

**Spirituality and the Disciplines:  
Priority Reading for the Pastor  
By Brian Moore\***

God is doing a new thing in our time! A renewed hungering and thirsting after righteousness has appeared in the church - and even in society in general. This desire has likely been spawned by the sense of powerlessness in the church and the barrenness of the affluent life society has created for itself in the late twentieth century. The "good life" that was supposed to be available in the lap of luxury has escaped us again! The desire for something transcendent has also been stimulated by a deep fear that we, as a society, as a world, are lost and hopeless. The problems facing us are beyond comprehension, not to mention solution. "When all around my soul gives way", what shall be my hope and stay? These situations have created an ideal climate for God to reach out to His empty creatures and fill them with Himself. Admittedly, all the quest for the transcendent is not Christian. In this fertile soil, sub-Christian or even anti-Christian elements also flourish. Good

\*The Reverend Brian H. Moore is pastor of Saint James Brethren Church near Hagerstown, MD. A graduate of ATS, he currently is a D.Min. candidate specializing in spiritual formation and ministry.

Good soil produces better weeds as well as better crops! Spirituality alone is ambiguous. "Spirituality is a slippery word" (Steven Harper, Class Lecture, "The Spiritual Life of the Minister", Ashland Theological Seminary, July 19, 1993). Spirituality must be qualified. "The goal of Christian spirituality is conformity to Christ - not togetherness, or meditation, or acceptance. The issue is discipleship. Discipleship is learning from Jesus Christ how to live my life as he would live it if he were me." (Dallas Willard, Interview, Renovare, 3,4.)

God seems to be doing a new thing in our time, and yet, from another perspective, God has been doing this same thing throughout the ages of Christian history. He has always had a people who were not satisfied with the status quo, people who sought something deeper, more vital and rich in a living relationship with Him. Their lives have been a witness to the living presence of Jesus Christ among His people. Their testimony through life and writings stands to call us all to that transcendent dimension of existence which lifts us out of a functional or mechanical mode to that realm closer to the imago dei within us.

In the first section of this paper I will review two books which give a historical overview to Christian spirituality.

In the second section, I will highlight

writings that invite us to practice the disciplines which give form and substance to the "new thing".

In the third section, I will review a number of writings which seek to integrate the renewal of Christian spirituality with ministry, especially pastoral service in the church.

### I. Christian Spirituality: A Historical Perspective

A History of Christian Spirituality, by Urban T. Holmes (New York: Seabury, 1980, 161pp.)

Seekers After Mature Faith, by E. Glenn Hinson (Waco: Word Books, 1966, 240pp.)

These two books, although similar in purpose, differ from each other in emphasis and sympathy. Therefore, they are complementary and together provide good balance. Unfortunately, the Hinson work is no longer in print.

Holmes states a fivefold benefit of understanding the history of Christian spirituality: 1) broaden the limitations of our own horizons; 2) free us to seek a pattern of discipline in the spiritual life that is most suitable for our own life; 3) enable us to help others without insisting that they be like us; 4) enlighten and inspire us by the examples of saints throughout the ages; 5) enhance our skills that we might become more competent

spiritual guides (Holmes, 3).

A beneficial diagram is included early in the book which helps us to categorize a particular person's emphasis in the spiritual life. The four poles on the axes are speculative/affective and apophatic/kataphatic. Speculative refers to the emphasis on the illumination of the mind while affective refers to the illumination of the heart. Apophatic emphasizes an emptying approach to spirituality while the kataphatic is imaginal in its approach. While it may be a bit unfair to a person to reduce his or her spirituality to a certain point on an axis, it is nonetheless worthwhile to employ the axis to identify an overall approach one uses in his or her quest for a life with God. These four patterns and variations thereof do seem to appear in the writings of the spiritual masters and to that extent Holmes' diagram on "A Phenomenology of Prayer" is useful (Holmes, 4). An excess in one area of the axes leads to an imbalance in approach and perspective. A truly "mature faith" would likely contain elements of all four dimensions, although context and temperament would likely cause one emphasis or another to be preferred. But the awareness alone would help one to identify one's preferences and, at the same time, seek to balance one's approach to God. Thus, an understanding of "a phenomenology of prayer" would help fulfill the above-listed purposes of

matriculation in a history of Christian spirituality.

