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Introduction to Volume 1

From its beginnings, Christian theology has been reflection on the Way of Jesus: the sustained, creative effort to support, understand and articulate the faith of believers who seek to live as disciples. Over the past two millennia, such reflection has at times become overly removed from the actual practices of people in the changing circumstances of their lives and cultures. Yet in recent decades, impetus has come from the pressing needs and questions of Christians and others, as well as from changing perspectives in academy and church, to turn once again to the essential practicality of theology.

In this first edition of *Theological Explorations*, we invite you to bring the questions and insights arising from your own experience into conversation with our authors, as we probe the possibilities for theology at the beginning of the new millennium. Each contributor to the journal was asked to consider the question: "What will your field look like in the next twenty-five years, and what are the implications for how we do theology?" They worked imaginatively to assess the "state of the question" in their areas of expertise, and to forecast inherent possibilities and tensions in the dialogue of theology with these signs of the times.

Thus, they focused on concerns that intersect in ecclesial, academic and societal spheres, in complex and varied ways. Zeni Fox explores the emergence of new, lay ministers in the Catholic Church of the United States and the discernment of theological meaning in the face of their experiences. Michael Horan discusses the realities of American religious pluralism and popular culture as they affect the lives of young people, and consequences for the theology of youth ministry. Cornelius van der Poel reviews how changing approaches and new technologies in science and medical practice create "pressure points" for theological reflection on health care ministry.

Ennio Mastroianni highlights the Vatican II view of the family as "domestic church," and shows how a theological understanding of marriage partners as ecclesial leaders contributes to the support of families today. Moni McIntyre stresses the disastrous consequences for our earth in the compartmentalization of science and theology, and suggests fruitful avenues for reclaiming their unity in sacramental and moral inquiry. Mary Hess challenges theologians as scholar-educators to take account of the pervasive influence of mass media and popular culture, as they shape both the contents of people's awareness and the very ways that we think and look for God in our world.

In my own essay I provide more lengthy overview of "practical theology" as a contemporary perspective and method, rooted in Christian theological tradition but welling up in new forms today. I weave several examples from theological education and congregational practice through an analysis of key aspects of practical theology for the next millennium.

By its nature, writing for cyberspace widens both the audience and the topics and methods for theological investigation. It creates new possibilities for communal networks among all those committed to disciplined, multi-faceted thinking about Christian faith in the shifting, perplexing circumstances of our world today. Your own engagement is vital in this practical-theological enterprise. Let us explore together, and may this journal serve as a meeting place for all "practical theologians" -lively participants in theological inquiry as it intersects with the multiple patterns of experience today. We welcome you to this exciting venture.

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Discerning Meaning: The New Lay Ecclesial Ministers

Introduction

In the period since the Second Vatican Council, a significant change has occurred in the ranks of professional ministers who serve the Church in a great variety of roles here in the United States. Whereas once in parishes and dioceses virtually all ministers were ordained, and in schools, hospitals and social service agencies all leaders were priests or vowed religious, today great numbers of these ministers are lay. To cite just one statistic: in 1992, there were 21,000 lay persons (including vowed religious) working as employed members of parish staffs; by 1997 that number was 29,000, an increase of 35%. Furthermore, between 1992 and 1997 the number of these lay people surpassed the number of priests in parish work.¹ Certainly, such change is one of the "signs of the times" and requires theological reflection, especially since our existing theological categories do not fully explain where these ministers "fit" in our ministerial world nor what the ministry of lay professionals means in our ecclesiological system. This article will trace the emergence of these new ministers, and then briefly outline some of the efforts to study and theologize about this new reality. It will especially focus on a theological colloquium sponsored by the NCCB Committee on the Laity. Finally, it will attempt to project what directions theology may take in the next twenty-five years, as we attempt to discern the meaning for the life of the Church in the United States of these new ministers.

The New Ministers

In the mid to late 1960's, a new role evolved in some parishes throughout the United States: the Director of Religious Education. In the mid to late 1970's, this was followed by another: the Youth Minister, with a gradual addition of roles such as liturgist and social concerns director, as well as the generalist role of pastoral associate. In the early years, the DRE was often a woman religious, sometimes a lay person; the Youth Minister was usually lay, whereas the pastoral associate has generally been a vowed religious. In these same decades, new graduate programs began, in religious education, theology, religious studies, at universities, colleges and even seminaries. Prior to this time almost all theological education was available only for priests. In the early years, the majority of those enrolled in the new programs were vowed religious; over time, lay registrants began to predominate. Graduates often took ministry roles on parish staffs. Simultaneously, dioceses throughout the country began lay ministry formation programs, of two to three years' duration. Some graduates assumed ministry roles; most served as volunteers. In 1980 the US Bishops, in their statement on the laity, *Called and Gifted*, took note of this new reality:

Growing numbers of lay women and men are also preparing themselves professionally to work in the church... Ecclesial ministers, i.e., lay persons who have prepared for professional ministry in the church, represent a new development. We welcome this as a gift to the Church.²

Several studies give us data about these new ministers, especially those working in parishes. Not surprisingly, DRE's were the first group studied;³ Youth Ministers received individual attention considerably later.⁴ Surveys of all those ministering in parishes were conducted in 1985, 1992 and 1997.⁵ A few small studies give some data about persons in diocesan ministries,⁶ and membership listings of groups such as the National Association of Catholic Chaplains show that there are an increasing number of lay ministers in other areas. The growing number of laity providing leadership for Catholic institutional ministries, as principals of schools, presidents of colleges and heads of hospitals and social service agencies has not been the subject of any major surveys. However, a Delphi study followed by a symposium affirmed that the Catholic identity of Catholic institutions could be maintained with lay leadership, and stressed the importance of education and formation.⁷

There are some general perspectives that can be drawn from these studies. Sociologically, those who serve are usually women, generally over forty and under sixty and largely white. They have preparation for the work they do, most holding a diocesan certificate, and over 40% an MA. Their salaries are considerably lower than their educational level would suggest, yet the great majority report that they are happy in their work. Many began their work because of a personal invitation from a priest; parishes report a high level of satisfaction with their presence and their ministry. Some attention has also been paid to their motivation; these new ministers speak of their work in theological terms. They say they believe they have been called to do what they do, that they are empowered by their Baptism, that they have received charisms or gifts of grace for their ministries. And yet, unlike other formal ministers of the Church (deacons, priests) they have no defined ministerial name, there is no ritual by which they are designated as ministers, there is no developed theology to explain their presence in our midst. To underline this final point, it is interesting to note that when bishops of the United States were polled about their concerns regarding the new ministers, the highest ranked item was, "a theology of lay ministry."

Theologizing about the New Ministers

Canonists, liturgists and systematicians have all noted the emergence of the new ministers, and have explored the meaning of this new reality from their particular perspectives. The Permanent Seminar of the Canon Law Society very

early recognized that new forms and structures are developing in ministry, and determined that study of the new realities was needed.⁸ Their on-going work has included a recent study of women and the permanent diaconate, noting the cultural reasons for considering such an action. They judged that the canonical restrictions on ordaining women as deacons are rather limited.⁹

Liturgists who consider the new ministers take as their starting point the community, the assembly, the People of God. They are particularly concerned that the emergence of the new ministers not overshadow the role of the community itself in ministry. A primary voice among the liturgical scholars addressing these issues is that of David Power. His early *Gifts That Differ: Lay Ministries Established and Unestablished* examined both the new largely unused installation for the lay ministries of lector and acolyte and the emergence of the various new ministerial roles such as those described above. A particular concern of his is the question of the recognition of ministries; he favors a blessing rather than rites of installation.¹⁰

Of the systematicians, the one who has given us the fullest reflection on the new ministers is Thomas O'Meara in his *Theology of Ministry*. The full work traces developments in ministry through the centuries, seeing all as "a theology of grace which views God's presence in the world as the source, milieu and goal of ministry." His theological judgment of what is happening today is that there is an explosion of ministry throughout the world which "suggests that the Holy Spirit is intent upon a wider service, a more diverse ministry for a church life that will be broader in quantity and richer in quality." O'Meara roots his analysis of the emergence of new ministries in the community's consciousness of its needs, which is why the nature and number of the ministries expand and diminish as culture and church need them. Like Power, he sees liturgical recognition as important; like the canonists, he sees diaconal ordination, especially for full time ministers, as appropriate.¹¹

In the work of all these theologians we note a dialogue between the received tradition and the life of the community today; in each we see an effort to read the signs of the times, in this case events in the life of the Christian community, and to interpret their meaning theologically.

A Theological Colloquium

In 1994, the Bishops Committee on the Laity established a sub-committee which was charged with focusing on lay ministry. As the group pondered the issues and concerns in the United States Church they decided that the specific area of lay ministry which needed the leadership of the conference was the lay ecclesial minister. With a significant grant from the Lilly Foundation, they began an

extensive process of study, consultation and dialogue. A summary of the work of the committee is available on the Conference's web site.¹²

As part of their effort they sponsored a theological colloquium. The steering committee took as its premise the "new reality" of large numbers of lay persons engaged in ministry, generally professionally prepared and paid, with a strong sense of having a vocation for their ministry, and called forth and accepted by the ecclesial community. It set as the purpose: "to engage theologians and bishops in theological dialogue and discernment about the phenomenon, lay ecclesial ministry, which has emerged in the life of the United States Church." One goal was "to make some progress toward the articulation of responses to the theological issues raised by the experience of ecclesial lay ministry." Faithful to that modest end, the colloquium was titled "Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry." The second goal was "to model how bishops and theologians can work together in fostering the mission of Jesus Christ."

The steering committee thought that the initial task of the group should be to focus on the emergence of the new ministers, and then to put that experience into dialogue with the received tradition. Therefore, two papers were prepared, "Ecclesial Lay Ministers: An Overview," a description of the new reality, and "Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry," a methodological introduction which called for an inductive approach, and a dialogue between the tradition and the signs of the times. These papers were sent to the theologians who were preparing the other papers, each written from a different scholarly perspective, including Scripture, sacramental theology, history, canon law and the magisterium so that the purpose and method of the colloquium would inform all the papers. In addition, two bishops prepared papers explicating the experience in their local churches.¹³ The letter of invitation to the colloquium stated: "The process of the colloquium will be one of discernment, listening to the Holy Spirit speaking through the participants, to the 'piece of truth' that each one brings in the belief that all the participants are there as equals with a common concern: to foster the mission of Jesus Christ and help us move toward articulating a theology of ecclesial lay ministry." Colloquium participants read the papers beforehand; once gathered, they worked together in small and large groups. Their final small group activity involved the development of statements which were then tested for affirmation with the group as a whole. The evaluations from the participants indicated that they overwhelmingly thought that the goals of the gathering were met. The learnings from the colloquium continue to inform the on-going efforts of the sub-committee.

As with the earlier work of the canonists, liturgists and systematicians, the work of the colloquium writers and participants demonstrates the importance of a

pastoral theology approach as we confront new developments in the life of the Church.

The Next Twenty-five Years

Clearly, the colloquium was an interim step in the effort to articulate a theology of lay ecclesial ministry. There is much work that must be done by theologians, much more discernment, to prepare the way for the official teaching that will one day come and to contribute to a deepened understanding of the new reality. Several areas especially need attention.

First, additional historical retrieval of diverse models of ministry would help. In part this is true because still in our time priesthood is too often seen as the only ministry, or as the paradigm of all ministry. The new ministers need models for themselves, and the larger community needs a fuller appreciation of the diverse ministries and ministers which have emerged at various times in our ecclesial communities. A fuller historical understanding could also trace the ways in which specific ministers and ministries became an accepted part of the life of the church, theologically and pastorally. A deeper understanding of the diversity of ministries would assist a realization of the complementarity of different forms.

Second, the question of what kind of recognition the new ministers should receive is important. Liturgical studies of past and present patterns of recognition are needed, but so is sociological analysis of how and why leaders have rituals of induction for their roles. (Recognition exists not primarily for the individual, but for the community.) The heightened awareness we have today of the need for an active role by all the laity must be held in tension with the need for the recognition of some laity for their particular ministries. The church has always ordered her ministries; how should that be done today? A ritual of recognition would, in itself, more clearly define lay ecclesial ministry. Such clarity should assist in developing clarity about the roles of other laity, and even the ordained as well.

Third, study of the ways in which laity are engaged in ministry in other countries, other cultures, will help make clearer how our culture is influencing the emergence of lay ecclesial ministers in our country. In what ways is this development a creative inculturation of the Gospel in a particular time and place, and in what ways does this development require critical readjustment to be faithful to the Gospel?

Fourth, a "coherent canonico-theological rationale that transcends the current doctrinal impasse about the participation of lay people in the exercise of the power of governance" is essential, in light of their growing involvement in the

ministry of ecclesial governance which exists in our country today.¹⁴ Again, attention to the signs of the times and dialogue with the tradition is called for.

Conclusion

Because the Church is a living reality, a People, the Body of Christ, it grows, changes, adapts. The task of pastoral theology is to help the Church in that process, by calling attention to and critically assessing what is happening in each age, in light of all that has gone before. Discerning the meaning of the new lay ecclesial ministers is part of the task of pastoral theology today.

Zeni Fox

Notes

1. Philip J. Murnion and David DeLambo, *Parishes and Parish Ministers: A Study of Parish Lay Ministry* (New York, National Pastoral Life Center, 1999), iii and 4.
2. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1980), 4.
3. Thomas Walters conducted several studies, in 1983, 1986, 1989 and 1992. As an example see, *National Profile of Professional Religious Education Coordinators/Directors* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Diocesan Directors of Religious Education, 1983). A summary of several of his studies is offered in Thomas Walters, Wayne Smith and Sylvia Macotta *A Hopeful Horizon*, (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Education Association, 1993).
4. Zeni Fox, "Research Report on Youth Ministers" and "Youth Ministers and Work Issues" in *Vision and Challenge* (February and April 1994).
5. The 1992 and 1997 studies were conducted for the Committee on the Laity of the NCCB: Philip J. Murnion, *New Parish Ministers* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 1992) and Murnion and DeLambo. The 1985 study was part of a doctoral dissertation in theology; a summary of the sociological data appears in "The New Parish Ministers," Zeni Fox, *Church* (Spring 1991), 16-21.
6. See for example, Barbara J. Fleischer, *Ministers of the Future: A Study of Graduate Ministry Students in Catholic Colleges and Universities* (New Orleans: Loyola Institute for Ministry, 1993).
7. Charles J. Fahey and Mary Ann Lewis, *The Future of Catholic Institutional Ministries* (New York: Third Age Center, Fordham University, 1992), 7.
8. The explanation of the need is given in the introduction, and the papers exploring various aspects of the question presented in *Official Ministry in a New Age*, ed. James H. Provost (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1981).
9. "The Canonical Implications of Ordaining Women to the Permanent Diaconate, Report of an ad hoc Committee of the Canon Law Society of America" (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1995), 2 and 50.
10. (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1980), especially vii-viii and 157-158.
11. (New York, Paulist, 1983), 1, 5-11, 153, 198. For a fuller summary of theological analyses see Zeni Fox, *New Ecclesial Ministry: Lay Professionals Serving the Church* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1997), chapters 5, 7 and 8, and the on-line series "Ministry in the New Millennium: What Should We Expect, and Why," www.liguori.org (Pastoral Link/Catholic Practice).

