CAMPUS MINISTRY AND NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL STYLES:

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It may be judiciously claimed and effectively argued, from the standpoint of the larger Church, with whom we all stand accountable for ministry before God in Christ, that campus ministry has assumed a self-defined as well as community-ascribed status of "non-traditionalist" in orientation to both ministry and education throughout its relatively brief history.[1] Those who serve within the family of The Church in positions of campus ministry should, in principle at least, feel at home and somewhat comfortable when thought and discussion turns to non-traditional styles of education and learning. To be sure, this familiarity with the non-traditional has at times proven more a problem than a blessing, at least in the day to day ordering of our profession and in the establishment of longer range planning objectives in our ministries. Nevertheless, we shall attempt a discussion of some of the possible relationships which may hold for campus ministers within higher education as we corporately wrestle with the meaning of "non-traditional style of learning for our ministries and for the institutions in which they are situated.

No sociologist, no theologian, no social ethicist worth his/her salt in these respective disciplines would begin a presentation of this sort without first suggesting, if only in outline fashion, the approach or method to be employed in such a discussion. Let me not depart from this functional and time-honored tradition. To link campus ministry and non- traditional styles of learning requires attention to what is meant by each of these terms.

First, I shall propose an understanding of higher education and the university which you will be free to accept, to reject, or to modify. This view will be drawn largely from my own perceptions of higher

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[1]Kenneth Underwood, *The Church, The University, and Social Policy: The Danforth Study of Campus Ministries,* Volume 1 (Wesleyan University Press: Middleton, Conn., 1969), pp. 3-19. In this section Underwood notes that one characteristic of campus ministry in the sixties, amid the stress and civil strife that epitomized the campus in those years, seemed to be an almost compulsive professional self-examination which resulted in many on the outside of the profession questioning the vocational clarity and practical effectiveness of those within the profession.

education resulting from experience with that institution during the past thirteen years. Then I shall invite your consideration of the functions and roles of the Church as expressed in higher education through campus ministry and against the backdrop of what I consider to be one critically important "style" of non-traditional learning. From my own experiences I shall illustrate briefly some of the practical linkages between campus ministry and the university which are facilitated through settings of non-traditional learning, And finally, I shall suggest some of the possible limits--skeletal features as it were--or stuctural elements of an ethical/theological justification for continuing the dialog between Church and university, again through the medium ot non-traditional styles of learning.

I. Education and Learning in the University: The State of the Art

If one reads closely the literature of higher education today or listens closely to junior level faculty and administrators ruminate about the "malaise" which characterizes significant segments of the institution, one sees a scene of administrative tension over appropriate institutional goals, faculty anxiety in the face of ambiguous and inconsistently applied standards of academic and professional accountability, and public bewilderment at what appears to be institutions searching for mission where once clarity of institutional purpose prevailed.

Legislatures look more critically these days at funding requests from state supported universities and colleges. Private and church related institutions search frantically for benevolent donors and generous patrons. Higher education in America no longer presents the blank check it once enjoyed. This budgetary contraction works its way down the institutional flow chart into faculty morale and into administrative offices. I would submit that its effect is not unfelt on students, the principal consumers in the market place of higher learning. This spring at my own insitution a junior faculty member, appreciated by undergraduates as one of the few professors who effectively taught freshmen political science students and commended by his departmental colleagues and department head for excellence in this aspect of faculty responsibility, was denied tenure and promptly terminated for not publishing - - that is, for not publishing soon enough. His second book, a major research effort five years in preparation, was accepted by a publisher this April. Each of you can point similarly to casualties in the struggle to "upgrade" faculties while simultaneously battling the budget. Not infrequently these casualties are credible teachers.

The shape of today's university is the product of years of increas-

ing specialization, fragmentation of disciplines, and differentiation of academic tasks. Across the board there has been little of substance to indicate the trend toward disiplinary ghettoization has been redirected. It is the rare university or college which provides, as an intentional component of its curriculm, integrative, cross discipline experiences for its students in the sciences, the engineering technologies, the social sciences and the humanities. Increasingly, the rewards systems for faculty and administrators in our institutions of higher learning, particularly state schools, are weighted against humanistic activities. Where this is not the case one finds in the humanistic disciplines, like as not, the same narrow definitions of technical performance long since the hallmarks and operative assumptions of acceptable performance in the sciences.

