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Is Educational Ministry on THE ROCK or the rocks?

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Part I. The Problem: Is Educational Ministry Losing Its Focus?

Eugene Peterson says he is angry. Too many pastors in North America are "abandoning their calling...[and] gone whoring after other gods".¹ Not that these pastors have left their congregations for other jobs; they continue to draw salaries from their parishes but they no longer *live* ministry among their people. Peterson claims too many pastors are functioning as "program managers" or "shopkeepers", packaging goods that can keep the diversity of old and new "customers" happy, or at least keep them coming back to worship—with cash in hand.

Criticisms like this are not new in the church. It prompts us to ask what reality is underlying these attacks. Peterson is a Presbyterian pastor concerned about his denomination, but could this also be a source of discontent among Lutherans? At least one Lutheran has recorded his discontent with the number of pastors who have lost touch with their people's story as well as with our Church's story and vision.² Pastor Biles is disturbed by so many colleagues who remain aloof from the community they serve and who seem unwilling to engage in the kind of dialogue that is meaningful to people in the pew.

Indeed, most of us have seen or heard of members in Lutheran congregations leaving to follow after some itinerant simply because that personality projects a resolute commitment to radical discipleship, holding up distinct images that invite response. Whether or not one considers these personalities as "flakes", they appear to have found ways to focus

ministry where peoples' needs are raw and craving fulfillment. But have they focused on authentic human needs, or are they more like neurotic needs, or perhaps even "consumer wants" which a certain slice of our culture has whipped into religious fervor?

Focus in ministry: that appears to be the issue, or more specifically, how do we assert leadership in the nurturing of healthy faith and life? In our pluralistic and fluid culture, pastoral responsibility needs to focus its efforts. Pastors are called to spiritual leadership, bringing God's gospel and God's people together. It involves utilizing binocular vision; we maintain focus on the gospel as we help people focus their life needs and life service on essentials. Yet pastors and laity are often on different wave lengths when it comes to bringing God's story and the congregation's story together. Part I of this article flushes out some of the issues that have complicated the nurturing role in pastoral ministry today and brought painful tensions between laity and clergy, tensions that thwart spiritual growth among both laity and clergy. Part II will explore some directions that signal renewed hope and perhaps begin resolution of a problematic situation in our church's educational ministry.

There are so many distractions that throw us off focus. The explosion of knowledge, goods, and services today leaves our people feeling themselves at the mercy of experts or "sellers" who manipulate facts and techniques in order to sell us inferior goods. This includes experts trying to sell us "the goods" on God. How do we guard against distortions? Unfortunately, we are so often beguiled into myopic scrutiny of incidentals, pursuing a trail of "distorted" facts, that we become easy prey for one whose intent it is to distort our focus of the overall vision of God's Kingdom.

Needless to say, it is not easy to paint a face on the one who would distort the focus of people in our congregations since there are so many different influences. There are both secular and religious zealots vying for our attention from the left and the right. Secular zealots point to the errors in our diets, our lifestyle, or our attention to some inner wealth of being. At the same time religious zealots abound everywhere, all pointing us to some distortion of "God's" facts or some miscarriage of moral life. For example, hardly a Lutheran congregation in

Canada has not felt the influence of conservative fundamentalism (or rather incidentalism).³ Modern media have accentuated the presence of these influences in every home. It means that continuing education, such as group Bible study and reflective dialogue, needs to be carefully focused and universal participation encouraged in all congregations. But what is the pastor's focus or role in that vital venture?