12. See www.nccbuscc.org/laity/ (Laity/Lay Ministry). The site includes a listing of the committee membership, the history of the project and the newsletter, "Lay Ministry Update," which has been sent to all bishops, approximately bi-monthly. The Updates give information about lay ministry in the United States Church, and also include both ecumenical and global developments and perspectives.

13. The colloquium papers have been published: *Together in God's Service: Toward a Theology of Ecclesial Lay Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998). The volume includes the questions participants raised after reading the papers, but does not include the tentative conclusions reached by the group.

14. John Beal, "Lay People and Church Governance: Oxymoron or Opportunity" in *Together in God's Service*, 121.

**A place for reflection, a chance to be honest in our location:
Popular culture, media literacy and theological reflection in the years to
come**

What is the role of media education and popular culture studies in theology in the next twenty-five years? I want to begin by answering somewhat provocatively, but also quite seriously: people such as myself (white, middle class, well educated) will not be able to engage in authentic theological exploration without simultaneously exploring and engaging mass mediated popular culture, or what Kellner labels "media culture."¹ I believe that media culture and the practices which create, shape and support it, are such an interwoven and essential element of our current context that not to engage in serious theological study of popular culture is not to be wholly honest in our situated theological reflection.²

Academicians in fields of theology and ministry who question this centrality – particularly those who never watch television or listen to popular music – ought to consider just the following examples of ways in which media culture affects their own practice. For instance:

- every student who comes into your classroom to prepare for ministry, whether it be an academic vocation, leadership in a local church, leadership in a national organization, or simply for their own personal growth, will likely have received more formation of their attention from the media culture industries than from religious resources;³
- when your students have a hard time critically reasoning their way from a text to their own voice using a rational, philosophical mode, it may have less to do with their cognitive abilities, and more with their unfamiliarity and lack of ease in that mode of argument. As Boomershine points out, while a print/literate culture reasons in a philosophic mode, an electronic culture reasons more by way of sympathetic identification;⁴
- when you face a classroom of students whose spiritual affiliation admits of no communal roots, be aware that that possibility exists in large part because an electronically mediated culture represents only limited ways of being religious and spiritual, and most of these are linked not to historical communities but to patterns of consumption and purchasing of style;⁵
- when you are struggling to help your students understand human being in relational ways, and voice their own sense of self amidst the diversity of their colleagues; when you are attempting to support practices of spiritual formation that focus attention on inward insight linked to rooted community, and finding

that many of your students have virtually no mature sense of themselves as selves embodied in a living tradition and history; understand that such a state of affairs is in large measure supported by cultures of commodification and consumption, cultures supported by the work of advertisers who seek to create dis-satisfaction with self and alienation from community as one route to greater consumption of the products they promote.⁶

There are many other examples I could cite, and obviously each of these that I have cited has other factors contributing to it as well as those directly attributable to media interventions. But the point remains: media culture is already influencing your teaching and research in ways that may or may not be obvious to you.

Research into the ways in which people respond to mass mediated popular culture has shifted away from previous paradigms. By focusing on mass media in their role as "culture industries," scholars have begun to see that communications media fulfill myriad roles in people's lives. Consuming mass mediated popular culture is not simply a process of ideological domination, with commercial imagery and meaning forced upon an unsuspecting and passive populace. Nor is it a process which is driven solely by the meanings people themselves bring to it, in some masquerade of a grassroots consumerist paradise.⁷

Instead communications and cultural studies scholars are suggesting that media culture is a complex amalgam of representations produced by commercially driven processes. These representations are then not simply passively received and consumed, but rather provide basic "notes" with which people improvise their own "melodies" - with the proviso that these melodies are constrained by the limited nature of the tones provided and the scales people can bring to them. These scholars point to the ways in which media culture "texts"⁸ can be a window into widespread hungers, particularly if one considers what kinds of pleasures are produced by the representations so transmitted, and the social location of the audience for whom the "text" is marketed.⁹ In ignoring the complexity of this process, we also ignore its structural, systemic, hegemonic implications.¹⁰

If mass mediated texts function in this way, then we have entered a terrain in which theological exploration can and must be present. For many people it may well be the only space in which they have any experience they would claim as spiritual.¹¹ Indeed, media educators are fond of pointing out that in a culture such as ours, where billions of dollars are spent on determining how to "catch eyeballs" for 15 or 30 seconds amidst the fluid chaos of a 500 channel universe, attention is the precious resource.

Attention, especially attention to the central sources of our hungers, our yearnings, our griefs, and our joys, is at the heart of theological exploration. Noticing how our attention is being shaped is central to noticing how we relate to and with God or how we are led away from our relationship with God. As a community of theologians, we have a large scholarly literature about the practice of attention in relation to spiritual formation. We have learned how the tools of exegetical analysis can help us to pay close and sustained attention to biblical texts. Scholars of liturgy and music have helped us to understand how our attention is shaped in authentic worship and praise. We have borrowed the tools of philosophical reasoning to submit our theological reflections to engaged attention. Each of these frames of analysis, each of these ways of "paying attention" is central to the task of ministry. Equally central should be learning the tools of close analysis and production that support "paying attention" to media. These are tools primarily held within the discipline of media education, or media literacy.

Traditionally, literacy has referred to being able to read and write in a specific language, and some religious communities have moved beyond that definition to speak of "religious literacy," by which they usually mean being able to worship with some degree of knowledge and understanding, and being able to interpret sacred texts and traditions within the lifeway of a specific community. What religious educators mean by "literacy" is more than simply a limited ability to take something in, to read a sign, for instance, or to recite a creed. Instead we are actually seeking something that might more appropriately be called "fluency," or the ability to read and write, to worship and interpret, with ease, knowledge, and grace.

In the context of media culture, literacy and religious literacy are further complicated by the necessity of being able to "read" and "interpret" visual texts that are electronically communicated (TV, film, and so on). Indeed, the New London Group has started to speak and write in terms of "multiliteracies," which term attempts to capture not only the diversity of "modes" of communication (traditional print, hypertext, multi-media, and so on), but also the diversity of cultural referents. "Multiliteracy," in this framework, "emphasizes how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of [our] working, civic, and private lives."¹² We need to be able to live and work and play in a diversity of cultures, and do so in representational forms as well as in written forms.

The media education movement in the U.S. defines media literacy very broadly as: "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms."¹³ Various media literacy organizations have produced lists of media literacy "principles," but most coalesce around the following: "all messages

are constructions," "messages are representations of social reality," "individuals negotiate meaning by interacting with messages," "messages have economic, political, social and aesthetic purposes," and "each form of communication has unique characteristics."¹⁴

On the face of it, this list could apply not only to media literacy questions, but also to much of the text interpretation and theological reflection done within contemporary seminary and divinity school settings. What is particularly helpful to theologians from media education, however, are the specific tools that have been and continue to be developed to help students across a wide range of ages, locations and interests, actively engage media culture.¹⁵

Lipsitz, writing about teaching social history using popular culture materials, says: "as my students and I used popular culture texts from the past to gain insight into the complex stories defining our present identities, we found terrains of conflict and struggle in the most unexpected places and allies in the most improbable individuals. Not because these films, songs, and shows reflected our lives directly, but, rather, because they reflected the core contradictions of our lives indirectly enough to make discussion of them bearable."¹⁶ It is this process – using popular culture texts as a way into discussions of deeper issues – that makes engagement with media culture such a fruitful endeavor for theological reflection. These materials can and must help us to lift up complex and compelling issues that the U.S. context ought to be forcing theologians to address: issues such as the ever deepening disparity between increasing poverty, and the control of increasingly vast amounts of wealth in a small number of hands; issues such as the deep and enduring divides in this country around the construction of race, of gender, of sexuality; issues raised by the use of entertainment icons and euphemistic language to disguise hostile international actions; and so on and on.¹⁷

As I noted earlier, we live embedded in a media culture, and if we are to be faithful to our call to witness to God in that culture, we need to engage it directly and honor the experiences of people within it. Media literacy tools ought to be available to everyone in this country, but those of us within theological contexts in particular ought to seek them out and use them to their full potential. A secondary benefit of engaging these tools is that they will strengthen and enhance the other practices of attention throughout our curricula. Learning how media texts are produced and how multiple responses to the same text are possible, for example, can ease the pain some students feel upon learning that biblical texts are constructed and that multiple translations arise, and multiple receptions exist.

In time, as we grow ever more fluent in our ability to speak both to and from media culture, we will also expand our imaginative repertoire, growing into more diverse ways of engaging in theological reflection. It is hard enough for me to imagine how media literacy might affect theological reflection in five years, let alone twenty-five. After all, less than ten years ago, the World Wide Web (inappropriately named as it is, in its current manifestation) did not exist. The idea of starting a theological journal back then that would exist only online would not have occurred to anyone, let alone been a viable undertaking.

I can, however, point to the work of several emerging theologians whose efforts to explore the U.S. context, while not explicitly linked to media literacy, nevertheless point to some of the ways in which we can and must engage the cultural surround in which we are embedded. I think, for example of Kathryn Tanner's work on *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Augsburg, 1997), Roberto Goizueta's book *Caminemos con Jesús* (Orbis Books, 1995), or Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* (Abingdon Press, 1996). I can also suggest (and have, at: <http://www2.bc.edu/~hessma/diss.html>) that engaging in serious and sustained reflection on popular cultural materials actually enhances religious experience and supports deeper investment in religious community.

Ultimately, all that I can confidently predict about the next twenty five years of popular culture studies and theological reflection is that the two disciplines can and must be in dialogue with each other, and that that dialogue will be a deep and enduring entry point for many people of my generation and beyond as we seek to find ways to be faithful to our relationship with God, and the historically grounded communities that have traditionally mediated that relationship.¹⁸

Mary E. Hess

Notes

1. Kellner suggests that "the term 'media culture' has the advantage of signifying both the nature and form of the artifact of the culture industries (i.e. culture) and their mode of production and distribution (i.e. media technologies and industries). It avoids ideological terms like 'mass culture' and 'popular culture' and calls attention to the circuit of production, distribution, and reception through which media culture is produced, distributed, and consumed." *Media Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 34-35.

2. I have briefly noted my "situatedness" at least in part, but I would like to make that location even more relevant to this discussion by pointing out that the closer we are to the "norms" represented as typical in hegemonic media representations, the more important it is that we critique those representations, as well as the structures they support.

3. The literature that addresses the social situatedness of advertising is particularly useful in understanding how media culture industries attempt to seek and hold our attention. For a good

introduction to this literature, see *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products and Well-Being*, edited by Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (New York: Routledge, 1990). You might also enjoy the documentary film, *The Ad & The Ego*, which is available through California Newsreel at: <http://www.newsreel.org/films/adandego.htm> (this site also contains an entire transcript of the film, and a facilitator's guide).

4. Thomas Boomershine, "How to be a faith witness in the communications media? Conditions requisite for the public communications value of faith witnesses." Paper presented to the St. Paul University 150th Symposium, *Witnessing to the Faith, An Activity of the Media*, May 30, 1999, Ottawa, ON.

5. Numerous sociologists and historians of religion have remarked on this emerging phenomenon. Two books that are particularly useful on this issue are: *Selling God*, by R. Laurence Moore (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Hoover and Lundby (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997).

6. See note #3 above.

7. Perhaps the most interesting articulation of these ideas I have found, particularly with regards to religious experience, is the "Symbolism, media and the lifecourse" research project out of the University of Colorado at Boulder, more information available at: <http://www.Colorado.EDU/Journalism/MEDIALYF/>. This major ethnographic study is seeking to discern how people make sense of their lives using elements from mass mediated popular culture.

8. By "text" I mean individual "pieces" of popular culture, such as one episode of a television show, one popular song, one MTV video, and so on.

9. For further discussion of these issues, consider both Colleen McDannell's *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); and Margaret Miles' *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

10. I have worked on this kind of analysis with graduate students in religious education and pastoral ministry, as well as with parish religious educators. You can find some examples of what this process can look like, linked through my graduate online course at: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/acavp/irepm/media/theo.html. There also numerous examples in the second chapter of my dissertation, available online at: www2.bc.edu/~hessma/chaptwo.pdf.

11. Here I would refer you to the groundbreaking work of Lynn Schofield Clark, "Exploring the role of media in religious identity-construction among teens: A review of dissertation research and findings," available at: <http://www.Colorado.EDU/Journalism/MEDIALYF/analysis/main.html>.

12. The New London Group, "A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures," *Harvard Educational Review* 66/1 (1996), 60. The "New London Group" is a group of literacy educators from around the world who have gathered regularly to discuss emerging issues in the field (see the article for the entire list of co-authors).

13. R. Hobbs, "Literacy for the information age," in J. Flood, S. B. Heath & Lapp (Eds.), *Handbook on Teaching Literacy through the Communicative and Visual Arts* (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1997), 7.

14. Hobbs, 9.

15. For examples of these tools, and sources for curricula and other resources, visit the most comprehensive media literacy site available online:

<http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/HomePage>.

16. George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), xiii-xiv.

17. The Media Education Foundation has produced a number of compelling videos that address these issues, although not from a religious perspective. Visit their web site at:

<http://www.mediaed.org/>. On the topic of euphemistic language and entertainment icons being used to "sell" hostile international actions, *The Iraq Campaign* is a brilliant satirical film that uses "expropriated images" from sources as diverse as Desert Storm coverage and Star Wars to tell a rather different story from the one found within network news broadcasts. Clips of the film can be found at: <http://www.moderntv.com/modtvweb/iraq91/iraq5.htm>.

18. My Boston College colleague Tom Beaudoin makes a similar point in his recent book, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: A CHALLENGING ENTERPRISE

Do you remember the play *Fiddler on the Roof*? Recall the anguishing scenes of the parents pondering the upcoming marriages of their daughters. A particularly poignant scene is the father wondering about the marriage of his Jewish daughter to a gentile. The excruciating struggle tore open his paradigmatic way of thinking and his emotional way of loving. The father's thinking about marriage, family, and religion and his passionate love for his daughter collided in his being and broke him open. This is what we, as families and congregations, can expect over the next twenty-five years.

In this imaginative essay, I limit my remarks to Christian Marriage and the family that flows from it. Obviously, family is a complex term. It can have a narrow and proper definition or it can have a broad and metaphorical definition. One of the challenges over the next twenty-five years will be to develop a definition of marriage and family that interrelates both terms. This is a huge task for both theology and philosophy.

