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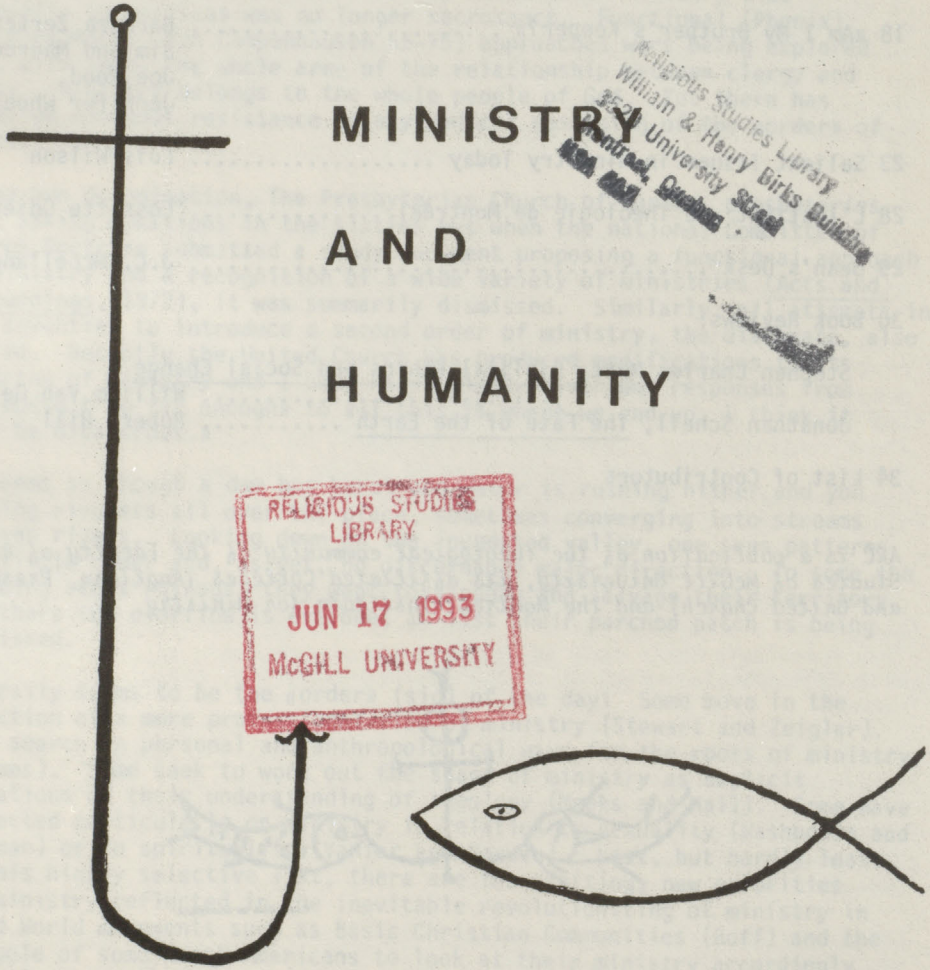

MINISTRY AND HUMANITY

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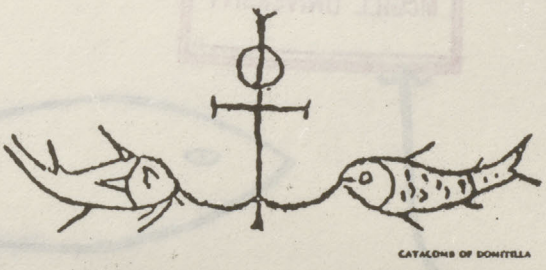
ARC is a publication of the theological community of the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University, its affiliated Colleges (Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church) and the Montreal Institute for Ministry.



CATACOMB OF DOMITILLA

EDITORIAL....ARTHUR VAN SETERS

MINISTRY AND HUMANITY

Ministry is not what it used to be. It is no longer easily definable along traditional lines: an Anglican priest, a Presbyterian minister, a Baptist pastor, a Christian layman, etc. Back in 1953, Hans Von Campenhausen published in German his seminal work on the development of ministry in the Church in the first three centuries. Its translation into English in 1969 accelerated and deepened the serious denominational (e.g. Johnson and Mudge) and interdenominational (e.g. COCU) studies of the sixties and early seventies. Ministry tied primarily to «office» was no longer sacrosanct. Functional (Phenix) or charismatic (Von Campenhausen 55-75) approaches were being explored and, with them, the whole area of the relationship between clergy and laity. Ministry belongs to the whole people of God. Yet there has remained enormous resistance to any radical reshaping of the «order» of ministry in practice.

In my own denomination, The Presbyterian Church of Canada, presbyteries kept asking questions in the sixties but when the national Committee of Church Doctrine submitted a study document proposing a functional approach to ministry and a recognition of a wide variety of ministries (Acts and Proceedings, 1972), it was summarily dismissed. Similarly, all attempts in the seventies to introduce a second order of ministry, the diaconate, also failed. Recently the United Church has produced modifications to its doctrine of ministry and I have heard widely divergent responses from «It doesn't go far enough» to «If this is where we end up, I think it will be disastrous.»

It seems as though a dam has burst and water is rushing hither and yon forming rivulets all over the place, sometimes converging into streams or even rivers. Looking down on the inundated valley, one sees patterns but little order and, as yet, no discernable major direction. To some the flooding seems ruinous; they want to sandbag and salvage their territory. To others the overflow is overdue; at last their parched patch is being nourished.

Diversity seems to be the «order» (sic) of the day! Some move in the direction of a more professional view of ministry (Stewart and Zeigler). Some search in personal and anthropological ways for the roots of ministry (Holmes). Some seek to work out the shape of ministry as explicit emanations of their understanding of theology (Meeks and Hall). Some have reflected particularly on ministry in relation to sexuality (Washbourn and Weidman) or to spirituality (Vanier and Nouwen). Last, but hardly least in this highly selective list, there are the exciting, new priorities for ministry reflected in the inevitable revolutionizing of ministry in Third World movements such as Basic Christian Communities (Boff) and the struggle of some North Americans to look at their ministry accordingly (Brown).

This issue of ARC follows some of these streams and ignores others. No attempt has been made to be balanced let alone comprehensive. Rather, it has emerged with a number of emphases, especially on the contextual, social, and personal dimensions of ministry. It is also written almost entirely out of people's experiences and in interaction rather than from written research and in isolation.

The process began last Spring (1982). I discussed the prospect of an issue of ARC on Ministry with the Institute staff. Together we arrived at an initial proposal and expanded our circle to include about fifteen people representing our different college communities, local pastors, and the university. We agreed to ask three groups of people to work corporately on three issues: the ministry of women, ministry in Québec today, and the ministry of social justice. By early Fall, groups of at least two or more had met and discussed their experiences and views. Then, in a variety of ways, they produced their articles.

The final stage was to send these three papers to an «outsider» and to ask for a wider perspective from someone who had travelled widely and had been in a position of looking more broadly at the Church in Canada and globally.

I am struck by one common factor in the result. All of these articles emphasize human dimensions of ministry and, perhaps, because of this, move easily between ministry that is personal and that which is corporate, and from the ministry of some to the ministry of all. As I read through these contributions I was impressed by something else. Their passion for humanness reminded me of the passion of people like Nouwen and Vanier who have both written so much about spirituality. True humanness is true spirituality and vice versa.

The article by Alison Stewart-Patterson, et al., is a narrative sharing of what ministry is to five women. They are aware of traditional expectations and are working out of a broader vision and more mundane involvements. They reevaluate their role as speakers and the church's need to grapple with urgent social problems. They want to be called by name, their human names.

Chris Ferguson and Kathryn Anderson offer what some may regard as a controversial analysis of their United Church presbytery's attempt to discern its mission in French Québec. Using liberation theology and social analysis, they point to the difficulty their church has had in following what they view as the imperatives of the Gospel in our present Québec context.

Doing justice is perceived by Barbara Zerter, et al., as the ministry of the whole church in a world that has become a global village. Aware of the unequal distribution of the world's resources, they press toward a vision of hope that is specific and encouraging.