Perhaps the most crippling feature distracting the pastor's focus in nurture has been the gradual encroachment of secular leadership models in the evolution of our modern pastoral identity. Many of the laity have not been a party to changes in the way some pastors have come to view themselves. For decades now, the secular image of "the professional" has become a popular leadership model among all vocations, perhaps especially among clergy in North America whose sagging esteem has sought to gain new integrity.⁴ So, pastors may have gained a certain integrity in professional function, notably as a therapist or manager; but they may have lost even more by subsequently secularizing the *focus* of the pastoral office to fit what Schoen (1983) called "the technological program" (p.31). That is a general trend in professionalism which seeks to apply the success of science and technology to every human endeavor for the well-being of civilization. It meant each discipline accumulated large bodies of *facts* (theory) and forged rigorous *techniques* (method) which practitioners of the profession carried around as in a "black bag" and judiciously dispensed at any scent of a problem. In terms of ministry, the emphasis shifted from living as *faithful witnesses* to performing *professional tasks*, be it building new churches, persuading prospective members, counselling the troubled, or packaging programs that win. So, when pastors began viewing themselves as professionals, their sense of vocation shifted from one of being a sacramental person at the head of a faith community (the "office" of ministry) toward one of applying know-how to fixing problems and sustaining success (the function). And the emphasis fell on being *effective* more than on being faithful.

This can sometimes precipitate a storm of conflict between laity and clergy on expectations about pastoral duties—and not only regarding pastor's duties but the pastor's *being* among the people. For example, if certain laity hold a more traditional view of the pastor's role, such as the character of "the

Master"⁵, it is not simply a matter of what the pastor should be doing in terms of ministry, but it is perhaps equally important what his or her *being* in the midst of them means to people. On the other hand, if the pastor has assumed "the professional" role model, his or her emphasis may fall on using a complement of skills effectively on parishioners or "clients". Thus, tension over role expectations and different foci in ministry can lead to frustrating, no-win situations between clergy and laity. Unfortunately, the appearance of Niebuhr's "Pastoral Director",⁶ which was an attempt to "baptize" the notion of a professional clergy with sound theological focus, did not stem the tide of secularization in the pastoral office. As modernity flourished, no clear focus held any ground on what pastoral ministry in the church should be about.

For many laity, too, their own development has led to altered perceptions of the pastor, particularly their perceptions on the pastor's *use of power* in the congregation. For decades, pastors have been smarting under the growing challenge to their authority from their own laity as well as from society at large. Compliance from laity can no longer be assumed when pastors teach, whether the topic is business, family life, ethics, or even theology. Harris laments how some pastors chose to react in unhealthy ways which further inflamed pastoral relationships; those responses took the form of dogmatic confrontation, passive acquiescence, or passive resistance, but rarely did it involve true dialogue.⁷ One might expect the pastor's authority will likely remain diminished now that most parishes have trained professionals as members who can also reflect critically and decisively. Clearly, there has been little training for laity or clergy that properly prepared them to anticipate, understand, or resolve the collision of traditions, expectations, and roles occurring in parishes.

Farley identifies another side to this stress point which is the gulf in *theological* education that persists between laity and clergy. He points to a growing estrangement happening between clergy and laity concerning fundamental assumptions about faith, theology, and even learning itself.⁸ Accentuated by the professionalization of clergy education, a longstanding notion has survived that only pastors need to embrace investigative scholarship in learning about faith and the Bible. The

laity have enough with learning the catechism and listening to sound preaching in the context of weekly worship, a notion known as "the homiletic paradigm of how faith occurs" (p. 96). When offered, adult education often shows little depth beyond a Sunday School format. Concerning lay education, Farley asks, "How is it that high-school age church members move easily and quickly into the complex world of computers, foreign languages, DNA, and calculus, and cannot even make a beginning in historical-critical interpretation of a single text of Scripture?" (p. 92) The assumption is that such in-depth, investigative learning (i.e., the theological process) is not essential to faith formation among laity. Is this a fair principle of lay education in a time when lay people are bombarded by influences like TV fundamentalism on one side and the excesses of secular consumerism on the other?

I believe there are more than a few pastors in the Lutheran Church who have experienced these stress points in ministry. They experience this gulf in education when they attempt to preach and teach the Word, *as God has made way into their own faith*. These attempts have often produced contention between pastors and their people. We have seen these differences surface at conventions. Can we learn to cultivate educational principles common to both laity and clergy so that we can bridge that gulf wherever it exists and learn to focus our life and ministry as one? Or is educational ministry on the rocks? Perhaps that was why Peterson observed so many pastors shying away from engaging people in the trenches; they are pastors who prefer just keeping shop, keeping the customers happy, and keeping the beans from spilling.

