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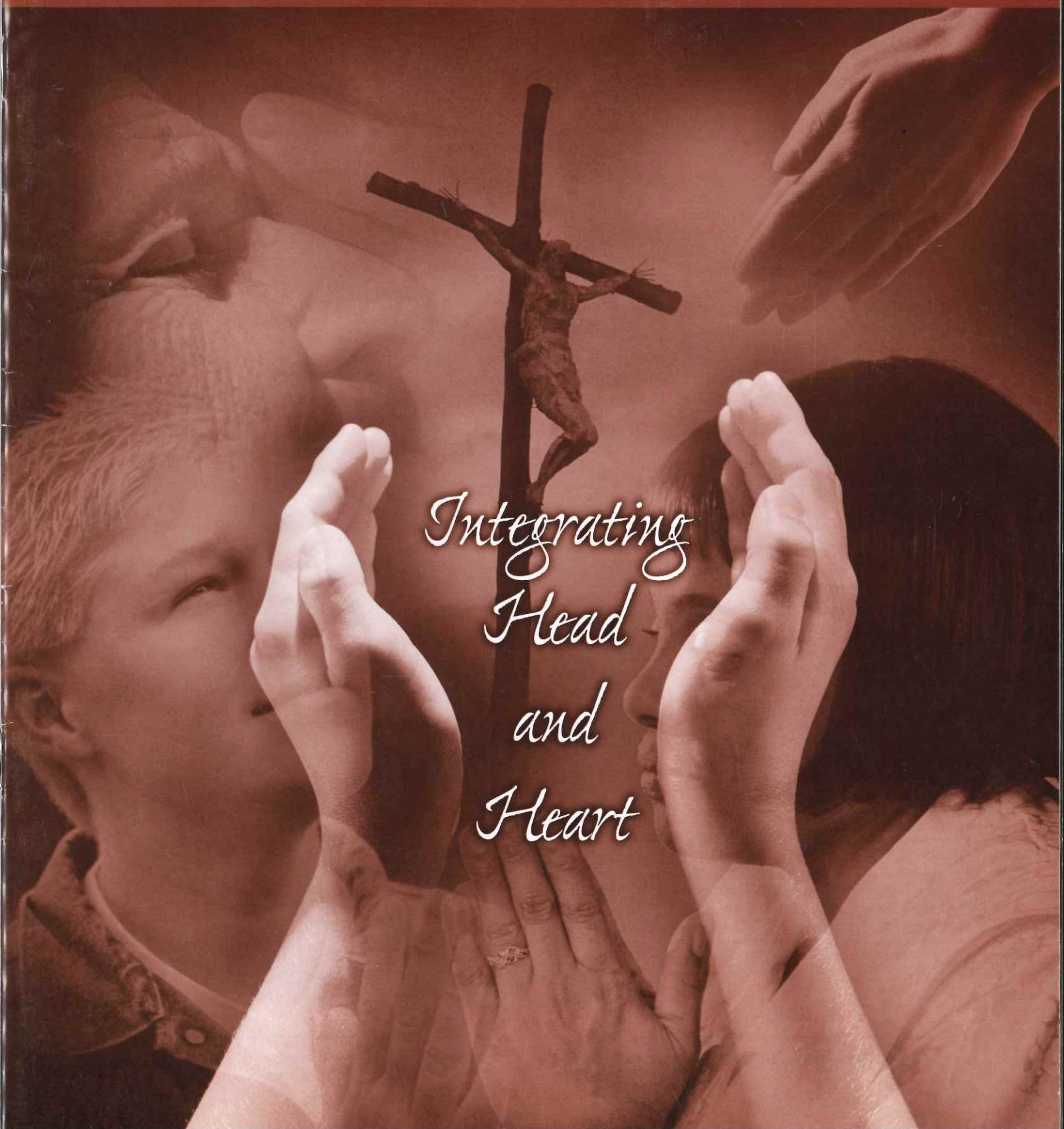
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THEOLOGY, NEWS AND NOTES

FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

OCTOBER 1998



*Integrating
Head
and
Heart*

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Integrating Head and Heart

BY ELIZABETH L. PATTERSON

Spirituality has become a fad. We have books, courses, and speakers on spirituality applied to everything from exercise to Fortune 500 leadership. This interest in spirituality is an open door for churches to move through, provided that first of all we have the knowledge and maturity to deal with the topic beyond the level of faddishness. We have a heritage and a history of the possibilities of life in the Spirit. And yet modern Protestantism has tended to remain ignorant of that inheritance.

The articles in this issue of *Theology, News and Notes* suggest how a church, or an interested Christian, might approach the topic. First, Gary Sattler's "letter" focuses on the particularity of the individual in providing spiritual direction. James Bradley emphasizes the importance of study as a spiritual discipline. I address questions of definition and context. Parker Palmer's contribution highlights guidelines and goals in teaching. Elizabeth Nordquist suggests how our churches might model an integrated, mature approach to Christian spirituality. William Mangrum relates his experiences with teenage spirituality. J. Alfred Smith reminds us of the centrality of spirituality in an African-American context.

Such discernment will enable our congregations, our students, and ourselves to appreciate and integrate the meat of this movement while avoiding either the Scylla of skepticism or the Charybdis of nondiscerning grazing at a smorgasbord that contains an amount of junk food along with that which nourishes.

Some of the articles in this issue are written by and for persons whose contexts or denominations have not had a recent history of fundamental attention to the Christian spiritual life. The experiences of the authors may encourage others. Other writers come from traditions of Christian spirituality whose faith communities have held this heritage more central. They remind us that, surrounded by clouds of witnesses, we open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts, and discover that we are all heirs together. ■



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Letter to a Spiritual Director

BY GARY R. SATTLER

Dear Dana,
Thanks for your note. So you've been asked to take program responsibility for the spiritual growth of your congregation. Congratulations! It is not surprising that you would be asked to shepherd that area. It is a very important part of the Christian life, more than simply the "Now that you're a Christian, there are a few rules to follow" in which we so often become entangled.

You know, you are the first friend and student who has asked me what I think about someone taking on such a task. Maybe it's because they think I have nothing helpful to say—or maybe it's because they know that in spite of my enthusiasm for the subject, my initial response will be a bit cautious. As I see it, this spirituality thing is a very big deal. And I imagine that is precisely why you have asked me my opinion.

In any case, I applaud you for delaying your decision until you have spent a bit of time in discernment. Too many of our colleagues would dash into a position of such magnitude without so much as a "Waddya' think?" to friends, God, or even to themselves. As a contemporary of Luther's said, "It is shameful for a person to rush into the pulpit like a pig to the trough." The same applies, I believe, to the teaching of spirituality. It is an honor to be a part of your process.

First, of course, I must say that—despite being one of my best students and a valued colleague—you are by no means fit for such a complex, demanding, and sacred task. Henri Nouwen reminds us that we can be competent in many things, but

we cannot be competent in God. Only God can be competent in that area. You are neither God—nor competent. Happily enough for us, God is for us and makes us into what Alan Jones calls "the competent incompetent." If you can settle for that rather ignominious title, keep reading.

Having said that, and assuming you are still reading, let me say that I imagine you will end up taking on that role, and that it will be good for you. While you are wrestling with the shouted and whispered messages of

Just as there is no such thing as "Lone Ranger" Christianity, there is no such thing as a cookie-cutter spirituality.

Scripture, teaching about Pachomius and Mechthild, about ways of listening and the meanings of different spiritual exercises, about points of divergence and convergence of "spirituality" (that wildly ambiguous word) and the rest of the Christian's life—you will also be learning humility. The insights and experiences of the sources you read, the colleagues you encounter, and the church members you engage will reveal the vast worlds you must yet explore, the poverty of your being that you resist knowing with remarkable cleverness, the raw and fiercely protected places in your soul that you have not yet offered to the excruciating and healing touch of Jesus.

You will be asked questions, and you will ask yourself ques-

tions. You will discover that people coming to you for wisdom are far beyond you in holiness. You will realize that there is one God, but many, many people. These things will push you to stay open to the possibilities God holds out to every one of us. I suspect that by now you are seeing how serious and precious I believe this enterprise to be. Were I a more courageous soul, I would lead every retreat and teach every course in bare feet. As it is, I try to hold that discolored attitude.

So, since you asked my advice, and assuming you end up pastoring in this particular field (remember, *pastor* simply means *shepherd*—an ignoble title until Jesus came along and elevated it), here is one of the things that seems critical to me.

A big issue, it seems—and here the spiritual quest, spiritual direction, and psychotherapy share a concern—is that blessed rage for order. That is, people seem to want to know what to do and how to do it. As if there is one *it* that can be known and done. This is a rather remarkable desire—eminently understandable, but hopelessly impossible. Erich Erickson wrote that a person becomes a therapist when he (or she) stops seeing a *case* and begins to see a *face*. So it is with the teaching and practicing of spirituality. It is profoundly momentary. It is irreducibly intersubjective. It is absolutely at the mercy of God. There are, I believe, spiritual direction programs that permit only the equivalent of "active listening" in the belief that advice, admonishment, correction, encouragement, and so forth, may interfere with the movement of God in the directee's life.

It seems to me that the very presence of another person—especially one with all the potential for transference and projection a spiritual director has—is already a meddling. The question is, is it a salutary or an unhelpful meddling? For example, is it in

the service of the director's needs or of the director's needs? Johannes Tauler pointed out in the fourteenth century that an unfaithful spiritual director is like a bad hunting dog. Instead of bringing the rabbit to its master, it devours the rabbit itself. My trust is that, as it is guided by God's love, it is salutary. But it is based on trust, and it is determined by the Spirit. As we know, the Spirit listeth where the Spirit will, and we generally are not privy on a moment-by-moment basis to that listing.