It is not my intention to give a definition of either marriage or family. Basically, I am writing from a narrow sense of marriage and family. Furthermore, I am writing from an explicitly North American, Roman Catholic viewpoint. I understand the marital relationship to be a life-long covenant between a man and a woman. This new community of persons begins a new family. It causes a differentiation in the spouses' families of origin, yet enables both individuals to continue to belong to his/her family of origin, albeit in a different way. Using the language of family life cycles, I am looking at marriage as the first stage of a new family unit. In accordance with the Vatican II documents, I presume that marriage and its family is the foundational community of both church and civil society. While recognizing that there is much less written about how the Christian family is a basic community of civil society than of church, I will write about the latter because I think that Vatican Council II's normative vision of Christian marriage and the family that flows from it can serve as a moral compass for us.¹ I leave the development of the former notion to others.

Because marriages and their families are religious mysteries, they are incapable of exhaustive definition. By their nature they can point to a transcendent reality that makes present and effective both human community and divine community. In fact, one can say that marriages and families that are based on genuine love form an interlocking human-divine community.²

There is, thus, a solidarity and bond among spouses who covenant themselves together for the whole of life, and this solidarity extends to their offspring, and

then outward to the rest of the human community.³ For people of religious faith, this experience expresses fruitful love and unity and frees them to serve neighbor and God.⁴ For believing Christians, this experience deepens their incorporation into the Mysteries of Christ and of the Trinity.⁵ Roman Catholic official teaching states that this experience is sacramental and ecclesial, i.e., a specification of baptism and a self-realization of church.⁶

Thus, it is appropriate to use both sacramental and ecclesial language to describe Christian marriages and their families. Furthermore, Catholic official teaching states that Christian marriages and the families that flow from them are sacraments and little churches. This teaching often uses the term "domestic church" to refer to the ecclesial dimension, and this understanding will be greatly developed over the next twenty-five years.⁷

To say that the Christian family is a little church is a theological statement and a faith statement. It is theological because it is an attempt to understand the reality of the Christian family from a religious perspective. It is a faith statement because its deeper meanings are not self-evident without a faith vision. Pope John Paul II made this latter point when he articulated the prophetic dimension of Christian marriages and families.⁸

This prophetic dimension underscores the "dangerous" element of the vocation to Christian marriage. If one responds wholeheartedly to this calling, then one can expect to suffer. To enter Christian marriage and to begin a family is to respond to the Lord's call to embrace the cross together⁹, which includes, metaphorically speaking, both Calvary and heaven. Couples can expect here the whole range of human experiences. It is here that their self-absorbed inclinations are challenged to stretch. It is here that the Holy Spirit gives whispers to move inward and outward, ever-enlarging both our personal and communal capacities for communion.¹⁰ Here Christ's presence and example ever abide as our hope for eternal life.

This hoping for eternal life suggests the eschatological dimension of the Christian family. The term eschatology conjures up nuances of yearning for the experience of God's reign of love, peace, unity, truth, justice, and mercy. In the remainder of this essay, I will tease out three elements related to living as an eschatological people: grappling with Christian revelation, starting with Christian conversion, and broadening Christian leadership. I choose these three elements because of the potential they contain for jarring the larger church into systematic change that can further the evangelistic yearnings that gave birth to Vatican Council II.¹¹ In short, I will suggest some pastoral implications derived from this eschatological dimension.

Christian Revelation

In official Catholic teaching, normatively speaking, Christian marriage ought to be the starting point for the Christian family.¹² In other words, Christian marriage commences a new unit within the larger church, and this unit realizes a quantitative change and a qualitative change within the People of God.¹³ Christian marriages and the families that are derived from them increase the number of foundational cells of the larger church and deepen the unity and love of the larger church.¹⁴

This teaching is derived from Christian revelation. It is based particularly, although not exclusively, on the tradition's reflections upon Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5.¹⁵ By studying both sacred texts from the perspectives of the themes of redemption and salvation, one can discern that both texts pronounce that God has included marriage and family into the divine plan for the human drama.¹⁶ These texts suggest that the mission of marriages and families to realize unity and fruitful love are foundational and enduring currents of human-divine interaction. Using other language, one can say that marriages and their families have a vocation, mission, functions, and tasks that undergird them.¹⁷ That is, marriages and families have an institutional dimension.¹⁸ Furthermore, for Christians, these marriages and families are "in the Lord Jesus."¹⁹

In the Christian faith, believers begin their personal ritual incorporation into Christ in Baptism. For Catholics, this experience is echoed when believers marry. In and through the sacrament of Marriage, a couple is ritually incorporated into Christ precisely as a couple.²⁰ Furthermore, Catholic teaching holds this view to be part of God's plan for saving and for redeeming the world.²¹

Here is the rub. Do we believe that God does have a plan for saving and redeeming the world and that Christian marriage and its family is a constituent part of God's plan? Do we believe that God can and does actually call human beings, especially those consecrated to be a sign of God's presence in the world, to adhere to a covenant? Or, do we believe that individuals and individual couples are the creators of their lives to such an extent that they alone can determine the shape of their lives? In other words, who reigns in the realm of our personal and communal lives?

Permit me to phrase these questions in still another way: Is the attractive love between two individuals the final criterion for determining whether two people should be able to bond their lives together for as long as they decide? Can anyone else, e.g., God, church, and civil society, set up preexisting conditions for this small community?²² Obviously, there is an institutional dimension to marriage and family that sets up conditions for this small community. After all,

both the church and society have laws to protect their values. As important as this point is, my critical question, however, is more foundational. Has God set up conditions for marriage and family?²³ If yes, then are God's conditions simply recommendations or commands? And finally, I ask, to what degree are believers bound to obey God's commands?

Religious Conversion

Although it is unpopular today to talk about obedience, this virtue is one that we mortals need to develop in order to grow in divinization. I am advocating here for a wholesome obedience to an extravagantly prodigal Lover that in traditional language had been described as the obedience of faith.²⁴ But, here again is another rub. Namely, is faith actively driving the two individuals in the choosing to covenant to life-long marriage and to ascend to ecclesial leadership? If, as Bernard Lonergan states, faith is the knowledge born of religious love, which is God's love flooding our hearts; and if religious conversion can be described as other-worldly falling in love; then the Christian faith experience is the fruit of a love relationship between God and believers.²⁵ It is precisely here, that the larger church has one of its most pressing challenges during the next twenty-five years.

To build church on religious love and conversion is to imitate the way of Jesus Christ. It takes little insight today to realize that external laws about marriage and family can and do change rapidly, thus having little binding force. The strongest binding force comes from within. Religious conversion is critical here because this experience is foundational to a religious identity and to a religious conscience.²⁶ Decisions and actions built upon this identity and conscience give rise to disciples. It is the formation of a community of disciples that is the goal of our efforts.²⁷ It is to be a community of love, peace, and unity, i.e., a sign of God's intimate communion with His people and of human beings' unity and peace with one another.²⁸

Thus, I propose that the larger church's leadership may increase credibility and respect among faith-filled spouses and parents by increasing their efforts to make religious conversion the starting point for discipleship. During the last thirty years, the Catholic Church has invested a huge amount of fruitful and creative energy to develop the Order of Christian Initiation for adults and children. The leadership has also invested in serving engaged couples, and to a much lesser extent, parents presenting children for the sacraments. Now is the time to increase investment in the formation of engaged couples and parents. Using what has been learned from the practice of initiation and from religious movements, especially those that rely on small group faith-sharing, the larger church has the opportunity to develop a powerful and extensive formation process for engaged couples and parents.

To accomplish this, however, bishops will need to revise the national policies for marriage preparation and for sacramental preparation of children, especially the parent component of the latter; and, they will need to allocate resources for research, development, and implementation. Of course, we must not be naïve about this proposal. There will be much resistance from many people, and it will be expensive. People will have to sacrifice time, talent, and money.

I suggest that these revised policies contain a directive for diocesan leaders and religious book publishers to revamp the current curriculum to reflect the official teaching that marriages and their families are a sacramental reality and an ecclesial reality. The ecclesial vision, mission, functions, and tasks of Christian marriages and families need to be articulated and the implications for everyday living need to be explored. I also want to emphasize that I consider the typical two-hour session in Pre-Cana Programs to be highly insufficient.

Gratefully, there already exist excellent official documents upon which to revise the curriculum, especially, *Familiaris Consortio* and *A Family Perspective in Church and Society*. These documents clearly present the ecclesial vision that the sacrament of marriage gives rise to a domestic church. These clearly develop the family's ecclesial mission to be a sign and instrument for promoting intimate communion with God and unity and peace within the human community. The ecclesial functions, according to official teaching, are to participate fully in the triple-office of Christ, namely, the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices. The tasks are to live as an intimate community, a life-giving community, a formational community, and a believing community.²⁹

Ecclesial Leadership

One consequence of couples and parents coming to appropriate an ecclesial identity will be that they will want more voice in the life of the larger church, especially in the congregation and in the judicatory. To accommodate this more active role in the larger church, more extensive organs of partnership will need to be developed than exist today. It will not be enough to have a few lay people represented on a parish pastoral council or a diocesan pastoral council. On a congregational level, perhaps an order of parents will be developed whose task is the formation of other parents and of children; and on a judicatory level, perhaps a body similar to the priest senate can be created. Once the systematic integration into the large church becomes more formalized, then the hard work of confronting the social ills of our day will come to the fore, e.g., the challenges posed by cohabitation, divorce, and absent fathers.³⁰ It will also be an opportunity to confront the challenges posed by interfaith marriages, blended families, same-sex households, etc. These apostolic efforts will find their impetus and authority from married couples and parents themselves and not merely from

the exhortation of the clergy.³¹ Hopefully, a vast peer-to-peer ministry will escalate exponentially and renew church at all levels, from the foundational cells to the congregations to the judicatories.

My final pastoral challenge is for the professional religious educators. The religious education textbooks have to be revamped to capture the ecclesial character of Christian marriage and family. Today, it is rare to find a textbook series for children and adolescents that has developed the ecclesial vision, mission, and functions of Christian marriages and their families. The situation for college textbooks on marriage and family is even more abysmal.³² Thus, Catholic institutions of higher learning have an incredible opportunity to develop a textbook that could become widely used throughout the country. The development of an interdisciplinary textbook on marriage and family is one of the great challenges of our time.

To accomplish some of these recommendations requires a fresh perspective for understanding church. Instead of the usual way of understanding church from the perspective of church professionals who tend to focus on the church as a whole, contemporary Christians may benefit from a dialectical perspective, namely, understanding church from the perspective of familial leaders who tend to focus on the little church. In this latter understanding, we understand the large church to be a community of communities.³³ At the foundational level the small communities are the families and households. Relative to unity in the church, the leaders of these communities have a two-fold function as ecclesial leaders. On the one hand, they oversee the growth and development of their families; and on the other hand, they oversee the role of bonding their families to the congregation.

In short, systematic change in the church requires that professional church leaders channel greater attention and resources toward empowering other adult ecclesial leaders. It is important to adopt an attitude that these leaders are worthy of our best formational efforts. At a minimum, let a diocese spend as much resources forming the hundreds and thousands of couples marrying every year and the even more numerous parents presenting children for sacraments as it does preparing the miniscule number of seminarians and deacons who will be ordained in a given year. Furthermore, if we can raise millions of dollars and can recruit hundreds of volunteers to preserve buildings, then we can muster the same effort to raise up families and children that are fired-up by the love of the Triune God. For almost a half century the hierarchical magisterium has stated repeatedly that the future of the church goes the way of the Christian family.³⁴ Let us heed this wake-up call by raising up the ranks of faith-filled spouses and parents to their proper ecclesial office.

Ennio Mastroianni

Notes

1. I am writing as a Roman Catholic, and consequently, will dialogue with both my denomination's official teachings and contemporary experience. For a fuller development of the ideas presented here, see my doctoral dissertation: Ennio Mastroianni, "Christian Family As Domestic Church? Inquiry, Analysis, and Pastoral Implications" (Ph.D. diss., Duquesne University, 1999).
2. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, in Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott, (America Press, Association Press, 1966), article 8. Throughout this essay references to the documents of Vatican II will be from the Abbott edition, unless noted otherwise. Abbreviations for the documents, derived from the Latin titles, will be used after the initial citation of a document. The number following a citation will be the article number. For example, article 11 of The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) will be rendered LG 11.
3. For a philosophical depiction of the point about solidarity, see Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951; Harper Torchbook, 1962), 69-72. Of particular pertinence is the chapter "The Mystery of the Family," 68-97, which is dated March - May, 1942. For a citation about the family's outward orientation, see John Paul II's introduction to the Christian family's ecclesial task or function: "The family is placed at the service of the building up of the kingdom of God in history by participating in the life and mission of the church." *Familiaris consortio* (*On the Family, FC*) in *Origins* 11 (December 24, 1981), 49.
4. LG 11 describes the marital vocation as one that express unity and fruitful love. This can be understood as a specification of the baptismal vocation, which is that all Christians are called to holiness and to the apostolate. See the Vatican Council II document Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem, AA*), 2. See also FC 52. John Paul posits the apostolic mission of the family in baptism. What makes the family's vocation "special" is the grace it receives from the sacrament of marriage, which provides ". . . new strength to transmit the faith, to sanctify and transform our present society according to God's plan." The duty of each Christian to participate in the apostolate and of the special role of parents is seen clearly relative to Baptism and the other sacraments of Initiation [Respectively, cf. General Introduction To Christian Initiation, *Per initiationis Christiannae* (second edition), 24 June, 1973, art. 7 and Introduction to the Rite of Infant Baptism, *Nomine parvulorum* (second edition), 24 June, 1973, art. 5. Both references are cited in *Vatican Council II: More Postconciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1982), 24 and 30-31, respectively.
5. My working definition of sacrament is based on the one given by George Worgul. See *From Magic to Metaphor: A Validation of Christian Sacraments* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 128.
6. LG 11 and GS 48. GS is the abbreviation for the Vatican Council II document *The Pastoral Constitution of the Church (Gaudium et spes)*. See also, Karl Rahner, "Marriage as a Sacrament," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 10, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury Press, 1977; first trans., 1973), 214.

From among the patristic authors, John Chrysostom's homilies on marriage and family life are especially illustrative for understanding the ecclesial nature of Christian marriage and family. Typically, he reasons from marriage and its family as a natural institution (although he doesn't use the word "institution") to Christian marriage and its family as an image or archetype (typos) of Christ, of church, and of the Christ-church relationship. Yet, one must qualify this statement with the fact that Chrysostom writes within the explicit Christian horizon that the husband and

wife are one in Christ and that they are members of His Body, the church. See John Chrysostom, "Homily 12: On Colossians 4:18," in *St. John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Catharine P. Roth and David Anderson, intro. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 75-77. See also, Chrysostom, "Homily 20," 43, 46, 50-51.

7. Although the Second Vatican Council uses the explicit term "domestic church" only a few times, the reality to which domestic church points is developed in several documents. In my dissertation, I have shown that "domestic church" is a model for understanding the ecclesial dimension of the Christian family. In post-Vatican Council II official church teaching, the hierarchical magisterium uses this model heuristically. The papal document, *Familiaris Consortio*--which is the major fruit of the Synod of Bishops on the Christian Family--is in my opinion, the key expansion of the Vatican Council II teaching on Christian marriage and its family.