Finally, the former moderator of the United Church of Canada, Lois Wilson, contributes her wider vision. Speaking out of her exposure to many parts of the world and all segments of her church in Canada, she seems to expand on and reinforce many of the perspectives already given: concern for the world, the Gospel bias for the poor and the ministry of the laos.

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CALL ME BY MY NAME

ALLISON STEWART-PATTERSON, MARY IRWIN GIBSON, SHIRLEY HERMAN, MAUREEN KABWE, FAYE MOUNT.

Five of us gathered together recently to discuss the various issues involved in being a woman in ministry. While it soon became evident that we were expressing a diversity of opinions and analysis, we were also determined to «hoe a new row», to bring to the surface our reflections on our experiences in ministry and to try to consolidate these reflections in the form of an article prepared «collegially». What we did share in common was the fact that we were all struggling to throw off the burden of the traditional expectations of what it means to be «a minister».

The article which follows becomes our marker of the beginnings of our growing insights on what it means to be a woman in ministry--the implications hopefully we will continue to work on. The content follows a style of narrative and reflection, a sort of story-telling that we all felt led us from discovering who we are to how we could be in ministry with integrity. For it is the simple stories of what we do, how we do it and where and when, that will communicate the sameness or the newness, the similarities or the difference of our ministries.

* * *

My feeling of excitement in being able to serve and to minister comes when I am working alongside others, struggling with issues of faith and justice. I feel that I am an in-breaking tool. For example, I once arranged a workshop on stewardship. Part of it was a group study of certain biblical texts. Each group was to work through the passages in order to articulate their own understanding of the gospel call to stewardship. One man complained, «This is crazy. I came here expecting you to give us the rules and I don't understand what we are supposed to do. I want budgeting and visitation skills explained.» However the groups worked away and came up with a whole range of examples from ecology to fund-raising. At the end the complainer said, «Now I understand. We

have each been forced to work through what stewardship means and to be open to hearing the Bible in new ways.» When this happens, I feel that I'm onto something. This process is more than affirmation of people's leadership potential or reflective abilities. It liberates people from being passive receivers to being active namers and shapers of faith in action.

* * *

One day Laura asked for my help. Laura is 83 years old and has been a widow for the last 21 years. Reasons of economy and physical limitations made it necessary for her to move into a one and a half room, third floor apartment. Laura is a real «giver», a «cheerful giver» who loves her God, her Church and people. Her health is deteriorating and she knew, even before the doctor told her, that her life is nearing its end. Or, as Laura puts it, «The day is soon coming when I will leave life for life and the people I love to join the people I love.»

Laura is not passively waiting for this day to arrive. She is purposefully and thoughtfully making preparation. She is putting her earthly house and concerns in good and proper order--the Presbyterian way--she calls this. Such matters as the burial plot and the funeral have been arranged and the bill paid. Her will has been committed to print and is in safe keeping.

Recently I spent an afternoon with her after she had called for my help. During the afternoon we sorted through a lifetime of her accumulated treasures, possessions and memorabilia that had been consigned to cartons, many cartons, at the time of her move in the winter, and had remained so entombed until now.

Laura wanted these things unpacked and sorted so that she could give them now to the persons she had chosen, and in this way have both the pleasure of giving and the assurance that «her will was done» insofar as these very important and valued pieces of her life were concerned.

She has no living relatives to whom she can turn for help in this sorting. But this was not why my help was sought for she has many other friends. My help was sought because as important as this part of her preparation was, it was not the only or even the most important matter with which she was needing and was determined to deal.

We sorted and sorted. More and more the one-room home became less and less the reflection of an elderly woman whose goal was «good and proper order». Yet, in the midst of this organized chaos we talked about many of Laura's important concerns: her life, with its regrets and its many cherished joys and memories; her relationships, past and present, including hers with God and her late husband's with God; her possessions, the holding of them and the giving-up of them. All of these vitally related to her own death and

how she felt about it and how she wanted to cope with it. And related also with the deep and at times overwhelming sense of grief regarding this «once in a life-time event» that to her seemed at once to be both end and beginning.

As Laura shared her story, generously punctuated with humour and laughter, sadness and tears, certainties and doubts, silence and closeness, the sorting progressed. The formidable chaos had almost imperceptibly taken shape, had been resolved. The goal, though not completely attained, was nevertheless recognized as realizable. This is my ministry.

* * *

Many of the things I do may look trivial to goal-oriented people. But, for me, the day to day meeting with people is where ministry begins. It begins in living with the people in a community, in belonging to them, in giving myself to them and in learning to love them. I remember moving to my present situation and wondering how on earth I could grow to love still more people. Yet within a short while I began to sense a deep, nurturing, mothering sort of love for these people to whom I had been sent.

It is in the everyday setting that I am able to see where the needs exist and to respond to them. I see quite a bit of my ministry in terms of reconciliation and evangelism, being a catalyst who can lead individuals to a deeper relationship with God, with their neighbours and themselves.

Part of my call to minister is a call to risk-taking. I am called to be open to anyone I meet. It is a call to risk intimacy and vulnerability with God's people. I have to have time for people, to take the moment when it comes and really use it for God's glory. In day to day encounters with people, it means seeing the signs and not being afraid to respond to them in a meaningful and creative way. People often offer clues to anyone who will see them, clues of their own deep hurts, needs and fears, of their alienation and bitterness. All these may be offered during a baptismal interview, or a visit to a newcomer, or an encounter over the vegetable counter at the local supermarket. I pray for the ability and the openess to respond in these moments of hope.

It is this foundation of knowing and being with people that enriches the other, more formal aspects of my ministry. Especially enriching is that time when we come together on Sundays as the Body of Christ in our celebration of the Eucharist.

* * *

The call to speak has always been powerful within me. It is the call to speak about God's living presence in the world today, to wake up those who have drifted off and to help them, once again or maybe for the first time, feel the love of their God for them. It is a call to communicate the

vibrancy and vitality of the Scriptures. One Christmas-time at an evening performance of Handel's Messiah in a large and beautiful church, I was asked to read the well-known--too well known perhaps--story of the nativity. As I read, I was conscious of reading it in a new way with an emphasis I had not felt before. The story came alive. I was aware of the audience, who had come to hear the music and tolerate the scripture, being seized by the words, waking up and in so doing becoming a congregation of worshippers. This turned a performance into an offering.

This call to speak is not confined to the sermon and the pulpit of the church where I serve. In fact, I have never been able to say where, within a worship service, the sermon begins or ends. Now, increasingly, I find that my best «sermons» are preached in a house, or at a chance meeting with a friend, or in response to the question of a stranger. I am less and less happy in a PULPIT, separated from and higher than the people of God. When one has spent all week searching for and building closeness with the people, it is not fair or necessary on Sunday to retreat behind a wall and climb into a wooden box where one is safe from assault in order to tell the people about God's love for them even as they sin.

I believe that the Word which the Lord gives me to speak on a Sunday--or at any other time--is quite powerful enough to give me all the tallness and safety I need. The less we put between the people and the minister, be it pulpit, or special clothes, or impressive title, the easier it is to share and to teach the communion of the Body of Christ.

* * *

I have come to the conviction that ministry is not defined solely by the needs and expectations of the congregations we serve, but by the call of the gospel to be in the world with those who suffer. There is so much hurting, struggle, searching and need in the streets and crowded apartments around my church. At a recent visit to a nearby home for battered women, a so-called secular institution, the director spoke of the complex problems of women who were seeking to free themselves and their children from a destructive, abusive and often life-threatening environment. We talked of the impact of the legal, social, economic, political and psychological factors to be faced in order to offer some hope for a new start for these women. I remembered sitting with a woman hours before she was to make her planned «escape» from home, helping her work through her sense of guilt that she could not be christian enough to forgive and endure the constant physical abuse from her husband. Reported cases show that ten percent of Canadian women suffer repeated domestic abuse, but the director said that from her experience, this unbelievable statistic represents only half the actual incidents of repeated abuse. She spoke of the pain that comes from sharing such frustration and suffering, of having to turn away two out of every three requests for help and being blocked by systems and law-enforcers that do not protect women. Any action that was going to have an impact on changing this intolerable situation is going to have to deal with all the

societal factors that perpetuate it. This woman's commitment was deep and costly. When I asked her how she coped personally with constant crises, she said that was only possible because of inter-staff support. She was amazed that our church was interested in their work--she had experienced «the church's unwillingness to be involved with women's struggles.» I came to her to see how I could help. I left realizing that I needed her help to learn how to minister to those around me.