So you see, the art of pastoring, and especially of leading a program to nurture people's spiritual lives, is a bit like the advice you asked me to give in this letter—embedded in both the ambiguity and certainty of life in Christ. The ambiguity inherent in our creaturely finitude and the certainty inherent in the bedrock foundation that God is love. Because of the ambiguity, I cannot say how, what, or if I would write to someone else. We are immersed in the particularities of you and me. Because of the certainty of God's love (however altered through our singular apprehensions thereof) I plod ahead. So it is and must be with the teaching and living of our spirituality.

You notice, no doubt, that even in the certainty of God's love, there is a certain fluidity in its meaning. While a phrase such as "God is love" may sound fairly definitive, in practice it works out, like many things, to be a bit slippery. After all, what indeed is love? Many words bantered about as common currency strike different people in different ways—indeed, may strike one person in different ways, depending on his or her state at the time. Given our different life experiences, personality types, and so

forth, even such a rather straightforward assertion and belief that God is love may become elusive and elastic.

If such a foundational verity as this can be received and expressed in myriad ways (both helpful and unhelpful) how disconcerting the rich and diverse paths and spirals and spaces of the spiritual life will be for those who want a few simple formulae. And how anguishing it will be for

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those who are taught to embrace one particular position or path: "Oh no, I am just too undisciplined to fast!" (But what if God doesn't want that sort of relationship with her?) or "What is wrong with me?" Contemplative prayer simply eludes me and leaves me empty and defeated." (But what if God has chosen to converse with him in some other way?) Jane de Chantal asserted in the seventeenth century that the great method of prayer is to have no method, thus emphasizing that the guidance of God's Spirit and what is most congruent with the individual at this point in his or her life is what matters most.

In the early church, a lexicon of technical terms had already developed. The early hermits, for example, called curiosity seekers "visitors from Babylon." They gave them a bite to eat and sent them on their way. True seekers they called "visitors from Jerusalem," and received them with prayer and conversation. (An early example of diagnostic vocabulary.) But is this helpful? Are these words, replaced with in-house diagnoses confirm-

ing a person's spiritual health or frailty, depending on our particular understanding of such conditions?

"Social activist." "Pietist." "Charismatic." These words take on different moral meanings depending on the bent of the person using them. So it is within the domain of spirituality as well. In some circles, the "healthy" person starts with petitionary prayer, moves to silent prayer, passes through meditation (here words like *discursive* and *kataphatic* get bandied about) and winds up at the pinnacle of spiritual growth and contemplative prayer (now we land on *nondiscursive* and *apophatic*). The "ladder of ascent" or of "perfection" has been scaled.

Is this the heart of Christian spirituality? I think not. And I suspect you don't think so, either. Augustine said, "You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." Emil Brunner adds that this must be the guiding principle of all genuine psychology. We might say that this is true of every aspect of life—a guiding principle of every element of ministry, and particularly of the explorations of one's spiritual life. This longing for God is the core impulse of the human condition. And because of the uniqueness of every person, that central longing gets expressed, responded to by God, and lived out in ways common enough for us to nourish and support each other, and particular enough that no one person's ways are quite like anyone else's.

I suspect you are catching my drift. Just as there is no such thing as "Lone Ranger" Christianity, there is no such thing as a cookie-cutter spirituality. People simply differ from each other and even, in a manner of speaking, from themselves. (Haven't you ever said, "Sorry, I'm not myself

today?") And God is simply too free to be trapped into working through particular ascetic practices, the current developmental schema, the most recently baptized listening techniques. Polanyi may have, with great wisdom, reminded us that we work within our (and others') boundary conditions, but the God of Christianity is more than capable of springing a boundary.

And social constructivism may daunt us with its assertions that all reality—including God—is a fabrication of personal and social forces, with the underlying aim of reducing our personal anxiety, of making society function in advantageous ways, and so forth. Psychology (particularly psychoanalysis) reminds us *ad nauseam* that we tend to see God through "parent-colored lenses."

All well and good—indeed, eminently helpful. But tragically off the mark once these disciplines wander outside their playgrounds. As adjuncts to the teaching and practice of Christian spirituality, they are allies—friends who enrich by their insights and challenges and arguments. As intellectual imperialists or as primary templates through which we who teach and practice Christian spirituality regard the art of life in Christ, they are what Luther called "the devil's tool." (Luther used a more lewd term, however.) He reminded us that *reason* is God's best gift—so long as it is used in reason's realm.

So it is with the various techniques espoused by various schools. As abbot of a monastery, Basil of Caesarea, some 1600 years ago, was well aware that different monks had to be treated differently because each had his own unique personality. In our desire to know what to do and

how to do it, we have been resisting that insight for centuries.

Here I dare invoke the person of Jesus—who, by the way, was not a spiritual director (nor was he the greatest psychotherapist who ever lived, however much the spiritual direction community would like to claim him). He treated people like individuals. He anticipated they

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would live lives of grace and truth in community, and that they would do so as themselves. That is why we find him speaking gently *here* out of frustration—*there* in fury, in fear, in power, or not at all.

Challenges are part of growth in the Spirit, I believe. My needs and desires are basically the same as my fellow Christians': the need to be saved by the grace of God, and the desire to work out that salvation in my life, albeit at times with fear and trembling. Yet my experiences and interactions with the living God are uniquely my own.

I imagine by now you have caught my encouragement and my warning. Read everything you can. Learn as much as you can. And release it to God. *Gelassenheit*, or "letting-go-ness" in submission to God, is a cardinal virtue of the Christian spiritual tradition. It is not a technique to be taught in the classroom or kicked into gear during a spiritual life retreat. It is a darned near impossible way of being with God.

Study developmental models and let them be potential descriptions rather than definitive

prescriptions, remembering all the while that God is sovereign. Hold on to the fact that God is with us working in and through the *intra-* and *interpersonal* terrain of our individual and corporate lives. That's what the whole shebang is about anyway, isn't it? God. God—and how we be with God.

And just be yourself. Riddled with doubt from time to time, confident way beyond what is proper at other times, sinful, forgiven, human in your peculiar ways. All enfolded (and this you must remember), along with everyone else, in the love of God.

I look forward to hearing more of your discernment process.

Blessings,



Gary

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The Discipline of Study and the Spirituality of Christian Leaders

BY JAMES E. BRADLEY

While the characteristic activism of evangelicalism is one of our leading strengths, the emphasis on experience, spirituality, and ministry can lead us to minimize and, in extreme cases, even denigrate the importance of study. On the one hand, the genius of evangelicalism is manifested in such protean forces as the modern missionary movement, and few will doubt that this impetus to missions was and is grounded in the experience we enjoy of the living Christ and the urgency we feel about the Great Commission. On the other hand, evangelicals are typically impatient with scholarship and disciplined study, and this has led to our being justly charged with obscurantism, extending, in some cases, even to a kind of arrogant anti-intellectualism.

Seminary professors can sometimes be overheard saying, "Give us three years of your time and learn to study; come to love the things that form the mind and shape the heart." Students are occasionally prone to respond, "The heart has its needs, and they may be met with less reason and less study than you suggest." Three years is too long for the evangelist with fire burning in the heart and, we are told, "Too many souls will perish in the time it takes to receive a seminary education."

Similarly, the spiritual hunger of students is often expressed in the form of a plea for more courses on practical topics and more emphasis on the application of biblical truth. This hunger and these pleas are

understandable—indeed, they are praiseworthy. But do we have to choose between the discipline of study and the genuine spirituality of mature Christian leadership? This short essay appeals for a

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reevaluation of the importance of rigorous study and seeks to show some of the ways in which study contributes to the formation of ministers of the gospel.

In the setting of an evangelical seminary, it is important to distinguish between the spiritual formation that students often plead for and the spiritual formation that we, as teachers, can realistically offer. The former pertains to momentary edification and encouragement; the latter pertains to the formation of an attitude and outlook that is derived from serious study. The one can only be supplied by time in prayer, in the study and proclamation of the Word, and in community; the other is found in rigorous independent study and in the classroom. The first is the responsibility of the church; the second is the responsibility of the seminary.

Christian leaders need both forms of formation. Let us see how this is so by first considering the

subject matter of theological study, and then reviewing what might be called the moral or spiritual function of rigorous study.

In the early modern world, before the proliferation of the professions in the mid-nineteenth century, the three professions of medicine, law, and theology dominated the field of higher education. Each profession possessed a specialized body of knowledge, the mastery of which was the main task of the aspiring professional. Of course, the general patterns of training for these professions have remained much the same to the present day, and some insight can be gained into the importance of rigorous study by comparing theology to medicine. A working knowledge of chemistry and a detailed knowledge of human anatomy are essential to all branches of medicine in exactly the same way that a critical knowledge of the Bible and a deep understanding of Christian doctrine are essential to the Christian leader. The technology of medicine has changed as dramatically as any other modern science, and the leading problem with comparing preparation for ministry or seminaries with other branches of human endeavor is that while technology changes rapidly, human nature, revelation, and the means of salvation do not. This means that the classical disciplines will always be needed.

