THE CHURCH IN MISSION IN EDUCATION

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A FEW years ago, the following item appeared in *Bergen Record*, a New Jersey newspaper. "Dr. Albert S. Thompson, Professor of Psychology, Teachers College,Columbia University, will speak on 'Human Relations in the Choir Loft' during a meeting of the Northern Valley Chapter, American Guild of Organists." As might have been predicted, the New Yorker Magazine's comment on this item was, "In a word look straight at the music." Since I did not hear the professor's speech, I have no way of knowing whether the comment accurately summarizes what he told the organists. I do know, however, that I wish I had something as simple and direct to say about the topic with which you are concerned at the moment.

The context for anything that is said about the mission of the church in education today is suggested by the meaning of the term "interim." The signs that we live, in an important sense, in a "time between" are everywhere around us. The society into which you and I were born, and the culture to which we have been socialized, are in crucial ways now regarded as fraught with ambiguities and highly problematic. With allowance for some exceptions, it makes considerable sense to say of our basic societal institutions, and of the norms, standards, and values that have been central motifs in our culture, that everything that is not nailed down securely is coming loose. To anyone who pays the slightest attention to the torrent of intelligence about what is happening in the world that pours constantly from the mass media, it can hardly be a surprise that perceptive social critics on every hand point to the growing evidence of personal, social, and cultural malaise. A broad historical perspective with respect to this malaise suggests that what we are living through at this time is not a new kind of human experience. Rather it is the late twentieth century's version of what has happened several times before. The social system with which we are familiar is being changed—through the operation of both internal and external factors—into something different. What the emerging new social system will be like is not entirely clear, and what we do know about what will be but is not yet, is at times not very reassuring, and in some ways frightening. This is why I say that we live in the interim - the time between the disappearance of the old and the appearance of the new.

If the notion of the interim provides a relevant context for the

discussion of our topic, there is a corollary idea that suggests, in broad terms and at a high level of abstraction, a premise for the consideration of the church's task in education. The idea I have in mind may be stated as follows: never forget the first law of the jungle—don't let go with your tail until your hand has a hold on something solid! Put in language different from that employed in this jungle metaphor, the problem the church has in education, as in everything else that constitutes a part of its mission, is how to let go of the old, the usual, the familiar, the tried and true in such a way that we can respond to the new thing that God is doing in the midst of all the turmoil, while at the same time retaining what is essential to the realization of the aims and purposes of our charter. Perhaps our chief difficulty has been that we have a tendency to follow the law of the jungle too literally—we hang on so tenaciously with our tails that our hands never are permitted to reach out for anything.

My view of the situation in which we find ourselves has received substantial support in the work of sociologist Jeffrey Hadden, whose study of what he aptly calls THE GATHERING STORM IN THE CHURCHES sets forth clearly the crucial aspects of the time between as it affects what the church does in the implementation of its mission. Hadden's central thesis is that "the Protestant churches are involved in a deep and entangling crisis which in the years ahead may seriously disrupt or alter the very nature of the church."[1] The crisis to which Hadden refers appears in three areas, each of which affects in vital ways the implementation of the mission of the church in education: the crisis concerning the purpose and meaning of the church itself, the crisis of belief, and the crisis of authority. The crisis about the meaning of the church takes the form of a struggle between those who see comforting people as the central purpose of the church, and those who think that the church's main task is challenging people to put an end to injustice in the world. The crisis of belief is symbolized by the furor caused by the controversy over the announcement of the so-called secular theologians that God had indeed died. The crisis of authority derives from the fact that the church is, after all, a voluntary association, and if its leadership adopts goals that its constituency finds unsatisfactory or unacceptable, the association may ultimately find itself without participants. I cannot take time here to pursue in detail the findings of Hadden's study. For our purposes, it may be sufficient to suggest that the crises mentioned—meaning, belief, and authority—are symptomatic of the fact that the church too, like all the other parts of our social system, is living in the time between, when the old is problematic and the new is ambiguous or threatening.