Southern sage and novelist Walker Percy puts his finger on one clear manifestation of this contraction of vision within the university in his observations in *Love in the Ruins: The Adventures of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World* when he writes:

> The prayer of the scientist if prayed, which is not likely: Lord, grant that my discovery may increase knowledge and help other men. Failing that, Lord, grant that it will not lead to man's destruction. Failing that, Lord, grant that my article in *Brain* be published before the destruction takes place.[2]

He continues to claim that within our tightly defined and delineated disciplines we are asking the wrong questions of the human scene:

> The old words of grace are worn smooth as poker chips and a certain devaluation has occurred. Even if one talks only of Christendom, leaving the heathens out of it, of Christendom where everybody beleives in God, it is as if everybody started the game with one poker chip, which is the same as starting with none.[3]

There is, I perceive, a growing sense of disciplinary, professional and personal isolation between the permanent citizens of the university and the publics they are mandated to serve. This malaise, perhaps too narrowly stated by Percy, affects not only the sciences but disciplines across the institution. Let me hasten to observe, however, that it is in this fractured social setting of academia that questions of meaning and purpose of the profoundest order are raised. In this context human

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[2]Walker Percy, *Love in the Ruins: The Adventures of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1971), pp. 7-8.

[3]Percy, *The Message in the Bottle* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1975), p. 116, in an essay entitled "Notes for a Novel About the End of the World."

beings continue to make commitments to what they perceive as ultimate value.

Today's university, characterized as it is by a highly specialized division of labor and academic expertise, stands irrecognizable to its institutional progenitors of earlier times. While it may be impossible to return to those days (I would be the last to suggest that as either a serious or a responsible option for today), it is not implausible to conger the nature and function of higher education. For Kenneth Underwood, known to each of us as one whose professional and affectional concerns clarified our own professions and tasks as ministers in higher education, "knowledge . . . is not divorced from authentic and ethical valuation within the structures of social life"[4] Perhaps our problem then, is fundamentally theological. We lack a holistic view of our social reality. We lack a holistic view of the purpose of the institutions in which we serve. We lack a holistic view of the educational process. In sum, we lack a holistic view of the human predicament. We have become academic technicians, or ecclesiastical technicians. Alfred North Whitehead's conceptualization of the university as a setting wherein values are critiqued, debated, and engendered seems oddly, and unfortunately I will add, out of place in our setting today.[5]

Today's university, indeed, higher education as a social institution, confronts a cluster of questions challenging not only its multiple missions but its very raison d'etre in today's culture. Precisely what function does university education serve in today's technocratic society? Is the mandate of the university or college that of facilitating "upward mobility for our graduates" as I recently heard one university president describe his institution's calling? Is it the preservation, care and extension of blessings of technical knowledge and its manipulative applications? Are today's universities the seminaries for the technological priesthood of our society? And granting that, is our *exhaustive* purpose? Or are there other presuppositional values still operative in the institutional self-understanding of higher education today? Are there values rooted in the humanistic concerns for quality of life, rooted in a basic and passionate quest for truth (wherever that quest leads despite the presuppositional biases of our funding agencies), values rooted in a passion for social justice in our larger society? Again, drawing from Kenneth Underwood's consummate effort to give shape and form to the value content of higher education, "What epistemologies and ways of learning keep alive the sense of wonder and awe, of power and good-

[4]William Kolb in Underwood, *op. cit.*, p. xi.
[5]Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

ness beyond man's capacity to manipulate?"[6] What sources of value shape the mission of higher education today?

Despite the reports of such distinguished bodies as the Carnegie Commission and the Newman Commission of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and yes even our own denomination's Commission on Higher Education, we have still found no clear criteria to satisfactorily clarify the philosophy and practice of higher education in contemporary America.

II. Potential Roles and Possible Functions for The Church in Higher Education: Campus Ministry in the Gaps

The Church is no stranger to the institutional configuration known as higher education in American society. Historically, the Church got the higher education ball rolling in the U.S.[7] And since the founding of that first "new world" college there has been no apparent end to the involvements of the Church in higher learning. From the founding and funding of colleges to the creation of professional schools and seminaries; from the amassing of endowments guaranteed to ensure "future" for frail institutions to the direct recruitment of students to populate them, the Church has maintained a clear presence in American higher learning. And let us not forget the campus ministries—how could we? Campus ministry stands as one of the oldest institutionalized forms of the Church's *non-traditional* address to the challenge of presence in and accountability for higher learning.