Can we imagine entrusting our bodies to a medical doctor who said, "I refuse to study the etiology of disease"? Or, would any one of us seek the medical counsel of the physician who neglected to study chemistry or anatomy? Given the fact that the complexity of the human soul is at least as great as that of the body, what can possibly be gained

by downplaying the importance of rigorous study of the Bible, doctrine, and Christian history? As Gregory the Great once observed, "Physicians of the soul treat deeper wounds than physicians of the body, and those who wish to be soul physicians without rigorous study are at least as dangerous as quack physicians." The furnishing of the mind with principles of biblical interpretation, with categories of doctrine, and with the knowledge of church history is not merely an intellectual discipline. Those who say as much betray their own ignorance, not only of Christian truth, but of Christian spirituality as well, for such people fail to fathom how a Christian leader is formed. Learning the doctrines of the church means far more than memorizing certain rote facts. Such learning, if done properly, instills an abiding love for those doctrines in the hearts of leaders, and it nurtures other essential mental traits as well. We may illustrate the value of study in the formation of ministers by appealing to the early modern literature of Protestant spiritual formation.

The discipline of study itself profoundly influences the spiritual development of people preparing for ministry. Few people would argue with the proposition that the church today needs faithful and reliable servants who can clearly expound the Word of God and explain and apply the doctrines of the faith. Rigorous study in seminary contributes to clear and forceful thinking, and such thinking is the irreducible minimum needed for clear and forceful preaching. Cotton Mather, the eminent Puritan theologian, argued that theological training was necessary for the following reasons: "to acquire a habit of thinking closely; to exercise themselves in contemplation and prayer; to converse much with God, and their own hearts; to study the sacred Scriptures in the original languages, with the utmost diligence and attention, and especially, to improve by them in a way of devotional exercise." A habit of *thinking*

closely is no small part of a good seminary education. A qualified minister is one who can critically weigh evidence and render a competent, biblically based judgment, and do so in the midst of rapidly changing values and mores. Careful study alone offers one the reward of a balanced perspective in bringing the whole counsel of God, in all of its rich detail, to bear on matters that are time-bound.

Second, discipline of the mind in the study of theology is comparable to discipline of the human spirit in the practice of prayer. The one who would belittle the former will be tempted to engage the latter only insofar

The discipline of study itself profoundly influences the spiritual development of people preparing for ministry.

as it strikes one's fancy or satisfies one's curiosity. John Ryland observed that since our minds are by nature in a state of apostasy, our Savior "recovers our shattered powers into a state of order and strength by slow degrees," and this slow recovery requires us to "seek daily after a clear and strong manner of reasoning on the principal truths of religion." Hence, patience and docility is required in both prayer and study. For the minister of the gospel, "next to the regulation of the appetites and passions, the most important branch of self-government is the command of our thoughts: which without a strict guard will be as apt to ramble, as the other to rebel." Richard Baxter once said that the medita-

tion of the Christian is intended "to direct you how to use your understanding for the warming of your affections, and to fire your hearts by the help of your heads."

Thus, in the old literature of formation, one finds a reciprocal influence of learning on piety and of piety on learning. The Baptist minister Joseph Kinghorn put the matter in these terms: "Piety will neither confer learning, nor powers of reasoning accurately; but other things being equal, that man [or woman] is likely to discern the will of God with the most correctness who imbibes the largest portion of the Spirit of God. As in other things, a man [or woman] may be expected to form a more accurate opinion of the various parts of any science who is attached to it practically, than another who has not pursued it with steadfastness and ardor; so in godliness, a spiritual mind will always greatly assist a man's [or woman's] powers of discrimination." The well-known adage: "Prayer, without study, is presumption, and study, without prayer, is atheism," nicely sums up the matter.

Third, study helps produce a temper of mind that is not only clear and stable, but tough. Toughness of mind is essential to the minister of the gospel, for only the constant exercise of one's critical faculties can liberate one from the power of other people's opinions. Study, in this sense, is the God-given means of maturity. Encourage "spirituality" at the expense of study, and I will tell you what you have encouraged: short-term ministries that collapse as soon as they encounter criticism—or, should they be praised, they come to believe the high opinions of others and so shape their discourse according to the tone of the time, or worse, the pleasure of the people.

Such vacillation is a certain mark of a weak mind. As one old Baptist minister put it: "For conscience [i.e., one whose conscience has been affected by

the proclaimed Word] does not often express itself in the language of noisy applause; which, when free from hypocrisy, is commonly the fruit of a weak understanding, under the influence of strong passions. Hence it is not unfrequent for those who have been the most liberal in praising a minister to be found among the first who entirely reject him and speak against him." In this way, a strong, independent mind formed by rigorous study contributes to self-transcendence. "In proportion, as the approbation of conscience and the inspection of God are properly kept in view, the pleasure you have, arising from verbal commendations of professed friends, and pain from the strong opposition from the avowed enemies of evangelical truth, will be diminished."

There is another kind of toughness that does not have to do so much with self-transcendence as with intellectual independence, and this matter bears directly on how effectively we are able to help others. Writing in the early nineteenth century, Joseph Kinghorn had a clear idea of the "wounded healer":

If you are designed [i.e., called] to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to confirm those that are wavering, you may have your own mind severely tried respecting the truth you have believed; and do not be surprised, if you have to examine your whole system; to dissect it joint by joint; to scrutinize the evidence of every part—perhaps to call in question the truth of Revelation—or to doubt the being of your God! You may be rendered painfully familiar with the reasonings and objections of men, who would subvert the whole foundation of your hope and joy; you may be

compelled to pursue an extensive course of inquiry, which otherwise you would have deemed quite unnecessary; and all this may be a discipline needful to fit you for your future warfare.

Kinghorn continues:

Thus you will be enabled to benefit others. You will obviate those difficulties, which they dared not to mention: Without giving their objections a formidable shape, you will apply

Wisdom is the place where true Christian experience and knowledge of the truth meet, and wisdom . . . is achieved only with effort and only over a period of time.

principles which will establish their faith: and time will probably discover that some who come to the house of prayer, returned thankful for the relief, which your previous difficulties enabled you to afford them.

In this way, rigorous and critical study leads to self-knowledge, however painful, a knowledge which in turn leads to the ability to help others.

Finally, disciplined study contributes to an outlook that is characterized by tolerance, for it fosters an appreciation for views other than one's own. In this sense, study may be compared to a cross-cultural experience, in that it takes us outside of our own frame of reference, and it arrests our attention by telling us truths about ourselves that we may not want to hear. The breadth of perspective that education

provides thus serves as the counterpart to close, detailed thinking, and both aspects are needed for a sound, theological education. It is for this reason that Job Orton, a Congregationalist minister, felt that students for the ministry who neglected the rigors of a classical education "have generally turned out ignorant and conceited bigots."

Wisdom is the place where true Christian experience and knowledge of the truth meet, and wisdom, as one old saint put it, is achieved only with effort and only over a period of time. "An able minister of the New Testament," John Ryland helpfully observed, "is not formed in a day or a year; no, not in seven or ten years; happy is that young man [or woman], who arrives to any degree of maturity and strength of mind, in the compass of twenty years." Some people are impatient with the time required for the cognitive half of wisdom, and they will end up as they began, moving in a hurry from one new experience to the next. But their haste has a price and it will hurt both themselves and others, for unless they slow down and "study to show themselves approved," all —Please turn to page 23.

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Plumb Lines and Anchors Required

BY ELIZABETH L. PATTERSON

Whatever else may be said about it, the surge of interest in spirituality over the last several years indicates that the Christian church may not be communicating well. We possess a rich heritage of approaches to life in the Spirit, but for many populations these traditions have gotten somewhat misplaced. "Full service" churches, which seem to be expected to meet the wide variety of physical, psychological, outreach, and organizational demands of their increasingly diverse congregations, cannot be totally blamed for sometimes losing track of the still, small voice. Yet the possibility of life in and with the Spirit, of daily relationship with God, is the gift of the Christian life—and people are seeking just such a life.

However eccentric this contemporary search may appear, in our noisy, shallow, eclectic, often narcissistic, materialistic, media-dominated world, the interest in spirituality is an open door for churches to move through, provided that first of all we have the knowledge and maturity to deal with the topic.

For many, an exploration of spirituality can lead to a deeper, more committed relationship with God. But for others, it will lead in directions which are ultimately hollow. Fads come and go and can inoculate one against the real thing. If that happens because churches have not offered their own spiritual resources with depth and wisdom, it will be an indictment against the church. This century has produced a population of Christians who often are ignorant of our spiritual inheritance. Those who wish to remedy that ignorance for others recog-

nize that often we must begin with ourselves. For those who would teach Christian spirituality with depth and discernment, this article offers some considerations.

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

In order to teach well, it is important to clarify assumptions. What does one's approach to spirituality imply about human nature, or the nature of God? How is God understood to communicate? Who

This century has produced a population of Christians who often are ignorant of our spiritual inheritance.

takes the initiative? What is the potential for relationship with God, and what might that relationship look like? What are the practices? The expectations for experience? The goals? It is irresponsible to teach without first asking what theology is being communicated, however inadvertently. (See Diogenes Allen's *Spiritual Theology* as an excellent resource.)

The term *spirituality* itself is a trans-religious term, indicating attention to those aspects of life which point beyond the material and the measurable to an intangible yet central transcendent dimension of the human experience. Christians recognize that it is the Spirit of God which creates that fundamental human long-

ing. St. Augustine long ago asserted, "Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You" (Confessions, 1:1). This longing is met in a relationship with Christ, who is at the center of Christian spirituality. The plumb line against which to measure any understanding of Christian spirituality is the plumb line of the gospel.

The term "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) is found primarily in the Pauline letters (see Rom. 7:24; 1 Cor. 2:13; 14-15, 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 1:3, 5:19) where it is used as a qualifier to describe someone living under the influence of God's Spirit. The spiritual person (*anthropos spiritualis*) is connected with Christ who is the source of a Spirit-filled life, in contrast with the person who fulfills only the interests of the flesh (*sarx*). Christian spirituality is not otherworldly; a Pauline understanding of spirituality is daily life lived under the guidance of and in relationship with God's Spirit, with the goal of becoming more like Christ rather than more egocentric.