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[1] Hadden, Jeffrey, *The Gathering Storm in the Churches,* (New York, Doubleday, 1969), p. 5.

Philosophically, the view that the relevant context for the consideration of education is that suggested by the notion of the interim is also underlined by the work of Philip Phenix, in his *Realms of Meaning*. Seeing education as the process of engendering essential meanings that lead to the development of complete persons, Phenix notes that the process is, in our time, under constant threat from several interrelated sources: the mood of criticism and skepticism engendered necessarily by the scientific approach to life, the increase of depersonalization and fragmentation of our society, the expansion of our cultural inventory in almost geometric ratio, and the rapid pace of social and cultural change, which has made so many kinds of changes difficult, if not impossible, to assimilate. To comment at any length on the implications of these threats to meaning, and to cite all the evidence with regard to them, are not possible within the limits of this address. A book could be written on each of them—indeed, several have already been written. What is important for us at the moment is to notice the model of the complete person that Phenix has in mind, and to see why, for him, education must be viewed as the process of engendering meanings. "A complete person," writes Phenix, "should be skilled in the use of speech, symbol, and gesture, factually well informed, capable of creating and appreciating objects of esthetic significance, endowed with a rich and disciplined life in relation to self and others, able to make wise decisions and to judge between right and wrong, and possessed of an integral outlook."[2] I think it would be difficult to find a better statement of the aims of education. In whatever educational ventures the church may be engaged, its mission needs to be to make, in ways appropriate to the other imperatives that are a part of its charter, its contribution to the development of complete persons. This really takes us back to the interim, since it is precisely this process of engendering meanings that has become so fragile, so uncertain in its outcome, in such a time as this.

With this as background, I want now to move directly to the question—what is the mission of the church in education today? My answer to this question will be given from the stance made somewhat inevitable by the fact that I am a professor in a theological seminary which sees its task as that of training people for the profession of the ministry, a sociologist, a churchman, an ordained clergyman, and finally a human being with a particular biographically determined situation. What I have to say, then, constitutes a view of the church's mission in education from that vantage point. While I would not want to push the point too far, I think that in an important sense most of the issues that perplex us as we consider the church's mission in education

[2] Phenix, Philip, *Realms of Meaning*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 8.

really come into sharp focus in what we finally decide constitutes viable education for ministry. Your attendance at just one meeting of the committee charged with determining what the curriculm for theological education needs to be would leave little doubt in your minds on this point.

But now to the meat of our assignment! I see the mission of the church in education as focusing on four major tasks. The first of these tasks has to do with *enabling men to learn the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of their ultimate concerns.* For some time now, a variety of persons involved in the discussion of theological questions have found Paul Tillich's insight that religion deals with what concerns men ultimately to be a useful starting point for the consideration of many of the issues involved in the life of the church, and especially the issues that arise out of the fact that the church is, among other things, engaged in handing on to future generations an important part of the cultural heritage. In this connection, I want to make what is really a very simple point. People learn to speak the language of religion in the same way they learn anything else. Before we can communicate adequately in *any* language, we must achieve at least a minimum level of mastery of its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, and the language of ultimate concerns is no exception to this. It follows from this that religious education is accurately described by saying that it is the church's attempt to teach people the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of the language in which its faith-stance and its commitments can be expressed.

In getting at what is involved here, I have been illumined in countless ways by the work of James Gustafson, in his TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS. "Members of the Church have a common language; the community has a set of significant symbols that are its own, and through which its particular meanings are communicated .... (I)n the Church the outer boundaries of the historical Christian community are set by familarity or unfamiliarity with its language. The inner core is in part designated by an intense use of the particular language of Christians."[3] With these words, Gustafson well expresses the point under discussion at the moment. He also suggests, by implication, one of the reasons why the church is experiencing difficulty today. In order for a community such as the church to exist, it must succeed in teaching its members the language through which its collective representations and common sentiments are expressed. In my book, THE CHURCH: MIRROR OR WINDOW? I have pointed out what the problem the church encounters in this connection is. "The community called the church maintains its identity because certain