As I am confronted with such signs of hope and promise, often unarticulated as such, I see more and more that ministry is seeking and naming the Christ incognito in our midst. This can only be done through working directly with those who suffer, seeking to analyse with them and others the systems of evil in which they are caught. This can only be done as we act personally and corporately to bring about the liberation of people from that which binds them, the work of the Christ in the world. As I work with my congregation, we must find ways to plant our feet outside our church community. What I am discovering is that it is there that we will be shown what it means to be the body of Christ in the world.

* * *

«What do we call you?» they said to me when I came to be their minister. They started off in the way they had always spoken of their minister, «The Rev. Surname called today.» The kids gave me a nickname-Rev. First-syllable-of-christian name. But eventually my name, my christian name became more and more to be used. Occasionally, if someone doesn't know me very well, they will call me Mrs. or Mme. Christian name.

Christ called us by name. We are called to minister out of all that we are in our being--our experience, our struggles, our context in history and in this society. We are called to minister as women, to know who we are, what we can and cannot do. All of us have travelled a long way and our stories are many. Out of these diverse stories and out of our common experiences, we have just begun to see the implications on the path ahead for us as women in ministry.

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THE PRAXIS OF MINISTRY IN THE QUEBEC CONTEXT

CHRIS FERGUSON
KATHRYN ANDERSON

INTRODUCTION

This brief reflection on the praxis of ministry emerges from the experience of two «immigrants» to Quebec. Both of us chose Quebec as a place to live and pursue our ministries, and both of us are involved at this time in non-parish ministries. Our conviction, however, is that the specific nature of Christian ministry (whether in the parish or not) must take seriously the social, economic, political and cultural contexts in which we find ourselves. Theologically we affirm a this-worldly faith, seeing God acting in and through history. In this we affirm the human vocation of being historical subjects, called to act collectively, as co-creators, shaping a world in response to God's will. Christian praxis is the unbroken chain of action and reflection. Praxis is our actual engagement in the world, the material reality, how we shape the world, and how we respond to the forces which shape us. So we have decided to put forward an example taken from our own recent experience of «praxis».

This instance represents the practical attempt to analyse the specific realities of our context and to try to discern what claim those realities have on the ministry of a particular church court of a particular denomination This includes a working out of the classic questions of the relationship between Christ and culture (to use H.R. Niebuhr's language) or, in other words, an effort to define our ecclesiology: What kind of church are we called to be and what is our mission in this place and time?

A CRISIS OF MISSION

In 1979-1981 the Montreal Presbytery of the United Church of Canada found itself caught up in a very serious conflict concerning the direction of its mission and its internal life as a court of the church. This led to a long process of self-examination and analysis involving a cross-section of presbyters. A series of working groups was set up to address the various areas of concern. Among them was a group called «The Contextual Trends Sub-group». This group of five people included four people born outside Quebec and one native-born francophone of immigrant parents. Two of the five were francophone, one was a black of West-Indian origin. The other two were Canadian born, one from the West Coast, the other originally from Ontario.

In a sense this group represented a good sample of Montreal's minority communities. However, it did not really represent the long-standing and established English community, nor the West Island suburban business oriented population. It goes without saying that it did not reflect the majority culture of eighty percent franco-Quebecois. In other words, the

group was not representative of either the majority English or the majority French population. It is important to note that in terms of the selection process no one of the so-called dominant or majority Anglo-Quebec community chose to work on the Quebec question.

In a way, then, from the beginning this committee was essentially marginal to the mainstream and, as we shall see, the margin is a place of great freedom and creativity but no real power. Sharing in common their marginality, they were, however, theologically pluralistic (from evangelical to liberal to radical). Even in their theological diversity, they shared the assumption that social trends and social reality should shape the nature of ministry in a dialectical relationship with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In short, a real ministry must be relevant to the real needs and issues of the world around us.

THE SIMPLE AND COMPLEX TASK OF TAKING THE WORLD SERIOUSLY

The first step in a praxis of contextual ministry is to discern what is really going on, what is at stake in our immediate context, while at the same time understanding that our local context includes and is shaped by global, provincial and national questions. The Contextual Trends Sub-group applied this method simply by assessing different areas of social life and analysing them. Although they were operating from a base of theological convictions, theological reflection was to be the second step. Seeing what was significant in the world around them was their first act of the praxis of ministry.

The societal trends which were significant in the Quebec context in their observations were as follows.

1) The French Fact and Quebec Nationalism

The dominant culture in all domains of public life is linguistically and culturally French. Since 1960 there has been a growing spirit of nationalism expressed in the economic sector and by legislative steps to protect and encourage the flourishing of French language and culture.

2) Pluralism

At the same time as there is the fact of a majority French culture, there is the fact of Montreal's being a city of great cultural diversity (with the pressing question of whether ethnic minorities will be assimilated, integrated or marginalized).

3) Secularization

The general Western trend towards secularization has had a tremendous impact on Quebec's culture, particularly in the period

of the Quiet Revolution which, in effect, brought Franco-Quebec to the newer era culturally. Protestants have also been affected by secularization. A typical church reaction to empty pews has been to invoke the «English Exodus» as the reason. Secularization is another prime (but, often overlooked) cause.

4) The Revolution in Communications

The impact of the mass media and micro-electronic revolution in terms of the Americanization of culture, promotion of consumerism and the problem of having only one major English language daily are significant trends to be considered by the church.

5) The Economic Situation

Worsening economic situations, growing unemployment and rising interest rates have an impact on the psychological and social well-being of Quebec. It was noted that the church investment board benefited financially from the situation of high interest rates.

A second analytic step was directed towards the congregations within the Montreal Presbytery. A questionnaire was sent to each church asking such questions as:

1) How has the political and cultural revolution affected your congregation?

2) What needs in the world are being met by your congregation locally and globally?

3) What global, regional and/or local needs are not being met and should be met?

The responses were not scientifically precise but provided a powerful indication of the hopes and fears of the people.

The strongest impression was of a deeply felt anxiety in relating to the social, economic, cultural, political and linguistic changes in Quebec society. Frequent mention was made of feeling trapped and of bitterness towards «French invasion into English territory». The vast majority expressed their alarm at the «exodus» of young English families from Quebec, which, to them, was seen as putting their future and the future of the church in danger.

Included within this fearful lament, there were critical appreciations of the dilemma of Anglo-Protestants in such comments as «more ingrown», «Anglophone ghetto», «danger of ghettoization», «isolation from others».

Some positive perspectives emerged as well, indicating that the changes have brought a renewed sensitivity to the needs of protecting English schools and appreciation of the French milieu. The majority of churches responded to

the question about «global needs» by saying that they contributed to the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church. Another frequent avenue of involvement in response to global and local needs was child sponsorship in the Two Thirds World (a more appropriate designation than Third World).

Many churches were also involved in various kinds of charity work and community agencies. Without denigrating the value of these activities, it was striking to note that no church reported being involved in activities geared to social change and/or solidarity with the suffering and the oppressed.

The churches also reported a varied list of unmet needs, among them: traditional evangelism, attention to the political situation and support for new and struggling ministries.

The third step was to address the data in terms of a theology of the mission of the church. The biblical and theological perspective was informed by Luke 4: 16-19 and an approach to the theology of the city articulated by Jacques Ellul. The call of the church was to be in the world with a Christ-like hunger for justice and righteousness in our society. This mission was seen within the context of nurturing the community of faith.

The fourth step was to move from these observations (including biblical reflection) to recommend how the church would, in a practical and committed way, respond to its context.