Christian spirituality is not the same thing as Christian doctrine. Rather, the spiritual life can be described as the lived experience of doctrine. To illustrate: There are diverse fields of knowledge which analyze, describe, and contribute to the development of a healthy family life. However, no one would ever confuse the study of a marriage or family with the relationships themselves. The same is true of Christian spirituality. At the most fundamental level, it cannot be studied, but only experienced. But there are a variety of fields: biblical studies, theology, church history, and ethics, certainly—and also the social sciences: art, music, literature—which study and describe spirituality and can contribute to its development. The task of the church is to provide its members with the concepts, resources, and practices for

discernment and growth of a mature Christian spirituality within the context of orthodox belief that is lived out in accountability and communion with a community of faith.

RESOURCES AND SOURCES

Two thousand years have provided a rich inheritance of literature dealing with Christian spirituality. Teaching spirituality requires some familiarity with this literature and with the contexts in which it was written. Modern reprints of classic texts (ie., the *Classics of Western Christian Spirituality* series) provides updated access to this heritage. However, without some understanding of what those writings meant in their own contexts, we may misread them. A good example is the new interest in the old tradition of *lectio divina*, or sacred reading, a practice which dates to Old Testament times. This is an emphasis on slow, meditative scripture reading (or recitation from memory, since written materials were not easily accessible before the printing press). Early Christian monastics practiced this daily as a means of letting scripture soak into their hearts. There, the Word might speak directly or, over a period of years, shape that heart and life into evermore Christlike living.

In our results-oriented culture, it is difficult to regain a frame of mind which does something without expecting an immediate payoff. We read in order to conquer a concept, to understand, control, and categorize what we read. We want a sacred experience fitted into a 20-minute time slot. *Lectio divina* is a means of spending time with the Word of God which asks that Word to shape us, and it requires a different orientation to reading than our modern one.

Similarly, to teach the practices of Christian spirituality without anchoring those practices in an understanding of their history and the theology they

were intended to enact is to lose some of their formational quality. An analogy may be helpful here. One can tour an art museum with no training in art and be moved, perhaps even changed, by interaction with a Pieta or a Vermeer. However, if one knows the worldview behind the painting and the context in which it was created, then history, expression, and experience become linked in deeper and more meaningful understanding, which ultimately impacts one's whole

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relationship to the world of art. The icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church which are meant to lead one into the presence of God are created out of just such specific theological and scriptural juxtapositions.

Our various Christian traditions have produced faith practices which were formed by the theology of those traditions. Understanding one's own heritage enriches its faith practices and also provides a framework from which to explore the practices of other Christian traditions. There is nothing wrong with trying new practices. The novelty itself is appealing when over-familiarity may have deadened the iconic resonance of one's own traditions. But, eventually, the theology undergirding the new practice must be made explicit. The sacrament of Communion is a good example: Differing methods of celebration speak to sometimes differing theologies of forgiveness and sanctification about the

nature of the sacramental elements and the understanding of priesthood. The teacher needs to know the territory so as to help others make the connections between theology and practice—connections which can enrich both.

Church history is a significant resource. For example, even a cursory survey of the ways in which Christian spirituality has been understood helps clarify why some traditions view the term with suspicion. As theological study formalized, categories developed. That branch of theology which addresses Christian doctrines became known as dogmatic or systematic theology, while moral theology (ethics) was understood to deal with the Christian life. Christian spirituality, as a lived relationship, fell into this latter category, which itself became subdivided into ascetical theology (the study of how humans undertake their relationship with God) and mystical theology (how God takes the initiative at the point beyond human effort). Although these distinctions are not contradictory and normally coincide in practice, there were those who viewed mystical theology as noncontinuous with the average Christian life.

Because of this, Protestant churches have tended to prefer concepts such as *piety* and *faithfulness* to the term *spirituality*. A third resource comes from those fields which deal with human personality and religious experience. Each of us lives out our life of faith within the context of a Christian community in a particular theological, historical, cultural, and social setting. Within that community setting, each individual has a unique relationship with Christ. One kind of spiritual relationship may become normative for a particular setting, even

though our Christian heritage testifies to a wide variety of faith experiences. The potential to create a spiritual "elite" who fit one kind of spiritual expression may inadvertently keep others from their own spiritual development. All of us are called to a relationship with Christ. How that is experienced and expressed will depend on who we are. Focusing on one understanding of the spiritual life to the exclusion of others may cause some to reject the whole notion, because what is modeled simply does not fit who they are. Or it may create discouragement or despair from someone who feels he or she simply is not loved enough by God to have the kinds of experiences which others seem to be having. Persons who teach spirituality must know enough about the varieties of religious experience to be able to validate different expressions of life with the same God.

This knowledge is important for another reason. The level of theological literacy—even the basic knowledge of Scripture—is often low among Christians today, while the air is filled with a fairly indiscriminate numinosity. Knowledge of the varieties of orthodox Christian experience provides boundaries as well as possibilities for the Christian spiritual life.

THE CENTRALITY OF SPIRITUALITY

The modern "disconnect" between the head and the heart makes the teaching of spirituality an ongoing effort in integration of experience and content. Formational learning is not polarized. It is important to understand that *how* one teaches implicitly communicates theological or spiritual beliefs as clearly as the content communicates them explicitly. This, perhaps, is the reason why the book of James warns that not many should be teachers. One cannot *not* teach. And one's behaviors, attitudes toward the

content and ideas one works with, choices of teaching methods, degree of openness to learning, relationships to students, all are effective communicators of what the teacher really believes.

To teach spirituality is to talk about a relationship. The challenge is to teach so as to honor, preserve, and guide the relational core of Christian spirituality, while building a mature faith which will not be

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tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine or fad and which is lived out in the practices of daily life. Neither classroom lecture nor experiential exercises alone will build a balanced spiritual life. It is at the point where first-order experience connects with second-order conceptualization that teaching begins. This is the integrative challenge for the teacher of spirituality in an age which often separates the heart from the head.

THE MEDIUM AND THE MESSAGE

"Dealing with souls is tenfold more dangerous than dealing with bodies. Unless you are in a healthy, vigorous condition with God, you will catch the disease of the soul you are dealing with instead of helping to cure it," writes Oswald Chambers in *Workmen of God*.

Those who teach must be those who are continual learners. We cannot teach others what we are not open to—a life of prayer, of space for silence and listening, of community, of learning with our heart in relationship with our mind. Teaching spirituality begins

with a personal integration of the head and heart. We cannot teach where we have not placed ourselves as learners, and in Christian spirituality, we are all, always, learners. There will always be more to learn, more depth to grow, new paths of obedience in our relationship with God. This personal integration requires that we pursue the difficult work of connecting our own lives of faith and action, our own openness to the experience of God, with our study of the content of Christian faith. The traditions of prayer, discipline, community and individual responsibility, silence, service, worship, and study, all call us to faithful practice. Calvin said that the two great things in life are *knowledge of self* and *knowledge of God*. To the degree that we know and understand our own hearts, we will be free to offer those hearts to God—without blinders or the self-deception which prevents us from being either good learners or good teachers.

BEGINNING WITH ONE'S SELF

The life of the human spirit is not optional. Human beings are made for relationships of the soul, and they will find them in non-Christian settings if the church does not demonstrate that this is the place where the hungry heart can be fed. All people are created in the image of God, however fallen or distorted that image may become, and to be human includes realizing one's capacity for spirituality. The Christian church has the resources. Indeed, the Christian church is foundationally established upon the promise of the *one* who sent us the Paraclete. It is our responsibility to learn our own heritage. It is our privilege to share our learning. And it is God's gift to us which allows us to journey together with those who teach us and those whom we teach, in a community of daily openness to life in the Spirit of God. ■

Creating Spaces for Truth

BY PARKER J. PALMER

My vocation is the spiritual life, the quest for God, which relies on the eye of the heart. My avocation is education, the quest for knowledge, which relies on the eye of the mind. I have seen life through both of these eyes as long as I can remember—but the two images have not always coincided. . . . But—unable to blink one eye, shut them both, or live in a blur—I have been forced to find ways for my eyes to work together, to find a common focus for my Spirit-seeking heart and my knowledge-seeking mind that embraces reality in all its amazing dimensions.

The teacher is a mediator between the knower and the known, between the learner and the subject to be learned. I must take responsibility for the way my mode of teaching exerts a slow but steady formulative pressure on my students' sense of self and world. I teach more than a body of knowledge or a set of skills. I teach a mode of relationship between the knower and the known. That way, reinforced in course after course, the subject will remain with my students long after the facts have faded from their minds.

To learn is to face transformation. To learn is to enter into relationships requiring us to respond as well as initiate, to give as well as take. To teach well is to attend to the learner within the teacher. If we let our teacher-self speak without allowing our learner-self to listen and follow, our own truth will be broken. Such schizophrenia is an occupational hazard of teaching, the risk of becoming speakers of large and

powerful words we fail to follow in the living.

In my academic life, schooled to speak and write, I used words in great volume for a number of years. Then came a time of dryness when I found it difficult to meet my classes, to speak in public, to write for publication or even for myself. That experience lasted for nearly two years. It made me desperate, angry, and despondent. I finally

To teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced.

left my university career, convinced that conditions in the academy had caused my words to dry up.