As we approach the third millennium in the church's history, we need educational renewal. I believe there is a need for both clergy and laity to participate in conferences, classes, seminars or whatever it takes to bring about dialogue on pastoral identity and the role of ministry for a changed and changing world. I am pleased to see that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada has launched a *Study of the Practice of Ministry* in 1989. I suspect the observations and reflections noted there strike a chord among those attempting ministry in the church.

Part II. Towards a Solution: Practicing Educational Ministry Together

The growing awareness and assertiveness among all peoples has exposed us to the great diversity in the church. Managing this diversity of beliefs and preferences among lay people in Canadian Lutheran parishes is sometimes enough to earn each pastor a Nobel Peace prize. And one could likely say the laity also deserve top marks in tolerance for enduring the diversity among various clergy who have served them over the years. It leaves many pastors nervous and ambivalent about providing serious leadership in certain areas of ministry like adult education. So, how ought pastors to exercise their theological competence to help a sophisticated laity focus life and ministry?

Much of the difficulty of maintaining focus in pastoral ministry was attributed earlier to the increasing ambiguity surrounding the role of pastor in parish ministry. Many pastors appear to experience role diffusion, or at least role exhaustion. The influence of the "professional" leadership model on traditional pastoral roles has added to the expectations of what pastors do in ministry; yet little thought is given to clarifying the conflicting perceptions that have emerged among laity and clergy. The growing challenge issued to pastoral authority is a feature of this ambiguity. Imbuing pastors with professional competence was supposed to enhance pastoral prestige as they "dispensed" their craft among laity, but it has more often served to heighten confusion as role expectations became increasingly diverse.

Help for educational ministry begins with recognizing and addressing this authority problem. Schoen speaks of a growing irrelevance in the way most professionals practice; they are not always able to fit the "rigor" they have learned into the situations of modern life. When applying their know-how, professionals tend to assess and fix situations according to standardized labels and solutions—supposedly based on the hard facts of theory and research. But much of that theory appears to be out of touch with the complex reality experienced in the field. In the Lutheran Church, some laity appear to identify with that diagnosis. Echoing comments like that of Pastor Biles at the outset, Diehl and Waters⁹ point to the increasing

difficulty pastors have translating the gospel on Sunday in a way that fosters an experience of grace and moral relevance among laity on Monday.

Schoen asks practicing professionals a hard question in all this, "Shall the practitioner stay on the high, hard ground where he[sic] can practice rigorously, as he understands rigor... Or shall he descend to the swamps where he can engage the most important and challenging problems?"¹⁰ Schoen is suggesting that professionals must consciously remove the disciplined "lenses" of rigor so they can learn to see the particulars of each situation and begin practicing what he calls "tacit knowing-in-action". They do not forsake their learning but use it more intuitively. For pastors, it involves listening and reflecting *with* laity in the world where they work and live; together they learn to "name" the situation in a way that helps the pastor's message and resources reach the laity.

Research by John Harris (1977) also indicated that changes were inevitable in the way pastors bring their authority or influence to bear fruit in the parish. "Pastors are learning to see that having influence does not mean calling the shots" (p. 48f.). He suggested that "new interactive forms of partnership between pastors and laity" was a sign of shared ministry to come. Indeed, it is not unusual to see worship bulletins and newsletters today indicate every member of the parish as "the minister". In this regard, Don Messer has presented some contemporary images of ministry which may serve to renew focus and vision for *both* lay and clergy.¹¹ In particular, he draws on the paradoxical images of "wounded healer", "servant leader", "political mystic", "enslaved liberator", and "practical theologian" in hopes of stimulating the modern church to see the richness of its authority and mission for ministry. But how do these changing images of pastoral and lay authority today connect with traditional images still ingrained in the minds of many? How can it result in laity and clergy *growing* together?