It is very significant to note that the recommendations were written and presented in French by a francophone. This provoked a heated, but necessary conflict concerning the right of francophones to participate in the church meetings in their own language without translation. It also demonstrated that the Montreal Presbytery operated as an «ethnic» English church (albeit with other ethnic groups attached to it). The mission of the Presbytery has been defined largely by a conservative and protective approach to the preservation of English culture, so much so that an éditoraliste of Le Devoir compared the United Church to a private club!

TAKING THE QUEBEC CONTEXT SERIOUSLY: CONCRETE STEPS

It is worth stating flat out that the majority of the recommendations made for moving from analysis to change were not accepted by the presbytery. This is not a success story. The exercise here is to lay out a model which exposes a straightforward approach to social praxis for a church revisioning its mission-in-context.

To move from analysis to action in regard to the politico-cultural context, the committee put forward nine distinct recommendations starting with the obvious need for the leadership in the presbytery to increase their knowledge and familiarity with French Quebec. This meant a clear acceptance of the «French Fact» and included taking the particular character of the region seriously enough to ensure that all ministers had sufficient training in the history and culture of Quebec and, of course, fluency in the French language. In a mission-conscious spirit the recommendation called for a discernment of new mission fields and a concentration on local ecumenism.

On a structural level, taking the Quebec context seriously would require changes in committees and their mandates. For example, a Communications Committee would be responsible for transmitting the issues and positions of the church, both local and national, to the Quebec media. Another committee would help keep the Presbytery in touch with the burning issues in Quebec society. It was also recommended that one of the standing committees form a permanent link with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Montreal.

A recommended change to the Church and Society Committee illustrated the subtle blindness to the wider culture which has existed within the English Protestant church. In recognizing that the «society» in which we live is predominantly French, it was recommended that the committee operate in French and move to address explicitly questions which face all of Quebec society, and that a sub-committee addressing itself to English issues be formed. This recommendation would force a shift from the dominant English tendency to see all issues in terms of how they affect the English and/or Protestant community to a perspective on the well-being of the whole society. It was also suggested that all churches put up French or bilingual signs and that the bookstores sell Christian material published in French.

STRUCTURING FOR MISSION

In order to provide a structure by which the Presbytery could continue to analyse its context and act within it faithfully, the committee proposed the establishment of a Mission Council. This group would determine the priorities and directions for mission in the Montreal area. The intention was to provide a place where ministry and mission within society could be approached in a comprehensive way. An important aspect of the recommendation was the proposal to have the Mission Council be responsible for the funds held at present by a separate body on behalf of the presbytery. The current practice of the stewardship of financial resources reveals an incipient dualism. The oversight for the ministry and «spiritual concerns» of the church has come from the presbytery while the financial management has been delegated to a separate group. This separatism has had enormous impact on the praxis of the presbytery. Implicitly «things spiritual» became set apart from «things material». Faith became spiritualized on the one hand and a protective attitude towards physical property developed on the other.

This Mission Council suggestion, although a simple administrative proposal, emerged from a strong hermeneutical suspicion (Segundo) and subsequent analytical critique that setting aside control of money from the responsibility for mission promoted conflicting and opposing styles of engagement in society. The proposal, therefore, represented an attempt to reintegrate all dimensions of stewardship as one for the world, beyond the bounds of the church as institution. Here, too, there is an important ecclesiological question: What kind of church are we to be with what kind of mission? The report of the Contextual Trends Committee clearly and explicitly advocates a God-World-Church typology, where God is revealed and experienced as acting with the world directly and the church is seen as God's witness and partner in mission. In this sense, the church is called to live in and for the world (World Council of Churches). According to this image of the Church's relationship to God's mission (Missio Dei), the church is called to live ex-centrically, which is to say, turned inside out (Hoekendijk). Such a model is, of course, contrasted with a hierarchical God-Church-World typology of the church as conduit through which God acts and according to which the world is brought into the church, there to discover God. Simplistic contrasts? Yes, but useful here to indicate a theological and practical basis of a church-for-the-world and the structural implications of such a theology. At the very centre of this ecclesiological question there is the christological question «Who is Jesus Christ?» The mission of the church is bound to following the crucified and resurrected Nazarene. Our mission becomes a question of putting our feet where Jesus put his feet. The image of a church living outside itself, living for the suffering world--a world fallen among thieves--is powerfully evoked in Hebrews 13:12: «So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.» Living «outside the gate» with the dispossessed is echoed in Luke 4:16-19 in Jesus' self-identification with the prophetic call to preach good news to the poor and liberty to the oppressed. Matthew 25 presses further to call for faithful disciples to attend to the least of all the brothers and sisters. The point is not to use three lines of scripture to build a christology but rather to evoke the bias and direction of a christology of the crucified Nazarene and the sense that this then gives for the mission of the church.

The Contextual Trends Report had other important recommendations. Without listing all of them, it is already clear that the methodology, content and underlying theological assumptions of this example of Christian praxis offer a coherent and important indication of how contextual, societal ministry can be done. In the end, the Presbytery did not follow the lead of the Contextual Trends paper in most of its assumptions or recommendations. The reasons, we believe, have to do with power relationships in the presbytery. Those who currently hold funds and are in positions of power and control did all they could to protect their vested interests and convince others that it was in the best interest of the presbytery to go along. Another important reason had to do with the lack of energy among those who did want to change direction. Faced with an enormous struggle which threatened to worsen the already difficult situation in the presbytery, the majority of people chose to take the

line of least resistance rather than engage in the «fighting» sure to follow if they adopted a clear position in favour of fundamental changes. The struggle to take context seriously remains, however, as a key Gospel challenge to be «in the world but not of it».

The model of Christian praxis adopted here follows «the Hermeneutic Circle» presented by Juan Luis Segundo and expanded and developed by others such as Joe Holland and Peter Henriot. The latter present Segundo's work in terms of a «Pastoral Circle» (Holland 3) which moves from (1) the lived experience by individuals and groups of a situation that calls out for action or change leading to (2) social analysis which attempts to answer the question «What is going on?» The picture that emerges leads to (3) theological reflection on both the experience and the analysis. Scripture, theology and tradition are approached through the fresh eyes of those who live in concrete situations and re-read and re-integrate their actions in light of their faith. This leads to the crucial fourth movement (4) Pastoral Planning. In light of the experiences analysed and reflected upon, what response is appropriate for individuals and communities? (Holland 4).

This circle of praxis was applied in the concrete situation of Quebec to open up new possibilities in a region pas comme les autres, to discern what was unique and specific so that the pastoral response could take seriously a wider cultural reality often avoided and ignored by a church which had historically identified with the minority and dominant élite. New experiences and social change call for new responses in the light of Christ's Gospel. The Contextual Trends paper illustrates a very specific attempt to respond contextually in Quebec as a church called to be partner in God's mission in the world.

Praxis requires addressing the world as it is experienced and readdressing our church and our ministry with a lively suspicion so that our theory and our practice are opened up to the questioning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ --the crucified Nazarene who is found in the world among the suffering and oppressed. In Quebec this leads to the majority French culture where a new society is being built working against colonialism and injustice. The first step for the English church is to take that context seriously--and to move from «ethnic church» to «church for the world». Until we do take this decisive step, our church-corporate in Montreal is less than «Church» and «Ministry» becomes a self-preservation exercise.

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«AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?» *

BARBARA ZERTER, JIM AND MAUREEN RAMSAY, JOE REED, JENNIFER WHEELER.

«Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'» (Gen. 4:9). Father Bill McNabb of Scarboro Foreign Missions tells the following story of his work in Nizao in the Dominican Republic:

> At my door stood three children, a girl and two boys. I knew what they wanted--something to eat. There was a piece of bread left over, so I gave it to the girl and was thinking up an excuse to send the boys away when the girl gave half the bread to them (they are not relatives of hers).
>
> I knew I was beat and shamed into making a further search to satisfy the boys. This is not an isolated instance. Children here will share the little they have as if it were the most natural thing; as if it couldn't be otherwise. I will confess I wouldn't be interested in dividing my little bit and so have been shamed more than once. When will I become a true Christian? (Scarboro Mission, December 1979, p. 11.)

Five of us sat around the other night discussing the content of this article. What does social justice mean to us? What is important to say about it? The following reflections are some musings we would like to share with you about what social justice means to us as human beings, as Christians. Why, although we would like to react in the manner of the little girl--as though to share were the most natural thing--we are often, like the author, shamed. We would also like to share some reflections on hope.

