participation and leadership is shared with

all. All have a place in the fellowship. Times in the service to greet the neighbor, greeters at the service to welcome, coffee hours for fellowship, periods and space for informal gathering, and recognizing visitors are all signs of this new community. Sharing concerns of those not present and including the needs of others from across the world permits the community to escape the confinement of the provincialism of the old order. It is an announcement and demonstration of the possibility of a new unity in which all will be gathered at the joyous banquet of the new age.

The worship of the community recognizes that it has companionship with the pioneer. While there is a time to listen to one another and to listen about Jesus Christ in the voices of others, it is important to find time to listen to Jesus Christ. There needs to be times of silence: times for companionship with the pioneer. When these times are too brief or non-existent it is a denial of what the community affirms: Christ is present and available to all. All need time in the service to focus their attention on the companion. It may be in periods of silent meditation, guided prayers, or the way the community uses the times before the service, at the end of the service, during the offering, and silence in communion services. There should be less fear of silence by pastoral guides, and attention should be given by pastors as to how they can guide others in the use of this time to look within and beyond the self.

There will be a place for compassion in the worship service. The guide understands that there is much pain and loss experienced in leaving the old behind. It is a struggle marked more by failure and fear than success and courage. These struggles must be allowed to find expression in confessions, in sermons, in prayers, and in the lessons so that the ultimate word of compassion, and forgiveness is a serious and not a superficial word in worship. The worship

that shares the needs of people cannot overlook the deepest need of the spirit. There must be words of comfort and assurance that "your sins are forgiven" and "neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more."

When we gather to guide people in the faith journey to follow the pioneer of faith, it is a commemorative occasion. It is a time of remembering. We recall the trials, struggles, and triumphs of those who have lived from the new and have preceded us in the community. We are "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses" that we call "the communion of saints." Lessons, testimonies, and stories of and about these significant others in our community instruct and inspire us. All worship is "done in remembrance of me." It is either the remembering of how the new, grace and truth, has come in Jesus the Christ or how he has been present in the lives of others. In the sacraments we commemorate the victories of the new and the promise it holds out to us.

For all of these reasons worship is, finally, a commissioning. It is a call to commitment. It is a time of deciding to seek to live from the new, to follow the pioneer, to live and serve in new ways. There needs to be a way to give those in the service an opportunity to make a commitment. This does not mean the return of altar calls or invitations to join the church. Nevertheless, we need creative thought and experiments in finding forms in the context of worship that invite and allow people to make decisions to live in a new way. The movement of the offering to the end of the service helps this effort, but more will need to be done intentionally with this time in each service. The question must be posed -- in what way do we act as guides to invite those in the service to let the new shape the lives of those who worship. Then we must provide a way to make and express this commitment.

Nurture: Those who guide understand that their ministry to the whole person includes the mind. In the role of guide the primary interest is not to know more about but to be able to know more of the new that has come in Jesus. Therefore, the concern for the mind is not for intellectual brilliance as much as for thoughtful reflection about the implications of living from beyond the self for God and the neighbor. There are several implications for the pastor as guide who seeks to nurture this dimension of the life of faith in those he or she serves.

The most difficult is to expose our assumptions. The patterns of the old order of self-regard are so fixed in our thinking that they are taken for granted as being the norm for our lives. No one should underestimate their staying power. That is why the nurturing process requires input from others who live from a variety of assumptions. A nurturing experience in which everyone is alike holds little hope of challenging assumptions. This does not mean other assumptions are more in keeping with the new. It only means we have difficulty seeing our assumptions in order to challenge them if we are left on our own.

Information is not neutral. It is "forming." The information that is being selected and shared will form the lives of those who are engaged by it. It is important that those who care for the nurturing process in the community be formed by the new life Jesus makes possible. It is also important that they have the appropriate information. Here the pastor's work as guide is to lead others who guide. They will need the best understandings we have of the scriptures and tradition even given the "historical conditioning" of this knowledge. At the same time they will need the best insights from others on the issues they address in contemporary life. If the pioneer spoke of the freeing quality of truth, then those who seek to follow him will not neglect the truth wherever it

can be found. We will, of course, allow for the distortions of assumptions of others, but will not dismiss the truth that emerges from their insights. This means the nurturing process will invite resources for learning from a variety of places. Even from those who have not decided to follow the pioneer of faith.