One does not read far in Holmes before one encounters a sure and certain disdain for one strand of Christian spirituality, namely, pietism. And Holmes is not content to disparage pietism once; more than any other particular spiritual emphasis dealt with in the book, pietism seems to be the "whipping boy" of Christian spirituality (9, 83-88, 136-142). Throughout most of the book the various ideas and emphases are described with the dispassion of a news reporter. But suddenly, in almost venomous terms, pietism is disparaged: "Pietism is a term which, while historically rooted to the late seventeenth century, describes a degeneration of spirituality that may be characterized more generally as suffering from sentimentality, biblicism, personalism, exclusionism, fideism, anti-intellectualism, etc. It flourishes in self-congratulatory small groups. It is impervious to criticism because it recognizes no canon of truth outside the subjective meaning of its membership" (Holmes, 83). And with many other such words he blasts pietism and its place in Christian expression, even associating this movement with the occult and witchcraft.

Implicated in this critical assessment are the likes of Gerard Groote (1340-1384), Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) and Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510). Further, Martin Luther

and Frederick von Hugel came under the influence of pietism. So, pietism, for all its negative evaluation by Holmes, has had significant impact on church history. This extraordinarily caustic approach does remind us however, that pietism is not above criticism. Even though I would defend its emphasis and its place in my own denominational background, certain aspects deserve rebuke and balanced correction. One, its emphasis on the individual tends to downplay the community of faith, a trait that seems to play well into the hand of the American virtue of individuality. Again, pietism tends to overemphasize detachment from society. In its emphasis on the hereafter, it encourages an irresponsibility toward the present. But, there are indications in pietism, taken as a whole, which reveal its sensitive social consciousness.

Before leaving Holmes, the overall value of the book needs to be emphasized. It really is an extended annotated bibliography. (And I might add, biography!) It gives a fine overview of the scope of the quest for God throughout the years of church history. Many interesting sidelights are included, such as St. Francis being the first to emphasize devotion to the infant Jesus, so manger scenes and much of our Christmas tradition relating thereto can be attributed to him (Holmes, 66). Another example is the origin of what we call the

oratorio: the Oratory was simply a room where a group of priests met with Philip Neri for religious renewal (Holmes, 108).

Helpful in the use of the book is its table of contents organized chronologically with individuals listed by page number. This functions as an index of names, but arranged chronologically rather than alphabetically. Further, each chapter is summarized by "Instrumental Images" and "Terminal Images", which we might also call "strategies" and "goals" in any particular spiritual emphasis.

Holmes' conclusions (157-161) fittingly close the book. We are reminded that while a history of spirituality is rich and varied, a number of images recur (the ladder, fire, mountain, desert). We are cautioned to refrain from the attempt to codify another's experience with God. We need to be constantly aware of the effect Neo-Platonism has had upon Christian spirituality, for its influences from the beginning to the present are unmistakable. We are urged to constantly seek a biblical spirituality, for this, more than anything else, will keep us from plunging into the uncertain waters of subjectivism. And most of all, we are urged to get on with the journey. It is a journey; we will not arrive to perfection in this life. It is imperative, however, that we answer the call, listen for God even if it makes us uncomfortable, for in hearing Him we are

made whole.

Hinson's book, like Holmes', sets the spiritual masters in their historical context. However, I find more emphasis on the historical setting in Hinson. The book is a different sort of excursion into church history, using the "life and times" of the spiritual master as the theme.

Hinson, like Holmes, urges the reader to sample the spiritual classics widely in order to discover writings which "feel right", which especially seem to fit one's temperament and interests. Once this process is made, one should live with that classic, master it and allow its fruit to grow in one's life. (Hinson, 18-22). (I have found Richard Foster's Devotional Classics [HarperSanfrancisco, 1993] to be especially helpful in this process. In an earlier era, Thomas Kepler's Fellowship of the Saints [New York: Abingdon, 1948] fulfilled the same purpose).

Hinson's book is unique in the inclusions of notes by Dr. Wayne Oates. The notes are comments on the text from the viewpoint of pastoral psychology. These almost create a book with a book and lend interesting insight into the phenomena described in the text itself.

It may be worthwhile to compare Holmes' view of pietism with that of Hinson. Obviously, Hinson is affirmative of pietism. For example, instead of being a maudlin expression of sickly sentimental piety

(Holmes), The Imitation of Christ is, according to Hinson, the highlight of the mystical piety of pre-Reformation Germany and the Netherlands (Hinson, 92-93). The Imitation, according to Hinson, is one of the most highly praised and yet highly criticized books of devotion. Its scrutiny and scrupulosity seem overbearing, yet its zeal is without peer. Too self-centered, say some. But, in balance, unless self is tended to, there will be no worthwhile self to give to others.

