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The Struggle over the Future
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Zu diesem Heft

Das vorliegende Heft enthält die Beiträge der ersten Internationalen Akademie für Praktische Theologie, die sich vom 18.-22. August 1993 in Princeton, New Jersey, mit dem Thema >The Struggle over the Future of the Church: The Contribution of Practical Theology as a Discipline< beschäftigte. Im Juni 1995 setzt diese neue internationale und interkonfessionelle Arbeitsgemeinschaft in Bern ihre mit großem Elan begonnene Arbeit fort.

Reinhard Schmidt-Rost

A.
The Struggle over the Future of the Church:
The Contribution of Practical Theology as a Discipline

Don Browning

The Idea of the International Academy of Practical Theology

Casual conversations during informal exchanges at professional meetings can sometimes be dangerous. Participants often become expansive and uninhibited. Their imaginations become inflamed by the excitement of the conference, and they begin to imagine ways to continue, indeed expand, the conversations, friendships, and intellectual breakthroughs which they are experiencing.

It was during informal exchanges between Hans van der Ven, Dietrich Roessler, Karl Ernst Nipkow, Friedrich Schweitzer, myself and others during a June 1990 consultation sponsored by the Department of Practical Theology of Tuebingen University that the idea was born for an international organization on practical theology. Upon returning to the United States, I shared these dreams with Professor Richard Oemer of Princeton Theological Seminary. Through two generous grants from President Thomas Gillespie of Princeton Theological Seminary,

A.

The Struggle over the Future of the Church: The Contribution of Practical Theology as a Discipline

Hans van der Ven from Holland, Dietrich Roessler, Karl Ernst Nipkow, and Friedrich Schweitzer from Germany, and Richard Oemer, Norbert Hahn, and myself from the United States. With an exhilarating sense of omnipotence, we founded the International Academy of Practical Theology and voted ourselves its first members and officers. For a passing moment, we all had some sense of what God must have felt at the creation of the world. This is to confess that, in certain ways, the Academy was something like an act of *creatio ex nihilo*. We founded an academy which we hoped would encourage intercultural, interdisciplinary, and scientific exchange about the purposes, unity, and relevance of the practical theological disciplines to both church and world.

We must pause immediately to give our thanks for President Gillespie's support for the birth of this academy. It is my conviction that this assistance comes not only because Tom Gillespie is a very fine man, which he is, but because of the longstanding commitments of Princeton Theological Seminary to the disciplines of practical theology. This is reflected, I believe, in the development at Princeton of one of the leading departments of practical theology in the world.

Don Browning

The Idea of the International Academy of Practical Theology

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It was during informal exchanges between Hans van der Ven, Dietrich Roessler, Karl Ernst Nipkow, Friedrich Schweitzer, myself and others during a June 1990 consultation sponsored by the Department of Practical Theology of Tuebingen University that the idea was born for an international organization on practical theology. Upon returning to the United States, I shared these dreams with Professor Richard Osmer of Princeton Theological Seminary. Through two generous grants from President Thomas Gillespie of Princeton Theological Seminary, we were able to hold a founding meeting in the summer of 1991 and defray some of the costs of this conference. The founding meeting was attended by Camil Menard from Canada; Riet Bonsstorm and Hans van der Ven from Holland; Dietrich Roessler, Karl Ernst Nipkow, and Friedrich Schweitzer from Germany; and Richard Osmer, Norbert Hahn, and myself from the United States. With an exhilarating sense of omnipotence, we founded the International Academy of Practical Theology and voted ourselves its first members and officers. For a passing moment, we all had some sense of what God must have felt at the creation of the world. This is to confess that, in certain ways, the Academy was something like an act of *creatio ex nihilo*. We founded an academy which we hoped would encourage intercultural, interdisciplinary, and scientific exchange about the purposes, unity, and relevance of the practical theological disciplines to both church and world.

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The birth of the Academy was based on some shared observations. Several of us had noticed a new, world-wide interest in practical theology. Furthermore, we were struck by the large number of shared themes that characterized the writings of practical theologians in different countries who had, as a matter of fact, little contact with one another. At a consultation between Dutch and American practical theologians at Elspeet, Holland in 1990, Gijs Dingemans wrote an important paper which summarized many of the converging world trends.¹

Some World-Wide Trends

In what follows, I will try my own hand at identifying these shared themes. My list, however, will have many continuities with Professor Dingemans's observations. I see seven trends widely shared in the practical theological revival around the world. First, there is the widespread belief that all of theology, including what is traditionally called practical theology, should begin with the analysis of practice and situations. Second, many believe that practical theology should concentrate on the church's practice in the world (the public paradigm) as well as the ordering of the internal life of congregations (the clerical and ecclesial paradigms). This was a point made over twenty years ago by Alistair Campbell in an important 1972 article titled "Is Practical Theology possible?"² Third, it is thought that practical theology in the future will be interdisciplinary and, in fact, may need to involve coordinated teams of theologians, ethicists, and social scientists working together on joint projects. Our Dutch colleagues have been pioneers in this approach. Fourth, practical theology should strive for unity; it should attempt to evolve coordinating models that interrelate the specialized subdisciplines of practical theology with each other and with theology as a whole. Fifth, there is a growing belief that it should be scientific and critical in the broad senses of these terms. German, Canadian, Dutch and some American scholars have joined in affirming these values. Sixth, practical theology should attend to both the critical norms of practice as well as the dynamics and rhetorics of transformation; it should be concerned with the transformation of the world in accordance with its discernment of God's action in the world. And seventh, and the most controversial, some believe that practical theo-

¹ G.D.J. Dingemans, *Practical Theology: An Introduction into its Dutch Background* (Summer, 1990)(xeroxed).

² Alistair Campbell, "Is practical Theology Possible?" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 25 (1972), 217-27.

logy must show how it is the strategic fulfillment of the whole of theology, which should now be conceived as practical through and through.

This list, of course, is to some degree a personal construction on my part. It is, in part, a wish list of what I hope practical theology becomes. Clearly, many of you would quarrel both with its descriptive adequacy and its normative desirability. All seven points are certainly not present in every vital expression of practical theology throughout the world. Nonetheless, a large number of those elements are visible in the writings of many practical theologians, and the fact of their presence marks a significant change in the way academic practical theology is proceeding in several countries.

The Family as Illustration of Trends in Practical Theology

It is easy to list these seven features. It is more challenging to illustrate what they actually mean for the practical theological enterprise. This is what I will now try to do. I do this not to convince you that either my description of trends or my ideal vision are correct. Instead, I will use them as tentative guides for illustrating challenges and opportunities for the further development of practical theology. The theological disciplines in our time have, for the most part, staked their futures on having a decisive relevance for the problems of modern life. This does not mean that they are no longer interested in the promises of a resurrected life, but they claim as well to be relevant to inner-worldly struggles facing humans in their days on this earth. Theology, especially in its political and liberation forms, has convinced itself of its relevance to these worldly challenges, but it has not convinced the secular world and certainly not the secular academic disciplines. Indeed, we have difficulty even convincing the church of theology's relevance to worldly problems. Many of our proposals for change seem like either idealistic demands for abstract social justice that are impossible to implement or actual accommodations to the transformations that modernity, not the church, is thrusting upon us. Can a more selfconsciously practical theology do better? Possibly, but only if we understand the demands and opportunities that these seven trends open before us.

I want to develop this point by using contemporary, worldwide transformations of the family as a case study. These transformations constitute one of the real struggles facing the church in nearly all the countries touched by modernity and postmodernity. What do these seven trends mean when focused on the church's struggle with changing,

and perhaps declining, families? I will confine my remarks primarily to problems in Western countries where increasing wealth has developed hand-in-hand with increasing family fragmentation. Although problems are doubtless different in other parts of the world, as modernity spreads, the experience of these wealthier countries may be predictive of trends throughout the world. First, what does it mean to start practical theology with description, in this case the description of families and the practices of institutions which surround them? Although many families are still giving birth to babies, raising children, and enriching the lives of parents, the last two decades have witnessed a vast decline in family well-being. Not only has there been dramatic increases in rates of divorce in all advanced industrial societies, there have been parallel increases in out-of-wedlock births (29% of all births in the United States), the feminization of poverty, the number of poor and unhealthy children, and the number of fathers absent from the financial and moral support of their children. A fourth to one-half of the children in advanced industrial societies are being raised primarily by their mothers, frequently with modest to no supports from their fathers. Large numbers of men are living most of their lives outside of the socializing effects of families, a fact that may correlate with an increase of male violence in most industrial states³. Practical theology would need to supplement this surface description of the facts with additional social science and theological explanations. But how should this be done? At what level of analysis should practical theology proceed? Should it work at some grand macro-level or some more detailed psychodynamic level or both? Can theology itself help explain the situation of families? Much of political and liberation theology have proceeded at the level of macro-analysis. And indeed this is indispensable. At this level, the dynamics of industrial or rational capitalism account for many of these family strains. Both Marxist and rational-choice economic analyses reveal how rational capitalism enticed men out of family farms and crafts into wage-earning positions in labor and management⁴. Rational capitalism created a profound split between public and private life, pushing fathers into public work outside of the home and women into the private activities of mothering and homemaking. This split increased female economic dependency on men. It removed fathers, to varying degrees, from responsibility for

³ Nancy Gibbs, "Bringing Up Father," *Time*, (June 1993), pp. 53-61. For a particularly powerful statement of this point, see James Q. Wilson, "On Gender," *The Public Interest*, No. 112 (Summer 1993), pp. 8-13.

⁴ Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, (New York: International Publications, 1972); Gary Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*

the socialization of their children, especially their sons. It created a greater psychological and sociological distance between childhood and adult life, thereby introducing dynamics of estrangement and anomie between youth and normative social institutions. In more recent decades, mothers have joined fathers in the paid labor force. This is generally seen as a liberation for women. It also can be seen, as Habermas has suggested, as a new stage of the colonization of the family by the forces of rational capitalism. This move has many consequences, not the least of which is the fact that now both fathers and mothers are significantly removed from the rhythms of child care. As William Goode said in his 1970 *World Revolutions and Family Patterns*, the forces of technical rationality and rational capitalism not only have fragmented the cohesiveness of the extended family, they have dealt a near fatal blow to the nuclear or conjugal core of already weakened extended family networks⁵. Many other factors could be mentioned to complete this macrolevel analysis. For instance, demographers Larry Bumpass and Ron Lesthaeghe have shown how enlightenment individualistic values have driven this entire process⁶. This is one reason why family decline has actually increased during more affluent periods, such as the last quarter of the 19th century and, in the United States, the 1970s and early 1980s when family income from both public and private sources grew at a dramatic rate. For some sectors of society, discrimination and racism clearly have been factors contributing to family decline, although these factors do not explain the world-wide trends nor the spread of the trends into the middle and upper-middle classes. Practical theology in all of its expressions — from homiletics to pastoral care— must take account of this macro-level analysis that I have illustrated around the family issue. But if it becomes preoccupied with this level, practical theology will become indistinguishable from the liberation and political theology which have specialized in broad sociological and economic analyses. Practical theology, in its description of situations, must also attend to the way human beings actually experience these forces and struggle with them in the fullness of their subjectivity. For example, we should not only analyze the macro-level tensions between the public and private aspects of family life, we must describe how these tensions are concretely experienced by mothers, fathers, and children living in both the

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Richard Posner, *Sex and Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁵ William Goode, *World Revolutions and Family Patterns* (New York, 1970).

⁶ Larry Bumpass, "What's Happening to the Family? Interactions Between Demographic and Institutional Change," *Demography*, 27:4 (November 1990), 483-497;

traditional modern family as well as those in the new post-modern, two-income family. Furthermore, practical theology should describe how the inherent ambiguities of human experience such as anxiety, guilt, shame, and sin both precede and interact with these broader forces of modern life and our subjective experience of them.

The question of the appropriate level of analysis of families has immediate implications for the second trend in practical theology — the move beyond the clerical and ecclesial paradigms to an emphasis on the public ministry of the church in the world. Within the confines of the clerical and ecclesial paradigms, practical theology concentrated on the role of ministers, priests, and laity in caring for broken families within their congregations or parishes. The larger cultural and social-systemic forces producing family strains were generally neglected. Theological analysis and prescription, for example, would center on this father's alcoholism, that mother's neurosis, this son's delinquency, or, perhaps, this particular family system within the context of other local systems. The family system as a part of the grand systems of modern and post-modern life was generally ignored. Clearly, for practical theology to guide public ministries, it must have available to it various macro-level modes of analysis. But once again, going beyond the clerical and ecclesial paradigms should not mean forsaking them. A challenge to practical theology in the future will be the task of balancing its public and ecclesial/clerical paradigms and integrating its macro and microlevel analyses of situations⁷.

This brings us to the third widespread feature of the new practical theology, its emerging interdisciplinary character. If practical theology is to take the analysis of situated practices seriously and yet bring powerful normative witness to them, it must be interdisciplinary. If, for example, one is to do both micro and macro-level analyses of the modern family, the social sciences — especially sociology, psychology, economics, and anthropology — clearly have a role. Orchestrating these disciplines with one another and establishing their relation to theological description is another major task of contemporary practical theology. Building on the work of Gadamer, Ricoeur, and Robert Bellah, some of us have proposed the concept of "descriptive theology" as a way of both using yet subordinating the social sciences to theology for the purpose of describing situations.

Ron Lesthaeghe, "A Century of Demographic and Cultural Change in Western Europe," *Population and Development Review*, 9:3 (September 1983), 411-435.

⁷ Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 77-93.

Fourth, the family issue offers a dramatic illustration of the need for unity in practical theology. Imagine trying to meliorate the family issue if the church's ministry were reduced to pastoral counseling in either its parish or specialized settings. Even if the family pastoral counselor is aware of how market and bureaucratic forces of rational capitalism affect family formation, the counseling situation itself is a poor vantage point from which to exercise leverage on these larger systemic realities. Yet, the more intimate interventions of the counselor or minister are crucial. It is unthinkable that we will ever find the perfect social and economic system totally devoid of tension-producing pressures on families and individuals. Rational capitalism has its problems for families but so does bureaucratic socialism. Our task may not be to trade one economic system for another, but to bring constructive critiques and changes to the economic systems a particular society is trying out at a given moment in history. Furthermore, is it imaginable that the church can address the disintegration of families without finding a role for religious education and preaching to supplement its pastoral care and social action? For instance, what is the meaning of the gospel for gender justice in families and the wider society and how can this be proclaimed from the pulpit? If one of the crucial trends in modern family life is the growing absence of fathers, how can this be addressed in the church's socialization and initiation of boys and young men? And what shared methodologies and integrating models make it possible for the discrete practical theological disciplines to relate fruitfully to one another on this and other crucial issues?

What does it mean for practical theology to be scientific and critical, the fifth characteristic mentioned above. How can the family issue illustrate this feature of the emerging trends in practical theology? No area of contemporary cultural conflict is more fraught with ideology and sentimentality than the family debate. In the United States, we have what James Davison Hunter has called a cultural war over "family values." Conservative religious and political voices associate family values with the stable modern or industrial family, i.e., the breadwinning father and the domestic and child rearing mother⁸. They attempt to justify the industrial family by references to the *Haustafeln* codes of the Pseudo-Pauline letters and the Pastoral Epistles. Liberal religious and political parties are not exempt from ideology as well. They strain to minimize the consequences of family change or legitimate the decline of the extended and conjugal family with reference to the ostensibly anti-family passages of Mark and Matthew⁹. Both

⁸ James Dobson and Gary Bauer, *Children at Risk* (Waco: Word Publishing, 1990).

⁹ See Mark 13:12-13; Matthew 10:34-39.

sides engage in inflammatory rhetoric and use both Bible and the social sciences for their purposes. Indeed, it is difficult to find the indisputable truth on this matter in either scripture or the human sciences. In fact, even to speak about the truth requires confronting challenging issues in the philosophy of the social sciences and the hermeneutics of texts. The practical theology of the future must have the patience to confront these difficult issues. Only by doing this will we make progress in surmounting the polarizing rhetorics of both right and left. This is what is meant by practical theology being both scientific and critical. It means, insofar as it is an academic discipline, that practical theology should advance reasons subject to public review for the positions that it advances.

Sixth, practical theology should be interested in the dynamics and rhetorics of transformation. Practical theology, even as an academic discipline, believes that all efficacious transformations come from God. But it also believes that Christians, as James Fowler has reminded us, both witness to and participate in God's transformative activity¹⁰. Theological ethics tries to articulate the criteria by which we discover the action of God. Practical theology should have, as I have often argued, a strong ethical moment, but it must go beyond theological ethics in also studying the conditions and rhetorics of transformation. Few theological ethicists study this latter question. This is what distinguishes practical theology from ethics as such. Transformative action on the family issue is complex, and the rhetoric of the family debate is even more complex. Individuals, families, work places, governments, social service agencies, cultural values, may all need transformation if family decline is to be reversed. To know the right and the good in practical matters, however, does not mean we can easily translate this moral knowledge into positive actions that will implement the right and the good. The new practical theology should assume responsibility for the critical articulation of both the norms guiding transformation and the processes that actualize transformation. This, I believe, is a move in the right direction.

Finally, if practical theology is to contribute to any concrete issue, including the family issue, it must understand itself as relating to the other theological specializations. To address the family issue, we must do research on the Hebrew, Greek, Roman, and early Christian origins of Western families. This requires the closest possible contact with historical and biblical inquiry. But to discover origins is not the same as determining the worth, value, and relevance of these origins.

¹⁰ James Fowler, "Practical Theology and the Shaping of Christian Lives, Practical Theology, ed. by Don Browning, (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 148-166.

We must be open to the possibility that early Christianity had a negative consequence for families in Western societies, as many of our Jewish friends tend to think. In addition, we must be willing to acknowledge that much of what we often call Christian pertaining to families may really be Greco-Roman. This may be good or bad depending on additional normative arguments that are brought into play. Strategic practical theology will have a more comfortable relation with the other theological disciplines if they are reconceived to be primarily practical themselves, as Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics suggests¹¹. Our task is to determine the relation and appropriate responsibilities of the various theological disciplines, all of which participate in practical logics to some extent.

The creation of the International Academy of Practical Theology is not only a grand moment for the traditional practical disciplines, it is a highly significant occasion for all of academic theology as well as the wider church. Our responsibilities and possibilities are momentous. It is with a keen sense of excitement and anticipation that I look forward to our conversations these coming days.

¹¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York:Crossroad, 1982).

Robert Wuthnow

Modernity and the struggle for the church

For several years, I have been working on the relations between religion and economic behavior. Much of what has been written about modernity and its effects on modern religion is in fact concerned with economic conditions. But highlighting them perhaps gives some added insights. If nothing else, it forces us away from Durkheimian perspectives that have focused so much on community, and pushes us more toward Weberian conceptions of ethics and of moral authority.

Viewed diachronically, there is much continuity in the ways that religious commitments influence behavior in modern society. The reason for this continuity is partly that social behavior itself is characterized by certain constants. Despite vast technological innovation the much anticipated leisure society remains as elusive as ever. Most people still spend a great number of their waking hours at work. Unprecedented affluence notwithstanding, money still remains scarce. Most people would like to have more money than they do; most find themselves beset with bills, taxes, and material wants to the point that excessive balances in their savings accounts are not a problem. In both the sphere of work and the sphere of money, however, a great deal of choice remains. As producers, individuals are free to choose (usually) from several alternative career options or jobs, and within particular jobs, discretion is necessary from day to day in the application of attention and energy to specific tasks. As consumers, individuals experience freedom of choice in making decisions among various products and brands. Religious commitments that focus on questions of choice, individual responsibility, and notions of obedience or obligation to God, therefore, remain directly relevant to the social sphere. Furthermore, modern religion in western societies has long been characterized by a "this worldly" orientation. That is, its focus on the supernatural has not deterred it from being especially interested in how people lived their lives on an everyday basis. Rather than encourage believers only to think about another reality beyond the present life, religious organizations have thus insisted that some behavior in this life was more pleasing to God or more in keeping with divine laws than other forms of behavior. Religious leaders have been watchful of the times, seeking evils to correct, morals to uphold, and principles to espouse. Given the great extent to which individuals are concerned with attaining their daily bread, it would have been surprising, therefore,

had religious organizations not paid considerable attention to the economic sphere.

But modern religion is also a repository of the past. More than any other institution, it is concerned with keeping tradition alive. Its very legitimacy depends on asserting and reasserting claims about the intervention of the sacred in history. Despite its insistence on the present life and on responding to the changes inherent in that life, it also stakes its authority in the wisdom of sacred texts that have survived over many centuries and in rituals and symbols that have meaning precisely because they too have existed for long periods of time. When religious organizations speak to matters of work and money, therefore, they do so with an eye to tradition.

There is much continuity in contemporary religious teachings about the calling, stewardship, responsibilities to the poor, and other issues relating to work and money. While the doctrine of the calling came to be emphasized in the Protestant Reformation, for example, Luther's and Calvin's teachings about glorifying God in one's labor were not entirely dissimilar from Benedictine rules nearly a thousand years old at the time, and these teachings drew explicitly on biblical statements much older than that. To suggest, as many active members of religious organizations do now, that one's work is in some way divinely appointed and of interest to God is thus simply to place oneself in a very long tradition of religious thought. Much the same could be said about teachings on stewardship or the poor.

The continuities are evident despite the fact that many people in contemporary society claim not to believe in these teachings or to understand them very well. At what time, one might ask, would this not have been the case? Certainly such teachings in the early years of Christianity were not yet familiar to the vast population of the Roman Empire and even after Constantine it remains doubtful whether the mass populace understood the new official doctrines very well. In the late middle ages and early modern period heresy, superstition, and folk religions remained strong against all efforts of the Catholic church and the Protestant reformers to combat them. And what is known of, say, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century piety in America is often based more on the writings and public pronouncements of clergy than on evidence from the ordinary man or woman.

It might even be argued that organized religion has been better able to assert teachings on economic issues in the twentieth century than ever before simply because it has had the resources and the incentive to do so. Its resources include a vast clergy, mostly with formal professional training, a literate laity generally within close proximity to

a meeting house of some kind, ample facilities in which to meet, and books, pamphlets, and periodical publications of all kinds, as well as (in recent years) radio and television broadcasts, cassettes, and video tapes. Its incentive is that the same resources used to disseminate religious teachings must also be replenished, and, existing as they do on such a large scale, these organizations require the constant input of volunteer time and charitable giving. Teachings about work in secular places of employment or about the uses of money in the marketplace generally have implications for the support of religious organizations themselves. Seldom does one find a religious book on these subjects, for example, that does not devote some portion to the importance of donating work and money to religious organizations.

A purely diachronic analysis of religious teachings on economic issues would of course pay attention to the possibility of change taking place in the relative impact or meaning of these teachings. Secularization theory suggests that such teachings are likely to have diminishing importance over time because of relative increases in the strength of political, economic, educational, or other secular institutions. Religious organizations may therefore be as concerned as ever about securing volunteer labor or influencing public thinking about stewardship, but have to confront the conflicting claims of employers and advertisers. Yet the value of secularization is not so much to identify specific ways in which such changes may be taking place as to suggest the relevance of change itself. Paradoxically, secularization theory posits that change is a constant feature of modern life. Thus, in ways that most religious leaders would also recognize, religious organizations are always faced with adapting to change and uncertainty.

This argument can be taken a step further by suggesting that the chief insight of secularization theory is simply the presence of a prevailing secular ethic in modern society to which religion must adapt and with which religion always finds itself in tension. Secular society might thus be likened to a playing field, tipped slightly so that the forces against which religion is pitted always enjoy a small advantage. But the image of a playing field is faulty in another respect because religion and other social institutions often form alliances, as it were, rather than being engaged with each other as antagonists. The important fact is that the playing field itself is subject to changes (much like weather in an outdoor arena) to which the players must adjust.

If the relevant environment in which relationships between religion and economic behavior are understood is viewed as a space that has taken shape largely within the two centuries since the Industrial Revolution, then it becomes evident that a diachronic model must be

replaced by a synchronic model. This is because religion is always self-reflective, active, responding not only to its past, but to the web of circumstances in which it finds itself in the present moment and to the changes it envisions taking place in the future. Characteristics of its environment become part of the meaning of its own elements because meaning is always contextually determined. In consequence, separate trends become less interesting than the larger mix of conditions to which religion must respond and of which it is a part. All of these conditions converge to shape the distinctive meanings and possibilities that religious teachings about economic issues may enjoy in contemporary culture. Among these conditions, the most important include the following:

1. *The triumph of economic individualism.* The modern marketplace, including labor markets as well as markets for goods and services, functions on the assumption that the individual is the basic locus of decision making and therefore the basic unit of responsibility. While it is possible to find examples of entire groups being treated as a collective unit (as in a class-action lawsuit or an entitlement program), it is much more common for individuals to be hired, promoted, and fired as individuals, held personally responsible for their debts, and appealed to by marketing appeals to personal desires and tastes. In labor markets, whole tribes or families are seldom employed as they once were (say, on plantations or in mining towns), but each individual member is expected to become a repository of employable skills, fill out an application that summarizes these credentials, and be hired on the basis of his or her merits. Despite (some say because of) the growth of large-scale organizations in modern society, a great deal of emphasis in the economic arena is therefore placed on the individual. This emphasis includes not only the responsibility to attain and deploy relevant skills but also to exercise freedom, use discretion, determine personal values or preferences, allocate time and energy to various goals, and make decisions about ethical conduct.

2. *The separation of public and private.* Much of modern life takes place in organizations that claim to represent the public, that are publicly owned, or whose operations ultimately bear responsibility to the public. At the same time, the personal lives of individuals are largely shielded from public scrutiny and accountability. There are of course glaring exceptions to this rule, as the scrutiny of public officials' private lives attests. Generally, however, privacy and personal freedom are cherished and protected even in the face of large-scale public institutions. This separation can be traced to early eighteenth-century Europe where it appears to have been encouraged by the simultaneous growth of cities political bureaucracies and

large-scale industry and commerce. The growing anonymity of urban life permitted individuals to develop more complex, multiple selves but in the process made these selves less stable and more problematic to maintain. In economic matters, labor and employment policy, fiscal management, taxation, the money supply, and the promotion and regulation of trade have all become public issues, to be discussed by public officials and in the public media, while their private counterparts — family budgets, career choices, consumer purchases — are left almost entirely up to individuals and households. Economic individualism is thus accompanied by the sense that individuals can have very little influence over public economic matters, except indirectly through their role as citizens, and are responsible for maintaining the privacy and autonomy of their own economic decisions. Under these circumstances, such decisions necessarily attach themselves closely to definitions of the self and to questions of personal worth, freedom, meaning, and morality.

3. The growth of the service economy. The shift in advanced industrial societies away from agriculture during the nineteenth century to commerce and manufacturing, and then in the twentieth century increasingly toward light industry, the professions, and services has had wide-ranging implications for the structuring of contemporary society. One has been the softening of class divisions between wielders of power and the majority of the laboring population. The relatively small fraction of white collar owners and managers who relied on masses of blue collar workers performing physical labor has been replaced by a much larger variety of occupations performing middle management, sales, clerical, and technical tasks. The disparity in income and wealth between the so-called ruling elite and the remainder of the population has probably not decreased substantially as a result; indeed, it has been aggravated by some features of the service economy. But the nature of work has shifted decidedly away from heavy physical labor allowing, among other things greater numbers of women to be included in the labor force, and making for a more finely graded system of intermediate careers in terms of prestige and social desirability. In the process, professionalization has extended downward and outward, encompassing a wider variety of technical and supportive occupations as well as more careers that would have once been considered entrepreneurial or managerial. Professionalization connotes an intrinsic personal commitment to a career, internalization of a set of norms that one chooses to adhere to, and a system of rewards that base rank and prestige on merit. Devotion to the workplace and discretion in making workplace decisions are thus important implications of professionalization. In addition, professional norms have

contributed ambiguity to the question of whether work should be performed strictly for money or whether other values (such as service) should prevail. The service economy has also contributed to the weakening of the labor movement as a distinctive force in politics, leaving an increasing share of the working class to fend for themselves by limiting purchases or numbers of children, seeking education, and maintaining dual career households. The meaning of poverty has thus shifted as well, the impoverished becoming an underclass distinguished mainly by the lack of social and moral capital assumed to characterize the majority of the middle and working classes.

4. *The growing importance of consumerism.* Although foreign trade, colonization, and neocolonial international systems greatly altered the shape of the global economy over the past three centuries, the greatest extension of market economics has been in the creation of consumer markets within developed societies themselves. Household items, automobiles, labor saving devices, and in recent decades a growing variety of services (from day care to lawn care) have become commodities packaged and priced for sale as consumer products. On the production side, the service economy is thus concerned increasingly with the creation and marketing of consumer goods and services. On the consumption side, more and more people participate more frequently in the marketplace as well. The role of consumer has become an important aspect of individual economic behavior. With it come responsibilities to buy well and to buy wisely. Moral injunctions to save and accumulate wealth, or aspirations of attaining higher social rankings by doing so, have largely been replaced by educational attainment systems, leaving most individuals with relatively fixed or secure salaries. Discretion must then be exercised by making informed consumer choices. Having money means primarily the ability to expand one's array of possibilities as a consumer. Social norms also come increasingly into play that define what are reasonable levels of consumer expenditure. It is expected that people will consume automobiles, clothing, housing, and other items to a level that is in keeping with their occupation or their standing in the community. Savings and charitable giving are thus likely to be defined chiefly as trade offs in relation to potential consumer spending.

5. *From life and death to personal happiness.* The lengthening of the normal life span, the dramatic reduction in infant and childhood mortality rates, and the virtual conquering of many life-threatening and debilitating diseases have had far-reaching implications for both the economic and religious spheres. For the former, the possibility of so-called orderly careers, following a predictable trajectory from early

educational preparation through mid-career to retirement has become an expectation both for individuals and for organizations employing them. A number of fixed costs have been built into the economy to foster these expectations, including the huge costs borne by parents and the wider tax-paying public in providing education for the young, investments in on-the job training, and payments to retirement programs. Social benefit programs have also been created to protect most citizens from the fear of leaving families unsupported as a result of death or injury. It is thus outside the immediate experience of most individuals to face the uncertainties of life and death that continue to be a feature of life for the poor who are not protected by such programs. To some extent, economic individualism is also encouraged by these programs, insofar as they replace familial or communal bonds of fealty as bases of social insurance. For religion, life-and-death faith has been replaced largely by personal-happiness faith. Answering questions about the reasons for illness and death, depicting the afterlife, or supporting the bereaved have declined in importance relative to dealing with day-to-day anxieties, worries, and self doubts and providing lessons in self esteem and positive thinking. Sermons offer comfort and reassurance, while support groups encourage people to have good feelings about themselves. It is in this context that religious teachings about the meaning of work or how to feel good about money and material possessions take place.

6. The declining moral authority of religious organizations. While participation in religious organizations remains quite high, at least in the United States, the capacity of these organizations to evoke conformity to specific teachings or ritual practices has diminished considerably. Distinctive denominational or confessional traditions were once reinforced by ethnic differences, geographic isolation, distinctive occupational or educational characteristics, a clergy trained exclusively in those traditions, and ecclesiastical rules bestowing special privileges on members in good standing and denying these privileges to others. Most of these features have eroded as a result of larger forces contributing to the blending of the population, as well as competition among religious bodies themselves. Moral authority has also declined as a result of fewer children remaining in the religious traditions in which they were raised, more young people being trained in alternative moral traditions through public school systems or higher education, and as a result of television, colleges and universities, and even political organizations claiming to speak authoritatively on matters of conscience. In place of strong organizational boundaries, a kind of religious populism has emerged in which religious leaders are subject to the demands of their audiences and to the vagaries of

public opinion. Such populism is particularly prone to being shaped by both of these factors, audience demand in the sense of catering to personal anxieties and needs, and public opinion in the sense of responding to politicized issues and movements. Thus, in recent decades there has been much greater attention paid to individual spirituality, on the one hand, and issues such as abortion and pornography, on the other hand, than to questions, say, about materialism or business that had no obvious constituency or interest group advancing them.

7. The escalation of big-ticket religion. Developments in the wider society, such as the rise of professionalism and the spread of the service economy, coupled with a tradition of free-market competition in the religious sphere, have greatly increased the cost of operating religious programs. Congregations that at one time supported a single staff member, doing so in part through contributions in kind (especially housing and food) and sometimes expecting this clergy person to be gainfully employed on the side, are now much more likely to support a multiple staff of clergy and assistant clergy, secretaries, educational and musical directors, and perhaps even trained counselors. Denominational officials may be supported to provide specialized services. And in other cases, television broadcasts may be supported, or book publishing ventures, telephone counseling centers, or movements to lobby for certain causes. While religious populism might deter appeals for volunteer work or financial contributions, the cost of these programs, therefore, necessitates greater attention than ever being devoted to these appeals. Besides competition among religious organizations themselves, a large number of secular nonprofit and government agencies have also entered the arena, appealing for charitable contributions and offering to provide social services in return. Religious organizations are thus faced with addressing economic issues as matters on which their own survival depends.

It would be wrong to suppose that these features of the social environment form a coherent system. Some of them clearly are at odds with others. But they do form a system in the sense of generating mutual effects on one another. Economic conditions themselves have an enormous influence, but religious traditions and organizations also form an important part of the social environment in which the specific relationships between religion and economic behavior take shape. The joint effect of these various conditions is to heighten the demand for moral meaning and moral restraint in contemporary culture. The quest for meaning, and the associated questions that arise about moral restraint, thus provide the immediate

context in which to make sense of how religious and economic orientations intersect.

Questions of meaning are integrally related to modern economic conditions. They are, in the first place, associated with the breakdown of community, of which the declining authority of religious organizations is but one example. A person who lives exclusively within a single community such as a monastic order or a medieval village experiences life as given. The meaning of one's own life within that community tends also largely to be given. There is likely to be a close connection between self identity and the community of which one is a part. But modern economic conditions tend to erode such all-embracing communities. Corporations may demand a great deal of a person's time, but would be loathe to absorb their employees entirely into their own domain or to guarantee shelter and sustenance until death. Markets function best when individuals are free to move geographically in search of gainful employment and when standards of taste can be extended beyond distinctive local enclaves. Without a single community of orientation, individuals must nevertheless decide on which standards of taste and of value they are willing to embrace. The meaning of life or of specific events becomes problematic because different contexts for making evaluative judgments are available.

Economic individualism, and the division of labor on which it depends, partly resolve questions of meaning by legitimating the reality of variability. It becomes, in short, acceptable for standards of taste and value to vary from one person to the next. However, for such differences to be acceptable it must also be the case that individuals take responsibility for their own choices. What an individual values must matter, despite the fact that other individuals may hold different values. Moreover, the reason why particular values matter must to some degree be intrinsic to the person rather than extrinsic. One may argue, for instance, that being a chemist matters (is personally important), but greater credence is likely to be accorded arguments that say it matters to me (is personally meaningful) than to assertions about, say, coming from a long line of chemists. The division of labor permits an individual to argue that this is a useful profession, something that others need, and that others cannot do. Yet there must also be additional reasons given to explain why I chose to fill this role. And much the same holds true of the decisions that consumers make. Thus, the question of why one particular choice among many possibilities is meaningful takes on special significance.

The objection might be raised that surely the modern economic sphere is so well institutionalized that questions of meaning actually make little difference. There might be points of entry or exit at which such questions were raised forcefully (such as deciding on a career). But everyday behavior at the job or in the marketplace would operate effectively on the basis of routine rather than requiring conscious interpretation. The best support for this objection would come from arguments about the inherent rationality of economic life. Especially if markets automatically seek out the most efficient means for accomplishing ends, and if they also adjust ends to fit existing means, then little but rote behavior would be required at all. It is increasingly evident, however, that economic behavior seldom functions in this way. As it is experienced by the average person, it is a sphere characterized by much ambiguity and by arbitrary or disorderly occurrences. To take an extreme case, automobile insurance systems may function reasonably well to adjust policy premiums to cover expected contingencies over large numbers of cases, but when an accident happens to an individual, the trauma and disruption (if not actual out-of-pocket expenses) are likely to be considerable. In less extreme cases, economic behavior also requires constant interpretation, not because it is fundamentally routine, but because it is fundamentally disorderly. Coworkers seldom live up to expectations exactly, performance and reward are never entirely synchronous, money never goes quite far enough, purchases work out on one occasion but not the next, and so on.

Religious faith enters the economic sphere, therefore, primarily as a way in which to construct meaning. It supplies order where order is lacking, provides rational explanations when chaos seems to prevail, and offers comfort and a means of escape from otherwise meaningless activities. It is not the only source of meaning: scripts are widely available about careers, success, family responsibilities, community obligations, and self fulfillment as well. Religious teachings compete with all these scripts as interpretations of the meaning of economic behavior. The important point, however, is that religion serves less to motivate, guide, or inform economic behavior than to enhance its meaning. Prayers generally do not yield specific information, for example, about how to attain a job, but add meaning to the individual's concerns with getting a job. Teachings about stewardship do not instruct people (usually) to donate a weekend helping save the whales, but heighten the sense that it is important to think about economic responsibilities.

By enhancing the meaningfulness of economic activities, religious commitment may well contribute to maintaining the basic structure of

the economic system. This may especially be the case if sensing a divine calling makes people more committed to their work, or if believing in the concept of stewardship leads people to take greater care in investing their money. Religious conviction may also provide ways of alleviating job-related stress, or of explaining why the poor are poor. None of this may involve a high-blown or all-embracing metaphysical system, let alone a religious worldview in which the economic structure itself is assumed to be divinely ordained. Meaning is likely to be supplied, less in terms of explicit answers to questions about economic behavior, than as a part of the internal conversation with which a person interacts with the world. Work and money are thus meaningful, not because they have ultimate significance, but because they are part of life which in turn is given meaning by statements about the existence of God or of divine love.

But such meaning is also moral, and in this sense implies restraint. To bestow meaning is to draw connections between an activity or event and some symbolic context. These connections provide added dimensions or a possibility for deeper interpretations. They expand as further connections or broader frameworks are envisioned. Yet there is always a limiting factor as well. To understand in one context is necessarily to deny other possible frameworks. Moreover, these frameworks imply an evaluative dimension, a sense in which it is "right" to think or behave in one way rather than another. Economic behavior may be legitimated by religious meanings, therefore, but it should also be restrained. Stewardship may imply *not* purchasing consumer goods or prayer may suggest *not* working harder to earn more money.

The reason that moral restraint may not be very effective in the economic realm is that meaning systems always require communities to give them plausibility and, indeed, to enforce norms of consistency and coherence. For individuals who happen to be devoted members of religious communities, it may be possible for teachings about the meaningfulness of work to channel activity away from gainful employment toward service to the community itself. Such guidance would require extensive discussion of the meaning of work itself and of the practical implications of religious understandings of work. If communities are silent about such issues, it is less likely that they will have an actual effect on behavior. Even those that are not silent, however, may have limited influence because individuals do not spend all their time in these communities, but participate in several, and take many of their cues from economic organizations themselves.

Given the high degree of economic individualism in modern culture, moral meaning and moral restraint are thus likely to function primarily in guiding individual decisions. Individuals may well make economic decisions with some reference group, such as family or church, in mind, but the implicit conversation involved is likely to be internal to the person. Were it to become explicit, it might take form in statements such as "is this the right thing for me to do?" or "how do I feel about this?" Without much in the way of external validation, there is clearly a great deal of room for slippage in making such assessments. What is popularly referred to as rationalization becomes a process of adjusting interpretations to actions until some portion of the self is satisfied. It is of course unnecessary for such interpretations themselves to carry all the weight of supplying moral restraint. Legal restrictions, not to mention a wide variety of institutional limitations (such as the number of hours a person can be paid each week), provide restraint of their own. Yet religion is likely to influence the individual interpretations that suggest moral restraint if it is going to have an impact on economic behavior at all.

Ritual and symbolism, it appears, play a special role in such circumstances. With coercive powers of an authoritative community lacking, some mechanism is needed to demonstrate to oneself or to a relevant reference group that restraint has indeed been exercised. Were such a community present, it might be able to establish rules dealing with every possible economic contingency. Without such rules, the ambiguities of behavior in the economic sphere make it difficult for the individual to know what is or is not appropriate behavior. Ritualistic behavior helps to reduce the inherent uncertainty of this behavior. It may be difficult to know what the ethical response should be, but being honest when confronted with a dramatic opportunity not to be provides evidence that one is indeed an ethical person. Whether a person has worked hard enough, too hard, or too little may be equally difficult to determine, especially if fixed hours are not part of one's job description. Commonly used language about stress or burn out supplies a way of talking that helps to legitimate saying that enough is enough. Or, by the same token, greed may be difficult to define, so buying a less expensive brand becomes a symbolic gesture of austerity, much in the same way the public condemnation of a "greedy" business official helps dramatize what it means to violate this standard.

To suggest that religious commitment may help to restrain economic behavior in symbolic ways is not to diminish the importance of this restraint. Token sacrifices at the supermarket may do little to reduce consumer spending at the national level or to redress economic

injustices. But symbolic acts are important for reasons other than their economic consequences alone. They send messages about values. They perpetuate the belief that greed is a matter about which it is appropriate to express public concern. Or they communicate to the individual that work is still important even when it does not result in monetary rewards. One might imagine an economic system in which all the necessary checks and balances were supplied by the marketplace itself. And yet such a system would clearly be impoverished culturally in comparison with one in which statements about kindness and unkindness, or about virtue and vice, could be made.

Whether economic behavior *should* be constrained in this way, or in more serious ways, is of course a normative question that cannot be addressed adequately within the framework of sociological analysis alone. From one standpoint, it can certainly be argued that the market system itself does little to supply or defend absolute values. If such values are important to the functioning of human society, then religious convictions and rituals that do supply them play a positive role. From another standpoint, it can also be argued that economic systems themselves influence values, perhaps in ways that encourage overwork, overspending, and a lack of attention to other dimensions of human existence. If so, then alternative sources of value are important indeed.

Because contemporary religion and economic behavior also thrive on freedom, it is nevertheless unlikely that the moral restraint religion may exercise in the marketplace will be very great. Were religious leaders suddenly to impose a percentage point cap on interest rates, for example, there would likely be an outcry not only from the business sector but from other religious leaders and congregants as well. Such a cap would seem an excessive imposition of moral restraint in part because it would appear to rob the individual of exercising discretion. Similarly, religious teachings that encouraged extremely low (or high) levels of workplace involvement would constitute an abridgment of personal freedom as well.

Individual freedom, combined with a relatively constant level of uncertainty in the economic sphere, have then reinforced what might be termed a logic of limited commitment. In this logic many commitments are valued, but none is valued in excess. The implicit idea is to hedge one's bets, cover all the bases. Some attachment to family, community, friends, and hobbies is important. Some involvement with religion is also valued, but the norm is to limit this involvement rather than becoming overly zealous or fanatical. Nearly

everyone attends religious services once in awhile but only a minority are involved regularly to a serious degree. Money is valued because of the freedom it gives to pursue a larger number and variety of commitments. It is not valued to the point that serious sacrifices of time or lifestyle are required to attain it. While virtually everyone considers material possessions such as new cars and nice clothing important, only a minority regard these as absolute essentials. Work is intrinsically important as well, but is a means of attaining other values. Thus people assert that they want more out of life than just a good job, and speak of burn out and stress as ways of signaling that work too has its limits. Limited commitment affords individuals with flexibility in the face of uncertainty about what may truly matter in life (or what may matter *to them*). Should one commitment not work out, then others are there to supply alternative sources of meaning.

Religion supplies meaning to the life of limited commitment, less as an overarching canopy, but as modes of speech and rituals of behavior that help to align the relationships among multiple commitments. Slogans about the dangers of excessive greed legitimate stopping short of an extreme commitment to the pursuit of wealth, but are quite flexible in allowing people to pursue a comfortable life — and to define what comfort should be. Ritualized behavior, such as attendance at religious services or giving to religious organizations, provides important symbolic ways of observing alternative values and commitments. Prayer permits emotional detachment from problems that seem to be taking more than their share of personal attention. It may also alleviate anxiety that arises from attempting to juggle too many commitments. At the same time, relativistic commitments that are otherwise hard to take seriously acquire added meaning in light of religious teachings about the worth of work or the meaning of money. All this can be legitimated with traditional maxims about "moderation in all things" or "the golden mean." It is, however, less likely that these maxims will be regarded as principles of the universe but simply as practical knowledge about personal growth and happiness. There are of course wide variations in how individuals actually allocate personal resources among various commitments. Limited commitment is nevertheless a norm that fosters adaptation to the variations and complexity of modern life itself. With few absolute requirements, together with few authoritative communities capable of setting fixed rules about how much commitment is desirable, individuals are left to use their own discretion in determining commitments. It is up to organizations to secure as much commitment as possible. Internalized checks give individuals a rationale for spreading their commitments among these various organizations. All commitments may be appealing, leading in-

dividuals to want more out of life than they can possibly attain, so a logic of balance, moderation, and restraint becomes particularly important.

Despite its adaptive potential, this logic never functions easily or with complete effectiveness. It may legitimate a balance of commitment and restraint, but fail to offer specific guidelines about how to prioritize commitments, let alone choose among them on a moment by moment basis. The ritualistic behavior that helps align different commitments takes time and energy itself, and it is seldom institutionalized clearly enough that an individual knows for sure that an adequate performance of ritual duties has been accomplished. It is, moreover, up to the individual to monitor his or her various commitments, determining whether they are producing the desired satisfaction, and adjusting them in terms of changing goals or resources. The logic of limited commitment is thus a system of norms that seldom runs smoothly without periodic reassessments. It requires constant attention, periods of reflection, an interest in thinking about values-commitments that are often associated with religion.