So what is social justice? The common thread running through our reflections is that the fullness of the earth is for everyone. Each person has the right to a fair share of the riches of creation. Yet we are faced with a world of hunger, poverty and suffering. We feel shock, anger and indignation that such situations should exist. The suffering of our fellow human beings, our brothers and sisters, causes us pain and grief. We may try to hide it, cover it up. reason it away, but still the suffering of others cannot leave us totally unmoved.

Our Christian faith reinforces this feeling. «Where is Abel your brother?» How can I call myself Christian and not care about the welfare of my sisters and brothers? I am my brother's keeper. It is my duty, obligation and privilege, as a Christian, to try to meet the needs of the poor and suffering, our brothers and sisters in whose faces we see the very face of Christ.

To speak about social justice, however, is to bring another element into the discussion. We are no longer talking about simply giving out bread, filling, or trying to fill, the empty hands of the destitute who reach out to us. We are also talking about trying to understand why they are poor in the first place and what keeps them so. We are speaking about cause and effect, understanding the cause and changing it.

This is where the problems start. Weeping about what cannot be helped is one thing. Changing what can be is another. Most of us feel a tug at our heart strings at the sight of three hungry little children and, like Fr. McNabb, go in search of bread. Probably we would also like to assure that they will have bread tomorrow and for all their tomorrows to come.

It seems that part of our human condition is that we are fearful creatures who enjoy our comfort and security and are afraid that if we start looking at the wherefore and whys of poverty we might find ourselves a little too close to them. If we look at the distribution of the world's resources and where many of our comforts come from we may discover that they live in poverty because we live in comfort. At the same time our inner voice tells us that this is not quite right. We cannot, in all justice, allow this situation, this suffering, to continue, but we don't want to, or feel we can't, change. The result is that we feel very guilty and would best like to close our minds to the whole problem. Repentance and change seem too much to ask.

Repentance and change seem such a long way off. We are generally rather confused about what, if anything, we are supposed to be repentant about. And change? Well what does that really mean anyway? We have a sense of «things just not being right» and «it must be different». A very common reaction in any discussion of social justice is one of defensiveness. «It isn't my fault.» «They did it to themselves.» It isn't always said that bluntly but usually the message is pretty clear. That type of reaction must mean that there are some feelings of guilt and responsibility there which the

person cannot handle and so tries to deny. Thus the common reaction to questions of injustice is one of denial, guilt, frustration, depression and a terrible sense of helplessness.

In our discussion we tried to understand where some of these feelings came from and what could be done about them. It is impossible for me to reproduce the discussion here but I would like to draw out some of the main elements which centred around individual and collective consciousness.

Our north-western Christian civilization is an individualistic one. Most of us, if asked to describe ourselves would do so in individualistic terms. There is a great deal of emphasis on my getting it all, knowing who I am, fulfilling my potential, my getting ahead, my making the right decisions for me, etc., etc. This is evident in all walks of our lives. Schools teach competition rather than cooperation. I must be sure that all my rights are met. Our churches too are geared towards individual salvation, me and God.

Individualism is not totally bad. Certainly it is important to know who I am, to have a positive self-image, to see each person as a valuable and worthwhile individual, to give each person respect and dignity--as person. (Although I think we fall rather short in this area. Some individuals are more valuable than others. We have a nice scale of criteria for individual value.) There must be a good balance between individual and communal.

Our overemphasis on the individual causes all kinds of problems. We are very isolated and alienated people. We tend to believe that problems are «all my fault». We hold individual responsibility for them. We create them, and must solve them, ourselves. How many children, for example, when their parents' marriage breaks up feel it is all their fault? Does not the increased rate of suicide among the young say something about their sense of despair, hopelessness and isolation?

When speaking about social justice we do not just feel that the way in which our wealthy societies are structured and use power has something to do with why people are poor. We feel that I, as an individual, carry the responsibility of western society. It's overwhelming, depressing and totally incapacitating! No wonder people are reluctant to talk about social justice. How could I possibly, as one person, change the whole mess? I would never be able to do it. If I tried I would risk losing not only the world I know but also the understanding of myself that I have. I might find myself in a world I did not know as a person I no longer knew for which I was responsible but totally incapable of doing anything about. It seems as though everything hangs on me--the responsibility for the problems of the world as well as my own self identity. People feel as though they are being asked to lose everything without any possibility for something else in its place.

Our «we» is made up of too many «I's». Historically the development of such dominant individualism is fairly recent; during the Middle Ages, Europe was a much more communal society. It was during the Renaissance that a stronger individualism began to emerge. So it isn't as though we were always this way. What developed over the years can also change. In order to halt the progressive

paralysis of individualism we must relearn, rediscover, our communal selves. We must relearn communication and cooperation. We must rediscover community. We must relearn a self identity that comes from relationship not just to another individual but also to the collective. Not that we should throw out the individual completely, rather we must build a balance between the two.

If we look at our faith tradition, we will also see the importance of the communal. God called Abraham to form a people. Israel is the people of God. Over and over again the people of Israel are reminded of God's love for them as a people. God makes promises to the people of Israel. God will never let them vanish. He will never forget his promise to them. God also calls the people of Israel to repentance. Certainly God has relationships with individuals but those relationships usually relate to the whole people as well. Our Judeo-Christian tradition is the history of a people and their hope and struggle for salvation.

This is a history which continues today. We must understand that we too are the people of God (I believe that all people are, but with different tasks) who are loved, saved and cared for as a people. Part of that communal relationship with God is also a communal responsibility. God called the people of Israel to repentance when they are gone astray. God also calls us to repentance.

We should not be incapacitated by an exaggerated sense of individual responsibility for the problems of the world, but we do have a responsibility --a communal responsibility. We must have communal repentance and change. Rediscovering our communal selves can also be very freeing. We can be freed from our individual guilt, depression and sense of powerlessness. We must come together again in small groups willing to learn, reflect, share, act, and challenge each other. They are small and beginning steps. We have many things to learn and unlearn. It will not be easy. There are no simple formulas. Just as the people of Israel went through captivity and exile in their repentance, so we will have our exiles and captivities. We are journeying on the road to salvation and we must be faithful. Our society is going towards a greater and greater isolation of people one from another. But we need each other. We must be willing to risk rediscovering our communal selves if we wish to keep from falling into the abyss of exaggerated individualism. We must dare to risk if we have any care at all for the poor, the weak, the suffering who cannot make it in the me, myself and I system. Who knows, they may save us.

Elements of Hope. Our Christian faith tells us that if we wish to have life in its fullness we must die. We must lose our life in order to gain life. The seed placed in the ground must rot and lose itself in order to come to fruition. In theory it sounds fine and we all hope that on our deathbed we may make that great leap of faith into new life. We seldom, however, see death and resurrection as part of our daily life.

In order to die we must let go of control and we are very much afraid of losing control. We are afraid of losing the things we have and thus ultimately of losing ourselves. We are afraid that if we do try to change the world, change the order of things, we would have to change as well. The material comforts we have become accustomed to may no longer be ours. How could we cope with this? Our own self-identity, which often seems to be very much tied up to what we have, may also be lost. We may no longer recognize or know ourselves. Yet the seed must die (John 12:24).

I have on a number of occasions had the opportunity to visit «developing» countries and meet and speak with the «poor and oppressed». Often, when I tell people here about it, their reaction is: «How could you possibly take it? How is it that you aren't totally depressed?» Certainly there is much suffering and to be close to it is very painful. Certainly there are many problems. The poor have no simple, easy answers, nor are they without faults. They face and share the same human frailties we do. Yet I have always returned with a renewed sense of hope.