This movement has left its mark on Christendom to this day in the following ways:

1. Denial of the world
2. Disciplined living
3. Group (small group!) accountability and development.

To this day, I suspect a disdain for the pietistic/mystical strain in the families of the Reformed faith. A deep experience of God is, in this thinking, no substitute for a rationalistic and logical ordering of the faith. This makes me appreciate all the more the statement someone made about being "weaned from the barren breast of Calvinism." Calvin scoffed at Theological Germanica, an anonymous writing which impressed Martin Luther (Hinson, 96-98). And yet Calvin believed that "theology exists for the sake of piety" (John H. Leith, ed., John Calvin, The Christian Life, San Francisco: Harper and

Row, 1984, vii).

It is worth noting in this context that the early Reformation period did not produce any classics of devotion. The agenda seemed to be apologetic and theological. Deep piety existed in the Reformers, but it bore no fruit in classical writings (Hinson, 129-131). But, as these historical overviews consistently portray, the Spirit of God will not allow the devotional life to wane for long. Just when things may seem the darkest, some new light breaks out and someone arises to call the Church back to its first love. The fire has always been there, just waiting to break out into a blaze!

In the way of critique, Hinson's work suffers from a number of limitations:

1. It is obviously "a child of the '60's", especially linguistically.

2. It suffers when it comes close to the present time. Radical upheavals and power shifts have severely dated the information relayed in the modern period (Hinson, 202-203). For this reason, I would like to see the book revised and updated.

3. The historical backgrounds, in some instances, are all too superficial. For example, the rise of monasticism was more than the quest for the Christian ideal. Monasticism was also a result of an insidious neo-Platonism which had penetrated Christian thought (Hinson, 30-31).

On the positive side, Hinson's overview

leads toward some worthwhile considerations:

1. The need for discipline in the Christian life. The devotional stream finds power when it flows with-in the banks of discipline.

2. Devotional or spiritual perception are never static. Therefore, there is no one frozen correct approach to the life with God. It is a journey, indeed!

3. Old disciplines (solitude, silence, meditation) seem more relevant today than ever because of our compulsive lives lived out in a compulsive society.

4. The church must always interpret life to people under the view of God and the Scriptures.

5. Retreats as much as ever are important ways to counteract the high-pressure society, to keep from being squeezed into its mold.

6. A new need is arising for those persons who can lead us through the unknown territories of our human spirits. The place of a spiritual director is well-established in the light of these historical overviews.

7. Small groups help overcome the vertigo of self-guided spiritual tourism.

## II. Spirituality and the Disciplines

The Spirit of the Disciplines, by Dallas Willard (HarperSanFrancisco, 1988, 270pp.)

Celebration of Discipline, by Richard J. Foster (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978, 171pp.)

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, by Richard J. Foster (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992, 256pp.)

The three books above form a delightful introduction to the disciplines of spirituality. They provide fine companions for the Way of Jesus Christ, lived out in modern times. I will discuss each one individually.

Dallas Willard provides the interested seeker with a deep and thorough rationale for the disciplined Christian life. He writes from the standpoint of someone on a crusade to change the face of the church! I think his posture is well-taken. He insists that the disciplined Christian life of which he speaks is **normal** for all of Christianity. Somehow the church has been doing a soft-sell over the years until now we have such an anemic version of the Christian life that "the real thing" looks highly abnormal!

He challenges what many of us deal with in ourselves and in our parishioners: that salvation equals forgiveness. When the meaning of salvation is limited to forgiveness and right standing with God, the result is a disembodied spirituality. As

such, it is neither seen nor heard and, in all likelihood, does not truly exist. If salvation equals forgiveness of sins, after the initial "decision" to "accept Jesus" one has an arrested spiritual development. One is placed in a passive stance toward growth, and the result is the lack of growth.

I appreciate Willard's emphasis on what could be called "incarnational spirituality", i.e., growth in the Christian life occurs within our bodies. Our body is also of the essence of who we are. If listened to carefully, Willard would root out present-day expressions of Neo-Platonism in which the body is considered to be unimportant and the soul is the all in all of Christian experience. The body, rather than being merely an encumbrance, is the creation of God and only needs to be "tamed" to become an instrument of God for righteousness. The disciplines are about presenting one's body to be a living sacrifice, pleasing to the Lord (Rom. 12:1).