For two excellent collections of theological essays on Christian marriage and family, see Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts, eds., *Christian Marriage and Family* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996); and, William P. Roberts, ed., *Commitment to Partnership: Exploration of the Theology of Marriage* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1987).

8. FC 51.

9. Worgul has argued convincingly that the key charter event that all Christian sacraments express is the paschal mystery. Using sociological language, he calls the paschal mystery the "root metaphor" of Christian experience. See *From Magic To Metaphor*, chapter 11, "Sacraments and Ecclesial Root Metaphors," 184-95.

10. LG 7. Mary Ann Fatula, *The Holy Spirit: Unbounded Gift of Joy* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998) 63-69.

11. For a sampling of the evangelistic concerns of the Catholic hierarchy in the 1950's and their awareness of the vital role to be exercised by Christian families, see Leon-Joseph Suenens, *The Gospel to Every Creature*, trans. Louise Gavan Duffy, with a preface by the Most Reverend John Baptist Montini, Archbishop of Milan (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1957) [*L'Eglise en état de mission* (Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1956)]. It should be observed that Suenens sees his book as a repeating of Pius XI and Pius XII's urgent efforts to call the faithful to accept the universal duty of the apostolate (missionary activity), especially in light of the growing dechristianization of the masses (1-4). In the same vein, Archbishop Montini writes in the preface: "The book begins by calling for a general mobilization of all the children of the Church for the purpose of making good her losses, defending her positions, of recovering her scattered members and of winning new ones. The Church is entering a dynamic phase in her history, her whole organism is being set in motion in order to increase her apostolic efficiency. This immense effort, far from exhausting the Mystical Body of Christ, reinvigorates it, rejuvenates it, and causes it to flower anew" (vi). See also, Suenens, *Love and Control: The Contemporary Problem*, trans. George J. Robinson, 2d ed., rev. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1962) [*Un problème crucial: Amour et Maîtrise de Soi* (Bruges, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1960)]. Here Suenens speaks frequently about the apostolate of the family for the increase of Christianity, both quantitatively and qualitatively (humanizing and christianizing the world); also, he links tightly the complementarity of Holy Orders and Holy Matrimony, esp. 27-34. He also concludes again that Christian marriage and its family is a cell of the church, and thus, has an evangelizing vocation: "Finally, this grace [of the Sacrament of marriage] consecrates the couple as they carry out their peculiar role in the Church: once a home is established it becomes, without ceasing in any way to be a home and precisely because it is a home, a household of charity, a cell of the Church, a source of apostolicity. As Mr. Eliot says, 'Home is where one starts from'" (59).

12. LG 11; GS 48-52; FC 11, 51-56.

13. See the decisive speech by Bishop Pietro Fiordelli during the construction of LG. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1976), 1.4, p. 309-311.
14. *Ibid.* LG 11.
15. Ennio Mastroianni, "Christian Family As Domestic Church?," chap. 2. For in-depth commentaries, see J. Paul Sampley, 'And the Two Shall Become One Flesh': A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*, in *Anchor Bible*, vol. 34A (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974); and, Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, trans. Helen Heron (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1991).
16. Compare, in particular, chaps. 2 and 5 of Ephesians.
17. In my opinion, FC is the best commentary on the ecclesial vocation, mission, functions, and tasks of the Christian family. By "best commentary" I refer to its status as official teaching, its inspirational quality, and its applicability to pastoral practice. FC is a papal document, derived from the work of an international synod of bishops, which explicitly continues and deepens the official teaching found in the dogmatic and pastoral documents of Vatican Council II. In addition to expounding theological and pastoral insights, John Paul genuinely exhorts the reader to appreciate the dignity of the vocation to married and family life. The pastoral fruitfulness of FC can be glimpsed in following document: *Ad Hoc Committee on Marriage and Family Life, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, A Family Perspective in Church and Society: A Manual For All Pastoral Leaders* (Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, United States Catholic Conference: Washington, D.C., 1988). Diocesan and Parish Directors of Religious Education and of Family Life throughout the United States have been using FPCS as a key resource for developing pastoral strategies for building partnerships of ministries with parents.
18. Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for Theology of the Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1957), 194.
19. 1 Cor. 7:39.
20. Paul VI, "The Transformation of Married Love Through Christian Self-Giving: Address of Pope Paul VI to the International Meeting of the Teams of Our Lady, May 4, 1970," in *National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Plan of Pastoral Action for Family Ministry: A Vision and Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1978), 30.
21. LG 11-13, 35, 41; GS 47-48.
22. James P. Hanigan, *Homosexuality: The Test Case for Christian Sexual Ethics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 106. His endnote 6 clarifies the sense of how I am using words like vocation, pre-structured call, and condition:
- To say that marriage is a vocation, or is embraced as a vocation, is to say among other things that the parties to the marriage do not create the terms and conditions of their union entirely by their own will. Rather they accept a pre-structured call, within which they work out their common life together. The more traditional way of speaking of this pre-structured call is to say that God is the author of marriage (Gaudium et Spes, 48) or that marriage has been divinely instituted. The acceptance of some basic conditions as essential to marriage, e.g., sexual fidelity, permanence, openness to children, are minimal signs of the recognition of marriage as a vocation. Most married couples will grow into a sense of the vocational significance of their marriage rather than fully grasping it at the outset.*
23. During my twenty-four years of pastoral experience, I have observed that many pastoral leaders and catechists are reluctant to speak about the will of God relative to marriage. Furthermore, they seem to be reluctant to speak about divorce, adultery, and cohabitation as gravely serious sin. Perhaps this reluctance is due to an unwillingness to rub salt into wounds

and/or to avoid scandalizing children about their parents' behavior. I understand the delicacy of the situation. On the other hand, what are the consequences of this reluctance upon the long-term healing of individuals, families, and communities? Strategies to address this critical pastoral challenge ought to be a high priority.

24. Rom. 1:5 and 16:26 are cited in art. 143 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Allen, Texas: Thomas More, 1994).

25. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 115, 240-41.

26. *Ibid.*, 271, 130. Regarding the family's role in shaping identity, see James P. Hanigan, *As I Have Loved You: The Challenge of Christian Ethics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 81-92. Regarding the relationship between religious conscience and conversion, see Walter E. Conn, *Conscience: Development and Self-Transcendence* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1981), 203.

27. At the conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew, the Risen Lord gives His followers the mission to make disciples. Reading the Epistle to the Ephesians in the light of this command, one can gain wonderful insights into how marriage and parenting is a communion with the Lord's salvific and redemptive work, which is to reconcile the world in Himself. One can gain further insight by integrating Lonergan's insight that the experience of conversion has a social dimension. More specifically, Lonergan posits that one of the authentic marks of conversion is the attachment to a new social group or to belonging to the same group in a new way (269). Failure to participate appropriately in this group can cause an alienation that can be called sin (364). I suggest that the discussions of the social ills of cohabitation and divorce can profit greatly by intersecting with these foundational insights. For example, we are used to thinking of the "new group" called church in terms of the large church, but in the ecclesial model of community of communities, the Christian family is understood as a subcommunity within the larger community [See Theodore Mackin, *What Is Marriage?*, vol. 1, *Marriage in the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 239-42]. Religious conversion, I propose, gives the believer an added inner strength to participate appropriately in community.

28. LG 1.

29. LG 10-13; FC 17, 48-64; and FPCS, chapter on the ecclesial vision of the Christian family.

30. For an informative account about how the modern welfare system played a major role towards increasing out-of-wedlock births, discouraging marriage, and increasing fatherlessness among the nation's poor, see Wade Horn and Andrew Bush, *Fathers, Marriage, and Welfare Reform* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hudson Institute, 1997).

31. See Leonard Doohan, *The Lay-Centered Church: Theology and Spirituality* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1984), chapter 3. See also Doohan's earlier section on models of spirituality where he describes a spirituality that flows from baptism rather than from the instrumentality of the bishop.

32. See the monograph by Norval Glenn, *Closed Hearts, Closed Minds: The Textbook Story of Marriage* (New York: The Council on Families, Institute on American Values, 1997).

33. Doohan, *Lay Spirituality*, 89.

34. GS 47. The theme of the importance of the specific vocation of the Christian family for the future well-being of society and church is a persistent one for the bishops. For example, see *The Papal Committee for the Family, The Family in the Pastoral Activity of the Church: Some Reflections on the Work and on the Conclusions of the 4th General Assembly of the Committee for the Family* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1978), 6.

Youth Ministry in a New Time: Building on the Past, Investing in the Future

What shape and texture will ministry to youth possess in twenty-five years? From whence that ministry in the past quarter century? This essay grounds youth ministry in the hopeful attention to the "signs of the times" that characterized Vatican Council II, locating youth ministry alongside the broader category of catechesis. Two important signs of the present times – religious pluralism and new conceptions of cosmology – are considered for their impact on the praxis of youth ministry and their implications for doing theology.

Signs of the Times for Effective Catechesis and Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry in its present expression is a part of the legacy of Vatican Council II. Youth Ministry has emerged as an important pastoral activity as a result of the council's basic orientation toward reading the "signs of the times" with attention to the holistic faith development of persons of all ages. The language of catechesis, the language that described faith formation found in conciliar and post-conciliar documents, was new language to most theologians and practitioners. After a centuries-long hiatus, the language of catechesis reintroduced to Catholic consciousness much of the world of the ancient catechuminate. In the wake of Vatican Council II, the Congregation for the Clergy prepared the General Catechetical Directory (1971) that offered a general vision and guidelines for catechesis; the document made clear that the aim of catechesis is to promote living, conscious and active faith.¹ The directory carried forward the core insights that growth in faith occurs within a communal context, that such growth takes place in several activities and aspects, not only through cognition. Moreover, the very process of coming to faith warrants that new members of the church be welcomed, socialized, and supported in their growth through many means. These means, occurring in a community of faith, would include but not be confined to liturgy, works of justice and service, prayer. The catechetical documents that were prepared for Catholics in the United States after the council vividly portray the action of sharing faith as dynamic, and they describe the faith needs of persons of various age groups. To summarize: Various conciliar and post-conciliar descriptions of catechesis offer a broad, multifaceted and imaginative conception of the faith life, of which one aspect is doctrinal knowledge. The movement for youth ministry emerges in part from this insight.

The Catholic church's expressions of commitment to fostering the faith of young persons through a specific ministry to them in the United States context have been consistent with the conciliar emphases noted above. Responding to the needs of adolescents in the United States, the United States Catholic Conference issued *A Vision of Youth Ministry* in 1976.² Its revised and expanded version,

entitled *Renewing the Vision*, published in 1997, is to date the most comprehensive plan for U.S. churches and schools in designing and implementing ministry to youth.³ From the publication of the first document to the present time, many churches and schools have adopted ministry programs and employed personnel to coordinate the faith development of young persons. Youth ministry is described in both documents through language that is redolent of the insights of Vatican II about catechesis: holistic and developmental, people-centered and needs-focused, multidimensional in activity, progressive and gradual in its response to the needs of maturing adolescents. The current document, *Renewing the Vision*, identifies eight components of youth ministry that comprise good programs and healthy responses to the needs of young persons. The eight components of youth ministry are: Advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care and prayer and worship.⁴ The newer document's emphasis on outward direction and the mission of youth to a broken world represents an advance over the earlier document, which had stressed the importance of forming community. Reflecting on social changes and changes in adolescents, the authors of *Renewing the Vision* note that the guiding gospel image for youth ministry today is the sending of the Twelve to proclaim the kingdom (Lk 9:1-3,6). Authentic proclamation occurs through the works of justice and peace, respect for human life and creation,⁵ signaling a new emphasis not strongly present in the 1976 document. The authors also acknowledge the complexity of home life in the United States, in which many families have neither the resources nor the time to devote to the basic interactions that would help parents to form the next generation in values and faith.⁶

Regarding the Future

As we attempt to imagine the future of the practice of youth ministry and the theological reflection that it engenders, two important challenges loom on the horizon. They can be summarized in simply worded questions: (1) Who are we and who shall we become as Catholic Christians in a multireligious America?; and (2) How do we share Catholic identity and spirituality in the future? The challenge of identifying and communicating Catholic Christian identity in the context of religious pluralism relates to the first question. The challenge of preparing young persons to embrace an ancient faith story and to retell that story employing an adequate and credible cosmology influences the second question.

Catholic Christian Identity in a Religiously Pluralistic World

As already noted, youth ministry was born out of the context of religious education efforts following the Second Vatican Council. As such, the "joys and hopes" of the world occupied the interest of the council fathers and many of the

Catholics who first received the documents and probed their meaning and implications. But the movement begun at the council toward a more inclusive commitment from within, and a more ecumenical worldview beyond, Catholic walls has not come to full growth in the years since the council. At the same time it is clear that the next generation of American Catholics and other Christians will reckon with greater religious pluralism in the United States.

An example may serve to contrast the radical difference between approaches to Catholic identity by young persons today with the approaches of yesteryear. Recently I had a classroom full of third year university students in rapt attention and a little shock. I had just told them about the time in the late 1960's when my mother was conflicted about allowing me to attend an eighth grade dance. I explained to the class that, while I was allowed to attend dances at that age, this particular dance was to be hosted by and held at our town's YMCA. The YMCA is an organization founded by Protestants. Therefore my mother, having received a pre-Vatican II religious education, thought that young Catholics ought to shun interactions with young Protestant Christians such as those who attend YMCA dances. My mother knew that things were changing; she just wasn't sure how much or how quickly. Upon hearing the story about my mother the students were literally incredulous. I elaborated the story and indicated that nearly all my youthful friends and my family's friends were Catholic, and that my mother's attitude toward the YMCA dance illustrated a fairly common Catholic attitude. The students were speechless. When asked to name the religious affiliation of ten friends, my university students could name affiliation for only about half. They did not know some friends' religious backgrounds, and they reported that other friends simply had no religious background to name.

The world of my students, learners at a Catholic sponsored university, is far more cosmopolitan than the Catholic ghetto that my youthful imagination inhabited during the era of Vatican II. The young persons of today's church live among peoples of many faiths as well as people who hold no religious affiliation or conviction at all. They find themselves unaware of persons' religious affiliation because the subject simply does not come up in current conversation. At the same time they also find themselves part of a social trend toward a growing interest in "spirituality," a term that carries multiple meanings in the popular culture. Their genuine search for ways of living and believing will need to be supported, as will their need to understand Catholic Christianity in the context of such a large and complex world of ideas, beliefs, attitudes.