There is a body of knowledge that has developed in the community of faith. It is not necessary nor possible for everyone in the community to know all of it. No one can. However, the pastor as guide needs to be aware of where to turn for help so that the knowledge required will be available to those who need it. This does not mean the pastor has to be the "expert" on everything. Only the expert of finding the knowledge needed by others in order to point the way out to them. The pastor invites others to explore the various ways that the new of faith can and is shaping the life of our times. They encourage others to become guides for the community, including guiding the pastor who supports their venture.

The nurturing process includes inviting the ones being guided into a process of maturation. The new has come, and the old has passed away. One has to be willing to confront not only one's own ignorance but one's own need to grow. What is sought is the "foolishness" that confounds the wise, the wisdom of faith. The new way creates sensitivity, insights, and understandings that have the character of revelation. Those who guide and are guided sense that their most profound insights have been given, disclosed, or revealed to them. So that the final characteristic of the nurturing task of the pastor as guide is a sense of expectancy. A waiting openness that searches with those they guide for the surprising discoveries of new options that will be disclosed to those who seek, knock, and ask.

Witness: To be a guide in the community of faith carries with it the responsibility to keep the sojourners on the journey of faith and to help them invite others to hear the call from Jesus to "follow me." This call does require a break with one's present life, a conversion. It may come slowly or quickly, but it must come. Since it requires a re-orientation of one's life from the values of the present age to those of God's new future, it cannot be a confirmation of what we are or have been. It will be a new beginning for all, a rebirth or a resurrection.

It is a demonstration that the real world of the future is not seen with our eyes but with our hearts. It is not a question of sight and projections but faith and discontinuity. Those who live from this new way will challenge the world to see a new basis of life by their words and deeds. They cannot hide their light under a bushel. They have redirected their lives, and that will stand out. It is a recognition that the world cannot deliver what it promises. Only the pioneer of faith can announce that we are the "blessed" and have that reality come true. The world entraps us with claims it cannot keep. It controls the present but not the future. Whatever it can produce will not be able to satisfy and sustain forever. So it is characterized by a quality of "passing away." To work for its rewards is to live under the threat of being victimized. Others come to take away and steal what we have. The achievements we garner are devalued daily and eventually are worthless. Jesus alone invites us to find the treasure for our lives that will last in following him.

The guide knows this is not easy. The guide does not minimize the forces that will resist these claims and seek to fight those who live from the promise of the new. Sometimes these powers entice by offers of privilege and at other times they intimidate by threats of punishment. What the world needs to see is

a demonstration that these forces that seek to manipulate are only interested in their future and not that of those they try to control. The pastor as guide knows that the witness that matters for the future of the world and the Kingdom will be sojourners who are able to continue to live from and for the new future. Those who do not run away from life to escape the old but those who are able to confront it and demonstrate its lack of power to control their lives will possess the future that will endure. The pioneer helps us to confront the forces of the old and not capitulate to them.

Those who are invited to live from and for the new -- the time of living from beyond ourselves for God and neighbor -- recognize their weaknesses. We are not in the promise land. We know that more wisdom, strength, and courage is required than we have. It is for the strong and we are weak. It is for the wise and we are foolish. The guide knows that these fears in the people's hearts are real. They need to be recognized, faced, and named. In so doing they remind us that what we are witnesses to is that the pioneer of faith is the one who enables us to run the race of faith. We testify not by boasting in our strength but by sharing with others that even with our weaknesses we are able to live from the Kingdom to which Jesus is leading us.