Willard is very careful to clarify the place of disciplines in the scheme of things, emphasizing the difference between works for salvation and the works of salvation. This emphasis must constantly be made because human nature seeks to create some avenue of self-justification. On the one hand, grace alone leads to passive Christianity; on the other hand, grace alone seems too simple for most people to accept. We naturally want to add something to the

formula. Disciplines in the hands of the insecure could easily be practiced for meritorious reasons. Willard's cautions deserve recognition (25-26).

In reading this excellent book, I got the impression that the first 150 pages is devoted to clearing away misunderstandings, objections and poor theology. This impression only points out, in my mind, how far we as Christians have gotten from fundamental New Testament teachings about the nature of the Christian life. Because the disciplines have been abused over the centuries much misunderstanding has grown up around them. This must be dealt with in order for sane, balanced views to be presented. I think Willard has done a great job in bringing back the importance of the disciplines and showing how they are an intrinsic part of the New Testament.

I find it interesting that the book makes overtures into many of the classic academic disciplines. I found the subjects of anthropology, theology, exegesis, philosophy, history, psychology, hermeneutics, sociology and political science all interwoven with the theme. This indicates to me that the disciplines are relevant to all aspects of life, inner and outer, abstract and concrete, personal and corporate. It also indicates to me that Willard has done his homework.

By way of recommendation, this book is required reading for all who wish to

discover the place of disciplines in the Christian life. Willard has done a great service to the church by rescuing the disciplines from being viewed either as an aberration or a luxury to being viewed as essential and nuclear in the Christian life.

Logically, Willard's writing precedes Foster's; chronologically, Foster's precedes Willard's by ten years! (Foster's Celebration of Discipline has been revised and expanded recently.) Celebration of Discipline, probably more than any other book, brought the spiritual disciplines to the attention of the modern church. It rushed in to fill the vacuum and the vapidness of contemporary Christianity. The response to the work only indicates how hungry the church is for moral and spiritual substance. A workbook and a video series has further enabled the contents of this important book to become readily available to many. So, what is the secret?

First, I think the warm and engaging style draws readers into the subject. One does not feel threatened by what Foster is saying. Rather, his own honesty regarding being a beginner and stumbling often encourages the reader to try or keep trying. But the warmth and honesty cannot mislead a person into thinking that this is a light-weight matter. The subject matter is serious, yet one gets the feeling of being taken on an exciting adventure.

Second, the book satisfies the seeking

soul because one is excited about being on a hunt for buried treasure. Buried in the Scriptures and Christian history are concepts which have been long neglected. The writings of the saints, with which Foster is obviously well-versed, are like buried treasure. They have suffered from obscurity and Foster brings them out in a tantalizing way. Just a glance at page 62 is enough to whet the appetite!

Foster, like Willard, is careful to caution anyone against falling into the pit of works-righteousness in the practice of the disciplines. He speaks of walking through a narrow chasm, bordered on the right by moralism and on the left by antinomianism. But there is a path through the chasm: the disciplines of the spiritual life (7). They are the "door to liberation", freeing us from the struggle to save ourselves or from losing ourselves in carelessness.

Foster arranges the disciplines into convenient categories, inward (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), outward (simplicity, solitude, submission, service), and corporate (confession, worship, guidance, celebration). Foster treats them individually, taking time for careful explanation, inserting cautions regarding misuse or imbalance, and offering practical application and illustration. I found his approach to be sane and practical in every case, never exotic or "superspiritual". He

calls us to a level of spiritual awareness and sensitivity that will not be found by simply living in the area of "lowest common denominator" Christianity. Like Willard, he believes that this is normal Christianity, not some avant-garde version for the select few. To think such is only to reveal how far we have gotten from a life-changing faith.

Foster has been criticized by some for being a handmaid of New Age teaching. The stress on inwardness and a mystical approach incline some to be suspect of his approach. However, in defense of his approach, I would suggest some considerations. First, Foster's identification with the Friends community indicate that he is following the tradition of his spiritual roots. Second, such criticism indicates a superficial acquaintance with Foster's works. He is careful to be biblical (e.g., "The one Spirit will never lead in opposition to the written Word which He inspired", 162). For Foster, Christ is all in all. Third, suspicions regarding New Age teaching are almost as popular now as the movement itself! The movement (if there is such) has gotten much free publicity at the hands of those who seem to have little else to do other than inspect the "bushes"! Fourth, similarities between Foster's themes and New Ages themes are coincidental. Both indicate a spiritual quest. With Foster as one's guide, there is little danger of being seduced into heresy.