As we well know, campus ministries continue to be outpost ministries in the often strange territory of the academy: communities of faith in a veritable sea of faith communities. Despite a long and at times rocky past, campus ministries are still interstitial ministries. Donald Shriver, now President of Union Theological Seminary in New York, awakened me to this term in 1970 when I worked as a research assistant in his University Program on Science and Society at North Carolina State University. Since that time, "interstitial" has characterized my personal and professional existence as a campus minister and shaped my conceptualization of ministry "in the gaps." It refers to the geographical *and* theoretical postioning of campus ministry and campus ministers bewteen institutions of Church on the one hand and university of the other. This is at best a precarious position from which to "do" ministry and a downright dangerous one at worst! To

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[6]Underwood, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

[7]Harvard University was founded in 1636 by Massachusettes Colony with classes beginning in 1638. It was named for Reverend Jorn Harvard, puritan minister and benefactor of both funds and library.

serve credibly in this institutional nopersons' land, one must develop vast tolerances to such everyday feelings as alienation and ambiguity, cultural loneliness and professional insularity. With one ear cocked to the life of the Church and the other fixed on the university the campus minister embodies a role of double accountability these days: accountable for meaningful programming and presence to the needs of persons (students, faculty, administrators, staff) of the academic community *and* accountable to the Church for active, intelligible, and forthright witness to Christ's Gospel.

Do not misunderstand me on this point. I do not bemoan this marginal status. I do not regret this functionally dual role. I simply contend that doing campus ministry in today's confusing scene of higher learning requires a modicum of resiliancy, passion, and unflinching commitment to the often antagonistic institutions of Church and university, Gospel and education, rarely demanded in today's cultural setting. If that is prideful boasting or exaggerated description, so be it. Langdon Gilkey addresses this issue theologically in a cogent work entitled *How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself.*

With the marginal and interstitial status of Christian campus ministry in contemporary higher education comes a sense of meaning which evolves out of the relationship of "engagement" in ministry within the academy. I think of the personal and collegial relationships with faculty and administrators which are mine as a six year veteran at LSU. These were outlandishly unthinkable just three years ago, I consider the continuing relationship with students whose lives and vocational commitments have been shaped in their encounter with the Church within the university. Yet, there is a tentativeness which shapes this sense of marginality.

This tentativeness expresses itself in several forms within the life of both church and university. Ours may be a tentative commitment to specific configurations of academic style and administrative power within the university. There must be, on the other hand, a total commitment to the relationship and the tension between the two habitations. To deal in the contemporary idiom: the relationship is more like marriage than like "shacking up." Perhaps a trial marriage is in order, but never can we risk flirtatious or one-night-stand promiscuity. The relationship demands respect for fundamental values and operational norms.

In this marginal role of ministry at the fringes—the fringes of student life, the fringes of faculty life and academic policy, the fringes of administrative power and institutional structure—certain functional

roles accrue to those who "stick with it." By that I mean: those who view campus ministry as a professional commitment, not simply as a stepping stone in the garden of ministrial upward mobility. Let me hasten to note that within the life of the university these functions are almost never bestowed on the minister by the institution. They must be earned and claimed. Let me suggest five such functions:

1) We function, with loving concern for the vision of what the university can become, as *critics* of current institutional configurations and styles.
2) We function as *listeners* and *counselors* and as such as *encouragers* to students in the crises of faith, valuing, and vocational decision, to faculty in the dilemmas of professional advancement and academic excellence, to administrators caught between personal desires to "do no harm" and the obligations of power.
3) We function as *nourishers of abiding values* as we celebrate the transcendent in our roles as priest and pastor. Our energies support communities of Christian faith and practice, transient and fleeting, but nevertheless authentic and life-transforming.
4) We function as *provocateurs* in our roles as extra-university and extra-church representatives of marginal and alternative institutions. In a sense, campus ministers are called to be interpreters of visions and incarnators of the values we proclaim for our own communities of faith and learning.
5) We function as *message carriers* and *convenors* and *brokers* within the university community, calling together individuals of varying disciplinary commitments who would perhaps never come together without our invitations to meet, to eat, or to simply gather for conversation.

To be certain, of course, no campus minister functions in all of these roles (wears all of these various hats) at one time. The art of effective ministry on the campus, not unlike ministry in other contexts, is the presence of mind to know which hat appropriately fits a particular situation.