[3] Gustafson, James, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels,* (New York, Harper and Row, 1961), p. 45.

special meanings have been 'internalized' by its members, and these meanings are a common objective reference for all of them. This cannot, of course, be the case unless the meanings actually 'inform' the lives of the members. And the meanings can be articulated and internalized because the church shares a common language. The language learned in church is one of several, for every person learns others—from his family, his social class, his peer groups."[4] And that is where the problem of the church begins. There is, as the work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman has made so clear, a "market situation" in the realm of ultimate concerns. "The consumer orientation . . . is not limited to economic products but characterizes the relation of the individual to the entire culture. The latter is no longer an obligatory structure of interpretive and evaluative schemes with a distinct hierarchy of significance. It is, rather, a rich, heterogeneous assortment of possibilities which, in principle, are accessible to any individual consumer . . . . (T)he consumer preferences still remain a function of the consumer's social biography. The consumer orientation also pervades the relation of the 'autonomous' individual to the sacred cosmos."[5] This is to say, then, that in a pluralistic society, even the commodities of culture, such as world-views, life styles, values, and commitments, are subject to a buyer's market. The very stuff of the Christian faith is a world-view and a life-style, and these rest upon the appropriation, the internalization, of the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of ultimate concerns. In the final analysis, then, and in an important sense, the fate of the church rests upon its success in teaching people to use its language when they deal with the issues of life.

The second major task of the church, in the implementation of its mission in education, is that of *assisting persons of all ages, but especially the adolescents, to find, maintain, and enrich a meaningful identity.* My intellectual guide with reference to this point is Erik Erikson's work on the problems of ego identity and the stages of the human life cycle. Life begins, and ends, for Erikson, with the problem of trust, and this finally rests upon the creation and maintenance of a viable and satisfying identity; the cycle of human life, from infancy to mature adulthood, is tied together in the observation that "healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death."[6] The fruits of the achievement of a viable identity are, in the end, summed up by the coming of ego integrity, which, in Erikson's words, is "the ego's accrued assurance of its proclivity for order and meaning. It is a post-narcissistic love of the human ego—not of the

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[4] Whitley, Oliver R., *The Church: Mirror or Window?* (St. Louis, Bethany Press, 1969), p. 60.

[5] Luckman, Thomas, *The Invisible Religion,* (New York, Macmillan, 1967), p. 98. See also Berger, Peter L., *The Sacred Canopy,* (New York, Doubleday, 1967).

[6] Erikson, Erik, *Childhood and Society,* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 269.

self—as an experience which conveys some world order and spiritual sense, no matter how dearly paid for. It is the acceptance of one's one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitution."[7] I wonder if it seems to you, as it does to me, that this is a psychologist's way of saying what St. Paul says, in his language, about the achievement of Christian maturity, and the fruits of the spirit.

In any event, the coming of this kind of integrity rests upon the building, at every stage of life, of the human identity appropriate to each stage, but especially in adolescence, since this is the stage during which the problem of identity is experienced in its most acute form. All this relates directly to the question of the church's mission in education, since almost everything done in the name of education contributes, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, to the solution of problems of human identity. Margaret Mead has recently reminded us that "Twenty years ago . . . the central problem agitating young people and those who were concerned with them was identity. In the midst of the tremendous changes going on in the world in the period immediately following World War II it was clear that it was becoming harder and harder for any individual then growing up to find his or her place within the conflicting versions of our culture and within the world that was already pressing in upon us . . . . Today, the central problem is commitment: to what past, present, or future can the idealistic young commit themselves?"[8] This statement needs to be edited by the omission of the phrase "twenty years ago," for the central problem agitating young people today is still that of identity. Yet Professor Mead's remarks are basically correct, if we are allowed to add something that has long been a part of the Christian understanding of identity—that an integral, if not *the* crucial, part of one's identity is his commitments.