Prayer is an expansion on the central discipline of the spiritual life. Prayer is, according to the author, like "coming home", to a place where one feels one truly belongs. Similar to his first book, Prayer takes us into Scripture and into the spiritual classics, deepening and broadening one's understanding of the subject.

The book is a call to prayer in its many forms. Foster isolates and discusses twenty-one aspects of the prayer life, forever dislodging the view that prayer is simply prayer. To read the book is to be reminded that some of the aspects of prayer are often practiced unconsciously while others need to be consciously addressed. Unless we keep in mind the breadth of possibilities in prayer, we tend to slide into the rut of unchallenged (and unchallenging) habit and repetition.

I chose to read the book as a guide to practice, rather than as an academic exercise. As such, it took me almost eight months to complete and I felt some sorrow in parting when I reached page 256. Each section under a bold heading was "sufficient unto the day". I read and I trust I inwardly digested, but I did not mark in the text. I plan to come back to these pages again and again, and I hope to do so with a sense of freshness.

I would recommend this book as a devotional guide, taking the pilgrim on a journey into the expansive land of prayer by

a trusted friend who knows whereof he speaks.

By way of summary and conclusions for this section, these three books taken together remind us that there is no advancement in the spiritual life without effort. Discipline is required to practice the disciplines! So many contemporary Christians are in a state of arrested spiritual formation because, first, our corporate theology of growth is entirely deficient, and second, because few have been willing to take "the road less travelled", thinking the way is hard, unrewarding and joyless. Willard and Foster are like a team, sent out by two, to show us a more excellent way. If heeded, the faith of the church will become more robust and less flabby; if heeded, saltiness will be restored to the salt and the light will again shine because it cannot be hidden. If these voices are not heard in our time, our consumer church mentality will prevail and "hot tub religion" (Packer) will replace true discipleship. When that approach comes to fruition, the church will enter a new dark ages, awaiting yet another call to purgation and renewal. My opinion is that even the presence of these voices indicates that we are beginning to emerge from a dark night and a new day is beginning to dawn.

III. Spirituality Applied to Ministry  
Spirituality for Ministry, by Urban T. Holmes (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982, 190pp.)

Pastoral Spirituality: A Focus for Ministry by Ben Campbell Johnson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988, 152pp.)

Sacrifice and Delight: Spirituality for Ministry by Alan Jones (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992, 189pp.)

These three writings are united in their supposition that a pastor ministers out of who he or she is. Therefore, self-understanding and spiritual nurture are priority number one for anyone who would minister in Jesus' name. Each of these books makes this assumption and attempts to approach the subject from all angles. Taken together, the three cover every apparent aspect of the issue and probe deeply into the soul and mind of the reader while doing so.

Holmes and Jones both represent a sacerdotal view of ordination and ministry and some of their discussions reflect this view. However, much can be gained by listening to them, even by those of us who espouse a more functional view of ordination. Sacerdotal or functional, each must pay close attention to his or her life and the role of God in it. Perhaps those with a sacerdotal view are more vulnerable to laxity in this area because of a supposed "fixed" view of ordination. At the same

time, those with a functional view of ordination may tend to forget the power of the symbolism inherent in ordination at all. In a given ministry situation, an ordained person is considered to be someone "special" to God, even if the pastor himself or herself does not think so. In other words, lay people in both persuasions are sacerdotal in how they view the ordained ministry. Regardless, "the minister" is the symbol of God, His presence and His power. Whether there is reality behind the symbol depends on one's "spirituality".

Holmes' work places a great deal of emphasis on the place of prayer in the life of the pastor as well as the parish (the chapter on "A Parish Piety" is excellent). "Prayer is to spirituality as eating is to hunger" (19).

However, I found in his chapter, "Prayer and the Unconscious", a quagmire of subjectivism arising from a sense of trying to rewrite Scripture with obvious deference to psychology, especially Jung. But one needs to be patient even in this, for there are some fruits to be gleaned. After all, Teresa of Avila is noted for her exploration of "the interior castle."