But now I see the deeper lesson. Words began to fail me because I was not following them with my life. I was failing to incarnate what truth I had been given, and my words, lacking flesh, were skeletons with no animation. Only as I began to act on the social concerns I had spoken about in class, only as I began trying to live the vision of community I had once written about, did my words begin to return.

This and other such experiences have brought me to the following definition of teaching: To teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced. How can we translate this into a practical pedagogy? A learning space has three essential dimensions: openness, boundaries, and an air of hospitality.

When we understand what each of these means, we can find specific methods to create the space for learning.

To create space is to remove the impediments to learning that we find around and within us. We not only "find" these obstacles; we often create them ourselves to evade the challenge of truth and transformation. Creating a learning space means resisting our own tendency to clutter up our consciousness and our classrooms.

Teachers lecture longest when they are least sure of what they are doing; students write the longest and most convoluted term papers when they do not know what to say. If we are to open space for knowing, we must be alert to our fear of not knowing and to our fearful tendency to fill the learning space. We must see that not knowing is simply the first step toward truth. We must remember that we not only seek truth but that truth seeks us as well. When we become obsessed with our own seeking, we fill the space with methods that may be mere diversions. But when we understand that truth is constantly seeking us, we have reason to open a space in which truth might find us out.

A learning space cannot go on forever. If it did, it would not be a structure for learning but an invitation to confusion and chaos. A space has edges, perimeters, limits. So the teacher who wants to create an open learning space also must define and defend its boundaries with care. Not only will this keep the space open, it will also keep the students from fleeing that space. The openness of space—which is at first appealing to our jangled minds—soon becomes a threat. Good teachers know that discomfort and pain are often signs that truth is struggling to be born. Such

teachers will not allow their students, or themselves, to flee. They will hold the boundaries firm, so that truth can do its work.

But precisely because a learning space can be a painful place, it must have one other characteristic—hospitality. Hospitality means receiving each other, our struggles, our newborn ideas, with openness and care. This may suggest a classroom lacking essential rigor, a place in which questions of true and false, right and wrong, are subordinated to making sure that everyone "has a nice day." But that would be a false understanding of hospitality. Hospitality is not an end in itself. A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible—things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought. Each of these is essential but none of them can happen in an atmosphere where people feel threatened and judged.

Openness, boundaries, hospitality: How do we create a learning space with these qualities? The most obvious approach is in the physical arrangement of the classroom. When the chairs are arranged facing the lectern, row upon row, the learning space is confined. Such an arrangement says that in this space there is no room for students to relate to each other's thoughts; there is no hospitality. But when the chairs are placed in a circle something else is said. The teacher may sit in that circle and talk, but we are all being invited to create a community of learning by engaging the ideas and one another in the open space between.

The teacher can also create a space with words—conceptual space we might call it—in at least two ways. One is through assigned reading; the other is through lecturing. There is often need for longer reading assignments to gather background

information and perspectives, but a shorter text can become an arena of focused exploration. When all students in the room have read the same brief piece, a common space is created in which students, teacher, and subject can meet. It is an open space since a good text will raise as many questions as it answers. It is a bounded space since the text itself dictates the limits of our mutual inquiry. It is a hospitable, reassuring space since everyone has walked around in it beforehand and become acquainted with its dimensions. A disciplined discussion creates a common space in which the group can meet in mutual accountability. The key to

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this approach is to keep the students firmly within the boundaries of the text, to keep them from fleeing into ungrounded opinion, wishful thinking, or irrelevant facts.

A teacher can also create a learning space by means of lectures. By providing critical information and frameworks of interpretation, a lecturer can lay down the boundaries within which learning occurs—but not if the lecturer uses words to fill up space, as too many do.

I often begin my classes with a period of silence. It may last only a few minutes, but it gives us a chance to settle in. I also use periods of silence in the middle of a class, especially in an open discussion when the problem we are trying to unravel is getting more tangled. I try to help my students learn to spot those moments and settle into a time of

quiet reflection in which the knots might come untied. We need to abandon the notion that "nothing is happening" when it is silent, to see how much new clarity a silence often brings.

Sometimes I use a simple rule that allows these silences to occur naturally instead of requiring my intervention. I merely ask that a student not speak more than twice (or three times in an emergency) in the course of an hour's conversation. The results are quite remarkable. Because of the pauses, the slowed pace, many more people speak than do in the normal free-for-all discussion. The more aggressive and verbal students are checked and reined. They are forced to sort and sift what they have to say. The quieter, more retiring students suddenly find the space to speak. They also feel a new responsibility; no longer do they have the luxury of letting the more impetuous ones pull the load.

In most places where people meet, silence is a threatening experience. So the teacher who uses silence must understand that a silent space seems inhospitable at first. Silence must be introduced cautiously; we must allow ourselves to be slowly reformed in its discipline before it can become an effective teaching tool. But once the use of silence is established with a group, it becomes a potent space for learning.

I have learned in silence that it is often better to speak a question than an answer. Teaching by questioning was the genius of Jesus' teaching. I do not suggest that questions are the only educative sort of speech. Our facts and theories, our advice and answers need to be spoken as well. But since we as teachers are overschooled to give answers and solutions, we have special need to develop the discipline of asking questions to create a space for truth.

I have spoken so far of creating cognitive space, space

that allows evidence and insight to emerge. But teachers must also create emotional space in the classroom. We often clutter our learning space with obstacles and distractions to evade the emotions that education evokes. If we leave those emotions unattended, we will not be able to clear that space. Fear of feelings are major barriers to creating the space this sort of teaching requires.

Students are threatened by the strangeness of what they do not know, by the thought of having to expose their ignorance. Students come into a classroom with these fears close to the surface. Teachers, too, enter the classroom with fears; at least I do. I am afraid of being inadequately prepared, of having my own ignorance exposed, of meeting the bored expressions of some students. Behind my role and my expertise, I need a sense of community with them that our roles make tenuous.

Creating a learning space that is not closed down by fearful emotions requires a teacher who is not afraid of feelings. The teacher must make the first move in opening the space for feelings simply because the teacher has the power to do so. In whatever way seems natural, the teacher needs to convey that teaching and learning are human enterprises, and we must use human emotions in the learning process rather than letting them use us.

I am not suggesting that a class be turned into a therapy group. But I am suggesting that sensitivity to feelings is essential—not only because submerged feelings can undermine learning but also because feelings are a part of the whole person. We can enter into the relationship called truth only in our wholeness, not with our minds alone.

I use several simple devices to make space for the feelings that help weave community. I usually begin a course with self-introductions, asking my students to

respond to queries about themselves that go beyond the surface statistics. Feelings will not be expressed and community will not form until we know each other and feel known in certain elemental ways. When it comes time for me to introduce myself, I often speak about the mixed emotions of excitement and anxiety I have at the outset of a new class. I may invite students to speak with me, in or out of class, about the emotions that the course generates in them.

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During a class session, I try to stay aware of students' feelings and respond accordingly. If a timid student contributes some information or insight that seems wildly off the mark, I try to redirect it toward the target rather than let it fly astray. I seldom find it fitting simply to say, "Wrong. You missed." Instead, I try to engage the student in dialogue to help improve his or her aim. I try to remember, too, how vulnerable many students feel when they merely ask a question.

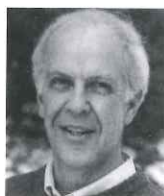
At the end of a class session, I may take time for a corporate evaluation of how the class went. At first these discussions are brief and awkward; students are accustomed to evaluating a class privately with each other, not with the teacher in public. But as we grow easier with the practice, these evaluations help to clear out the learning space. Sometimes they alert us to cognitive issues—a certain point has been understood by only half the group. But more often they allow feelings to emerge.

Paying attention to feelings may seem "soft" to tough-minded

teachers. But as I create space for feelings, I find that the group's capacity for tough-mindedness grows. One has to watch for the tendency to want to deal more with familiar feelings than with the alien subject at hand. But properly employed, with an eye to the end of learning, methods such as these increase our ability to expose our own ignorance, to ask hard questions, to challenge the validity of what others are saying and receive similar challenges in a spirit of growth. In an emotionally honest learning space, one created by a teacher who does not fear feelings and who uses some simple techniques, the community of truth can flourish between us and we can flourish in it. ■

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The Attraction of Holiness

BY PAUL FRANCIS FORD

Long before I attempted to teach spirituality, I was attracted to (and sometimes repulsed by) learning it. This attraction came from God because it always comes from God. This is my first assumption about holiness—the subject matter of spirituality. It is drawn from Ephesians 1:3–6: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has [1] blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [2] chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love, and [3] destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the beloved.” Everyone who is called to be is called to be holy, not just “church professionals.”

My second assumption is that God's holiness usually attracts us through the holy people God's providence places in our lives—living people and those who have left us the legacy of their life stories, prayers, books, music, and art work.

As a Roman Catholic, seminary began for me as a freshman in high school and ended 12 years later, when I could have been ordained as a priest. Instead I tried to become a monk. So I continued in formation, this time as a postulant, novice, and simply professed Benedictine.

It was as a monk that I first matriculated to Fuller Seminary and, when the senior monks discerned that I should not advance to final vows, I continued at Fuller and finished my doctor-

ate with a concentration in spirituality. For the past ten years, I have been teaching spirituality as a theological subject and engaging in the spiritual direction of both Protestant and Catholic laypeople.

All Roman Catholic seminaries assume that spiritual formation is an essential part of the formation of a future priest. My first, *minor* seminary had a faculty member who was in charge of the formal program of

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the annual retreat, monthly days of recollection, weekly conferences, and daily prayer (prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, and devotional exercises). He was also charged with ensuring that each of us had a director of our own choosing (usually another faculty member).