I have described a multiplicity of roles and functions appropriate to the interstitial and marginal quality of life and relationships in campus ministry. At a fundamental level, these functions affirm the historic missions of both Church and university to the larger culture, missions to embody roles both of learning and of serving on behalf of our larger society. I these dual roles, *paidaic* and *diakonic* respect-

ively, we call both the university and the Church to perceive and to own for themselves enlarged responsibility for the quality of life in our society.[8]

III. Service-Learning as Educational Hermeneutic: In Search of Alternative Styles

As professionals in ministry we carry representational responsibility for bearing within our selves and within our ministries the marks of both the *diakonic* and the *paidaic* functions of the Church in higher education. Robert K. Greenleaf, writing for the Center for Applied Studies in Cambridge, Massachusetts, focuses this mandate for contemporary church *and* educational institutions in the thesis of his essay "The Institution as Servant:"

> . . .caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. . . .If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to *raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant* of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them.[9]

The Church has generally perceived itself as a *diakonic* institution, serving on behalf of The Christ the needs of the larger society and the world. Similarly, the university has historically perceived itself as bearing for society the *paidaic* function. It is long since time that these twin functions got together. The campus minister along with those who teach and administer with holistic sensitivity may be those who most adequately perceive the incompleteness of each of these facets of institutional life. Ours is the opportunity to find appropriate vehicles within church and university for engendering creative reflection and action on each of these *for* the other.

The Church, when fully church, is both *diakonic* and *paidaic* in nature. The university, when authentically university, embodies both learning and service goals. This is part of what it means to hold up a holistic understanding of the educational processes for our time.

We have seen in recent years an awakening within the university to structures which embody a nascent understanding of the *diakonic* function of that institution: what state university has not experienced

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[8]Robert Sigmon, in an untitled and unpublished paper written in 1970 for the North Carolina Internship Office, lays out a theoretical framework for dealing with the diakonic and paidaic themes in the context of internship education in higher education.

[9]Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Institution as Servant* (Cambridge, Center for Applied Studies, 1972), p. 1.

growing interest in continuing education for the general population. Land Grant, agriculturally centered, mechanical and technical schools have long understood the service function in their relationships to the larger society: consider state cooperative Extension Services. It is not as if the academy has operated in a value vacuum on this count. Parallel traditions of learning and service, have developed with little reference to each other and less intentionality at the point of their conjuction in actual curricula settings.

Applied to the context of the contemporary university the joining of *diakonic* and *paidaic* functions suggests the possibility of new clusters of learning environments for a host of disciplines. The structure of internships, well developed in the social sciences and professional schools, has yet to be fully explored for the technical disciplines of engineering and the physical and biological sciences. Governmental institutions, particularly regulatory agencies in such areas as community health, environmental quality, and agricultural and industrial health provide untapped contexts for uniting theoretical learning and society-engaging service.

Campus ministry, in its legitimate concern for the quality and direction of life and values in higher education, can appropriately develop program as *modeling behavior* within and alongside the university. As a model developer campus ministry functionally critiques the institution by providing allurement to consider other structural alternatives for engendering lasting and experientially tested values for students and faculty. In such a role campus ministry becomes, on behalf of the university in which it serves, a "liberated zone" in its embodiment of value focused and reflected service activity. As campus ministers we are less than responsible when the "service" activities of our ministries bear no intentional relationship to the "learning" objectives of the institutions in which we minister. It is most often incumbent upon us to catalyze that relationship, to intentionalize the connection, to incarnate with students, faculty and administrators that concern for the value-laden task of holistic education.

IV. A Quest for Theological Credibility Toward a Struggle Ethics

As ministers in higher eduation we constantly struggle for appropriate symbols to express and to bear the meanings which we perceive in our involvements with students and faculty and structures. We struggle for responsible vehicles of accountability which, at the very lowest order of meaning, are bi-polar in their flow of accountability and multi-directional at best. At times we have agonized about, strug-

gled over, our professional self-identities. With any degree of faithful providence, those days are over. That necessary and even essential navel-gazing is hopefully behind us. Today we struggle with new constellations of meanings: how to actualize roles of critic, encourager, norisher, provocateur, broker. We struggle with competing underlying mandates for our presence between institutions: mandates to be the Church and mandates to function within the guidelines and operational assumptions of academia. What is the source of our strength as we engage these twin institutions? On what authority do we draw to conceptualize our ministries in the gaps between church and university and toward both institutions?

Out of the experience of quest for such a rationale comes the shape of a theological, indeed, christological, awareness of *incarnation* as a pivotal interpretive construct for that understanding. To deal with both Church and university from an "incarnational" perspective is first to recognize the graceful presence of God in every personal and interpersonal and institutional encounter. To approach the task of institutional relationships from an incarnational perspective is to recognize the reality of power in both personal and institutional configurations. To approach ministry incarnationally is not merely a challenge to perceive the reality of God in Christ as generally "out there" but to recognize the representational claims of God in Christ on us, through us, and within us as co-ministers with others in both university and church contexts.