There must be a conversion! That is the first word of the invitation. The call to follow Jesus is not a continuation of our basic drives and culturally conditioned responses. It is a break, a change in orientation, a change in direction. The validation of this call is not its endorsement and unqualified blessing of the way we are and the way things are. When Jesus announces that the rain falls on the just and the unjust, he is announcing that no one can make promises for our life in this world that will insure us that our lives will be trouble free. There are no correlations to what the world claims it can do and

what it does. To live as though it does is to court disappointment. Even if one has the fortune to benefit from what the world can give, it can all be lost or discovered as ultimately powerless in the face of death. The call of faith is to become a new creation. This promise is not in addition to what the world promises but instead of. The vitality of this demonstration is not an expose of the world's failures. It is a discovery of the joy and peace that the new gives. The witness does not thrive on being a detractor of the world but by offering the attraction of the blessings of the Kingdom. The witness is that the kingdom delivers what it promises. Therefore, the witness of those who follow Jesus, which to many appears to be a word against the world, is in fact a word for the world.

Care: When the pastor serves as guide in the tasks of providing pastoral care in the community of faith and in the world the key skill needed is discernment. This is to discern where the person is, where Jesus the Christ is leading them, and how the pastor can assist this process of guiding others to the new that Jesus is offering them.

In order to do this one must be available and accessible. Availability and accessibility mean more than frantic activity. It means the guide cannot be pre-occupied with his or her own agenda. Otherwise, the guide may be with the other but still out of touch. They may share the same time but remain world's apart. It will mean the guide will need to be present with people and responsive to those hunches that do intrude and somehow suggest it is time to see certain persons or to share one's intuitive inclinations. While the guide cannot force him or herself on those they are guiding, there is such a thing as attentive waiting.

Attentive waiting can take several forms. It can be marked by a wandering around in visitation, not only to the known needy but to all. This attentative waiting can be a willingness to be interrupted or a responsive sensitivity to the impromptu meetings that "just happen." Or it may be the willingness to ask questions that invite others to share their needs with the one whose role is to guide. In other words, the agenda for pastoral care by the guide is to be sensitive and responsive to the agendas of others.

Those times when the pastor guides others in the tasks of pastoral care are times in which he or she seeks to discern Christ in and at work in the life of the other. The promise of faith is always with us as well as before us. The guide knows it may be easier if he or she has faced the situation of those being helped. However, that is not what finally qualifies the guide to help. No guide can have had the experiences of all whom they will be asked to guide. What the pastor knows is that Jesus has had the experience in kind and in degree of all who will need to be helped. Jesus is seeking to give life to and through the other. The guide seeks to help others discover the possibility and promise of this presence. The guide knows it is there, and encourages and waits for the other to discover and disclose it.

The pastor knows that part of the work as guide is to recognize his or her limitations of ability, time, skill, and experience. Therefore, guidance will often mean that the pastor must share the guiding role with others. In some cases this can mean professionally trained helpers and in other cases it may mean the friendship and fellowship of others who are on a similiar path in their journey. In most cases it ought to mean inclusion in a community of others for mutual support, guidance, and accountability. It is not the task of the pastor to seek to guide all but to see that all have access to guidance. There are

times when the pastor must say to others in the community, "you feed them." The pastor shares the responsibility for guidance with the community. Therefore, the pastor does not measure effectiveness in care by what he or she does directly but also includes the ways in which others are drawn into the guidance process and supported in their work as guides of others.

Social Action: While there are public or social consequences in everything the pastor does, here we want to look at how the pastor's work as guide affects direct action with social needs. It will be marked by a radical openness. To live from and for the new that Jesus pioneered means an end to all closed stances. To be aware that one lives from beyond the self requires one to be open to all, even to those who must be opposed! Social action is not to be identified with strife. There may be conflict but the sojourners of the new future see the conflict as part of a larger and longer struggle. Therefore, opposition does not grow out of hate or bitterness but out of love and hope. The inner peace of those who challenge creates the possibility of finding a way to something that is beyond what most believe can be done.

The pastor's work as guide is to encourage those tendencies for inclusive rather than exclusive social action ventures. "Progress" requires the participation of all because the complexity of the problems we face escape the limitations of any one point of view. It is more than the need for people to participate in order to own the decision. That is a tactic. What is being suggested here is strategic. It is a recognition that to concentrate on eliminating one demon can result in several new demons taking the place of the one that has been banished. No one knows all the demons. For that reason we need the insight of others.