The task of the church in education is, in this connection, made very difficult, since the church, as part of the establishment, has helped to make a society with values and priorities to which many of our brightest and most able young people find it ludicrous and obscene to commit themselves. The most insightful guide to the understanding of this situation is unquestionably Yale psychologist Kenneth Keniston, whose studies of both the alienated and uncommitted, and the young radicals, the committed youth, have thrown much light on the problems we face in the education of young people. "In the experience of these young men and women," Keniston writes, "we can discern an emergent stage of life that intervenes between adolescence and adulthood, a

[7] *Ibid*, p. 268.
[8] Mead, Margaret, *Culture and Commitment*, (New York, Doubleday, 1970), p. ix.

stage of life made possible by the affluence of the post-modern world, and made necessary by the ambivalence that world inspires in the most talented, thoughtful, principled, sensitive, or disturbed of those who have an adolescence."[9] To describe young people in such terms is to point to a generation whose involvement in, and acceptance of, the society that you and I have made cannot be taken for granted, and we face the task of convincing them that the society is worth trying to save, if it is not worthy of joining. Whether we like it or not, many of our young people, as a part of their continuing search for a meaningful identity, are engaged in the search for new forms of life, forms that will include, among other things, new orientations to the future, new pathways of personal development, new values for living, new styles of human interaction, new ways of knowing, new kinds of learning, new concepts of man and society, new formulations of the world, new types of social organization and institutional forms, new tactics of political action, new patterns of international relations, and new controls on violence.[10] And this, I think you will agree, is quite an agenda! The church that is going to do anything significant in education in such a time will have to find ways to contribute substantially to the consideration of this agenda. More importantly, the church will have to make its contribution with the realization that it no longer sets the terms for the discussion of the agenda. That agenda has been set by the young people themselves, and if the church wants to participate in the discussion it can no longer do so as the agency that brings the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, the "answers," but only as a participant and an enabler in the task of finding out what the questions are.

Theodore Roszak has, in a book which has recently been very much "in" with the young people, given us an account of what he calls THE MAKING OF A COUNTER CULTURE. I want now to suggest that there may be a clue here to one aspect of the church's mission in education. The young people, in their search for new ways, are already in the process of creating a counter-culture, of outlining the contours of a map of tomorrow that may, in some respects, change our cultural cartography beyond recognition. An argument can be made for the view that the church's only viable options, at this stage in the history of our society, have to do with the terms on which the church is to participate in the making of the counter culture. I find it impossible to quarrel seriously with Roszak's statement that "for better or worse, most of what is new, provocative, and engaging in politics, education, the arts, social relations (love, courtship, family, com-

[9] Keniston, Kenneth, *Young Radicals*, (New York, Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968), p. 263.
[10] *Ibid*, pp. 287-290.

munity) is the creation either of youth who are profoundly, even fanatically, alienated from the parental generation, or of those who address themselves primarily to the young."[11] I must, in all candor, say that my agreement with this is hedged about with some sense of ambiguity, and with some real ambivalence. Perhaps this is understandable, if you keep in mind that, in the view of my two sons, aged twenty-one and fifteen, my understanding of yesterday, today, and tomorrow is hopelessly out of it, and my attitudes, as expressed in my interaction with them, do not do justice to my intellectual commitment to the proposition that the building of a counter-culture is essential if tomorrow is to be better than today. Nonetheless, I do seriously propose that if the church has a mission in education today, it properly lies in the area of active participation in the construction of a counter-culture. We are all, as Roszak points out, technocracy's children, that is to say, products of a culture that has taught us to accept as axioms three interlocking premises: that the vital needs of man are (contrary to everything the great souls of history have told us) purely technical in character; that the expert analysis of human needs is all but complete; and that the experts who know what we all need are all on the official payroll of the establishment.[12] And in response to this "the young stand forth so prominently because they act against a background of nearly pathological passivity on the part of the adult generation . . . . (T)hey (the adults) have surrendered their responsibility for making morally demanding decisions, for generating ideals, for controlling public authority, for safeguarding the society against its despoilers."[13] To the extent that this is true, the young people can be understood as saying to us, "look, dad, you have messed things up badly; the social structures you have built, including the church, what we call simply 'the establishment,' are no longer viable, because they are no longer responsive to human needs and hopes; we want the chance, before it is too late, to change the scenario of the human story; and, for these reasons, we are going to challenge you at every point, reminding you that the role models, the life styles, and the values you offer us are not handed down from heaven; maybe you could have sold us that bill of goods if it were not so obvious that you are not happy with them yourselves, and if it were not so clear that your own commitment to them is less than genuine, if not plain phony, but not any more; we have had it with all that; but if you want to help us recover the best of what you had to give us, and to discover, along with us, what the new tomorrow might still be, we will be glad to have you join us." The message does not come to us, from the side of the young, unac-