While in the Catholic Church the struggle with church authority is evidently connected with the much-debated role of the *magisterium*, still this conflict is not an exclusively Catholic problem. The Protestant churches as well have been faced with the question whether controversies in doctrinal matters should be dealt with by disciplinary measures. The Protestant Church in Germany at least has also dismissed ministers from their office as pastors — after a juridical process, however, in which theologians and members of the synod were

1. E. Jüngel, *Die Autorität des brüderlichen Christus*, in: *Unterwegs zur Sache*, München, 1972, 179-186, 179. For Jüngel, "a responsible theology has to deal with the situation critically. It cannot withdraw from the existing ecclesial problems... either by attempting to patch up bruised authorities with postulates or by presenting the question of authority in the church as a superfluous one and one to be superseded by the postulate to abolish all authority." All use of authority, however, has to seek its model in the "authority of the pleading Christ" and to strive for insight and evidence instead of using force.

Maureen Junker-Kenny

The Struggle to State the Grounds of Authority in the Church: A Task for Practical Theology

Introduction

"The Christian Church is being rocked by an unparalleled crisis of authority." This was the diagnosis of the Protestant systematic theologian Eberhard Jüngel in 1972, a time marked by students' protest against authorities and a general questioning of tradition.¹ Twenty years later, his Catholic colleague Peter Hünemann commented on the results of the disciplinary measures which the German Catholic bishops in their reaction to Eugen Drewermann's controversial synthesis of psychoanalytical, mythical and Christian elements by withdrawing his right to teach in the name of the Church as well as his priestly functions from him: "The authority of the bishops, the legal processes of disciplinary measures in doctrinal matters in general and the other canonical measures were heavily criticized....In this process an immense erosion of episcopal authority was the result."² No doubt it would be easy to find similar assessments from American Catholic theologians, e.g. after the dismissal of the moral theologian Charles Curran from his teaching position at the Catholic University in Washington.

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¹ E.Jüngel, Die Autorität des bittenden Christus, in: *Unterwegs zur Sache*, München, 1972, 179-188, 179. For Jüngel, "a responsible theology has to deal with this situation critically. It cannot withdraw from the existing ecclesial problems... either by attempting to patch up bruised authorities with postulates or by presenting the question of authority in the church as a superfluous one and one to be superseded by the postulate to abolish all authority." All use of authority, however, has to seek its model in the "authority of the pleading Christ" and to strive for insight and evidence instead of using force.

involved as well.³ The theses put forward by the Hamburg pastor Paul Schulz in his book "Is God a mathematical formula?" and by the feminist pastor and psychologist Jutta Voss in her book *The Black Moon Taboo* were both judged to be incompatible with Christian teaching on God and salvation.⁴

Even if all of these examples refer to quite different problems deserving a closer scrutiny of the issues at stake, it is still evident that conflict with authority and the loss of authority is a problem shared by all the Western Churches. The loyalty of church members to the position of their church leaders which could be almost automatically counted upon in the 1950s and 1960s seems to have greatly diminished.

I would suggest that these individual cases are symptoms of a wider phenomenon, and that practical theology has the task of bringing to our attention the structural roots of this process.

What are the **structural reasons** for the continual dwindling of authority? Here, 'structural' refers to the conditions and developments of modern society which are at work quite independently from any actual statement or measure issued by the Church.

In the first part of my paper, I will examine why recent research in the sociology of religion has proposed "individualization" as a broader and more appropriate category than "secularization," to describe the current transformations in the relationship between religion, society, the churches and their individual members.

² P.Hünemann, "Sind die Bischöfe überfordert?" in: Theologische Quartalschrift 172 (1992) 131-133, 131.

³ For an analysis and comparison of the disciplinary process in doctrinal matters (Lehrbeanstandungsverfahren) in the Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland see René Pahud de Mortanges, *Zwischen Vergebung und Vergeltung. Eine Analyse des kirchlichen Straf- und Disziplinarrechts*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992, 213-225.

⁴ P.Schulz, *Ist Gott eine mathematische Formel? Ein Pastor im Glaubensprozeß seiner Kirche*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1977. J. Voss, *Das Schwarzmondtabu. Die kulturelle Bedeutung des weiblichen Zyklus*, Stuttgart, 1988, 4th ed. 1993. Jutta Voss was asked to explain how her idea of a "lunar-related transformative spiritual potency" (lunarbezogene, Wandlungen einleitende Geistpotenz, p.96) relates to the Christian doctrine of the divine Trinity in whose name she would lead Sunday services, baptize, and preach. Another point to be clarified was her position towards the reformed understanding of the Lord's Supper as founded in Jesus' deliverance of his life of which his blood is the symbol. For Jutta Voss, the blood of Jesus is the "male blood of killing" which has to be replaced by what according to her was its historical predecessor, the "biological mystery of the transformation of menstrual blood" (p. 50).

In the second section, I would like to reflect on the question: What is the theological basis for the authority of the Church? What legitimation both empowers its use and limits it?⁵

The authority of the Church is derived from and serves (or should serve) the authority of the Gospel. The Christian faith understands its truth not as something produced by human reason, but as something given. The Church in all its denominations, members and functions has to witness to and guard this truth given in history to humankind by God. As a truth given it is not at the disposition of the individual members.

Yet, if "individualization" as a fundamental characteristic of the system of modern society has the effect that each person has to make up her own view by choosing from and combining elements of the plurality of world views present, then the truth of the Christian faith threatens to become diffused. There is the danger that the Christian truth is more and more at the disposition and mercy of the individual's pragmatic needs.

The third part of my paper is devoted to the seemingly impossible task of reconciling the results of the sociological and the theological inquiries which are clearly at odds with each other. I will try to indicate perspectives for a way out of this dilemma both by presenting some of the theological reflections called forth by the crisis of authority and by stating for the ensuing discussion the questions which remain "open" (to use a euphemistic term), or rather painfully unanswered and pressing.

I. Religion in Contemporary Society: The Concept of Individualization

It is only recently in German-speaking sociology of religion, in a study on the role of religion in Switzerland published in 1991 and 1992, that the category of individualization has been proposed as a more adequate and more precise conceptualization of the transformations in

⁵ This second step corresponds to the task of exploring the "principles of the Christian tradition" in Dietrich Rössler's definition of practical theology. These principles are then to be related to the "insights of contemporary experience." (Dietrich Rössler, *Grundriß der Praktischen Theologie*, Berlin / New York: De Gruyter, 1986, 3).

the relations between religion and society rather than the term "secularization".⁶

For many, the process of secularization is the leading factor in the loss of ecclesial authority. The major inadequacy of the concept of secularization, however, is the underlying assumption of at least some of its proponents that religion and modernity are mutually exclusive and that in the course of modernity's process of rationalization religion will eventually disappear. This prognosis has been shaken by phenomena such as the surge of new religious movements in the 1970s and 1980s and also by a higher stability of membership and adherence to the Christian churches than had been expected.

In the religious context in France, e.g., Daniele Hervieu-Leger has drawn attention to the religious consciousness alive in French popular religion, in post-1968 ideological communities, and in the new religious movements. She points out the particularly modern elements in the ambivalent attitude of these movements towards modernity. Some of these movements

are the vehicles of an alternative rationality which is as much in harmony with as in contrast with modernity. This particular ambivalence with respect to modernity is visible in the affinity of these movements with the processes of privatization and individualization of beliefs, which is precisely characteristic of the situation of religion in modernity. It is visible in the mobility of religious networks that are founded on an associative basis, as well as in the emphasis that they place on personal experience and the individual's 'right to subjectivity'.

Still, she retains the term secularization, but with the important shift in accent that secularization means "no longer simply the 'decline' of religion but the process whereby religion organizes itself to meet the challenges left by modernity."⁷ The use of the concept of individuali-

⁶ M. Krüggeler and P. Voll, "Säkularisierung oder Individualisierung? Variationen zu Faust I, Vers 3415ff." in *Pastoraltheologische Informationen* 12 (1992), 147-162. M. Krüggeler and P. Voll, "Strukturelle Individualisierung - ein Leitfaden durchs Labyrinth der Empirie" in A. Dubach / R. Campiche (Eds.), *Jede(r) ein Sonderfall? Religion in der Schweiz: Ergebnisse einer Repräsentativbefragung*, Zürich: NZN Buchverlag, 1993, 17-49, 17-18. Cf. also 12.215-222. K. Gabriel judges this approach an "exception" also in German-speaking sociology of religion: "Although points of reference are to be found in the sociological classics, especially with Max Weber and Georg Simmel, in the sociological research of religion the concept of individualization as yet has hardly been used." K. Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne*, Freiburg: Herder, 1992, 142, Fn.11.

American sociologists of religion have highlighted the individualizing effects of modern society and of Christianity, especially in Puritanism. Cf. R. Wuthnow, "Sociology of Religion" in N.J. Smelser (Ed.), *Handbook of Sociology*, Beverly Hills, 1988, 473-509, 486-87: "Thus modern bureaucratic states have generally advanced individuation through, on the one hand, standardization - especially through schooling

zation to interpret the ongoing changes in the interaction of religion and society has the advantage of not having to pretend to know the final outcome of the process.⁸ But this new concept is also more inclusive because it offers a general theory of society and treats religion as one among other cultural phenomena. The observations made on the changing role of religion can, therefore, also be verified in other cultural realms.

This modern tendency towards individualization has not gone unnoticed in practical theology. A theory for individualization in Christianity has already been put forth. Thus, before I talk about the sociological

and language uniformities - which makes persons relatively interchangeable with one another, and, on the other hand, through personalization, which attaches rights and responsibilities - such as voting and paying taxes - to the individual. In short, individuation in ideology and individuation in social structure seem to be prominent features of modern society." Although Wuthnow's description of religious individualism anticipates the results of the Swiss inquiry, still he does not advance the concept of individualization itself as the most basic category of interpretation: "In the case of religious individualism, the most general effect of a strong emphasis on the individual appears to be a tendency to 'decouple' the substantive tenets of any formalized set of doctrines or creeds. If religious belief is defined as a matter of individual interpretation, for example, then it becomes possible for particular ideas to be put together in a number of ways ... individualistic religious orientations are disaggregated at the level of the individual believer. Accordingly, for any particular individual, a highly integrated world view may exist, but the components of that worldview may be quite dissimilar from those of any other person's worldview."

7 D.Hervieu-Léger, *Religion and Modernity in the French Context: For a New Approach to Secularization*, in: *Sociological Analysis* 51 (1990).15-25.22.15. Her "new definition" of secularization presents it "as a process of the reorganization of the work of religion in a society which can no longer satisfy (not temporarily, but structurally) the expectations it must arouse in order to exist as such, and which can find no better response (not temporarily, but structurally) to the uncertainties arising from the indeterminable quest for the means to satisfy these expectations."(24) Her description of the lasting significance of religion comes close to the functionalist view of religion that considers religion as a praxis of mastering contingency to which Krüggeler and Voll adhere (cf. Dubach / Campiche, *Sonderfall*, 27-32). Whether the category of individualization is proposed in order to replace the concept of "secularization" or whether it is only put forward as a more precise formulation, depends on one's understanding of "secularization." If it does not denote the complete "loss" of religion, but only a "change of its significance", then it would not imply any statement on the compatibility or incompatibility of religion and modernity and the term would not need to be replaced. Cf. P. Voll's reinterpretation of "secularization as individualization of religion" in his article "Vom Beten in der Mördergrube. Religion in der Dienstleistungsgesellschaft," in Dubach / Campiche, *Sonderfall*, 213-252, 226. 244, Fn. 1. 245, Fn. 10. Cf. also Wuthnow, *Sociology of Religion*, 475, and Gabriel, *Christentum*, 141-42, Fn. 10.

8 In their study on religion in Switzerland, the researchers Krüggeler and Voll explicitly refute the "misunderstanding that processes of modernization and individualization were linear developments which were therefore projectable into the future." ("Strukturelle Individualisierung" in Dubach / Campiche, *Sonderfall*, 18).

thesis on structural pluralism and structural individualization, I will recapitulate the theory of the three forms of modern Christianity put forward by Dietrich Rössler in his "*Grundriß der Praktischen Theologie*".

1. *The threefold shape of modern Christianity*

Rössler describes the emergence of the threefold shape of present-day Christianity as a distinctly modern phenomenon: while the period of the Middle Ages was characterized by the idea of the "*corpus christianum*" and the "unity of church and world", in the 17th century, German Pietism (in this respect comparable to Puritanism in the English-speaking countries) proposed a concept of the church based on the distinction between the zealous and the lax. In this view of the church, "only the participation in the more rigoristic form of life which Pietism had made its program could count as participation in the church."⁹ The Pietistic separation between a markedly ecclesial form of religious praxis and the practices of the world led to the development of the three fundamental forms of present-day Christianity, one ecclesial, one public, and one private:

on the one hand an ecclesial Christianity emerged which tried to give itself a character of its own by adhering to a certain kind of piety; on the other hand a general or public Christianity remained which leaves a residue in uncontrolled traditions in texts, in conditions, in obligations and in publicly held convictions.¹⁰

This 'public Christianity' includes elements of what has been discussed as 'civil religion' in the United States.¹¹

The third form, "individual or private Christianity", is explained from the need of the individual church member to choose against the background of public Christianity between the various degrees and kinds of participation in ecclesial Christianity. Rössler concludes:

"This distinction had the consequence that the individual . . . must continue to seek . . . his or her own place between ecclesiastical and general Christianity. There is thus besides these two forms of Christianity an individual Christianity in infinitely many varieties which can hardly be

⁹ D.Rössler, *Grundriß*, 80-81.

¹⁰ Cf. Rössler, "Die Einheit der Praktischen Theologie" in K.E.Nipkow / D.Rössler / F.Schweitzer (Eds.), *Praktische Theologie und Kultur der Gegenwart*, Gütersloh 1991, 43-51, 48-49.

¹¹ The examples given by Rössler - such as the preamble of the German Constitution, the principle of a social market economy, the Christian implications of German folklore and literature - are only partly comparable to the "ostensibly religious practices and language that accompany American civic rituals" described by Lewis Mudge (in *The Sense of a People. Toward a Church for the Human Future*, Philadelphia, 1992, 231, Fn. 32).

defined in a precise way. At what point is a person really a church-oriented Christian and in which case is she no longer ecclesially oriented? ... The self-definition of the individual is, at any rate, a specifically modern task".¹²

What is the proper response of the Church with regard to these modern conditions, i.e. the private choice of degrees of involvement between general and ecclesial Christianity? Rössler demands that the Church "cannot make membership dependent on participation in its programs; at least, it has to respect all the baptized as its members and it cannot dispense itself from its responsibility for public Christianity".¹³ While highlighting, on the one hand, the "almost unlimited individualization of religious ideas and forms of life . . . which elude any kind of definition and schematic representation"¹⁴, Rössler draws attention on the other hand to the lasting significance of the institutional church. For "without ecclesial Christianity neither public Christianity would be able to survive in any identifiable sense, nor would an individual Christianity in the sense of the possibility of manifold varieties be imaginable"¹⁵. Thus, paradoxically, the more that civil and private religions thrive, the more important the ecclesial and explicit type becomes. The Church is needed in order to provide an identifiable interpretation and model of the contents of the Christian faith.

How do these practical theological insights into the development of the church in modernity compare with a sociological account of basic characteristics of modern society and of the place of religion within it?

2. *Structural Pluralism and Individualization*

On the cultural level, the consequences of the differentiation or segmentation of society are *structural pluralism* and *structural individualization*. The terms "differentiation" or "segmentation" denote the process of separation of different segments of society, such as politics, economics, science, education, and private life. Modern society is composed of segments which are juxtaposed and which, despite the

¹² D.Rössler, Die Einheit der Praktischen Theologie, in Nipkow / Rössler / Schweitzer (Eds.), Praktische Theologie und Kultur der Gegenwart, 49.

¹³ D.Rössler, Grundriß, 82. Indeed, the actual evolution of practical theology itself shows that the task for ecclesial praxis has not been restricted to the boundaries of the Church. Rössler's thesis here is that the major areas of practical theology were developed in response to the differentiations of Christianity in modernity: the fostering of religious education for the public form, the promotion of theories of worship and preaching for the ecclesial form and of pastoral care for the individual form.

¹⁴ D.Rössler, Grundriß, 82.

¹⁵ Cf.D.Rössler, Die Einheit der Praktischen Theologie: in Nipkow / Rössler / Schweitzer, Kultur der Gegenwart, 49.

repercussions they have on each other, form systems of their own. The consequence of this for religion is that it loses its role as the one belief system which links the different realms. Religion is now just one segment beside the others. Each segment has its own norms and laws. The segment of economics is ruled by the norm of efficaciousness, functionality, and profit. Science constitutes a segment with its own experts who follow a scientific kind of rationality. In this schema, religion belongs to the segment of world views which is relevant for the private lives of people, but which does not have any direct impact on the other segments. The rules of the business world, or of the legal and the political systems follow their own rationales. One effect of the differentiation of society is the emergence of *structural pluralism*, i.e., a pluralism produced by the processes of modernization.¹⁶ The social philosopher Otfried Höffe describes the origin of this feature:

Societies are considered pluralistic when the public realm consists in a highly differentiated system of intermediate groups, cooperatives and associations that mediate between the power of the state and the individual . . . Due to a long process of religious, political, cultural and social differentiation the relatively homogeneous and stable conceptions of values and living conditions of the so-called old European or preindustrial society have dissolved. . . More and more groups have developed interests, forms of actions, belief convictions and conceptions of reality which are not identical with those of other groups. Because of this basic pluralist feature societies are capable of developing many varied forms of self-realization. In contrast to homogeneous societies this variety creates more scope for individuals and groups, but also more areas of social conflict.¹⁷

¹⁶ Referring to German society (which seems more homogenous in its population than the United States or England and France), the sociologist of religion Karl Gabriel examines the difference between the cultural pluralism of the industrial society from the 19th to the middle of the 20th century and since the 1960s. The earlier pluralism had "limits which were based in the social structure and essentially consisted of a pluralism of group cultures which were relatively closed in themselves. Even traits of the unified culture such as the belief in progress and the welfare state program at least existed in differently accentuated and oriented group-specific versions . . . With the dissolution of the milieus of large groups and of traditional forms of production and living the cultural pluralism of the industrial society undergoes a fundamental transformation and takes on a new character. The opening of the group milieus initially contributes towards a greater homogenization of culture. A central factor in the melting of the group cultures specific in class and denomination are the media, especially television. It is the media in the first place that create and maintain a group-transcending, homogenized horizon of cultural focuses. This homogenized background in turn offers the basis for new cultural differentiations and thus for a new, more radical cultural pluralism." Gabriel. *Christentum*. 133-134.

¹⁷ O.Höffe, *Strategien der Humanität. Zur Ethik öffentlicher Entscheidungsprozesse*, Freiburg, 1975. 18-19.

A second characteristic of differentiated societies is *structural individualization*. In his book "The Society of Risk" (1986) the sociologist Ulrich Beck traces the development from industrial society towards the "risk society" of fully developed modernity.¹⁸ The greater range of individual and political choices has also brought about greater risk. With regard to the individual person, the concept of individualization denotes the transition from preset patterns and courses of life which are predetermined by the class and the gender into which a person is born, to 'individualized' biographies. In former times, one's social position and gender prescribed certain courses of life and led to so-called 'normal biographies.' These 'normal biographies' are presently dissolving. A person can and must choose her course of education, her living arrangements, her degree of participation in society. In every-day life as a consumer she can choose from a wide range of goods and services. Under this aspect, individualization is a gain in freedom.

On the other hand, all these choices and decisions are controlled by the need to make one's living; i.e., they are subjected to the demands of the job market. For the sake of their own material survival people are forced to make themselves the center of their own life planning. Personal ties such as being attached to one's partner or family, to a neighborhood, a workplace, to a regional culture and landscape are subordinated and often sacrificed to the requirements of the job market in order to secure one's market-mediated existence. There are both waves of individualization and the experience of collective fates like mass joblessness and processes of de-qualification.

The consequence of this process in which education, mobility of place and flexibility of time are prime assets is that "the social internal structure of the industrial society — social classes, family forms, gender roles, marriage, parenthood, working career — and the psychological patterns of behavior that go with them melt down and change"¹⁹.

¹⁸ U.Beck, Die Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne, Frankfurt, 1986, esp. 115-119. Beck's thesis is that the industrial society which we normally identify with 'modern society' "really only represents a half-modern society. It is partially a society of estates or social position, and partially an industrial society" (118). The transformation of which we are contemporaries consists in "setting women and men free from the social forms of industrial society - class, social layer, family, gender-related conditions." (115).

¹⁹ Beck, Risikogesellschaft, 115.

With familiar ways of life dissolving, the stabilizing functions which these institutions offered have to be taken over by other services, such as counseling institutions and informal networks.²⁰

Therefore, individualization is a double-sided gift of modernity "The increase of options, of possibilities of consciously choosing forms of life [Lebensgestaltung] is matched by an increase in risks and constraints".²¹ In addition, the conflicting norms of the segments of a functionally differentiated society — e.g., to function competitively in the workplace, to be a caring and sensitive parent, partner or friend — and the pluralism of values which encourages an attitude of non-commitment and consumerism make the formation of a stable identity a difficult task.

Yet precisely by placing this task of mediation on the shoulders of the individual members does modern society succeed in functioning. This is pointed out by Krüggeler and Voll, members of the research team on religion in Switzerland, when they describe individualization as

a mode of socialization which corresponds to the basic structure of modern society [i.e., functional differentiation] . . . What might appear to the individual person as an enlargement of her scope of action, from the perspective of society turns out to be a precondition . . . for the modern level of division of work and social complexity. Only if the mediation between the various subsystems is taken over by the individuals and is not regulated in detail by institutions, only then is a large-scale functional differentiation of social subsystems possible.²²

3. *Individualization in religion*

What are the chances for the acceptance of the authority of a religious tradition under these conditions in which choosing and deciding have become basic cultural modes of life?²³ The effects on religion can be summed up in the two terms "institutionalization" and "bricolage".

²⁰ Cf. K. Gabriel, *Tradition im Kontext enttraditionalisierter Gesellschaft*, in Dietrich Wiederkehr (ed.), *Wie geschieht Tradition? Überlieferung im Lebensprozeß der Kirche*, Freiburg: Herder, 1991, 6988, 80: "The consequences of the dissolution of milieus . . . are highly ambivalent. Apart from an immense widening of the individuals' scope of freedom and options and thus an individualization, the loss of milieus also entails demanding problems of orientation and new dependencies: dependencies from one's individual success at school, from the job market, from the mass media, from counseling institutions of various kinds."

²¹ Krüggeler/Voll, *Strukturelle Individualisierung*, in: Dubach / Campiche, *Sonderfall*, 25.

²² "Strukturelle Individualisierung, in: Dubach / Campiche, *Sonderfall*, 24-25.

²³ An early reflection of this situation can be found in Peter L. Berger's *The Heretical Imperative*, New York: Doubleday, 1979.

Deinstitutionalization can refer to the rejection of the organizational character and the normative claims of the churches, as well as to the modern thrust to de-center tradition and reappropriate it (or some of it) on subjective terms. It does not mean "the replacement of a traditional religious standards of beliefs by a new non-religious world view. Rather, it claims that the religion which was historically institutionalized in Christian denominations and churches is decreasing in favor of a diffused religiosity, on the one hand, which evades doctrinal and organizational fixation, and a variety of minority religions on the other hand which find their profile against this diffusion and are based on individual decision." The result of this is that the "social form of religion changes from an institutionally and disciplinarily controlled religion towards one which can be actualized according to individual needs".²⁴

Another aspect of deinstitutionalization is that the Christian religion even in Western society is losing its former "monopoly" on religion. "It is no longer possible to present in a binding way a unified normative model of religious orientation. Normative claims of religious organizations must first be reconstructed by the individual person as his own obligation and effort"²⁵. In this context, dissent assumes an important function. To voice one's disagreement with regard to parts of a certain tradition can also serve the need to ascertain one's own individuality. "Traditions and the institutions that embody them still count as points of reference for individual self-descriptions, but their given resources [Vorgaben] are only taken over according to an individual's subjective 'conviction' and their adequacy in particular situations. Here it is this accentuation of a difference in respect to the offers of a certain tradition that can be used to build up a specific identity"²⁶.

Bricolage refers to the realm of diffused religiosity and marks the patchwork way in which the individual person assembles his own belief from different sources.²⁷ A syncretistic religion is the result. Its difference from the syncretism of popular religion is explained by Robert Wuthnow in the following way:

²⁴ Krüggeler/Voll, Strukturelle Individualisierung in: Dubach / Campiche, Sonderfall,32.

²⁵ M.Krüggeler, Inseln der Seligen: Religiöse Orientierungen in der Schweiz, in: Dubach / Campiche, Sonderfall, 123. Cf. also Gabriel, Christentum, 142-150.

²⁶ Krüggeler / Voll, Strukturelle Individualisierung, in: Dubach / Campiche, Sonderfall, 26. Cf.their summary of tendencies in the transformation of religion and options for the Churches, 43-47.

²⁷ Cf.Krüggeler, Inseln der Seligen, in: Dubach / Campiche, Sonderfall, 93-132, 102. 115. Dubach, Nachwort: 'Es bewegt sich alles, Stillstand gibt es nicht' in: Dubach / Campiche, Sonderfall, 295-313, 304-307.

If religious belief is defined as a matter of individual interpretation, . . . then it becomes possible for particular ideas to be put together in a number of ways. The effect of this decoupling is somewhat similar to that accomplished in popular religions but at a different level of ideological organization. Whereas popular religions tend to be disaggregated by virtue of their intrinsic aphoristic quality and lack of formal codification, individualistic religious orientations are disaggregated at the level of the individual believer.²⁸

In line with this sociological research, is there a way in which the authority of a religious tradition would appear acceptable and worthy of consideration to the contemporary person? Leaving aside the fundamentalist reaction to processes of modernization, what seems to be impressive in a religious tradition for most actual or potential believers is not its claimed authority, but its credibility. For Robert Schreier in his reflection on "local theologies", credibility is the most important condition for the functioning of a tradition within a culture, for crediting it with authority. In his analysis, credibility is judged according to the ability of a tradition to treat the problems that the society faces: "It will be accepted if the manifest concerns of the tradition match the manifest problems of a culture . . . it must be evident to the members of a culture that their concerns are the tradition's concerns"²⁹.

In this regard, the increasing exodus of women from the Catholic church should be taken as a clear sign that the manifest concerns of the tradition do not match the concerns of many of its members. But the credibility of a tradition is also judged by its immediate suitability for personal needs. It threatens to fade if it is seen to be at odds with what seems to be the modern person's holy grail, one's personal right to choose and to revise one's choices.

In my judgment, the theological problem with individualization is not that it confronts the individual with the need to decide for herself what she believes and how she wants to live, instead of allowing herself to be carried along by habit and convention. The call for personal decision is well in keeping with the authority of the gospel. The danger that structural individualization poses for the Christian faith — as well as for any other consistent system of meaning — is the diffusion of the contents of its message. Without the challenge and the possibility for correction which the wider community of the church could offer the Christian truth can easily be reduced to the individual's psychological needs for survival in the contradictory demands of a segmented society.

²⁸ Wuthnow, *Sociology of Religion*, in: Smelser, *Handbook*, 485.

²⁹ R. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll, New York, 1985, 107.

Against the backdrop of this sociological research it becomes evident that what is needed amid the syncretizing and diffusion of world views is an identifiable witness of the Christian faith in order to know what counts as "Christian" even if one adopts a selective attitude towards it. Therefore, the church as a visible social body with a particular shared belief has an indispensable function also for those who are neither engaged in its communities nor participating in its offers.³⁰

II. The Theological Grounds of Authority or: Which Truth? Whose Authority?

So far, we have seen that the reason for the factual, empirical difficulty of the church to assert its authority in contemporary society lies in the structural individualization and pluralism inherent in the process of modernization. In this context, any statement of authority must appear like an unwarranted attempt to exert ecclesial, clerical, or hierarchical power. But what is the theological justification for the church's claim to authority? Drawing on recent debates in fundamental and dogmatic theology, I will first discuss its fundamental reason and measure, which is the authority of God's revelation. Secondly, I shall consider how the contents of this revelation prefigure the style and the structures in which it should be mediated, i.e. proclaimed and lived. Thirdly, I will suggest how the authority of the gospel calls for the effort of the Christian faithful to examine and distinguish between adequate and inadequate interpretations and actualizations of its saving truth.

1. Authority and the Experience of God's Revelation

The theological reason for the authority of the church is the divine authorship and authority of Christian revelation. Not human reason or human ingenuity is the source of this revelation but God's self. Edward Schillebeeckx states how in the human experience of God's revelation the distinction between human receptivity and divine agency is present:

Revelation takes place *in* historical human experiences *in* this world, but at the same time it summons us *from* what we take for granted in our limited world . . . This experiential structure of revelation is expressed . . . in the Christian revelation, which had its beginning in a historical en-

³⁰ A theological reflection of this sociological fact can be found in Peter C. Hodgson's *Revising the Church. Ecclesial Freedom in the new Paradigm*, Fortress Press, 1988, 104-105: "without their ecclesial essence, the churches would be merely human, social institutions; and without the ecclesial community, God's redemptive,

counter of human beings with a fellow man: Jesus of Nazareth. In him, something that we could never have conceived of appears in a most surprising way *in* our history. Nevertheless, what could not have been conceived of by human persons appeared in the immanence of our historical experiences. In the encounter with Jesus, the authority of the (Christian) experience which he called to life coincides with the authority of the divine revelation.³¹

Schillebeeckx expounds the experiential and practical character of revelation correcting the traditional instructional approach which interpreted revelation as the divine issuing of supernatural teachings. Yet, at the same time he takes pains to distinguish between the human experience itself and God's self as the content of this experience which gives it its authority: "So for believers, revelation is an action of God as experienced by believers and interpreted in religious language and therefore expressed in human terms . . . The all-pervasive, authoritative element of revelation in this complex context is not this interpretative experience itself but what can be experienced in it"³².

From Schillebeeckx's account two insights regarding the authority of the gospel can be drawn:

1) The identity of the Christian faith depends on the fact that the human experience of revelation is not self-produced but given³³. It is an event effected by God. It is this truth "that the church has to cherish

liberating power would become historically actual only in diffused, anonymous forms".

³¹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ. The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, New York, 1980, 62.

³² E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 78.

³³ Yves Congar groups several instances under the qualification as "given." "The first such level is that of the given, the datum: Scripture, witnesses of the Tradition, formulations of the magisterium. These documents have been composed in a certain language issuing from a particular cultural setting an historical and social context. . . The given comes in bulk, not sorted and packed." (Y. Congar, *Towards a Catholic Synthesis*, in *Concilium* 148 (8/1981). *Who has the Say in the Church?* 68-80, 75). It is important, however, to distinguish between the fundamental given datum, God's self-communication in the person of Jesus, and the "statements which try to express the significance and meaning of the story of Jesus in his proclamation, his being killed and being resurrected". (Th. Pröpper, *Erlösungsglaube und Freiheitsgeschichte. Eine Skizze zur Soteriologie*, München 1988², 230). Pröpper's hermeneutical thesis is that the meaning of all the testimonies on Jesus Christ first has to be reconstructed by relating them to his story whose truth these testimonies seek to express. This does not only refer to the witnesses of tradition, but also to the earliest witness in the Scriptures. The Scriptures remain norma normans for all the ensuing Christian tradition; yet, they are themselves interpretations of what has happened in Jesus, God's final self-revelation.

— God's eternal self-revelation in the historical form of the dead but risen Lord, Jesus Christ"³⁴.

2) This basic truth of the Christian faith can only be expressed in finite and surpassable human terms which have to be judged for their adequacy. The procedures of how this is done concretely in cases of conflict, i.e. which body or which single person gets to bear the authority of the gospel in their right to decide, differ from one Christian church to the other. Any attempt of judgment, however, presupposes complex hermeneutical reflections on how to actually identify what remains identical in the Christian tradition³⁵.

However complex the task of judging the adequacy of new interpretations may be, it belongs to the church's commission to stand up for this truth that has been entrusted to it. The witness of the church to the gospel obviously includes more than the theoretical task of grappling with contradicting claims to authentic interpretations of the message of God. Since it is a determinate, identifiable truth which is not compatible with all other positions, the church also has to be alert to what is inconsistent and contradictory. To give an example for mutually exclusive concepts which also make a difference in praxis: one cannot believe in the Jewish and Christian God considered as the Lord over all of history and at the same time have a fatalistic view of the world. These are two basic convictions between which a Christian who strives for the consistency of his faith has to choose³⁶.

2. *The Mediation of the Authority of the Gospel*

That the authority of the church is intended to serve the authority of the gospel,³⁷ it has consequences for the style and structures of the

³⁴ Cf. E.Schillebeeckx, Church. The Human Story of God, New York, 1990, 214.

³⁵ This task involves "a historical reconstruction of the history of tradition of the Christian faith." Cf. Pröpper, Erlösungsglaube, 230-235.

³⁶ Another example from the scene of modern syncretism is the Christian belief in resurrection and the esoteric and the Hinduist belief in reincarnation which are mutually exclusive. To give reasons for this thesis, however, would involve a discussion of the implications of resurrection and of the Christian view of the human person.

³⁷ This is clearly stated by Yves Congar: "The category that must govern all our research is that of the 'life in the truth of Christ', not that of infallibility. Infallibility - a terribly weighted term which we need to use very warily - is a function of truth. We must not make infallibility the foundation stone of our structures and make truth a function of it." (76) With reference to the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum he clarifies: "The very texts of the magisterium itself never cease asserting that the magisterium is helped to guard and teach pure et integre only 'id quod traditum est', 'what has been handed down'. We know the words of Dei

church's witness. The way in which the church proclaims the gospel must be in keeping with the message of the gospel which invites the free assent of its hearers. That the gospel takes human freedom seriously and that this has to make a difference in church structures is emphasized across denominational borders. But because of statements from the Vatican urging obedience towards the teaching decisions of the magisteriums, recently especially Catholic theologians have found it necessary to underline the principle of freedom in the mediation of the gospel. They relativize the magisterium's quest for obedience by reflecting on the essence of faith, by highlighting the role of reception and non-reception by faithful as a criterion, and by critically analyzing the concept of tradition. Gabriel Daly gives an insightful comment on the limits of institutional authority posed by the inner nature of faith:

As Christians we are committed to the conviction that the truth we profess is the truth which sets men and women free. Such truth can never be authentically professed on purely extrinsic grounds, because the freedom it engenders is ab initio an interior one. This kind of truth demands an unforced and unfeigned inner assent which cannot be produced by any extrinsic authority.³⁸

By reminding the church of the freedom of conscience to which it subscribed Avery Dulles gives an immanent critique of present practices of the Catholic church leadership:

There is a temptation for church authorities to try to use their power of governance to stamp out dissent. . . It inhibits good theology from performing its critical task, and it is detrimental to the atmosphere of freedom in the church. The acceptance of true doctrine should not be a matter of blind conformity, as though truth could be imposed by decree. The church, as a society that respects the freedom of the human conscience, must avoid procedures that savor of intellectual tyranny.³⁹

Verbum §10: The magisterium is not above the Word of God . . . it listens to it devoutly, guards it religiously, and explains it faithfully'. The criterion of truth is 'id quod traditum est'; the magisterium of the Church is fundamentally a magisterium of Truth itself." Concilium 148 (8/1981), 76.

In their reply to the Vatican *Instructio* to Catholic theologians the German-speaking Catholic dogmatic and fundamental theologians likewise insist that "Theology sees itself, as well as the ecclesial magisterium, bound not primarily to obedience as such, but to the authority of the truth." (*Stellungnahme der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der deutschsprachigen Dogmatiker und Fundamentaltheologen zur >Instruktion über die kirchliche Berufung des Theologen< der Kongregation für die Glaubenslehre* (24. Mai 1990)" in D. Wiederkehr (Ed.), *Wie geschieht Tradition?*, 173-176, 174).

³⁸ G. Daly, *Which Magisterium is authentic?* in: *Concilium* 148 (8/1981) 52-55, 53.

³⁹ A. Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism. Current Challenges in the Theology of Church*, San Francisco, 1988, 108-09.

This freedom of conscience is a principle invoked both by Catholic and Protestant theologians. The Catholic theologians Wolfgang Beinert defends of faithful dissent as follows

"The deepest reason for the legitimacy of the non-reception of magisterial directives by individuals on the philosophical level is the virtue of *prudentia* which includes the duty to critical distinction, on the theological level the *primacy of conscience* and the *freedom of the act of faith*".⁴⁰

The Catholic fundamental theologian Hermann J. Pottmeyer analyzes:

The teaching magisterium can sharpen the tension by pressing the demand for obedience in a way that violates the faithful's conscience of truth. Reception, which can only occur in free agreement, is not enhanced in this way. The solving of the conflict can only happen through a process of dialogical understanding . . . In the final analysis, the magisterium can only demand obedience towards God and God's Word⁴¹.

The former general secretary of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Lukas Vischer, summarizes the position of the Commission with regard to cases of conflict:

If there are juridical structures regulating such discipline [in matters of faith and morals], they should be strictly subordinated to the calling and mission of the Church and not allowed to deteriorate into juridicism, limiting the freedom of conscience of individual church members and ministers. Disciplinary measures which may be necessary to maintain the clarity of the Church's message must not contradict the ethos of freedom which is characteristic of the New Testament.⁴²

Schillebeeckx's conclusion from the way in which "God rules in history, ... in the utmost respect for human freedom" with regard to church structures can count as expressing an Interdenominational consensus: "The functioning of ministerial authority must ... be organized in such a way that the liberating authority of the Lord Jesus, which is

⁴⁰ W. Beinert, Die Rezeption und ihre Bedeutung für Leben und Lehre der Kirche in: Wolfgang Beinert (Ed.), Glaube als Zustimmung, 15-49, 43.

⁴¹ L. Sartori, What is the criterion of the *sensus fidelium*? in: Concilium 148 (8/1981) 56-60, 58, concludes: "The classical theological thesis of 'receptio' requires, therefore, to be broadening and deepened. The active reaction of the believers (whether in consensus or in dissent) can in fact be described as true *locus theologicus*, in which it is possible to read the force of the transmitted Word, to grasp its original resonances and ever new implications."

⁴¹ H.J. Pottmeyer, Rezeption und Gehorsam - Aktuelle Aspekte der wiederentdeckten Realität 'Rezeption' in: W. Beinert (Ed.), Glaube als Zustimmung, 51-91, 78.

⁴² L. Vischer, How does the Church Teach Authoritatively Today? (Abbreviated version of the report of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches from the International Ecumenical Consultation in Odessa, 1977, in: Concilium 148 (8/1981) 1-10, 6.

abidingly present, can come into effect time and again in the life of the Christian community of faith.⁴³

Another theological reason for the right and necessity of the Christian Church to transmit the gospel to each new age in creative freedom is put forth by the Swiss Catholic dogmatic theologian Dietrich Wiederkehr. After broadening the concept of tradition from the hierarchy to the whole church, he sets out to rescue it from the danger of "religious Darwinism":

"It is especially the Catholic understanding of tradition, reinforced by the promise of the Spirit (a promise that can lead to ideology), which is in danger of regarding the *factual* course of tradition as the course tradition was meant to take. . . Besides the possible and the real correspondence to the given situation there are in church history undeniable moments of refusal, neglect and failure by the church, where tradition has been a betrayal."

He then locates the right and the duty of each age to go beyond the existing tradition in its interpretations of the Christian faith in the very fact of tradition itself:

The great ages of the church, of the praxis of faith as well as of intellectual fruitfulness, were not the times of sterile continuation or fashionable adjustment but the times of risking new steps and simultaneously of open argument. Tradition only exists because there has always been more than tradition. This paradoxical conclusion is to say that the tradition of the past is unjustly played off against its new actualization, that it rather is the strongest warrant for contemporary transformations/interpretations. Because each new present moment was recognized despite all the rich offers already given in tradition, because of this each time new tradition originated. The right of the church in previous times is also the right of the present church.⁴⁴

This freedom to create and not only to conserve tradition as well as the need to appropriate the Christian faith in a personal way are very much in consonance with the message of the gospel. Moreover, these insights seem to be in keeping with the results of the sociological analysis of contemporary society. Karl Gabriel describes how the mediation of traditions is changing:

Practically all inherited deposits of tradition [*Traditionsbestände*] lose their *matter-of-course* validity. Traditions are at one's disposal, but they have to be *chosen*, one has to *decide* on them. . . Without a minimal degree of reflection no process of tradition can succeed anymore. Who-

⁴³ E. Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 216

ever considers this insight scarcely new and exciting, should realize that it means something very different if a small academic elite treats traditions in this way or if for almost everybody traditions in principle a matter of choice and have therefore become contingent.⁴⁵

Yet, the freedom emphasized by so many theologians does not necessarily exclude the need to set limits to interpretations in order to preserve the gospel in its character of being a given and identifiable truth. On the background of individualization with its tendency towards diffusion and syncretism, not every case of ecclesial authority can be dismissed as illegitimate use of power and an unfounded rejection of a rightful claim to *aggiornamento*.

3. *The Teaching Authority of the Church in Cases of Conflict*

Lukas Vischer in his summary of the Faith and Order Commission's report on binding doctrine in the church rightly places the source of unity in the churches' practice of faith, in its *orthopraxis*. The "primary root" of unity lies "in the Eucharistic fellowship and in the common mission and witness of the Church"⁴⁶. Although he warns against imposing uniformity, he still sees the need for authoritative teaching:

Obviously, pluralism must not be misunderstood as 'indifferentism' or relativism'. The Church must also know how to say 'no'. Faithfulness to the apostolic witness implies that there may be unfaithfulness. Obedient listening and the desire to teach aright call for the recognition that sometimes the line between truth and error must be drawn. . . . Often the churches, afraid of possible divergences in their ranks, tend to withdraw from authoritative teaching. They try to preserve peace and unity by avoiding critical issues rather than by taking positions on matters of faith and justice. But there is no escaping. They need to hazard peace and unity and dare to confront error and unrighteousness. Controversy within the Church and conflict with evil in the world may be inevitable if the Church is to be faithful to its Lord.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ D.Wiederkehr, Das Prinzip Überlieferung, in: W.Kern et al. (Eds.), Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie, Bd. 4, Traktat Theologische Erkenntnislehre, Freiburg, 1988, 100-123, 110. 116-117. 122

⁴⁵ K.Gabriel, Tradition im Kontext enttraditionalisierter Gesellschaft, in: D.Wiederkehr (Ed.), Wie geschieht Tradition?. 69-88. 81.

⁴⁶ "The growing variety of interpretations may cause the problem of diffusing the visible unity of the Church's teaching and call into question the Church's identity. The acceptance of pluralism does not necessarily militate against unity. Authoritative teaching should seek to maintain the Church in unity, yet not impose uniformity nor deny creative difference. The oneness has its primary root in the Eucharistic fellowship and in the common mission and witness of the Church." Concilium 148 (8/1981) 6.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* 6-7.

Avery Dulles derives the need for a "unified authoritative leadership" from this:

"The apostolic ministry of supervision is permanently necessary for the Church so that it may articulate its faith and co-ordinate its efforts as Christian mission may require. Without a unified authoritative leadership, the church would disintegrate into a plurality of movements having, indeed, a certain common inspiration but incapable of adopting a clear corporate stand on any controversial issue".⁴⁸

But while one acknowledges the need for authoritative decisions, one cannot absolutize it. Even legitimate decisions have inherent limits. As Schillebeeckx reminds us:

In serious situations of conflict and thus in exceptional circumstances, definitions of church order, which are in fact necessary for the concrete and practical life of the church community of faith . . . can never resolve the religious and theological question of the authentic place where . . . the concrete effectiveness of the Holy Spirit can be demonstrated. Not even the church authority has a special charisma here; it has the authority to settle unresolved questions for a time — in order to even out polarization.⁴⁹

III. Conclusion

Our *sociological* inquiry in Part One alerted us to the fact that despite the growing individualization and syncretism of world views in modern society — which probably are here to stay — the institution of the Christian church remains important because it gives an 'official' picture of what it is to be Christian. The *theological* reflection in Part Two reminded us that the authority of the church is there to safeguard the truth that has been entrusted to it, the salvation of humankind in Jesus Christ's revelation of God's loving self. If the mission of the church is to live by and mediate this truth, then it has to set its witness to the Christian God against the current postmodern aestheticisms that avoid existential questions, existential decisions and engagements. Contemporary culture might happily say "Yes to religion, but No to God" (J.B.Metz).

⁴⁸ A.Dulles, *Successio apostolorum - Successio prophetarum - Successio doctorum* in *Concilium* 148 (8/1981) 61-67. 62.

⁴⁹ E.Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 227-228. In the fact that God's revelation took human freedom seriously he finds "intrinsically ecclesiological reasons which impel the church of Jesus Christ to follow the nonauthoritarian, vulnerable, even helpless, rule of God"(221). He also reminds the church of Thomas Aquinas' insight: "The power and rule of Christ over human beings is exercised by truth, justice, and above all, love"(222).