Egil Grislis re-introduces us to the orthodox image of pastoral authority characterized in the Lutheran tradition.¹² Pastoral authority, as vested in the *office*, is one of servanthood (emphasizing humility and function) and grace (emphasizing sacramental gift). Modelled after Philippians 2:5-7, it means the pastor empties himself or herself of any self-made importance (or secular-styled function?) so that God's Spirit might

effectively use the “earthen vessel” in the pastoral office to present Jesus Christ. Whether the pastor preaches, teaches, counsels privately, or presides at corporate worship, his or her success in fulfilling that office function is determined by the extent to which the people whom the pastor is serving have actually encountered Jesus Christ (p. 77f). Now, to hustle oneself out of the way sufficiently to let Jesus’ presence come through requires a heavy dose of humility indeed! It prompts us to declare, as Erwin Buck sardonically asked in a sermon at a pastor’s installation, “Who do we think we are?” But, then, that’s where the “sacramental gift” takes over—to the extent the human vessel has “emptied” himself or herself and allowed Christ room to appear.

This orthodox view is easily recognized as a “sacramental” view of ministry sung in a distinctly Lutheran key (the real Presence). Yet this is not intended to make ordination to ministry a sacrament; no special dispensation of grace or holiness is given to pastors beyond that given to all Christians at Baptism. Messer’s paradoxical images, especially the “servant-leader”, are present here and more or less assure a perpetual ambiguity surrounding pastoral identity. However, an important footnote is needed here. For pastors and laity to work together, as in *learning* together or *ministering* together, both laity and clergy need to “empty” themselves in the way all Christians are to become “little Christs” and channels of God’s grace. On this point, Grislis brings out Luther’s insistence on the priesthood and sinner/sainthood of all believers which puts everyone on equal footing.

Nevertheless, to establish “order” within congregations, leadership status needed to be accorded someone, particularly when the Word and the Means of Grace were administered. It is as though the pastoral office presented a “holy guidance” that was to engender a kind of order and civility among the community of faith in worship. In this way, the community’s interest and agency concerning the flow of God’s grace and initiative—in as much as we are given control of that—was vested in the pastoral office.¹³ But what about the pastor’s involvement in guiding other parish activities, such as in the administration of parish business or in establishing educational encounters? In these situations, do pastors manifest Christ’s presence any differently from the laity?

In other words, how does the orthodox Lutheran image of the pastor's office translate into today's parish? How does the *professional* pastor of today make Christ "sacramentally present" to the parishioners in his or her charge? Moreover, does Christ's presence not become particularly delicate to "translate" into modern time when so much of the pastor's educational preparation brings a dimension to his or her faith development that, in most cases, is not experienced by the laity? How are we to deal with the gulf in schooling between laity and clergy, the gulf of which Farley (1989) speaks and of which Hadden warned us decades ago in *The Gathering Storm*?¹⁴ Are laity today not equally as sophisticated in both their cognitive and social capacities to reflect and evaluate in matters of faith as they must do in secular matters? Is it not part of the church's responsibility to develop the critical capacities of the laity so that their faith can survive bogus claims in both the religious and secular realms?

It is one thing to encourage our people to go with the faith (trust) of a child; but it is quite another to encourage they continue with the faith (belief or understanding) of a child! Unfortunately, many people confuse the need to be constant in faith (as in "trust") with the need to maintain a constant belief. Now, we may all put a hold on growing from time to time and live aloof of any new understanding, perhaps out of a need to embrace stability in a stormy period. We might call this a *tolerant* closed-system faith where persons are presently satisfied that their belief system is the best or, at least a necessary, construction of reality for giving rudder and keel to their current course. Yet they will not say "never" to adjusting their beliefs, nor to offering acceptance and fellowship to others who choose different interpretations of the same experience or biblical heritage. Indeed, these Christians can often have great empathy for those in the midst of uncertainty; they are the necessary, stabilizing partners among the community of faith and often serve as "lighthouses" for those struggling in a sea of doubt.