There is a sense of vitality, of struggle with life, of hope and faith in the future that we are sadly lacking. It isn't a naive kind of hope based on wishful thinking but rather a hope born out of suffering and struggle. It is a hope that encourages and renews us. We often feel that we bear the weight of the world on our shoulders, that it is up to us to set everything straight, that the poor are dependent on us. Certainly we do have responsibilities and things we must do. In meeting, sharing and coming into relationship with the poor, however, we begin to see that it isn't all dependent upon us. We begin to see that we can share together, that we can support, encourage and challenge each other. It isn't a matter of us and them but rather of our shared struggle, with its shared pain but also its shared joy and hope. Our world becomes smaller and larger. We are reminded of our own place in a human family that goes beyond our immediate selves and surroundings. We are reminded of our shared sister-brotherhood with the whole family.

It is not just in going to the «third world» where we can experience this growth. In our own midst, if we have the courage to see, we can find this springing up of life and hope.

We must change. We cannot remain the same. It is scary and it does hurt. The change, however, does not take place in isolation; it takes place in relationship. We are offered a greater fullness of life. We are given a taste of resurrection. It is overwhelming and joyful.

The world will not change from one day to the next, but we change. We are part of, as St. Paul says, the groaning of creation coming to birth (Romans 8:22). The person who accepts the challenge and enters into the struggle discovers a new, fuller self and a new, fuller relationship to community. So too can the congregation that accepts the challenge and enters into the struggle--though not without pain (but which birth is without pain?)--discover a new fuller sense of itself. Being fearful creatures it is a fearful

challenge, but if we dare to take it, if we risk to be the seed laid down in the earth, we will discover a greater, more abundant life.

* Editor's Note

The Hebrew word for «keeper» in Genesis 4:9 is šōmēr and has traditionally been understood as one who cares for someone else in a socially responsible way. This is how it is used in this article. However, the biblical use of this term is quite the opposite and means «keeping someone or something in place or exercising control over someone or something.» The irony is that this sort of «keeping» is precisely what the article is against. In the Old Testament šōmēr is used of a keeper of prisoners (Josh. 10:18), of sheep (Gen.30:31), of baggage (I Sam. 7:22) etc., and, only when Yahweh is the subject, a keeper of Israel (Ps. 121:3-8). (For a fuller treatment of the term «keeper» see Paul A. Riemann, «Am I My Brother's Keeper?» Interpretation 24 (1970), 482-491). Nor is the term «brother's» intended to be inclusive of «sister's», but only a quote taken from a story about two brothers. While this may seem obvious, it needs to be emphasized when used in connection with an article on the ministry of doing justice.

SALIENT ISSUES IN MINISTRY TODAY

LOIS WILSON

I write about three salient issues in Ministry today:

to take seriously the world context for ministry
to practice the bias of Christian ministry
to understand ministry as of the laos, the whole people of God.

TO TAKE THE WORLD CONTEXT OF MINISTRY SERIOUSLY

Paul Tillich once said that the question of meaning, or the religious question, has remained the same all through history. However, Christian community has phrased the same question quite differently at various stages of our life and history. For example, in the earliest days, the community asked the question «What happens when I die?» And the church responded with the doctrine of resurrection. In the Middle Ages, the question was the same one, but phrased somewhat differently, «What shall I do with my guilt?» And the church responded with the penitential system and the doctrine of justification by faith. Now, in our time, the question of meaning is still the primary question, but it is more frequently phrased, «Where shall I find authentic community?» And one of the salient issues of ministry is to respond to that query.

We used to think we knew the nature of human community. Community meant «join us.» We understood ourselves as the norm, and although we were quite open to others who would like to join us, yet we would set the ground rules.

We know now that we are in a new time in history. Canada represents a pluralistic world which includes significant groups of other living faiths, of a variety of cultures and ideologies, and a rich mixture of cultural roots. The pluralism so characteristic of our country is not, however, reflected in our Protestant churches. If the church is unable to respond affirmatively to this issue of ministry today, it will become increasingly marginalized in terms of serving as stewart to the next generation of Canadians.

In the world at large, as well as in Canada, Christians are becoming aware of their position as a minority, and need to explore ways of ministry that will encourage and enable Christian input into the creating of authentic human community in this country. If the present rate of conversion continues until the year 2000, by that year there will be more Christians in Latin America than in Europe, more in Africa than in North America. Already the scales are tipping in terms of influence and numbers of Christians in the Southern and Northern Hemispheres. In Johannesburg alone, there are more than two thousand independent African churches growing quite separately from any Western missionary influence.

Our colleagues in other parts of the world are saying with increasing strength that we in the West have supported an «ideological misuse of Christian faith in North America». That is, today we have mistaken the freedom of Christian persons for unlimited freedom to accumulate wealth and property at the expense of the rest of the world. So they are asking us with persistent intensity, «Will you listen to our experience, and the ways in which the economic and political systems of the West impinge negatively upon us?» Recently there was a Conference on «Families Under Stress» held at Bossey in Geneva. An American delegate went with the usual list of causes of stress in North American families: drugs, divorce, alcohol, unemployment etc. But those of the Third World refused to listen to his list until he had examined theirs. Because, they said, stress in families in our part of the world is largely due to the economic, political and cultural policies from your part of the world. For example, they said, families in North America would feel it stressful to have a family member with a physical handicap. But in South America some family members have physical handicaps because of torture inflicted in response to their opposition to economic monopolies from the North. When peasants lose their small plots of land to make room for agro-business that grows cash crops for the North, then the peasant's family suffers stress, to say the least!

One of the salient issues in ministry today is to make the global/local connections and take the world context of ministry seriously. To identify the «missing links» between global and local, to relate critically to various ideologies including capitalist and communist, to trace analytically the connections between militarism, violations of human rights, and economic exploitation are all spiritually a priority for ministry today. Dorothee Sölle in an article in the Christian Century, May 12, 1982, speaks of a young woman, Marianne, who lives comfortably in the suburbs with her two children and husband. «She tells me about the gold jewellery her husband gave her for Christmas. The gold comes from South Africa: but she doesn't see the blood

on the gold chain. She hardly understands the connection between racism, infant death rates and exploitation on the one hand, and profit, the low price of gold and the export of nuclear technology (in which her husband is involved) on the other hand. For her 'sin' is a ridiculously old fashioned word, connected with eating too many calories, illegal parking or uncondoned sexual behaviour which you can't take very seriously.» Nor is this woman alone in being unable to make any connections between the local congregation to which she belongs and the world as it is. She is typical of so many in congregations and pulpits who do not understand how the suffering and exploitation of so many people of the Third World support our affluent life-style. Nor do they care to know. And yet there is a rising anger among the poor and exploited of this world. And they are angry because we are not angry enough!

Sometimes I despair as to how this can become a priority. Or how can it even get on the agenda of ministry for Canadians? We can't fly everyone to other countries so they can be helped to break out of provincial shells. And, indeed, we don't need to. The Third World is here. The infant mortality rate for Indians in Canada is worse than that of Nigeria or Indonesia. Yet the false and paralytic belief persists that the local church and the universal church are not interdependent, that the rich and the poor are not two sides of the same coin.

Salient in ministry today is the issue of world context of ministry. It is necessary that the right hand knows what the left is doing. It is vital that the congregation knows itself to be a part of the universal body of Christ, set for stewardship in an apocalyptic world.

THE BIAS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

The bias of Christian ministry is, it seems to me, very clear. Ministry is for and with the orphan, the alien, the poor, the widow, the marginalized. The signs of the Kingdom are the lame leaping, the blind seeing, the poor receiving good news. When I was Moderator of the United Church, I specifically asked to visit prisoners. Usually a Presbytery would wonder why, but would set it up for me anyway. Frequently, the prison officials would indicate minimal involvement of mainline Christians in ongoing prison life and work. I also asked that visits to Indian reserves and/or churches be high on my agenda but was usually met with the same incredulity. Why should a Moderator want to do that? In one case, I was told that it would be difficult to visit such-and-such a reserve because it was over an hour away, but the Indians could come to town for our meeting. They did. When I was expressing disappointment at not visiting them on their own ground, they exclained, «But our reserve is only twenty minutes away, across the lake!»

The obvious bias of much of ministry as expressed by congregations is still the preservation of things as they are. It is the understanding that the church must be preserved as an institution at all costs as well as the links of the church to particular cultural values in our society. Ministry is looked at to «conserve» traditional values. Ministry is not expected to be biased in favour of those «outside the city gate.»