The trouble with calling the faithful to witness their faith "against" the arbitrariness of orientations in present-day culture, however, is that it presupposes a unity in Christian experience, outlook, and praxis that does not exist.⁵⁰ Therefore, what seems to be the most pressing problem in the situation of an individualized Christianity in individualized Western societies is how to foster the identity of the Christian faith within the church, i.e. how to deal theologically and practically with the personal interpretations of the Christian message on the borderline between private and official Christianity. Prominent examples of this are the cases of conflict mentioned in the beginning — Eugen Drewermann and Jutta Voss putting forward in the name of the church their individual syntheses of Christian and other traditions. Obviously, everyone claims that they are giving a truly authentic interpretation of the Christian message of God which is true both to their conscience and to the demands of the time. How can one decide whether their work anticipates a future consensus? Often enough in church history, the dissidents were the ones who helped to pass on the authentic moments of the tradition. One criterion which can be ascertained easily is whether they do engage in dialogue, argumentation, whether they discuss the questions posed by others.

But is it enough for safeguarding the given truth of Christianity to demand from the various groups of Christian faithful that they keep up communication between each other and with Christian tradition — instead of falling into the "aggressive monotrationalism" that can mark hierarchical just as well as contextual theologies which only pay heed to the experience of their own circle.⁵¹

Nicholas Lash even envisages the possibility of different creeds, although these have to contain "essential elements of the Christian narrative". But, basically, the unity of Christian faith is expressed more in

⁵⁰ "Faith is now being articulated and lived in a multitude of apparently incompatibly forms, some deeply communal and morally engaged, some radically privatistic, each bearing witness to an apparently different version of the gospel". L.Mudge, *Sense of a People*, 75.

⁵¹ This danger is particularly evident in the "communities of feeling", the new religious collectives in Western culture. Cf. K.O.Frh.v.Aretin, E.-W.Böckenförde et al., *Die kirchliche Sprachverwirrung in ein Pfingsten verwandeln*, in: Herder-Korrespondenz 46 (1992) 172-175, 173. Cf. also I.U.Dalferth's criticism of the "dissolution of distinct theology into (pseudo)religious irrationalisms and projects of wholeness" in his *Kombinatorische Theologie. Probleme theologischer Rationalität*, (*Quaestiones Disputatae* 130) Freiburg, 1991, 13. Also Mudge's judgment remains cautionary: "It remains to be seen whether what is particular and local is for that reason more likely to be authentic" (*Sense of a People*, 71).

procedure than in substance, in communication, mutual criticism, and acceptance.⁵²

Once "the irreducible diversity of culture and memory, history and experience, language and thought-form, is taken seriously then, as Karl Rahner has remarked, 'There will be no longer any single and universal basic formula of the Christian faith applicable to the whole church.' In these circumstances, the unity of the Creed, no longer "maintained by subscription to one single formula, will be maintained by continual quest for mutual recognition. The stories that differently express different experiences will not be verbally identical. But, if each creed, each 'abbreviated statement' of faith, containing what are taken to be the essential elements of the Christian narrative, is to be a *Christian* creed, . . . and not a narcissistic celebration of a nationalist, sectarian or particularist egotism and self-interest, then it must be offered as, and be capable of being accepted by others as, a different version of the same story, not a different story.⁵³

Robert Schreiter offers a more substantial definition of unity. "Cultural diversity among Christians is a fact. At the same time, however, Christians believe that unity is one of the signs of God's church. What unity means in the concrete is differently understood, but it does involve the Pauline 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all' (Ephesians 4:5).⁵⁴ He also puts forth five criteria by which to judge Christian performance: its cohesiveness, the worshiping context, the praxis of the community, the judgment of other churches, and the challenge to other churches.⁵⁵

I would like to conclude my inquiry with the concern expressed by Lewis Mudge and commend his questions to our discussion:

⁵² The willingness of local groups and churches to engage in communication is not a matter of course. Schreiter points out what gets lost without such dialogue: Solutions are "reached without the benefit of dialogue with the tradition, to the detriment of the entire body of Christ: the local church has lost the opportunity to have its response to the gospel tested, challenged, or affirmed; the larger church may have missed an important incarnation of Christ in culture... The complexities of cultural difference are often confused by relations of power. But there is a growing danger that more and more in the future there will be no dialogue with tradition at all. More facile models of contextualization will be pursued, and blame will have to be placed on both sides of the erstwhile dialogue." (Local Theologies, 101)

⁵³ N.Lash, Theologies at the Service of a Common Tradition in Concilium 171 (1/1984) (Different Theologies, Common Responsibility. Babel or Pentecost ?), 74-83, 80.

⁵⁴ R.Schreiter, Local Theologies, 102.

⁵⁵ R.Schreiter, Local Theologies, 117-121.

"If not by the methods of Cardinal Ratzinger, how *shall* the church determine what is faithful and authentic and what is not? . . . The church faces life-or-death issues, issues around which cluster questions of basic integrity, and faithfulness to the gospel. But the issues in different parts of the world are not the same. . . It is not merely a question of adaptation or application of the gospel to circumstances, but rather fundamental differences of perspective, divergent ways of conceiving what the gospel is about. When pluralism reaches a certain point, contextuality begins to become more important than tradition, more important than any ideal or essential unity the faith may possess. How far along this path is it legitimate to go?⁵⁶

... it seeks to confront people's moral and pastoral problems. In particular, sexuality is given a prominence as great as the major life events of birth and death, but then is reduced to discussions of copulation — who does what with whom where!

Perhaps I speak too harshly, yet undoubtedly the combative word 'struggle' fits this topic area well, both in terms of the history of the debates and in terms of much contemporary discussion. In an audience of this kind I need not labour the point about our history. We must all be aware of the early Hellenization of Christianity and of the Neo Platonic dualism, with its fear and contempt of bodily matters, which influenced the teachings of the Fathers. Origen likened the opening of the vagina to the gates of hell and castrated himself for the kingdom's sake; Jerome wrote, "I praise marriage and wedlock, but only because they beget celibates". But most significant, perhaps is Augustine's description of prelapsarian sexual intercourse: in the ideal state there would be no spontaneous male erections, rather:

These members... would be moved by the command of his will, and the husband would be mingled with the body of the wife without the medicative stimulus of passion... Thus it would have been possible to inject the semen into the womb through the female genitalia as innocently as the menstrual flow is now ejected.

Thus the struggle with sexuality within certain aspects of the tradition has been at a very basic level its spontaneity and power were seen as inevitably corrupting, the epitome of temptation leading to the commission of sin. Allied to this was a powerful gender bias, so well documented now by feminist theologians. Eve the temptress was to be found in every woman. The alleged irrationality of women made them

⁵⁶ L.Mudge, *Sense of a People*, 88. 74-75. He concludes: "Clearly we need some new means of interpreting the life of Christian communities which come together in innovative ways around issues of human well-being and destiny in today's world (88)... What theological method, in touch with tradition, yet open and creative, might be adequate for making sense of this new situation?" (75)

Alastair V. Campbell

The Struggle of the Church over Sexuality and the Task of Practical Theology

Birth, copulation and death.
That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:
Birth, copulation and death.

These cynical words from T.S.Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* have often seemed to me to sum up the church at its worst when it seeks to confront people's moral and pastoral problems. In particular, sexuality is given a prominence as great as the major life events of birth and death, but then is reduced to discussions of copulation — who does what with whom where!

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Thus the struggle with sexuality within certain aspects of the tradition has been at a very basic level its spontaneity and power were seen as inevitably corrupting, the epitome of temptation leading to the commission of sin. Allied to this was a powerful gender bias, so well documented now by feminist theologians. Even the temptress was to be found in every woman. The alleged irrationality of women made them

¹ Augustine, *City of God*, XIV, 26. We have here a remarkable prediction of what is now commonplace in artificial insemination, but condemned in Catholic teaching because of the total absence of the "unitive" aspects of sexual intercourse!

fit to serve and nurture but unfit to lead. When leadership² was taken by followers of Jesus like Mary Magdalene, the tradition soon equated her with an unnamed prostitute. There are evident in the New Testament strong moves to replace the patriarchy of the day with a new emphasis on the ministry of women, as Witherington has carefully documented.³ But these were short lived as the (male) church leadership consolidated in response to thwats of heresy and of the loss of control perceived in prophetic movements like Montanism. It is significant that in later epochs women were let with only one route to church leadership — through the monastic movement — and that route required the renunciation of sexual feelings of any kind and a separation from the more powerful world of male dominance. Throughout its history the church — in all its forms — has remained deeply disturbed by the combination of leadership and female sexuality. The emphasis that "woman has her place in the order of creation", strongly affirmed by Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics III/ 4* is quite consistent with the tradition both before and after the Reformation. Men have never been slow to tell women what their place is, and to find theological justifications for it!

The Struggle Today

I realize that my glance at the negative aspects of the tradition is absurdly simplified and that I have left out much that is of positive value in the attempts of church people and theologians throughout the ages to describe the meaning of the Christian norm of agape when it is applied to personal relationships, including the ideal of lifelong and faithful marriage. Equally, I would accept that the dualistic and ascetic elements of Christianity have not always had the upper hand and that there have been notable attempts to describe the goodness of our created nature and to describe ways of acting, in our sexual experiences as in other aspects of our lives, that will lead to personal fulfilment and to non-exploitative relationships with others.⁴ But the mere fact that we can speak of this topic area as a "struggle" amply illustrates how powerful the negativities of the past are to this day. Carter

² See E. Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women Around Jesus* (SCM Press, 1982), Chp.3

³ See Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge University Press 1984) and *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge University Press 1988).

⁴ Good surveys can be found in the works of W.G. Cole and of D.S. Bailey.

Heyward in her radical re-evaluation of Christian sexual ethics sums up the degree of struggle as follows:

Organized religion in general, the christian church in particular, is not simply unhelpful in shaping sexual ethics. Given the misogynist, erotophobic weight of its sexual baggage, which even the most progressive churches have not discarded entirely, christianity is a largely damaging/damaged participant in explorations of sexual ethics.⁵

Heyward's description of the continuing problems that churches create for themselves can be illustrated by two bits of "baggage" from the past. One is the continuing gender bias in both debates about, and the realities of, church leadership. Even in those churches which have ordained women for some years, the power remains quite firmly in male hands, and with the resurgence of fundamentalism strong moves are afoot to restore women "to their rightful place" in many churches. (An example is the Presbyterian Church in Australia.) The sheer virulence of the debate in some quarters strongly suggests a dread of sexual confusion and a powerful "fear of the feminine". How else do we explain the extraordinary ructions in the Church of England, since their decision on the ordination of women? A second continuing inheritance from the past is a confusion of sexuality with male genitality and a distrust of the loss of control associated with sexual arousal, ejaculation and orgasm (as males experience it). No doubt this confusion is compounded by the fact that ejaculation is necessary for procreation, but the root of the confusion goes back to Augustine's dislike of post-lapsarian sex — some natural features of male sexuality are distasteful, in need of redemption. Luther, among others, could find its redemption in the marriage bed — that "hospital for incurables" as he put it. But that feeling of being lessened by the sheer physicality and loss of conscious control in the male climax seems to dominate Christian thought still — how else do we explain the very different reactions to male as opposed to female homosexuality? And how can intercourse between males, which can never bring about the pain of an unwanted pregnancy be viewed with so much less tolerance than heterosexual intercourse in any circumstances? The answer is related not to reasoned argument, but to an ancient (and perhaps quite primitive) male emotional reaction to his own genitality. Christianity, among other religions, has given this male obsession with his own sexual functions a religious sanction. But the confusion is profound, for, as I shall argue in the next section, this focus on male genitality leads to the impoverishment and potential perversion of human sexuality as a whole. The experience of half of humanity (those who are female) is

⁵ *Touching our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God.* (San Francisco: Harper, 1989), p.124.

not even considered, and the assertion of or loss of male power becomes the hidden agenda of sexual ethics.

In addition to these factors coming from an inheritance we could do without, there are some distinctive features of our own time, which complicate the struggle. The first and perhaps most obvious is the advent of AIDS, the "dread disease" of our time. The effects of the fear which this epidemic has caused are almost too obvious to mention: a new Puritanism has seen in the disease God's revenge on the ungodly, giving a fresh impetus to a sexual morality based on fear. Distaste for male homosexuality has found a fresh justification (people easily forget the range and virulence of STDs in the heterosexual community and the dramatic spread of AIDS among women in many countries) and old "merit theories" of rights to health care have begun to reassert themselves. Easily overlooked has been the dramatic change in modes of sexual behaviour within the gay community. Even further from sight is the theological significance of the gay and lesbian community's realisation that sexuality need not be confined to specific sexual acts.

A second notable feature of our times is the ever increasing gap between sexual intercourse and procreation. With the advent of effective contraception and sterilisation for both males and females and with the dramatic expansion in assisted reproductive technology, the "natural law" account of sexual intercourse as being by its very nature inseparably both unitive and procreative seems increasingly divorced from reality — except among the poorer nations where overpopulation and starvation go hand in hand. Nor only can conception be prevented or planned at intervals, but it can be achieved with only partial or with no genetic relationship to the parents. Virtually anything is now possible and technically not particularly difficult: one's child could be genetically related to oneself and partner but born of another, or conversely born of the female partner but genetically related to others in whole or in part. Donors and birth mothers can be strangers or relatives of any degree of closeness. Grandmothers or aunts can be the birth mothers of their own grandchildren, nieces or nephews; uncles or grandfathers (perhaps long dead and their semen cryopreserved) can be the genetic fathers. Women who have never had intercourse with a man can give birth to children partially or totally unrelated to them genetically. All of this has, of course, been deplored by official Roman Catholic teaching, with the foundations for criticism laid in *Humanae*

Vitae, and the applications to new birth technology made in *Donam Vitae*.⁶

But what technology has brought to possibility is merely the outcome of what may be regarded as a fundamental feature of human sexuality: sexual attraction has never been restricted to the fertile period in the woman's cycle (as it is in other animals) and sexual intimacy has — so far as we can tell — always carried a much wider range of meanings for humans than merely its relationship to bearing humans. The advent of new birth technology merely forces us to think more carefully of the moral implications of this human diversity and freedom. It also allows us to separate considerations of the morality of sexuality from considerations of the morality of parenthood, and to look in each case at the potential for exploitation of the vulnerable. The failure to make these distinctions in the past has resulted in grave injustices to both women and children. Such injustices undoubtedly continue in our age — but the blame should not be placed on the separation of procreation from sexual intercourse.⁷

A third feature of our time is an ever growing awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse, both of children and of persons in vulnerable relationships to others, such as the relationship between patient and doctor. For the church the realisation has dawned that such abuse of the vulnerable is also to be found within its own life. We are all aware of the growing evidence of child abuse in church institutions run by celibate orders. (The Christian Brothers in Australia have recently published a detailed and unreserved apology in the press for abuses occurring in the past in their child care institutions. The major cases in the USA and Canada will also be well known.) However, this is by no means a problem only of the avowedly celibate. All the churches are becoming aware of a hitherto concealed problem in their midst, with numerous examples of a crossing of the boundary between pastoral concern and a sexually exploitative relationship. The problem is well described by the title of P. Rutter's authoritative study: *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*. But the significance of this problem for the church's

⁶ In this later document all forms of artificial conception are excluded on the grounds of splitting the two purposes of sexual intercourse; thus not even use exclusively of the couples own gametes is permitted.

⁷ This is not to deny that new birth technologies, rather than freeing women, may be a new form of exploitation. This point has been strongly argued by a number of feminist writers who point to the foisting of treatments of dubious efficacy and safety on women driven by a societal pressure to have child. Male power has often been evident too in the proprietorial attitude of the doctors towards "their" achievements, instance the headline in a British newspaper: "1,000th IVF Baby born to Steptoe-Edwards Team!"

whole approach to sexuality has been little discussed. It has been seen as an unfortunate aberration, rather than a fundamental challenge to the church's ability to cope adequately with the sexual aspect of our human nature. In the next section I shall look at this "challenge from within", as well as the external challenges already described.

The task of Practical Theology

In the second academic article I ever published I described the task of Practical Theology as follows:

Practical theology is concerned with the study of specific structures in which God's continuing work in the world may be manifest. These may occur either inside or outside the life of the church.⁸

Twenty-one years later I would still adhere to this description of our work, but perhaps I am wiser to the extent that I am now acutely aware of how difficult it is and how little we often achieve by way of a creative interchange between church and society. In this chastened spirit I shall not claim too much for this section of my paper. I don't know if we are equal to the struggle we experience in the church's attempts to come to terms with sexuality. Yet I believe the continuing attempt is important, for, for all our inherited blind spots, fears and prejudices, I think that Christian theologians have access to a rich source of understanding — that source is the courageous vulnerability which lies at the heart of the Christian Gospel. (What I mean by this may become clearer as my argument progresses.) The task is two-fold: first, we must try to sort out our theology of human sexuality, at least in a tentative way; then we must ask how well this answers the questions of our age, and what it might mean in terms of practical outcomes. But now I shall add another caveat. I shall not claim to speak of human sexuality as though I could gain some unbiassed comprehensive view. I write (as anyone must) from the perspective of my gender, my sexual orientation and my sexual experience. The phrase "*human sexuality*" is distinctly grandiose!

a) Towards a Theology of Sexuality

The first problem which confronts us is that, in common with most other intellectual disciplines, theology must be seen as a form of eva-

⁸ Is practical theology possible? *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 25, May 1972, p.224. A modified form of this paper was republished in D.B.Forrester (ed.) *Theology and Practice* (London: Epworth 1990).

sion: by imposing categories upon a human experience and seeking to analyse logically we protect ourselves from its emotional impact. How can we avoid a theology of sexuality becoming emotionally evasive in this manner? The truth is, we cannot. Only poets catch the force of human emotion in words, and even so, erratically. But we can at least watch for the grosser forms of evasion in our theorising about sexuality. The first is a common mechanism of defence when anxiety runs high-splitting off the emotionally charged area. Much theological writing uses this device to neutralise sexuality. I have already commented upon the concentration upon male genitality, as though this were the epitome of human sexuality. Only if we wish to discuss a mechanism for fertilisation can sexuality be thus discussed — the erect penis is the soft equivalent of a syringe — the physiology of ejaculation the biological equivalent of the syringe plunger. The female is penetrated as the syringe pierces skin to deliver its contents and once delivered the act is complete. Of course, no theologian has written in these terms about sexual intercourse, but I have merely taken the tendency to splitting to a logical conclusion. It is less obvious, but nonetheless present, when sexuality is reduced to sexual activities of specific kinds, all clustered around male genitality, with the female as shadowy inciter, receptor or victim. The grossest offences of sexuality are related to this male genital mode, thus illustrating the grave dangers we run into when we split off an emotionally charged area in this manner.

Any minimally adequate theology of sexuality must place it within its full human context, recognising it as an aspect of the very complex relationship between physiological arousal, cognition and emotion. Think of the mysterious relationship between hunger and thirst and a fellowship meal and you get closer to the required complexity. We human animals have virtually no instinctive pathways left — our bodies respond to internal chemical changes and to external stimuli with a range of physiological signals, but these patterns of arousal are endlessly malleable. Our bodies don't deliver unambiguous messages about whether we are hungry or anxious, angry or afraid, sexually aroused or frightened or ready to attack. We must learn to interpret the meaning of the changes in our body, and often these interpretations are context dependent and socially determined. Forbidden sexual attraction can be experienced as irritation at the other, forbidden anger as a sense of guilt and inadequacy. Thus there is a very narrow sense in which sexuality is quite specific and related to the anatomical and physiological differences between males and females and to the

various response patterns connected with sexual intercourse.⁹ This narrow area constantly overlaps into cognitively mediated reactions, i.e. interpretations of our physical sexual characteristics, whether these are anatomical features or physiological changes. In his classic text, *Embodiment: An approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*¹⁰, James B. Nelson helpfully suggests that we use "sex" to describe the narrow range circumscribed by anatomy and physiology, but "sexuality" to describe our understanding of ourselves as sexual beings with all the range of interpretation which that implies. Theologically, "sexuality" is much more important, for, it is here that the potential for both good and ill are found. Here lie the roots of gender stereotyping and sexual violence and physical and emotional exploitation. Here too lie the roots of creativity and tenderness and the wish to understand and care for that which differs from us, yet strangely is also us. Thus an adequate theology of sexuality must not isolate and fragment our sexual natures, rather it must show how our sexuality can enlarge our understanding of ourselves and others and open pathways of love as diverse as friendship and shared endeavours, sexual intimacy and ecstasy, and the closeness and the mutual learning of parent and child.

But now we must beware a second method of evasion often used in theological accounts of sexuality — the mechanism of idealisation. Here I must plead guilty — and over many years! I know I have a fondness for writing poetic, somewhat "purple", passages about sexuality, which conceal the tougher questions. Take this passage from *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*¹¹:

The gracefulness of sexuality consists in discovering the rich complexity which a blend of maleness and femaleness offers us. We can rejoice in the differences and rejoice in the sameness, not afraid of the "sexual revolution" of our time, since it offers to men and women alike an amazing range of self-expression. Sexuality is graceful because it helps us to trust God's creation, venturing forth...to a place of music.

Such idealisation is another form of defence against the emotional and moral dangers of our sexuality. How old-fashioned, how redolent of the 60s that passage sounds as we now contemplate all that we know

⁹ However even these biological differences are far from absolute, as illustrated by hormonal changes leading to changes in secondary sexual characteristics and by the ambiguous sexual differentiation of some individuals, for whom the process appears to have been only partly completed during fetal development. Male characteristics are changes wrought on a substratum which is basically female in its earlier cellular development.

¹⁰ London: SPCK, 1979.

¹¹ London: Danon Longman & Todd. 1986 (2nd edition), p.76.

of sexual violence and exploitation. My writing is especially irresponsible in a book to read by pastors or future pastors, for, it makes merely passing reference to the possibility that we might use the intimacy of the pastoral relationship to assuage our own hurts, at the expense of the person dependent upon us.

The fundamental weakness of such idealisation is that it treats sexuality as though it were a single form of experience, a kind of emotional constant, as it were, through all life's changes. Thus it is really another version of the "splitting" discussed in the previous section. The reality is quite other. If there is a constant, it is the need for the deep security offered by a safe physical closeness with another human body. That is arguably a constant from birth to death and across all varieties of heterosexual and homosexual intimacy. Moreover, this foundational, pregenital intimacy is profoundly expressed in numerous Biblical passages about the closeness and dependability of God (of which the most striking is "underneath are the everlasting arms"); and about the intimacy between Jesus and his followers (the perfidious kiss of Judas, the attempted embrace by Mary outside the tomb reveal the norm to which his disciples were accustomed). But all else changes, and if we seek to make our sexuality fill a single mould or suit a single purpose we soon lose all sight of the other in the relationship that our needy self insists we get and keep forever. It is in this needy insistence that the origins of much exploitation of the pastoral relationship will be found. Rutter describes brilliantly the way male helpers turn to needy women in order to assuage their own confusion and uncertainty about their masculinity. Thus, although the sexual actions are adult in appearance, the relationship for both people is a regression to early childhood and the hurts experienced then. How does the professional helper allow this to happen? It appears at the time to be irresistible, because of the idealisation of what, viewed from without, is clearly an exploitative relationship. As Rutter puts it:

...nearly all men share the ability to idealize, even deify, the radiant, magical power of the feminine. In this way it can at any moment seem to be the sole object of value worth pursuing in life – regardless of the consequences.¹²

Thus beneath the problem of idealisation there lies the fundamental issue of gender. Few theologians have attempted to confront the way in which the sexual agenda has been consistently dominated by male pre-occupations. Of course I do not overlook at all the fundamental challenge which has come from feminist theology as well as from feminist writing generally, but it remains unclear to me how the move is

¹² Sex in the Forbidden Zone (London: Unwin, 1990), p.66.

to be made from the identification of the extreme gender bias in traditional theology to a reconstructed theology of sexuality that truly serves men and women alike. However, as a male and as a practical theologian I must at least try to work as best I can to repair the damage people of my gender have done. (I am conscious that what I say is tentative and I look forward to criticism and debate.)

Our starting point will be important. Typically theologians — especially those in the Natural Law tradition — have started with the question, What is sexuality for? The answer (often expressed in the words of the marriage service) has been that it serves the ends of procreation and of uniting the man and the woman in the bonds of love, so that children can be nurtured and cared for in a stable relationship. No one could deny that sexuality can serve these worthy ends, though equally in a relationship blighted by sexual exploitation and violence it can do the very opposite. However, where does such an approach leave the single person, or the person with a homosexual orientation, or the single parent, or the elderly couple whose children are long gone from home, or those physically incapable of sexual intercourse who wish to marry and adopt children? The problem lies in insisting that our sexuality must have a purpose, instead of seeing it simply as part of the way we are as humans, recognising the complexity of our responses to our sexual nature and our need to adapt it and make it part of our choices throughout our lives. This may become clearer by the use of an analogy: the infant cries when it is hungry, so we can say that the purpose of its cry is to attract the mother's attention in order to be fed and so survive and grow. Equally we might say that we have sexual natures so that intercourse takes place and the species survives. But is the infant cry all that is to be said about the human voice — is that what an aria sung by Kiri Te Kanawa "really" is? — just a cry for attention? The problem lies in confusing use what purpose. There are many uses to which our human capacities can be put. We do not solve our moral dilemmas by describing one of these uses as a purpose. This is not to say that Natural Law theory has no contribution to make to a theology of human sexuality. But the only form of it that is at all adequate to the task is that which includes within the "natural" our capacities as interpreters of experience and moral agents who must choose how they use that which is given in the material world.¹³

A second false starting point is of the biblicist type. Biblical texts are used to establish norms for sexual behaviour. This demands consi-

¹³ I have in mind here criticisms of the "biologism" in traditional natural law theory by writers like Bernard Haering and Richard McCormick, and their attempts to improve on it.

derable ingenuity and selective reading of Scripture in order to gain a picture that does not reduce women to the status of mere chattels and producers of a blood line for the males. Premarital intercourse, rape and adultery are treated as property offences in the Decalogue. There is no consistent view of monogamy and divorce, and what there is clearly favours the male. Of course things lighten up in the reported teachings of Jesus, especially in Luke's Gospel. But the Pauline Epistles we seem to have (as Thielicke puts it) "a blind man talking about colour". We can choose to go for everything (as some sects do) and have hatted silent women in church who obey their husbands absolutely, feel unclean when they menstruate and don't quarrel with concubines. The alternative is to be willing to see the cultural relativity of the biblical material and to opt for a normative theological interpretation which is based on the central features of the Gospel as the New Testament proclaims it. Of course our claims to describe such a Gospel norm will reveal our own value preferences — no-one approaches this question with a totally open mind. But let me at least lay my cards on the table, reveal my own prejudices, so that we can have a discussion of the alternatives.

Our starting point should be the description of "union with Christ" through Baptism in Galatians 3:26ff. Here Paul offers us the vision of what all humanity may be if we are brought to completion "in Christ": So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus." We should remember that this statement comes at the culmination of a powerful section of the epistle stressing freedom from the Jewish law and the inheritance open to us all as God's children. We know also that Paul opposed anti-nomianism. There is no support in his teaching for the sexual libertinism that some took "freedom from the law" to mean. But here he is describing the spirit of unity and freedom which is open to all who live in Christ. This seems to capture the new way of being which Jesus brought through his open, vulnerable and loving ministry leading to his death. This overcame the divisions between people of different races, sexes and social classes. It broke the old boundaries of prejudices (against "sinful women" for example); it questioned traditional family ties and religious practices; and it forged a new community where all were equally loved and respected. It was, in the words of Vanstone, the "precarious endeavour of love"¹⁴.

But it lead to such new wine, that the old wineskins burst. The authorities could not allow Jesus to live, and the community which arose after his resurrection was caught in strife of all kinds, soon returning to old

¹⁴ *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977).

patriarchal ways. Still the vision remains. It is one in which gender bias is a total denial of the Gospel, and in which the whole being of men and women equally has gifts to offer to preserve the fragility of love in a world of greed, prejudice and heartless violence.

Having set this broad theological context, I must now fill in some detail in respect of specific sexual relationships and behaviours. I shall do this in only the sketchiest manner and my perspective will be that of confronting the problems which males create in allowing sexuality its rightful place. (I do not wish to perpetuate the arrogance of so many male writers in this field, by telling women how they should feel and where they have to fit in my little scheme of things!) The main priority here is to confront the violence associated with male sexuality. Earlier in this paper I referred to the malleability of our emotional responses. We learn to read ambiguous physiological signals in specific ways, partly determined by our upbringing and culture. The impetus to action of male sexual desire is a close cousin of the impetus to violent attack and if aggression is equated with masculinity the fatal link is forged. In *The Intimate Connection*¹⁵ James B. Nelson explores the connections men make between their sexual potency and their worth as males. He traces the fear of loss of vigour (and so of worth as a man) associated with the difference between the erect penis (phallus) and the flaccid penis. Men have learned to value the phallus, but feel embarrassed by the flaccidity and reduced size of the penis when not erect. The connections between violent penetrative sex and this self-image are all too obvious. Moreover, the woman or other partner in this scenario has no value except as a receptacle. The partner should express pleasure and satisfaction, but only because this provides reassurance to the man of his virility. Where the man fails, the woman is often blamed and the flaccid penis is associated with the weakness and softness of femininity, despised in this stereotype of masculine worth. As many writers have pointed out¹⁶, such pathological behaviour in men's expression of their sexuality stems from a basic insecurity about their sexual identity — a fear of the feminine in themselves, as though somehow it would overwhelm them and prevent them from being men. We need not go into the various theories (psychoanalytic or otherwise) that seek to explain this. The point is that so long this persists, men's sexuality becomes a source of pain and danger to themselves and others, and it cannot serve to further kingdom of

¹⁵ Westminster Press, 1988.

¹⁶ e.g. Alan Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman* (Abacus 1976), E.&G. Strachan, *Freeing the Feminine* (Labarum Publications Ltd., Dunbar, Scotland, 1985).

freedom and love proclaimed by Christ. (In this context the passivity of Jesus in the face of violent confrontation is striking.)

A consequence of our need to break the cycle of violence and exploitation perpetrated by male sexuality is that traditional teachings about sexual differentiation must be radically questioned. Among modern theologians Karl Barth is a major offender here. His discussion of sexuality in *Church Dogmatics III/4* proceeds, on the basis of a very dubious exegesis of Genesis I, to insist on a clear distinction between males and females and also on the "priority but not superiority" of the male. This, Barth asserts, is part of the created order of things. A lot of detailed research has shown these alleged differences to be quite elusive — there are much greater within gender variations than between gender variations on virtually all capacities and personality characteristics. If Barth is referring merely to biological differences, then (for reasons given earlier in this paper) the distinction is relatively trivial and irrelevant to most of what we mean by sexuality in a broad sense. Moreover, Barth's emphasis on the "priority" of the male seems to give sanction to a sexuality dominated by male preoccupations and to the perpetuation of social roles determined by a male view of the "proper" ordering of society¹⁷.

Barth's highly socially relative account of the "order of creation" leads me to the second priority in constructing an adequate theological account of sexuality. We need to question whether the "nuclear family" is to be equated with the "Christian family", and in particular whether we can escape from the gender role stereotyping of our recent past. We should note that the so-called "hard sayings" of Jesus about the powerful family ties of his day indicate that we need not make a given social arrangement for child-bearing and child rearing into an absolute. Jesus saw children as of value in their own right not merely as possessions of their parents, and he recognized in sexual union a more powerful bond than filial piety. But all these personal relationships were also relativised by the call of the Kingdom. We should add to this our realisation that the idealised "Christian family" of modern times has often held dark secrets of domestic violence and child abuse; and, at a less dramatic but nonetheless damaging level, a loss of tenderness and closeness from the father and a constant stress and demand on the mother. By what criterion do we judge these families better for the nurture of children than those where there is a single parent or where a homosexual couple care for a child? If our criteria

¹⁷ His argument from priority is also very strange - does the rest of creation have priority over humans because it was created first? - or, should woman be seen as the pinnacle of creation since she was created last?

are freedom for all to develop lives of service and love toward others on the basis of tenderness and respect in the home, there is no obvious arrangement that can be guaranteed to nurture, in this rich sense.

Finally, then, what would such a theology of sexuality have to say about specific sexual behaviours and attitudes? If we view sexuality as part of our wholeness as persons, which if allowed its proper place, enable us to care more fully for others, then we need to put what I have called "pre-genital sexuality" into a normative place. A safe intimacy is something which most people treasure throughout their lives. The loss of it is one of the cruellest aspects of bereavement when a partner dies. In a private and tender contact with the body of another we can know ourselves again as embodied selves and can overcome some of the dislocations of mind and body created in the stress of daily living. In such moments of tender closeness we need not prove anything to the other or to ourselves; we can know both activity and receptivity and value them equally. Again the other is seen as a person in all their complexity and difference and not merely an extension of ourselves. It is here that the differences (whether biological or culturally conditioned) between men and women do become important. Respect for the other entails being willing to see, honour and nurture her or his different sexual response. In this way adult sexuality differs in a very significant respect from the dreaming innocence of the infant at the mother's breast: confusion of the two (common among men fixated on the female breast) leads to a demanding and self-centred form of adult sexuality.

The specifics of sexual behaviour must be seen always against the background of these foundational requirements for non-exploitative caring sex. Specific areas of concern focus around penetration and procreation, for reasons which may be evident from the earlier discussion. So far as the former is concerned, issues of mutual desire, mutual respect and safety all arise and these can be resolved only where there is trust and open communication — a marriage does not provide any sanction for intrusion by the male, as court decisions have amply demonstrated recently — phallic aggression is something to be morally deplored in all circumstances. Equally, the decision to use our sexuality to bring about a pregnancy is, at the current stage of human development, a special area which needs to be treated separately from sexuality as a whole. To make procreation normative re-opens the door to sexual exploitation of women. Rather, parenthood is a choice, possible but increasingly not the norm, which men and women should take together. We should also consider whether such a choice could also be made by single women or lesbian couples, using donor inse-

mination. The arguments for or against are not to do with our sexuality as such, but with our understanding of the nature of parenthood and the appropriate nurturing of children.

In conclusion to this section, perhaps I should observe that traditional Christian sexual mores obviously do not equate with all that I have said about acceptable behaviours. I do not believe that we can exclude homosexual love from our theology of sexuality and I do not see marriage as the one bulwark for sexual morality. But these differences aside, what I have suggested as norms may be equally, or indeed more, demanding than those of the past. I have tried to relate my theology of sexuality to the "courageous vulnerability" of Jesus. I see this as especially significant for men as they consider how they may interpret their own sexuality. Courage of this kind is in total contradiction to the sexual idolatry and gender stereotyping of our modern Western culture, where courage is linked to male aggressiveness and tenderness is equated with a contemptible weakness. In our day the gun and the phallus equally symbolise the power to intimidate, invade and dominate; men become empty shells using those who are weaker to try to fill the emptiness. In *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* I wrote of the integrity of Jesus as that of steadfastness and inner wholeness. Applying this to what I have described as the foundational aspect of all sexuality, safe intimacy, I see demands for fidelity to, and respect for, the other as strong as any coming from the traditional emphasis on monogamy and lifelong marriage — indeed stronger, for, they are to do with the spirit and not merely the external form of the relationship.

b) The Practical Task

My description of Practical Theology back in 1972 required us to develop specific proposals for action (in the church or more widely in society) and then to subject these to further theological critique. So what proposals emerge from this approach to our understanding of sexuality? I can describe them quite briefly, leaving it to our further discussion to see the applications and limitations of what I suggest.

First, the church must be willing to hear the questions people are asking. At times I feel overwhelmed by the sheer arrogance and hypocrisy of the pronouncements of the churches in this area (there are always of course a few honourable exceptions.) What has struck me with particular force, as I have been writing this paper, has been the effrontery of male theologians (I don't mean just a succession of Popes) who know what to tell women about their "true" sexual ful-

filment! I discovered this tendency in myself, as I have sought to describe sexuality as though it were a single experience, instead of something rich and complex, much of which is hidden from me by my gender. Our hypocrisy is equally strong. The majority of us here will have children or grandchildren whose experience of fulfilling sexual partnerships is wholly unlike the official church account of moral behaviour. Many of us will know from our own friends or family the power and lovingness of homosexual partnerships. The questions the church most easily listens to and seeks to satisfy are those coming from its members who panic at these changes in social mores and demand strong answers of the traditional kind. No wonder most young people don't bother to ask their questions of us, and take their standards from the culture around them. Ironically that culture is much more destructive of their sexual fulfilment than anything even the extreme puritanism of the church has had to offer — but we have become so obsessed with arguments among ourselves that we don't hear the questions in the society around us.

Second, the church must put its own house in order before offering advice to those outside the church. Here I have especially in mind the growing evidence of abuse of the pastoral relationships, and the "dark secrets" of child abuse and domestic violence within church families. This problem must be confronted head on, in theological education first and foremost. It is all too obvious that our selection, training and supervision of those who will hold pastoral office has failed to recognize how easily the boundaries can be crossed by even the most experienced of pastors. (It was depressing to read recently of a statement from Rome blaming, at least in part, societal mores for the child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions, as though the church had no responsibility to perceive the dangers and prepare its workers for them.) Dealing with this issue means a radical look at how pastoral training is done at present. Indeed it raises more basic questions about whether the whole emphasis in training is still too intellectualist for the real issues which most pastors will face.

Third, we must shift the emphasis in our public statements about sexuality from issues of private behaviour to issues of social justice. I can take an illustration of this from the New Zealand church scene. In successive General Assemblies the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand has caught the headlines with debates about whether gay clergy should be ordained. In these same years evidence has been mounting of an increasing "sex tourism" trade from New Zealand to Thailand and of such an increase of families in NZ needing to be investigated for child abuse that the social services can't cope. These matters have of course been discussed by the Public Questions

Committee, but have been paid minimal attention either by those inside or outside the church. We must learn to apply the insights of liberation theology to this whole area of sexuality, moving alongside the vulnerable, offering voice to the voiceless and hearing the cry of the oppressed. How long will it be that only a minority in the church think that these are the important sexual issues, while the majority remain fixated on the bedroom behaviours of consenting adults? I wait for the day — but not with great hope - when at least one church will say publicly that such matters are none of our business, but that sexual exploitation in every context, including marriage, is a deep offence to Christ.

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K.E. Nipkow

The Role of Method in the Practical Theological Disciplines and the Struggle of the Church

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9. Practical Theological Competence as a Profession and as a Habitus

1. A Surprising Challenge and a Practical Theology Badly Theoretically Prepared

By both, the conference theme as a whole and my topic in particular, we find ourselves confronted with a surprising and demanding theoretical task. It is surprising, because practical theology as the vocational science of ministers — this is its traditional purpose — prepares for administering the divine service, for preaching, pastoral care, teaching, and, not to forget, dealing with "the hedgings, matchings and dispatchings", but the study of practical theology is neither primarily directed on coping with conflicts at general nor even with such a huge mountain as "the struggle over the future of the church." It is one thing to be involved in or to observe a struggle in the church (and there are a lot of them); it is quite another thing to make of it a subject of thorough practical theological research and systematical theory-building (and I deliberately emphasize both terms, the word "research" and the word "theory"). We are miles away from the latter with almost nothing in hand. Therefore, our task is also a herculean theoretical challenge.

Limited space forbids to explore the history of practical theology in any extensive way. But a quick glance already delivers an interesting result. The very origin of practical theology as a scientific discipline of its own falls into a period of church-history in Europe when a struggle over the future of the church sets in. In the age of Enlightenment in the 18th century the inner-church struggle between the confessional groups and the additional controversies between the camps within the denominations are dramatically superseded by a general dissociation of modern mind and a church-bound form of religion. The famous answer given by the younger Schleiermacher in defending at least "religion" as such (1799) is well-known. We realize less clearly that also his later description of theology as a scientific discipline including practical theology is a reaction to the new erosions in the spheres of religious mentality which threatened basically the future way of the church, not the future of private religiosity. As long as something is not put into question, it needs no special reflection. Since then this state of naivety is irretrievably gone.

A next logical step is done by C.I. Nitzsch who argues that practical theology has to discuss the church as a topic of its own beside of what systematical theology is used to say about it. The reason why is simple. What may be stated about the church in correct dogmatical terms can be wrong with respect to the practical life of the church in its exposure to the changing conditions of modernity.

We follow from it that practical theology has necessarily to deal with "church theory" ("Kirchentheorie"), which is adequately to be developed as one of its sub-disciplines at a prominent place. Our conference theme precisely aims at the point where the church as a whole is at stake in practical terms, in those of struggle. Consequently, I cannot enter in the following into any methodological considerations concerning homiletics, catechetics etc. before having discussed the overall function of practical theology in relation to the life and the way of the church as a whole.

Our brief historical retrospect delivers a second result when we remember the developments of the 20th century. "the struggle over the future of the church" was to become a constant issue. Our conference theme is not new as far as struggle as such is concerned.

In Germany, the decades before World War I were highly controversial. Should the grounds and aims of practical theology and all its disciplines be revised in a process of modernization or not? After the war the system of church and state broke apart; the statechurch was abolished. In spite of this deep shock churchleader hoped for "a century of the church". At three times, during the chancellorship of Bismarck, in the days of the Weimarian Republic and during the Nazi-regime between 1933 and 1945, the term "struggle" advanced to an explicitly used leading slogan. I mention the "Culture Struggle" ("Kulturkampf"), between the Prussian state and the Roman Catholic Church in the first case, the fierce "School Struggle" ("Schulkampf") between the churches and the socialist parties about the confessionalist character of the state schools in the second case and the "Church Struggle" ("Kirchenkampf") of "The Confessing Church" ("Bekennende Kirche") after 1933.

As a matter of fact one struggle was followed by another one, but who might have expected that after all practical theology would have resolutely built up a theoretical framework in order to clarify its general role in struggles and conflicts is disappointed.

2. Obstacles on the Way to a Methodological Discussion

There are many obstacles that up to now have prevented practical theologians from developing a consistent explanatory and actionleading theory relevant to our point. I mention three of them:

(1) For the neo-orthodox theology of Barthianism a *deductive normative position* is the typical starting-point. The future of the church is reflected in the light of the promise that the "proclamation" of "the word

of God" will create the true church as "the body of Christ". In this process it is God who separates and reconciles. The struggle is solved, as it were, "from above". Consequently, practical theology is more or less absorbed by dogmatic theology, losing much of its specific profile and task.

(2) Practical theology is really many positions, and the deductive-dogmatic one is certainly not the dominating approach. Instead, an *inductive-additive position* is most spread in Europe as well as supposedly on the North American continent. In our century an extensive reception of non-theological methods from the social sciences has taken place with psychological, sociological and educational methods now forming constituent elements of the different practical sub-disciplines. Some of them are relevant for our topic, as we will see below, because they directly relate to internal or external conflicts.

Psychoanalytical methods as they are used among others in pastoral care draw hypotheses from assumptions about unconscious inner conflicts in early childhood and later in life. The methods of ideology critique are related to contradictions between mind and reality, i.e., between the self understanding of the church and its empirical reality. Neo-Marxist analyses are used to start from the struggle between the rich and the poor; they have influenced Latin America liberation theology. However, all these methods, which certainly have enriched practical theology very much, have chiefly led to a diversification only without producing any coherent discussion on the struggle of the church over the future. What has grown, as it were, "from below" remained an additive proliferation with little systematic theory-building.

(3) The overall weakness in practical theology may be seen in the *lacking of meta-theoretical reflection* as such. What it means can be taken from what we are trying to do just now, i.e., not only to hold a position and to use a method, but also to reflect upon both from the perspective of our fundamental theological issue with the interest in the methodology to be applied. When the question is raised on our conference what practical theology as a discipline and what the methods of its sub-disciplines can contribute, we are not only asked to tell each other what we are for in the struggle, but mainly to clarify our instruments. Let me illustrate this difference from an analytical linguistic point of view.

Practical theological statements can be of two kinds. In saying "Christians have to fight against stubborn church-authorities and be advocates for priests becoming married including women as priests and homosexual persons as ministers", we are directly conveying a meaningful position, e.g. in a discussion between churchmembers in a

situation of adult education. The same is with a statement like the following in the homiletic situation of a sermon "We all know that God hates what is against his will in the struggle of the church against the satanic powers of today as are sexual promiscuity, abortion, homosexuality etc., therefore, fight together with our Lord!" Statements of this kind are directly related to the subject matter as such.

From these statements we have to distinguish those which express our theoretical reflection about the language and the procedures in adult education and homiletics just mentioned above. "What can they achieve? What, for instance, prevents church-authorities from learning? What, in other cases, prevents church-members or adults at general from learning? Which methods in church adult education are more hopeful than others to promote the desirable future of the church? How should the methods of preaching look like in struggles?" To sum up: It is not the methods of speaking, proclaiming, appealing etc. as such, namely as they are being used in the immediate practice, what is demanded from me, but an analysis about the logic of these methods. That is what the term "methodological" means.

3. "Struggle" as a Multi-dimensional Term and Issue

As a next step of clarification we have to ask what the term "struggle" implies.

Firstly, the conference theme speaks of "the struggle *over* the future of the church". We may understand this phrase as pointing at the controversies about the main direction in which the church should go. The German term for it is "Richtungstreit".

As there is no consensus about the answers, we have also to deal, secondly, with struggles *within the churches*. The conference agenda has some of them put before us as the struggles on church-authority, sexuality and feminism.

Another section of this conference will deal with practical theology in diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, we are here not only composed of people from different regions of the globe, but also of Christian theologians from various churches or denominations. So it is world-wide with additional tensions. Therefore, thirdly, the word "struggle" also means *interchurch struggles*.