But, for some, faith tends to become petrified within an *intolerant* closed-system of belief, one which tries to explain all dimensions of life within one neatly organized, static way of looking at reality. In the process, however, the closed system permanently reduces complexities and ambiguities which

people encounter in life, whether in current situations, in tradition, or in Scripture texts; these situations are interpreted so as to remove complexity and ambiguity. Unfortunately, such persons often do not see their position as an interpretation! They believe their particular understanding *is* God's Word.

But this ignores or limits the New Testament witness to who we are as "The Church". We are a great diversity called to be one in Christ. Thus, to renew educational ministry, we need to restore our identity in and our vision of The Church. In this regard, a vital difference distinguishes the pastor from the "professional". Unlike professionals, pastors do not deal in clients *from* a community; they *are* the community.¹⁵ Together, bishops, pastors, and laity are the church; they are the Body and Presence of Christ in the world. To be that Body, they need to be a *communion*. Therefore, for pastors and laity to begin growing together in faith and communion, to begin sharing focus in ministry, they need to bridge the gulf in understanding (real or imagined) between them. To bridge the gulf developing between laity and clergy, education in the church needs to foster *the continual growth of faith's understanding for every member*. We cannot close ourselves off from each other or we miss being confronted with other "missing pieces" of reality as experienced by the *whole* Body.

We cannot afford to hedge on our educational efforts in the church for fear we may invoke greater reaction from those with an intolerant, self-satisfied faith; we must risk dialogue and expect a certain amount of fallout from honest interaction. We must risk it if we want to transform isolated *reaction* into community *interaction*; God knows we are not wanting for "reactions" in the church's life together. But how do we intercept that "we-they" kind of thinking and begin seeing and believing in the tarnished mosaic that is the church on earth?

Moreover, to this analysis, we could add other secular experiences that polarize and disrupt the experience of true community today—such as the fragmentation by age, vocation, interests, and membership in other social institutions—all of which create subcultures that leave us increasingly insulated and alienated, with fewer avenues for building mutual understanding. Similarly, religion on this continent is strongly influenced by a rugged individualism, the American "habit of heart",¹⁶ which also works its attitude against the church as

a "communion of saints". It is a "habit" inducing people to see religious faith as an individual experience that does not need community, at least not that community manifest in the visibly tarnished church.

Nevertheless, however tarnished, diverse, and disappointing the promised Reign of God may appear to us, the church is all of us put together. That church is the incarnation of the One whom we await; there is no other. As Neuhaus insists, we have no mandate to speak of the "true" Church of Christ apart from the divided and blemished institutional church. The "whore of Christendom" you see is the "Bride of Christ" who will one day be fully transformed.¹⁷

Clearly, something is needed that can bring integration and unity to the expanding, fragmenting confusion which so many experience in the church, particularly that experienced in the pastoral office. Pastors "drifting with the current" need something to provide a stabilizing "keel" in their *function* and *being* and in the midst of the "storm" rising between laity and clergy.

A key realization assisting the recovery of focus in pastoral ministry involves the promise of Christ to come *in the midst of the church's communion*. Moreover, there is a way to understand and practice Christian nurture that may help solve the problem of identity and focus in pastoral ministry with the laity and it may help enhance true communion in the church, too. It involves encouraging all our members, but especially pastors, to live from a *hermeneutical* principle in all aspects of ministry, and not just when exegeting biblical texts. I have written of this approach to ministry on a previous occasion.¹⁸ Moreover, it builds on the research of Schoen, Harris, Poles and Miller, and others who also advocate approaches to church education and ministry that strike the same chord—the need for laity and clergy to practice reflection together in the context of free interaction.¹⁹ What I recommend is often called a "phenomenological" hermeneutic because it presents a "whole life" orientation that can guide all pastoral functions as well as his or her being with people in the community of faith.