Holmes' work concludes (literally! for he died soon after writing this book) with a discussion on the place of a spiritual friend. The chief purpose of this companion is for accountability in the journey, an accountability related to the adoption of a

rule. The rule, interestingly enough, ought to contain lectio, silencio, oratio, and actio. Meditatio could also be included.

His concluding words are worthy of being included here:

The pastor is truly called to live with people at the level of their ultimate issues and values, as in matters of sexuality, vocation, birth, and death. In the final analysis, what can be more worthwhile? Why do we have to pander to false models? We cannot pretend to be such instruments, however, if we do not renounce what would distract us from such a delicate caring. We have to be tough...We have to be rooted in what feeds our soul - the intimate knowledge of God...(190)

In Pastoral Spirituality, Johnson builds his thoughts around a hypothetical pastor named Tom, and his spiritual guide, Jesse. While these two do not dominate the scene, they are referred to periodically throughout the book. More attention is devoted, and rightfully so, to the contents of the situation facing pastors than to the characters through whom the ideas are being played.

Like peeling off the layers of an onion, the life of the pastor is layer-by-layer exposed and discussed. Again, insights from Jung are notably prominent and

they are helpful as applied to pastoral spirituality. Spiritual formation is seen in the total context of one's self, one's community of faith, one's time and culture, and one's destiny, all encompassed about by God.

Taken as a whole, the book could be useful as a handbook for pastoral ministry, giving a substantial rationale behind specific acts of ministry. The pastor is the symbol of the work of God among His people and, as such, is called to integrity and reality.

Some of the segments of the book were useful to me as I led pastoral couples on retreat for my project. At the present time, I am also working on a course for the seminary in the area of Pastoral Self-Care. Johnson's book, more than others I have read, informed me of the importance of the "self" which is to be cared for. Who is this self? How did it come to be? Do I accept - celebrate, even - this self I am? Johnson's work is valuable in dealing with these questions.

Sacrifice and Delight must be read with caution, with a careful filtering system. Some assumptions in the work seem most carefully hidden but must be exposed so the reader does not stumble over them. One of those assumptions is a version of monism, that all reality is a whole, that all being is one, everything is together in a cosmic whole. I find a hearty biblical differ-

entiation lacking in that view. A second assumption, like unto the first and possibly deriving from it, is the relativity of truth. There is little (almost nothing!) that makes this book distinctly Christian. The author seldom refers to anything specifically biblical or Christian. That alone does not make a book less than Christian (or why is Esther in the biblical canon?), but in its ranging to and fro one gets the feeling that "the Rock which makes people stumble" is carefully sidestepped. This aspect was somewhat frustrating to me because I had to continually make mental adjustments in order to glean the truth of what he was saying and refashion it to fit my theological framework. Rather than simply "delight" in the truths being stated, I had to "sacrifice" the mental energy required to restructure the ideas to conform to my evangelical persuasion.

With that understanding, the reader is taken into a journey which is expansive and challenging. The author quotes from a wide range of sources, gathering insights from poets, novelists, historians, psychologists, love songs, the spiritual classics, theologians, sociologists, journalists and others. His own writing is more abstract and poetic than most writers in this field today. This approach may try the patience of the practical-minded, but when one is patient and seeks for the "treasure buried in the field", the rewards are unmistakable.

The issue Jones is addressing is, what is the role of the minister today? To answer that question, we are taken into the absurdities of ordination (from a human point of view), the woundedness or brokenness of the vessel God has chosen to use ("the wounded fool"), and nurturing or caring for the broken vessel.

The ministry is described in such terms as "storytelling", "art", "acting", "sacrifice" and, most of all, "delight". His concluding thrust is in a lighthearted vein, calling us to learn to befriend ourselves, take delight in what God has made, approach life "playfully".

One of the most helpful aspects of the book is the chapter on "The Context of Ministry" (59-72). That section is the most astute analysis of contemporary ministry I have seen anywhere. The two major trends of individualism and pluralism have demoralized pastors everywhere. (The analysis will be helpful in that portion of my final project on "Ministry From a Contemporary Perspective"). Jones calls the pastors to become the visionaries of a revitalized spirituality founded on the resurrection (71). "The Church needs to recover both its intellectual and social nerve" (70). Our task in the years ahead is to address the spiritual poverty of our world. This is Jones at his best.