The premise for involvement in social action ministries by the pastor as a guide for others is part of the commission of following Jesus to embrace the new possibilities that will re-order the world. The style of these efforts is invitational. The future is not commanded but commended. What is called for often seems so drastic, so difficult, and so dangerous. Experience teaches that more often than not it is only the small next step that future generations will judge as not having gone far enough. The struggle is with the adjustment we must make to take the next step and not how others will adjust. A move that seems large to us will often seem small to others who want, need, and hope for more. It will never be enough not only because all will not be satisfied but because faith knows the pioneer will still be beckoning us to move on after we have taken these steps. This is a very hopeful posture because it assumes that lives and life can change by decisions of the living as well as the passing of old generations.

The guide must provide those who seek to alter the social order a larger vision than they usually have to enable them to cope with what could be described as irrelevant and irreverent practicality. The world usually uses the counsel of being practical as a pragmatic criterion for action. It has a political wisdom that has merit. However, those who serve the new age and the possibilities it offers are often more practical. Their advice is that there is another option to patching up the old and that is to take the venture to live from the new. This may seem too far fetched to most to seem advisable or practical. The sojourning community is often a community "ahead of its time." That is why it is so important to the present time. It is viewed as irreverent because it is not locked into the unquestioned "sacred" assumptions of the hour. The role of the pastor as guide is to counsel people against capitulation to the

need for immediate success or despair with their failures. What matters most for the world is a people who understands the difference between setbacks and defeats. Those who face frustrations with the old but keep living from the promises of the new and the new promises are the most radical social activists in the world. They do not give up! They outlast their adversaries because they are reaching for the new and not trying to hold on to the old. Time and faith are in their favor.

Finally, the work of social action for the world and others must be concerned with the process as well as the product. The distinct contribution that the guide reminds the community of faith about is that the new age that promises respect and dignity for all must be achieved by treating all with respect and dignity. To pray for one's enemies and those who oppose and persecute is to be living in the promised future as well as from and for it. To hate and seek to destroy is in fact to have capitulated to the old order that has no future and is passing away inspite of the noble aims we may be striving to achieve.

Administration: This task of ministry is appropriate to the understanding of the role of pastor as guide. Administration has its side of tedious details that are necessary and do serve others. Those who see administration as simply serving the "machinery" of the institution may be over reacting to abuses that do occur. However, the issue is not whether we will have institutions but whether our insititutions will serve the needs of people. Inefficiency and incompetance are no great blessings and those who are most adamant against institutions often have the lowest tolerance for these shortcomings. The pastor as guide is concerned about these insititutional details because of a concern that they will serve people.

When the pastor understands the role of guide in service of the new Jesus has made possible, planning becomes a primary administrative function requiring attention. It is, however, planning with a difference. It is planning that seeks to discern the future God wants for the world. Particularly the world where the pastor is to oversee the mission of the community as guide. This does not mean that only the pastor can discern that future. It only means the pastor is responsible and accountable to see that planning begins at this point. The result of this is to give planning the role of deciding what must be done by whom and by when in order to move toward the future to which God summons the community. The church's program is not repetitive even when it repeats what it has done before. It always is asking anew what shape the programs must take to shape the future to God's promise.

As guide the pastor practices the art of orchestrating the gifts of others for the common mission of the community so that it can be a sign of and in service of the new age. This means that a primary responsibility of the pastor is to identify the latent and present talents of the people; to enlist them in the service of the future; to resource them for their effectiveness; to deploy them for the strategic utilization of their talents; and to support them as they are exercising their gifts. It is the recognition that as guide the pastor cannot do the ministry of all for all. The pastor is to serve the sojourners in their service of faith.

Spirit and structure live in tension in the community of faith that is in service of the new future Jesus has opened to the world. Those who view spirit and structure as incompatible misunderstand both. As guide the pastor knows the spirit seeks form, embodiment, and longevity. The question the pastor seeks to answer is how to create the structures that will be appropriate for the new

Spirit's work in the community of faith and the world. Structure is not ignored in the name of the spirit. Likewise, the pastor seeks to provide guidance so that the structures of service maintain the sensitive quality of the Spirit that brought them to life. The goal of the Spirit and structure is the same: to create and maintain the new life in and for the world.