In the face of this new pluralism, Catholics and indeed Christians in general will no longer wield the strength once enjoyed in a largely "Christian" nation that hosted intramural struggles and perceived great distinctions between Protestant Christians and Catholic Christians. As the university students' reaction to the

story of the YMCA dance illustrates, today's youth inhabit a different religio-cultural universe. Non-Christians of many faiths and people of no faith at all are fully integrated into American society, affording young persons a wider and more varied panorama of America's spiritually pluralistic landscape. Even as the view becomes wider, we also must acknowledge that first world postmodern culture offers little regard for organized religion as the well from which to draw resources for quenching spiritual thirst.

An Adequate Cosmology?

From the conversations of recent years with hundreds of young persons and youth ministers throughout the country, I have come to believe that we have reached a critical moment in human thinking about the world. Pastoral experience makes me wonder if perhaps part of young persons' suspicion of religion and the attendant interest in spirituality for a "new age" comes from the need for an adequate vision of the world and the place of religious stories in that world. Within the precincts of Catholicism, we may wonder about the very worldview that supports our worship life and current efforts in religious education and ministry to youth. Have we Catholics developed language and metaphors that can carry an adequate cosmology for the new scientific discoveries of our age, or do we continue to worship and teach by using outmoded language about the universe? And if our cosmology remains outmoded, does the credibility of the Christian story of salvation become outmoded in the minds of the young? Does Christianity lose its power to invite young persons to this way of seeing God at work in the world if the world that we describe is merely quaint, scientifically naïve, fantastical?

In response to these questions, Walter Wink has reflected on five overarching worldviews that display assumptions about the God-world relationship; Wink names these the "powers" that relate the material and the spiritual dimensions of existence.⁷ Wink claims that there have been five worldviews that have operated in the history of Western civilization. Until the advent of the most recent worldview, each one has conceived of the world of spirit as separate from the realm of matter.

According to Wink, the first or ancient worldview, assumed by the writers of the bible, imagines a natural interaction between the "worlds" of heaven and earth. Heaven, of course, is "up" and the power of God resides there. Good or evil on earth enjoys a natural correspondence with the heavenly powers. The second or "spiritualist" worldview of the early Christian centuries conceives of spirituality as the good and materiality as the distraction; the vale of tears of the present life eventuates in reward. The task of the spiritual life is to advance in spirituality despite the world of matter and flesh. The third worldview, materialism,

controlled the Age of Reason and the scientific discoveries that rose out of empiricism. It continues to control the imaginations of many persons who grasp at things as the source of unending power and ultimate meaning. The fourth worldview, branded the "theological" worldview, was constructed in reaction to the enlightenment materialist worldview. It simply posits that the worlds of matter and spirit can coexist peacefully and separately. Wink notes that a fifth worldview is currently emerging, one that is related to recent scientific discoveries and a new cosmology.⁸

This fifth integrative worldview eschews the dualism found in the other four. It promotes the intimate connection between the material and the spiritual. Movements as distinct as eco-spirituality, selected Buddhist writings, feminist spirituality, Native American and "new age" thinking all converge around the desire for and commitment to the integration of spirit and matter. This final and recent worldview arises from the need to tell the story of religion while accounting for the signs of the times. What is striking about the present era, Wink proffers, is that never before have persons been aware of and able to choose among various worldviews.⁹ The challenge to religious educators and youth ministers seems clear in light of Wink's narrative: How to speak a language that braids a bridge between the metaphors for God's activity found in the language of scripture and worship on one shore, and the consciousness of a technologically informed and religiously diverse global village on the other.

A Sacramental Vision: Integrating God and World

One way into that complex conversation between worlds of spirit and matter is through the promotion of a thoroughly Catholic spirituality. Such a spirituality of Catholicism celebrates God's universal love for the world and the world's people. Yet that spirituality offers a theological point of distinctiveness about Catholicism. The cultural world of Catholicism as it was inhabited by the generations of Catholics in the first half of the twentieth century will fade into memory for twenty-first century Catholics. "Being Catholic" will take on new meanings and will be assigned new forms as inevitably it has throughout the ages. Vatican Council II has already receded as an event from the consciousness of many younger Catholics, who know little about its message or importance to the life of the present church.¹⁰ What forms might Catholic spirituality take in the next twenty-five years?

Catholic culture will be credible in a multi-religious society to the degree that Catholics can be both distinctive and accepting. The distinctiveness and the inclusiveness of Catholicism offer compatible rather than competing values to young people; supports for those values in Catholicism may be found in the Catholic commitment to sacramentality as a spiritual pillar. The Catholic

commitment to sacramentality, to reverence for creation as a medium of God's grace, is based in belief in the Incarnation and its effect on humanity and indeed on all creation. Religious educator Thomas Groome names this impulse in the tradition a "sacramental cosmology" that begins with a conviction about the earth as the medium of God's reaching out to humankind and the human response to God.¹¹ Catholicism has not consistently promoted a worldview to support the integrative spirit-matter paradigm, with its attention to the Incarnation. But it has the theological resources to do so.

Forming Ministers for the Future

The worldview that Wink describes, or the Catholic sacramental vision that Groome names, will not find its way into the hearts and minds of young persons unless and until their mentors understand that worldview and construct an adequate language to support conversation about spirituality from a variety of perspectives. Worldview and vision, language and metaphor, images and the skills to communicate them, emerge from good learning and teaching, prayer and reflection. Youth ministers are among the increasing number of lay pastoral ministers in the Catholic church who need sound theological and pedagogical education, but they also need opportunities to cultivate the inner life. In the next twenty-five years, they will need much, but at the very least they deserve and will require a sacramental vision of the earth if they are to offer credible witness to the viability of Catholic Christianity in a religiously pluralistic and scientifically sophisticated context.

Michael P. Horan

Notes

1. The text and commentary on the directory were published together in one volume for readers in the United States: Berard L. Marthaler, *Catechetics in Context* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1973).
2. *A Vision of Youth Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1976).
3. *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1997).
4. *Ibid.*, 26.
5. *Ibid.*, 50.
6. *Ibid.*, 5.
7. Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).
8. *Ibid.*, 13-19.
9. *Ibid.*, 22.

10. See for example, William V. D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge and Ruth A. Wallace, *Laity American and Catholic: Transforming the Church* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1996), 83-89; the study analyzes opinions and attitudes of Catholics born after Vatican II and compares them with opinions and attitudes of Catholics born before the council.

11. Thomas H. Groome, *Educating for Life* (Allen, Texas: Thomas More, 1998), 125.

Health Care Ministry in the Twenty First Century: A Meeting Ground for Technology and Human Dignity

To give a clear description of health care ministry is, at the present time, not an easy task. Health care ministry is the confluence of pastoral, theological, psychological and anthropological perspectives in a rapidly growing world of biochemical, medical and technological discoveries. All these elements influence each other in the search for a valid approach to human, personal and spiritual guidance of persons who are struck with any form of illness.

If a proper definition of today's health care ministry is difficult, to project its nature some twenty-five years from now demands the use of a crystal ball. I do not think that such a ball exists, but the history and development of health care ministry may give some indicators in what direction changes, demands for new insights and consequent adaptations might occur. These indicators suggest that the development of health care ministry will occur along the lines of friction between scientific progress and the theological understanding of human life and dignity. History shows many of these frictions and developments.

Health Care as Religious Concern

Human life is frail. It is short lived and subject to countless attacks from many different sources. Yet, this same life is precious beyond imagination. Without it not a single human being would be around. No wonder that throughout the ages of development the care for health and wholeness has been an important aspect of human concerns and studies, however primitive or disorganized such studies might have been.

The elusive nature of human life caused human health and well being to be placed in the hands of powers that reached beyond human comprehension. Human life and divine intervention were seen as being closely intertwined.¹ Health care was normally left in the hands of local priests. From its earliest stages in ancient Egyptian civilization and the code of Hammurabi, healing and health care ministry blended into a oneness. This blending of human health and spiritual values has never been totally abandoned although it has been a bone of contention for centuries.²

Health Care as Object of Scientific Study

Progress in the knowledge of anthropology, biology, chemistry, technology and other scientific fields has taken away much of the cloud of the unknown in which human life and health were shrouded. Human health became an object of scientific study and scientists worked hard to wrestle its mystery away from the

power of the divine. Yet, they never fully succeeded. The more science unfolds the composition of human existence, the more puzzling becomes the mystery from where life originates and by which power it is maintained. It is something like outer space, the more deeply the enormous telescopes penetrate into the immensity of the universe, the more awesome becomes its magnitude and the further its limits seem to recede into infinity. The explorer, researcher and scientist experience that in all that they can achieve and in the wonders they uncover, they are only stammering participants in a wisdom that far exceeds human comprehension.³

Religious Elements and Scientific Insights Intertwine

Religious insights regarding human life have changed radically under the influence of scientific progress. The conviction that only offerings to the spirits, prayers and religious incantations could bring healing has made room for professional diagnosis and adapted medication. Spiritual health care which used to focus on surrender into the hands of the divine became deeply interwoven with reliance on medical diagnosis and treatment. The direct influence of God, which was the main emphasis in the past, receded. Medical progress influenced the vision on human life and re-directed spiritual health care ministry.

In addition to the increased knowledge of chemistry, medicine and medical technology, we also witness a deeper understanding of psychology and sciences related to human emotional life. The relationship between these sciences and human health is only in its early stages of development, yet it is generally recognized⁴ and influences strongly the approach to ministry.⁵ The connection between religious support and overall health or healing is seriously researched by some and ridiculed by others.

Despite this controversy we may say that there is a mutual influence between scientific discoveries and the importance of spiritual values in health care ministry. The way we assist people in their search for healing and wholeness changes continually. Health care ministry covers a middle ground between the elusive power of the divine and the tangible results of scientific progress.

Social and Cultural Developments Influence Theological Understanding

Vatican Council II, in its pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, has opened for us the possibility to reformulate many theological concepts in the light of social and cultural developments. The Council places among the tasks of the Church "to read the signs of the times"⁶ and to search for God's presence with the help of these signs (#4). This is a recognition that the values of human existence and the expression of the human relationship to God are not exclusively determined by

an abstract theological understanding of life, but that God's revelation takes place in interhuman activity as well. The council states this explicitly when it says that, "Christians ought to be convinced that the achievements of the human race are a sign of God's greatness and the fulfillment of his mysterious design" (#34). In other words, humanity itself participates in God's self-revelation and in the understanding (and subsequent unfolding) of the way in which it is called to respond to God.

These "signs of the times" are perhaps nowhere clearer than in the development of medical knowledge and technology. A simple comparison between the practice of medicine by a native doctor in an inaccessible rain forest and organ transplantation in a modern hospital in western civilization needs no description. This comparison shows not merely an enormous progress in medical knowledge and technology. We see a new understanding of human dependence on God, a new insight of God's caring love for humanity, a new experience of interpersonal relationships, and a new sense of responsibility with regard to human behavior in relation to God and neighbor. The signs of the times force humans to re-evaluate their understanding of God's care for humanity, of the human response to God, of interhuman relationships and consequently, we must re-evaluate the meaning and form of health care ministry.

Contemporary Needs Shape Ministry

The experience of the holocaust half a century ago, the contemporary efforts to genocide that we witness in Rwanda-Urundi and in Kosovo, the unimaginable cruelty of killing and mutilation that takes place in Sierra Leone stunt human imagination. The casual dealings with abortion in so-called highly civilized countries as the USA and the Netherlands, and many other violations of respect for human life and dignity call for a different approach to health care ministry. The classical presentation of a God who is loving, just and merciful but who controls every development in created existence has lost much of its credibility. Yet new visions develop to project the divine.⁷ The immanence of God and the meaning of participation in God's life throw a new light upon God and upon human dignity.

Pressure Points in the Growth of Pastoral Theology

In the final analysis, health care ministry must combine and integrate two seemingly opposite factors, scientific insights and reliance on the all-encompassing creator God. When scientific insights change the understanding of human existence, the concept of God as creator and ruler must be adapted accordingly. Thomas Aquinas already pointed out that we know and can describe God only in human concepts. Consequently, when human concepts

change, human knowledge of God changes with them, and human relationship with God must be adapted or re-defined.

In times of patriarchal societies these concepts reflected primarily authority and control. When patriarchy made room for mutuality, cooperation and equality, authority was not abolished but received a new expression. Perhaps we could portray God now as an infinitely loving father who invites humanity to share in his life and provides all necessary qualities to manifest the divine life in created dimensions. Before all else this God grants and respects the ability and responsibility to choose in which way humanity can best accomplish this manifestation.

Earlier I have indicated how health care ministry changed from support through blind and unquestioning surrender to God to a search for wholeness which includes the integration of physical, psychological and spiritual values. Scientific discoveries will continue to throw new light upon the course and form of human life on this planet. These same discoveries will, therefore, place new demands upon the understanding of God and the human response to life.

Time does not allow to mention all scientific and spiritual questions involved. I will pass over the questions related to sacramental ministry when, partly because of lack of ordained ministers, there will be a shift from external action to a stronger emphasis on the internal attitude of living the sacraments.⁸ Neither will all scientific developments have a bearing upon health care ministry. I want to mention only a few points that do affect human life and relationships.

Many centuries ago conjugal relationships in marriage were only morally acceptable when there would be a reasonable expectation that pregnancy might follow. Sexual intimacy was for procreation. A better understanding of the meaning of the conjugal act led to the insight that such a relationship was perfectly legitimate even at times when the woman was known to be pregnant or certainly infertile. The doctrine was adjusted to "there should be an openness to new life." The morality of birth regulation was then, and still is, based upon this "adjusted" principle. The relation between psychological needs and physical behavior is only in its early stages of development. Through ongoing research deeper insights will develop in the meaning of human wholeness and new doctrinal adjustments are certain to follow.

Current developments in the science of chemistry and biology herald even more fundamental changes. The knowledge of DNA has advanced enormously over the last few decades, yet science is by no means at the end of its course. More recent developments allow a much more accurate understanding of hereditary conditions and predictions of future illnesses. This can have very significant

influences upon human behavior and relationships. Knowledge of hereditary conditions can become an important factor in the choice of a marriage partner, in the decision to have children, and even in the courage to live or not to live beyond a certain age. Human life is seen from a different perspective and, as a consequence, health care ministry must find new forms to assist people in their human and spiritual needs, even if no specific theological approaches are affected by the discoveries.

A more far-reaching development is the ability to change the structure of the DNA. This can easily enter into the manner of being human. This is further complicated by science and technology that allows scientists to replace older body cells with new ones, thus producing literally a rejuvenation of the individual. How far this possibility can go is as yet a matter of speculation but progress in this science is certain to follow. Serious questions will arise about the effects upon human life and human relationships, but some theological questions are perhaps even more wearisome. What does this development do to our traditional theory of creation? To what extent is this "manipulated human life" still the responsible agent within whom God has placed the call to live one's life in accordance with the abilities which the creator placed within it? What does health care ministry mean in regard to this "man-improved" human existence and its relationship to God?