I chose my spiritual directors because what they said with their words they lived with their lives. As I set about the task of being formed spiritually, I had excellent directors and soaked up much of the riches offered to me. It was the time of Vatican Council II, and my interest in Scripture and liturgy was greatly encouraged. The wealth of the liturgy was brought home in Sunday mass celebrated at the cathedral and

daily mass and in all the seminary devotions. I became very active in the choirs formed to sing the treasures of the chant and new compositions by modern composers. I feasted on the prison meditations of Father Delp and the prayers from St. Paul and Karl Rahner's encounters with silence—all of which were read aloud to us slowly for morning meditation.

In 1969 I graduated to the *major* seminary, where I completed the last two years of college and the four years of theology and pastoral formation necessary for ordination. It was there that I took my only formal course in spiritual theology, from the physicist-theologian James O'Reilly, whose attempt to integrate theology and to live it electrified me then and now.

The spiritual formation program there was to me more formal and aloof, but the holiness of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ shone through to me in a few of the faculty, especially O'Reilly. And it was a Jesuit who introduced me to the writings of C. S. Lewis. (The spiritual theology I teach now is very “Lewisian” and “O'Reillian.”) The faculty helped me discern my vocation not as a parish priest but, for several years at least, a monk.

There's nothing like monastic life to steep one in the Scriptures. Chanting all the psalms every two weeks and hearing the entire Bible read through every year meant that I had to wrestle with God's Word at a level deeper than academics.

The monks sent me to Fuller where the second thing that struck me was how holy some of my teachers and my classmates were. I learned spontaneous prayer from a Uniting Church doctoral student from Australia. And in the classroom and chapel, I heard the

most stirring prayers and preaching I had ever experienced.

But the *first* thing that had struck me was that there was no formal spiritual direction program at Fuller! How could it be that all of these people who felt called to ministry were not guided by and in some accountable relationship to a fellow Christian for their life of prayer and their growth in knowing and doing God's will? Many of my peers were newly married, had just become parents, juggled many jobs, wore many hats. Some had just become Christians. Who for them was the human supporter of God's desire for them to be human, to be happy, to be holy?

When I mentioned this to Fuller trustee Max De Pree, who was paired with me for the all-seminary retreats we used to have, he too became convinced that the seminary should not presume that all seminarians were well-churched and guided. As a board member, Max encouraged newly appointed dean, Robert Meye, whose first act at Fuller in 1977 was to attend a gathering of Fuller administrators and Roman Catholic spiritual formators. For this gathering O'Reilly prepared a paper which has to be ranked as one of shortest and best written about spiritual formation in seminaries. One famous passage graces the walls of many pastors' offices:

The minister is one to whom his/her people come at those junctures of life when they have come face to face with the unsolvable, those moments when they meet with the limits of creaturely power, when they experience darkness or have intimations of mortality. At such moments, people have need to draw near to one who, while able like other men and women to swim in the waters of life and stay afloat in them, is not averse to drowning graciously in them, able to be overcome. People need one who has entered deeply into the paschal mystery of Jesus,

rejoicing in life but at ease with death.

For ten years now I have had the privilege of teaching the very course O'Reilly taught me. Using carefully crafted questions, I ask students to write about the spirituality they bring to the course, leaving each student free to answer or not answer any question they feel is too personal. I encourage students to write this paper for themselves first, uncensored and uncensored, ideally in the first person and at the feeling level. I ask them to consider submitting as much of this as

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they feel they can to their spiritual directors (who regularly tell me that this is one of the most helpful things in beginning a new direction relationship). I also encourage them to submit a more censored version to their formation advisor and to a professor of their choosing (not necessarily me). This professor will grade it according to standards I make available. To model openness to formation, I make available my own autobiography, drafted according to the same guidelines I give my students.

I notice a much greater emphasis in my seminary today on the integration of all aspects of formation: human, spiritual, academic, pastoral, and communal. Students are expected to

select not only a spiritual director from one of the priests on our faculty, but also a formation advisor from the faculty. After a thorough admissions process, human, spiritual, academic, pastoral, and communal strengths and areas for growth are identified for each seminarian. And his progress is discussed with the student in monthly meetings with the formation advisor and in an annual review.

In such formation for a life of ministerial holiness, I can only hope that I both attract and encourage my students to keep, in O'Reilly's words, "a place in his or her heart for the sweet powerlessness by which we are to be carried into the hands of the living God."

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Spirituality in the Church

BY ELIZABETH H. NORDQUIST

The core of my sense of call to ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA) nearly 20 years ago was a longing to be a companion to people on their spiritual journey as they sought to integrate their faith and their lives. That integration is what I understand spirituality to be: the conscious attention to the movement of the Spirit in one's life and the subsequent actions of love, mercy, and justice that flow out of one's awareness of Christ's passion for the world. Therefore, it was a surprise to me, during 15 years of parish ministry with three different congregations, to encounter the question: What is spirituality?

I believe the answer to that question is the basic task of pastoral responsibility—to teach spirituality in the life of the church. For those of us who are called to congregational ministries in cultural contexts shaped by technology, scientific methods, consumerism, entertainment, and politics, our first task is to proclaim that, indeed, God in the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit is present, active in this world, and in us as individuals and gathered communities of faith—and that we can experience and exhibit a quality of life that is empowered by the Spirit.

I am fascinated by the variety of other issues that clamor for our attention: issues of the moment, topics of concern, trends in the church and in the world, interpretations of new scholarship, practical advice for people of all ages and stages. All of these areas of concern are worthy of attention, but from our pulpits and classrooms, the unifying theme in all our proclamation must be to invite our people to believe that God is at work, to discover the intention of God for

the world, and to discern where the Spirit of God is moving.

Sociologists, educators, and historians tell us of societal evidence of longing for a sense of something larger, a quest for meaning, a wishing for the miraculous. It is essential to my vows to name the reality of God's Spirit in this world and to preach the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is tragic to me that so many have left the structures of

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the church in order to seek elsewhere for the spiritual heritage that is organic to Christian faith itself. That tragedy makes it imperative that wherever I preach or teach, I name the longing for God and proclaim from Scripture the stories of men and women who had their longings for the holy met in Jesus Christ. What we proclaim and live as Christians is the *spiritual life*.

I have found that I need to lead people in opportunities to experience the power of Christian spirituality. In some churches I held regular classroom experiences to teach spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation on Scripture, and discernment. I found, however, that while those occasions were helpful to those who chose to participate, they

were limited by the amount of time allotted.

Therefore, those formal learning classes were augmented by the creation of other opportunities in the life of the church. The offering of retreats was a particularly rich avenue of nourishing spiritual growth in the congregations in which I have served. Whether a three-hour Saturday morning or a long weekend, people could come apart and focus more fully on their lives in Christ. These have been held in a variety of locations: some on the church property, some in homes, some away at retreat or conference centers. Some of them involved just a handful of people; others involved a large contingent of the congregation. Each of them, however, created a sacred time and space in which to encounter the Spirit in the context of a worshiping community.

A retreat, in contrast to a conference, has a spirit of spaciousness, a quality of unhurried reflection, a time free from the tyranny of the clock and the urgency of program. For some people, this atmosphere of peacefulness is the requisite element to allow for learning the practices and disciplines that accompany an attentive, conscious journey of the Spirit. Not everyone chooses to come apart with a community in that way, but for those who do, the growth in their depth of spiritual perception is palpable.

Retreats, however, are occasional things, a few times a year at most. So one Lent I invited my church to participate in a six-week experiment in the practice of *lectio divina*, a Benedictine practice in which one is led in slow steps of listening, meditating, and contemplating a particular passage of Scripture in order to allow the Spirit of God to speak. In a group of about 15 people, each participant focused on a particular gospel encounter that Jesus had on his way to Calvary. As we drew the Lenten series to a close, the group asked if we could continue

for another six weeks into Pentecost. So we did. Then, what had become a regular practice evolved into a continuous opportunity for spiritual reflection and growth in the life of the congregation long after I left to accept another call.

The group's structure allowed for people to come when they were able, because the practice was centered around the Word, not around compatibility or the relationship between the participants. Over the years that I led the group, more than 60 people joined in the practice. We all participated in that holy place of awe that comes from observing the Spirit blow where it will, bringing transformation to people who are seeking to integrate their faith with their lives.

The business meetings of church governing bodies is another critical place in the life of the church where leaders can be formed spiritually. When volunteers and paid staff meet to do the business of the church, there can be tension about allotting time for study, prayer, or spiritual discernment—given the limited amount of meeting time. Yet attention to the spiritual dimensions of administrative and financial decision-making can be transformational in the lives, not only of church leaders, but the congregation as a whole. The governing body is a natural group for which to plan a retreat. In such a setting, space and time can be allotted more expansively for listening to the Spirit's direction without the urgent demands of a full agenda.

More significant, however, is to integrate attentiveness to the Spirit in the press of decision-making and action-taking. In those moments, tempers can rise, feelings can get hurt, heels dug in and things said that should never have been said. Those can become teachable moments in which

church leaders are shaped by the Spirit. Even though taking time to learn and pray during a board meeting crowds an agenda, the experience of integration becomes a profound dynamic for the staff members and the church community.

The most accessible yet difficult method of teaching spirituality to a congregation is for the pastor to be intentional about his or her own spiritual life. We are all shaped in our walk with Christ by people who have

Attention to the spiritual dimensions of administrative and financial decision-making can be transformational.

influenced our lives, for better or for worse. Part of our calling, as laypeople or clergy, is to be everything God has created us to be. That calling requires that our lives be characterized by faithful and challenging spiritual practice ourselves. The spirit cannot be continuously nourished by a rote practice of spiritual exercises that worked when we were just beginning in faith or ministry. We need to be honest with ourselves about our own heart—its desires, its brokenness, its dryness, its longing for God—and to be continuously mindful of the shape of learning, prayer, and service suitable to the place in which we find ourselves.