The paper delivered by Robert Wuthnow has discussed the struggle of the church in the context of modernity. The very heading implies already that innerchurch struggles can be caused by external social

factors, not only by an innertheological controversial setting. May be, this fourth constellation is even the most important at all, the struggle *between the church and its context*..

Today, in the "one world" of our globe, this context includes last, but not the least, as a fifth dimension of meaning the struggles *between different religions*.

In the following I shall understand the term "struggle" as a multidimensional issue with our conference theme formulation as a sort of embracing perspective. Or to put it in a more precise way: The different kinds of struggle — within a particular church, between churches, between churches and their contexts — can be regarded as the components of the struggle over the future of the different churches. In using the term "churches" in the plural form, "the" church as the "una sancta ecclesia" is included as a matter of Christian faith; it cannot and will not be the direct subject of my analyses.

4. The Interdependence of the Struggles over the Future of the Church and of Society

The fact that internal and external struggles seem to be closely interrelated will hold true most in the field of moral issues. With this area practical theology has a lot to do, in particular in pastoral care. But even when listening to a seemingly spiritual sermon on a Sunday morning churchgoers are present in more than one role only. They feel themselves being addressed as church-members and as citizens, as partisans of camps within the congregation and within society, as adherents of progressive or conservative valuesystems, as human beings of white or coloured skin, as men or women. Therefore, it is understandable that attempts have been made to pull practical theology and Christian ethics together.

Another relevant factor which contributes to the interrelation of religion and society is the way how the churches conceive of the future and develop their image of God's acting in history. From this side the field of *politics* becomes a sphere of concurring visions.

The history of *American Protestantism* illustrates that also a system with a separation of state and church can develop a high degree of interdependence. On the new continent the American churches became the center of social and cultural organization. From the very beginning of settlement we can observe the linkage of individual piety and social theologies. The separation of state and church has not led to an ideological disconnection of the two spheres. The question has

ever been: "Which sort of faith for which church in which historical and societal world for the whole country"?

The struggle over the future of the church was and still is a struggle over the future of America. American Protestant religion has been future-oriented all the centuries with many hot debates whether the American society has already become true Christian or not. On the one hand the liberals believed that the "second coming" of Christ in which the kingdom of God was to flourish and prosper had already happened in the forms of blooming cultural development. On the other hand this postmillennialist standpoint was opposed by the premillennialist view of evangelicals who denied the cultural liberal optimism and refused to accept the identification of the given empirical reality of the American nation with God's Kingdom.

The arguments of post- and premillennialists were drawn from different interpretations of the course of history. The theology of "dispensationalism", the belief in a divine plan with particular dispensations given in particular epochs, necessarily implied the interpretation of concrete social issues as God's signs to humankind that our time has come near to its end. It is obvious how alarming from this angle moral issues concerning alcoholism, drugs, sexuality must appear.

The correlation of religious and social factors can also be observed in the field of *economics*. The "populist movement" at the end of the 19th century and the movement of "progressivism" with the "social gospel" as one of its main elements in the first half of our century are also simultaneously truly Protestant and truly American. If we had asked Protestants in that time for their view on the future of the church they would have answered in categories of social egalitarianism, general welfare, military strength and all this, of course, mixed up with the religious conviction of God being surely on their side.

On the old continent *European Protestantism* shows quite another type of interdependence between religious and social struggles. While in the North American development the Calvinist idea of a theocratic community was influential combined with a dynamic view of historical development, in Germany and in the Scandinavian countries the Lutheran "doctrine of the two realms" (Zweireichelehre) had laid the ground. If one believes according to this doctrine that God is reigning the hearts and souls by his Word in his spiritual realm to the right and the bodies by way of the parental, political and economic order in his worldly realm to the left, the political motto of the church has to be not to interfere with politics. What follows is more or less a general support of those in power and to oppose where the given order is questioned by emancipatory or revolutionary ideas.

One might suppose that the interdependence is less visible if we turn to the *Roman Catholic Church* which leaves to us the impression of a self-reliant, centrally governed body of high independence and little interdependence with its context. But this is only one side of the coin. The Roman Catholic Church has a very strong interest in shaping the surrounding world in accordance with its self-understanding as a "societas perfecta". Thus, the struggle over the future of the church obtains an unmistakable direction. It has been successful when a nation has become a Catholic nation, a schoolsystem a system of Catholic schools and so forth.

The results of this chapter can be summed up as follows. Struggles over the future of the church are in an intricate way composed of theological and non-theological factors and always embedded in a larger cultural historical process. They differ not only from continent to continent, but also according to the particular Christian traditions and specific cultural constellations. Of a major relevance is the nation of the church, the understanding of its mandate in the world. Practical theology has to take these different settings into account, if it is asked for its function in struggles.

However, what can we realistically expect? Can practical theology as a discipline exert a major influence at all, if the historical transformations are as complex as it is the case? If religion, society and culture are interrelated, the future of each of these areas of life will depend on that of the others. In view of this fact it might be that theology plays much more a reacting than an activating role and that for instance liberalism and fundamentalism are two forms of adaptation to the processes of modernization, or to be more precise, fundamentalism is the reaction to the reaction of liberalism. In short, we are warned to overestimate the influence of practical theology.

An accompanying result of this section is the divergence in the meaning of the term "church", the typical Protestant church in America being the local congregation, the Church of England or of Sweden being state-churches, the Roman Catholic Church a centralized global church. Each of them shows rather different types of authority so that the role of practical theology has to be considerably modified.

5. The Churches and the Contradictions of Modernity – between the Protagonists of Prophetic Renewal and Apocalyptic Fundamentalism

Many specific innerchurch struggles can be regarded as indicators of the embracing struggle over the future of the church on the whole (see above chap.3). They are rooted today, as it seems, in the negative judgements about the frustrating course of history at general and that of the church in particular, both being closely intertwined (chap. 4). As this history is the history of modern ages, my next thesis is derived from the *crisis of modernity*, "modernità in coma", as an Italian journalist recently has put it in a floppy ironical way. Most of the present conflicts in the churches probably mirror this crisis, in a different way, however. The controversial reactions differ according to what one considers to be worst and what ought to be altered first.

Modernity has become universal and so have their contradictions. The process of modernization has reached its geographical universality, but, as seen from a first standpoint, it has failed to fulfill its promises. With the eyes of a second stand, the modern spirit has not remained behind its own standards, but has followed completely wrong standards.

From the first perspective the Christian heritage has been a constructive element at the dawn of modern times since the age of reformation and the epoch of Enlightenment. Beside other influences, groups of Christians have transferred the idea of religious freedom to the political reality of freedom for religion. The ideas of social justice and equal human rights go back to biblical roots, too.

But who has profited by these ideas in the further historical developments? White people much more than black and coloured people, the northern hemisphere more than the southern, the rich more than the poor, men more than women. This discrepancy between promise and reality is the first source of a deep and justified disappointment and the reason why Christians raise their voice of protest. From this perspective of a determined *Christian humanism and socialism* the struggle over the future of the church and of society – we remember the interdependence has to be decided on the issues of human rights, social justice and – more recently – the preservation of life on our globe. The practical activities have received today a specific uncompromising determination with regard to the liberation of disadvantaged and oppressed groups. Church authorities are accused of being accomplices with the political powers and of clinging to authoritarian and patriarchal structures of their own at that.

In quite another direction *the public resurgence of evangelicalism, fundamentalism and traditionalism* is pointing. While on the side just mentioned the crisis of modernity is still experienced as a lack of freedom and autonomy, it is now just the opposite, the lack of order and integration, of clear-cut truth and obedience to eternal fundamentals that arouses the deepest irritation. There a "yes" to pluralism, here a "no".

Research on the fundamentalist revolt against modernism is baffled by its vast present dimensions and its quick growth. The studies observe similar phenomena among Protestants and Catholics, with Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, in the forms of religious, cultural and political fundamentalism.

In the religious area we have on the Protestant side to distinguish between radical fundamentalists and more moderate evangelicals. Their common denominator is the resistance against the liberal heritage of the Enlightenment. According of Martin E. Marty's and R. Scott Appleby's study project the chief theological characteristic of fundamentalism is its "oppositionalist" nature, "one beats back" — beating back as a constitutive principle, "struggle" as God's demanding mandate.

The theological attacks are directed against hermeneutics in terms of historical-critical research, against pluralism and relativism and against the theories of evolution. The spearhead of all of this is the fight against the idea of a free, self-sustaining and critical subject as a criterion of truth experience. Truth is given and final, not preliminary. While the Christian movements on the one end of this polarisation draw on the prophetic traditions of the Old and New Testament in order to motivate their cry for change, it is on this end more or less an apocalyptic vision that propels the mind. Not human powers, but Christ and the Antichrist are regarded as the true subjects of history. The human individual is expropriated as far as his or her private experience and independent reflection are concerned, it is seen as a mighty instrument in respect to the overall divine plan in God's hand.

The emergence of fundamentalism is nourished by several important sociological and psychological factors. Fundamentalism has been explained as the escape from the challenges of a free and plural society and from a church which follows similar patterns. One has seen that, indeed, our situation overstrains the individual. It is true that on the one hand modern societies highly esteem the individual while on the other hand they leave it alone in its search for meaning, shelter and ultimate security. Thus, people become prone to conversions whatever kind if these grant what is felt as missing.

In this chapter, to sum up, I have tried to show that two different aspects of modernity have created two corresponding reactions which oppose each other although both start from a negative appraisal of the same situation. The clash is unavoidable in the church as well as in other areas of society, since those who complain of unfulfilled promises do want the human potentials of our time to become accomplished whereas the other side refutes just this vision as an expression of hybris and sin.

The fierceness of struggle is additionally nourished by other structural similarities here and there, the most important of them being the passionate orientation towards the future itself. It is just these movements which are struggling over the future of the church whereas the middle of the spectrum is much less keen on any major future renewal at all.

6. Practical Theological Methods as Subordinate Instruments in Struggles

The opposing powers outlined in the previous chapter which allow to define at least one of the major conflicts over the future of the church today are very active including political campaigns. The main emphasis is laid by them on a visible transformation of the Church. Everyone is summoned to practical commitment, be it on behalf of evangelization and mission or of emancipation and liberation. The older Pietism already used to define the true theological theory according to the true Christian praxis. A similar subordination of theological thinking to practical action can be observed in the present.

What is the role of practical theology as a discipline on this background? What is the part the methods of the practical theological disciplines are to play? Future-oriented Christian movements will expect practical theology to become an ally in the fights against the opponents with the effect that the methods of the sub-disciplines become instruments in the practical campaigns.

(1) The Technological Role of Methods

One of the most conspicuous examples to illustrate a first type of instrumentalisation is the usage of modern means of audiovisual communication by fundamentalist TV-churches. In their revolt against modernism they do not despise modern techniques. Hereby the arsenal of homiletic methods to proclaim the gospel is surely broadened. This

does not imply, however, that to the same degree a self-critical methodological reflection is developed.

The studies on new evangelical and charismatic movements as well as those on new syncretistic cults show that "new religiosity" is definitely group-religiosity. Again the corresponding interest in methods of group-psychology is high, but purely functional because the purposes are fixed and beyond discussion.

To put it in more general terms, we may state that the practical theological methods are taken as auxiliary technological devices in a purpose-means-relation by which practical theology is robbed of its character as an independent theoretical discipline.

(2) *The Experimental Role of Methods*

Another kind of onesidedly emphasizing the adjective "practical" in practical theology is to be found where the struggle over the future of the church aims at a new Christian life-style by way of experiment and discovery. The still growing development started in the 70ies and has been widely influenced by the ecumenical movement. In the meantime workshops on "spirituality" and experiments with new Christian community have been powerfully supplemented by ecological initiatives. Although research has also identified some forms of a so-called "green fundamentalism", the leading principles of most of these initiatives, action groups and basic communities are much more shaped by self-criticism and openness than by religious self-security and the ardour to convert others to homogeneous standards.

The effects on methods are also different. They are used in an experimental role according to the experimental style of probing the future by new spiritual, ecological, feminist, intercultural or interreligious patterns of life and dialogue.

For illustration let us first touch methods of Christian adult education. There has been as classical debate on the methodology of the work of Lay Academies. Should they be only a "forum", i.e. an open-minded platform of discussion, or also a "factor", i.e. a driving force by supporting transformations of the church from a partial point of view? In the second case academy "courses" will become "workshops" or even "training-camps" where the new shape of faith and life is propagated and actually exercised. Practical theologians are expected to join and to deliver ideas apt for concrete progress.

From the methodological discussion in the field of modern education the type of "action research" is well known among experts. Its chief characteristic is the linkage of research and a particular project of practical innovation, e.g. the experimental testing of a new kind of schooling. In practical theology such a model can be found in a way — this reservation has to be added — in forms of "pastoral clinical training".

What is the common structure of the two kinds of defining the role of methods either according to the technological or the experimental model? With a positive undertone one may say that in both cases practical theological methods are applied in a close connection to practical issues. But what is the price? The involvement in controversial processes happens at the cost of a loss of theoretical independence and profile. The experimental role leaves more room though for creative and critical reflection, compared with the technological model and its classical streamlining subordination. But is this sufficient?

7. The Critical Assessment of Methods by Practical Theology as a Theoretical Discipline

Although I am personally much in favour of the experimental role of methods, their possible contribution in clarifying or solving church conflicts is rather weak. As to the technological model a constructive role is completely lacking.

In the nature of struggle that one has given up the standpoint of an observer in order to become a participant involved in controversial actions. This loss of a position which enables to take the perspectives of both opposing parties can imply a corresponding loss of competence and trustworthiness. Partisans are no good mediators. It would not be very wise though to play off against each other the standpoints of academic impartiality and practical partiality. There is no neutrality in disciplines like ours. What counts is, however, the competence of simultaneously being committed and being able to keep a certain self-critical distance. The factors pertinent are the power of historical and systematical analysis, the degree of metatheoretical reflection and on the whole the relative independence of practical theology as a scientific discipline.

(1) *Church Struggles and Methods in the Light of Historical Research*

Historical research is indispensable. Historical studies can lay open some of the roots of present day conflicts. Our understanding of the motivations can be enriched, our biases be corrected. We are learning to deal with religious struggles more realistically, looking at them from different sides now with a growing feeling for the wins and losses.

(2) *Church Struggles and Methods as a Subject of Systematic Reflection According to Theological Principles*

In our discipline we also need a good deal of systematic reflection. One of its tasks is to make sure of the leading practical theological principles. Whatever our private theological preferences and religious affinities may be, without a safe knowledge of its fundamental convictions a church will lose its orientation. Church boards have a right to expect practical theologians to be competent as to what matters.

As a Lutheran practical theologian, to give an example, I have to know how to differentiate between the priesthood of all believers and the function of the ecclesiastical office of ministry. Shall laypersons without official vocation be admitted to public preaching and the public administration of sacraments? This is an old and an ever new struggle in my own church over the expectations of Pietist groups. The booming Charismatic movement goes still further in challenging the churches in Germany to admit a second baptism and independent Charismatic local congregations. All this is being propagated on behalf of a renewed church in the future. Whatever now the governing church bodies responsible for the decisions to be taken for the sake of the church as a whole may find out, they ought to know what they are doing. Practical theology can assist an informed and deliberate church leadership.

3) *Church Struggles and Methods in View of Positional Programmes or from the Perspective of a Critical Metatheoretical Assessment*

As a theoretical discipline practical theology has to serve, thirdly, by critically assessing those practical theological concepts, strategies and methods which more or less self-sufficiently present their ideas and procedures without calling them in question. Although such a "positionalist" or "programmatical" approach may certainly compare the favoured methods of one's own in homiletics, poimenics and catechetics with competing programmes, critical defense and offense included, this kind of criticism is not what we understand by a meta-

theoretical critique which intends the systematic comparison of positions.

To begin with the character of statements, i.e., the linguistic status of propositions, positional thinking tends to programmatic sentences. A programme, however, is bent on success and keen on beating the opposing position. Programmes are no theories. The more statements, and actions based upon them, are onesidedly programmatic, the more they will aggravate integration and reconciliation. At worst they heat the struggle and provoke the opponent's counteractions. Instead, the function of a systematic critical assessment can and should be to foster a more balanced understanding of the pros and cons.

In summing up, I would like to say that it is by this nature as a theoretical enterprise, as "the *theory* of the praxis" of the church (not the praxis itself), to quote Schleiermacher, that the practical theological disciplines in dealing with methods can play a more constructive role for the use of praxis than by being too much directly absorbed by praxis. This does not exclude that practical theologians will actively take part in a struggle as protagonists of this or that position. They cannot avoid being involved. But their trademark, so to speak, is to secure and to make visible the distinction between the one thing and the other.

8. The Methods of Practical Theological Disciplines and the Culture of Struggle

As a next step it is necessary to look at methods in more detail. Are there at all specifically theological methods in theology? Schleiermacher's famous negative answer is well-known. There are not, and what makes out their theological character is their purpose only.

Indeed, the procedures in homiletics are composed of hermeneutical, rhetorical and semiotic methods. In pastoral care methods of psychoanalysis, client-centered therapy and behavioural psychology play a considerable role beside others. In the educational field, church education, religious education in schools and Christian adult education share many insights with general education, not to mention the amount of knowledge adopted from sociology and psychology, among others from learning theory; youth research, developmental psychology and life span research. All these methods become theological ones by the religious tasks and purposes they are attributed to. What follows for their function in religious conflicts? To answer this question we have to distinguish between, as it were, the 'natural' potentiality of

a method and its function within its specific context of application in the church.

My argument in this chapter now is that at present almost all methods of our sub-disciplines are by virtue of the 'nature' of their own already children of the spirit of modernism since the times of Enlightenment. Thereby our task becomes ambivalent. On the one hand practical theology ought to serve all groups in the struggles over the future of the church. On the other hand its methods are not neutral although by a technological use much of their character can be neutralized in a problematic sense as we have seen. How can the modern character of methods be described?

Struggles within the churches and over their future call for two things, for *scientific analysis* and *constructive solutions*. At first let us look at the analytical power of practical theological methods.

(1) *The Analytical Function of Practical Theological Methods in Struggles*

Psychoanalysis is a classical case of conflict-oriented analysis as we all know from the attempts of explaining behaviour by tracing it back to unconscious conflicts in childhood and later. Studies on fundamentalism, dogmatism and fanaticism help to understand why religious struggles can often assume a sharpness which makes any peaceful solution impossible. As to fundamentalist attitudes deep-rooted anxieties seem to nourish the extreme rigidity in keeping to one truth, one doctrine, one strategy, a standpoint that does not allow any compromise. The ability and readiness to accept a compromise, however, is a basic prerequisite of a peaceful life in a world shaped by Christian and religious pluralism. In knowing about the psychological backgrounds pastoral care might perhaps be better able to intervene in conflicts, in particular on the level of local congregation. By consultation pastoral interventions would help to mitigate a conflict provided the persons in question allow these interventions.

Semiotical analyses of sermons can reveal the indoctrinating nature of what a preaching minister may by him- or herself regard as the proclamation of the pure gospel. A rather harmless example is the word "we" — "we see, we believe, we agree upon" etc. — as it is disguising the minister's private religious position he or she wants to transmit as the only valid opinion. Of a direct influence upon conflicts are semantical dichotomics, here "us", there "the others", here the believers, there the unbelievers. In dealing with a biblical text the tendency to make one reading to the only valid reading has stabilizing effects upon the one group, but deterrent effects upon others.

As to Christian *adult education* faith development theories inform us that many church-members conceptualize their convictions in sort of a 'closed system', in a "synthetic-conventional" structure, whereas others spell out their faith in an "individuating-reflective" structure as a next step, but that it will last rather long until a "conjunctive" structure of faith enables to take the perspectives of opposite stands and to become more tolerant. By the explanatory power of structural developmental theories we understand much better why some constellations of struggle are so hopeless. The transformation of the deep-structures of thinking and believing depends on many factors which cannot easily be influenced.

The ambivalent situation is always the same. Scientific methods like those mentioned above can be helpful by their analytical results in enlightening the background of religious struggles. Thereby they can initiate new learning, but the contrary is possible, too. Attitudes of dogmatism prevent people from learning, and scientific insights will be no argument.

(2) *Hermeneutical and Dialogical Functions of Practical Theological Methods in Struggles*

Most of the methods in practical theology follow the principles of hermeneutics and dialogue. Hermeneutical criteria form a constitutive part of homiletic work beginning with the interpretation of the biblical text and including the interpretation of the present situation of the listeners. In religious instruction they have a safe place, too. The same priority is given to the spirit of dialogue and free discussion in all dimensions of religious education as well as in pastoral care. Authoritarian methods do more or less belong to the past.

In short, we meet with a similar general picture. The aspects of our methodology just mentioned are the result of modern developments. While the hermeneutical perspectives mirror the modern historical understanding of truth as being bound to human forms of expression in the flow of cultural change, the principles of free discussion and dialogue express the basic self-understanding of a democratic, open society. With these statements we are returning to the main contemporary struggle as outlined above and the dilemma is obvious, too.

(3) *The Modern Character of Practical Theological Methods and the Struggle over Modernity – a Dilemma*

If we as practical theologians are convinced that in the struggles in question practical theology is to play a role as a discipline – and if we know what we mean in using the word "discipline" which is a definitely

scientific term — we have to realize that already the very theme of our conference is in a way taking side. The same is with the topic of my paper. In applying the metatheoretical critical assessment to ourselves we see that the question concerning the role of methods is also by itself a fruit of modern theological reflectivity. As to the methods in detail we have come to the same result.

My intention has been to argue for a role of practical theology in the struggles over the future of the church by which our discipline appears as a reliable and competent partner to all different combatants. But how can this be, if a modern discipline is involved in a struggle over just these modern implications? How can rules and procedures in homiletics, poimenics and catechetics help, if a broad opposing alliance will reject them? What about our whole argumentation in favour of the analytical power of methods and their contribution to understanding and dialogue, if all this is regarded as irrelevant or even dangerous because it breathes the spirit of intellectualism, liberalism and relativism?

We have to be very honest about ourselves as to what we are doing. We are not located outside of church and society and their conflicts over the future. The very fact that our discipline has developed as it has is already an answer to our issue.

(4) *Phronesis or the General Impact of Practical Theology as a Discipline towards a Culture of Struggle*

The development of practical theology since Schleiermacher and Nitzsch points to a contribution to the future in following terms. The education of ministry today as I have had the chance to observe it at Protestant and Catholic faculties in Germany is, firstly, interested in a historical orientation about the backgrounds of recent developments and conflicts. Secondly, emphasis is laid upon the ability to compare controversial methods or programmes and to discuss their value for renewal according to the theological standards of each particular church. Finally, we more and more learn about the constructive role an empirical practical theology can play to clarify the interplay of psychological, sociological, political and religious factors in conflicts. The general impact of all these endeavours which surely need further development is what can be called the attitude of "phronesis", of circumspection, of "Besonnenheit".

Whether this answer will satisfy the combatants in a struggle depends on how far they will agree with the rules and principles underlying this self-understanding of practical theology as a discipline. If they do, they can probably profit from it in several respects. These are a greater

emphasis for others, a better understanding of the different motivations and the readiness for living together in a pluralistic Christianity and a pluralistic modern culture challenged by severe crises.

This conclusion has nothing to do with a harmonizing view of our global and local situations in church and society. Nor are we allowed to evade struggle where it is vitally necessary. It has a lot to do, however, with a humane culture of struggle among Christians as an example for the world.

9. Practical Theological Competence as a Profession and as a Habitus

We need both a struggle over the future of the churches and a humane way of acting in conflicts so that we must not be ashamed as Christians and can prove our competence as professional theologians.

Practical theology as a discipline is by itself a piece of praxis by which we are involved in the life of the church including their controversies. But our superior task in a professionalist understanding of our profession is different from the processes in the immediacy of life.

We are members of a certain profession which is responsible for the theological education of ministers and teachers in the church, not to mention the contributions to neighbored professions. Although the professions of ministry and teaching do not possess all characteristics of full professionalization, the elements of academic training, of a corporate ethos and a certain degree of self-responsibility provide ministers and teachers, in particular Protestant, with an independence which enables them to fulfill a constructive role of their own. A main quality of this professional competence has to be trustworthiness hopefully bestowed upon them by different opposing groups.

How can this happen? Let me conclude with the assumption that it is presumably the influence of the education in all practical theological disciplines together as it is exerted upon the person as a whole which matters. It is the 'habitus' which will speak to others in controversial situations. This personal factor should not be forgotten.

We urgently need a great variety of free and daring experiments in order to renew our local congregations and our churches in large. It would be a good thing if the commitment of practical theology as a discipline is represented by educated and balanced personalities.

¹ Sergio Torres and John Esposito, eds., *Theology in the Americas* (New York: Oxford Books, 1975), p. 3.

Camil Ménéard

Practical Theology in a Canadian Context

In August of 1975, about 200 Christian Thinkers from South and North America met in Detroit "to study theology by taking as their starting point their respective historical experiences"¹. This week-long conference was the brainchild of the Chilean priest Sergio Torres and a group of friends. Among the goals of this dialogue, the North American theologians wanted to learn from the well-known Latin American representatives of liberation theology what meaning this new approach might have in their own theological community. The follow-up to the conference expressed a change in perspective. The goal is no longer to apply liberation theology or to discover the meaning of this approach in the North American context. The goal is rather the "contextualization" of North American theology.

The title of the follow-up clearly indicated this will to articulate a new Christian theology that emerges from our own experience as North Americans. I quote: "The aim of this program is to explore one aspect of the "context" of the reality in which Americans live: the dynamics of power and powerlessness in the present American experience... Conversion to God implies self-knowledge... God is calling American Christians to conversion, and our obedience to the Lord demands a critical evaluation of the uses and abuses of U.S. power"². A new methodological approach was proposed to carry out this program. First, theology will spring from the experience of all Christians and from the voices of the oppressed themselves. Second, this approach will use social sciences and integrate a structural analysis of the American context as part of this theological enterprise. Third, theology will explore a new way of knowing from the praxis; in this perspective, it is better to begin "doing" theology instead of "studying" a theoretical discourse already made elsewhere. The application of this program in diverse context would help to develop different theologies in conversation with each other: a black theology, a Hispanic theology, a Canadian theology, and so on.

In this short paper, I wish to show that this program has been seriously pursued in the Canadian context, so that a new practical theology is going to be developed with certain characteristics closely related to this social environment. This essay presents an analysis of this

¹ Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds., *Theology in the Americas*, (N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 3.

emerging theology produced not only by academicians, but also by faith-and-justice Christians and by the Canadian Catholic bishops as well. A Protestant theologian well-known for his concept of contextual theology will help us to describe the components of our context. Since I regard this theology more as a new way of thinking the faith shared widely among sensitive North American Christians than as an enterprise pertaining to any person or group, I will be obliged to make a selection in order to describe its particular character. This is not an easy undertaking. It would have been easier to summarize what has been discussed among specialists in our research-teams, but it seems to me that these epistemological and methodological debates remain often theoretical ideas well-known in other countries³. Finally, this description reflects my own experience and social location, especially as Dean of a Department of Religious Studies in a state university of Quebec, President of the Canadian Society of Theology, associate member of many associations or research-groups in practical theology and theological advisor of my Catholic bishop. In the second part of the paper, I wish to explore the components of our context, to point out the tasks of practical theology for the future of the Church and to raise some questions on the challenges of this theology made in a Canadian context.

1. Aspects of an emerging Canadian practical theology.

The foregoing considerations indicate that we mean here by "practical theology" this Christian praxis oriented to action, activation of the

² *Ibid.*, p. 434.

³ Among the publications of the Groupe de recherche études pastorales/Group for Research in Pastoral Studies, see Mark Pelchat, ed., *Les approches empiriques en théologie/Empirical Approaches in Theology* (Québec: Faculté de théologie, Université Laval, 1992); Camil Ménard, ed., *L'intervention pastorale. Recherches et analyses* (Montréal: Fides, 1991); Jacques Gagné, ed., *La Prospective en pastorale/The Exploration of the future in Pastoral Studies* (Québec: Faculté de théologie, 1991); A. Visscher, ed., *Les études pastorales à l'université/Pastoral Studies in a University Setting* (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1990); Jean-Guy Nadeau, ed. *L'interprétation, un défi de l'action pastorale* (Montréal: Fides, 1989); Marcel Viau et Raymond Brodeur, eds., *Les études pastorales: une discipline scientifique/Pastoral Studies as a Scientific Discipline* (Québec: Université Laval, 1987); Roland Chagnon et Marcel Viau, eds., *Les études pastorales: pratiques et communautés* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1986). The review *Pastoral Sciences/Sciences pastorales* (Ottawa, St-Paul University) has published two other works of this group (Vol. 6- 1987 and vol. 3- 1984).

Church and social transformation⁴. The recovery of a more vital relationship between theological reflection and Christian life in the world has become increasingly common in recent years⁵. Calls for recovering such an understanding of theology have previously surfaced within a variety of theological context but have received in America an eager interest that has literally sparked a huge theological creation. Latin-American theology is now one of the best known in the world. It is time to realize that North-American theologians have also accomplished an original work around a largely shared set of concerns. In order to describe as completely as possible the character of this Christian praxis, I will focus on five main aspects⁶.

1.1 A distinctive American Catholic theology is something **very young**. It has taken on contours that did not exist thirty years ago when it was still a mere outgrowth of European theology. It is in fact a post-conciliar development. Prior to Vatican II, theologians teaching in the seminaries had received their education in Italy or France; they therefore used neo-scholastic manuals largely produced in Europe. As secular priests or members of a religious order, they taught in obedience to their vow an anxious and defensive theology that could not face the questions which modernism, with its liberal criticism and its evolutionary understanding of the history of dogma, had put to the Church at the beginning of this century. A real change began when the Council was still in session and when the old manuals were replaced by loose-leaf notebooks showing that theological thinking must be creative⁷. At that time, theology as systematic discourse was not related to historical Christian sources as it was in Europe, nor to American culture. It seemed formulated in all ages and all places. The new theology was open to modern culture, to the historical critical method, to ecumenism and to self-criticism inside the Church. At that point American Catholic theologians began to think and write for their students and a new public of educated Christians. For these theo-

4 For the notion "practical theology" and its distinction from and relation to fundamental and systematic theology, cf. David Tracy, *"The Foundations of Practical Theology"*, in Don S. Browning, ed., *Practical Theology. The Emerging Field in Theology, Church and World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. 61-82.

5 See the excellent historical survey of Randy L. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline", in *Theological Studies* 51:4 (1990), pp. 650-672.

6 Since nothing has been written on this particular topic, it has been helpful to use Gregory Baum's report, "The Social Context of American Catholic Theology", in *Theology and Society* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 181-206.

7 See P. Partikian and L. Rousseau, *La théologie québécoise contemporaine (1940-1973): Genèse de ses producteurs et transformations de son discours* (Québec:

logians, it is clear that the last council was a starting point and a great moment of discontinuity in the Church's tradition. They have kept in mind the need for historical reflection and this obligation to change the Church's teaching even if Roman authority does not yet agree. Progressive thinking is a characteristic of new American theology, above all in the field of moral theology⁸.

1.2 This new theology is a work of the whole people of God. An **eclesial** theology has replaced the old ecclesiastical discourse. Among American theologians, there are "family resemblances", and one of them is the fact that their work has been pursued in harmony with the ordinary teaching of the Church. How can we explain this situation? Because Canadian Catholic bishops are not great theologians, but good pastors who soon realised that their people were no longer participating in the Church⁹. In 1965, a young theologian launched a brilliant book deploring a lack of propheticism¹⁰; he argued that life in the Church was an exercise in fidelity to the Spirit who provides each Christian with critical guidance for building a new society. A second evangelisation was necessary to exercise this prophetic mission¹¹. In 1968, the Quebec bishops appointed a research commission to examine the contemporary crisis and to make recommendations for new and more appropriate pastoral policies. The final report (1972) retained two principles: a) secularization is an irreversible process; and b) rupture and fidelity are needed to define the new identity of the Church. The new project purported to be faithful to the heritage and would therefore have three characteristics: to serve the world in dialogue with society, to play a prophetic role in the transformation of society and to develop more participation in the structures of the

Université Laval, Cahiers de l'Institut Supérieur des Sciences Humaines, no. 8, 1977).

⁸ Charles Curran would be a good illustration showing that progressive thinking in moral theology is not yet accepted by Roman theologians. Father André Guindon (St-Paul University, Ottawa) is an other scholar who has had recent problems. Fortunately, he is being strongly supported by theologians and bishops and his case will be treated otherwise.

⁹ The review *Sociologie et Sociétés* has an excellent analysis of this evolution of Catholicism in Canadian Society (Catholicisme et société contemporaine/ Catholicism and Contemporary Society XXII:2 (1990)). See also Gregory Baum, "Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec", in *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1991), pp. 15-47.

¹⁰ Jacques Grand'Maison, *Crise de prophétisme* (Montreal: L'Action catholique canadienne, 1965). This major intellectual figure in the Quebec Church has for thirty years been developing a practical theology that deserves international attention. See Gregory Baum "Jacques Grand'Maison: Prophecy and Politics", in *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novalis 1991), pp. 91-107.

Church¹². The new theology has been built in that perspective of Christian stewardship and critical stance in regard to modern society.

1.3 This concern of Canadian theology for the world explains its **strong public presence**. Even if Sunday attendance is low in the churches, significant controversies in the Church are reported and discussed in the media. Theologians also have great influence in public debates, on political, economical or cultural issues. For instance, a research-team in practical theology has recently conducted a five-year-research-action in six regions of the province of Quebec. They wanted to know if – and how – the experience of faith could be lived in this secularized world. They listened to hundreds of people. They have published four books so far that have generated widespread interest¹³. Social workers, judges, school boards, and many other groups continue to invite them for conferences and discussions. Another good illustration of this publicness is given by the pastoral documents published over the years by the Canadian Catholic bishops. Their "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crises" (1983), created through dialogues with church groups and centers in Canada, has sparked considerable debate in the newspapers and even in political milieux¹⁴. A research project on this subject has identified two hundred and forty-eight articles or letters discussing this document in the six largest newspapers in the country¹⁵. A special commission and many conferences have since been organized to study this document which calls "the option for the poor" the first principle of a Christian reflection and praxis to solve the economic crisis. This exceptional impact shows that Canadian theology has a strong public presence even on economical and political issues.

1.4 Another mark of this Canadian theology is its **pluralistic character**. It has developed in many different kinds of institutions: semi-

¹¹ Jacques Grand'Maison, *La seconde évangélisation* (Montréal: Fides, 1973)

¹² On this important report, see Gregory Baum, "The Report Dumont: Democratizing the Catholic Church", in *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1991) pp. 49-65. This six-volume report had the suggestive title: *L'Eglise du Québec: un héritage, un projet* (Montreal: Fides, 1971-1972).

¹³ Jacques Grand'Maison, ed., *Le drame spirituel des adolescents. Profils sociaux et religieux* (Montreal: Fides, 1992); *Vers un nouveau conflit des générations. Profils sociaux et religieux des 20-35 ans* (Montreal: Fides, 1992);

¹⁴ On the social theory produced by the Canadian Catholic bishops, see Gregory Baum, "Toward a Canadian Catholic Social Theory", in *Theology and Society* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 66-97.

narities, faculties of theology, départements of religious studies at secular colleges and universities, Protestant divinity schools, pastoral institutes and so on. New disciplines have been created, with curious names like ethicology, religiology, praxeology¹⁶. Theology is now taught by men and women who are mainly lay people working in institutions no longer under the control of ecclesiastical authorities. This freedom of thought allows a new dialogue with the social sciences and humanities and with other Christian denominations. Interreligious dialogue is an important part of this pluralism that raises questions on crucial issues like Christian identity, the universality of salvation in Jesus and the future of Christianity in the modern world¹⁷. The pluralism of Canadian theology includes many practitioners who are identified with marginalized groups: women, native people, Christian-Marxist networks, gays and lesbians struggling for their social recognition. Pluralism is not seen as liberal relativism, but as a new way of serving the truth that is always seen perspectively. Because of this pluralistic character, some Catholic bishops have reorganized major seminaries where "orthodox" theology for future priests and teachers is taught.

1.5 Finally, I wish add that Canadian practical theology has been **strategic** with relative efficiency in the field of education and evangelization. It was the case in the 1970's, when Catholicism had to face the rapid secularization of modern Canadian society. Practical theologians organized authentic communicational activity in the Church in order not only to fix the purposes but also to build the strategies and tools of a second evangelization. Many programs in the field of pastoral studies were created at that moment to provide new formation about learning from the Christian praxis¹⁸. Ten years later, critical evaluation showed that the Catholic church was still "between Temple and exile".

15 Marcel Lefebvre, "Une intervention pastorale particulière des évêques du Canada sur l'économie", in Camil Ménard, ed., *L'intervention pastorale. Recherches et analyses* (Montreal: Fides, 1991), pp. 143-183.

16 See Louis Rousseau et Michel Despland, *Les sciences religieuses au Québec depuis 1972* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988). And Marcel Viau, *Introduction aux études pastorales* (Montreal: Editions Paulines, 1987), in particular pp. 81-101.

17 Such issues have been studied in the last conventions of the Canadian *Society of Theology*. Among others, see Jean-Claude Petit et Jean-Claude Breton, eds., *Le christianisme d'ici a-t-il un avenir?* (Montreal: Fides, 1988); *Enseigner la foi ou former des croyants?* (Montreal: Fides, 1989); *Jésus: Christ universel?* (Montreal: Fides, 1990); *Questions de liberté* (Montreal: Fides, 1991); *Seul ou avec les autres? Le salut chrétien à liberté* (Montreal: Fides, 1992); Camil Ménard et Florent Ville-neuve, eds., *Le pluralisme culturel et ses enjeux* (Montreal: Fides, 1993).

18 See Guy Lapointe, ed., *Crise des prophétisme. Hier et aujourd'hui. L'itinéraire d'un peuple dans l'oeuvre des Jacques Grand'Maison* (Montreal: Fides, 1990).

The old institution had not yet been able to leave its doctrinal security and its concern for sacramental activities¹⁹. The expected democratization of the ecclesial structures was a failure. In the 1990's, three important pieces of research have revealed a "black hole" in the galaxy of faith²⁰. People outside the Church's influence are living in a distinct world. They have created new "language games" to express their experience of human faith, combining diverse philosophical and religious ideas. While many bishops are now tempted to "risk the future" with a minority strategy of education, some practical theologians continue to claim that the mission of the Church is to evangelize at large and to be evangelized by a popular Church. The future of Christianity depends on the choices that will be made in the next months. In the political sphere, Canadian theology has always been concerned with economical and constitutional debates. Protestant theology in the 1930's had a clear link with the Socialist party of Saskatchewan²¹. The Catholic Church has a close relation with the National-Socialism of the Province of Quebec²². Unfortunately, it has never been possible for progressive Catholics and Protestants to make a common strategic choice for a Canadian socialist system as did Latin-American theologians. Their prophetic vision aiming at the transcendence of capitalism was not related to what McCann and Strain call some "middle axioms" capable of guiding a concrete Christian social praxis²³. This lack of strategical consensus explains, in my opinion, why Canadian practical theology has never been a collective enterprise and remains for that reason without great impact on the transformation of our society.

¹⁹ Fernand Dumont, Jacques Grand'Maison, Jacques Racine, Paul Tremblay, *Situation et avenir du catholicisme québécois*. Tome 1. Milieux et témoignages. Tome 2. Entre le temple et l'exil (Montreal: Leméac, 1982).

²⁰ In addition to Grand'Maison's research quoted note 13, two other works are useful for understanding the present religious situation. See Raimond Lemieux et Micheline Milot, eds., *Les croyances des québécois* (Québec: Université Laval, 1992) and Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin Publ. 1987).

²¹ See Gregory Baum, "Political Theology in Canada", in *The Social Imperative* (New York/Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 70-98.

²² See Raymond Lemieux, "Le catholicisme québécois: une question de culture/ Quebec Catholicism: a Cultural Question", in *Sociologie et Sociétés* XXII:2 (1990), pp. 145-163.

²³ Dennis P. McCann/Charles R. Strain, *Polity and Praxis. A Program for American Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), pp. 145-177. See also John A. Colemann, *An American Strategic Theology* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982).

2. The Canadian Context. Tasks of a Contextual Theology.

In the second part of the paper, I want to turn briefly to the context in which we have to carry out theological reflection on Christian praxis. I suppose that it is not necessary here to define contextuality nor to develop the meaning of contextuality in Christian thought. With the Detroit conference, we shall assume that the aim of this exploration is to come to a correct collective understanding of our historical situation²⁴. How, as Christians, can we assess the contemporary North American and Canadian social situation?

2.1 *The Canadian context.*

The question of the circumscription of this context is much more difficult at this time because of our international consciousness. Ecologists have demonstrated to our technological society the terrible connectedness of things. Moreover, globalization in economic exchanges has created a planetary market which increases interdependence between the nations. The unemployed, low-income groups, welfare recipients, immigrants and senior citizens are victims of social injustice common to all modern society. For the sake of this paper, what is important about theological reflections within our social, historical and cultural context are some attributes which, in fact, characterize the "New World" in itself. By the way, is it not surprising that a culture almost 500 years old still clings to the idea of its newness? What is the clue to this mystery?

In a penetrating analysis of our world, the Protestant theologian Douglas Hall argues that a dominant culture has evolved in **North America as a whole**, thus allowing a first larger analysis. According to him, a contextual theology done in the spirit of the prophetic tradition is a *theologia crucis*. Its point of departure is the brokenness of the human spirit and the human community. Its aim is to understand the culture of the milieu in terms of the forces that make it inhuman and call for rescue and transformation. Without ceasing to be a personal and pastoral theology, "the theology of the cross becomes today", he says, "of necessity, a political theology"²⁵. It therefore generates solidarity with the prophetic voices that reveal the ambiguity of the dominant culture.

²⁴ S. Torres and J. Eagleson, eds, *Theology in the Americas* (New York: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 434.

²⁵ Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith, Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), p. 32. For an introduction to Hall's theology, see Gregory Baum, "Douglas Hall: Contextual Theology", in *The Church in Quebec* (Ottawa: Novalis, 1991), pp. 109-133.

What then is the ambiguity of dominant American culture? The culture of North America belongs to the first world defined by technological reason, industrialization and strong confidence in inevitable progress. In Europe, Hall argues, the first World War created a violent change. The failure of the modern vision was soon recognized. But here modern faith in progress remains undisturbed. The "American Dream" is our continental heritage. We are **prisoners of optimism** and this success-oriented culture has become the religion of progress. Following the church historian Sidney Mead, Hall proposes the thesis that Protestantism and Americanism have been amalgamated in the formation of this highly positive view of human experience. Prophetic voices in Christianity were never strong enough to shake the foundations of this spirit. Consequently, this cultural optimism has developed a form of false self-consciousness. The specific darkness that pertains to our social situation is still hidden. Explosions of violence among Black people, the increasing gap between rich and poor, terrible diseases like AIDS are some symptoms of the malaise of our society. As an organism breaks down, so society breaks down. The denial of death cannot solve this problem.

The refusal of American culture to face up to the collapse of its entire system of values has destructive social consequences. Hall distinguishes three types of responses for a society in despair²⁶. One can abandon hope and adopt a pervasive cynicism, whose familiar garb is shallow hedonism. However, silent majority of people will prefer the second way: subconscious repression of despair and the nurturing of false hope. The third choice is the possibility of being truthful about what is happening in the historical situation. Fortunately, Hall discerns in our contemporary experience growing but chaotic forms of disillusionment that need a reasoned reflection upon its cause and its meaning. Therefore, a truly contextual theology will be a critical one. It has "the vocation of exploring the failure of the illusion that is passing, and of articulating a new expression of the faith which can absorb this failure and point towards a new symbolic transcendence of it"²⁷. In other words, the gospel of failure, which the churches have to preach at the present time, remains good news, because God's redemptive action is still at work in our world. Practical theologians must be close to these events and tell their story in order to create new hope.

In his discussion of the **critical components** of the North American context, Hall concentrates his attention of seven especially crucial

²⁶ *Thinking the Faith*, pp. 172-177.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

areas. Two issues seem to me very significant²⁸. The first is the new position of Christianity in our culture. Few Christians have realized that we are living at the end of the Constantinian era and that the Church is now a diaspora, as predicted by Karl Rahner thirty years ago. Religious pluralism makes the end of a monopolistic situation evident; consequently, the Christian mission in the world must be re-considered. The second component of particular significance is what ecologists call the rebellion of nature. In Canada, people are very concerned with the disappearance of species, the construction of huge hydro-electric dams that change all the natural system in northern Quebec and the logging of centuries-old trees on Vancouver Island. A new respect for "Mother Earth" forces a change in Christian attitudes toward this world.

Hall's understanding of the Canadian situation is very relevant. He distinguishes two salient features of this reality "The first is the tenuousness and the extreme vulnerability of our whole experiment in nationhood. The second is our proximity to one of the great superpowers, the United States of America"²⁹. A people living on the edge of an empire is in a provocative position. Is it possible to share 4,000 miles of undefended border with a giant without being greatly attracted by its models? Canadians feel envy, resentment and dependency when they look at their powerful neighbour. They are tempted by the "Florida sun": by the culture of success and optimism, by the cult of body and entertainers, by the ideology of technical rationality capable of solving all the problems of humanity. In contrast, Canadians listening to the prophetic voice of their cold landscape are called upon to treasure their "winter light": their tradition of modesty and freedom, their role of mediation between the United States and other countries, their international role as peacekeepers. While there is suffering and poverty in our country, Canadian society cannot be compared with Third World oppression. But Canadians can easily understand all the people living under the influence and the power of U.S. imperialism. We feel more humiliation than oppression³⁰. We have to live with economic decisions made outside the country which have direct consequences on our political and social existence. Canadians are then called upon to reinforce their independence and to develop prophetic wisdom in the concert of nations.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-237.