Guides are judged in pastoral administration by what they make possible and not for what they do. To focus attention on the pastor's activity is to miss the ministry dimension of administration. Ministry is for others. In the case of administration this means for others who serve as well as are served by and through the corporate responsibilities of the sojourning community. What has been, is, and will be accomplished by others here and now, in other places and other times is the measure of the faithfulness of the managerial guidance of the pastor.

The pastor is given the responsibility of the overseer. Ordination and assignment confer upon the pastor the opportunity and obligation to guide as an administrator. This is pastoral administration which is noted for a triple accountability: to the pioneer of faith, Jesus; to the sojourning community to help them along the way; and to the pathfinders who seek support as they work through the new in their arenas of personal responsibility in the world. This is what makes the pastor as guide a servant of those she or he oversees. Her or his work is evaluated by those who follow her or his guidance even while the pastor is the guiding overseer for the community. It is an order of community that is one of the promises and signs of leadership in the new epoch of faith that God has offered to give to the world. The pastor as guide seeks to embody this gift in her or his leadership.

Conclusion

Faith begins and ends in Jesus Christ. In his appearance the ministry of the new gift of God for the world inaugurates its work. Jesus Christ is the first fruits. He invites and calls others to follow his way so that the new Kingdom can be made available to all for all times and places. Those who follow find themselves living from, for, and in a new reality. As they come together some are called and selected to serve this new movement in a unique way. Those so called are asked to equip themselves to serve as guides to others and the community so that they can fulfill their responsibilities for the future Jesus has made possible.

All of ministry has as its goal the realization of the promise that the "kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of Christ." This rule does not have as its purpose the domination of the world. Its purpose is to encourage all to live in the freedom the pioneer of faith has made available and to discover the fulfillment he gives which will never pass away. Those called to serve this future as pastors give themselves as an extension of the ministry Jesus began and they anticipate the day when he will bring to completion the work he began and is continuing in and through their ministry. They look to the same one as the pioneer and perfecter of their ministry: Jesus the Christ.

NOTES

NOTES

Chapter I - Nouwen

1. The Wounded Healer (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972), p. 37.
2. Open Hands (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Marie Press, 1972), p. 57.
3. Open Hands, p. 158.
4. Intimacy (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publishers, 1969), p. 37.
5. Pray to Live (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publishers, 1972), p. 36.
6. Reaching Out (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co. Inc. 1975), pp. 11-12.
7. Intimacy, p. 32.
8. Open Hands, p. 147.
9. Reaching Out, p. 34.
10. Intimacy, p. 127.
11. Reaching Out, pp. 17-18.
12. Intimacy, p. 17.
13. Pray To Live, p. 66.
14. The Wounded Healer, p. 98.
15. cited in Open Hands, p. 38.
16. The Wounded Healer, p. 96.
17. Reaching Out, p. 69.
18. Aging, (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1974), p. 106.
19. Reaching Out, p. 113.
20. The Wounded Healer, pp. 19-20.
21. Intimacy, p. 120.
22. Creative Ministry (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co), p. xv.
23. Creative Ministry, p.xxi.
24. Creative Ministry, p.xviii.
25. The Wounded Healer, p. 95.
26. Reaching Out, pp. 32-33.
27. Creative Ministry, p. 111.
28. Out of Solitude (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1974), p. 40.
29. Intimacy, p. 113.
30. Reaching Out, p. 28.
31. Creative Ministry, p. 33.
32. Creative Ministry, p. 39.
33. Creative Ministry, p. 40.
34. Reaching Out, p. 92.
35. Creative Ministry, p. 107.
36. Reaching Out, p. 63.
37. Creative Ministry, p. 17.
38. Creative Ministry, p. 20.
39. Creative Ministry, p. 63.
40. Creative Ministry, p. 65.
41. Open Hands, p. 66.
42. Creative Ministry, p. 82.
43. Creative Ministry, p. 88.
44. The Wounded Healer, p. 41.
45. The Wounded Healer, p. 73.
46. Aging, P. 153.