Some Christian leaders have sought out the friendship of a spiritual director. Others have found a group of colleagues that is able to do more than just support one another through the snags and disappointments in ministry—but that is also able to

be a true community of Spirit in the pilgrimage of faithfulness by the sharing of spiritual practices together. Still others have attended retreats or worship services in settings where they are not leaders.

Through our own spiritual formation, we can become examples of the integrated life in Christ that we teach. And our own spiritual formation is obvious to those we serve by the way in which we serve.

Spirituality is the lifestyle of the people of God. As spiritual leaders, it is imperative that we integrate it explicitly and implicitly into the curriculum of the church. When we do so, God is glorified and God's people are empowered to become agents of his realm in the world. ■

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Beware of Uniforms; Dump the Silver

BY WILLIAM L. MANGRUM

It's been months since our youth minister of eight years resigned. In the remote village of Mendocino on the northern coast of California, where I have pastored for the past five years, youth ministers don't grow on trees. And the 60-plus dossiers we've received have yet to yield another capable leader willing to live on what we can pay. So . . . I'm also the youth minister for the duration.

The daunting task of working with high school students has not been without benefit to me, however. Much of what I "own" by way of teaching spirituality has been forged in this furnace. As pastor/theologian Eugene Peterson writes, "The Christian life is thoroughly organic: The Holy Spirit grows the spiritual life in you, forms Christ's life in you, in the particular conditions in which you live."¹

What is true of the Christian life in general is perhaps even more true of pastoral identity and spiritual formation. Thus I am shaped and shape others in the conditions in which we live—conditions of time, location, and story. "The gospel is always conveyed through the medium of culture"² professor Darrell Guder reminds us.

THE BUSINESS OF LISTENING

I have no special gifts for working with youth, and no interest in learning a thousand games, or eating pizza late at night, or watching endless movies, or talking about music, or learning their talk, or walking to the high school for lunch. None of this appeals to me. Yet I am their pastor, and so on Sunday evenings, I unlock Preston Hall, and there, between 6 and 8 p.m., 10 to 15 teenagers gather for food,

camaraderie, and Bible study. Our scheme is simple: The high schoolers provide the fun and friendship, and Mendosa's (our only local market) provides the food. The kids walk the quarter-mile, charge it to the church, and bring it back to the hall. My part is to show up, open up, lock up. For two hours, I am in the busi-

"The gospel is always conveyed through the medium of culture."

ness of listening. That's the hardest part. I also lead Bible study.

When our journey together started last fall, the kids were not keen on Scripture. Dragging in a box of Bibles, I would hand them out, and before I had completed the circle, all the Bibles were tossed or heaved back in the box. In this small town, Bibles and students seemed to repel. But now we've settled into a comfortable rhythm—Mendosa's for food, an hour of games or gossip, and 20 minutes of Mark's Gospel.

A GIGANTIC MISS

Admittedly, we all have bodies of similar makeup. We are born, more or less, in the same way. Furthermore, as it says in the Westminster Confession, all persons "are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, [and] do proceed [to] all actual transgressions."³ That is to say, we are all blinded by the light of our own self-worth, and

from this follows a host of addictions, problems, misunderstandings, failures, divorces, hurts, nightmares, bankruptcies—in a word, *sin*.

But granting this, the people of Fullerton are different from the people of Chicago—as are the people of Mendocino from the people of Omaha. Detroit is not Barstow. Locality matters. Place shapes and forms souls. Indeed, people do not "sin" in general. We sin in particular ways, against specific persons. Our habits of sin are nurtured by particular attitudes and dispositions shaped by particular relations and vocations and interests. The pastor that fails to notice the particulars of place and the subtle influences of geography on the spirits of his or her parishioners will not last long in that place. Or he or she will not gain a hearing.

Like the polar expeditions of the nineteenth century, some pastors set out to shape the contours of their parishioners' souls with all the technology of the Royal Navy officers' clubs. In "An Expedition to the Pole" essayist Annie Dillard poignantly describes richly appointed sailing vessels that set out carrying only 12 days of emergency fuel for a three-year voyage into the unknown. Instead of additional coal, "each ship made room for a 1,200-volume library, a hand-organ playing 50 tunes, china place-settings for officers and men, cut-glass wine goblets, and sterling silver flatware." Most tellingly, they "carried no special clothing for the Arctic, only the uniforms of Her Majesty's Navy."⁴

They all died. And for more than three decades, search parties found skeletal remains scattered across ice packs. The remains told stories of people ignorant of location, geography, and weather. Accompanying one clump of frozen bodies, for instance, "were place settings of sterling silver flatware engraved with officers' initials and family crests."⁵

Pastors too are likely to set out poorly equipped for specific localities. In retrospect, my sermons for the first two years

said little to my congregation—a congregation shaped by this location. Badly equipped for life in this place, I endeavored to record general words for general listeners who might or might not tune in to KMFB on Sunday at 8:00 a.m. I was preaching for my place in history and insufficiently aware of local conditions. I spoke past those who called me “pastor” to some greater, larger unknown audience.

This gigantic miss was repeated in my initial work with high school students. I was filling a slot, showing up until we hired someone who “understood” teenagers. As an ill-fated polar explorer of the past, I too brought along a host of comforts which had little to do with the terrain. I was gospel-speaking to high school students. But I barely knew my students’ names—and certainly not their geography-shaped stories.

SHAPING THEIR SOULS

In a short time, I was in trouble. So I asked Sayre (a 6 foot, 2 inch high school junior) for assistance. I needed a guide, I said, someone to help me understand high school kids. But not just any high school kids—our high school kids. Would he, I asked, come to the pastor’s study once a week for three months for conversation? I needed help. (I also wanted to see if Jesus could work his way into the life of this particular student.) If Sayre would commit to three months, only he would be the judge of our success.

Our arrangement was simple: Together, along with his friend Jeff, we would read a page from Mark’s Gospel. And I would ask questions. They were free to offer any response—questions, observations, disbelief, or even ridicule. Nothing was barred. There were no expectations of behavior, no standard-issue verbal “uniforms.” After the discussion, they would tell me whether this story had any relation to their story. Then, the following Sunday night, they

would assist me in telling the story to the youth group.

Nine months later we are still meeting. They bring the Kettle chips and Snapple. The tools in my study are pencils, markers, and three typed copies of Mark’s Gospel. We read. We ask questions. We laugh. We talk about girls and teachers and parents and cars and bikes. And we talk about Jesus. I pray for them. And, sometimes, they pray.

How am I doing at shaping their souls? At forming their spirituality? It’s hard to tell if you keep looking for them to show up in the pressed uniforms of the

*We too must be shaped
by the land and the
people with whom we
dwell.*

Royal Navy. This last summer, interrupted by backpacking trips, family vacations, and summer jobs, we haven’t met as often. But recently Sayre wanted me to know he had arranged his senior schedule so as to be free on Tuesday afternoons. “We are going to keep meeting, aren’t we?” he asked.

Yesterday, one day after the fall term began, at 1:30 Sayre and Jeff arrived at my office. We began. Again.

PRACTICING PROPER TECHNIQUE

Karl Barth persuasively argued “God with us” is the heart of the Christian message heard and received. As such, this means not only that God is, but that God is in relation to us. Thus any report about God is also a report about us for “a report about ourselves is included in that report about God.”⁶ Spiritual formation, then, is but one means of shaping spiritual character. It takes as its theological point of departure the biblical story of *God with us*.

Spiritual formation is the craft of attending to a particular person in a particular location

through the seasons of his or her life. There are skills of the craft to be learned. We must not attempt to learn it on our own, nor disregard the wisdom of the centuries. This too is a kind of foolish vanity. But however much we learn from the past, we must embody the practice of soul-crafting in a particular place, in a specific time, in mutual reciprocity with persons of story.⁷

As the God of love is known only by the common history of *God with us*, so our story of pastoral care and soul-shaping is really only known by a common history with those we are called to serve. We too must be shaped by the land and the people with whom we dwell.

My advice? Beware of uniforms. Pack more coal. Dump the silver and the silk neckerchiefs. Dress for Arctic storms and catacombs. And pray. ■

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¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Wisdom of Each Other* (Zondervan, 1998), 33.

² Darrell L. Guder, et al., *The Missional Church* (Eerdmans, 1998), 18.

³ Karl Barth, “The Subject Matter and Problems of the Doctrine of Reconciliation,” in *Doctrine of Reconciliation*, Vol. IV.1 of *Church Dogmatics* (T.&T. Clark, 1956).

⁴ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 6.034.

⁵ Annie Dillard, “An Expedition to the Pole,” in *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (Harper & Row, 1982), 24.

⁶ Barth, 7.

⁷ Ibid.

African-American Theodicy

BY J. ALFRED SMITH, SR.

The stained glass windows of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church of Seattle present a pictorial history of women and men who were paradigms of spiritual excellence as they led generations of persons of ebony hue in loving mercy, doing justly, and walking humbly with their God. The words, works, and witness of these invisible spiritual pioneers in theological scholarship made them more than minor prophets in the canon of the well-established, eight major black denominations. These did not come into being as did many white denominations that were born in protest to Catholic ideology and practice. They came out of the womb of the racial segregation and oppression that was practiced on American soil by persons whose cultural blinders refused to accept slaves and African freedmen and women on an egalitarian basis. African-American Christian spirituality has embraced a theology broad enough to be inclusive of social ethical reflection that examines the human condition holistically so as to empower persons to overcome the challenges of daily living.