²⁹ "A View from the Edge of Empire: Prophetic Faith and the Crises of our Time", in *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies*. McGill University, vol. 20 (1992), p. 21.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33.

2.2 *Task of a contextual theology.*

To conclude this paper, I will emphasize the task of Canadian contextual theology. Four theses can summarize this proposition.

2.2.1 The fundamental issue we have to face is the possibility of faith as such. The younger generation in North America realise for the first time in our historical situation that their social and economic conditions will be less than what their parents enjoyed. It is hard to believe when the future seems lost in the night. Theologians have to remember our strong tradition of survival in a cold climate and to propose a positive vision of collective existence built on solidarity.

2.2.2 Thinking the content of Christian faith has been neglected in our theology. It is clear that the metaphysical thought in which Christian doctrine was organized is no longer understood. The triune God, the person of Jesus and his salvation, the Church and the ministry, all the doctrine must be rethought in post-modern culture. Theologians have to leave the security of the past and to risk a new interpretation of Christian vision capable of inspiring human existence in the darkness.

2.2.3 Theological enterprise has to use the humanities, but above all the social sciences, to explain the world. Practical theology in a Canadian context is tempted nowadays to develop a professional approach without real confrontation with other interpretations of religious transformations. In fact, critical sociology is less than before used to train the students. Practical theology can easily become ideological discourse³¹. We shall have to clarify this methodological issue in our academic discussions.

2.2.4 Contextual theology is a Christian praxis that needs strong commitment in a particular field. Whatever this field may be, theology in the Canadian context must be based on preferential solidarity with the victims of this society. This strategic choice seems to me to be the future of the Church and a chance for practical theology to take part in the salvation of freedom in North America³².

³¹ The danger of practical theology falling into ideological discourse has been strongly emphasized by a well-known sociologist at St-Paul University. See Paul-André Turcotte, "Sociologie, théologie et pastorale. Conditions institutionnelles et pratiques", in *Théologiques: Revue de la Faculté de théologie de l'Université de Montréal*, vol1/1 (1993), pp. 33-54.

³² For further considerations, see Camil Ménard, "L'urgence d'une théologie pratique nord-américaine comme théorie critique de l'agir chrétien au service de la société", in Jean-Claude Petit et Jean-Claude Breton, eds., *Seul ou avec les autres? Le salut chrétien à l'épreuve de la solidarité* (Montréal: Fides, 1992), pp. 297-318.

D.J. Louw

Practical Theology in Diverse Cultural Contexts: Wisdom as a new Paradigm for Practical Theology in a Post-Apartheid Theology

The aim of my paper is to reflect on the question: what is meant by theology in a Southern African context, bearing in mind the fact that our region is exposed to radical processes of cultural, economic and political change. The latter implies a philosophical paradigm shift and a process of conceptual reframing with radical social, political and economical consequences. It also implies a total restructuring of our society. Besides vital political steps which had to be taken, the country is desperately in need of concrete modes of actions which have to be taken. If practical theology is going to take the issue of *doing theology* seriously, the following question is at stake: what sort of action? What is meant by actions which on the one hand could still be called theological but at the other hand are practical and contextual?

The current situation in Southern Africa forces theology to operate on the boundary between church and social environment. According to D. W. Augsburger a theology that functions on the boundary requires a commitment to presence, to dialogue, to crossing over and coming back between worlds (1986:36). He argues: this is the reason why pastoral counselling across cultures is rooted in an incarnational theology that is truly present to some and a dialogical theology that is open to others in *agape* (1986:36).

Theology between boundaries in Southern Africa cannot avoid the issue of cross-cultural pastoral care. At stake then is the challenge to appreciate cultural differences instead of being disturbed by them. This lies at the heart of effective cross-cultural pastoral care (R. C. Leslie 1990:251). Thus one of the main goals of cross-cultural pastoral care is to give attention to ethnic factors and finding ways of bridging cultural differences in order to be effective and practical. Although South Africa is moving very rapidly away from racism, pastoral care would be unrealistic if it assumed that ethnic considerations, which are usually related to factors of race, social class, religion and gender, could be ignored. P. Way is convinced that cultural issues are indissolubly related to ethnic factors. He views ethnicity as a primary bonding, an identification and context of belonging, shared by groups with common language, behaviours, histories, lifestyles, values and norms (1990:253). For theology, ethnicity implies a theology of culture. "Such theologizing must be open to a broadened historical past that includes

all human history, to a broadened human experience that embraces all cultures, to a broadened future that opens theological thought to the ongoing work of God among the nations of the world" (D. W. Augsburger 1986:72).

Sub-Saharan Africa has taken to Christianity in an astounding way. While Europe and North America are struggling with secularisation as part of the problems of the church in an affluent society, Africa is becoming the centre of gravity of Christianity. Although the claim may be exaggerated, the point then to be made is that only in Africa does Christianity really face the issue of inculturation (J. Kinghorn 1991:96). This is the reason why the church cannot bypass the issue of cultural theology. In the past African culture and religion have been utterly ignored by the colonizing powers which used the African as an object of no value and for which any substitute could be found. The effect of such an attitude was not only a material poverty but a spiritual poverty which is deeply rooted in anthropological pauperization. Therefore B Bujo is convinced that true African liberation is not possible without rediscovering deeply rooted cultural values (1992: 10).

Pastoral care in Southern Africa is confronted with the challenge to deal with the real issue in cultural theology: humanity and human dignity (see D. W. Augsburger 1986:77). Should this be true, I want to pose the important question: if practical theology pretends to be doing theology, is it possible to deal properly with the issue of humanity if practical theology only makes use of liberation theology to promote the issue of humanity? The hypothesis of this paper is that doing theology should be aware of the one-sidedness of liberation theology. The liberation issue is important for the struggle against apartheid. It is true, the process of freedom cannot avoid the issue of liberation in our country. However in a new South Africa we need more than liberation theology. We actually need a theology of justice and wisdom.

I am going to toy with the idea and assumption that liberation theology is alien to the African way of thinking and doing. This could be one of the possible reasons why many African states, after independence, could not develop freedom in a peaceful and democratic way. The underlying reason for this is the fact that liberation theology is rooted in the neo-Marxistic way of thinking. The philosophy of the neo-Marxists goes via Marx right back to German idealism. The dialectical model stems from the philosophy of Hegel. Through Hegel dialectics is rooted in the Hellenistic way of thinking, that is to analyse, to find answers to all questions and to solve all problems.

In order to turn to real cultural issues in Africa, theology should try to get rid of biased Hellenistic and Western paradigms which do not fit in

with the actual African philosophy of man and life. It could be of paramount importance to explore the value of the following statement of Kenneth Kaunda: "Let the West have its Technology and Asia its Mysticism! Africa's gift to world culture must be in the realm of Human Relationships" (1967² :22).

Our task is to determine whether a sound Biblical approach could provide practical theology with new paradigms which could serve as vehicles and instruments, even as guidelines, to facilitate the cultural and political process of change in South Africa. The hypothesis is that Scriptural issues of justice and wisdom could provide practical theology of the required paradigm for social change and peaceful solutions. During the struggle, liberation *from* is important. When the struggle moves into the agreement stage of conflict management, the dominant issue becomes: liberation *for*. In this stage it is important that liberation theology should develop into justice and wisdom theology. Accordingly restitution becomes an integral part of reconciliation. To my mind wisdom, justice and restitution are nearer to the issue of humanity, and even to the African philosophy of life, than the aggressive approach of the Western analytical problem solving attitude.

In order to investigate the value and truth of the above mentioned hypotheses, the paper is divided into three sections. In the first part I shall give attention to the question: What is African Christian theology? Secondly, I shall deal with the myth of the so called "post-apartheid society." The last part will deal with the issue of restitution in practical theology.

1. Outline of a Christian theology in Africa

The issue of Christian theology in Africa is the attempt to delineate some of the features of that real world of Africa in which theologizing takes place. It is the attempt to discover an African context for theologizing. One of the main driving forces behind this attempt is the struggle in Africa to be free of some kind of North Atlantic captivity. "There is a need for a new *skenos* (Greek: tent) which is African, and communicates to *homo africanus* and theology like theological education becomes an instrument of *skenosis*, a tabernacling of the eternal word of God in Africa too (cf John 1:14)" (J. S. Pobee 1989:3). This is the reason why B. Bujo advocates for a genuinely African ecclesiology which will produce a different model of the church from that which is currently dominant (1992:73).

Practical theology in Africa should address the matter of its North Atlantic captivity and free itself to be authentic in Southern Africa. To my mind practical theology should thus be aware of some characteristics of this captivity:

(a) **The rationalistic and analytical approach to life issues and problems.** The European mind wants to solve problems and tries to manage all life issues. Thorough analysis therefore should inevitably lead to rational answers.

(b) **The denominationalistic approach of the mother churches in Southern Africa.** The church should recognise the importance of ecclesiological pluralism. A good example of this is the multiplicity of independent churches in Southern Africa. In Africa the church exists in a plural society. African Christian Independency represents among other things a cultural renaissance, a protest against the North Atlantik captivity. In the past the church placed more emphasis on the institutional framework, than on people and relations.

(c) **The individualistic view of life** which distinguishes between the individual's faith and the life of the people. This leads very easily to a sharp distinction and even separation between private life and public interests, church and state. These go against the grain of Africa's holistic view of life. In Africa religion cannot be relegated to limbo as the business of the clergy, and in that context, the separation between faith and life, individual conscience and social process are false distinctions.

(d) **The obsession of the church with achievement.** The church became an important ally of Western society's achievement ethics. What you know and what you can do is of more importance than who you are. Doing functions and knowing functions surpass being functions.

(e) **The abstract and ideological feature of Western thought.** Liberation became one of the major issues in Africa. The reason for this is that liberation theology deals directly with existential problems such as injustice and abuse of human dignity. However liberation theology cannot separate itself from its essential philosophical feature: dialectic materialism. It is too abstract and mechanistic. It allows too little space for the human person and relies too much upon the intrinsic momentum of inevitable historic processes. Most remarkable is the statement of J. N. K. Mugambi: "Hegel's idealistic philosophy which has influenced many modern western thinkers (both positively and negatively) would make no sense in the context of traditional African thought. Nor would the doctrinal debate on whether Jesus is 'of one substance' with God the father" (1989:137).

The question: What is African theology? is very difficult to answer. The concept, Christian African theology, is even more complex.

Among theologians in Africa little consensus exists about the meaning of the concept: African theology. One thing is clear, Africans do not experience God theoretically. Africans in their religious heritage express their experience of God practically, without much theoretical exposition. "They live rather than verbalize their theology" (J. N. K. Mugambi 1989:9).

In the light of the current situation in Southern Africa the main issue in theology is liberation. Liberation is the objective task of contemporary African Christian theology. It is not one of the issues, but rather, all issues aimed at liberating the African from all forces that hinder him from living fully as a human being. If the church is not an island unto itself, and if it is inextricably bound up with the society and world, it is quite understandable that contemporary issues of society should engage theological reflection. Therefore liberation theology is linked up with the context of poverty with its diverse indices leading to a sense of hopelessness in people. Liberation theology reflects the situations of political instability marked by injustice and abuse of human dignity.

It becomes clear that the theological issue for the churches in South Africa is: social transformation/liberation. "This implies a process of transforming the church to enable it, in turn, to be a transforming community, but also a prophetic ministry directed at society as a contribution to the flourishing of justice. We seek a transformation of unjust social structures and of the attitudes and policies which perpetuate and reinforce them" (J. R. Cochrane *et al* 1991:10). In order to reach this goal, a social-ecclesial analysis becomes an important task of the church in its attempt to understand its immediate context. This critical discernment presupposes a hermeneutics of suspicion. In the end it should develop into a spirituality which enables the Christian community to exercise the gift of discernment ("seeing clearly") and to discover the resources of empowerment (becoming the human being God intended in the *imago dei* — one who has full dignity among others, and a share in the dominion or stewardship of the world and its resources) (J. R. Cochrane *et al* 1991:23).

The transformation of human society becomes the predominant issue. In practical theology and pastoral care the relationship between liberation and salvation becomes vital because of the political aspiration of the people towards self-realization and self-fulfilment. J. N. K. Mugambi makes the following distinction: "Liberation may be defined as the *penultimate process* of eliminating dependence (which is dehumanizing) and enhancing integrity and independence (which are hu-

manizing) in every aspect of socio-political life both for individuals and for society as a whole"; "Salvation may be defined as the *ultimate hope* of realizing or attaining total self-realization and self-fulfilment, which transcends the finitude of natural and historical processes" (1989:x). Salvation functions then as a corrective check to remind mortal men and women that total liberation is not attainable in the historical dimension of human existence. Hence the eschatological emphasis in any theological discussion of salvation.

In the South African context it is very difficult to maintain a balance between liberation and salvation. Especially in black theology. This is most evident in, for example, the Kairos Document. The power of liberation for many people in Southern Africa is illustrated by the following prayer published in Kairos Liturgies: "All-powerful God, raise us all up from this death. Give new life to these dry bones and may the uprising of your people in South Africa today take us forward to the new society, the new humanity and the new world that is promised by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1986:23).

F. Chikane is convinced of the fact that *doing theology* is emerging as a dominant methodology in the Third World. "Doing theology therefore means action and reflection on one's activity and involvement with the people, and participation in their struggles. The theologian must be involved with the people in the activity of God, and 'do theology' in action" (1985:100). The implication of his point of view is that theology not grounded in liberating praxis is not liberating theology. J. W. de Gruchy is convinced that Christians in Southern Africa must participate in the creation of a just society. He therefore regards the liberation issue as inevitable for doing theology (1985:94-95). In the words of Philip Potter doing theology means becoming the messengers of the gospel of the good news to the poor and liberation for the oppressed (1985:13). Theology becomes the love of God in action; theologians in Africa do not do theology *for* the people but *with* the people. This is the reason why B. Goba makes it very clear that for them theology is not an academic exercise, but a struggle against the demon of white racism (1985:58). Because of this struggle reconciliation is built on liberation (J D Roberts 1983:67).

In conclusion, we can say that African Christian theology is doing theology in a cultural and political environment. The main objective is liberation and contextualization. Change and transformation are therefore important ingredients of doing theology. The theological basic theory behind this model is the incarnation motive. Because of the incarnation of Christ the actions in doing theology are transparent for the identification of God with the struggle of the people, it becomes

Christian love in action. "From a theological perspective black adults in Southern Africa could be viewed as experiencing a deep yearning for a pastoral care and a love that will open up God's hope, healing, and saving power and illuminating revelation to them" (H. H. Eybers 1991:3).

The previous exposition highlights one dimension of theology which pretends to be truly African. It touches the dimension of contextualization. What about the other dimension: the dimension of humanity and ethics. Doing theology could never be a neutral matter. To go deeper into this, it is important to try to understand African philosophy of man. In doing this, one must be aware of the danger of romanticising Africa. In South Africa the process of urbanization has influenced people to such a degree that it is very difficult to describe African culture and lifestyles. Nevertheless I will try to highlight a few outstanding features.

Outstanding features of African theology in its social context:

(a) **Humility.** African people experience life in close connection with nature. The hardships of nature teaches you that it is impossible to manipulate life for your own benefit. Instead of an aggressive approach, our being dependent on nature creates a cautious attitude to life. In Africa one has to exercise patience and tolerance. "To be exposed to Nature and to have to live your life at its rhythm develops humility as a human characteristic rather than arrogance" (K Kaunda 1967²:24).

(b) **Relational.** The second feature stems from the structure of the traditional African society. Societies in Africa were, in fact, highly organised and delicately balanced in the network of relationships which held their members together. African people do not have relations, they are relations.

(c) **Cooperation and mutuality within an holistic approach.** The tribal community was a mutual society. It was organised to satisfy and safeguard the basic human needs of all its members and, therefore, individualism was discouraged. The land was communally owned and administered by chiefs and village headmen for the benefit of all.

It is debatable whether an holistic concept is unique to Africa. Such an holistic outlook is found in other Third World cultures, indeed even in bygone European times (J Kinghorn 1991:95). This however does not diminish the importance of the insistence by African theology on a view of the world which stresses the comprehensive interrelatedness

of all of life. The African holistic view and integrational approach serve as an antidote to the individualism which has been responsible for so much of the paralysis of modern theology.

(d) **The sacredness of life.** Life is viewed with respect and carefully dealt with. In Africa you don't exploit life and other people for your own benefit but you live through other people in order to serve. Life and nature are sacred and should be handled with care. You don't live to earn and to make a profit but to look after the basic needs of your people.

(e) **Acceptiveness.** The tribal community was an accepting community. "In the best tribal society people were valued not for what they could achieve but because they were *there*. Their contribution, however limited to the material welfare of the village was acceptable, but it was their *presence* not their *achievement* which was appreciated" (K. Kaunda 1967²:26).

(f) **Inclusiveness.** African society is man-centred. T. Adeyemo refers to Africa's philosophy of people-centredness (1991:90). Africans believe that things (including time) are made for the benefit of man. J. Müller speaks of the anthropocentric nature traditional African ontology (1991:78).

The extended family system constitutes a social security scheme which has the advantage of following the natural pattern of personal relationships. African psychology must be understood against this background. The system approach is predominantly inclusive. By this is meant a web of relationships which involve some degree of mutual responsibility.

(g) **Dialogical structures.** Africans love conversation. They will talk for hours with any stranger who crosses their path, and by the time they part there will be little they do not know about each other.

(h) **African spirituality.** Enjoyment of life and a patient optimism are characteristic of an African approach to life. They have a sunny outlook and hate gloom and pessimism (K. Kaunda 1967²:36). The reason for this is Africa's love for rhythm. Rhythm is the very expression of the life-force within African people. Laughter, music and dancing reflect the spirit of their culture.

The important question at stake is whether the changes in South Africa take African spirituality seriously. Blacks in South Africa are in transition, they are moving from a rural society to an urban society. urbanization and industrialization become important forces to reckon with. In the meantime they have to move from oppression to libera-

tion. The challenge in a new South Africa is how to create a stable society and maintain political structures which safeguard human rights and promote humanity. I want to argue that liberation theology cannot provide the framework for this. Liberation theology is intrinsically alien to African spirituality. It is actually only a vehicle voicing the frustration of blacks. But contextualization implies more than freedom *from*; contextualization is in desperate need of a new ethics: freedom *for* to do this, Africa should not copy the Western model of democracy with its accent on individualism. It should rather try to inculcate modern trends into traditional African wisdom which at one time was such a successful forum for communal democracy (B. Bujo 1992:7).

The liberation paradigm was efficient during the struggle of blacks in the townships of South Africa. If this is going to be the only paradigm for a future South Africa we are going to run into serious trouble. C. H. Pinnock in a book review: *Liberation theology at the crossroads: democracy or revolution?*, refers to the important choice that needs to be made between liberal democracy and revolutionary rhetoric (1991:474). The current trend is away from Marxism which characterized the liberal movement in its early stages, toward more of a grassroots populism as typified by the Christian base communities (C. H. Pinnock 1991:474). C. H. Pinnock is convinced of the fact that liberation theology has made terrible mistakes. These include a betrayal of the poor, aligning theology with a disastrous modern ideology, dividing Christians from each other, and selling out believers under communism (1991:475).

The shortcoming of liberation theology is that it creates an aggressive approach to life problems. It does not succeed to develop the potential of African spirituality. Theology in South Africa has to adapt to the changing political climate. If it is going to persist in the liberation paradigm, it will not succeed to prepare South Africans for the new dispensation which is based upon the philosophy of negotiation, dialogue and constructive conflict management. To succeed liberation theology makes use of people's frustrations and cooperates with a rather violent environment. It operates with a psychology of anger which neglects African spirituality. The latter is more right brain oriented. Africa is in need of a real African Christian theology which can succeed to utilize African spirituality and view of life. To my mind wisdom theology is equipped to achieve such an objective.

In a new South Africa the struggle will have to move from the transformation of structures to the transformation of hearts. For this we need wisdom.

Liberation theology is in essence incarnational. However it remains a question whether it is possible to move directly from salvation/ Christology to anthropology and the actions of man. If practical theology really wants to be theology in action and if it wants to succeed in being cultural and contextual, it should discover the necessity of a pneumatology.

D. P. McCann sets the agenda for practical theology and develops a model for social action: orthopraxis. "This concept — literally, 'the right sort of praxis' — refers to the concrete struggles of basic 'communities' seeking to give Christian witness in a revolutionary situation" (1983:111). The danger of orthopraxis is that it can become easily a new ideology justified by the struggle of the people. The right sort of praxis is in a desperate need for the right sort of action. The latter brings practical theology back to its ethical basis. D. Tracy regards ethics as the foundation of practical theology. "I believe that the principal praxis criteria for practical theology are criteria of transformation and the principle theoretical criteria are those of a theological ethics related to that praxis" (1983:72). Tracy is convinced that without explicit ethical reflection, a practical theology could be left with a purely dispositional ethics, modelled on possibilities of human transformation (see 1983:79). A purely dispositional ethics is especially insufficient in the current situation of political transformation in Southern Africa. A new South Africa needs ethical guidelines to prevent chaos and destructive violence. Without mature people and a positive and constructive approach to situational problems, our region will be destroyed. South Africa will then be another Lebanon or Angola. To prevent liberation theology from such a destructive undertaking, wisdom theology could operate as an important alternative.

Doing theology becomes theological ethics when it is founded by pneumatology. Works of love then become the characteristics of a Christian ethics. 1 John 3:16 says: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." To put this love into practice, practical theology should represent the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). To keep in step with the Spirit practical theology should operate by the principle of wisdom. An excellent example of this is Proverbs 16:6: "Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil."

The profit of wisdom theology for an African context is that it makes an appeal upon African spirituality. It has the potential to unfold and reveal the inner strength of a truly African approach to life. Wisdom theology has the advantage that it reflects the actual spirit of African

culture and religion. Because of this benefit practical theology in South Africa should adapt to this theological paradigm in order to meet with existential needs in a new South Africa.

The advantage of wisdom theology is that it appeals to the constructive dimension of human conduct. It actualizes human potential while it concentrates on the essential being functions of man. In order to do this properly, wisdom needs ethics. And to prevent wisdom from being purely dispositional, a new code of conduct should be founded upon theological ethics. Doing theology is truly *practical* and *theological* when actions and conduct are guided by the fruit of the Spirit. It is through a pneumatology that wisdom becomes operational. The quest for justice and peace needs the guidance of wisdom: But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peaceloving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (James 4:18-19)

2. The myth of a post apartheid society

The main purpose of liberation theology in South Africa is to create a just and democratic society. At the beginning of this paper I mentioned the importance of a cultural approach. In a cross-cultural model it is of paramount importance to appreciate ethnic differences instead of being disturbed by them. Moreover, the appreciation of distinctive differences opens the way to understanding rather than judgement, and so makes communication, dialogue and negotiation in South Africa more possible.

In principle apartheid has been dismantled. The challenge for a future dispensation is to dismantle apartheid in government institutions, and the allocation of resources and privileges based on race. In order to achieve these objectives a purely democratic society has to be created. Politically speaking a new government will try to establish a just society, freed from the wrongdoings of the past. For this people must change their attitude.

It is an existential fact that ethnicity creates prejudices which in their turn lead easily to racism. To eradicate racism practical theology will have to move beyond the revolutionary restructuring programme of liberation theology. Racism is an attitudinal problem. Unless theology is willing to address the attitudes of people in the light of sound theological ethics, we will not solve the problem of racism. Apartheid has codified racism as a means to preserve its owner power. The task for

doing theology based on pneumathology is to decodify racism. Unless we start doing this, a post apartheid society will remain a myth.

To boil down to the actual problem, practical theology will have to address people's fears and prejudices. For one reason or another, there will always be people who are driven by fear. In an interview with *Time Magazine*, the South African-born Mark Mathabane mentioned the fact that when he came to the U.S. in 1978 he believed that America had long since resolved its racial problems, that blacks were equal citizens. "Then I discovered, to my horror, that not much had changed in people's hearts. White people's attitudes towards blacks have changed very little since the days of lynchings. Without that change, laws are relatively impotent" (1990:16).

Change in South Africa must be genuine in order to create a new society. To do this theology has to change not only attitudes but perceptions as well. Stereotyping could be abolished if the church operates as the koinonic body of Christ. The unity in the body of Christ cuts through all cultural differences and racist prejudices (Ephesians 2:14-18). He destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. By proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation it is possible to reveal their sinful attitude to people to and bring about change on a cognitive level. People have to realise that their hostility has been put to death by the cross of Christ.

Practical theology should launch a special programme of reconciliation in South Africa. The fundamental question at stake is whether such a programme will succeed without giving attention to the problem of justice, compensation and restitution.

3. Restitution as a pastoral option in practical theology

We are in a transitional period, not just in the negotiations, but between the phasing out of the past and creating the new. This period is most delicate, because it requires the negotiators to obtain the acquiescence of the most recalcitrant defenders of the status quo. At either end of the political spectrum are those who do not really believe in democracy. At present it is very difficult for the church to side with one group only. At the same time it is impossible to stay neutral. An absolute neutral position would actually be immoral. What then is the task of the church in a situation of change and transition?

One of the most burning issues is how to deal theologically with the wrongdoings of the past: justice versus reconciliation. Those arguing for justice will say that, if one can grant amnesty for past acts now, the

next government can do the same after committing similar crimes. Moreover, it is argued that without justice, the passage from apartheid will not be complete, psychologically or politically. Therefore justice requires-restitution and retribution. On the other hand there is the argument that retribution will only tear the country apart, and the veiled threat that the whole transition will be derailed by those most threatened. It is in such an impasse that reconciliation becomes an option in order to move the country forward rather than keep it mired in the past.

As each of the problems is faced, a catharsis will be needed as the full implications of each change are realized. The issue of bitterness and apology will keep coming back, at each new phase of change and possible sacrifice. In South Africa we shall face the issue of guilt and forgiveness, retribution and reconciliation time and again.

Reconciliation means the restoration of a good relationship between enemies. In order to achieve this good relationship in the confrontation of God and man, it is necessary that the factors which produce the enmity be removed (H.-G. Link 1978:145). In South Africa one of the main factors is apartheid. Therefore the demand for confession. To be genuine and to confess, it is important to view apartheid as sin. This can only happen when Christians become aware of the reality of God in the midst of injustice and inhumanity. Confession becomes cheap when it is merely an effort to exonerate oneself. When confession is the result of a sound knowledge of God and guilt is sincere, the quest for restitution will automatically be part of reconciliation.

Since the Rustenburg declaration the demand for confession of guilt crops up time and again. However, when a confession has been made, the important issue becomes forgiveness. The latter means that the past is totally wiped out and cancelled. Otherwise guilt and confession becomes a meaningless game.

In order to safeguard reconciliation against superficiality, it is important to understand the relationship between reconciliation and restitution. Restitution is justice being made concrete and practical. Reconciliation is restitution portrayed within the framework of a theological understanding of salvation. Justice/restitution versus reconciliation is theologically spoken a false contrast and opposition. Justice is the doing part of reconciliation, while reconciliation is the ground motivation for doing justice.

If we take into account so many abominable crimes committed against black South Africans, it is understandable that Africans today raise their voices and claim compensations for the wrongs committed

against them during the time of apartheid. The point I wish to make is that restitution should not be forced. It should be an obligation which stems from a theological understanding of reconciliation. Restitution is actually an ethical issue which proves the validity of a profound ethics of love.

In the Old Testament it was clear that in a case of offence, restitution had to be paid. Numbers 5:6-7: "When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the Lord, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged." Therefore it could be argued that reconciliation without restitution is meaningless. This is true, but restitution without the ethics of love, becomes harsh demands without necessarily restoring peace. Without an ethics of love and a theology of wisdom, the processes of change could run out of control. For example, the current violence in South Africa could become uncontrollable, unless the political parties succeed to reach and accommodate the needs and demands of the so called "lost generation" amongst the black youth. During the stage of negotiations a liberal theological approach is a negative one, because it carries the possibility to generate only the aggressive emotions of people. Contrary to this approach, wisdom theology tries to emphasise empathy and understanding, based upon an ethics of love.

Linking up with the African view of life, J. Kinghorn advocates for a sophisticated theology of *shalom* (1991:94-95). According to him, a theology which stresses the interrelatedness of being, can probably best formulated as a theology of *shalom*. *Shalom* is a structural concept which becomes visible through deeds of love, justice and reconciliation. *Shalom* is theology's answer to the aggressiveness of liberation ideology. *Shalom* aims at an holistic and systemic understanding of freedom as a social and structural phenomenon. However, the content of *shalom* is not peace as a result of revolutionary deeds, but peace as a result of an ethics of love.

The latter is being generated by the spirit of God and exercised by the koinonic functions of the body of Christ. An ethics of love is the real and actual practice of theology which pretends to be doing theology and practical theology. This kind of practice is in a desperate need for wisdom as the guiding principle for doing theology. Wisdom is theology in operation, it is the practice of love which has the potential, not only to transform the hearts and minds of people, but to transform society at large. The challenge of love to the practice of theology implies the following: sacrifice without compensation; acceptance without any

conditions; service without a hidden agenda; sharing without any profit and forgiveness without account-keeping.

Conclusion

In South Africa practical theology will have to deal with the issues of reclaiming of land and affirmative actions. These cannot be ignored by theology. To deal with it in a proper and just manner, concrete actions of reconciliation are needed. In order to achieve peace and reconciliation in South Africa it will be necessary that the factors which produce the enmity be removed. A removal of all the scars of apartheid will stir up a lot of resistance and even lead to more violence. To prevent that a new dispensation creates more violence, the church has to play a decisive role. In order to fulfil this task practical theology will have to undergo a paradigm switch. The liberation theme must be supplemented by the wisdom theme. Wisdom theology is intrinsically linked up with an ethics of love. If theology is going to take the principle of contextualization seriously and try to be of cultural value in Africa, it will have to move away from a rather aggressive approach to a much more constructive approach. It will have to utilise African spirituality as an important partner in the effort to create peace. The future of Africa lies not in Marx and Hegel but in Africa's enjoyment of people and in Christ's offering and servanthood. For doing theology the agenda of the future must be set by an ethics of love. Doing theology is not a revolutionary strategy in a new South Africa, but love in operation. Love creates humanity: "Africa's gift to world culture must be in the realm of Human Relationships" (K. Kaunda 1967²).

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Friedrich Schweitzer

The Cultural Context of Practical Theology – A German Perspective

Let me start with a few introductory remarks. The topic of this section of our conference is "Practical theology in diverse cultural contexts". This can mean that we are to report about the state of practical theology in our respective countries. In my understanding it may, or even should, also mean that we are to address the more general issue of the contextual nature of practical theology. In my statement I will attempt both – to give you some information about practical theology in Germany and to address the question of cultural contextuality of practical theology.

I have three points: I will start with some general considerations about the question of cultural contextuality in practical theology. Second I will apply the question to the German situation. And third I will ask what cultural contextuality might mean for international discourse on practical theology's contribution to the struggle over the future of the church.

1. The Meaning of Cultural Context for Practical Theology: Some General Considerations

In our everyday work as practical theologians we do not think about the contextuality of our theorizing. Rather in most cases we work within a given frame of reference which results from a particular religion and from a particular cultural situation. For the most part, contact and cooperation in the university or in the field will not challenge the contextual cultural limits of practical theology. But as soon as we enter into international dialogue we will in fact realize to what degree our theories are limited by cultural context.

For me this became clear three years ago when we had a first international symposium on practical theology at Tübingen. At this symposium we hit upon a clear example of the cultural limitations of language which actually caused much confusion in our discussions. The term which this was all about was a simple one: *the church*. It was quite impossible for us to translate or even clarify the meaning of the term *church* between Germans and Americans. Obviously the respective background assumptions were so strong that mutual understanding was almost excluded.

From this experience the question arises if a conference like ours is even possible. Can practical theology be done across cultural boundaries? Can there be a general practical theology, of international scope and with intercultural validity?

When Friedrich Schleiermacher fathered the new discipline of practical theology he also raised the question what scope this discipline could have. He asks if practical theology might be the same for protestant and catholic theologians, and if it could claim validity beyond Germany. Schleiermacher's answer to the question of the denominational character of practical theology is fairly typical for his dialectical style. He contends that both, a purely positive and a purely negative answer would be equally mistaken. The truth, he says, is in between both answers. "Some rules will be identical for both churches; but when one goes into detail, the difference between the principles also becomes visible here" (*Praktische Theologie* 51). For him, the different relationship between clergy and lay people in the protestant and catholic tradition necessitates different practical theologies. And because of the international differences in the structure of churches and in the traditions of worship practical theology can only be developed at a national level.

Schleiermacher's concern with the limits of practical theology is no coincidence. Neither is it due to protestant apologetics against catholicism. Rather it follows quite systematically from his understanding of practical theology itself. If practical theology has its place at the juncture of theological principles on the one hand and the historical development of church and Christianity on the other, then the scope of practical theology goes as far as the acceptance of these principles and as far as the given cultural and historical context.

My term *cultural and historical context* is of course rather vague. What are the limits of such a context? How can they be specified? Schleiermacher's answer refers to language. For him historical and practical disciplines are dependent upon a common language. For mathematics which can be communicated through abstract formulas this is different. For practical or technical disciplines like education or practical theology however, the boundaries of theory coincide with the boundaries of language.

So for Schleiermacher the extension of practical theology is contingent upon shared principles of a religious community and upon the linguistic and cultural context.

2. **Praktical Theology in Germany: Denominational, Regional and National Contextuality**

When we look at the development of practical theology in Germany Schleiermacher's point of view seems to hold true in many ways. In Germany practical theology has clearly developed along cultural and denominational lines. At the same time, however, there is a growing need for communication and cooperation between the various strands of practical theology in Germany.

Let me specify this observation with three cases: protestant and catholic practical theology; practical theology in east and west; and finally the national limitations of the practical theological discussion.

a. Practical theology in Germany has developed in two distinct traditions, protestant and catholic. There have been several points of interconnection, and you may also observe many parallels in the respective developments on either side. Until recently or even until today, however, protestant and catholic practical theology in Germany cannot be considered a unified discipline.

Seen from a demographic perspective this may be surprising since there are no more parts in the country which would be exclusively protestant or catholic. The denominational distribution of the population is mixed throughout the country, with the exception of the former GDR where there are approx. 25% protestants, 5% catholics and 70% who claim no affiliation with any religious body. It seems that the difference of theological is strong enough to create two different practical theologies in Germany, irrespective of the cultural situation.

Increasingly, however, both practical theologies encounter quite parallel challenges, especially in respect to the future of the church. A drop in church membership, decreasing participation in church services, lessening support from families for Christian nature, discontinuities in the religious orientation between the generations — all these main issues on today's agenda of church leaders are to be found with catholics as well as Protestants.

b. My second case are the differences between practical theology in east and west. In the last 40 years practical theology in east and west have gone different ways in Germany. From a common starting point in 1945 they have developed along their own lines. Again there has been continuous contact between practical theology in east and west and there has certainly been a certain amount of exchange. Nevertheless even today, under the conditions of national and political unity, practical theology in east and west have not grown together.

In this case it was most of all the cultural and political situation which caused the different developments. Different societies with different presuppositions for the development of the churches have brought about different practical theologies, maybe even different understandings of practical theology itself. In the west practical theology is much closer to the social sciences. In many cases practical theologians specialize in cultural analysis which they consider to be crucial for their work. In the east the relationship between culture and theology is more distant. The hostility which the church encountered with the socialist government as well as a stronger theoretical division between religion and culture are the backdrop of practical theology there. This is not to say that practical theology in the east was or is in favor of splendid isolation. There have been quite remarkable efforts to work for "the other", to have a church not for oneself but "for others", as it was called with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's phrase. But nevertheless its own self-definition in respect to culture in general had to develop differently under the auspices of a socialist state.

Given the unification of church associations which followed the national unity, today's challenge lies in the cooperation between practical theology in east and west. In many cases it is necessary for the future of the church that the church can speak with a single voice. But how will the church be able to do so as long as there is no agreement between practical theology in east and west?

c. My third case is of a somewhat different nature. This time I do not want to compare different developments within Germany. Rather I want to look at practical theology in Germany as whole. Here, the issue of cultural contextuality becomes visible in that practical theology in Germany has for the most part developed within a close national community of discourse. The scientific community which is addressed, and which in turn is listened to, is a strictly German community.

This is remarkable at a time when other fields of theology have clearly widened their audience to include scholars from many other countries whose voices can no longer be excluded from the conversation.

In practical theology no such widening of audiences can be observed (unless we consider our own enterprise here as a future point in case). Even in the past, however, there have been a small number of exceptions to the rule of exclusively national development. These exceptions are of special interest here because they show how practical theology has relied on means of communication which are different from its own indigenous body of theory has gained influence mostly in American practical theology and, later on, has attracted similar atten-

tion in Germany. This is especially true for the pastoral counseling movement and for the influence of Rogerian psychology.

The other example of international exchange has to do with the social sciences, especially with the sociology of religion. Sociological theories like the functionalism of Talcott Parsons or the phenomenology of Peter Berger have equally influenced practical theology in Germany, in the U.S. and in other countries.

From this we may conclude that international and intercontextual contact and exchange in practical theology did not happen through practical theology itself but rather through external media. Especially the social sciences and psychology have functioned as media of intercultural and intercontextual communication for practical theology.

3. Cultural Contextuality, International Dialogue and the Struggle over the Future of the Church

What is the possible contribution of such considerations on the cultural contextuality of practical theology concerning the struggle over the future of the church? Are there any implications for this struggle? And given the cultural contextuality of practical theology — how is international dialogue possible?

Given the observation that international exchange in practical theology has taken place through the media of psychology and of cultural analysis two expectations may be formed. The first expectation concerns the techniques which were designed in practical theology. Can international dialogue lead to the identification of certain techniques and, moreover, of quality standards for such techniques which could claim international authority? Should we strive, just like in psychology and medical science, for an international professional agreement on what procedures are to be considered legitimate and effective in practical theology?

What clearly speaks against such aspirations is the paradigmatic shift which can currently be observed in pastoral theory in the U.S. as well as in Germany. Psychology and psychoanalysis no longer are considered the prime sources for pastoral care. Rather, there has been a clear turn towards ethics and hermeneutics which are now seen as the decisive background for the future development of pastoral care. Although the relationship to psychology is not given up altogether there is a notable shift in the direction of hermeneutical and ethical analysis.

The reason for this shift in pastoral care and practical theology is to be found, at least among others, in recent cultural developments which include a more critical stance towards psychological professionalism. Again a different cultural situation requires a different response from practical theology. When people have become sceptical of psychology's promises the pastoral care can no longer profit from a psychological identity either.

This brings us back to cultural analysis in general. Does cultural analysis offer more of a platform for international dialogue? Can such analysis contribute to the struggle over the future of the church?

In my opinion this will in fact be the case if cultural analysis is to mean intercultural comparative studies in practical theology. This kind of studies has proven its usefulness in various other fields like sociology and anthropology. It may also be of help in practical theology's attempt to become clear about the future of the church.

One of the focal points of the struggle over the future of the church in many countries today is the question of *modernity*. How should the churches respond to the challenges of modernity? Have churches already gone too far in adapting themselves to modernity, or do they still have to face up to modernity because they have remained premodern in their state of development? — This question can of course be answered through practical theological studies within one's own context, say the German or American cultural situation. In many ways, however, comparative studies of the situation in different countries may shed some new light on this question.

What may become clearer through such comparative attempts is the effect of certain social and religious institutions or of certain church policies which exist in one country but are absent in the other.

To mention at least one example let me point to the question of religious education in public schools which we have in Germany. This institution has come under much dispute after the German unification. Can the consequences of the absence of religious education in public schools be studied by looking at the situation in the U.S. where no such classes exist? This would be a topic to be examined through comparative studies.

Of course many difficulties will have to be solved if such comparisons are to work. Is it even possible to isolate the effects of a single institution like religious education? In spite of such questions it seems promising to me to undertake such comparative studies (and the IAPT might offer an occasion to actually do so).

Even now, without the grounds of academic scrutiny, international comparisons play an important role in the struggle over the future of the church. Opponents of religious education in public schools in Germany point to the U.S. in order to show that the future of the church acutally does not depend on this kind of educational support.

If practical theology is to contribute to the struggle over the future of the church and if it is to do so, at least among others, through international dialogue the method of choice is the *comparative study of church, culture and religion*.

1. "Die Zukunft der Kirche hat schon begonnen." So ist programmatisch der Schlußbeitrag des epochenmachenden vierbändigen "Handbuches der Pastoraltheologie" überschrieben, verfaßt von Karl Rahner, der auch ansonsten die Konzeption dieses Handbuches maßgeblich beeinflußt hat.¹ Ohne auf Einzelheiten dieser seiner ekklesiologischen Zukunftsskizze eingehen zu wollen, seien wenigstens einige der markanten Kennzeichen kurz in Erinnerung gerufen, die sich nach Rahner auf dem künftigen Weg der Kirche immer stärker herauskristalisieren werden und auf die es sich darum rechtzeitig einzustellen gilt:² Konzentration auf das Wesentliche, Kirche als kleine Herde, Demokratisierung der Kirche, Ausgleich zwischen Zentralismus und Dezentralismus, gesellschaftskritische Funktion der Kirche, individuelles Gewissen und Lehramt. Deutlich ist diesen Stichworten noch der Optimismus anzumerken, den das wenige Jahre zuvor beendete Zweite Vatikanische Konzil in die katholische Kirche hineingebracht hatte, den Optimismus nämlich, daß diese Kirche sowohl reformwillig als auch reformierbar sei. Nüchtern ist jedoch heute – ca. 25 Jahre später – in all den von Rahner als zentral markierten Punkten "Fehlanszeige" zu vermelden. Genauer noch: Nicht nur ist die Erwartung einer wirklich konsequenten und durchgängigen Reform der katholischen Kirche im Sinne der Impulse des letzten Konzils enttäuscht worden; sondern maßgebliche Kräfte innerhalb dieser Kirche betreiben seit einiger Zeit eine Restauration hinter dieses Konzil zurück. Und sie finden dabei – das sei nicht nur nebenbei bemerkt – in

¹ Vgl. K. Rahner, Die Zukunft der Kirche hat schon begonnen, in: HPTb IV, 744-753.

² Vgl. auch ders., Strukturwandel der Kirche als Chance und Aufgabe, Freiburg/Bz. 1972.

Norbert Mette

Practical Theology and Political Theology Johann Baptist Metz zum 65. Geburtstag

Ich bitte vorab um Verständnis, daß ich mich in den folgenden Überlegungen, sofern sie inhaltliche Fragen tangieren, auf den römisch-katholischen Raum konzentrieren werde. Das geschieht nicht in anti-ökumenischer Absicht, sondern aus dem Bestreben heraus, es nicht nur bei allgemeinen Erörterungen zu belassen, sondern diese beispielhaft zu erläutern und kritisch zuzuspitzen. Und das ist am unverfänglichsten — jedenfalls für die anderen — in den eigenen Reihen möglich. — Die Frage nach der Zukunft der Praktischen Theologie leite ich bewußt mit einem Rekurs auf die für unser Thema relevante Vergangenheit dieser Disziplin ein.

1. "Die Zukunft der Kirche hat schon begonnen." So ist programmatisch der Schlußbeitrag des epochemachenden vierbändigen "Handbuches der Pastoraltheologie" überschrieben, verfaßt von Karl Rahner, der auch ansonsten die Konzeption dieses Handbuches maßgeblich beeinflusst hat.¹ Ohne auf Einzelheiten dieser seiner ekklesiologischen Zukunftsskizze eingehen zu wollen, seien wenigstens einige der markanten Kennzeichen kurz in Erinnerung gerufen, die sich nach Rahner auf dem künftigen Weg der Kirche immer stärker herauskristallisieren werden und auf die es sich darum rechtzeitig einzustellen gilt²: Konzentration auf das Wesentliche, Kirche als kleine Herde, Demokratisierung der Kirche, Ausgleich zwischen Zentralismus und Dezentralismus, gesellschaftskritische Funktion der Kirche, individuelles Gewissen und Lehramt. Deutlich ist diesen Stichworten noch der Optimismus anzumerken, den das wenige Jahre zuvor beendete Zweite Vatikanische Konzil in die katholische Kirche hineingebracht hatte, den Optimismus nämlich, daß diese Kirche sowohl reformwillig als auch reformierbar sei. Nüchtern ist jedoch heute — ca. 25 Jahre später — in all den von Rahner als zentral markierten Punkten "Fehlansätze" zu vermischen. Genauer noch: Nicht nur ist die Erwartung einer wirklich konsequenten und durchgängigen Reform der katholischen Kirche im Sinne der Impulse des letzten Konzils enttäuscht worden; sondern maßgebliche Kräfte innerhalb dieser Kirche betreiben seit einiger Zeit eine Restauration hinter dieses Konzil zurück. Und sie finden dabei — das sei nicht nur nebenbei bemerkt — in

¹ Vgl. K. Rahner, Die Zukunft der Kirche hat schon begonnen, in: HPTH IV, 744-759.