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[11] Roszak, Theodore, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, (New York, Doubleday, 1969).
[12] *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.
[13] *Ibid*, p. 22.

companied by ambivalence, ambiguity, uncertainly, as well as a noticeable portion of selfishness and self-pity. But the young can offer an excuse that is not open to us—they are young, and they do not have to play the game, as we often do, of pretending that they have the answers.

The ambiguity, ambivalence, and complexity that surround the questions of identity and commitment in contemporary society illustrate, perhaps better than anything else could, the fact that we live in a time of interim. The debate about the status of the young in our society is symptomatic of everything that bewitches, bothers, and bewilders us. No matter what side of this debate we find ourselves on, we are somehow forced to acknowledge the relevance and cogency of the arguments on the other side. And that may account for our ambivalence. My sympathies are with the young, for I know that what they decide about their identities and commitments is crucial for my fate too. Yet I would be less than candid not to admit that what John Aldridge says about "the country of the young" strikes, in some ways, a responsive chord. "There may even be something more than paranoid truth in the thought that today the most vehement complaint of the young against us can be made with greater justice against them, that it is they who are now manipulating us, who are programming our minds to work within alternatives which they have invented, and forcing us to conform to their authoritarian and bureaucratic plans for the renovation of the modern world."[14] My immediate response to this is, yes, there is a lot of truth here, and a convincing amount of evidence can be adduced to support this view.

Then, however, my intellectual commitment to the need for keeping things in perspective comes into play, and I have to say, the immediate response is too much at the feeling level, and that Aldridge's view is convincing because, like many people of my generation, I am, in moments of weakness, utterly frustrated by a sense of inadequacy. This says something very important about the presence of identity and commitment problems at age levels other than adolescence. And it alerts me to the need, if I am not simply to be overwhelmed, to look further into the resources for understanding what is happening. One of those resources is certainly the perspective offered by the anthropologists' reflection on ethnocentrism. "When one turns to man's relation to his own culture," writes George Pettit in his recently published PRISONERS OF CULTURE, "he recognizes that loyalty to that culture is essential to the survival of the society which supports it. But loyalty to an idea does not necessarily prove that the customs built

[14] Aldridge, John, *The Country of the Young*, (New York, Harper and Row, 1970), p. xiii-xiv.

around it are normatively right or good. Rather, when considering one's own culture, one tends to ignore the possibility that it may be wrong . . . . Children are the guinea pigs of civilization . . . . When these child guinea pigs are old enough, adults try to condition them for adult life by caging them in school for many hours a day. Perhaps the object of this is to make adult life seem good by contrast. Those who do not weather the process may end in hospitals, or in prisons, or in their graves."[15] And this, too, strikes a responsive chord, for it reminds me that, where identities and commitments are concerned, we are all in the human story together. The generations need each other, but it is largely our generation that is responsible for keeping the lines of communication open.