As a student of African-American Christian history and a teacher of African-American Christian spirituality, as well as a full-time pastor of an urban church that struggles to help inner-city people find meaning for faith in their social context, I have had to reach deep within my depths to formulate my own definition of provisional African-American spirituality. I use the term *provisional*, because no human has the ultimate word on the nature of the eternal in our human predicament.

I believe that African-American spirituality is a celebrative God-empowered response to the contradictions and

illogical ramifications of human experience. The nature of African-American spirituality is characterized by paradox: African-Americans discover answers in the absurd; blessings in blackness; courage in chaos; determination in defeat; destiny in death; energy in exhaustion; forgiveness in failure; faith in the fiery furnace; hope when hope unborn has died; inspiration in spite of injustice; love for the last, the least, and the lost; songs in sorrow; triumph in tribulation; and the presence of

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God eternal in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of man.

This definition is the theme of African-American spirituals and sorrow songs, and the substance of the souls of the nonacademic lay theologians of black churches across the nation who speak of God “making a way out of no way.” This definition is inclusive of the joy that is heard in gospel music and in the new emerging styles of praise music and gospel rap. However, this definition addresses the cognitive concerns of youthful college students whose “hip-hop” culture of postmodernism has infected them with cynicism. They raise

theodicy questions about the illogicality of an omnipresent God whose holiness allows long-term justice to super-reign—or a finite God whose gift of freedom to humans leaves the door open to being charged with not having the power to balance the scales of justice with holiness. Countee Cullen, of the 1919 Harlem black intellectual Golden Age, addressed cognitive concerns about African-American spirituality and theodicy by saying:

*I doubt not God is good, well
meaning, kind, and did He
stoop to quibble could tell why
the little buried mole continues
blind, why flesh that mirrors
him must some day die, make
plain the reason tortured
Tantalus is baited by the fickle
fruit, declare if merely brute
caprice dooms Sisyphus to
struggle up a never-ending
stair. Inscrutable His ways are,
and immune to catechism by a
mind too strewn with petty
cares to slightly understand,
what awful brain compels His
awful hand. Yet, do I marvel at
this curious thing: To make a
poet black, and bid him sing.*

Countee Cullen shares with those who read him the firm faith that nurtured him, starting from his childhood days of growing up in a Methodist parsonage.

Howard Thurman, professor of religion and philosophy at Morehouse and Spelman Colleges, and former dean of the chapel at Howard and Boston Universities, has a view of theodicy which allows evil to have a purpose in the process and evolution of life. Whereas many would see evil as being irrational and senseless, Professor Thurman believes that because evil is a part of life, it also exhibits an orderly, rational structure of cause and effect. The purpose of the presence of evil in life, he says, is to upset the balance in order to make sure that the creative dimensions of life do not become static or arrested. The consoling point of Dr. Thurman’s view is that since evil is a dynamic part of life, evil then is not outside of the divine

power and purpose of God, who is transcendent, but also immanent in history as Sovereign and Sustainer.

Dr. Thurman pointed out in his *Exposition of the Book of Habakkuk*, that the fate of Judah at the hands of the Chaldeans is evidence that there is a moral law in the fabric of the universe that is binding. Therefore, theodicy must allow for retributive justice. Dr. Thurman wrote, "Things do not merely happen, they are part of some kind of rationale. If this rationale can be tracked down and understood, then the living experience, however terrible, makes sense."¹ Professor Thurman believed that there was a positive, propitiatory purpose for the unmerited sufferings of many innocent black slaves. The theodicy of Dr. Thurman would go so far as to boldly suggest that black slaves redeemed the religion that slave masters profaned.

What would be the impact in urban centers across America if urban evangelists could confront the large number of black males who live by the law of the gun with the spiritual values of Howard Thurman? What would be the moral effects upon the ethics of social policy if those who shaped public policy could be introduced to the spiritual vision of Thurman? Although Thurman is by no means the sole exponent of African-American Christian spirituality, the academy and the church are indebted to him for his courage in addressing issues of theodicy and piety. As a Christian, he was a person of prayer and prophetic utterance. He blended in a harmonious synthesis, both head and heart. Martin E. Marty wrote of Thurman: "He

has shown us how the path of holiness and enlightenment is not merely parallel to, but links up with the path of community and action."²

One cannot complete this essay without mentioning the primary and powerful spiritual foundations laid by mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and the "big mamas" who ruled the behavior of the block from a rocking chair on the front porch. This was true of Dr. Thurman's early childhood. And it was true of my childhood rearing. It is a legacy which may never be resurrected in our day of impersonal urbanization.

*"Yet, do I marvel at
this curious thing:
To make a poet black,
and bid him sing."*

Yet a host of younger womanist theologians are refining and defining the many issues of African-American Christian spirituality. From these women I find the riches to improve upon my provisional definitions of spirituality. Churches and seminaries include these sisters' pictures in their stained-glass windows. Then early eighteenth-century black women preachers such as Jarena Lee and Zilphaw Elaw will rejoice in heaven with Hagar and Huldah.

The spirituality of the black church women's movement is related to theodicy in the sense that in spite of the legacy of lynchings and dehumanizing and demoralizing acts of defining African-Americans as nonpersons, these women have courageously and prayerfully worked to improve the circumstances of black

family and community life through the large number of academic schools and colleges which black women of spiritual power founded and continue to fund.

Even now, these women of prayer and service keep alive nurseries, preschools, day-care, counseling, legal aid and financial aid centers, scholarships, reentry care for ex-offenders, and anger-management programs to reduce domestic violence—as well as church-sponsored schools on the elementary, high school, college, and adult education level.

The unresolved issues of theodicy cannot erase the historical fact that no matter how debased black existence has been, and no matter how great black suffering has been on American soil, African-American spirituality has enabled black Christians to affirm life in the face of the demonic and demeaning. ■

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¹ Howard Thurman, "Exposition to the Book of Habbakuk," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 6. George A. Buttrick, Editor (Abingdon Press, 1956).

² Martin E. Marty, "Mysticism and the Religious Quest for Freedom," in *The Christian Century*, March 16, 1983.

The Discipline of Study and the Spirituality of Christian Leaders

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they will ever have to offer others is half-truths, compounding their error with the retelling of shallow experiences.

So while there are inherent tensions within evangelicalism between theory and practice, those who complain of too much academic work and too little spirituality betray a misunderstanding both of the purpose of seminaries in general, and the vision of Fuller Seminary in particular. Protestant seminaries in general were never intended of themselves to provide spiritual nurture on a day-to-day basis, and they cannot, and must not, attempt to take the place of the church.

Fuller Seminary was founded, among other things, for the purpose of providing a balance to the unreflective activism of the evangelical movement. If some people will perish because they have not heard the gospel, others will certainly suffer because evangelicals have not taken the time to study in sufficient depth, detail, and breadth. But genuine study has never been, and will never be, a matter of simply acquiring a body of information: It has to do with the formation of a person's character. If, as evangelicals, we are rightly

concerned with the urgent demands of the gospel, we must also ask ourselves the sober question: How many people will languish over an entire lifetime under the ministries of ill-prepared pastors who, because of defects in their education and character, habitually dispense half-truths and can only offer partial, and sometimes even disastrous, remedies? ■

ENDNOTES

¹ An abbreviated version of this essay appeared in the Fuller Seminary weekly *The SEMI*. Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Eerdmans, 1994); George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, (Oxford University Press, 1997). Much of what Marsden and Noll say about Christian scholarship in general can be applied to evangelical theological education.

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⁴ John Ryland, *Cotton Mather's The Student and Preacher. Entitled, Manductio Ad Ministerium, or Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry* (London, 1781), vi.

⁵ John Ryland, *The Student and Preacher: Or Advice to Students of Divinity and Young Ministers of the Gospel* (London, 1770), 11.

⁶ John Mason, *The Student and Pastor: Or, Directions How to Attain to Eminence and Usefulness in Those Respective Characters*, 2nd ed. (London, 1760), 35.

⁷ Joseph Kinghorn, *Advice and Encouragement to Young Ministers: Two Sermons, Addressed Principally to the Students of the Two Baptist Academies, at Stepney and at Bristol* (Norwich, 1814), 34-35.

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⁹ Abraham Booth, *Pastoral Cautions: An Address to the Late Mr. Thomas Hopkins, When Ordained Pastor of the Church of Christ, in Eagle Street, Red Lion Square, London, July 13, 1785*. Now published and greatly enlarged (London, 1805), 34.

¹⁰ Booth, *Pastoral Cautions*, 34.

¹¹ Kinghorn, *Advice and Encouragement*, 38.

¹² Job Orton, *Letters to Dissenting Ministers, and to Students for the Ministry, from the Rev. Job Orton, ed. Samuel Palmer*, 2 vols. (London, 1806) 2: 178.

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Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER

- 5** *The "Reluctant Dissenter"*
James P. Shannon speaks on his newly released book
- 5-8** *Annual City of the Angels Film Festival*
Directors Guild of America, Los Angeles
- 12-14** *Annual Gathering on Church Growth and Ecclesiology*
Golden Gate Theological Seminary, San Francisco, California

JANUARY

- 4-5** *Southwest Alpha Training Conference*
Phoenix, Arizona
- 7-8** *San Diego Alpha Training Conference*
San Diego, California
- 20-22** *School of Psychology Integration Symposium*
David Myers, Ph.D., guest speaker

(Unless otherwise noted, events will be held at Fuller Seminary.)