Yet there is also the growing understanding of ministry as having to do with dissent, or with creating a just and sustainable community. Slowly and painfully, some are learning that the people of God are to be broken for the healing of the nations (the Program to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches is one such example). Vulnerability has not been upheld as a particularly strong contribution to ministry. A significant minority are practising ministry as a dynamic for change and social transformation of persons and systems. More and more Christians are acting «out of character» as it were. Margaret Thatcher could not understand why the Church of England refused to sing «Onward Christian Soldiers» after the «victory» of the Falkland War. A high profile political bureaucrat in Canada took me out to lunch to enquire whether I was pleased with the United Church these days. In the course of the conversation, it became clear that «what it used to be» (in his eyes anyway) was more acceptable. He now sees the church so often in an adversary role with Government, and he can't figure out why that seems to be so!

The bias of Christian ministry is to the marginalized. But Canadian congregations feel it is death to stand still, and therefore feel constantly propelled to «secure our future.» A busy active congregation is seen as a «better» church than one which does not engage its members in frenetic activity. Are many indeed running where they have not been sent? Particularly clergy?

TO UNDERSTAND MINISTRY OF THE LAOS, THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD.

A salient issue in ministry today is the role of the laos, the whole people of God. The time is long past when the clergy were the best educated members of a congregation. Or the widest travelled. The time is also long past when the local church was the centre or focal point or organizing principle for community life. Two heretical understandings of the church are abroad in response to this threatening, changed situation.

On the one hand, the church is conceived as a fortress against the unbelieving world. Truth is to be found inside the fortress mentality. Mission is thought of as scalping raids to bring «in» more people. Numbers are seen to be very important to ministry. The fortress mentality (which all of us share now and then) divides clergy and laity. Clergy are expected to «run the fort» and to uphold and live out the life of faith on behalf of the congregation. Some clergy get confused too and in fact TRY to be Mr. or Ms. Christian to the community.

On the other hand, the church is conceived of as a culture church and as part of the world roundabout. It embraces the world and its values. It baptizes and blesses things as they are. It assumes the protective colouring of the world. Its clergy approve rising defence budgets and do not raise issues around arms or cruise missiles or multinationals, particularly if some in the congregation earn their living from such industries. No creative tension is present at all. The culture church expects laity to go along and participate uncritically in the cultural norms of Canada.

A salient issue in ministry is our doctrine of the laos, the whole people of God. What we need to be working at is renewing our practice together of being neither fortress nor culture, but salt and leaven, of being the city set on a hill or the lamp NOT set under a bushel! The gathered and scattered church needs to renew its self-understanding as existing TO BE IN MISSION in God's good world. And His presence there needs to be acknowledged by the believing community--by an awakened laos, alert to discern the signs of His presence in the community of communities in which they live.

When I was associate minister in a congregation, one of the first things I did was to make a record of the place of employment of every person. Then I would visit them at their place of employment. Many asked if I were lost. The immediate assumption was that I should be «back at the church», and that their life as employed persons bore no relationship to their life of faith as Christians. The laos need to be awakened theologically in their vocational areas, and helped to take seriously their responsibility for the kind of society we create. The church's traditional residential emphasis must be complemented by a similar thrust to take ethical issues seriously in the public ordering of our lives. Because this has not been so for some time, the church is presently facing rising anger from non-ordained males, particularly businessmen and those whose ministry in the secular world has not been supported or nurtured. Increasing numbers of women too, when employed for money for the first time, are made to feel they «have left the ship». They are castigated for not bringing casseroles to the pot luck supper. Seldom does the congregation understand its responsibility to support them and nurture them in the new ministry they now enter in their chosen vocational area. A salient issue in ministry is to assist the laos in its understanding of the nature of public morality as well as private faith. We all increasingly face key questions such as the possibility of nuclear annihilation, the growing gap between rich and poor, the prostitution of technology. What desperately needs to be on the agenda for ministry is how the laos can incarnate the implications of the gospel for human and humane community, now, and in the future.

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L'INSTITUT DE THEOLOGIE DE MONTREAL

COSSETTE ODIER

Voici trois ans un nouvel institut était créé par les trois Collèges en collaboration avec la Faculté des Sciences Religieuses. Son role: permettre la formation en français des candidats au ministère francophone des Collèges et l'éducation permanente pour les laïcs des communautés francophones épiscopales, presbytériennes et unies.

Avec l'intention de développer peu à peu un coursus d'études en francais crédité par la faculté des Sciences Religieuses et en collaboration avec d'autres universités (U. de M., UQAM) l'Institut à offert cette année deux cours électifs:

Michel Despland: Erasme, Luther, Calvin, trois aspects de la Réforme

Pierre Goldberger: Loi et Evangile.

Et désire en proposer deux autres l'année prochaine:

Robert Culley: Le Prophétisme

Phyllis Smyth: Approche de l'éthique médicale.

Des conférences organisées grâce à la participation de André Lacocque et de Samuel Terrien ont contribuées à faire connaître l'Institut plus largement. La bibliothèque du Collège presbytérien abrite depuis quelques mois une collection toujours plus importante d'ouvrages en français.

D'autre part, l'Institut participe activement à la formation des étudiant(e)s de l'Institut de Montréal pour le Ministère. Un groupe de réflexion se réunit chaque semaine «en français» pour aider les étudiant(e)s à intéger leur stage et leur formation théologique. Une semaine de séminaire sur l'Eglise au Québec est en préparation pour février. Son intention sera de donner l'occasion aux étudiant(e)s de mieux découvrir la réalité du Québec francophone et de réfléchir sur le ministère de leur église dans ce milieu.

Enfin, la section éducation permanente de L'Institut se développe chaque année et répond à un réel besoin des communautés. La session «Bible Ouverte» attire cette année plus de trente participants. Cette formation donne la possibilité aux laïcs de rédécouvrir la Bible, d'approfondir leur foi, de rechercher comment témoigner de la foi chrétienne aujourd'hui. C'est une session oecuménique--avec la participation de catholiques cette année pour la première fois--tant par ses participant(e)s que par son équipe de huits animateurs et animatrices.

L'Institut de Théologie de Montréal cherche ainsi à servir les églises quant leur ministère d'education dans le Québec francophone et espère, un jour, contribuer à la vie de l'université et des églises par la richesse d'une pensee théologique protestante francophone en Amérique du Nord.

DEAN'S DESK ...J.C. McLELLAND

The Second Term seems to be the busier one each year. We have regular visitors for the Thursday Noon Speakers series as well as the Continuing Education programmes at the Presbyterian College. This year, for instance, they are «lending» us not only the Anderson Lecturer, Professor Hendrikus Berkhof of the Netherlands, but also President Howard Hageman of New Brunswick Seminary and Principal Ingram Seah of Taiwan Seminary. Other guests include Dr. George Vandervelde of the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto; Prof. Thomas Hopko of St. Vladimir's Seminary, N.Y., for a Seminar on Orthodoxy; Prof. Patrick Masterson, Dublin; Prof. Hans Goedicke, Johns Hopkins; and Prof. Charles Curran, Washington. An outstanding feature of the guest list is a Cummings Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts, co-sponsored by their French Department and our Faculty: Prof. Roger Mehl of Strasbourg will spend two weeks on campus, and will include lectures to our theologues, to l'Institut de Théologie de Montréal, as well as to U. de M. and UQAM students.

Our teaching staff also continue their peregrinations. The «big news» of staff changes is the imminent departure of Dr. Arthur Van Seters, Executive Director of the Montreal Institute for Ministry and Lecturer in Old Testament, who will become Principal of the Vancouver School of Theology this summer. We will miss him from our theological consortium and Faculty.

Prof. Douglas J. Hall is chief speaker at the annual Theological Students' Conference in Toronto in February, while Prof. Donna Runnalls gives the opening address at the annual conference of the Canadian Liturgical Society in May. I will be attending the consultation on Orthodox and Reformed dialogue in Chambésy, Switzerland, in March which we hope will establish an international group for an official round of conversations. Several of our staff intend to journey to Vancouver in late May for the Learned Societies meetings.