These and many more questions will become even more difficult when the science of cryonics comes into closer reach of human possibilities. The knowledge of preserving sperm, ova and embryos will undoubtedly develop further, perhaps even to the point that cryonics can become a reality. This poses interesting questions such as is "freezing a living person" a killing of the individual or is it a suspension of life to be restored a few generations from now? What does it do to our concept of dying? What sort of ministry can be offered to individuals and their families who plan such experiences or are engaged in them?

Conclusion

The above discussions are brief and cover only a few points. I have taken health care ministry as pastoral care in the broad sense of the word. This care depends on two major factors, (1) the understanding of God's plan in creation and redemption and (2) the understanding of human life and responsibility in this world. These two factors are inextricably interwoven. Scientific development would be deceptive and it would also be short-changed if theological insights were completely ignored. Theological insights would be unfaithful to God if they ignored scientific developments. When human concepts and knowledge grow, our understanding of God must grow with them. The wisdom that progression

of science can uncover is ultimately a participation in God's wisdom. This new knowledge can be used constructively or destructively. Human knowledge and the responsibility to fulfill what God expects of humanity must develop accordingly. This is a challenge with which we enter into the twenty-first century.

Cornelius J. van der Poel, CSSp.

Notes

1. The close interaction between the human and the divine is noticed in the most ancient civilizations. It is explicitly stated in the Code of Hammurabi. See Encyclopedia Microsoft Encarta, 1995, under Code of Hammurabi.
2. For a brief description of the origin of medical ethics, see Raymond Devettere, *Practical Decision Making in Health Care Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 9-23.
3. *Ibid.*
4. We find an interesting example of this in an article in the *Bazuin* (Feb. 19, 1999), 14: "Zorg is meer dan het repareren van mensen" (Care is more than repairing people), in which the author states "Purely technological nursing-care is no care."
5. The development of Clinical Pastoral Education during the last 30-40 years is clear evidence of this growth process.
6. Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981) p. 905.
7. See Roger Burggraeve & Didier Pollefeyt, *Ethiek als Intimiteit met God? Christelijke ethiek in gesprek met joodse denkers* (Ethics as Intimacy with God? Christian Ethics in Discussion with Jewish Philosophers (Kok Kampen, 1998).
8. For a brief description of the attitude of living the sacraments, see my series of articles on "Living the Sacraments," *Pastoral Life* (Dec. 1998 and Jan., Feb., March 1999).

Looking Ahead: Ecology and Theology

Many Christians still take for granted notions that they learned to live with when they were children. For example, biblical and contemporary cosmologies must clash; humankind—the central feature of the visible world—was destined by God to dominate otherkind, which is lesser in value in God's "eyes"; and, the resurrection of the body means some kind of grand celestial grave robbery at the end of time. Schooled to believe that "God's ways are not our ways," the average churchgoer learned how to compartmentalize the claims of science and religion, and thus most often avoided serious conflicts. This strategy has not worked for everyone. What is true on one level must be true on all levels; when we discover discrepancies between science and religion, we have a problem, and it needs to be addressed. Sensitive to the challenges inherent in scientific theories and discoveries, theologians must find a way to respond to those who argue that traditional religions may be reduced to pious platitudes, tax-exempt safe havens, and medieval remnants of botched biology, cosmology, and anthropology.

One of the major forces that accounts for the current reassessment of theological claims is the ascendancy of ecology as a tool for understanding the complexities of what we believe is the divine will for creation. The term "ecology" is derived from the Greek *oikos*, house. Ecologists study the relationships between organisms and their environments, and they focus on the inclusive and dynamic character of reality. Focusing on relationships can significantly alter one's approach to theology and hold out hope to believers who have become aware of the errors and irrelevance of some past theological claims. A closer relationship between ecology and theology promises to be both compelling and challenging as we continue to wrestle with the nature of ultimate reality. Sacramental and moral theologies are only two of the disciplines that stand to be enriched by the new and necessary alliance between ecology and theology. I will briefly consider each of these areas.

With the help of some insights from ecology, we can replace the static image of the hierarchy of being, in which the value of each species is judged by how closely it corresponds to a perception of God as pure spirit, with a network of relationships. In this network, each entity may share equal value (as in the case of "deep ecology," a particular subspecialty within the field of ecology), or, at the very least, the interdependency among the species is acknowledged and valued. Humans view their reliance on every other creature as a manifestation of divine bounty. God, then, is perceived as the author of life who treasures all parts of creation, the great as well as the small, and is the lure that beckons us into relationship. The exact nature of this God is uncertain, but an omniscient, omnipresent, impassible being beyond time and space is not a candidate.

Because theologians have largely ignored the effects of our ever new means of planetary self-destruction and universal pollution, our elaborate theological systems and approaches to ethics have sometimes been used to justify harming the physical aspects of the world in which we live. If for no other reason, an ecological approach to theology is imperative, not optional. Theologians must strive for a realistic approach to the human in all dimensions as we relate to God and the rest of the earth. We must reckon with the massive ecological devastation that humans have wrought if meaningful theories about how God interacts among us are to be constructed. To continue to ignore the groans of creation while we perpetuate thought systems that do not take cognizance of the world around us is unconscionable.

As long as theologians are describing a God who is essentially "up and out," we necessarily downgrade what is "down and in," including the Earth itself. Our attempts to structure our theological systems around a deity whose primary residence is in an otherworldly place (heaven) and who may send us to another otherworldly place (hell) are destined for disaster because they do not square with reality. While heaven and hell are powerful symbols that can help us to realize that our actions have consequences for humankind as well as otherkind, too often they are used as weapons in the hands of some Christians who would intimidate marginalized groups among us. Ecological insights help us to recognize the Earth as our primary reality. They can help us to cast aside the "God" of philosophers and to discover the God of Jesus in whom "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (Gal 3:28). By affirming the diversity of creation, ecologists open the way for a greater appreciation of Jesus' ministry of inclusiveness. Environmental destruction reduces the splendor of Earth and defaces our primary revelation of God. If we continue to contaminate our world at the present rate, we may live into a time when it may not be possible to believe in God at all. When we disrupt our oikos, we destroy revelation itself.

Incorporating ecological insights into our theology can help us do more than enhance our notion of God. For example, doing theology as if the Earth mattered can help us to reconsider the way we regard the sacraments. As we reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation in the light of ecology, we may deepen our appreciation of the vital connection between what we say about God and how we live in the world. We need the things of this Earth to represent certain characteristics of God, and the symbols used in liturgical celebrations must be able to point to an appealing and credible divine reality. The Roman Catholic Church clearly stipulates the type and condition of elements to be used to represent the Body and Blood of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist. (See The Code of Canon Law [1983]: "The bread must be wheaten only, and recently made, so that there is no danger of corruption. The wine must be natural, made

from grapes of the vine, and not corrupt"-Can. 92:2-3). The Church knows that degraded and impure symbols point to a degraded and impure deity.

While the requirements for bread and wine are plainly established, there is no mention of a requirement that the water used for baptism be uncorrupted. It is, however, to be blessed: "Apart from a case of necessity, the water to be used in conferring baptism is to be blessed, in accordance with the provisions of the liturgical books" (Can. 853). In our post-industrial age, however, we cannot take for granted that water is an unambiguous sign of purity and health. As long as our streams and rivers remain polluted, it is increasingly difficult to view water as a life-giving sign of cleansing, and therefore, as representative of the good gifts of the Creator. What if our liturgies reflected our awareness that the water supply is contaminated, and, therefore, its symbolic value is at least questionable? Do we need to account for the fact that water has to be treated before it can even be blessed? What effect, if any, would this acknowledgment have on the sign value of the sacrament?

Similarly, the way we celebrate The Sacrament of Reconciliation may be profoundly influenced by our willingness to consider the impact of ecology. Our understanding of this sacrament has already changed considerably with the advent of the social sciences. In their teachings about sin and conversion, moral theologians have been making great strides since Vatican II toward developing an awareness of social sin. Armed with the insights that emerged during the post-conciliar era, the Roman Catholic Church changed the way it celebrated reconciliation. Theologians and clergy no longer perceive sin only as a matter between individuals qua individuals and God. Instead, we recognize sin as the heart of racism, sexism, classism, ageism, etc. While individuals are morally responsible for their participation in these evils, we realize that these evils are much more far-reaching and complex than can be accounted for by any single individual. This nascent shift in thinking represents a tremendous step forward in our awareness of the consequences of our actions.

Moral theologians would take another leap ahead if we took a serious view of sin from an ecological perspective. Although humans seem to be the only species capable of the premeditated and willful destruction of relationships, we realize that we may sin against more than human beings. Our capacity to harm extends to the rest of the Earth's inhabitants. How seriously we view ecological degradation hinges on the way we see ourselves in relation to otherkind. If we persist in interpreting the biblical injunction to "fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28 NRSV) as giving us a divine despoiler's license, then we not only misconstrue the author's meaning, but we also place ourselves in an adversarial relationship with the rest of the

known world. If, instead, we were to see ourselves as one with the rest of the world, much as God is one with us as the Ground of Being, then, otherkind would be in a much better position vis-à-vis humankind. This, however, begs the prior question answered by deep ecologists, which is whether we are equal to or greater than the other species with whom we share this planet.

From the perspective of theology informed by an ecological perspective, sin includes such things as pollution of all kinds, speciesism, deforestation, and the other deleterious effects of anthropocentrism: in short, the wanton disregard of that which is not human. As ecological awareness becomes part of our theological consciousness, the notion of sin will necessarily expand. As with social sin, however, individuals remain responsible for their own actions even as we expand the category of "sins."

The future of theology rests, in large part, upon the willingness of theologians to incorporate the insights they may glean from ecology. Far from being a fringe discipline, ecology will either become foundational for our attempt to do theology or we will have thrown away our chance to make significant gains in our undying attempt to seek understanding as people of faith.

Moni McIntyre

Recommended Reading

Brockelman, Paul. *Cosmology and Creation: The Spiritual Significance of Contemporary Cosmology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

McKinnon, Mary Heather, and Moni McIntyre, eds. *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995.

Theology That Is Practical: The Model for the Next Millennium

Introduction: Three Contexts for Practical Theology

Family Shelter: A grassroots group is formed by Christians who are appalled by the rising rates of family homelessness in their local area. As they meet to work on a solution to the problem, they reflect on the Gospel injunction to shelter the homeless and the church's call to respond. As others from their town join the effort, including local politicians and social service professionals, the group begins to define and justify its goal—establishing a transitional shelter for homeless families—by insisting on adequate housing as a universal human right.

Ministry Education: A graduate theology course for students in pastoral ministry includes extensive examination of case studies from the students' experience. Topics range from the tensions between tribal initiation rites and Christian church membership in Africa, to the conflicting expectations of parents, pastor and a newly hired youth minister in a suburban American parish. As their major course project, students use these pastoral situations in a structured reflection process with selected themes from the history and theology of ministry. They then propose new pastoral responses for each case and new insights for their own ministries.

Church of the Covenant: A white, middle-class, small-town church is confronted by the presence of illegal immigrants from Central America. After an extensive process of committee work and adult education, the congregation votes to become a "sanctuary" church and welcomes three immigrants into its midst, in opposition to current United States immigration policy. Subsequently, a research project involves scholars in Bible, ethics, sociology and religious education in considering how this case illuminates the meaning of discipleship and citizenship in their disciplines, with implications for the education of Christians.¹

All of these are examples of contemporary efforts to do "practical" or "pastoral" theology.² They engage people in a variety of settings, with diverse experiences and goals. While the efforts are often incomplete and the term itself is in development, practical theology as a perspective and as a method is central to the way we understand and engage in theological reflection for the twenty-first century. In this essay I will first explore the evolving meaning of the term, and then elaborate on key aspects of practical theology, with reference to the examples given above.

A Capsule History

Before describing contemporary dimensions of practical theology, a broad historical overview may be helpful in showing how this "new" perspective attempts to retrieve early understandings and to overcome later compartmentalization. Research into Christian beginnings suggests that "theology" (although the term was not itself used³) was understood by the early church in two ways: as primarily a habitus, "a cognitive and affectional disposition or orientation toward God, others, and creation" that shaped their practice in the world; and secondarily as a discipline of study and instruction needed to foster and refine this habitus in believers.⁴ The major forms of theology as discipline were materials such as hymns, liturgies and catechetical orations, and were developed out of the recognition that Christians' beliefs, affections and character dispositions must be formed and reformed. That is, Christians assumed that these qualities were not fully and automatically bestowed upon conversion, but were the result of ongoing cultivation in the faith community in light of the questions and situations that people confront in daily existence. Thus, this second sense of theology was focused on the task of supporting the believing community's life of faith, and necessarily was developed in reflection upon the community's current practices and questions.

In its long and complex history, the shift in the setting for theological reflection in the West from faith communities and monasteries to universities and, eventually, seminaries, occasioned changes in the understanding of what theology is, who engages in it, and for what purposes. While the sense of theology as habitus did not entirely disappear, a scientific and speculative understanding of the work of theology began to dominate in the university environment, as theology became one science among many and was divided into its own subspecialties. By the nineteenth century this had culminated in what Farley calls the "triumph of the fourfold pattern" in Protestant theological education, with its division of theology into biblical studies, church history, systematic theology and practical theology. The essentially practical nature of all theology as the possession and fostering of a Christian habitus, then, was marginalized in favor of a model where "practical theology" became the specialization for applying the insights of academic scholars in the other three subdisciplines to ministerial practice.⁵

The common outcome for both Protestant and Catholic theological education was similar: "pastoral theology" was that subdivision that "delivered" the findings of the other subdivisions to a community or congregation that itself had relatively little to contribute, but was the passive recipient of these ministrations. Pastoral theology, so conceived, contained little theological substance of its own.⁶

Thus, theology was done by specialists in the university or seminary and "applied" to pastoral settings through a program of studies designed to prepare

clergy for their ministerial assignments. The "clerical paradigm"-Farley's often-quoted term-became dominant, and a long-term narrowing of the functions of ministry to ordained clergy was solidified.⁷

Reclaiming Theology as a Practical Enterprise for Christian Communities

The current interest in reclaiming the centrality of the practical or pastoral in the entire theological enterprise gains impetus from a number of circumstances. Prominent factors in Roman Catholicism include, in particular, the theological themes developed in the Second Vatican Council. *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, brought to the fore an understanding of the church as People of God, on pilgrimage in the world and universally called to holiness. If all Christians are to exercise the roles of priest, prophet and king as followers of Christ, then the cultivation of these roles as their habitus is essential, and the fruits of their efforts are integral to the self-understanding of the church. Thus, theological reflection on those efforts is necessary and the "sense of the faithful" is to be taken seriously as a source for theological truth, along with the teaching authority of the church.⁸

Even more clearly, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, articulates a dynamic model of theological reflection that is practical. By reflecting systematically and prayerfully on the circumstances of human existence in our world, in diverse economic, social, political and cultural manifestations, Christians are challenged to bring the resources of their faith into their work for universal justice and peace. *Gaudium et Spes* brings the rich themes of human dignity, the communal nature of people, social justice and the common good to a compassionate and critical examination of the needs and issues of contemporary people. Drawing on these "universal" aspects and needs of human existence and articulating them within a theological understanding of salvation history, the document calls Christians to join with all others of good will to work for human fulfillment.⁹

In order to carry out their mission, then, Christians are to see the world as the sphere of God's activity and, as church, to participate in it. Effective exercise of their divinely appointed role requires the ability to discern how grace is operating in the workings of humanity (and, indeed, of all creation) and to bring their particular talents to transform the realms in which they find themselves: marriage and family, work, social structures, the church itself. Thus they need modes of theological reflection that are "portable," "performable," and "communal," in the apt expression of James D. and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead.¹⁰

Practice, Theory and the Cultivation of Phronesis

The strongest common denominator in contemporary expressions of practical theology is the expectation that theological reflection moves in some fashion from practice to theory to practice.¹¹ "Practice" is here understood in Chopp's sense of "socially shared forms of behavior that mediate between what are often called subjective and objective dimensions. . . . a pattern of meaning and action that is both culturally constructed and individually instantiated."¹² Practices hold rich layers of the communities' shared experiences and the meaning they have drawn from these experiences about how they are to live. Much of the time we engage in our practices unreflectively. New questions raised by changing circumstances within the community and the broader culture, however, may force a reexamination of them. When such changes are explicitly reflected upon, practices are considered anew in light of the central themes of the community's tradition. Through this consideration, new understandings are achieved about the meaning of the foundational tradition in order to shape transformed practices today.