The Living Reminder (New York: Seabury, 1981, 78pp), In the Name of Jesus (New York:

Crossroad, 1991, 81pp.) and The Way of the Heart (New York: Ballantine, 1981, 78pp.) by Henri J. M. Nouwen.

What can I say of the works of Nouwen? He has been a literary companion of mine for fifteen years, coming to me by way of The Genessee Diary and then The Wounded Healer, With Open Hands, and Thoughts in Solitude. Later, Reaching Out, Creative Ministry, and Clowning in Rome widened my acquaintance with the Dutch priest and professor. It has come to the point that, when Nouwen speaks, I listen!

I have chosen the three writings above for their particular emphasis on spirituality for the pastor. Each has a particular contribution to make in this regard without being simply repetitive.

The Living Reminder is a call to keep spirituality alive in the routines of ministry. We do this by seeing our tasks primarily as servants of God, rather than of people. We stand in the presence of people as "living reminders" because we have first walked in the presence of God. We can be truly present to people because we have been absent from them in order to be present to God. Our professionalism can so easily cause us to become "lukewarm technicians", functional, rather than transcendent (see Adrian van Kaam, The Transcendent Self). The Living Reminder is a reminder to keep one's own house filled with Holy Spirit so that ministry can be alive with God, rather

than the mere dead letter of the law.

One sentence I have had cause to reflect upon and even to pass along to others is this: "One of the most comforting remarks I ever heard was: 'I wish you could experience yourself as I experience you. Then you would not be so depressed'" (67-68). This indicates to me that we can minister by who we are without even being aware of anything other than our weaknesses and inabilities. In that, there is hope.

In the Name of Jesus addresses three great temptations of pastoral leadership and offers guidance to help overcome them. Who of us does not wrestle with the temptation to be relevant, to be spectacular, and to be powerful? These temptations are addressed in the context of Jesus' encounter with Peter in that post-resurrection scene on the shores of Lake Galilee, Jesus' own temptations in the desert, and in Nouwen's ministry context of the Daybreak community for the mentally handicapped. For each temptation there is a corresponding task and a corresponding discipline. The combined effect is to become a humble servant in the presence of God. Nouwen himself is living this out in ministry.

The book should be required reading for all pastors because we cannot escape the expectation of success placed upon us by society, our peers, and our churches. We are very worldly in this regard and we need the corrective of this book to remind us who

we are before God. (There is also a very searching comment for the seminary system of today, 69-70.)

The Way of the Heart is written to help deliver pastors from "tyranny of the urgent", our compulsive manner of behaving in performing ministry. Deliverance is to be found in solitude, silence and prayer. Drawing on the wisdom of the Desert Fathers, Nouwen directs us to the most important aspect of ministry, our attention to God.

Solitude breaks the stranglehold of people-demands upon us. Silence breaks us from the oppression of wordiness. Prayer, then, becomes possible because of solitude and silence.

"The prayer of the heart" is praying in a way that is not primarily an intellectual and oratorical exercise (getting the words and phrases "right"). It is "standing in the presence of God with the mind in the heart" (59). It is, to use Paul's phrase, to "pray without ceasing" because it is not limited by formality. It is a posture of the inner life before God that is portable, goes wherever we go and is involved in all that we do. It is "practicing the presence of God."

Nouwen's writings are, in my estimation, necessary to help balance the "how to's" of ministry. Theological and practical skills need to be developed, but not at the expense of the interior life. Even as Jesus said, "Apart from me, you can

do nothing." Just to go through these three books and reread my underlining is renewing and comforting as well as challenging.

The Contemplative Pastor (Carol Stream, IL and Dallas: Christianity Today and Word, 1989, 176pp.), Under the Unpredictable Plant (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992, 197pp.) and Working the Angles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, 131 pp.) by Eugene H. Peterson.

Eugene Peterson is speaking a much-needed word to pastors today in the light of the vocational crisis many of us face. Some pastors drop out of the professional ministry while many others simply endure the misery of an unfulfilling career. Peterson, like Nouwen, calls us to investigate our ideas of pastoral roles and seek to recover a more biblical stance. These three writings represent Peterson at his finest in helping today's pastor perform a paradigm shift in ministry. It remains to be seen if many of us can "pull it off".