Of course there are students around too. The season has been difficult--unsettled weather and labour unrest and a flu epidemic. The Junior Common Room continues to focus the social interaction and much heavy discussion. Several students will attend the Theological Students' Conference in Toronto. Gradually the restoration of oil paintings, class pictures etc. is adding an attractive display to our walls. The presence of exchange students from not only the U.S.A. but this year also Erlangen, is noteworthy, as is that of two Research Associates, Dr. Harvey Kugelmass of Montreal and the Rev. Philip Lee of Saint John, N.B.

I hope to see many of you in October at our Birks Event, this year observing the Luther anniversary (1483-1983) in our joint lectureship.

BOOK REVIEWS

Stephen Charles Mott
Biblical Ethics and Social Change
New York: Oxford University Press, 1982

The emergence of the New Christian Right has reinforced the century-old yoke between evangelical Christianity and conservative politics in America, but there is a younger generation of evangelicals who have repudiated that yoke along with its individualism, moralism, and nationalism. These younger, «liberal» evangelicals espouse an evangelical social gospel motivated by biblical faith rather than civil religion. Stephen Mott, Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is a liberal evangelical who is interested in developing the framework for a consistent evangelical social ethic. Biblical Ethics and Social Change is his treatment of the biblical basis for implementing social change.

The first part of the book presents a biblical theology of social involvement. It begins with a realistic analysis of evil in society, drawing upon the biblical concepts of the «cosmos» and the supernatural «powers.» As the struggle against evil in social life, social action depends on God's grace which precedes and is the foundation for Christian ethics. Here Mott follows Barth in describing Christian action as that which corresponds to God's gracious action in Jesus Christ.

There are two excellent chapters on the two primary manifestations of God's grace--love and justice. Again, Christian love and justice is that which corresponds to God's love and God's justice. Love has social, and not merely individual, importance in that it affirms the worth of human life and provides the basis for the idea of basic human rights. Justice, as an instrument of love in society, is not merely retributive but distributive, liberating, and creative. Biblical justice is dominated by the principle of redress which operates on the basis of the maxim: To each according to each one's need. Understood in this way, justice is biased in favour of the poor and the weak. Ultimately, social responsibility makes sense in light of the Reign of God which brings a demand for justice and gives purpose to history.

The second part of the book evaluates various methods of achieving social change: evangelism, the church as counter-community, strategic non-cooperation (e.g. civil disobedience), armed revolution, and political reform. Mott does not rule out any of these as options for Christian action; depending on the situation, any one of them could be an appropriate response to the justice imperative. To complement the emphases of more radical evangelical groups (e.g. Sojourners) who work primarily through the counter-community and non-cooperation models, Mott stresses the role of political authority. Accordingly, he gives a fair evaluation of the importance of government and legislation, and shows that reform is not

necessarily co-optable but can be creative and even revolutionary.

The book is a scholarly synthesis of biblical studies and ethics from an evangelical perspective. The word «evangelical» today often implies, among other things, a set of rigid beliefs about the Bible, but establishment evangelicals would question Mott's approach to scripture. For example:

> In aid of greater methodological self-consciousness in interpretation, modern sociological and ethical categories are applied to the materials of the Bible to suggest new possibilities of meaning and to provide a means of assessing the applicability of the results of exegesis to contemporary discussion. . . . Thus one interprets Scripture with knowledge of sociological, economic, and ethical categories employed elsewhere to understand socio-economic structures and conflicts (viii-ix).

Those who are not interested in «new possibilities of meaning» or who reject «secular» knowledge will not be pleased with Mott's method. The basic norm for his biblical interpretation is a commitment to justice for those who suffer oppression.

Good introductions to Christian social ethics are rare, so this book meets a need. Professors and pastors with responsibility for introductory courses in ethics could well use it as a textbook. It will be especially appealing to those who desire scriptural references which illustrate the topic under discussion. The book is an important contribution to contemporary ethical discourse and, at the same time, helps restore respectability to the term «evangelical.»

William Van Gelder

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Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, 2065 Sherbrooke Street West (Métro Guy), Montreal, Quebec H3H 1G6, Telephone: (514) 937-9176.

Jonathan Schell
The Fate of the Earth
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982

Mr. Schell is a staff-writer for The New Yorker. The three essays found in this book originally were published as articles in that magazine. In these essays, Mr. Schell has produced a well-written meditation on the prospect of nuclear war. Now that we have these essays the question arises as to why it took so long for them, or something like them, to appear. With some notable exceptions, we on this continent have declined to think publicly, in print, in depth, in a popular medium about nuclear war. This danger, which makes up so much of the background to our life together, rarely has come into the foreground of popular discussion. Mr. Schell attemps here to bring the issue into the foreground. To the extent that his book is read and criticized, he will have succeeded.

The book's strongest section is the first essay, «A Republic of Insects and Grass». In these ninety pages, Mr. Schell presents a detailed description of the probable consequences of a nuclear holocaust. Here Schell traces the development of nuclear energy («the basic power of the universe»). He then pictures the probable primary and secondary effects of a full-scale nuclear exchange between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. (His argument begins with John Hersey's Hiroshima and other accounts of the use of the bomb on 8/6/45). Schell wants to give a description of the effects of such an exchange upon individuals, society, and the environment. A great deal of speculation is involved in this assessment, especially regarding the secondary effects, and this Schell admits. His argument can be criticized all along the line--for dismissing without discussion the question of a limited nuclear war, for overestimating the environmental consequences of an exchange, for clinging exclusively to a «worst-case» method. These criticisms, however, miss the heart of Schell's argument; a full-scale nuclear exchange would risk the extinction of the human race. He writes, «It is clear that at present, with some twenty thousand megatons of nuclear explosive power in existence, and more being added every day, we have entered into the zone of risk of extinction». This deeply disturbing and frightening account of what may happen, replete as it is with factual detail, and spiced as it is with occasional jarring comments (e.g. «The right vantage point from which to view a holocaust is that of a corpse»), gives us a pointed presentation of the fundamental risk, the dangerous potential, of nuclear armaments.

I recommended this book to a friend who read the first essay one day during a visit to his dentist. That evening he telephoned and exclaimed, in a rage welling up from a mixture of Schell and dental surgery, «I hope Schell shows us a way out of this!» Schell does not. It is to Schell's credit that he does not try in the book's second half to «solve the problem» outlined in the first half. Rather, he attempts in the essays, «The Second Death» and «The Choice», to meditate on the meaning of extinction and to present his reader with a life or death choice. Nevertheless, these two essays are much weaker than the first. The point of «The Second Death» is simply this: «death is only death; extinction is the death of death». On the way toward this conclusion, Schell seems to want to discuss both the moral implications of future extinction and the cultural consequences of the present risk of extinction. He summons a great cloud of witnesses in the course of these eighty pages (Einstein, Galileo, Descartes, Burke, Shakespeare, Socrates, Jaspers, and many others). Schell begins the essay under the shadow of Kafka's remark, «there is infinite hope, but not for us». Along the way the reader will find many intriguing, provocative isolated thoughts, but no sustained argument. Perhaps the most valuable part of this essay is Schell's argument with Jaspers over this question: «if under certain circumstances it is the duty of the individual to sacrifice his life for something higher than his life, might it not be the obligation of mankind under certain circumstances to do the same?» On this point though, as in the rest of the essay, Schell attempts to do far too much, far too quickly.

According to Schell's third essay, the choice we are left with is the choice between the survival of the nation-state and the survival of the species. Nuclear weapons, he argues, have not only made «war» obsolete, but they also have made the value of national sovereignty a thing of the past. Schell writes, «today the only way to achieve genuine national defense for any nation is for all nations to give up violence altogether». «The Choice» is the weakest of the three essays.

I recommend this book to the ARC readership. Although the first essay is very much better than the last two, still The Fate of the Earth raises extremely important questions for those who have interest in «ministry and humanity» and who thus can share in Tertullian's second-century prayer: «We pray for the welfare of the world, the prevalence of peace, and the delay of the final consummation» (Tertullian, Apologeticus, 39:2).

Robert Hill

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To those who have responded go our sincere thanks.

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