The incarnational hermeneutic liberates the campus minister to deal with pressing questions of meaning, value, and purpose expressed in unique shapes in the university. At the same time we recognize the tentative nature of our response to each of these at any point in time. In no other institution of our society is "future" present in the way it is present in the academy. In her book *Human Liberation a Feminist Perspective: A Theology,* Letty Russell calls this eschatological dimension of ministry the task of "remembering the future."[10] We express this in the shape of leadership patterns emerging in students, in the shape of life-transforming professional educational settings such as those of medical and biomedical research or engineering education, in the form of value debate and alternative examination of civic structure in the political and social sciences. In the persons of students and faculty and administrations, future incarnates into real and specific and particular and unique personal shapes and human configurations. As

[10]Letty Russell, *Human Liberation in Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), pp. 45-49.

the Church we are invited to engage these incarnational configurations on behalf of an enlarged view of what that future portends.[11]

Campus ministers are pushed and pulled, shaken and nudged in our relationships with both university and church structures to develop an ethical frame-work out of which to fashion our style of encounter within the life of the university, through the lives of its inhabitants, and with the issues which circumscribe their lives. Such an ethical frame of reference is, I would suggest, *relational* or *configurational* in nature, highly contextual yet guided by an overarching and supporting experience in and commitment to life in Christian community. Such a relational frame of ethical reference rejects absolutist claims of technological/instrumental values as ultimately determinative of the shape of humanness; yet such an ethics perceives the functionality of these same values as possible instruments of "the good" in a technically oriented world. Such a relational, configurational, and incarnational frame of ethical reference rejects absolute claims presented by humanistic values when their claims are abstracted toward idealistic ends in realms disconnected from actual living situations and problems. Yet, at the same time, recognize that humanistic values inform our community's life at points of prompting appreciation of goodness, truth, beauty, proportion, balance and internal integrity.[12]

In the Christian context, our relational and incarnational frame of ethical reference is pre-eminently *christocentric* in value structure. As such it is liberational in its understanding of human need and human nature. Out of such a scheme of ethical response we are freed to struggle with the issues which define life in the university: issues of faith; issues of values and value centers; issues of justice and institutional responsibiilty for structural change; questions which call for educational models sensitive to future possibilities of social and personal needs; basic questions of the structure and shape of human nature; questions of appropriately holistic educational structures designed to interrelate the human dimensions of relationship with the world of work, love, power, and justice.

Our theologies inform the perceptions we bear of the institutions

[11]The understanding of incarnational dimensions of theology are drawn from several sources. Principal among these are the writings of H. Richard Niebuhr and James Gustafson.

[12]I am indebted to Dr. Charles Milligan, Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Iliff School of Theology for clarifying for me the term "configurational" in relation to value theory and ethical thought. In its simplest sense the term means more than "situational" and "contextual" in current ethical idiom. The term speaks to a valuational middle ground between subjectivist and objectivist value theory which takes seriously but not absolutely the "clustering" of values, value objects, and valuers in the context of history.

wherein we serve. Our theologies structure the basic assumptions about the nature of persons and the possibilities latent in the challenge of human encounter. I have suggested the structure of "incarnation" as a theological orientation holding possibilities for creative response to the demands of ministry in higher education. Such an orientation provides a credible frame of reference for appropriating the wealth of the Christion tradition which is ours and which also we bear in our persons and ministries.

I have suggested that in order to integrate theological insight and the practice of ministry we need to develop conscious and intentional frames of ethical reference. The relational or configurational approach to ethical stance accounts for the impossibility of ministry without struggle and conflict. The incarnational theological perspective witnesses to the need for contextually sensitive ethical methodological flexibility in dealing with the increasingly complex interfaces of technology and value, with the increasingly sophisticated struggles of power in the shaping of educational policy, and with the myriad subtleties of institutional relationships across disciplinary lines in the contemporary university. Furthermore, such an ethical style can be solidly grounded in the foundational affirmations of the Christian faith community. To be sure more theoretical work needs to be done in this area before we can present a fully developed theology and ethics for doing campus ministry. What is suggested here is a humble beginning. The resources for continuing the dialog between theology, ethics and the context of ministry in higher education are many and highly instructive. I trust that we shall continue the dialog together.