It is not my intent to outline a pedagogy or paradigm of educational ministry at this point, only to convey the basic orientation from which to engage in nurture or ministry with people. Basically, a phenomenological hermeneutic means that

one approaches all life's experiences in a reflective or interpretive perspective. It involves sorting and integrating the possible meanings or effects phenomena have, and then thoughtfully guiding the subsequent course of events in as much as we share that responsibility with others. Of course, this describes what many people already do intuitively and my concern is to bring that to light as a common footing for laity and clergy in our journey and ministry together. For example, as I have suggested elsewhere: "Such a hermeneutic could help pastors disclose the many meanings 'written' in the lives of their parishioners—especially the meanings surrounding shared experiences of things like corporate worship or the local newscast."²⁰

This kind of hermeneutic does not become so much a scientific, objective study of people as a focused dialogue with people. It expands on the hermeneutic developed from this perspective for sermon preparation which involves focused dialogue with the biblical texts. A "focused dialogue" means that a guiding principle or discipline is present to help alert participants to moments in the dialogue which need further clarification of the people's story or renewed confrontation with God's Story. In the case of our distant tradition and biblical texts, that guidance may involve the use of literary critical methods. In the case of more recent tradition or current situations happening in the faith community, guidance may mean using ethnographic methods such as "triangulation" or cross-checking between multiple accounts of the same phenomena under exploration. The bottom line is helping the people explore, understand, and appreciate the richness of meaning present in our spiritual heritage; that is a big part of the pastor's role and a big part of our celebration together as Christians. Richness in meaning is not cause for anxiety but for joy in the opportunity to grow together in our understanding.

Ricoeur talks about the many possible interpretations or the "surplus of meaning" hidden in the development and use of human language which lies embedded in any text.²¹ In the end, he says, we do not have access to "prove" which is the precise meaning or "truth" intended *behind* any text; that is why controversy continues over interpretations of Scripture texts. Indeed, that is likely why the gospel writers preserved so many accounts of the same events when God was incarnate among

us in Jesus. Extending this metaphor to modern times, we would suggest there is a greater surplus of meaning in our varied *experiences* of God's Word today (and God's "Silence"). That is, our experiences today likely have a greater thickness and depth of meaning, going beyond our attempts to describe them.²² Their thickness is enhanced by our increased *social* awareness, our contacts with how other people experience and make sense of life today. Their depth is enhanced by our growing *historical* awareness, the heritage of previous generations who have lived and made meaning of the biblical tradition.

Leroy Howe helped clarify what this means for nurture in the church when he presented his case for orienting all ministry from the perspective of *Pastor as Educator*.²³ He, too, sees the interpretive process informing the various operations in which pastors are involved. Similarly, Howe points to the increased diversity of experience and relativity of meaning invading our faith communities today. He deems it the result of a more secular and pluralistic world in general and calls the church into dialogue.

What this means for the ministry of interpretation is that, if any learning is to take place, all the relationships between conflicting points of view, . . . between the many horizons of meaning, must continually be made explicit, but without serious prospect either of absolute differentiation or of hierarchical ordering. In contrast with neo-conservative proposals to insulate believers from contamination by varieties of outlook, the context of learning, within and without the church, must be made *broader* than any envisioned to date.²⁴

It behooves us, then, to begin understanding ourselves better by exploring and sharing our meaning-making with others in the faith community. In the process we will discover "the communion of saints". The New Testament is replete with admonitions that, if anyone would be "in Christ" they need to sustain fellowship "in the Body of Christ". We not only will be, we *are* the communion of saints. For pastoral ministry to continue reflecting "the presence of Christ" among the faithful, for the focus of the Church's educational ministry to remain firmly "on Christ, the Rock", we need to draw together and close the gap in our communications. We are invited to discover our sameness amid the differences among us. The more we understand our differences, the more we will dispel our fear and distrust of each other and discover what makes us One

with Christ in our midst. In Jesus' prayer for us to be one, we are invited to live in faith (that is, in trust) toward each other, that means a caring and perceptive openness—regardless how satisfied or insecure we may feel about our present understanding in faith.