For example, the group working on homelessness as noted in the Family Shelter story was galvanized when the neighbor of one of them faced eviction from her apartment. The original Christian members (mostly parishioners from the same Catholic church) began to study the rising rates of homelessness for women and their children and learn how current governmental "practices" actually promoted this homelessness. Most notably, they found, state funding could be used to place these families in isolated motels after eviction, but not to supplement their rent in order to keep them in their apartments. This led them into a deeper examination of Christian understandings of justice and concern for one's neighbor. They looked at their parish's current "practices" of community service, which were focused on giving charitable contributions to local organizations. They began to see the need for their congregation to adopt new "practices" of political advocacy in order to be true to their Christian vocation.

What abilities do people need for practical theological reflection? Contemporary practical theology emphasizes the cultivation and exercise of "practical wisdom," *phronesis*, as a central goal. Drawing on Aristotle's distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis*, scholars de-emphasize (while not rejecting) the former's focus on technical skills and stress the latter's ethically based "practice of human life [that] results from prudential decisions (*phronesis*) between making and practice."¹³ In opting for a Christian *praxis*-reflective action-based in *phronesis*-the capacity for arriving at decisions for action-we ground our reflections in the question: "Because of who God is in relationship to us and who we are in relationship to one another for the same reason, what kind of world should we be making, and how?"¹⁴ Thus any specific skills possessed by men and women (including those taught traditionally as skills for ministry) are exercised within the framework of "phronetic," practical theological reflection.¹⁵

A Range of Contexts, Stages and Roles

Cultivation of this practical wisdom is akin to cultivation of the habitus claimed by Farley and others as essential for Christian identity, and therefore must be central to the tasks of theology. While it is always oriented toward transformation toward more faithful practice, it will be exercised differently in the contexts of academy, local congregation and everyday family and work obligations. Whitehead and Whitehead provide a helpful schematic for this in the introduction to *Method in Ministry* by drawing a continuum of theological reflection. On one end of the continuum, a faith community reflects on pastoral issues that are immediate and concrete in order to devise more prudential responses congruent with their Christian call. At an intermediate stage on the continuum, a community may take a longer period to consider a pastoral question in a larger Christian and cultural context, using theology and the social sciences more extensively to illuminate the situation and allowing more time to frame effective responses. At the other end of the continuum, a longer-term, more extensive, historical and philosophical process is used to examine the issue within the development of Christian theology and articulate new insights to inform practice. All stages are "practical theology" and operate in a "phronetic" mode, but the participants, methods and results may differ.¹⁶

To take a fictionalized but true-to-life contemporary example congruent with my Ministry Education context: a lay staff member is newly hired in a middle-class, Midwestern Catholic parish. She soon finds herself in conflict with one of the parish council committees for whom she has been appointed the resource person. Committee members complain to the pastor about her work with them; misunderstandings and miscommunication abound. After long and agonized discussions with the pastor and the committee and much prayer and discernment, a tentative solution is found. Subsequently, the staff member enrolls in a graduate ministry program and does a case study on her experience, in which she and her student colleagues discuss how the theology of ministry, systems theory and management literature on "formal" and "informal" authority illuminate the issues in the case. Her professor, whose own scholarly work focuses on the theology of ministry, draws on the case study as part of his larger project of outlining New Testament understandings of ecclesial ministry and how today's practices shape our reading of key biblical texts. Thus, several different points on the Whiteheads' continuum are touched upon by this multi-faceted reflection.

Thus far I have maintained that practical theology, rather than being a derivative subspecialty of theological inquiry, is in fact the normative mode for all theological discourse. At the same time, as this example shows, a particular "job description" is also emerging for those who serve as practical or pastoral

theologians in a more specific sense. At the ministry oriented end of the continuum, this will include those who serve formally within churches as ecclesial ministers (whether ordained or "lay," in the current usage of the Roman Catholic church), since it becomes obvious that they are engaged in practical theology. The lay staff person in this example is such a practical theologian, and also a facilitator of such practical theological reflection in others (though often in short-term and informal circumstances). Moving along the continuum, those who train such ministers may be specialists in the traditional "practical" disciplines of pastoral care, preaching, catechesis and so on; or they may have the credentials of scholars in Scripture, systematics or church history. Imbelli and Groome state that "In a more specific sense, however, the pastoral theologian's 'place' is that of mediator between the work of the specialists in Bible and history, systematics and ethics, and those engaged in full-time pastoral ministry within the Church."¹⁷ This presumes that rigorous and specialized efforts are needed from both the ministers and the academicians in order to arrive together at new insights in their practice to theory to practice reflection. It further presumes that particular individuals and communities may serve to bridge these closely related endeavors.

In order to show more clearly the dynamics of this contemporary understanding, I will outline several particular aspects that I find integral to practical theology: emphases on critical and disciplined conversation; congruence with a reconceived understanding of education; and a claim for a public orientation.

Key Aspects of Practical Theology

Critical Conversation

No single image, of course, is adequate to capture our intentions. However, the metaphor of conversation is increasingly used to characterize practical theological discourse. In his "map" of four views of rationality in practical theology, Richard Osmer names this mode as "rationality as conversation."¹⁸ Indebted to Paul Ricoeur, it includes both the face-to-face dialogue of human subjects and their engagement with written (or artistic) "texts." It is sparked by the crises and questions arising from historically situated communities, as they seek to understand and respond to these through wrestling with the central stories of their tradition. It is intended to correlate, in David Tracy's sense, interpretations of the community's experiences and culture with interpretations of the Christian tradition.¹⁹

In naming the process as conversational with this rootedness in correlational method, a community of discourse is necessarily implied, as well as a method that is hermeneutical, critical and transformative.²⁰ A number of authors have

developed this process as a variation on the hermeneutic circle of practice to theory to practice. Thomas Groome has outlined a framework of five movements (preceded by a focusing activity) in what he calls "shared Christian praxis," as follows: 1) naming/expressing a present action as experienced by the community, 2) engaging in critical reflection on this action, 3) bringing forth the Christian "Story" (expressed in Scripture, tradition, ritual and other forms) and "Vision" (mandates arising from the Story to empower the praxis of Christians) appropriate to the present action, 4) bringing the critical insights on present action into hermeneutical dialogue with the Christian Story and Vision, and 5) making decisions for Christian living as shaped by the critical conversation of the preceding movements.²¹

Don Browning has a highly developed and comprehensive understanding of practical theology as conversation and as the encompassing model for all theology.²² He reconceptualizes the traditional fourfold distinction among theological disciplines within a vision of the necessarily practical nature of all theological reflection, whether done in the academy, the faith community or other settings:

In saying that we should move in theology from practice to theory and back to practice, I am saying more than meets the eye. . . . Human thought works that way. We never really move from theory to practice even when it seems we do. Theory is always embedded in practice. . . . [O]nce we grasp the practice-theory-practice structure of all theology, the gulf disappears between our high-level theological texts and courses and the practical activity of religious education, care preaching and worship. The structure of theology and the structure of these concrete practices are the same.²³

In order to exercise practical wisdom (he frequently uses the language of "practical reason"), there must be a first movement of 1) descriptive theology, the attempt to arrive at a "thick" description of the situation by examining the prevailing understandings of the community's (faith-based) vision, obligatory norms, human tendencies and needs, environmental-social constraints, and specific rules and roles. The social sciences are integral to this descriptive process. Second, the questions arising from practice are brought to the foundational texts of Christian tradition through historical theology to surface insights from our past in relation to our present dilemmas, drawing on the best of contemporary historical-critical techniques to understand what the past does and does not say. In the third movement, systematic theology, there is a hermeneutical "fusion of horizons between the vision implicit in contemporary practices and the vision implied in the practices of the normative Christian texts," creating new meanings for our situation.²⁴ Finally, in the phase of strategic practical theology, the insights of the previous three movements—always

understood as part of the overall practical enterprise—are brought together in the attempt to frame faithful and effective responses to our concrete situations today. Here the traditional "practical" disciplines are prominent, but the "clerical paradigm" critiqued by Farley vanishes. Strategic practical theology, engaged in communally, is the responsibility of all Christians and is not confined to ecclesial affairs, but opens itself to engagement in the world.

The Church of the Covenant example named in my introduction has already been extensively analyzed by several authors, including Browning, and is helpful for highlighting the conversational model here. Covenant's congregation delegated the task of studying the sanctuary issue to its Mission Committee. The committee itself engaged in a difficult and critical (and, at times, divisive) dialogue as they attempted to arrive at a "thick" description of the refugee situation in light of current American government policies. Key biblical and theological texts emerged to guide the committee and the congregation in their reflection: the Good Samaritan was evocative for many, while the leaders of the effort drew insight from Matthew 5:10's call to endure persecution for the sake of righteousness and Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*. Eventually, as the congregation came to vote on the sanctuary decision, the "fusion of horizons" occurred in which the church came to see that its current practices must be reevaluated in light of the normative Christian tradition. Having made the decision, plans for strategic action could be designed.

Disciplined Conversation

The need for phronesis oriented toward praxis is clear in such an example. It is also apparent that a disciplined quality is needed for such conversation if it is to be both theological and practical. This implies four key elements. First, in our classic Christian sense of "spiritual disciplines," the conversation of practical theology is characterized by prayerful discernment. This assumes that God's grace is present and working in the situation we face and the conversation we have about it, and that our conversational "ground rules" help us to remain open to this dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit. Second, our discipline is a mark of our discipleship: the followers of Jesus remain faithful through keeping the faith tradition as a "privileged"²⁵ or "normative"²⁶ conversation partner and through ongoing attention to its resonance in our experiences and our practices. All the authors I have cited have explicit methods for bringing the tradition into the conversation and considering its message, usually at some middle stage of the process (following the description of practices and preceding the critical reflection that leads to transformed practices).

Third, such discipline requires a commitment to, and techniques for, keeping all the necessary "partners" in the conversation, although their "voices" may be more

or less crucial at various points. All individuals and communities with a stake in the outcome of the conversation must be included, at least implicitly, along with key prior interpretations of central texts from the tradition, the pivotal experiences of the participants both within and outside the community's experience, and understandings of the historical and cultural situatedness of all participants.²⁷ Identification of our own assumptions—what Browning calls our "pre-understandings"—is also crucial here, as the participants in conversation confront what has shaped them in their approach to the particular situation and to the other participants. Fourth, participants are regularly called to pause in their conversation and take note of its progress, of voices heard and not heard, of possibilities being opened and pathways being closed. This is the difficult practice of critical thinking both about the situation and about the limitations of our own thinking processes.²⁸ Yet it is also a spiritual practice of discernment, as ongoing openness to the Spirit's work allows new insights to emerge beyond our expectations.

This conversation, however, is characterized by fluidity as well as discipline. Held together by the principles outlined above, it nevertheless takes place in multiple settings, with multiple and shifting participants. This is necessitated by the changing nature of the practical questions addressed, but also by the need for Christian communities to draw upon diverse types of expertise in arriving at the "thick" descriptions they need for responsible conversation. And further, even those most central to the conversation are themselves residents of a modern (or postmodern) world in which their own identities and conversation partners are multifaceted, complex and often ambiguous. Thus not only flexibility but also a sense of creative intuition and "playfulness" are essential to practical theology.²⁹

My Family Shelter example illustrates the aspect of fluidity. The members who formed the original planning group were from the same parish and knew one another well, besides sharing a strong faith commitment. In attempting to create a family shelter, they had to enlarge their conversation to include influential people in the wider civic community, thinking carefully about the many types of professionals required to make the project a reality. Amid all the hard work of fundraising, finding a location for the shelter, and renovating it, they also had to set up an institutional structure that would provide for ongoing professional staffing of the shelter and eligibility for governmental funding, while remaining faithful to the group's sense of mission. Practical theological and moral reflection was taking place at many levels—among the group members, in their interactions with their parish, in the town, among the staff hired for the shelter, and eventually among the shelter residents—as they continually reshaped their goals and actions in ongoing conversation. As the Whiteheads wisely note, the difficulty of such conversation and reshaping is often well characterized as a "crucible," and discernment is vital.³⁰

A spirit of playfulness in the practical theological conversation is evident when student-ministers reflect on cases drawn from their own experience, as in Ministry Education. By bringing the narratives of their past ministerial practice to a new community of conversation, and by doing this in an academic context at some remove from their ongoing practice, they are given time, a safe environment, and the challenge and affirmation of others. All participants can "play" with the "facts" of the cases in ways that allow imagining other resolutions and new possibilities. And, as already suggested, the practice of theological education in the academy is itself transformed in unexpected ways by imaginative engagement with the ongoing efforts of real faith communities to cultivate a Christian habitus.

Educational Congruence

I believe that recognizing and fostering a viable practical theology and forming practical theologians requires viewing it as a disciplined conversation that is educational to its core. To adopt such a view requires abandoning the commonplace equating of education with schooling. Further, it requires a critique of our tendency to equate the doing of theology with abstract speculation.

Although practical theology may indeed be done in the contexts of academy and "Christian education"—and these settings are vital to its ongoing refinement—its scope and aims, like education itself, transcend these. As Gabriel Moran puts it in his finely tuned distinction: "Education is a different kind of reality from school or schooling. While school is a definite institution and schooling is a particular form of learning, education is not a thing at all but a lifetime process constituted by a set of relations. . . . Education is the reshaping of life's forms with end (meaning) but without end (termination)."³¹ Implied here are the concerns of practical theology for ongoing practice to theory to practice reflection. We see the correlating, through conversation, of experience and culture with tradition ("life's forms," "a set of relations"). This is done in order to bring forth new understandings and practices that are meaningful for today ("reshaping life's forms with end [meaning]"); and the assumption that any present formulation is contingent and must be continually reformulated ("without end [termination]"). As Moran insists, this is a profoundly moral activity; and as Browning argues, practical wisdom must be informed by theological ethics.³²

This educational process is understood as practical theology, of course, when the conversation explicitly draws upon the Christian tradition in the consideration of how to "reshape" the forms or practices of our communal lives. The "end" in Moran's first sense of meaning will focus upon the ways that Christians communally have made meaning in light of their own foundational "Story."