The Contemplative Pastor will speak to the heart of many of us. We, as Peterson states, began with a calling and found ourselves with a job. In other words, the ministry becomes professionalized both by external expectations and inward responses (perhaps Nouwen's list of temptations: to be relevant, spectacular and powerful). When this happens, we must go back and be reformed spiritually and vocationally. Peterson's method is to take the Beatitudes

for sources of renewal and re-formation. He shows how the commonplaces of ministry can once again become holy ground. We pastors "shine" in times of crisis, but we become dull and sub-ordinary in the ordinary. New perspectives are called for, to see the commonplace as God's place.

Peterson's chapter entitled, "Lashed to the Mast", an exposition of ordination, is the best in the book, in my opinion, and could well be made more accessible by being issued in booklet form.

Under the Unpredictable Plant is yet another call to pastoral integrity and an attack on religious professionalism. Using the story of Jonah as matrix, Peterson takes the reader on a delightful journey with the prophet. Tarshish is our self-chosen field of ministry, in contrast with God's chosen assignments. The storm is the (super) natural result of using ministry for self-aggrandizement. We escape the storm by abandoning religious careerism and returning to ministry as vocation. Ministry as vocation is sustained by askesis, the training regimen of an athlete, the disciplines of the spiritual life, the return to becoming "contemplative pastors" (see 88-115, for excellent expansion of these ideas.) Re-formation is finding the road back to Nineveh. "The unpredictable plant" is ongoing life in ministry, living under the adventure of the Holy Spirit who is constantly in the process of creating and

demolishing, destroying all concepts of static ministry, always bringing forth newness. The new call is to make that paradigm shift from church operator to pastor.

Working the Angles is yet another way to challenge many contemporary forms of pastoral ministry and to recall them to true vocation. In this imagery, Peterson thinks of the lines of a triangle as the usual functions in ministry, the obvious things we do in our public performances and duties. The angles, however, are the three necessary less visible aspects of ministry, our first calling of prayer, Scripture and spiritual direction. Peterson feels that most contemporary pastors have abandoned the angles and have been working the lines. The angles, however, determine the shape and size of the triangle. The book is an urgent call to recover the first business of pastoral integrity: solitude and leisure before God, pondering Scripture and being an unhurried presence to other people. This, too, is a book about spiritual re-formation. Having been destroyed by the contemporary image of the pastor as a "church operator", many pastors must come back to the biblical image of "pastor". The job-description needs to be rewritten and a new accountability system must be devised so that pastors do not go off "whoring after other gods" of ministry redefined.

## Summary and Conclusions

The thrust of the writings I have reviewed here indicate that ministry is first a spiritual matter. It is about spirituality and SPIRITUALITY IS LIFE (Harper, class lecture, July 22, 1993). The historical perspective is necessary to remind us that the quest is agelong and lifelong. God has put that hunger there and the historical overview narrows down for us the parameters within which this hunger is to be satisfied. People may look elsewhere, but the quest is really a spiritual one.

Spirituality can only be pursued within the time-tested disciplines. Disregard these and the spiritual life will ever be shallow and dispersed. Disciplines provide a channel for energy and focus. Little will change without them; we will not be changed without them.

Since ministry is a spiritual matter, spiritual vitality is of first importance for the pastor. Skills are necessary, but vocation must be preeminent. Unfortunately, it has taken some of us many years to discover this. We assume that what we need is some new "wow" program that will guarantee success. Many of us in ministry are still on an ego-trip, trying to prove to ourselves, our parents, or our professors that we truly are capable "somebodies". For many of us, our egos are all wrapped up in our ministries and we can scarcely tell one

from the other. Perhaps the whole ethos of pastoral ministry needs redefined. We have been swept away by the shifting streams of current expectations. How can we return to our unique selves, surrendering "the religious businessman" image? Re-formation along the lines of Peterson's and Nouwen's emphases is the key to a recovery of pastoral integrity and wholeness in our time or any time. Our core selves must be rediscovered (Holmes and Johnson) and those selves must be reshaped by the disciplines of the spiritual life. Then those renewed selves must be cared for and re-commissioned for ministry in new patterns of expectation and expedition. The seminaries must accept their role in the formation of the pastor and place greater emphasis on being rather than doing. Many of the skills come only in practice anyway; it seems that the seminary might help this recovery if formation were given greater priority.

God is doing a new thing in our time! Renewal is coming to the church. A shift is beginning. The literature I have reviewed here indicates that out of the restlessness a new being is emerging to guide the people of God in the coming years. We can participate with joy and watch with hope for new expressions of the reign of God among us.

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