² Vgl. auch ders., Strukturwandel der Kirche als Chance und Aufgabe, Freiburg/Br. 1972.

bestimmten politischen Lagern weltweit unverhohlene Zustimmung. Das zeigt, daß das Ringen um die Zukunft der Kirche alles andere als eine innerkirchliche Angelegenheit, sondern auch darüber hinaus, speziell politisch, von nicht unbeträchtlichem Interesse ist.

2. Es wäre allerdings kurzschlüssig, Rahners Zukunftskonzept damit für gescheitert erklären und ad acta legen zu wollen. Das ließe nämlich den theoretischen Status übersehen, den Rahner seinen Überlegungen zugrundegelegt hat. Sie lassen sich mit dem von ihm selbst geprägten Begriff der "ekklesiologischen Futurologie" umreißen, von der er postulierte, daß es sie "in einem ganz neuen Sinne gibt, oder; besser gesagt, geben sollte"³. Was ist damit gemeint? Rahner geht von dem veränderten, nämlich reflexen Verhältnis aus, das die Menschen heute der Zukunft gegenüber einnehmen und das darin seinen Ausdruck findet, daß die Zukunft nicht länger passiv hingenommen, sondern sie bewußt geplant, schöpferisch vorausentworfen und aktiv zu verwirklichen versucht wird. Davon bleibt auch die Kirche nicht unberührt: Während sie — abgesehen von der eschatologischen Naherwartung in ihrer Anfangsphase — früher die Zukunft mehr oder weniger als Weiterdauern ihres im Grunde unveränderlichen Wesens verstanden hat, begreift sie sich heute als eine auch menschliche und geschichtliche Größe, die als solche auf die Ausgestaltung ihres künftigen Weges bewußt Einfluß nehmen kann. Selbst wenn "ihr Verhältnis zur eigenen zu planenden und in schöpferischer Freiheit zu entwerfenden Zukunft ihrem eigenen Wesen und ihrer eigenen Aufgabe entsprechend anders sein (dürfte, NM) als das Verhältnis der Welt und der profanen Geschichte zu deren Zukunft"⁴, kann und muß es so etwas wie eine "Futurologie" auch für die Kirche geben. Denn die Zukunft der Kirche ist ihren Angehörigen nicht einfach vorgegeben, sondern zur bewußten Gestaltung aufgetragen. Genau das zu reflektieren, gehört nach Rahner zur spezifischen Aufgabe der Praktischen Theologie, da sie ja — im Unterschied zu der "essentiellen Ekklesiologie" der Dogmatik — eine "existentielle Ekklesiologie" zu betreiben hat, also mit dem faktischen sowie dem sein sollenden Selbstvollzug der Kirche befaßt ist.

3. Auch wenn die Praktische Theologie von ihrem Ursprung her als eine "theologische Krisenwissenschaft" charakterisiert werden kann, die angesichts der damaligen epochalen sozialen und kulturellen Umbrüche zu einer bewußteren Gestaltung der kirchlich pastoralen Praxis

³ Ders., Die Zukunft der Kirche hat schon begonnen, aaO., 746.

⁴ Ebd., 747.

verhelfen sollte⁵, blieb sie bis in die Mitte des Jahrhunderts hinein zumindest im katholischen Raum innerhalb der antireformatorischen und antimodernistischen Ekklesiologie befangen. Die Kirche "der Vorzeit", die es gegenüber der "feindlichen Außenwelt" zu verteidigen und innerhalb der eigenen Reihen zu effektivieren galt, bildete ihren normativen Bezugspunkt. Eine Ausnahme bildete die eine Zeit lang zwar einflußreiche, aber kirchenpolitisch schließlich abgewürgte Pastoraltheologie der sog. "Tübinger Schule": Mit ihrer Reich-Gottes-Idee als Leitorientierung für das gesamte kirchliche Handeln ermöglichte sie es, eine Vorläufigkeit und damit Wandelbarkeit der Kirche überhaupt zu denken und fällige Reformen zu benennen und einzuklagen. Auch in der Auseinandersetzung mit dieser "Tübinger Schule" zeigt sich exemplarisch wiederum eine enge Liaison von kirchlichen und politischen Interessen, die ins Spiel kommen, wenn die Zukunft der Kirche zur Debatte steht.⁶

4. Nicht zufällig greift das pastoraltheologische Konzept des "Handbuches" auf den Ansatz von Vertretern der "Tübinger Schule" zurück. Hatte diese doch insbesondere durch die Wiederentdeckung der Eschatologie innerhalb der Theologie dieses Jahrhunderts eine Rehabilitation erfahren. Dadurch bekamen — begünstigt durch die philosophische Entdeckung des "Prinzips Hoffnung" (E. Bloch), durch die Planungs- und Futurologie-Diskussion in den Sozialwissenschaften sowie durch das Aufkommen und Propagieren einer reformorientierten Politik der "Zukunft für alle" — auch innerhalb der theologischen und kirchlichen Debatte die Begriffe "Hoffnung" und "Zukunft" einen bis dahin ungeahnten Stellenwert⁷; das Vorgegebene wurde als geschichtlich Gewordenes rekonstruiert und damit als wandel- und veränderbar interpretiert.

Die Veröffentlichungen, die seitdem — ein markantes Datum ist der "Concilium-Kongreß" von Brüssel im Jahre 1970 zu diesem Thema⁸ — aus verschiedensten (theologischen, soziologischen, pastoralen etc.) Perspektiven zum Thema "Zukunft der Kirche" verfaßt worden sind,

⁵ Vgl. A. Exeler/N. Mette, Das Theorie-Praxis-Problem in der Praktischen Theologie des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts, in: F. Klostermann/R. Zerfaß (Hg.), Praktische Theologie heute, München-Mainz 1974, 65-80. Vgl. grundlegend V. Drexler, Neuzeitliche Konstitutionsbedingungen der Praktischen Theologie, 2 Bde., Gütersloh 1988.

⁶ Vgl. N. Mette, Theorie der Praxis, Düsseldorf 1978, 19-75.

⁷ Vgl. als Überblicke G. Bauer, Christliche Hoffnung und menschlicher Fortschritt, Mainz 1976; F. Kerstiens, Die Hoffnungsstruktur des Glaubens, Mainz 1969.

⁸ Vgl. Die Zukunft der Kirche. Berichtband des Concilium-Kongresses 1970, Zürich-Mainz 1971.

sind nicht mehr zu überschauen⁹. Allerdings hielt aus verschiedenen Gründen die Zuversicht, bei der Behandlung dieser Frage weiterführende Anleihen bei der "Futurologie" machen zu können¹⁰, nicht lange an, auch wenn P.M. Zulehner den 4. Band seiner Pastoraltheologie im Jahre 1990 unter dem Titel "Pastorale Futurologie" vorgelegt hat¹¹. Sein Konzept von Futurologie unterscheidet sich denn auch deutlich von dem der 70er Jahre, als die "Grenzen des Wachstums" (D. Meadows u.a., 1972) noch nicht das allgemeine Bewußtsein bestimmten. Wortprägungen wie "Kirchenträume" oder "Kirchenvisionen", wie sie in den 80er Jahren aufkamen und seitdem eine bemerkenswerte Resonanz finden¹², zeigen an, daß auch innerhalb der Kirche die von der Reformern gewünschte Zukunft immer stärker kontrafaktisch gehofft wurde und gehofft werden mußte. Das ist darauf zurückzuführen, daß im Gegenzug zu den reformerischen Bewegungen in der Kirche – wie in der Gesellschaft insgesamt – die eher traditionell eingestellten Kräfte sich ihrerseits der Zukunft der Kirche zu bemächtigen versuchten – und zwar weniger theoretisch als viel mehr praktisch. Begünstigt wurden und werden sie durch eine verbreitete Stimmungslage, die in einem gewissen Überdruß der Propagierung von immer Neuem sowie infolge der Bewußtwerdung von allenthalben antreffbaren Risikolagen auf eine Bestandssicherung des Erreichten bedacht war und ist. Auch hier zeigt sich wiederum eine deutliche Parallelität zwischen kirchlichen und sonstigen gesellschaftlichen Ein- und Vorstellungen zur Zukunft.

5. Dies nicht bedacht zu haben bzw. zu bedenken, erweist sich immer stärker als ein schwerwiegendes Versäumnis vieler praktisch-theologischer "Futurologien" bzw. Zukunftskonzepte. Dies ist selbst dort noch der Fall, wo zwar die binnenkirchliche Fixierung pastoralen Handelns durchbrochen wird und gesellschaftliche Wandlungsprozesse als Herausforderungen für die Kirche in den Blick genommen werden, wie es P.M. Zulehner in seiner erwähnten "pastoralen Futurologie" tut; dies bleibt jedoch postulatorisch, solange nicht die Voraussetzungen

⁹ Bis hin zur Dokumentation der außerordentlichen Bischofssynode 1985, die W. Kasper unter dem Titel "Zukunft aus der Kraft des Konzils" (Freiburg 1986) vorgelegt hat.

¹⁰ Vgl. dazu bes. K. Füssel, Futurologie, in: F. Klostermann/R. Zerfaß (Hg.), aaO, 370-380.

¹¹ Vgl. P.M. Zulehner, Pastoraltheologie. Bd. 4: Pastorale Futurologie, Düsseldorf 1990.

¹² Vgl. z.B. N. Lohfink, Kirchenträume, Freiburg 1982; W. Ludin (Hg.), Am Horizont die neue Erde. Lesebuch der Kirchenträumer, Freiburg 1989.

dafür seitens der Kirche befragt werden und ihre eigene Verstrickung in die gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche kritisch aufgeklärt wird.

6. Genau diese Verstrickungen wahr- und als Anfrage an die eigene theologische Reflexion ernstzunehmen, charakterisiert den Ansatz der "politischen Theologie" in ihrer neuen Ausformung, wie sie sie sowohl im evangelischen (vor allem J. Moltmann, D. Sölle) als auch im katholischen Bereich (vor allem J.B. Metz) gefunden hat¹³. Eines der zentralen Themen dieser Theologie bildet von Anfang an, und zwar durchaus in praktischer Absicht, die Frage nach der Zukunft bzw. der Zukunftsfähigkeit des Christentums unter den Bedingungen der modernen bzw. spätmodernen Gesellschaft. Indem sie dabei die Hoffnungsstruktur des christlichen Glaubens mit den zeitgenössischen Zukunftsvorstellungen in ein spannungsträchtiges Verhältnis setzte, hat sie entscheidend zur Klärung eines theologisch angemessenen Denkens und Handelns auf Zukunft hin beigetragen: Stichwortartig seien genannt die Unterscheidungen zwischen Chronos und Kairos, zwischen Futurum und Adventus, zwischen Evolution und Apokalyptik, zwischen Prognose und Prophetie, zwischen Utopie und Eschatologie. Damit verbindet sich ein genereller Vorbehalt etwa gegenüber solchen futurologischen Konzepten, die "dem Mythos von der Zeit als einem unendlichen, in jeder Hinsicht leeren und überraschungsfreien Kontinuum, in das wir unsere 'Fortschritte' projizieren"¹⁴, erliegen oder lediglich die herrschenden Trends nach vorn verlängern und somit den status quo stabilisieren.

7. Unweigerlich kommt auf diese Weise ein gesellschaftskritischer Zug in die theologische Reflexion hinein. Wo dieser ausgeblendet wird, kommt es zu verhängnisvollen Verkürzungen des christlichen Glaubens in Theorie und Praxis. Das ist etwa der Fall, wenn man meint, sich allein um die Zukunft der Kirche kümmern zu können. Es steht gegenwärtig mehr auf dem Spiel – darauf hat vor allem J.B. Metz immer wieder insistiert –, als daß wir nur die zunehmende Bedeutungslosigkeit oder das gänzliche Verschwinden der traditionellen Religionsformen zu beklagen hätten. Während der Tod Gottes schon seit längerem öffentlich proklamiert wird, vollzieht sich eher im Verborgenen, aber umso nachhaltiger die Exekution des Menschen, jedenfalls

¹³ Vgl. J.B. Metz, Politische Theologie, in: SM III, 1232-1240; B. Wacker, Politische Theologie, in: P. Eicher (Hg.), Neues Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe. Erw. Neuausgabe, Bd. 4, München 1991, 235-247; J.B. Metz/W. Kroh, Politische Theologie, in: EKL³ III, 1261-1265.

¹⁴ J.B. Metz, Die Zielperspektive. Identitätsbildung aus Nachfolge, in: R. Zerfaß (Hg.), Mit der Gemeinde predigen, Gütersloh 1982, 13-21, hier: 14; vgl. auch K. Füssel, aaO.

des Menschen, "wie wir ihn bisher geschichtlich kennengelernt haben, mit seinen Werten und Idealen"¹⁵. Es muß deswegen also um den theoretischen und praktischen Widerstand gegen den Tod des Menschen gehen — "gegen die wachsende Subjektivität, gegen den Gedächtnisschwund, gegen den Sprachzerfall und den Analphabetismus zweiter Ordnung. Nur dann werden auch die Liebe und der Hunger und Durst nach Gerechtigkeit in unserem sozialen Leben nicht versiegen"¹⁶. Angesichts dieser Zusammenhänge ist es unabdingbar, daß die praktische Theologie ihren Bezugsrahmen ebenfalls entsprechend weit spannt.

8. Soll das Christentum zu einer solchen not-wendigen "Umkehr zur Zukunft" beitragen können, ist auch innerhalb der eigenen Reihen die Bereitschaft und Fähigkeit zu einer entsprechenden Umkehr erforderlich. Diese haben sich nach J.B. Metz vor allem an drei Wendepunkten zu bewähren, vor denen momentan das Christentum steht; an der Art und Weise, wie sie mit ihnen umgeht, könnte es übrigens zum produktiven Vorbild für die übrige Gesellschaft werden. Konkret geht es um den¹⁷

8.1 "Abschied von gesellschaftlicher und politischer Unschuld": Christlicher Glaube als Nachfolge vollzieht sich nicht in einem abstrakten Raum oberhalb der gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche und feiert keine gegenüber konkretem menschlichen Leiden unempfindliche Versöhnung. Er will vielmehr als erfahrene Freiheit, als Freiheit auch der anderen und damit als Gerechtigkeit praktisch werden.

8.2 "Abschied von geschichtlicher Unschuld": Nachfolge vollzieht sich in der konkreten Begegnung mit dem Antlitz der geschichtlichen Opfer. Sie kommt von der "Rückseite der Geschichte" (G. Guitierrez) her und widersetzt sich allen Bemühungen, vergangenes Unglück und Leiden im Namen des Fortschritts vergessen oder gar ungeschehen zu machen.

8.3 "Abschied vom Eurozentrismus": Die — nicht zuletzt von Europa verursachte — soziale Zerrissenheit der Welt, an der auch die Kirchen selbst ein nicht unbeträchtliches Maß an Schuld tragen, ist als genuin theologischer Topos zu begreifen: "Verhältnisse, die dem Evangelium direkt widersprechen — wie Ausbeutung, Unterdrückung, Verelen-

¹⁵ J.B. Metz, Religion, ja - Gott, nein, in: ders./T.R. Peters, Gottespassion, Freiburg 1991, 11-62, hier: 58; vgl. auch ders., Wohin ist Gott, wohin denn der Mensch?, in: F.-X. Kaufmann/ders., Zukunftsfähigkeit. Suchbewegungen im Christentum, Freiburg 1987, 124-147.

¹⁶ Vgl. J.B. Metz, Wohin ist Gott, wohin denn der Mensch?, aaO., 144f.

¹⁷ Vgl. zum folgenden zusammenfassend J.B. Metz/W. Kroh, aaO., 1263f.

dung, Folter und Rassismus —, sind Herausforderungen an die Theologie und verlangen die Formulierung des Glaubens in Kategorien der Solidarität, des Widerspruchs und der Veränderung."¹⁸

9. Die hier postulierte Umkehr zeitigt, soll sie nicht abstrakt bleiben, nachhaltige Konsequenzen für die Sozialgestalt der Kirche. Ihre derzeitige Krise erweist sich vor diesem Hintergrund zumindest zu einem erheblichen Teil als durch ihren Rückzug aus den konkreten Lebenswelten der Menschen in eine gettohaft abgeschlossene vermeintlich "reine" Glaubenswelt hinein selbst bedingt. In diesem Sinne richtet sich das Plädoyer der politischen Theologie auf eine Abkehr sowohl von der traditionellen Volkskirche als auch von der bürgerlichen Servicekirche zugunsten einer Förderung der basisgemeindlichen Kirche, wie sie sich vor allem in den Kirchen der sog. Dritten Welt herausgebildet hat¹⁹; damit eng verbunden ist das Engagement für eine Überwindung des bisherigen Eurozentrismus zugunsten einer kulturell polyzentrischen Weltkirche.²⁰

10. Es wäre ein Mißverständnis zu meinen, von der politischen Theologie her könnten einige wichtige Gesichtspunkte additiv zu einer ansonsten davon unbeeinflußten praktischen Theologie hinzugefügt werden. Zur Entscheidung steht vielmehr die Wahl eines neuen Paradigmas an, das wesentlich von einer anderen Begründung des Praxisbegriffs seinen Ausgang nimmt und eine Reihe von weiteren kategorialen und methodischen (entsprechend dem Schema "Sehen — Urteilen — Handeln") Umakzentuierungen zur Folge hat. Die politische Theologie — und konsequenter noch die von ihr inspirierten Befreiungstheologien — hält dazu an, jegliche ekklesiozentrische o.ä. Reduktion des kirchlichen bzw. pastoralen Wirkens zu durchbrechen und dieses als solidarischen "Dienst der Versöhnung" (2. Kor 5, 18) in einer zerstrittenen und gespaltenen Welt zu begreifen und zu konzipieren. Evangelisierung zielt sowohl auf individuelle als auch kollektive Transformation und vollzieht sich als unbedingter Einsatz für die integrale Befreiung der Menschen, vorrangig der Armen und Notleidenden, sowie für die Schaffung einer Kultur der Anerkennung der anderen in ihrer Andersartigkeit. Die damit verbundene Betonung der prophetischen und (politisch-)diakonischen Dimension kirchlichen bzw. pastoralen Handelns findet ihren praktischen Niederschlag in einer kirchlichen Sozialform, die konsequent das kommuniale und partizi-

¹⁸ Ebd., 1264.

¹⁹ Vgl. ausführlicher J.B. Metz, Suchbewegungen nach einem neuen Gemeindebild, in: F.-X. Kaufmann/ders., aaO., 148-165.

²⁰ Vgl. ausführlicher ders., Im Aufbruch zu einer kulturell polyzentrischen Weltkirche, in: ebd., 93-123.

patorische Moment christlicher Praxis zur Geltung kommen läßt und die Gemeinde als Ort der Konvivialität nicht außerhalb, sondern inmitten der übrigen basisorientierten sozialen Bewegungen zu realisieren versucht.²¹

²¹ Vgl. hierzu ausführlicher N. Mette, Kritischer Ansatz der Praktischen Theologie, in: J.A. van der Veen/H.-G. Ziebertz (Hg.), Paradigmenentwicklung in der Praktischen Theologie, Kampen-Weinheim 1993; H. Steinkamp, Sozialpastoral, Freiburg 1991.

Johannes A. van der Ven

Empirical Methodology in Practical Theology: Why and How?

Many times the question of the methodology in practical theology is at stake. Some argue that practical theology has no methodology at all, and even should not have one. Because practical theology, they say, is not a discipline, that makes use of procedures and techniques. Theology generally refers to truth and not to method. Truth transcends method, interrupts and even negates method. This especially applies to the truth of God's revelatory praxis in Jesus, the Christ, that is mediated by the people's praxis inside and outside the church in the context of modern society. This truth does not ask for methodology, but for openness, awe, wondering, concern, commitment, surrender. From these attitudes, the practical theologian does not strive to master God's revelatory praxis, but to open himself or herself for it, to approximate to it in a respectful and reverend way.

Others say, that methodology is not to be considered as the alpha and omega of practical theology, but at least as a necessary condition for it. Without a sound and clear methodology, practical theology can not fulfil its task: reflecting on the people's praxis from the viewpoint of God's revelatory praxis in a way that is as scientific as possible. This especially refers to developing practical theology within the context of the modern secular university.

The first conception refers to practical theology from the tradition-based perspective of theology as 'sapientia'. The second relates to practical theology from the traditionoriented viewpoint of theology as scientia".¹

The point of departure of this paper is the "scientia"-perspective. From this frame of reference, the question has to be asked, which methodology is relevant for practical theology. A multitude of methodologies, that are factually used in practical-theological studies, can be distinguished. Historical, hermeneutical and ideology-critical approaches appear to be very enriching. Linguistic methods are also successfully applied, like for instance semiotics, and metaphor-analytical and speech act-analytical techniques. Next to these methods, the empirical approach can be relevant for practical theology.

¹ W.Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie*, Ff 1973

In this paper I would like to deal with two questions: why is the empirical methodology useful for practical theology; and, how can it be used and implemented? From these two questions I would like to structure this paper by dividing it into four parts. First I will refer to a number of historical claims to practical theology and its empirical approach (1). After that I will elaborate on the models of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, partly connected with the recent history of practical theology in the Netherlands, especially in Nijmegen University (2). Next I will describe some principles and methods within the model of empirical intradisciplinarity (3). Lastly I will complete this paper by formulating a hypothesis with regard to the relationship of complementarity between quantitative and qualitative research in practical theology (4).

1. Historical Claims

I would like to present three claims, which are implied in the history of practical theology. The first claim refers to the origin of practical theology as an academic discipline in Vienna. The second claim relates to the historical project of the Enlightenment, from which practical theology can be interpreted. The third claim has to do with the beginning of practical theology in the Netherlands thirty years ago.

A first claim

Practical theology as an academic discipline started in 1774. In that year, empress Maria Theresia of Austria, following the proposal of Stephan Rautenstrauch, ordered the so-called fifth year to be added to the four year theological curriculum in the university. She established a special chair for it, as in the faculties of medicine and law, where a fifth year was supposed to introduce the medical and the law student to the practical medical and juridical field.²

Why did she do that? Why did Stephan Rautenstrauch advise her in that direction? The reason was that the traditional theological curriculum was strongly neo-scholastically oriented. There was a wide gap with every day life, that had to be bridged in the fifth year. In this additional year the connection had to be brought about with today's world. "Today" was the key word; in German: "die Gegenwart"³

² J. Müller, *Die Pastoraltheologie innerhalb des theologischen Gesamtkonzepts von Stephan Rautenstrauch*, in: *Praktische Theologie heute*, München 1974, 42-51;

³ N. Mette, *Theorie der Praxis*, Düsseldorf 1978.

A second claim

There also was an other factor at work. That went deeper. Rautenstrauch was not aware of it. It emerged from a historical-theological 'looking-back' two centuries afterwards, from a kind of interpretative reconstruction in the seventies and eighties of this century. Some protestant German scholars in practical theology think — and they gave good reasons for it — that the phenomenon of the fifth year, in which the emphasis was on today's world, has to be localized within the framework of the Enlightenment⁴. Their claim is that Rautenstrauch introduced or had to introduce the fifth year because of the influence of the Enlightenment on the relation between church and society. Shortly, he established the fifth year because of the historical project of the Enlightenment⁵. The tied bond between throne and altar was becoming looser and looser, the church was losing its privileged position in the midst of society. It was just becoming a societal institution among other institutions. The people were defining their church membership more and more in terms of achievement and free choice instead of ascription by birth. There are some sociologists who suggest that this process of institutional differentiation between church and society and between church and state already had begun with the edict of Worms in 1122⁶ (Kaufmann 1989; 1992). This edict resulted in a kind of labile homeostasis between the emperor and the pope. Sometimes this homeostasis failed because of the domination of the pope by the emperor, what is called caesaropapism. Sometimes it failed because of the other way around, i.e. the domination of the emperor by the pope, what is referred to as being theocracy⁷. But, after centuries and centuries of power struggle, with the beginning of the historical project of the Enlightenment, the principle of separation of church and state really began to work effectively. The whole cultural atmosphere of religious criticism, deism, agnosticism, indifferentism, and even atheism and antitheism put the church in a totally new situa-

⁴ V.Drehse, *Neuzeitliche Konstitutionsbedingungen der Praktischen Theologie*, Bd. I-II. Gütersloh 1988; D. Rössler, *Grundriss der Praktischen Theologie*, Berlin/New York 1986

⁵ H.Peukert, *Wissenschaftstheorie, Handlungstheorie, Fundamentale Theologie*, Frankfurt 1978; H. Peukert, *Kommunikatives Handeln, Systeme der Machtsteigerung und die unvollendeten Projekte Aufklärung und Theologie*, in: E. Arends (Hrsg.), *Habermas und die Theologie*, Düsseldorf 1989, 39-64.

⁶ F.X.Kaufmann, *Kirche begreifen, Analysen und Thesen zur gesellschaftlichen Verfassung des Christentums*, Freiburg 1979; ders., *Religion und Modernität, Sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, Tübingen 1989.

⁷ M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, Grundriß der Verstehenden Soziologie*, 1. Halbband, Tübingen 1980

tion. The democratic constitutions of The Netherlands, America, France and the developing law systems eliminated the church from public law, and put it into private law. The church was treated as a private association among other private associations. Now, in Rautenstrauch's fifth additional year, practical theology was supposed to take into account this culturally and structurally new situation for the church. Systematic theology was not supposed to be able to do that, because of its rigid structure, its doctrinal thinking and its attitude of defense against the new world, i.e. the world of a-doctrinal investigation, so-called unbiased empiricism, free thought and unoppressive dialogue. From this perspective, practical theology is seen as a typical modern form of doing theology, facing the modern world, facing modernity.

A third claim

In 1964, almost 200 years later, the first chair in practical theology in the Netherlands was established in Nijmegen University. What may be seen as the characteristics of this event? Did the faculty think that systematic theology was not able to address itself to modernity? The answer is: no, not at all. In that time, the Nijmegen faculty was known worldwide, as it still is, because of its openness, tolerance, free thinking, and its endeavour to conduct its research as un-biased as possible, facing modernity as a challenge. Systematic theologians like Schillebeeckx and Schoonenberg determined theological thought at the faculty and they still do. But, interestingly, it was Schillebeeckx himself who made the official proposal for establishing a chair of practical theology (with some ecclesiastical people behind the scenes, like the former bishop of Breda, De Vet). "The dogmaticians and moral theologians", declared Schillebeeckx, "also take into account the present-day situation of the church, but they do so occasionally and certainly not scientifically, rather in a 'prescientific' and in this sense unreflexive, 'naive' manner. This prescientific awareness, however, can be scientifically reflected. The scientific-analytical description of the current state of the church as such cannot be the very task of dogmatics and moral theology, just as the study of the state of the church in the past is not the task of dogmatics but of a separate discipline, that of church history"⁸. According to Schillebeeckx the formal object of practical theology is to relate theological insights to empirical facts in a methodologically grounded and systematically structured manner.

⁸ E. Schillebeeckx, Oprichting van een pastoraaltheologische studierichting aan de Theologische Faculteit, Toegevoegd stuk aan: H. Cornelissen et al., Concept voor

The first chair-holder in practical theology, my very honoured predecessor Frans Haarsma, and the three chair-holders in psychology of religion, Willem Berger, in sociology of religion, Osmund Schreuder, and in religious education, Fons Knoers, who were appointed at the same time within the faculty of the social sciences, were supposed to collaborate very strongly with each other by setting up and developing a curriculum and a research program from scratch. Because of both the affluent economy and the large numbers of theology students in those days, they were able to surround themselves with a big staff of theologians, psychologists, sociologists and educationists⁹.

2. Multidisciplinarity and Intradisciplinarity

Looking back 30 years later, the question may be asked: What did the Nijmegen practical theologians do, in those days? They did two different things with regard to their own staff and to their students. Among their own staff, they elaborated on the model of multidisciplinarity. For their students, they developed a program along the lines of what I like to call intradisciplinarity.

Multidisciplinarity

As I said, among their own staff, the Nijmegen practical theologians implemented the model of empirical multidisciplinarity. They concretized this model with the help of the so-called two phase model, as this was described in 1964 by Karl Rahner and others in the five volume handbook of practical theology¹⁰.

In the first phase the theologian works together with the social scientist in order to get enough relevant, reliable and valid empirical information with regard to the topic concerned. In the second phase the theologian starts to reflect on those empirical research results from a theological point of view. For that reason, he analyses the material, that he got from his colleagues in the social sciences, from the pre-suppositions of that data set; he evaluates it from criteria, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the empirical material concerned; he synthesizes

de Oprichting van de pastoraaltheologische studierichting, Archief Theologische Faculteit, Katholieke Universiteit, Nijmegen 1963

⁹ J.A. van der Ven, *Toekomst voor de kerk? Studies voor Frans Haarsma*, Kampen 1985

¹⁰ F.X. Arnold, K. Rahner, V. Schurr, L.M. Weber (Hsrg.), *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie, Praktische Theologie der Kirche in ihrer Gegenwart*, I-V, Freiburg 1964.

his reflections in a theologically proper way¹¹. The theological perspectives from which the theologian reflects on the empirical information in this second phase, may vary strongly. In his inauguration lecture, Frans Haarsma, using the two phase model explicitly, started his theological reflections — among others — from the theological 'analysis fidei' and the 'hierarchy veritatum'¹². Rahner himself proposed to emphasize the 'theologoumena' of salvation history ('Heilsgeschichte'), salvation service ('Heilsangebot'), and salvation process ('Heilsprozess').

Intradisciplinarity

But, the 'founding fathers' of practical theology in Nijmegen did something different with regard to their students. In that time, I myself did a master's in dogmatic theology with Schillebeeckx and afterwards, in 1968, I became a half time PhD Student in practical theology and joined, half time, in the same period, the staff for teaching some courses in catechetics. In those years, the PhD-program, that was established for me, was aiming at developing a profile of a practical theologian according to what I later called the model of empirical intradisciplinarity, not multidisciplinarity. From the beginning, all dissertations in practical theology were characterized by that model of empirical intradisciplinarity.

What does intradisciplinarity mean? In the general epistemological sense, it refers to the borrowing of concepts, methods and techniques of one science by another and the integration of these elements into the other science¹³. Such intradisciplinary processes occur in all scientific fields: in the natural sciences, in the linguistic, historical and social sciences, in the philosophical and theological sciences. Intradisciplinarity encourages innovation in these sciences. By way of example, one need only look at the relationship between biology and chemistry (biochemistry), physiology and psychology (physiological psychology), linguistics and sociology (sociolinguistics), linguistics and psychology (psycholinguistics), history and psychology (psychohis-

¹¹ J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology: From Applied to Empirical Theology*, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 1 (1988) 1,7 - 28; J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology. An Empirical Approach*. Kampen 1993. 93-97.

¹² F. Haarsma, *De Leer van de kerk en het geloof van haar leden*, Bilthoven 1968; *Kirchliche Lehre und Skepsis der Gläubigen*, Freiburg 1970; F. Haarsma, *Morren tegen Mozes, Pastoraaltheologische besouwingen over het kerkelijk leven*, Kampen 1981.

¹³ W. Ruegg, *Der interdisziplinäre Charakter der Soziologie*, in: *Internationales Jahrbuch für interdisziplinäre Forschung II*, München 1975.

tory), the linguistic sciences and philosophy (philosophy of language), and so on.

The history of theology is an example par excellence of intradisciplinary borrowing, adaptation and integration. To name just a few arbitrarily chosen but striking examples: The moral theology of Thomas Aquinas is unthinkable without Aristotelian ethics; the Tübingen school of the first half of the 19th century could not have existed in the absence of philosophical idealism; Tillich's systematic theology is inconceivable without depth psychology and existential philosophy; Rahner's fundamental theology would be impossible without Hegel, and Metz's political theology incomprehensible without the Frankfurt school. Omnipresent is the critical question about the legitimacy of this kind of intradisciplinary innovation: Is theology putting its (traditional) identity at risk by such a venture? Will theology remain theology?

Not only are intradisciplinary developments in the field of paradigms, theories and concepts readily illustrated by looking at the history of theology, but the same applies also to developments in the area of methods and techniques. The introduction of literary criticism, a profane science, into exegesis was accepted only after great controversy. Many conflicts preceded the acceptance of *Formgeschichte*, *Redaktionsgeschichte* and *Traditionsgeschichte* in Biblical interpretation. In the meantime the barriers to structural analysis and semiotics have also been cleared away¹⁴, and the methodology of speech acts is gradually being introduced¹⁵.

What does empirical intradisciplinarity mean within practical theology? It means conducting practical-theological research with the help of empirical methodology, concepts, methods and means in order to build-up relevant and adequate practical-theological theory for achieving practical-theological aims. The empirical intradisciplinary model requires that practical theology itself becomes empirical, that is, that it expands the traditional-theological range of instruments, consisting of literary, historical and systematic methods and techniques, in the direction of an empirical methodology.

This does not mean that the use of literary, historical and systematic procedures are of no relevance or use for practical theology any more. Their value maintains, they have significance¹⁶. But, the focus is on

¹⁴ E.J. van Wolde, *A Semiotic Analysis of Genesis 2-3. A Semiotic Theory and Method of Analysis Applied to the Story of the Garden of Eden*, Assen 1989

¹⁵ F.-L. Hossfeld, *Geprägte Sprachformen im Leben der Glaubensgemeinde*, in: *Theorie der Sprachhandlungen und heutige Ekklesiologie*, Freiburg 1987, 75-97

¹⁶ See footnote 1.

broadening the perspective, enlarging the scope, enriching the methodological apparatus, expanding the instrumentarium into the direction of empirical methodology.

The only restrictive aspect, that I have to mention, is not a matter of principle, but of contingency, of circumstances of time and space. It refers more concretely to having enough personnel and time to your disposal for being able to implement all literary, all historical, all systematic methods and means besides all empirical methods and techniques. But that is nonsense. From my own experience, I know for sure that it is impossible to develop enough skills in empirical methodology to feel at home in that field and at the same time be a professional researcher in the field of literary, historical and systematic methods. It is really impossible. Therefore, each practical-theological department has to make a choice, not a principal one, but a pragmatic one, based upon the contingency of restricted resources. One can not do everything at the same time in a professional-scientific way. Such a choice does imply concentration, but not necessarily on-sidedness. On-sidedness, though, is not only a speculative danger, but a real one. Such a choice does imply focusing, but not necessarily narrow-mindedness. Narrow-mindedness, though, is not only a speculative risk, but a real one. Once one chooses for an empirical approach within practical theology, one has to specialize himself or herself in empirical methodology – both qualitative and quantitative-, but at the same time stay in touch with other approaches within theology in general and within practical theology more specifically. But, keeping contact with other approaches and other disciplines does not only apply to empirical researchers in practical theology, it does apply to any approach and any discipline in practical theology and in theology in general.

Intradisciplinarity and the three claims

One may ask the question: in which sense does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity fit into the three claims for practical theology which I mentioned earlier.

Does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity fit into Stephan Rautenstrauch's claim that practical theology has to develop itself in front of today's world, 'die Gegenwart'? My answer is conditional in nature. Yes, practical theology does so, if and only if it is really aiming at methodically and systematically investigating the hearts, the minds, the praxis of today's people in today's society in reference to today's christianity.

Does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity correspond to the claim of the Enlightenment's historical project, in the frame of reference of which practical theology emerged, as we saw from the reconstruction, that was made over the last two centuries? Again, my answer is conditional in character. Yes, practical theology does so, if and only if it does take seriously into account the attitudes of people, who distanced themselves from the church, from the christian faith or even from religion. Practical theology has to interpret the multidimensional modernization and the multidimensional secularization process as a stimulus, as a challenge, as a invitation to advance the enculteration process of the christian religion in the modern world¹⁷.

However, I have something to add to that. Because, the question at stake is not so much, whether and how far christianity today engages itself with the modernization process and how it handles the process of secularization. However important that may be, the quintessence lies in the question whether and how far christianity participates in the Enlightenment's historical project of society's transformation towards liberty, justice and solidarity. This participation implies a continuous criticism from Enlightenment against Enlightenment. That means that practical theology has to participate in the self-critical reflection on modernity. That is what postmodernity is all about: modernity in the mode of its self-criticism¹⁸. Practical theology can do so from its own sources, especially from its prophetic traditions in the first testament, and from Jesus, the eschatological prophet, in the second testament.

Does the model of empirical intradisciplinarity satisfy Schillebeeckx' claim with regard to truly scientific standards? Lastly, my answer is in the conditional mode, now even more so. Practical theology does correspond to truly scientific standards, if and only if it meets the research criteria that are applied by our colleagues, working with the same or parallel empirical methods in the other faculties in the university. The presupposition of modernity is at stake here: the relation between faith and human rationality, or at the level of academic research, the relation between theology and scientific rationality. The question is no longer, what rationality's role might be in the christian faith, as the traditional apologeticians thought, but rather the other way around, what role the christian faith might play within rationality.

¹⁷ D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York 1991

¹⁸ F.X. Kaufmann, *Das janusköpfige Publikum von Kirche und Theologie, Zur kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Physiognomie Europas, Referat auf dem Ersten Kongreß der Europäischen Gesellschaft für katholische Theologie, Stuttgart/Hohenheim 1992*

Methodological dilettantism in practical theology, how ever it may be legitimized by making an appeal to the specific nature of faith, puts the scientific status of practical theology at risk. The scientific prestige of practical theology within the theological faculty and, even worse, in the university in general, is not always high enough to be taken as seriously as it should be in the academic community. Practical theologians have to take this situation as a serious challenge. Because of this reason, none of the PhD-theses in practical theology leaves my Nijmegen department without a written consent of an outstanding colleague in one of the social sciences concerned. Because the very nature of the practical-theological discipline is at stake, and by that, the very nature of our discipline's task: to bridge truly scientifically the gap between the christian religion and today's world, 'die Gegenwart'.

3. Principles and Methods

Let me try to describe in global terms what the empirical intradisciplinarity in practical theology is all about. For that, I would like to refer to some hermeneutical principles and after that to the phases of the so-called empirical cycle.

3.1. *Hermeneutical Principles*

To begin with the hermeneutic principles, I do not see any conflict between a hermeneutic and an empirical approach in practical theology. For me, the hermeneutic approach comes first. It establishes the framework within which the empirical research has to be conducted. Without saying that, the empirical interdisciplinarity model would lead us to brute positivism, naked empiricism, stupid objectivism¹⁹. At a conference of american, german and dutch practical theologians, I was asked whether I was developing either an empirical-hermeneutical or a hermeneutical-empirical approach. My answer was without doubt: the last one, a hermeneutical-empirical approach. That means that the empirical approach has to take into account the main principles, which from my point of view are implied in any hermeneutic perspective.

The first principle says that the researcher meets his or her topic of study from his or her own prejudices. The term prejudice does not necessarily have a pejorative meaning. Gadamer distinguishes between

¹⁹ H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tuebingen 1960, 257

'prejuges legitimes et illegitimes'²⁰. The idea that prejudices are intrinsically to be evaluated in a negative way, stems from the Enlightenment. It is a prejudice of the Enlightenment itself²¹. However, it is important to become conscious of one's own prejudices, because only in that case the topic under study can communicate itself to the researcher in a proper way. The process of becoming aware of one's own prejudices does not take place before one meets one's research topic. It happens in and through that meeting. Exactly in the confrontation between one's own prejudices and the 'otherness' of the text, of the human actions or of the data under investigation, really hermeneutic understanding takes place.²²

The second principle refers to the fact that the empirical researcher participates in the life world of his or her fellow human beings whose praxis he or she is studying. This, though, does not exclude that the results of researcher's study also influence the life world of all humans, for which sake the term 'double hermeneutics'²³ is coined by the sociologist Giddens.²⁴

The third principle relates to the fact that the history of the texts or of the persons under study has carefully to be investigated. This has to be done from the perspective of the fact that this history influences today's life of the researcher and his or her fellow human beings. The reason is that this history functions as the tradition, in which its 'Wirkungsgeschichte', as Gadamer puts it, bridges the gap between past and present. From there it anticipates the future. In other words, the time perspective guides every truly hermeneutic investigation.

The fourth principle implies that one has to take into account the context of the life, in which the person or persons under study live. With that, all kinds of ecological, economic, political, social and cultural factors of that context have to be studied. Because otherwise, one

²⁰ H.-G. Gadamer, o.c., 255

²¹ H.-G. Gadamer o.c., 260

²² H.-G. Gadamer, o.c., 279

²³ Dilthey already spoke of 'double hermeneutics', but he understood it referring to the fact that the historian studies history, which he himself participates in: "that he who researches into history is the same as he who makes it" (Gesammelte Schriften 1964, VII, 278). This is remarkably so, because, in general, Dilthey had an objectivistic view on history (cf. J. Bleicher, *The Hermeneutic Imagination, Outline of a Positive Critique of Scientism and Sociology*, London 1982, 80ff).

²⁴ A. Giddens, *Hermeneutics and Social Theory*, in: G. Shapiro and A. Sica, *Hermeneutics*, London 1983, 215 - 230.

studies people's life, as if it were an island, in a vacuum. Bernstein is of the opinion that Gadamer did not sufficiently take into account this multi-dimensional context. Gadamer was not aware of the power struggles and the conflicts that condition and influence this context. He was not conscious of the conflicts of interpretations that arise from that²⁵.

The fifth principle is that the thoughts, feelings and praxis of the subjects under investigation, have to be explored and analyzed from an ideological-critical point of view. One has to take into account the possible influences of psychic and social repression, which the subjects may not be aware of. This repression may be read from the expressions the subjects create and the statements they make. For that, the term hermeneutics of suspicion is coined²⁶.

Any empirical research project, any empirical research activity has to start from the hermeneutical frame of reference of which these hermeneutic principles are the core.

3.2. *The empirical cycle*

I would like to present the empirical cycle as one of the methodologies that might be of use within practical theology. Some aspects of it trace back to the rich history of the so-called empirical theology at the Chicago School in the beginning of this century²⁷. The cycle consists of five phases and fifteen subphases. Here, I restrict myself to globally listing the five phases. In doing that, I will give some illustrations from my theodicy research project, of which I published the results in a number of articles and in the last chapter of my "Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach"²⁸. For reasons of clarity I will present the five phases in a linear way, although the cycle has to be interpreted as a spiral, in which the phases have to be gone through in an iterative way. The term 'spiral' means that the last phase leads, as it were

²⁵ R.J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, Philadelphia 1986, 156ff.; R.J. Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles, Essays in a Pragmatic Mode*, Philadelphia 1986, 68ff.

²⁶ Ricoeur P. (1987). *Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences*. Cambridge/Paris; P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action, Essays in Hermeneutics II*, Evanston 1991, 270ff.

²⁷ J. A. van der Ven, *L'avenir de la théologie empirique*, I. D'aujourd'hui à hier. In: *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 2, 231-240.

²⁸ J.A. van der Ven, *Toward an Empirical Theodicy*, in: *Teodicea Oggi? Archivio di Filosofia* 56 (1988) 1-3, 359 - 380; J.A. van der Ven, *Theodicy or Cosmodicy: A False*

spontaneously, into the first one. The term 'iterative' means the cycle has to be run through several times after each other. In describing the five phases I will use the present tense, because they apply, from my perspective, up until now. For the theodicy illustrations I will use the past tense, because the project has been completed; it belongs to the past.

Phase 1

The first phase is called "the development of the theological problem and goal". In this phase, the researcher participates as a human being in the field of the subjects, whose life he or she investigates. In this field, all kinds of problems emerge, which may have a religious dimension and may be of theological interest. At the moment, a certain problem attracts people's and researcher's attention in such a way that they decide to develop a research project on it, the first phase starts. It is the task of the researcher in dialogue with the subjects concerned to specify the problem in such a way that it becomes a scientific-theological question: being well formulated, distinguished into certain dimensions and aspects and implying a perspective on the way to deal with it. In connection with this developing problem, the goal of the research has to be clarified and eventually stated. In the research project on theodicy, one of the questions was: what is going on in people's hearts and minds with regard to the relation between suffering and religion; the goal was among others advancing and contributing to theodicy poimenics and church development in the perspective of theodicy²⁹.

Phase 2

The second phase is called theological induction. In this phase, the researcher dives into the water in order to see what kind of people and what kind of cognitions, affections, actions, processes, structures he or she may meet, which might be of interest to his or her research project. The researcher walks around, he or she experiences, he or she observes, he or she talks continuously with all kinds of people in order to get informed about the topic concerned. The researcher also undertakes some systematic interviewing, some systematic observation, some systematic experimenting, some systematic reading of letters, diaries, protocols, minutes, eyewitnesses' reports, and newspa-

Dilemma? *Journal of Empirical Theology* 2 (1989) 2, 5 - 27; J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, Kampen 1993, 157-224.

²⁹ J. A. van der Ven, *Explorations on Church Development from a Theodicy Program*. In: *Pastoral Sciences* 9 (1990) 75-108.

pers. The researcher also goes to key persons, following the snowball procedure, in order to ask them specific questions and to tape the answers. In connection with that the researcher reflects on the experiences and impressions that he or she is gaining, the information that he or she is getting, the processes that he or she is going through. The researcher constantly compares the impressions, the experiences, the information with each other. He or she also analyses them from the scientific literature that he or she consults, reads, summarizes. There is a continuous to and from between perception and reflection. The researcher, as it were, lives with his or her research topic, wakes up with it, spends the day with it, goes to the bed with it, and sleeps with it. From this process of induction, the researcher is able to formulate his or her practical-theological question into a real research question. He or she determines the relevance of it, delineates the scope of it, specifies the hard core of it, lists the researchable dimensions and aspects of it. In the theodicy project, my colleagues, my students and I, did all kinds of individual and group conversations and interviews, we undertook all kinds of individual and group observations, we conducted all kinds of pilot quasi-experiments. We reached and met all kinds of people: youngsters in schools, students in the university, participants in adult education, lay people in parishes, patients in hospitals, lay ministers, professional pastoral workers, ordained and not-ordained. We asked them to tell something about their relationship with suffering and religion, how ever it might be, positive, negative or indifferent. We asked them to express their feelings or we experienced their emotions, like sorrow, grief, anger, frustration, resignation, acceptance, happiness, thankfulness, even joy. We came across a rich variety of convictions, attitudes, and emotions among a rich variety of people.