Recovering true communion among the saints or recovering the oneness of the Body of Christ is an essential feature for the survival of congregations today. So many Christian experiences which are vital to the community of faith hinge on being of one spirit and of one mind in terms of *trusting in Christ*; they include experiences like *koinonia*, the common cup, the confession and absolution. But “unity” or “one-ness” can no longer be defined as total conformity in understanding. Since so much of faith development is uniquely personal and, for most of us, shaped by different faith communities, the “links” in the faith chain making up our communities are bound to differ. Yet, as long as all the links are inter-locked, the chain holds. The church is an ever-growing circle that resists all forces that would break that chain.

By sharing a hermeneutical focus, we can learn to understand and appreciate the diversities, and even the incongruities, within ourselves as well as our neighbors. God must have loved diversity, having created each of us unique. Still, God must love our communion more, having re-created us as One Body in Christ.

Notes

- ¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans) 1.
- ² D.V. Biles, *Pursuing Excellence in Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1988).
- ³ Some of the attractive “incidentals” fundamentalism promotes include their fondness for apocalyptic prophecies woven together from isolated verses of Scripture or their un-critical study of texts which wrenches the Genesis creation stories from their context in attempt to represent these verses as objective, scientific data rivalling Darwin's thesis on evolution. These concerns are incidental to salvation, but perhaps a more fundamental concern related to these incidentals is their doctrine of the *Bible* in place of our Lutheran doctrine of the *Word*. A fundamental difference is their insistence on the “inerrancy” of the Bible. Logistical problems emerge immediately; after all, whose version is inerrant? We all believe the *Word of God* is inerrant; but it has been our attempts

to re-present or interpret that Word into *human* words that are fallible. None of our human languages can “hold” or transmit the Divine Word perfectly. Since there is no perfect or “generic” language created by God, we all proceed cautiously—as did the first Councils—humbly praying for God’s inspiration as together we reflect, research, and re-present God’s Word into human language for each generation. The canon of the Bible remains normative for that task, but not inerrant.

- 4 See J.C. Hough and J.B. Cobb, *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), or D. Schoen, *The Reflective Practitioner* (New York: Basic Books) for a discussion of the role played by the professional leadership model in the evolution of pastors’ vocational identity.
- 5 Hough and Cobb (6ff) note Osborn’s research which cites “The Master” as the dominant pastoral model until this century. This characterization of the pastor made him or her an authoritative institution (the “office”) with respect to theological, spiritual, or religious matters.
- 6 H.R. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper, 1956).
- 7 J.C. Harris, *Stress, Power, and Ministry* (Alban Institute Inc., 1977).
- 8 E. Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 85 ff.
- 9 William E. Diehl, “To Expand Our Ministry”, and B. Waters, “Technology as a Problem for Christian Ministry”, *Word & World* VII/4 (1989) 345ff.; 385ff.
- 10 Schoen, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 42.
- 11 Don Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989).
- 12 Egil Grislis, “The Lutheran Pastor and the Meaning of Authority”, *Consensus*, 15/1 (1989) 63–80.
- 13 The paradox or ambiguity reflected in this orthodox Lutheran image of pastoral authority appears to be the same paradox or ambiguity reflected in the New Testament between the “ministerial authority” of the Pauline school and “spiritual indwelling authority” available to all Christians proclaimed in the Johannine school. See E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroads, 1984) 25ff.
- 14 J.K. Hadden, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969).
- 15 Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (New York: Crossroads, 1989).
- 16 R. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
- 17 R. Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) 11.
- 18 Rolf Nosterud, “Congregation as Text: An Hermeneutic for Ministry”, *Podium* XXI/1 (1988) 22–24.

- 19 Besides being consistent with those already mentioned, such as Harris who called for more "integrative interaction", see also J.A. Poles and D.E. Miller, *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985); T.H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).
- 20 Nosterud, "Congregation As Text", 23.
- 21 P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: TCU Press, 1976).
- 22 J. Poling and D. Miller, *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 67.
- 23 Leroy T. Howe, "The Pastor as Educator", *Quarterly Review* 3/3 (1983) 18-32.
- 24 *Ibid.* 26.