The third major task of the church in education is *participation in the dialogue of society, culture, and education.* In regard to this task, the work that will provide the context of discussion for many years to come is that done by Kenneth W. Underwood, who directed the Danforth Study of Campus Ministries. The work was cut off from its completion by the tragic death of Dr. Underwood, but the report of the study, on which he was working almost up to the moment of his death, has thoroughly explored the heights and depths, the lengths and the breadths of the issues that the church confronts in its encounter with education at the college and university level. That encounter, of course, comes to focus when we attempt to decide what the task of the campus minister is. Underwood's study emphasizes the need for new forms, new structures, and new knowledge in ministry, but the newness maintains its continuity with the historic forms of ministry—pastoral, priestly, prophetic, and kingly. "The pastoral role is that of caring for individuals; the priestly role is proclaiming the faith and its gospel and of carrying out ritual acts which affirm the central tenets of that faith; the prophetic role is judging the justice and humaneness of the social order and pointing to the changes required if these values are to be present; and the kingly role is governance and the organization of activities for the care of men in the world through responsible corporate action."[16] These roles, Underwood believed, cannot be separated in the total ministry of the church, for they are parts of a fundamental unity. The task of ministry, in its encounter with the world, and with education, is to create a community in which the knowledge that is essential for the maintenance of an urban-technical social system is placed in a continuing dialogue with the sources of religious and ethical insight. What is called for, in this view, is a ministry on the campus that stresses responsible knowing and responsible corporate

[15] Pettit, George, *Prisoners of Culture,* (New York, Scribner's, 1970), pp. x-xi.
[16] *New Wine,* A Report of the Commission on the Danforth Study of Campus Ministry.

action, a ministry that enables students to sort out the ways in which all modes of knowledge—theological, humanistic, scientific, and ethnological—can be related to each other. Such a ministry would relate itself to the movements of student protest not by exalting the existentialist cult of individual subjectivity or uncritically proclaiming the absolute evil of power structures, but by seeking to be an enabler in the process of obtaining and using knowledge about the structure of educational institutions, and about the cognitive and social needs of students, so that, in the long run, both the church and the university can help students to bring together in a viable identity a religious world-view, the life of intellect, and practical action in society.

Underwood had high hopes for the future of the campus ministry. Indeed, he regarded the campus ministry, rightly understood, as the precursor of all ministry. For him, the precursor ministry "is an ecumenical team ministry supported by adequate structures of governance in the church, hopefully clear in its relationship to the governance of the university, and staffed by men capable of uniting the priestly, pastoral, prophetic and governing modes of ministry . . . ."[17] Some may doubt whether an adequate number of men of this caliber and with this image of ministry is available, but there is little room for doubt that this view of the new ministry rooted in the historic modes of ministry is what is called for if the church is to have any significant part to play in shaping the future of our society. Above all, one thing is clear. If Underwood is right about the ministry, the day is already past when the church could suppose that its contribution to education is to be made by maintaining isolated Christian enclaves that religious parents naively suppose can succeed in sheltering young people from the stormy blasts of a pluralistic, urban, industrial, and technocratic society. The church is in, and of, that kind of society all the way, and the only questions have to do with the terms on which the church—in education or in other aspects of its mission—will participate.

Something needs to be said, at this point, about the place of the study of religion as an intellectual discipline in the curriculum of higher education. Langdon Gilkey has recently discussed this issue in a paper entitled "Religion and the Secular University." I think the essential point he tries to make applies with equal force to the church-related college or university, although perhaps not in quite the same way. Religion needs the university, Gilkey says; but the statement can also be turned around—the university needs the discipline of religious studies. "Religion as it appears in the university—and especially in an academic department—is the disciplined study of that whole range of human experience in which man confronts, celebrates, obeys, defies,

[17] *Ibid*, p. 29.