Phase 3

After that, the third phase takes place. It is called theological deduction. This implies hard bureau desk work. Now systematic thinking starts, hard studying begins, library work and theoretical construction activities come into being. The experiences and reflections of the previous phase become the object of conceptualization now. This means, the terms, which are implied in the research question and which are supposed to play a core role in this phase, are listed. Then, these terms are defined with the help of the theological-scientific literature as sharp as possible, however without loosing its complexity, but exactly including it. Further, the defined concepts are connected with each other in order to build-up a theological theory. A theory is to be seen as consisting of concepts and the relations between concepts. It is

network of concepts. After that, a so-called conceptual model is developed. In such a model, the theoretical relations between the concepts concerned are translated in terms of hypotheses. From my perspective, those hypotheses are not becoming the object of verification, but of falsification. If the hypotheses emerge undamaged from the testing process, they do not become theses, but maintain the status of hypotheses, corroborated hypotheses though. Lastly, the difficult process of operationalization takes place. Operationalization does not mean any arbitrary concretization of the concepts, but the translation of them in terms of operations — hence the term 'operationalization' —. Operationalization implies the transformation of the concepts concerned in terms of observable, measurable and testable behaviour. In the theodicy project, we formulated a theodicy theory, consisting of a number of theodicy concepts, which were connected with specific demographic characteristics of people and their attitudes. We derived ten hypotheses from that. We operationalized the theodicy concepts into twenty eight items, forming the theodicy measuring instrument.

Phase 4

Then, the fourth phase takes place, which is called empirical-theological testing. Now, the researcher dives for the second time into the water, although it is different water from the first, because otherwise he could not test his or her hypotheses. So, the researcher gets in contact with the people concerned, after having drawn an appropriate sample from them. The researcher interviews them, observes them after informed consent, asks them to fill in the questionnaires concerned and so on. By that, the researcher collects step by step the data required. After that, the researcher is going to inspect the data. The reliability of the data is a matter of principle, because eventually the rejection or corroboration of the hypotheses concerned rely on that. After data inspection and occasionally data cleaning, the researcher starts the data analysis. He or she conducts analyses with the help of descriptive statistics, like frequency tables and crosstables. After that, the researcher decides whether, and if so, which analyses from the inferential statistics are to be used, like factor analysis, reliability analysis, association analysis, variance analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, path analysis and so on. It is very important not to give the computer the statistical initiative, but to guide the statistical analyses from the theological theory concerned. In the theodicy project, I used all analyses mentioned, because they were required to test the hypotheses concerned, and by that to answer the research question with an eye on the research goal. For that I used the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Phase 5

Then, the last phase completes the cycle. It is called theological evaluation. First, the testing results are summarized and interpreted in terms of the hypotheses. If one thinks that the hypotheses are always confirmed, because the researcher is supposed to get from the computer what he or she puts into it, one makes a crucial mistake. The question is exactly whether the theological theory developed fits into the empirical data. Does theological theory fit into the empirical reality? That is the question! In the theodicy project, I found that about 50% of the hypotheses, grounded in solid theodicy theory, as I professionally and scientifically thought, were falsified³⁰.

For example, from political-theological insights, I formulated the hypothesis that the concept of solidarity theodicy would strongly correlate with family-critical and economy-critical attitudes. It did not appear to be so. That hypothesis was falsified. Then starts the process of reflection on the results concerned and on the methods and means applied. That leads the researcher to new guesses, estimations, distinctions, interpretations, ideas, inventions, and imaginative thinking. Negative results do not damage the relevance of the research project concerned. They may have positive scientific meaning in terms of future research. For that reason, an empirical-theological project always ends with proposals for future research. With that the empirical cycle transforms itself into an empirical spiral.

4. A Hypothesis: The Complementarity of Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Before ending, I wish to make a remark in order not to be misunderstood. The five phases of the empirical cycle mentioned may be said to be representative for the quantitative survey design in practical theology.

For me, choosing the quantitative survey design is not a matter of principle. I only used it in this paper as an example. In the Nijmegen department of practical theology, we are using not only the survey design³¹, but also the experimentation design³² and the content analysis design³³.

³⁰ J.A. van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*. Kok 1993. 210-215.

³¹ Interesting examples of using the survey design for topics, that are different from the theodicy theme, are: H.-G. Ziebertz, *Moralerziehung im Wertpluralismus*, Kampen/Weinheim, 1990. R. Jeurissen, *Peace and Religion*, Kampen/Weinheim 1993.

As far as the quantitative approach is concerned, in the Nijmegen department of practical theology, we are focusing on the relation of complementarity between the quantitative and qualitative approach. Our hypothesis is that they are not each other's opposites, but that they complement each other. I like to emphasize this being a hypothesis. The reason is that complementarity is only one alternative next to other alternatives. Methodological approaches can show genuine complementarity, but they can also be totally unrelated, related but only supplementarily, or related but flatly contradictory³⁴. From advancing theoretical reflection and empirical research this hypothesis is to be corroborated or falsified. A main point is to clarify the concept of complementarity further. Two basic forms can be distinguished: parallel and circular complementarity. The difference of the former with the latter is that it implies different approaches repeatedly coming after each other in a kind of spiral process³⁵. Sometimes, it is called ladder complementarity³⁶.

In concluding this paper I would like to present an example of this complementarity between the quantitative and the qualitative approach. It is about the analysis of a pastoral transcript, drawn from a forty five minutes pastoral counselling, which was held by a hospital chaplain with a cancer patient in a teaching hospital. First, I conducted a quantitative content analysis of this transcript. I coded each of the more than 800 lines from three category systems, which refer to the thematic topics of the counselling, the emotions in the counselling process and the interaction styles between the pastor and the patient. From the frequencies of the codes concerned, I conducted some statistical association analyses. One of the most striking results was that the patient found himself in a helpless situation, that raised all kinds of severely ambivalent feelings in him, which were not really met by the

³² Interesting examples are: M. van Knippenberg, Communicative Self-Investigation in Pastoral Group Work, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 1 (1988) 2, 64 - 88; C. Hermans, Understanding Parables and Similes qua Metaphors, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 1 (1988) 2, 21 - 51; J. Siemerink, Prayer and Our Image of God, in: *Journal of Empirical Theology* 2 (1989) 1, 27 - 44; C. Hermans, *Wie werdet ihr die Gleichnisse verstehen?* Kampen/Weinheim 1990.

³³ See: J.A. van der Ven, *Die quantitative Inhaltsanalyse*, in: J.A. van der Ven, H.-G. Ziebertz, *Paradigmen der Praktischen Theologie*, Kampen/Weinheim 1993.

³⁴ D.M. MacKay, 'Complementarity' in Scientific and Theological Thinking, in: *Zygon* 9 (1974) 3, 225 - 244.

³⁵ K.H. Reich, *The Relation between Science and Theology: The Case for Complementarity Revisited*, in: *Zygon* 25 (1990) 4, 369 - 390; cf. K.J. Sharpe, *Relating Science and Theology with Complementarity: A Caution*, in: *Zygon* 26 (1991) 2, 309 - 315.

pastor. The patient was the more in despair, because, from my analysis, he appeared to have no significant others at all. After that I analyzed the same transcript from a qualitative approach. In order to conduct this analysis properly, I listed the computer software programs, that are available for qualitative analysis³⁷. I chose a program that was developed on the basis of the phenomenological and symbolic interactional principles of Glaser and Strauss' methodology³⁸. It was created by a group of Nijmegen sociologists. It is called in dutch: Kwalitan (Qualitative Analysis)³⁹. The results of this analysis went deeper than that of the quantitative analysis. The emotional ambivalences that emerged from the statistical study, were to be understood as signals of the tragic drama in which the patient found himself: the drama of life and death. The lack of significant others led him into a severe degree of rationalization, that appeared to function as a defense mechanism in order to unconsciously prevent the patient from becoming fully aware of the terminal situation he was in⁴⁰.

Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have advantages and disadvantages. The first ones allow for developing a 'hard core of knowledge', intersubjective testing of the results' reliability and validity, replication and generalization. The second ones give the opportunity to take the subjects' uniqueness into account, the dynamics and the drama of their interactions and communications, the depth of their emotional engagement, the specificity of the images, symbols and rituals which are implied in that⁴¹. The quantitative and qualitative content analyses which I conducted with regard to one and the same pastoral transcript appeared to complement the weak sides of the one from the strong sides of the other and vice versa. Evidently, I am convinced of the fact that the corroboration of the complementarity hypo-

³⁶ S. Strasser, *Understanding and Explanation*, Pittsburgh 1985, 31

³⁷ R. Tesch, *Qualitative Research, Analysis Types and Software Tools*, New York 1992

³⁸ B. Glaser, A. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, New York 1967; B. Glaser, A. Strauss, *Awareness of Dying*, New York 1980; A. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge 1991.

³⁹ F. Wester, *De gefundeerde theorie-benadering*, dissertatie Universiteit Nijmegen 1984; F. Wester, *Strategieën voor kwalitatief onderzoek*, Muiderberg 1987; V. Peters, F. Wester, R. Richardson, *Kwalitatieve analyse in de praktijk en handleiding bij Kwalitan, versie 2*, Universiteit Nijmegen 1989.

⁴⁰ J.A. van der Ven, *Die qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*, in: J.A. van der Ven, H.-G. Ziebertz, o.c. .

⁴¹ J.-G. Nadeau, *Pour l'observation praxeologique d'une pratique pastorale en milieu marginal*, in: *La praxeologie pastorale, Orientations et parcours*, Cahiers d'Etudes Pastorales, Montreal 1987

thesis can not be based on only one example. But, it gives some indication, or at least some hope of probably not totally going the wrong track.

Ökumenische Theologie und die ökumenische Frage. Sieben Thesen

1. Die ökumenische Bewegung hat in den letzten achtzig Jahren Erfolge aufzuweisen

Spätestens im Jahre 1054 ging der Kirche Jesu Christi eine ihrer "notae ecclesiae", eines ihrer Wesensmerkmale, verloren: die Einheit. Durch das "morgensländische Schisma" trennte sich die lateinisch-abendländische Kirche von den vier ostkirchlichen Patriarchaten Konstantinopel, Alexandrien, Antiochien und Jerusalem. 1521 erfolgt die zweite schwerwiegende Spaltung durch die Bannbulle Roms gegen Martin Luther. Auch die weitere Geschichte der Christenheit wurde bis in unser Jahrhundert hinein primär durch Spaltungen dann durch Wiederannäherung geprägt. Die Zahl der im ökumenischen Rat der Kirchen verbundenen selbständigen Kirchen umfaßte 1961 317 Mitgliedskirchen, wobei bekanntlich die Römisch-katholische Kirche nicht Mitglied ist.

Nachdem die letzten Jahrzehnte des 19. und das erste des 20. Jahrhunderts von einem weltweiten innerkonfessionellen Zusammenrücken geprägt war — Anglikaner, Presbyteraner, Methodisten, Altkatholiken, Baptisten u.a. gründeten ihre Weltbünde —, wurde mit der Weltmissionskonferenz in Edinburgh von 1910 die interkonfessionelle Ökumene zu einem wichtigen Thema. 1919 regte der protestantische Erzbischof Nathan Söderblom von Uppsala die Einberufung eines ökumenischen Konzils an im Sinne einer beschlußfähigen Versammlung aller christlichen Kirchen mit dem Ziel der Einheit; ein Vorschlag, der seitdem regelmäßig aufgenommen worden ist, aber bis heute auf seine Verwirklichung wartet. Söderblom war es auch, der als erster den Begriff "Ökumene" als das "Werk der Versöhnung und Einigung bisher getrennter Kirchen" verwendete.

Hier kann nun nicht detailliert die Geschichte der ökumenischen Bewegung nachgezeichnet werden. Hingewiesen sei aber noch auf zwei zentrale Ereignisse: die Gründung des "internationalen Missionarates" 1921 und die "Erste Vollversammlung des ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen" 1948 in Amsterdam.

Die innerkonfessionelle und die interkonfessionelle Ökumene ist aber auch nicht nur eine Angelegenheit der Kirchenleitungen und der kirchlichen Amtsträgerinnen und Amtsträger geblieben. Gegenwärtige Vorurteile und Ressentiments wurden bei den Kirchenmitgliedern abge-

Norbert Greinacher

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baut, ja es entstand ein ökumenischer Bewußtseinsprozeß von der Basis der Kirchen her. Das Verlangen nach einer Versöhnung und Wiedervereinigung der Kirchen ist gewachsen. Die konfessionellen Unterschiede werden weithin nicht mehr wahrgenommen. Das geht so weit, daß bei mehreren empirischen Untersuchungen über den Kirchenaustritt aus der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland als wichtigster Austrittsgrund die Haltung des jetzigen Papstes genannt wurde!

Auch die Katholische Kirche konnte sich diesem Prozeß nicht verschließen. 1960 wurde von Papst Johannes XXIII. das "Sekretariat zur Förderung der Einheit der Christen" ins Leben gerufen. 1965 kam es zur Einrichtung einer gemeinsamen Arbeitsgruppe des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen und der Römisch-katholischen Kirche. 1968 kam die Mitgliedschaft der Römisch-katholischen Kirche in der für den institutionalisierten Einigungsprozeß entscheidenden Kommission des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung dazu.

Um den Wandel zu illustrieren: Noch im Jahre 1910 hatte Papst Pius X. in einer Enzyklika Martin Luther zu den "hochmütigen und rebellischen Menschen" und zu den "Feinden des Kreuzes Christi" gerechnet, die "die Leugnung der Hauptsätze des Glaubens" anstreben.¹

Aber alle diese unbestreitbaren Erfolge können nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, daß die jetzt gut achtzig Jahre alte Ökumenische Bewegung in eine Sackgasse geraten ist.

2. Bisher wurde die Ökumenische Bewegung im Rahmen der Theologie vor allem von der systematischen bzw. ökumenischen Theologie reflektiert.

Die vergangenen achtzig Jahre der Ökumenischen Bewegung wurden theologisch begleitet vor allem von der systematischen bzw. der ökumenischen Theologie. Dabei zeigt sich immer mehr, daß die Streitlinien heute nicht mehr *zwischen* den konfessionellen Theologien — hier Katholische Theologie, hier Protestantische Theologie — verlaufen, sondern quer durch alle konfessionellen Theologien.

Ja, man darf noch einen Schritt weitergehen. Ich bin der Überzeugung, daß die klassischen, traditionellen kontroverstheologischen Probleme zwischen den Konfessionen obsolet geworden sind, zum

¹ Vgl. Kurt Koch, Gelähmte Ökumene. Was jetzt noch zu tun ist, Freiburg/Breisgau 1991, 109.

Beispiel das Problem der Rechtfertigung, der Sakramente, der kirchlichen Ämter, ja auch des Petrusdienstes.

Ich sage nicht, daß all diese Probleme gelöst worden sind. Was ich meine, ist dies: Die traditionellen kontroverstheologischen Probleme sind kein kirchentrennendes Hindernis mehr. Wer würde heute im Ernst noch wegen des "filioque" eine neue Kirchentrennung verantworten wollen? Wer würde im Ernst in Frage stellen, daß ein institutionell verfaßtes Christentum eine irgendwie geartete universale Kirchenleitung benötigt?

Im Jahre 1981 begann die Arbeit des ökumenischen Arbeitskreises evangelischer und katholischer Theologen am Projekt "Lehrverurteilungen — kirchentrennend?", das die in den reformatorischen Bekenntnisschriften und in den Beschlüssen des Trienter Konzils im 16. Jahrhundert ausgesprochenen gegenseitigen Verurteilungs- und Verwerfungsaussagen einer eingehenden Prüfung unterzog. Das vier Jahre später fertiggestellte Abschlußdokument des Arbeitskreises kommt zu dem Schluß: "Bei einer Reihe von Verwerfungsaussagen des 16. Jahrhunderts müssen wir heute sagen, daß sie auf Mißverständnissen in der Gegenposition beruhten. Andere zielten auf kirchlich nicht verbindliche Extrempositionen. Wieder andere treffen den heutigen Partner nicht mehr. Bei wieder anderen haben neue Sacheinsichten zu einem hohen Maß an Verständigung geführt. Bei einigen Verwerfungsaussagen allerdings läßt sich auch heute noch kein ausreichender Konsens feststellen. Doch ist zu fragen, ob sie allein die Aufrechterhaltung der Kirchentrennung angesichts des veränderten Verhältnisses der Kirchen und ihrer Glieder zueinander rechtfertigen können."² Und die "Gemeinsame Ökumenische Kommission" unter dem Vorsitz von Bischof Lohse und Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger, die die Studie in Auftrag gegeben hatte, kommt in ihrem Schlußbericht vom 26.10.1985 zu folgendem Schluß: "(Die Voraussetzung ist) dafür geschaffen, schwere Hindernisse, die einer engeren Gemeinschaft zwischen den getrennten Kirchen im Wege stehen, auszuräumen und gemeinsame Schritte zu tun, die zu einer weiteren Stärkung und Festigung der ökumenischen Gemeinschaft führen können. Die Gemeinsame Ökumenische Kommission bittet daher die Leitungen der betroffenen Kirchen, verbindlich auszusprechen, daß die Verwerfungen des 16. Jahrhunderts den heutigen Partner nicht mehr treffen."³

² Karl Lehmann/Wolfhart Pannenberg (Hg.), Lehrverurteilungen - kirchentrennend? Teil I: Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute (Dialog der Kirchen IV), Freiburg/Breisgau 1986, 32.

³ Ebd. 195.

3. Um der Glaubwürdigkeit des Christentums von heute und morgen willen ist eine institutionelle Wiedervereinigung jetzt notwendig.

Alfred Delp, ein Jesuit, der engagiert war im Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus und am 2. Februar 1945 hingerichtet wurde, hat auf einem "Kassiber" folgendes geschrieben: "Wenn die Kirchen der Menschheit noch einmal das Bild einer zankenden Christenheit zumuten, sind sie abgeschrieben. Wir sollen uns damit abfinden, die Spaltung als geschichtliches Schicksal zu tragen und zugleich als Kreuz. Von den heute Lebenden würde sie keiner noch einmal vollziehen. Und zugleich soll sie unsere dauernde Schmach und Schande sein, da wir nicht imstande waren, das Erbe Christi, seine Liebe, unzerrissen zu hüten."

Was Alfred Delp kurz vor seinem Tode geschrieben hat, bedeutet für mich so etwas wie ein Vermächtnis. Es ist heute eher noch aktueller und drängender geworden. Wir haben nicht mehr viel Zeit! Wenn uns diese institutionelle Wiedervereinigung nicht gelingt, ist das Christentum vom sozialen Kältetod bedroht.

4. Die institutionelle Wiedervereinigung ist deshalb so schwierig, weil sie mit Angst besetzt und mit Machtverlust verbunden ist.

Kein Zweifel: Das Aufgeben der überkommenen, aber liebgewonnenen konfessionellen Identität ist mit Angst verbunden: Angst vor unwiederruflicher Veränderung, Angst vor dem Neuen. Diese Angst ist auf der einen Seite verständlich. Auf der anderen Seite sollte sie aber gerade bei Christinnen und Christen kein entscheidendes Motiv sein. Denn die Christen dürfen doch darauf vertrauen, daß es Gottes Wille ist, daß die Einheit der Christen wiederhergestellt wird und daß der Heilige Geist den Amtsträgerinnen und Amtsträgern und den Kirchenmitgliedern Kraft und Mut gibt, diesen Neuanfang zu beginnen.

Sicher aber ist, daß eine solche Wiedervereinigung auch den Verlust von Macht bedeutet. Was wäre der Papst, wenn er seine Autorität mit anderen Autoritäten teilen müßte? Was wäre ein katholischer Bischof, wenn er auf einmal in derselben christlichen Kirche seine Macht mit anderen Bischöfen teilen müßte? Aber vielleicht könnte diese Einsicht im Hinblick auf den notwendigen Verzicht von Macht in der Kirche hilfreich sein: Die kirchlichen Amtsträger und Amtsträgerinnen werden sowieso immer mehr an Macht verlieren, weil immer mehr Menschen den Kirchen den Rücken zuwenden. Ein post-konfessionelles Be-

wußtsein (Konrad Raiser) setzt sich durch. Ein konfessionelles Verständnis von Christentum und Kirche hat nur noch in kleinen Kreisen überlebt. Für die durchschnittliche Christin oder den durchschnittlichen Christen in der säkularen Gesellschaft spielt die Konfession kaum eine Rolle mehr.

Die entscheidende Frage lautet nicht mehr, wie die Zukunft der konfessionellen Kirchen im nächsten Jahrtausend sein wird. Es geht um die Frage, ob das Christentum als Ganzes im nächsten Jahrtausend noch bestehen wird.

5. Die Realutopie einer wiedervereinigten Kirchen von morgen darf nicht eine uniforme, sondern kann nur eine konziliare Kirche sein.

Es kann sich nicht darum handeln, die wiedervereinigten Kirchen zu einer uniformen Größe zurückzuführen, die es ja auch in der Geschichte nie gegeben hat. Es gab schon immer eine Pluralität der Kirchenstrukturen, der Liturgien, der kirchenrechtlichen Ordnungen, der verschiedenen Spiritualitäten, der verschiedenen Theologien. Bereits im Neuen Testament ist dies bekanntlich bezeugt.

Die Realutopie der wiedervereinigten Kirche von morgen kann nur eine konziliare Kirche sein, wie sie Ernst Lange schon vor Jahren gefordert hat, das heißt eine Kirche, die stolz ist auf ihre verschiedenen geschichtlichen Traditionen, auf ihre geschichtlich gewordenen Strukturen und Mentalitäten, die sich aber gegenseitig als christliche Kirchen anerkennen und eine institutionelle gemeinsame universale Kirchenleitung haben.

Mit anderen Worten: Kircheneinheit darf nicht zur Verarmung, sondern soll zur Bereicherung religiöser Ausdrucksformen und theologischer Traditionen führen. Das heißt strukturell: Den Teilkirchen muß so viel Unabhängigkeit und Eigenkompetenz wie möglich zugestanden werden. Die einzelnen Gemeinden können auch in ihrer bisherigen Form und Abgrenzung weiter bestehen. Eine sinnvolle Neustrukturierung wird sich aufgrund der Kircheneinheit und der gesellschaftlichen Zwänge früher oder später von selbst ergeben.

Eine gemeinsam autorisierte und autorisierende Kirchenleitung ist aber konstitutiv. Dabei können einer Einzelperson höchstens konstitutionelle Rechte und Aufgaben zukommen. Sie könnte Repräsentant, Integrationsfigur, Leitbild sein. Die eigentliche Leitung muß einem kollegialen Gremium oder mehreren Gremien zukommen, dem eine einzelne Person vorstehen kann, die aber an Mehrheitsbeschlüsse

gebunden ist. Alle Leitungsgremien müssen demokratisch legitimiert sein. Es gibt kein Leitungsgremium auf Lebenszeit. Die Vereinigung von quantitativ sehr ungleichen Partnern wirft im Rahmen des demokratischen Prinzips das Problem der Parität auf. In einer Übergangsphase muß daher den einzelnen Teilkirchen in den gemeinsamen Leitungsgremien ein Vetorecht eingeräumt werden. Der definitive Schritt zur Wiedervereinigung der verschiedenen Kirchen muß von der Basis der einzelnen Teilkirchen demokratisch legitimiert werden.

6. Das Haupthindernis für eine solche Wiedervereinigung ist die Römische Kurie.

Zwar betonte Papst Johannes Paul II. in einer Grußbotschaft an die Fünfte Weltkonferenz für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung, die im Sommer 1993 in Santiago de Compostela stattfand, den festen Willen der Römisch-katholischen Kirche, sich auch künftig in der Ökumene zu engagieren. In diesem Zusammenhang hat Kardinal Edward Cassidy, der Vorsitzende des Päpstlichen Sekretariats für die christliche Einheit, erklärt, daß das Engagement der Römisch-katholischen Kirche zur Wiederherstellung der sichtbaren Einheit der Kirche unwiderprüflich sei⁴. Auf der anderen Seite aber sind auch die letzten offiziellen Äußerungen der Römisch-katholischen Kirche noch bestimmt vom Geist der "Rückkehr-Ökumene". So heißt es etwa in dem neuen "Direktorium zur Ausführung der Prinzipien und Normen über den Ökumenismus" von 1993, daß es klar sein müsse: "Die Katholiken halten an der Überzeugung fest, daß die eine Kirche Christi in der Katholischen Kirche subsistiert, 'die vom Nachfolger P... und von den Bischöfen in Gemeinschaft mit ihm geleitet wird' (Lumen gentium 8). Sie bekennen, daß sich die Fülle der geoffenbarten Wahrheit, der Sakramente und des Amtes, die Christus für den Aufbau seiner Kirche und zur Ausübung ihrer Sendung gegeben hat, in der katholischen Gemeinschaft der Kirche findet"⁵. Identische Aussagen – unter Berufung auf das Dekret des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils über den Ökumenismus (Nr.3) finden sich auch in dem "Weltkatechismus"⁶.

Eine solche falsche theologische Prämisse steht natürlich jeder institutionellen Wiedervereinigung diametral entgegen.

⁴ Vgl. Frankfurter Rundschau vom 11.8.1993.

⁵ Verlautbarungen des Apostolischen Stuhles 110, hg. vom Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Bonn 1993, 14.

⁶ Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche, München 1993, Nr. 816.

7. Heute ist es vor allem eine Aufgabe der Praktischen Theologie, die Wiedervereinigung der christlichen Kirchen zu begleiten.

Wenn es, wie ich überzeugt bin, Aufgabe der Praktischen Theologie ist, eine kritische Theorie der kirchlichen Praxis zu entfalten, dann muß die Wiedervereinigung der christlichen Kirchen ein Hauptgegenstand der Reflexion der Praktischen Theologie sein.

Mit anderen Worten: Der Schwerpunkt der theologischen Arbeit im Hinblick auf die Ökumene sollte von der systematischen und ökumenischen Theologie auf die Praktische Theologie verlegt werden. Denn es kann jetzt schwerpunktmäßig nicht mehr darum gehen, die theologischen Annäherungen bis ins unwesentliche Detail fortzuführen, ohne daraus die praktischen Konsequenzen zu ziehen.

Wenn es richtig ist, daß die Wiedervereinigung zu einer Überlebensfrage des Christentums überhaupt geworden ist, dann muß es sich die Praktische Theologie zur zentralen Aufgabe machen, darüber zu reflektieren, wie diese Wiedervereinigung in absehbarer Zukunft verwirklicht werden kann, welche einzelnen Schritte dazu notwendig sind, welche Hindernisse auf welche Weise ausgeräumt werden müssen.

Die Praktische Theologie würde ein "Zeichen der Zeit" übersehen, wenn sie nicht in diesem Sinne aktiv werden würde.

Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore

Feminist Practical Theology and the Future of the Church

Most women who are feminist or womanist, or otherwise self-naming, live with ambiguous emotions toward their religious communities. Many Christian women have left the church or Christianity altogether. Those who remain within the church often see themselves as people on the margins or as reformers in some sense of that word, although the forms of reform are understood quite differently in diverse cultural contexts.¹ Wherever they stand, however, women frequently question whether they are compromising too much or whether their pain is more than they can bear. And they ask what kinds of reform are needed for the good of women and for the good of the whole human family and for the good of the earth.

This dilemma makes the future of the church a problem at best, for many women carry such hurt that they hope the church will not have a future, while others pray and work toward a thoroughgoing transformation. Many of the church's problems that call out for transformation are problems grounded in the way that goodness is understood or misunderstood — the way that human existence is described and future action is envisioned. This address is a journey through some of the concrete and theoretical problems; my hope is that the future of the church will be illumined as we engage in the praxis of practical theology.

The Church Faces into the World

In the beginning of this moment in time, our world is not without form and void, but it may well be without direction and hope. Consider, for example, some of the issues facing the church in the decade of the 1990s:

¹ For Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Yolanda Tarango, reform begins by listening to the voices and theological affirmations of Hispanic women, and for Chung Hyun Kyung, reform begins when Asian women analyze their stories and build meaning structures from their life experiences. See: Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); and Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991).

In these very moments, the former Yugoslavia is torn apart and people are being captured, raped, murdered, beaten and imprisoned, usually one religious group over another. In this case, the Muslims are particularly victimized.

Worldwide, war is waging in northern Ireland, fueled by the religious differences and power struggles between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and war is waging in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians, fueled also by religious differences and power struggles.

In my region, we are living in the aftermath of the April 1992 uprising in Los Angeles, followed by uprisings in Atlanta, Toronto and elsewhere. At the base of these uprisings were racial discrimination, physical and spiritual poverty, and interracial resentment and anger. In the days following the burning and looting and protests in Los Angeles, African American leaders denounced racial and class discrimination in the United States — discrimination that has become systematic genocide, killing African American life and quality of life. One Korean-American pastor at the California-Pacific Annual Conference (United Methodist) said that the Korean-Americans in Los Angeles were like Uriah in II Samuel 11:14-27; Uriah was sent to the front lines by David, but in the case of Korean Americans, white racism against Blacks was the power that sent them to the front lines.² And Latino leaders have pointed out that at least one third of the businesses and homes that were burned in Los Angeles were theirs, yet no one has named that reality in the media, political arena, or church; they have been an invisible people.

Another major issue that faces the churches in the United States and Canada is that of homosexuality. In the case of the United Methodist Church, decisions were made in the 1992 General Conference to maintain the language of the Book of Discipline regarding homosexuality, except for one addition to the "Social Principles" related to the civil rights of gay and lesbian persons.³ Hence United Methodists will continue to refuse ordination and consecration to homosexual persons, and the study of homosexuality that will be conducted in the church will be guided by resources that are consistent with the existing

² Chang Soon Lee, Address to California-Pacific Annual Conference, June 12, 1992.

³ United Methodist Church, "Social Principles," *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 1992* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), par. 71G, p. 92. The paragraph begins: "Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to support those rights and liberties for homosexual persons."

"Social Principles" that declare homosexual practice "incompatible with Christian teaching."⁴

Consider now how much of ecclesiology has been grounded in the historical marks of the church — one, holy, catholic, and apostolic — or in the New Testament concepts of the church — ekklesia, diakonia, liturgia, kerygma, and basileia. Consider further how much of ecclesiology is constructed from foundations in Christian doctrines or philosophical systems; far less ecclesiology has been formed from anthropology, much less from a feminist anthropology. What would happen if the realities facing the church were taken as primary data in reshaping anthropology? Toward what kind of church would we hope and move? We will begin this exploration with a simple case study because some of these realities are revealed in very ordinary experiences of women in the church.

A Woman faces into the Church

This summer, for the first time in my life, I was invited to preach in a church that was important to my own life journey — the small town church of my father's youth, and the church that I had visited about once a year with my cousins. My husband and I had talked with my Texas family about a visit, and my cousin asked if the two of us would be willing to preach. We said fine, and he made contact with the pastor to see what he thought. We checked and double-checked with my cousin about whether he wanted one or both of us to preach, and he repeatedly responded "both." After talking with the pastor and getting an enthusiastic response, my cousin asked for curriculum vitae, which I supplied, along with biblical texts and sermon title.

When we arrived in my father's hometown to visit the family, we were greeted warmly, and we did much visiting in a compressed time. Over lunch on Saturday, my cousin said:

I want to get some awkward items out of the way.

I told our pastor that I had invited both of you to preach, and he was enthusiastic, but last week, he announced with great fanfare that Allen Moore would be with us next Sunday to preach. He shared a lot about you, Allen, but he never mentioned Mary Elizabeth. Tomorrow, we will have a church full of Mullino family coming to hear Mary Elizabeth and a

⁴ *Ibid.*, par. 71F, p. 92. The fuller text reads: "Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

church full of our regular congregation coming to hear Allen. This probably happens to you a lot, Mary Elizabeth.

I nodded because, indeed, it does happen to me often. My cousin, not knowing quite how to handle the situation, said to us:

Tonight we are having the pastor and his wife over for dinner, and I would surely appreciate it if you would find a way to communicate what you will be doing.

I first asked my cousin if the whole situation would be easier if Allen preached, but he hastily said no; Allen and I agreed that we would find a way to clarify the confusion.

That night when we explained to the pastor what we would be doing, an awkward silence was followed by a "fine" from the pastor. His wife added quickly to me, "Oh, I wish we had known this earlier, so we could have put your name in the bulletin".

Sunday worship came, and in the opening prayer, the pastor gave thanks for Allen's presence to preach; a long pause followed, and then he added, "and his wife." We preached to two-part sermon, and the service ended with an altar call and the singing of "Soldiers of Christ Arise." Standing by the exit door, we greeted people and enjoyed the warmth of the congregation and some friendly references to members of my family. One man shaking my hand did, "Did you know you were leaning on the Mullino pulpit this morning?" I had not known; my grandparents had donated the pulpit years before.

As I reflect on this moment in time, I meet myself and the church in a new way. I was touched to be asked to preach in the church of my family; *the invitation communicated that I was connected*. My father, not inclined to farming, had left this community almost 60 years ago. My parents and I had visited the west Texas town many times, but this was different. Allen and I were being asked to do what we do, and it was a homecoming. I was keenly aware as I prepared and preached that many generations of human beings and generations of Christians had gone before me, passed on their heritage, opened the doors I had entered, and travelled with me through hard times and good.

The ironic misunderstanding about who was preaching is indeed common for me; my cousin was correct. Just six months ago, I preached at a church in California on a Sunday designated to honor the pastor. My spouse was invited to present a certificate to the pastor. The local newspapers carried the story: "The distinguished Allen Moore, Dean of the School of Theology at Claremont, made a presentation to the pastor; he was accompanied by his lovely wife." These incidents used to anger me; now, they amuse me, but the so-

cial reality that stands under them does not amuse me at all. These nearly trivial events occur to me about once a month in the church and its institutions. *Such events are not themselves a problem; they are signal lights that illuminate the problem of women in the church — women who are ignored, silenced, identified only in relation to men.* For people who have never had such an experience, or who have had one or two and "risen above them", the phenomenon is difficult to communicate in more than a trivial way. For people who have had such experiences again and again, one trivial story is sufficient to illumine the complex social dynamics and all of its debilitating consequences. The message is clear: Women cannot, will not, should not preach; we shall not accept them as leaders. The message that is far more subtle and far more devastating is: We will not block women; we will simply ignore them.

The response of women to such a response by the church is often to fall silent, to self-destruct, to exercise strong (even manipulative) leadership behind the scenes, to doubt themselves, to distrust and compete with other women for the scraps of opportunity, or to choose some dramatic combination of these life-denying options. In the story I have shared, my first impulse was to volunteer silence, saying to my cousin that I would be happy for Allen to preach the entire sermon. Fortunately, my cousin chose not to participate in my voluntary silence, and Allen did not *want* to preach the full sermon. They both empowered me by choosing not to participate in my act of self-destruction. I also empowered myself by not continuing to volunteer silence as I would once have done. I have finally learned (almost learned) to be obnoxiously present when the forces of silence are at work. With the pastor, who probably would have accepted my voluntary silence, I introduced the topic of our shared preaching without apology; happily, my spouse (the presumed authority of the family) told a story that corroborated mine. *I have learned that survival — refusing to be obliterated — is itself a subversive act of liberation.*

But my experience of this summer communicated even more to me about women and the church. The words of the family friend at the door of the church linger still, "Did you know you were leaning on the Mullino pulpit?" I did not grow up in a family of religious leaders. I grew up in a family of farmers, homemakers, accountants, and small merchants. Furthermore, I grew up as a women child in a world where only men children were expected to give religious leadership. I inherited no religious mantles, received no special interest or expectations from the churches of my youth and young adulthood, and had no doors opened for me. In fact, I had to pry open the few doors that I did enter, and walk around others in order to climb in a window. Sud-

dently, on this summer Sunday, *I came to see myself as "leaning on the Mullino pulpit" — inheriting from the ordinary people who did their ordinary part in supporting the church of their community.* Again, for people who do inherit religious mantles or for men who are recognized and nurtured from a young age to give leadership, the power of this discovery is difficult to communicate. It is a power nonetheless — a power that promises to turn the church upside down by recognizing that the heritage of the church is passed down through ordinary acts of ordinary people. A church is not a series of ministers; it is a community of our ancestors — a heritage we can lean on. And the church is a heritage that we *do* lean on, though we often do not recognize it until someone asks, "Did you know you were leaning on the Mullino pulpit?"

One last word should be said about leaning and leaping. As much as I acknowledge the overwhelming power of my ancestors to provide for my leaning, *I acknowledge their equally overwhelming power to provide for my leaping.* The words that Allen and I were moved to proclaim on this summer Sunday were not words my ancestors would have proclaimed, or even condoned. The heritage they passed on was not a blueprint that we were obligated to follow, but a spirit of courage and persistence that emboldened us to leap in response to God's Spirit in that moment. We could speak of friends with AIDS, racial and class conflict, and the oppression of women, partly because our ancestors themselves had followed a Spirit of freedom and hope. But we were also compelled to leap in some new directions because those same ancestors had participated in destructive social forces that now cry out for change.

I have shared this story not as a story of all women or all churches, but as a light to illumine sexist social realities that do affect all women and men and all churches, albeit in many different ways. At the root of this reality is a denial of goodness and a limiting of human life. Such limits are so pervasive in sexist social acts and ideologies that they destroy our ability to perceive goodness at its best. The remainder of this essay will be focused on some particular ways in which the denial and distortion of goodness have undergirded the oppression of women by the church.

This question of human goodness is not just a personal issue for a few individual women. It is a political issue for women around the world, but it takes radically different forms as it is identified with diverse forms of racism; agism, nationalism, heterosexism, and anthropomorphism. The search for a new paradigm is urgent — a paradigm that will reshape views of human existence and the future of the church.

Sin Reconsidered

Traditionally, the questions of human existence are often framed in terms of sin and goodness. This way of framing is filled with problematics, but one particular aspect of the problematic is addressed here — the limited view of human goodness that is put forth when goodness is defined in contrast to traditional understandings of sin. Although the conception of goodness as the counterpoint to sin may illuminate goodness in significant ways, such an approach cannot give a picture of goodness at its best.

In particular, we will look at traditional formulations of sin in relation to sexuality, power, and chaos. The identification of sin with these powerful dynamics is alarming for women, who have often been victimized by these dominant views. Women have been traditionally valued as virgins and feared as temptresses, they have been valued for humility and longsuffering and feared as wielders of power, and they have been valued as harmonizers within the home and feared as potential disrupters of social order. The traditional modes of identifying sin with sexuality, power, and chaos reinforce the very values and fears that have shaped women's lives, and often their oppression.

Sin and Sexuality

The relation between sin and sexuality is a dominant mark of the Christian tradition, with celibacy seen as a state far superior to marriage. The question for this essay is whether celibacy, abstinence, and sexual control are adequate definitions of goodness at its best, particularly in an era when sexual preference and sexual conduct have functioned as primary criteria for defining the ministry of the church.

According to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Paul places the higher value on celibacy, but regards marriage as better than burning with passion:

To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. (1. Cor. 7:8-9, NRSV)

Although Paul's words were directed to a particular community at a particular time and although he and other early Christians expected the world to end at any moment, his words have not always been interpreted in that culture-specific way. In fact, they have been generalized and given a major role in shaping dominant Christian values of sexuality and abstinence.

Tertullian, for example, writing from North Africa in the early third century, appealed to Paul's language and argued that it is better neither to marry nor to burn: "Marriage, forsooth, is better because burning is worse."⁵ Tertullian later made a case that marriage inevitably involves lust, so even monogamous marriage is contaminated with the desire for sexual relations, which is the same as fornication.⁶ This negative valuing of sexual expression continued through the Patristic Age, during which time much was written in praise of virginity.

Much later in history, Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) argued that, without the fall, intercourse would have existed without carnal desire because the "lower powers" would have been "entirely subject to reason."⁷ Thus, Aquinas maintained the commonly accepted disdain for sexual feeling, but permitted the possibility that sexual intercourse itself might have been pure if desjoined from ardent desire.

Biblical texts that were commonly used by the church to support the value of celibacy were also used to describe women as threats to celibacy. One frequently quoted text appears in the Book of Revelation where the author speaks of the one hundred forty thousand who have been redeemed from the earth:

It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been re-

⁵ Tertullian, "To His Wife," *Tertullian: Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage*, transl. William P. LeSaint, S.J., S.T.D. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1956), 13. This treatise (*Ad Uxorem* in Latin) was probably written between 200 and 206 C.E. when Tertullian was about 40-50 years of age and when he was still clearly a Catholic. (8, 5) Marriage, according to his argument here, is not an inherent good, but only comparatively better than burning.

⁶ Tertullian, "An Exhortation to Chastity," in *Tertullian: Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage*, 57. This treatise (*De Exhortatione Castitatis* in Latin) was likely written between 204 and 212 C.E. during a time when Tertullian was moving toward the Montanists. (39)

⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Vol. I*, trans., Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1947), Question 98, Article II, 493-494.

Acquinas saw himself in agreement with Augustine on these ideas, both seeing the age of innocence as a time when reason was in control: "Wherefore Augustine says (*De Civ. Dei* xiv.26): 'We must be far from supposing that offspring could not be begotten without concupiscence. All the bodily members would have been equally moved by the will, without ardent or wanton incentive, with calmness of soul and body.'" Aquinas embellished on his own argument by referring to this quote and explaining: "This is what Augustine means by the words quoted, which do not exclude intensity of pleasure from the state of innocence, but ardor of desire and restlessness of the mind." Aquinas imaged the age of innocence, then, as a state in which "fecundity would have been without lust," and he appealed to Augustine in making his case.

deemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless. (Rev. 14:4-5, NRSV)

In a somewhat more equitable text from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Paul prescribes appropriate sexual behavior:

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman.' But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. (I Cor. 7:1-2, NRSV)

If you consider that both of these texts were written during times of threat, one can imagine the fears that may have haunted these authors and their communities. The Book of Revelation was apparently written during a period in which Christians were being persecuted, and internal evidence within Paul's Corinthian letters indicates considerable tension and fragility within the Corinthian Christian community. Both authors chose to stress the impending end of the world, and both placed emphasis on life purified of sexual sin. The haunting question is why women were chosen to represent the dangers facing the community and the threat to sexual prity. The corresponding questions are: What limitations are placed on human goodness by identifying it so narrowly with sexual abstinence and control, and what limitations are placed on the church by identifying the *bene esse* with the absence of sexual expression.

Sin and the Will to Power

The relationship between sin and the will to power is another dominant theological theme — one that has led to extensive warnings against the dangers of power and pride, alongside elaborate praise for the virtues of humility, patience, and servanthood. The essential concern here is that though pride and the will to power can be devastating evils, and though the virtues of humility, patience and servanthood can be profound forms of goodness, these virtues cannot represent goodness at its best.

The history of Christianity abounds with examples of sin equated with power and pride, but two exemplars can represent the point in this brief essay. One eighteenth century Christian leader in England was John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement. Wesley's concern was not to found a denomination, but to renew the depth of Christian experience. With that vision, he engaged in an approach to theology that he called practical divinity, and he maintained a strong sense of the contrast between God's grace and human sinfulness. In making his case, he frequently exhorted against the dangers of human pride,

even the pride of thinking oneself receptive to God's grace. In one such passage, he said:

(H)e that cometh unto God by this faith must fix his eye singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come as a *mere sinner*, inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness only, pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery.⁸

Wesley was persistent in warning against the dangers of claiming too much credit for oneself and, thus, slipping in one's relationship with God.

Frequently, he was explicit about the dangers of pride, as when he warned the professors in the Methodist societies against pride, enthusiasm ("the daughter of pride"), antinomianism (which often proceeds from enthusiasm), sins of omission, and schism.⁹ The professors were those people who personally professed entire sanctification, and Wesley worried about their spiritual pride which led them into other dangers or sins. Pride was seen at the root of many evils.

In a similar fashion, the twentieth century U.S. Reformed theologian Reinhold Niebuhr developed a thorough theological exposition on pride as the root of human sin. He made a case, first, that human beings live in a tension between finitude and freedom, and human sin is an effort to escape that tension. People deny finitude through pride and the will to power; they deny freedom through sensuality, losing the self "in some aspect of the world's vitalities."¹⁰ But Niebuhr argued that pride is actually more basic than sensuality; in fact, pride, or what Paul describes as self-glorification, can be said to give rise to sensua-

⁸ John Wesley, "Justification by Faith," in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 208 (first appearing in print in 1746); cf. Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. XI (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 19//), 366, 439; Wesley, "Advice to an Englishman," *Works*, vol. XI, 185-186.