Thomas Groome's groundbreaking work on Christian religious education as the fostering of "conation" helps us to envision the aims of practical theology as fundamentally educational. In language very similar to Farley's regarding theologia as a habitus, Groome speaks of conative activity as engaging whole persons in their self-actualization in relationship to others and the world. In its Christian manifestation:

Christian conation means "being" and becoming Christian. Pedagogically this poses the task of informing, forming, and transforming people in the pattern of lived Christian faith—to know, desire, and do with others what is ingredient to being Christian in right relationship with God, self, others, and creation after the way of Jesus. . . . The unity of knowing, loving, and serving God by knowing, loving, and serving one's neighbor as oneself after the way of Jesus makes for specifically Christian faith conation.³³

Groome also uses the language of phronesis as practical wisdom to help encapsulate the central aim of this approach to religious education. A community well formed in conation will be able to reflect upon pressing needs and decisions in light of guiding metaphors and principles (Browning's visional and obligational dimensions) in order to arrive at prudential decisions for transformed practices. As Browning comments in comparing his own approach to Groome's, "[both hold that] the structure of theological reflection and the dynamics of Christian education should be the same. Doing theology and doing Christian education entail the same procedures. . . . Doing theology in all these settings [academia, congregations and others] should follow a practice-theory-practice model."³⁴

Public Orientation

Some practical theologians have noted a progressive widening of the "subject-field" of practical theology in contemporary discourse: from the narrow clerical paradigm, to the whole faith community's involvement in reflecting on its internal practices, to the mission oriented role of the faith community in the world, to the broader subject-field of religious/moral practice in the world.³⁵ In favoring the latter approach, I argue that the imperative for a public orientation for practical theology arises from two major sources. First, the needs of human beings and of our world cry out for sustained reflection on current practices with a view to transformation toward greater justice and ecological order. These needs impel Christians to responsible engagement in public affairs. Second, such engagement means working with others who do not share our guiding story and vision, yet who are themselves shaped by foundational communal stories and visions; and practical theology gives us a way to recognize and engage in dialogue with those stories as well.³⁶ Browning maintains that all practical

thinking includes some vision, some "deep metaphors" regarding life's purposes, and that these are sometimes embedded in narratives. "I argue that we can discern the form of practical reason within the Christian narrative but that we can discern it within other narrative contexts as well."³⁷ If this is true, then even while acknowledging the historical situatedness of all communities and their narratives—and the inability of "outsiders" to know fully those communities' reality—the conversation of practical theology can be widened to include non-Christian partners and metaphors.³⁸

In this mode, an important goal of practical theology becomes "development of a 'public' account of proper practice in the world; i.e., an account that is not confessionally-dependent upon the church."³⁹ The conversational/correlational activity brings Christian themes into public discussion, supported by the conviction that they have relevance beyond the faith community.⁴⁰ Effective education of "disciple-citizens" is essential: the formation of faithful Christians who take public responsibility seriously and understand the tensions in their dual roles.⁴¹ At the same time, what Browning calls the "inner core" of practical reason—the interplay between the demands of moral obligations and the tendencies and needs of human nature—can take place within a variety of visional "outer envelopes", i.e., narratives and metaphors that shape a community's worldview.⁴²

Both the Family Shelter and Church of the Covenant examples illustrate this public orientation and its tensions and possibilities. The original housing group turned to the Christian narrative for inspiration and guidance in addressing the issue of homelessness. In becoming a broader organization with civic alliances, however, they consciously chose to use the language of universal human rights to persuade others to support the project. The Church of the Covenant took a different route: their transformation of practices was confined to their congregational vote for sanctuary, and they mainly conducted their conversation within a Christian narrative language. The term "sanctuary," however, had already moved from its biblical roots to become a multi-dimensional term in civic discourse, as churches throughout the country took similar votes to welcome refugees and publicized their decisions in public venues. Thus "sanctuary" had acquired a status as "Christian classic," in Tracy's terms, and became a catalyst for action in multiple realms.

Conclusion

I have already noted that the framing of theology as practical is both new and rooted in Christian tradition. For the next millennium, however, I believe that we are called to be more intentional in how we conceive of all pastoral activity, as well as the work of the theological school or university department of theology,

as grounded in a practical imperative. Our evolving understanding of the need for all Christians to connect their faith and their daily lives in order to fulfill their mission, the pressing problems of our time, and the imperative to work together with others of good will to address these problems—all these point to a practical sensibility as paramount.

In an early collection of essays on practical theology, Browning mused on conversations with his colleagues at the University of Chicago as they puzzled over the misconceptions regarding this endeavor:

Wasn't it the case that practical theology appeared confused and softheaded because it was indeed the most difficult branch of theology, requiring the widest range of theological skills and judgments, and because the challenging intellectual work needed to clarify its logic and methods had simply not been sufficiently attempted?⁴³

Since then, significant work has been done in this work of clarification, through efforts understood as pastoral, practical, scholarly, ministerial, spiritual, political and so on. But this clarification will need to continue into the next millennium. Just as the dynamic of practice to theory to practice yields a certain provisional meaning and yet must be ongoing, so the work of practical theology, in Moran's terms, will be "with end" and "without end."

Maureen R. O'Brien

Notes

1. This event is described and analyzed in two collections of essays: *Tensions between Citizenship and Discipleship*, edited by Nelle Slater (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989) and *Education for Citizenship and Discipleship*, edited by Mary C. Boys (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989). One of the authors, Don S. Browning, develops his own reflections on the case further in *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), especially in Chapter 9.

2. There continues to be some interchangeable use of the terms "practical" or "pastoral" in relation to this emerging form of theological reflection. I prefer "practical" because it is probably the term more frequently used by scholars who are systematically developing its meaning within theology—many of whom I will cite in this essay—and because their explications more consistently include the practice-theory-practice method that I am using.

3. See Randy L. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), 650-651. He cites the Greco-Roman usage of theologia in reference to mythical, civil and natural or rational explorations, and the likely desire of early Christians to avoid association with these in their own thinking about God.

4. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology," 651. Also see his development of this argument in "Spirituality and Practical Theology: Trajectories Toward Reengagement," *APT Occasional Papers* 3 (Spring 1999), 9-10. Probably the most influential work shaping this discussion of theology as

habitus and the problem of its subsequent fragmentation is Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, Press, 1983).

5. Farley, especially Chapter 5, 99-124. Maddox points out that "practical theology" as a formal subdiscipline was initially moral theology ("The Recovery of Theology," 656-657). He also maintains that while theology as science became the university norm, practical theology as the cultivation of spirituality was confined largely to monasteries, where it "might meet the needs of the ascetic-contemplative life, but it was only tangentially related to Christian life in the world" ("The Recovery of Theology," 654).

6. Robert P. Imbelli and Thomas H. Groome, "Signposts Towards a Pastoral Theology," *Theological Studies* 53 (1992), 129. Farley comments: "Once functions of ministry comprise the unity of practical theology, that term becomes an aggregate of disciplines of the functions, each one with its specialist, auxiliary sciences, and so forth" (106). For an overview of the development of the "practicality" of theology in the American context, see E. Brooks Holifield, "The Practicality of Theology in America," audiotape (Pittsburgh: J. Hubert Henderson Conference, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1998).

7. Farley, e.g., 114-115. For a comprehensive historical and theological overview of the "depositioning" of lay people vis-à-vis ministry, see Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993).

8. "The whole body of the faithful who have received an anointing which comes from the holy one (see 1 Jn 2:20 and 27) cannot be mistaken in belief. It shows this characteristic through the entire people's supernatural sense of the faith, when, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful,' it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals. . . . The people unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply through right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life" (*Lumen Gentium*, 12; from Austin Flannery, O.P., general editor, *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* [Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Company, 1996]).

9. "The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Impelled by that faith, they try to discern the true signs of God's presence and purpose in the events, the needs and the desires which it shares with the rest of humanity today. For faith casts a new light on everything and makes known the full ideal which God has set for humanity, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 11; from Flannery).

10. James D. and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, rev. ed. (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 9.

11. There is a burgeoning literature on practical-pastoral theology on both sides of the Atlantic, along with the growth of professional societies and scholarly journals devoted to the topic. See Randy Maddox, "Practical Theology: A Discipline in Search of a Definition," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18/2 (Summer 1991), 159-169, for an extensive review of the state of the question and numerous citations of key sources in English and German. A significant, recent scholarly effort in the field is the establishment of the *International Journal of Practical Theology* (see <http://www.deGruyter.de/journals/ijpt/> for contents of each issue).

12. Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 15.

13. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Theory and Practice: Theological Education as a Reconstructive, Hermeneutical, and Practical Task," *Theological Education* 23 (1987 Supplement), 125-126.

14. Bernard J. Lee, S.M., "Practical Theology as Phronetic: A Working Paper from/for those in Ministry Education," *APT Occasional Papers* 1 (Winter 1998), 3.

15. Lee insists upon the interdependent relationship of phronesis and praxis. He reconstructs Aristotle's categories to give these primacy over both episteme/theoria and techne/poesis: "moving directly from theory to practice is never allowed. The passage must always go through phronesis/praxis. It is never enough to know how to do it and to do it. We need to know whether the kind of life we believe all people should be living will benefit from the doing" (14).

16. Whitehead and Whitehead, xii.

17. Imbelli and Groome, 137.

18. See Richard Osmer, "Rationality in Practical Theology: A Map of the Emerging Discussion," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 1/1 (1997); available online at <http://www.deGruyter.de/journals/ijpt/pdf/11.pdf> He characterizes the other three modes of rationality used in discussions of practical theology today as argument, rhetoric and postfoundationalist science.

19. David Tracy, "Foundations of Practical Theology," in *Practical Theology*, ed. Don Browning (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).

20. See Osmer, especially 29-31.

21. Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 146-148. Groome also cites Farley's outline of the four components of 1) attending to the contemporary situation, 2) critiquing the present situation by use of the faith tradition, 3) interpreting the faith tradition by use of the present situation and 4) bringing new, theologically transformed understandings to the contemporary setting (Farley, 165-68). Other prominent approaches to practical theology are named within the rubric of "theological reflection" for ministry and for Christian living. See especially Robert Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection* (Liturgical Press, 1996), and Whitehead and Whitehead.

22. Osmer uses Browning as exemplar of this mode; see Osmer, 20ff.

23. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 9.

24. *Ibid.*, 51.

25. Whitehead and Whitehead, 7.

26. G.D.J. Dingemans, "Practical Theology in the Academy: A Contemporary Overview," *Journal of Religion* 75/3 (1995), 92.

27. Whitehead and Whitehead provide an insightful outline of the three interrelated elements of experience, tradition and culture as providing the "model" for their approach, and name the stages of their "method" as attending to these elements, asserting our voice in the conversation about them, and moving toward pastoral response. See *Method in Ministry*, especially the overview in Chapter 1. Jan Michael Joncas offers an overview of practical theology and a use of the Whiteheads' model and method for initiating a conversation on a "theology of the choir." His postings are found at the World Wide Web site for the National Association of Pastoral Musicians: "Practical Theology for pastoral musicians," <http://www.npm.org/theo.html>

28. "Critical thinking" is integral to practical theology. At the same time, it is a difficult cognitive skill that requires both developmental readiness and the creation of a safe environment for the expression of diverse viewpoints. See my discussion of pedagogical and developmental issues related to the use of practical theology with young adults in Maureen R. O'Brien, "Practical Theology and Postmodern Religious Education," *Religious Education* (forthcoming, 1999).

29. See, for example, Terry A. Veling, "Practical Theology': A New Sensibility for Theological Education," *Pacifica* 11 (June 1998), especially 205.

30. Whitehead and Whitehead, 15.
31. Gabriel Moran, *No Ladder to the Sky: Education and Morality* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 12-13; emphasis in original.
32. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, especially 96-99.
33. Groome, 30.
34. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 218.
35. Maddox, "Spirituality and Practical Theology," 14.
36. See Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American*
37. *Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985). The authors have done significant work in identifying what they call the "communal moral languages" of American tradition that arise from biblical and civic-republican narratives, and in urging that we reclaim these as a source for conversation about the common good. In our religiously pluralistic society, it is also increasingly apparent that we must recognize the foundational narratives of other religious groups as sources for such conversations.
38. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 194.
39. Catholic social teaching has been a proving ground for this task in the twentieth century, and is likely to continue as we enter the new millennium. While largely philosophical in its early formulations, increasingly it is framed in the dual moral/religious "languages" of Christianity and of universal human dignity and rights. The two pastoral letters of the United States Catholic bishops, *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) and *Economic Justice for All* (1986), exemplify this approach. The bishops are clearly impelled to speak by their interpretation of the crises addressed by each letter (the nuclear arms race and poverty, respectively). Their aims are practical; they do not write in an abstract and speculative realm. In seeking to recommend transformed practices, they first draw upon biblical and theological sources to evoke the Christian vision of a peaceful and just world. They weave this visional narrative together with the principles derived from natural law ("just-war" theory and human economic rights, for example) and move into a consideration of the socio-political forces shaping present policy in light of these narratives and norms. This leads them to direct and specific recommendations both for changes to those policies, justified in "public" language, and calls for Catholics to address them in prayer, fasting and other pious and ecclesial practices particular to the church. See National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, first published in 1983, in *Pastoral Letters, Volume IV, 1975-1983* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference); and *Economic Justice for All*, first published in 1986, in *Pastoral Letters, Volume V, 1983-1988* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference). For an extended discussion of the use of religious and public languages in *The Challenge of Peace*, see Maureen R. O'Brien, *Religious Education and the Public: The Contribution of "The Challenge of Peace"* (unpublished Ph.D. diss., 1990).
40. Maddox, "Spirituality and Practical Theology," 14.
41. David Tracy's discussion of the "Christian classic" is very helpful in developing the argument that a "classic" holds the possibilities for disclosure and transformation beyond the believing community. See *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981).
42. See John A. Coleman, "The Two Pedagogies: Discipleship and Citizenship," in *Boys*, 35-78.
43. See Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, especially 106-107. It is important to note that Browning emphasizes his construction of the five dimensions as itself an exercise of practical moral reason rather than deriving them from abstract, supposedly universal truths: "I did not so

much derive them as construct them. . . . They are reconstructions of intuitive experience of what goes into practical moral thinking, whether conventional or critical. . . . My claims for their usefulness are open-ended and modest" (107-108).