and is healed by ultimacy and sacrality. Every culture, even a technical scientific one, must face the issues of fate, sin, and death, and find some resolution to them in terms of an ultimate horizon of meaning, an affirmation of value and of hope . . . . (A)dvanced technical societies that believe they are successfully secular, succumb to the demonic myths of class, race, or nation, and thus, far from avoiding the religious issues of meaning and destiny because they are secular . . . , they illustrate and resolve them in the worst possible way."[18] If the university is the place where what a society and its culture are all about is considered, where people are trained to understand its goals and accomplish its tasks, and where all the thinking and planning for its future are to be done, then a case can be made for a department of religious studies. But more than this, religion is needed in the university so that this community, too, "can come to understand the religious and moral dimensions of its own life, the importance of its own ideals and its tendency to deny or tarnish them," for without this kind of understanding, "it will not be able at all to continue those profane tasks which are its *raison d'etre,* . . . the tasks of objective inquiry and technical development which are its immediate and conscious goals."[19]

Likewise, religion needs the university. "If it does not seek to understand itself and its world through the eyes of academic inquiry, it too can lose itself. It can . . . disappear into either an unintelligible and fanatical piety, or the suburban Establishment, the passive receptacle of the culture's guilt and escapism. . . . If its commitment to ministry in the world is to be fulfilled, religion must be in touch with the knowledge about man and his world represented by the social and psychological sciences in a modern university. If its faith is to have meaning and validity to its own adherents . . . the symbols of that faith must be related to all the significant areas of ordinary secular experience."[20] With these remarks I heartily agree, and I call them to your attention because Dr. Gilkey has said so well what needs to be said on this issue, and because I could not possibly say it better. In the curriculum of contemporary higher education religious studies are an integral part of learning to be a complete person.

This brings me, appropriately I think, to the discussion of the fourth task that I see as a part of the mission of the church in education—*the equipping of the saints for ministry in the world.* The saints I have in mind come in various shapes and sizes, but at the moment I am concerned with two main types—professionals and non-professionals, or clergy and laymen. Language of this kind sometimes upsets

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[18] Gilkey, Langdon, "Religion in the Secular University," *Religious Education*, LXIV, (1969), p. 465.

[19] *Ibid*, pp. 465-66.

[20] *Ibid*, p. 466.

those of us whose religious socialization process took place in the Christian Church–Disciples of Christ, so I must add immediately that the language is employed for purposes of description and analysis, and not invidiously or pejoratively. I mention this in part because I faced a similar problem when in my TRUMPET CALL OF REFORMATION I argued that the Christian Church–Disciples of Christ began as a sectlike group and gradually was transformed into a denomination. The response was that the use of concepts like sect and denomination is inherently value-loaded and invidious. The same point might now be made about the use of concepts like profession, clergy, and laity. I am convinced, however, that this is really a false problem, and that so long as concepts are defined carefully, with their meanings clearly stipulated, and the concepts are used for description and analysis, no very significant intellectual problems need arise as a result of their use.

I am increasingly persuaded that the Christian ministry, in all its varieties, is a profession. If it is not, then what the church is attempting in carrying on the work of its theological seminaries is, at best a waste of time, and at worst a kind of pious fraud. I take it, then, that the important question we have to ask is, what is a profession? The literature on this is voluminous, and I shall make no attempt to review it here.[21] For our purposes, I think it may be useful to follow a description of the professional suggested by Paul Harrison. "We shall describe a professional, first, as one who has been called to a vocation of community service. Second, the service depends on esoteric knowledge that determines the rules and methods of the profession. Third, the professional possesses authority that is grounded in the esoteric knowledge and shared only by his fellows. Fourth, a professional belongs to an independent guild or association. Fifth, the profession fulfills an important function in society, i. e., the service performed is objectively and subjectively perceived, by both professionals and laymen, to meet important social needs."[22] The key concepts in understanding what a profession is, then, are these: vocation, esoteric knowledge, authority, the guild, and function. As I see it, the mission of the church in *theological* education has to do with unpacking the meanings and implications, the ambiguities and perplexities, that these concepts involve.