⁹ John Wesley, "Cautions and Directions Given to the Greatest Professors in the Methodist Societies," in *John Wesley*, 298-305. According to Albert Outler, these cautions were first printed "to cope with both a false doctrine (i.e., 'sinless' perfection) and a false temper (i.e., self-righteousness)." (299) The content was later abridged and woven into *Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection* and, later, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Wesley opened the original pamphlet with this "first advice": "Watch and pray continually against *pride*, against every kind and degree of it. If God has cast it out, see that it enter no more. It is full as dangerous as desire. And you may slide back into it unawares, especially if you think you are in no danger of it." (299)

¹⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964, 1941), 178-179.

lity.¹¹ Niebuhr proceeded to describe three kinds of pride: pride of power, pride of knowledge, and pride of virtue, and he sought "to relate the Biblical and distinctively Christian conception of sin as pride and self-love to the observable behaviour of men (sic)."¹²

Niebuhr's analysis is based on an assumption that people suffer from too much pride and self-love, rather than too little. This assumption is questionable when viewed from the perspective of women, for whom the sense of inadequacy and self-hatred is often overwhelming. Valerie Saiving and Sue Nelson Dunfee have both critiqued Niebuhr's view, arguing that women are more likely to suffer from too little pride and self-love and are more likely to participate in what Dunfee calls the sin of hiding than the sin of pride.¹³

Niebuhr's analysis of the sin of pride has another fatal flaw from a feminist perspective, and that is his distinction between individual and corporate sin. In acknowledging corporate sin, he opens the way for a thoroughgoing analysis of the evil in social structures, but his view has another effect as well. According to Niebuhr, sin is not only found in individual persons, but it is actually escalated in the form of group pride, creating a tension between individual and group morality.¹⁴ According to Niebuhr, "The group is more arrogant, hypocritical, self-centred and more ruthless in the pursuit of its ends than the individual."¹⁵ Not only is the group the bearer of evil, then, but it is almost never the bearer of good. Herein lies a problem, especially for women whose women's communities are a primary source of life, and often far more trustworthy than what has been handed to them as biblical or distinctive Christian teaching (the authorities to which Niebuhr most often appeals.) Herein also lies a problem for the institutional church. Is the church to exist only as a support for individuals in their potential goodness of the church body itself and of the whole creation within

¹¹ Ibid., 186.

¹² Ibid., 188.

¹³ Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 25-42; and Sue Nelson Dunfee, *Beyond Servanthood: Christianity and the Liberation of Women* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1989), esp. pp. 105-130. Dunfee is now exploring the reality that women - especially women of color - sometimes use hiding as a way of survival, but the attention of this earlier book is directed to the use of hiding as an escape from full selfhood rather than as a chosen strategy within an oppressive social milieu.

¹⁴ Ibid., 208-209; cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960, 11932).

¹⁵ Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. I, 208.

which it lives? If the latter, then the critique and reformation of the church body is urgent.

The association of the will to power with pride, and the association of both with sensuality is quite common in the Christian tradition, and women are the losers in both cases. They are often the people of the society whose power and sensuality are most feared, and they are often the people expected to carry forth the values of humility and sexual purity. Because women have traditionally had little public power or sense of personal power (pride), repudiating the will to power as a sin undercuts women's efforts to claim or assert power in the public realm and encourages women to deny their social and personal power altogether, as when I volunteered in the case not to preach. Because women have been traditionally associated with sexual desire (which is to be overcome), repudiating sexual expression as sin has been a way to cast dispersions on women's worth, to define clear boundaries around the women's proper place (e.g., in the home), and to close women out of male circles of leadership and influence.

Sin and Chaos

Another traditional understanding of sin is also not very complimentary to women, and that is the identification of sin with chaos and the corresponding association in certain times and places, but it cannot represent goodness at its best, especially when order is so often used as an excuse not to ordain women or not to allow them to take certain roles in the church.

In Christian tradition, sin and evil have often been associated with chaos and uncontrolled nature, which need to be ordered and brought into control. Since women are commonly associated with chaos and nature, as are the men of some racial/ethnic communities, they too are identified as forces to be controlled. Susan Griffin makes a strong case for the common linkage in intellectual and religious traditions among eros, nature and women, and the common concern that all of these need to be controlled.¹⁶

Griffin argues that the fear of nature and natural forces is expressed in the metaphysical division of matter and spirit which is the foundation of Christianity and, also, of pornography. The strong Christian teachings against natural beauty, pleasure and sexual expression reinforce

¹⁶ Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 8-14; cf: Griffin, *Women and Nature* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

this mind-body split, as well as the urgency of control. Ironically, ascetic tendencies in Christianity contribute to the rebellion that is expressed in pornography but, in actuality, pornography actually reflects the same metaphysics as Christianity.

Griffin concludes, "For all the old shapes of religious asceticism are echoed in obscenity. And every theme, every attitude, every shade of pornographic feeling has its origin in the church."¹⁷

Griffin further recognizes the common distinction between culture and nature and the characteristic purpose of culture to control nature, hence, her subtitle "Culture's Revenge Against Nature." She makes the case that human control over nature corresponds with, and reinforces, male control over women. She says, for example,

The idea that the sight of a woman's body calls a man back to his own animal nature, and that this animal nature soon destroys him, reverberates throughout culture. We find it in the most ancient sources. In the Biblical story or creation, we discover Eve, who has spoken with a serpent, seducing Adam into eating an apple, the forbidden fruit of knowledge. Through this seduction, the commentators tell us, 'Eve brought death into the world.'¹⁸

The reaction to such reminders of animal nature is cultural control, which finally culminates in the objectification of women. The objectifying of women is seen in various forms of pornography, such as the striptease in which women's body is revealed as "flesh under culture's control."¹⁹

One can identify many further examples of the tendency to value control over nature, such as Christian interpretations of God's command for people to have "dominion" over nature (Gen. 1:28), or the preaching of Christian missionaries to encourage indigenous peoples to exert control over their traditional lifestyles (lifestyles that are often closely attuned with nature), or the emphasis in spiritual disciplines on self-control.

All of the contrasting of control and nature — order and chaos — is problematic for women because women have traditionally lived in the most chaotic realms of life — rearing children who are unpredictable, cleaning houses that get dirty again, working as secretaries and office administrators where everything happens at once, and so forth. Furthermore, in most of these settings, men are traditionally valued as the

¹⁷ Griffin, *Pornography and Silence*, 16; cf: 14-16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33; cf: 31-46.

authorities, or they hold the formal positions of executive power. From a feminist point of view, chaos needs to be revalued, and goodness as order needs to be reconceived.

In concluding this reconsideration of sin, we can make claims about sin that turn some traditional formulations inside out. We can say that sin is *refusing to receive the gifts and blessings that we are given*, including our sexuality and power. Further, sin is *denying or thwarting chaos and creativity*, or refusing to make decisions in the midst of chaos, thus avoiding change in ourselves and our institutions. Sin, then, can be described in the traditional language of *missing the mark*—not being fully what we are created to be. As such, sin is a *way of being in the world that destroys or denies life*, and it includes participating in social structures and social movements that destroy or deny life. In all of these descriptions or definitions, sin is *alienation from God and the world*—a moving *against* relationship rather than a participation *in* relationship that is life-sustaining.

When these understandings of sin are related to the church, we are faced with the community called church will refuse to receive the gifts and blessings that we are given—denying sexuality and power, denying beauty, denying the possibilities of contributing to the repair of the world (the Hebrew vision of *tikkun olam*).

Further, the church will seek to deny or thwart chaos and creativity, a dynamic well revealed by the way the church often closes out children on the one hand and controversy on the other. One church near us will not allow children under twelve in worship because they disrupt the videotaping. John Hull (of England) recognizes that more individualistic churches often find children a distraction in worship because they disrupt individuals in their private communion with God.²⁰ The difficulty that the contemporary church has with controversy is also well documented in the stories of parishes and congregations, and in the centrist tendencies of denominations and global churches that seek to control the beliefs and actions of their various branches. In all of these ways, the church does miss the mark, and it contributes, as in the case study, to destroying or denying the life of women. What is denied ultimately is the community's relationship with God and its participation in the work of God.

²⁰ John Hull, *What Privents Christian Adults from Learning* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 17-18.

Goodness reconsidered

In light of this journey into sin, the possibility that goodness is the antithesis of sin is limiting, especially if the definitions of sin are limited in the ways described above. On the other hand, these traditional forms of defining sin may touch on forms of human energy that potentially embody human fullness as much they embody sin. Perhaps, this human energy points to goodness at its best.

GOODNESS AS SENSUAL RELATING WITH THE UNIVERSE

Rather than conceiving human goodness as abstinence from sensual or sexual relationships, *goodness at its best can be described as sensual relating with the universe. to relate sensually with the universe is to feel the tenderness and joy and hurt and outrage that relationships bring. It is to be attuned with the rhythms of one's body, with rhythms of earth, with the rhythms and movements of other people and other beings.*

Perhaps this is a conceptual leap that comes more naturally for women than for men. As Catharina J. M. Halkes has said:

Women experience their body differently from men. They are more familiar with it, even if only through their experience of their body's cyclical behavior; but also from bearing and nursing children. . . . Men are more ambivalent with regard to their bodies. . . . The integration of body and spirit/soul seems very difficult for them.²¹

For women to conceive of goodness in terms of sensual relationships is an affirmation of body-awareness. The cycles of a women's body cease to be a curse distracting from normal social interchange; the cycles become a gift contributing to attunement, even attunement to pain and heightened physical and emotional sensitivity. Sensual relating is heightened.

The conceptual leap toward valuing sensual relationships may also be larger for women and men standing within the Reformed tradition than for those standing in more sacramental traditions such as Roman Catholicism.

Again, Halkes²² is helpful:

²¹ Catharina J. M. Halkes, *New Creation: Christian Feminism and the Renewal of the Earth* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1991, 1989), 148.

²² *Ibid.*, 78; Halkes develops this case and also cites: M. E. Brinkman, *Het Leven Als Teken* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1986), 8.

In contrast with Roman Catholic theology, which saw in nature and in the earthly reality references to God's immanence, and which preserved and respected the earthly, material reality in its sacraments, Reformed theology always trembles before nature and symbols of nature, as before a dangerous fascination which could adopt a demonic shape.

Halkes further develops the idea that the separation of nature and history is a unique Reformation emphasis, giving evidence in Rudolph Bultmann, Gerhard von Rad and others.²³ Halkes represents a critical voice within the Christian tradition whose diagnosis is remarkably similar to Susan Griffin's in regard to the destructive tendencies in dichotomizing culture and nature, in elevating culture above nature, and men above women.

Sensual relating with the universe may represent goodness at its best, but it does not necessarily represent pleasure at every turning. Sensuality involves pain as well as joy—the full range of human experience and feeling. In her poem, "I Give You Back," Joy Harjo, member of the Creek tribe, proclaims that she releases her fear for the sake of fuller living, even in the face of enormous anger and pain. She says,

I give you (my fear) back to the white soldiers
who burned down my home, beheaded my children,
raped and sodomized my brothers and sisters.
I give you back to those who stole the
food from our plates when we were starving.²⁴

In giving back her fear, Harjo claims her openness to whatever sensual experience will come:

I am not afraid to be angry.
I am not afraid to rejoice...
I am not afraid to be hated.
I am not afraid to be loved.²⁵

This openness described by Joy Harjo requires discarding fear, but not denying that which is fearful. Here is not a naive openness, but an act of courage — courage to live fully in spite of the oppressive forces that abound.

For the church of the future to be so open to sensuality is to appreciate the sensuality of the sacraments (the bread and wine and water), the sensuality of human interactions within the community (the right hand of fellowship, the kiss of peace, the common meal), and the pre-

²³ Halkes, 78-80.

²⁴ Joy Harjo, "I Give You Back," in *Making Face, Making Soul*, ed., Gloria Anzaldua (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Book, 1990), 151.

²⁵ Ibid.

sence of God within these sensual experiences. The kiss of peace, for example, is a sharing of the breath, or Spirit, of God.

Further if the church of the future is to be open to sensuality, it will have to *feel* — to feel joy and pain, peace and anger, hunger and fullness. The fear of sensual sharing and wrenching emotions represents the church's fear of knowing the world in its fullness and facing the questions that the world puts before us. The very traumas of religious-cultural-political wars in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Israel and beyond are exacerbated by a denial of full sensual experience the unknown and the depths of fear that hide within us. The work of practical theology will be to reflect on these feelings and to propose structures and actions that enable the church to feel and to respond to the world.

Goodness as Power in Relationship

The dangers in the sin of pride or the will to power are dangers inherent in power that is used to destroy or abuse relationships. If goodness is defined in terms of avoiding such destructive wielding of power, we have a very limited understanding of goodness indeed. What if we understand power as an energy of the universe, and hence, a natural human energy? *Goodness at its best, then, is a participation in the natural power that fills creation.* The challenge is to distinguish power that contributes to life from power that contributes to death — the power that nurtures whole relationships from that which destroys them.

One important perspective on power comes from Carter Heyward, who describes God as "power in relation." She grounds her theology in these basic assumptions:

. . . That the experience of relation is fundamental and constitutive of human being; that it is good and powerful; and that it is only within this experience - as it is happening here and now - that we may realize *that the power in relation is God.*²⁶

In God we relate powerfully with the whole of creation, and the relationship with God is one that demands of us the exercise of power. The work of God is done in relation to our human work, and God's redemptive activity requires our participation. Heyward says, "We cooperate with each other and with God in a process of mutual redemption — that is, in the deliverance of both God and humanity from

²⁶ Isabel Carter Heyward, *The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relations* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1982), 1-2.

evil."²⁷ Heyward adds that the work of Jesus is to reveal the power of justice and right relation, for he "can help us see the power, love the power, claim the power, use the power."²⁸

Considering our world in which some countries and cultures are oppressed by the abusive or negligent use of power by other countries and cultures, we cannot deny the reality of Niebuhr's warnings. On the other hand, considering that same world in which many peoples are oppressed because their power is denied and where human bodies and the natural world are oppressed because they are defined negatively (in need of control), we cannot deny the hope in Heyward's vision that people will seek to participate fully in power in relation.

The challenge of goodness at its best is not for the church to deny or hide power, nor to suppress pride, but to support relational power and pride. The challenge is to create structures and processes that invite people into full participation. This is very different from working to maintain present structures or to place a few people into key positions as tokens. This is a mission of inclusiveness that demands full sharing of power and responsibility, as well as full representation in all aspects of the church's life by gender, race, age, class, culture, and sexual preference. Imagine a church where people are encouraged to give of themselves through their unique charisms — their unique gifts and interests; imagine a church where the whole body witnesses to the Spirit of God in the world.²⁹ Such a view does not eliminate the hierarchy of the church, but recognizes that its distinctive role is integration — leading the whole body, with the fullness of its diverse gifts, toward unity.³⁰

The further challenge for the church is to develop the ability to discern goodness at its best — to discern the extent to which power and pride contribute to life — the life of the individual, the community, the society, the whole earth. The heart of goodness, and the guide for des-

²⁷ Ibid., 2. In explaining the human vocation, she says, "Simply because we are human, we are able to be co-creative agents of redemption. Our vocation is to take seriously the creative character of who we are—both in relation to one another (humanity) and to the power of relation itself (God)." (2)

²⁸ Ibid., 36.

²⁹ This proposal is very similar to Leonardo Boff's model of the Church as Sacrament of the Holy Spirit; he envisions the church community as structured by charism—the charisms given by God to every person for the sake of building up the whole of the community. Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1988), 144-164.

³⁰ Ibid., 163-164. Boff calls this the charism of unity, which is "responsible for harmony among the many and diverse charisms." (163)

cerning goodness, is to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28; cf: Matthew 22:34-40; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18). In such loving, we do not avoid power, but we participate fully in the power of God's love.

Goodness as Integrity

Rather than describe human goodness as escape from chaos, *goodness at its best can be described as integrity — a wholeness in which the many experiences of God and the world are woven into a full fabric in human life.* Integrity is *not* denying differences or always living peacefully and harmoniously, especially not living in a trivial harmony that subjugates the less powerful to the more powerful. Likewise, integrity is not avoiding the realities of conflict, and it is not taming chaos.

Integrity is allowing, celebrating, and coming to deep appreciation of differences. To live with integrity is to accept and live in relationship with difference — the differences that exist between God and the world, between human beings and the rest of creation, among peoples of diverse cultures and life situations, and even within individual people.

In the future of the church, integrity will require an understanding and appreciation of difference. The danger that one social group will abuse another is real, however, and the discussion of this danger is more developed by feminists-of-color. Gloria Anzaldua makes her case strongly when she describes how white feminists often deny racial difference and thereby deny the unique reality of feminists-of-color:

'Diversity' and 'difference' are vague, ambiguous terms, defined differently by whitefeminists and feminists-of-color. Often whitefeminists want to minimize racial difference by taking comfort in the fact that we are all women and/or lesbians and suffer similar sexual-gender oppressions. They are usually annoyed with the actuality (though not the concept) of 'difference,' want to blur racial difference, want to smooth things out—they seem to want a complete, totalizing identity.³¹

Such an effort to totalize or absorb the identity of others is not integrity, but domination. If the future of the church is to be integrous, we will need to learn new ways to be multicultural and diverse — ways that are neither condescending nor dominating, but ways in which we

³¹ Anzaldua, "Introduction," *Making Face, Making Soul*, xxi.

live toward what Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza calls a "discipleship of equals" and what Letty Russell calls a "household of freedom."³²

Integrity is allowing disharmony to open issues for the sake of a more significant, inclusive harmony. Nelle Morton, for example, was quite happy to stir discomfort with divine images such as Mother or Goddess in order to shatter the limited and destructive patriarchal images of God and to introduce people into a fuller, more liberating reality.³³ In public speeches, Morton often argued that iconoclasm is sometimes the only way to shatter oppressive images, a lesson she learned from James Cone who insisted in saying that "God is black." She observed that Cone could not have opened people to liberating images by the more innocuous "God is both black and white."

This suggests, also, that *integrity is allowing, even stirring, conflict in order to deal with significant issues.* Conflict that confronts us with significant issues is a blessing. Conflict is only dangerous when it is used to avoid significant issues or when it is ignored and people refuse to deal with the realities that it brings to the surface. For the church of the future to live constructively with conflict is a challenge indeed, but a challenge that encourages the church to face into pain and discord for the sake of a more just and loving reconciliation.

Thus, *integrity is also allowing chaos to brood (even when it is threatening) so that it may give birth to something new.* Chaos can be creative and regenerative — a very natural part of human existence. In fact, Victor Turner observes that the rhythm between social structure and *communitas* (characterized by more direct and immediate relationships) is a natural rhythm of human communities.³⁴ Integrity is living with these natural rhythms, however uncomfortable they may sometimes be. Integrity is allowing our churches of the future to move

³² Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1993); and Letty M. Russell, *Household of Freedom* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), esp. 25-28.

³³ Nelle Morton, *The Journey is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 145, cf. 122-146. Morton says, "I do not argue for the use of *God the Mother* or a return to the *Goddess*, except for iconoclastic purposes. It may be the only way to shatter the old male god image and return a patriarchal culture to the *Goddess* along with the restoration and public expression of worthy self-images of women. . . I believe the *Goddess* could ultimately become the same kind of idol the male god has become. But in a sexist culture and sexist religion the option for the *Goddess* may be the only, the only sane, redemptive move." (145)

³⁴ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969), 119-154.

through history and to shift between structure and *communitas* as the needs of the church and world change.

In this feminists view of goodness as integrity, sin and evil are not identified with disorder and chaos or with finitude. Sin is the attempt to eliminate creative chaos or deny finitude. Sin is closing out the influences within us and around us, or refusing to make decisions, thus, ignoring chaos or seeking escape from its creativity. Goodness has to do with receiving and integrating the moments of chaos into a new fabric — a fabric that by the grace of God may be more filled with goodness than the one that went before.

Conclusions

In launching this address with issues facing the church in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Israel, and Los Angeles, I named only a few realities that face the church as the church faces the world. The inability of the church to address racism within its structures and in the world, the inability of Christians to make peace with peoples of other cultures and religious traditions, the inability of the Christian church to embrace fully gay and lesbian persons, and the inability of the church to resolve conflicts without the violence of combat are testimonies to the crying need for practical theology — theology done by and for those who live in the midst of these realities.

In further launching this address with a personal case study, I acknowledged some contradictory affirmations that emerged from one particular moment of praxis: An experience of being connected, alongside the experience of being rejected; an awareness of the power of women to self-destruct in the face of rejection, alongside awareness of the subversive power of women when they do survive against the odds; an experience of inheriting from ordinary people rather than theological or pastoral giants; and an experience of our Christian heritage as simultaneously comforting (good for leaning) and disruptive (a goad for leaping into issues that our ancestors would have never imagined or accepted as Christian).

The personal anguish of women living with the church and envisioning its future is more than the anguish of a few overly sensitive women. It is a reality of the institutional church and all of its institutions — institutions where glass ceilings still exist for women and people of color; institutions where, from the simplest rural church to the most sophisticated theological guild or seminary, women are still ignored, denied, and silenced; and institutions in which the very theories of human

existence (including theories of sin and goodness) reinforce the oppression.

So what of the future of the church? Perhaps the anguish of women is itself a gift. Whether women are inside or outside the church, contented or angry, they raise contradictions as they live day by day. Their lives are so embroiled in controversy that traditional formulations of sin and goodness are hopelessly tainted, and we have no good choice but to re-form those formulations and re-form the church. We have no choice but to hope for and work toward *tikkun olam* (the repair of the world); the very brokenness of the earth, the brokenness of our human community, the brokenness of the church cry out for liberation and wholeness. If practical theology cannot contribute to the repair of the world, then we do not need practical theology.

Abstract: Diplomarbeit am Lehrstuhl für Pastoraltheologie in Würzburg (Prof. Rolf Zentgraf) 1994.

Annette Volk

"Seelsorge am kranken und todkranken Kind – eine theologisch-psychologische Arbeit."

Annette Volk geht aus ihrer doppelten Perspektive als Theologin und Psychologin heraus der Grundfrage nach: "Inwieweit die seelsorgerliche Praxis der Kirche dem kranken und todkranken Kind und seiner psychologisch erforschten Denkweise gerecht werden?" (S.8). Dies geschieht in drei Schritten.

In einem ersten Schritt geht es um eine Sichtung der theologischen Literatur zur Krankenhausseelsorge allgemein und speziell in bezug auf das kranke Kind. Insbesondere gilt es, die Defizite der bisherigen Darstellungen (und der zugrundeliegenden Praxis) aufzuzeigen und "die Notwendigkeit einer Hinwendung zur Seele des Kindes theologisch und psychologisch zu begründen" (S.15).

B.

Der zweite Schritt ergibt sich aus einer psychologisch-empirischen Untersuchung mit 80 Mädchen im Alter von 5-9 Jahren über deren Todesvorstellungen (in Anlehnung an die von der Universität Würzburg durchgeführte Untersuchung von Annette Volk, 1994). Zusätzlich gewährt die Sichtung der psychologischen Literatur Einsicht in das kindliche Todeskonzept.

Abstracts Stellungnahme des Beirats

In einem dritten Schritt erfolgt die Integration der gewonnenen psychologischen Erkenntnisse in die theologische Option. Zum einen wird die paradoxe Situation todbedrohter Kinder aufgezeigt ("Ich weiß, daß ich sterben muß, aber ich weiß nicht, was Tod ist", S. 102); außerdem werden aus den Erkenntnissen über die kindliche Vorstellungswelt vom Tod heraus Denkanstöße für die praktische Arbeit von Klinikseelsorgerinnen angeboten, um in der Praxis eine Umkehr und eine wirkliche Hinwendung zum todkranken Kind zu erreichen.

Frau Volk gelingt mit der vorgelegten Arbeit ein wichtiger Beitrag zur Seelsorge an kranken und todkranken Kindern. Ihre Kritik am herkömmlichen Seelsorgebetrieb und dessen Reflexion im Spiegel der theologischen Literatur erweist sich als sorgfältig recherchiert – und wohl begründet. Ihre ganze Untersuchung zeigt jedoch einen Weg für den notwendigen Perspektivwechsel: Die Vorstellungswelt des Kindes kennenlernen und von ihr her denken. Dieses Postulat wird in den Impulsen und Denkanstößen konkretisiert und operationalisiert. Über den Bereich der Seelsorge an todkranken Kindern hinaus gibt die

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Der zweite Schritt ergibt sich aus einer psychologisch-empirischen Untersuchung mit 80 Mädchen und Jungen im Alter von 5-8 Jahren über deren Todesvorstellungen (mit den Schwerpunkten Universalität und Nonfunktionalität), die von Frau Volk selbst durchgeführt wurde. Zusätzlich gewährt die Sichtung der psychologischen Literatur Einsicht in das kindliche Todeskonzept.

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Arbeit auch für die religiöse Erziehung, für Kinderliturgie und die Katechese zu denken.

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Andrea Kaufmann

Der Beitrag des Weltgebetstages zur Befreiung der Frauen. Eine feministisch-theologische Standortbeschreibung.

Andrea Kaufmann geht der Frage nach, ob und inwiefern der "Weltgebetstag der Frauen" ein Ort und Instrument der Frauenbefreiung in den Kirchen ist.

Dazu gehört als erster Schritt eine Standortbestimmung: Feministische Sprachkritik, feministische Exegese, der Ansatz der Frauenkirche und die Suche nach neuen Gottesbildern sind Elemente der Kritik an Sexismus und Patriarchat in den Kirchen und der Beschreibung des Aufbruchs vieler Frauen in ihr oder aus ihr heraus (Teil I). Der zweite Schritt geht direkt auf das Phänomen "Weltgebetstag" zu und stellt diesen zunächst in seiner Geschichte, Zielsetzung und Organisationsform dar. Den Kern dieses II. Teiles bilden jedoch Darstellung und Interpretation von Aussagen, die in der Bewegung engagierte Frauen über sich und ihre Beziehung zum Weltgebetstag machten (Ergebnisse von teilnehmender Beobachtung, mündlicher und schriftlicher Befragung).

Die Zusammenfassung des III. Teiles beantwortet schließlich die Ausgangsfrage der Untersuchung: Der Weltgebetstag ist ein Ort und Instrument zur Frauenbefreiung, weil er Frauen in den Kirchen sichtbar und hörbar macht, weil er modellhaft gelebte Frauenkirche ist und Spiritualität mit Politik verbindet. Dies gilt es auch (und gerade) mit den Ansätzen feministischer Theologie zu vermitteln.

Abstract: Diplomarbeit am Lehrstuhl für Pastoraltheologie in Würzburg (Prof. Rolf Zerfaß) 1993.

Christoph Renzikowski

"O hilf uns streiten zu allen Zeiten". Programm und Praxis kirchlicher Konfliktforschung. Eine Pilotstudie aus organisationspsychologischer Perspektive.

Christoph Renzikowski ist eine Pilotstudie zur kirchlichen Konfliktforschung; zugleich setzt sich die Arbeit zum Ziel, einen theoretischen Beitrag zur Programmatik dieser (erst im Entstehen begriffenen) Forschung zu leisten.

Der Bedarf für beides, die theoretische Fundierung und die praktische Anwendung von Konfliktforschung im Raum der Kirche, ist evident.

Erkenntnisleitendes Interesse ist dementsprechend auch die Entideologisierung des Konfliktbegriffs durch die Fundierung einer soliden, humanwissenschaftlich wie theologisch begründeten Konfliktforschung.

Die vorliegende Arbeit versteht sich als einen Baustein dazu, und zwar mit den beiden Komponenten Theorie und Empirie. Der Theorierahmen referiert Ergebnisse der Organisationspsychologie (v.a. den Ansatz Karl Berkels), Religionssoziologie (Karl Gabriel) und Ekklesiologie. Der empirische Teil erhebt nach der Methode des narrativen Interviews als Material Erzählungen von PastoralreferentInnen über von ihnen erlebte Konflikte. Aus beiden Komponenten ergeben sich die Schlußthese, der innerkirchliche Umgang mit Konflikten kranke nach wie vor am Klerikalismus, sowie Konfliktforschung (Langzeitstudie oder Befragung aller am Konflikt Beteiligten; Kombination der Forschungstätigkeit mit der BeraterInnenrolle; Einzeluntersuchungen zu bestimmten Problemfeldern). Im Schlußwort kommen (in Form einer schriftlichen Befragung) mit Prof. Karl Berkel und Prof. Elmar Klinger noch einmal zwei Experten zu Wort. Sie plädieren für ein erneuertes ekklesiologisches Denken, für die stärkere Einbeziehung organisationspsychologischer Erkenntnisse in die Pastoralpsychologie und für eine Unterscheidung der Geister, die zu klaren Optionen führt.

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Hildegard Tellmann

"Leben wär' eine prima Alternative". Aspekte von Trauern und Sterben am Beispiel der Schriftstellerin Maxie Wander in der Bedeutung für die Pastoraltheologie.

Sterben und Tod sind menschliche Grenzerfahrungen, mit denen sich jede/r früher oder später auseinandersetzen muß. Wie ihr Name sagt, führen sie Menschen an ihre Grenze: an die Grenze des Verstehenkönnens, an die Grenze der Machbarkeit. Daher weiß sich die christliche Tradition der Seelsorge für Trauernde und Sterbende verpflichtet, und daher ist Trauer (eingeschlossen die antizipatorische) ein Thema der pastoraltheologischen Reflexion. Wenn sich die Pastoraltheologie an der Frage Jesu: "Was willst du, daß ich dir tun soll?" orientieren will, so steht am Beginn die Wahrnehmung dessen, was wirklich ist: Was erleben Trauernde? Welche Gefühle und Bedürfnisse haben sie? Was hilft ihnen, was hindert sie, "gut" zu trauern — und damit gut zu leben? Diese Fragestellung ist der Kern der vorliegenden Arbeit. Ausgangspunkt ist hier das konkrete Erleben von Trauern und Sterben der Schriftstellerin Maxie Wander, das diese in Form von Tagebuchaufzeichnungen und Briefen festgehalten hat. Als Rahmen dient ein Überblick über humanwissenschaftliche und theologische Theorieelemente zum Thema Trauer (I. Teil). An eine Skizze der dem Trauernden insgesamt eher ungünstigen gesellschaftlichen Situation schließt sich die sozialwissenschaftliche Analyse an (Trauer als Statusübergang; die sozialwissenschaftliche Analyse; die Bedeutung von Krisenagenten). Es folgen individuelle Aspekte des Trauerns, in die im Rahmen der psychoanalytischen Trauertheorie (S. Freud, M. Klein) die Trauer als Prozeß begreifen (Y. Spiegel, V. Kast, E. Kübler-Ross). Dabei beleuchten die Begriffe "Trauer als Krise", "Trauerphasen" oder "Traueraufgaben" jeweils verschiedene Facetten des einen komplexen Erlebens. Und diese Komplexität ist schließlich auch das "Ergebnis" aller sozialwissenschaftlichen und psychologischen Theorie: Trauer äußert sich vielfältig, je nach individuellen und sozialen Voraussetzungen sehr unterschiedlich, oft chaotisch; Modelle dienen zum besseren Verständnis von Trauerprozessen, wollen und dürfen jedoch Trauernde nicht unter ein neues Diktat "richtigen" Trauerns stellen. So sind auch die Grenzen zwischen "normalen" und "pathologischen" Trauerverläufen anerkanntermaßen fließend.

Die theologischen Perspektiven umfassen philosophische, biblische und praktische Aspekte. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Theodizee-

frage führt unmittelbar an die Grenze des Verstehens, was Leid und Trauer betrifft. Eine rational befriedigende Antwort ist nicht zu finden; einzig mögliche Antwortversuche sind das Ernstnehmen des Schmerzes und die Offenheit für Wachstums- und Reifungsprozesse, auch und gerade im Glauben. Dies sind im Wesentlichen auch die Verstehenszugänge der biblischen Tradition. Neben den verschiedenen Ausdrucksformen der Klage, auch der Anklage an Gott, findet sich die Hoffnung auf Trost und Heilung durch Gott; Ernstnehmen der Trauer und Überwinden des Leides besitzen also gleichermaßen ihren Platz. Im Neuen Testament zeigt sich das sowohl an der Praxis Jesu wie auch an seiner eigenen Person und Biographie. Im Mittelpunkt stehen hier der Auftrag zur mitfühlenden Begleitung Trauernder und die eschatologische Hoffnung auf die endgültige Überwindung des Leids durch Gott. Dieser Umgang Jesu sollte auch als Maßstab für die Seelsorge gelten. Unterschieden wird hier noch einmal in primäre und sekundäre Hilfen: Unmittelbar den Trauernden zugewandt sind Besuche, Gespräche und liturgische Riten, die bei der Bewältigung der Trauer helfen können. Daneben besteht auch die Notwendigkeit für einen Bewußtseinswandel und strukturelle Veränderungen in der Kirche.

Der II. Teil befaßt sich mit dem empirischen Material: Den Erfahrungen von Trauer und Sterben, wie sie Maxie Wander in ihren Briefen und Tagebüchern festgehalten hat. Nach einigen Bemerkungen zum Datenmaterial und zum Auswertungsverfahren geht Hildegard Tellmann kurz auf die Lebensgeschichte Maxie Wanders ein. Daran schließen sich die Trauergeschichte und die Sterbegeschichte an.

Zur Geschichte der Trauer um den Tod ihrer Tochter Kitty gehören sowohl die "Vorgeschichte" mit der Beschreibung der Beziehung zwischen Mutter und Tochter und die Schilderung der Ereignisse, die zu ihrem Tod führte, wie auch schwerpunktmäßig die Beschreibung der Trauerreaktionen bei Maxie Wander (Trauerphasen, Träume, Hilfestellungen und Schwierigkeiten), die über einen langen Zeitraum hinweg reichen und letztlich erst durch den eigenen Tod beendet wurden.

Diese Geschichte der "vorweggenommenen Trauer" um das eigene Leben ist Gegenstand des zweiten großen Kapitels im zweiten Teil. Wieder steht am Beginn die Schilderung der Ereignisse, die Entdeckung der tödlichen Krankheit, ihr Verlauf und ihre Behandlung. Daran schließt sich der Versuch einer Beschreibung in Anlehnung an das Modell der Sterbephasen (Kübler-Ross) an.

Eine Zusammenschau von Trauer- und Krankheitsgeschichte befaßt sich vor allem mit der Frage nach den "inneren Quellen", die Maxie

Wander zur Bewältigung ihrer Trauer und zum Leben halfen. Vier solcher Quellen beschreibt Hildegard Tellmann exemplarisch: Der Lebenswille, die Auseinandersetzung mit religiösen Sinnfragen, die Beziehungen, das kreative Schreiben.

Ein III. Teil wendet sich der verbesserten Praxis der Zukunft zu und versucht, die in der Interpretation der Erfahrungen Maxie Wanders gewonnenen Erkenntnisse in Impulse für Trauernde und ihre BegleiterInnen umzusetzen. So können Trauernde selbst am Beispiel Maxie Wanders lernen, Gefühle zuzulassen und innere Kräfte zu mobilisieren; eine Möglichkeit der Selbsthilfe ist außerdem der Anschluß an entsprechende Gruppen. "Professionelle" TrauerbegleiterInnen sollten dem großen Bedürfnis nach solidarischer Beziehung Rechnung tragen (können) – zunächst einmal durch Aufmerksamkeit für Trauernde und ihren Begleitungsbedarf, dann auch durch entsprechende Kenntnisse und Fähigkeiten. Spezielle Formen professioneller Trauerhilfe sind Trauerseminare und Trauertherapien. Einige Aspekte zur Begleitung antizipatorischer Trauer bei Kranken und Sterbenden sowie ein reflektierender Ausblick runden die Arbeit ab.

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Abraham Christian Käußl

Aidsröschen, oder: Ich werde am Du. Die "Therapeutische Beziehung" in der Begleitung von HIV-Infizierten und AIDS-kranken Frauen und Männern – eine qualitative Studie.

Abraham Christian Käußl legt mit dieser Arbeit eine theoretisch fundierte empirische Studie zu Eigenart und Bedeutung der Begleitungsbeziehung mit HIV-infizierten und AIDS-kranken Frauen und Männern vor.

Gerade die HIV-Infektion und AIDS-Erkrankung lassen Beziehung problematisch werden; oft beherrscht die Angst vor Ansteckung die Sozialkontakte. Daher stellt sich die Frage, wie im Rahmen einer "professionellen" Betreuung die Beziehungen zwischen BegleiterInnen und AIDS-Kranken bzw. HIV-Infizierten aussehen können. "Welche Erfahrungen haben beide Gruppen bisher miteinander gemacht, wie sieht so eine Beziehung aus, was ist an ihr typisch, wie verhält sich die alltägliche Realität zu den anfänglichen Vorstellungen, welche Wünsche haben beide Gruppen aneinander?" (S.8)

Diese eher beschreibende Perspektive wird ergänzt durch die Vermutung, eine solche Beziehung sei zugleich therapeutische Beziehung: "Die Beziehung zwischen Infizierten und Begleitern kann so zum Ort der Heilung werden." (S.44).

Hieran schließt sich das (pastoral)theologische Interesse der Arbeit an: Was bedeutet die Beziehung in der AIDS-Begleitung theologisch? "Ist es eine Möglichkeit, Gott und sein Reich zu verkünden, indem wir uns ganz einfach auf menschliche Beziehungen einlassen?" (S.9). Dieses Erkenntnisinteresse (in seinen verschiedenen Dimensionen) spiegelt sich im Aufbau der Arbeit. In einem Theoretischen Teil (nach der Einleitung der II. Hauptteil) wird das Vorwissen des Forschers expliziert. Das Kapitel AIDS (1.) bietet die wichtigsten medizinischen und psychosozialen Informationen sowie staatliche und kirchliche Stellungnahmen zu dem Phänomen. In den kirchlichen Stellungnahmen deuten sich bereits theologische (An)Fragen an.

Im Sinn einer Begriffserklärung führen die beiden folgende Abschnitte aus, was unter "Begleitung" (2.) und "Therapeutischer Beziehung" (3.) verstanden werden soll. Entsprechend zur besonderen Situation der Begleitung von HIV-infizierten und AIDS-kranken Menschen werden spezielle Probleme wie die Begleitung von Menschen mit sexuellen Problemen (2.1.5) und Sterbebegleitung (2.2.) angesprochen. Die Klä-

Die Darstellung des Beziehungsbegriffs bezieht sowohl Erkenntnisse der Transaktionsanalyse wie der Kommunikationstheorie mit ein. Ein letztes Kapitel beinhaltet explizit Theologische Perspektiven (4.). Kaleidoskopartig werden verschiedene Facetten einer "Theologie der AIDS-Beziehung" (S.54) betrachtet: die "Option für die Armen" der Bischofssynoden von Medellin und Puebla und Aussagen des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils; der subjektorientierte Ansatz des (selbst an AIDS verstorbenen) praktischen Theologen Henning Luther und Überlegungen von Walter Fürst zur Krise der Pastoral als >kairos<; ethymologische Beobachtungen zum Begriff >therapeuo< im NT und ein Blick auf die Praxis Jesu. Der folgende III. Teil widmet sich der Methode der qualitativen Forschung allgemein und des narrativen Interviews im besonderen. Wissenschaftstheoretische und forschungspraktische Grundlagen werden beschrieben, schwerpunktmäßig die Durchführung und Auswertung des narrativen Interviews. Diese Offenlegung der eigenen Vorgehensweise wird abgerundet durch die Darstellung der konkreten Interviewsituation und der beiden Interviewleitfäden. Im IV. Teil steht die Auswertung der Interviews im Mittelpunkt. Auf der Grundlage von Sequenzanalyse und Bündelung der angesprochenen Themen unter Überschriften (vgl. 1. Vorgehensweise) werden die Inhalte und Ergebnisse der Interviews dargestellt. Nach erläuternden Vorbemerkungen (1.-3.) geht es zunächst um Grundkonstellationen (4.) und Voraussetzungen der Beziehungen zwischen Infizierten/Kranken und BetreuerInnen: Hier spielen medizinische Faktoren ebenso eine Rolle wie die Rahmenbedingungen der Wohngruppe, die eigene Motivation und biographische Vorerfahrungen in der Herkunftsfamilie und in der Drogen- und Schwulenszene. In einem zweiten Schritt wird das Beziehungsgeschehen (5.) näher betrachtet. Dazu gehören Rollen- und Kommunikationsverhalten beider Seiten (5.2.-5.3.), und noch einmal werden die lebensgeschichtlichen Faktoren (besonders der Infizierten/Kranken) beschrieben, die sich auf die Beziehung auswirken (5.7.). Noch einmal zentriert auf den Begriff "Beziehung" werden in einem eigenen Unterpunkt (5.6.) Charakteristika der erfahrenen Begleiterbeziehungen zusammengestellt (wie z.B. Funktionalität, Gebundenheit an Personen, Angewiesenheit auf BetreuerInnen). Weitere Abschnitte widmen sich spezifischen Themen in den Beziehungen wie Angst (5.8.), Sexualität (5.9.) und den Wünschen (5.10.).

Der letzte Teil (6.) nimmt bezug auf die eingangs aufgestellte These, Begleitungsbeziehungen mit HIV-infizierten und AIDS-kranken Frauen und Männern könnten therapeutische Beziehungen sein. Aussagen der Befragten zeigen ansatzhaft, wo im Beziehungsgeschehen Heilung geschieht (6.2.). Daraus ergeben sich Überlegungen zur theologi-

schen Integration dieser Ergebnisse (6.3.): Aus eigener Beobachtung beschreibt Abraham Christian Käufl, wo kirchliche Verkündigung an Grenzen stößt, wo aber auch gelebte und reflektierte Ansätze einer Theologie zu finden sind. Abgerundet wird die Arbeit durch einen eher meditativen V. Teil:

Wie im Märchen vom Dornröschen die Beziehung erst durch Widerstände hindurch erkämpft werden muß, dann aber zum Erwachen und zum Leben bringt, so brauchen auch "Aidsröschen" in ihren Verwundungen und Abschottungen Menschen, die sich mutig und geduldig um die Beziehung mühen. Dieser Primat der Beziehung erinnert an das dialogische Prinzip Martin Bubers, das zugleich den Horizont öffnet für die Beziehung zum größeren Du. Darum schließt ein Gebet von Michel Quoist die Arbeit ab.

Stellungnahme des Beirats der Konferenz der deutschsprachigen Pastoraltheologen zur Amtsenthebung von Jaques Gaillot als Bischof von Evreux

Die Amtsenthebung von Jaques Gaillot als Bischof von Evreux ist nicht nur für das betroffene Bistum und die Kirche von Frankreich von Bedeutung. Diese Maßnahme betrifft auch das Selbstverständnis der Kirche und ihr Ansehen in der Gesellschaft. Als Pastoraltheologen und Pastoraltheologinnen, deren Aufgabe es ist, sich mit dem Leben und Wirken der Kirche in der Welt zu befassen, weisen wir daher auf folgende Gesichtspunkte hin:

- 1) Die Bischofskongregation in Rom beruft sich darauf, Bischof Gaillot habe sich als unfähig erwiesen, das Amt der Einheit auszuüben. Wir teilen die Sorge um das hohe Gut der Einheit der Kirche und wissen, wie schwierig es ist, diese Sorge in der heutigen Zeit wahrzunehmen. Es darf aber nicht übersehen werden, daß die Einheit der Kirche von menschlicher Seite nicht erzwungen werden kann, sondern ein Geschenk des Heiligen Geistes ist. Im Vertrauen auf sein Wirken kann die Kirche ein offener Raum für kontroverse Meinungen und für theologische Vielfalt sein. Gleichzeitig ist es die Aufgabe der Leitung, in Konflikten zu vermitteln. Gerade in der Ermöglichung eines respektvollen Dialogs erweist sich der Dienst der Einheit. Nur unter diesen Voraussetzungen werden Entscheidungen möglich, die dem Selbstverständnis der Kirche entsprechen und ihr Zukunft ermöglichen.
- 2) Die schwerwiegende Entscheidung, einen Bischof aus seiner Diözese zu entfernen, erfordert nicht nur eine höchstmögliche Transparenz des Verfahrens, sondern auch eine klare inhaltliche Begründung. Beides ist im römischen Kommuniqué nicht gegeben.
- 3) Im Konflikt um Bischof Gaillot zeigt sich einmal mehr das Fehlen einer kirchlichen Schiedsgerichtsbarkeit, die die Rechte der Person schützt, sowie der Mangel an institutionalisierten Formen der Mitsprache des Volkes Gottes.
- 4) Die Amtsenthebung des Bischofs Gaillot erfolgte mit dem erklärten Ziel, die kirchliche Einheit wiederherzustellen. Im Blick auf andere Bistümer, in denen eine Spaltung zwischen Bischof und großen Teilen des Volkes Gottes droht, stellt sich aber die Frage, ob im Fall Gaillot das Argument der gefährdeten Einheit andere inhaltliche Differenzen um den Weg der Kirche überdeckt, die jedoch nicht offengelegt werden.

- 5) In der öffentlichen Meinung steht der Name des Bischofs Gaillot für das Engagement der Kirche für Benachteiligte. Durch seine Amtsenthebung wird dem Mißverständnis Vorschub geleistet, ein unkonventioneller Einsatz für Arme und an den Rand der Gesellschaft Gedrängte sei in der Kirche heute nicht erwünscht. Wir Pastoraltheologen und Pastoraltheologinnen sind überzeugt, daß die Zukunft der Kirche wesentlich davon abhängen wird, ob es ihr gelingt, gerade auch eine Kirche der Entrechteten zu sein. Bischof Gaillot hat dies auf die prägnante Formel gebracht: "Eine Kirche, die nicht dient, dient zu nichts."

Mainz, 13.2.1995

Für den Beirat der Konferenz der deutschsprachigen Pastoraltheologen
gez.: Prof. Dr. Leo Karrer, Vorsitzender

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