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1. The Wounded Healer (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972), p. 37.
2. Open Hands (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Marie Press, 1972), p. 57.
3. Open Hands, p. 158.
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44. The Wounded Healer, p. 41.
45. The Wounded Healer, p. 73.
46. Aging, P. 153.

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- (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 32.
3. Evolution and Guilt, pp. 25-26, also see pp. 61-63.
4. Juan Luis Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 25, also see p. 51.
5. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 120, also see pp. 141-144.
6. Juan Luis Segundo, The Sacraments Today (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 71.
7. The Liberation of Theology, p. 151.
8. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 122. also see p. 102.
9. Juan Luis Segundo, Our Idea of God (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 66. "The Christian message shows us three, loving each other in such a way that they constitute one" p. 87.
10. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 105.
11. Our Idea of God, p. 152, also see p. 166.
12. See Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973). "A qualitative and intensive approach replaces a quantitative and extensive one" (p. 151). "The salvation of the whole man is centered upon Christ the Liberator" (p. 149). "Salvation embraces all men and the whole man" (p. 168).
13. Our Idea of God, p. 106, also see Grace and the Human Condition, p. 53.
14. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 63, also see pp. 58-62.
15. Evolution and Guilt, p. 96.
16. The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action, p. 79.
17. Juan Luis Segundo, The Community Called Church (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 117.
18. The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action, p. 25.
19. The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action, p. 15.
20. The Liberation of Theology, p. 234.
21. Evolution and Guilt, p. 129.
22. Evolution and Guilt, p. 55.
23. Evolution and Guilt, p. 131, also see pp. 106 and 130.
24. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 3.
25. Our Idea of God, p. 34.
26. The Community Called Church, p. 125.
27. The Community Called Church, p. 4.
28. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 54.
29. The Community Called Church, p. 46.
30. The Community Called Church, p. 47.
31. See The Community Called Church, p. 22.
32. The Sacraments Today, p. 46.
33. The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action, p. 139, also see pp. 76 and 80-81.
34. The Community Called Church, p. 85. See Gutierrez,
35. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 147, also see pp. 69, 146-147, and 158-162. "To love - the creative action par excellence - is to deliberately choose to lose one's own autonomy" (p. 159), and "There is no neighbor as such...Who my neighbor will be depends on my capacity for drawing close to others...Or better it will depend on my ability to bring him close to me, to immerse him in my time, my world, and my range of interests" (p. 161).
36. The Community Called Church, p. 103.
37. The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action, p. 95, also see pp. 83-97.
38. The Sacraments Today, p. 110, also see pp. 104-110.
39. The Community Called Church, p. 69.

40. Evolution and Guilt, p. 59.
41. The Community Called Church, p. 60.
42. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 54.
43. The Community Called Church, p. 72.
44. Grace and the Human Condition, p. 129.
45. The Sacraments Today, p. 33.
46. The Sacraments Today, p. 34.
47. See The Sacraments Today, pp. 45-46.
48. The Sacraments Today, p. 14.
49. The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action, p. 56, also see The Liberation of Theology, pp. 104-106.
50. The Liberation of Theology, p. 110.
51. The Liberation of Theology, p. 181, also see pp. 110-120, 175-181; The Community Called Church, pp. 19-23; and Grace and the Human Condition. "It is not a question of suppressing the supernatural or confusing it with the natural. It is a matter of re-expressing it in a way that is more evangelical and more coherent at the same time" (p. 95).
52. See Evolution and Guilt, pp. 129-130.
53. The Sacraments Today, p. 96.
54. The Sacraments Today, p. 52.
55. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 271.
56. This is not always the norm for the church. "The worst contradiction embedded in the praxis of the church is the fact that it has tried to achieve liberative ends like those of grace and salvation by mass means that are intrinsically opposed to liberation" The Liberation of Theology, p. 215.
57. See The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action, pp. 98-106 for a discussion of these questions.
58. Our Idea of God, p. 174.
59. Evolution and Guilt, p. 113.

Chapter IV - Cobb

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