In a course that I teach at the seminary, in which we consider "the minister and his roles," and in which the question of the ministry

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[21] See, for example, Vollmer, Howard, and Mills, Donald, *Professionalization,* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1966); Lynn, Kenneth, *The Professions in America,* (Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1965); Etzioni, Amitai, *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization,* (New York, The Free Press, 1969); and Whitley, Oliver R., *Religious Behavior,* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1964), Chapter VII, "Who and What Is a Minister?".

[22] Harrison, Paul M., "Religious Leadership in America," in Cutler, Donald R., (ed.), *The Religious Situation: 1969,* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 957-979.

as a profession is dealt with in some detail, I rather insistently remind students that the intent of theological education is to help them answer three basic questions: who am *I*, what is a minister, and how does one get the answers to the identity and role-image questions together on a cogent and viable basis? My experience has been that approaching such questions from the angle of vision established on the basis of the sociology and social psychology of role theory has made it possible for many students to understand more clearly their own motives and the theological ground on which this vocation of community service rests. The three questions are not, of course, answered in any final way while one is a theological student; they are, after all, questions that one wrestles with all the days of his ministry. But unless the intellectual and affective basis of a satisfying self-image and role-image is laid, it is almost predictable that a person will find himself unhappy and ineffective in ministry within a very few years. James Gustafson has, in this connection, well reminded us that "the problem the minister faces in any social context is that of determining *who he is* and *what he is doing* within the complexity of his functions." And this means that "he must carry on a constant process of interpretation of his activities," asking "what are the institutional and sociological consequences for his theological convictions," and "what are the theological implications for the multifarious activities in which he is engaged."[23] So the aim of theological education must be to equip the minister with the tools he needs to carry on this process.

The minister, I have said, is a professional person. But what is it that he professes? What the minister professes can be best approached by appropriating a role image that has found increasing use in a number of the so-called "helping professions," and especially among the social workers—the image of the *enabler*. The minister as a professional needs to be skilled in the art of enabling laymen to accomplish the work of ministry. This is, I take it, the meaning of St. Paul's phrase "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry." The minister as a professional does not, nor can he, do the work of the ministry for others. This is not his job. What he needs to do is to be able, through the enactment of his priestly, pastoral, prophetic, and kingly roles, to facilitate the process of enabling the people of God, with their diversities of gifts, abilities, experiences, and commitments, to accomplish the work of the ministry in the world. If the connotations of pious moralism can be stripped away from the use of such language, this means that the minister, as an enabler, is called to be "a godly man in his congregation and community," and his calling as godly man is "to

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[23] Gustafson, James, "An Analysis of the Problem of the Role of the Minister," *Journal of Religion*, XXXIV, (1954), pp. 187, 191.

interpret the life of the people, individual persons, and their organized and unorganized relationships with one another, in the dimension of the relation of life to God."[24] This indicates, in the broadest sense, the theological, sociological, and human dimensions of the *calling*, and I would add, the *profession* of the ministry. The curriculum of the theological seminary is, then, designed with the aim of teaching persons the knowledges, techniques, and skills necessary for practising the art of the enabler, for God's sake.

From where I stand, then, the mission of the church in education, for this time of the interim, has to do with the accomplishing of four major tasks: (1) enabling men to learn the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of ultimate concerns; (2) assisting persons of all ages, but especially the adolescents, to find, maintain, and enrich a meaningful identity; (3) participation in the dialogue of society, culture, and education; and (4) equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. I would not want to claim that these tasks necessarily encompass the whole of the mission of the church in education, but I am at least certain that the agenda set by these tasks, both in terms of what I have said about them, and in terms of what has been left unsaid, is a crucial and demanding one that will, if it is accepted, tax the resources of the church—economic, human, and spiritual—almost beyond endurance. As one whose ministry is devoted to the attempt to accomplish one small, but very important, part of the mission of the church in education, I would add only that I hope and pray that this mission may be fulfilled.

[24] *Ibid*, p. 187.