

SECTION I

CHALLENGES TO FORMATION AND SUPERVISION ACROSS RELIGIONS AND CULTURES



This volume of *Reflective Practice* is devoted to the increasingly urgent task of preparing religious leaders for a diverse world. No one questions the importance of addressing the challenge of diversity for both formation and supervision. Attending to one's social location has become a critical dimension of self-understanding for ministry. Programs that expose ministry students, pastoral supervisors, and faculty to diverse cultural, ethnic, or religious settings are standard in virtually every seminary and common fare at professional gatherings. We also know that understanding stories, even strange stories, links us with others, even strange others. Even so, achieving effectiveness for cross-cultural ministry is seldom easy. Beyond continuing to attend to our own social location and listening to the stranger, what must we learn about responding to religious and cultural difference in order to minister authentically in diverse contexts?

In the opening essay of this section, Anthony J. Gittins, CSSp, explores the skills, knowledge, and virtues necessary for developing mature ministers for diverse cultural contexts. Although reading this essay may take some translation for people more familiar with clinical images of ministry, it will be worth the effort. Skills like listening and empathic responding do not so much depend on an extensive knowledge of a faith tradition or a culture as much as they are driven by virtues or dispositions like tolerance or humility or patience. Ministry across cultures, Gittins proposes, involves "passing over" to another view of the world and then "coming back" to what is more familiar. But in the coming back, we are different because we have been changed by the encounter with an Other.

The stimulating and challenging essay by Pamela Cooper-White continues her exploration of multiplicity in the inner world. She proposes that a deeper awareness of and acceptance of the hosts of voices "crying from the margins of our own unconscious life" will enhance our capacity for empathy with actual others and stretch us beyond our familiar comfort zone. She writes, "It has been my contention that empathy for actual others in our relationships requires us to engage in the work of coming to know, accept, and even embrace the parts of our multiple selves that we have found most

difficult to acknowledge.” Cooper-White’s perspective moves the agenda beyond skill, knowledge, or virtue and establishes awareness of our internal “otherness” as the royal road to empathy and a capacity to relate to Others without excluding or demonizing them.

The essay by Maurice Apprey was first presented at the Annual Conference of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education in the fall of 2008 and is presented here through the generosity of ACPE and the graciousness of Dr. Apprey. With personal candor, intellectual rigor, and clinical wisdom, Apprey examines how the “antinomies of black and white” play out as patients deal with his being an African from Ghana, West Africa. Are the associations of black and white with negative and positive natural or acquired? How are they acquired if they are not natural? Because talking about race is so complex, it is understandable that most of us are cowards when it comes to talking about race. This essay is rich in philosophical and psychoanalytic references. The reader will be rewarded by new perspectives on race, racialization, and Otherness.

The last three essays in this section explore practical issues regarding forming religious leaders in and for a diverse context. In order to form leaders for a diverse world, Joretta Marshall argues that ministerial formation must itself be diverse. What practices and experiences will invite persons to risk engaging difference in order to understand and embrace diversity? Readers will find both a variety of useful and challenging general questions about formation for ministry and a number of specific questions regarding the challenges of diversity.

Care at the end of life presents chaplains and spiritual caregivers with specific interfaith challenges. Drawing on research from nursing and medical practice, James W. Green looks at four critical areas to suggest what cultural competence means in pastoral practice at end-of-life care: (1) Patient autonomy is expressed in speech and behavior among ethnically distinct communities. (2) Because minority individuals and groups have been marginalized economically and politically, trust is fragile in health care as well. (3) Medical truth telling with patients nearing the end of life is not common in world cultures. (4) Knowing whom to talk to and asking what to say or not say requires a subtle realignment of the traditional power relationship between care providers and care receivers. Beyond examining our prejudices and stereotypes, cultural competence for spiritual caregivers at life’s end means being particularly attentive to differences of ritual practice, language, and power.

Susan Rakoczy writes from South Africa about the particular challenges of cultural and religious diversity for spiritual direction. The diverse religious experiences, language, and practice that people bring to spiritual direction today require a capacity to enter into very difference worlds. Rakoczy uses the term interpathy to emphasize the cognitive differences that may be evident between a seeker and a spiritual director. This section ends as it began with an emphasis on need for emptiness in the caregiver, albeit brief, in order to make room to receive what is new and different.

We have only scratched the surface of issues related to formation and supervision across cultures and among religious traditions. For example, how might we reshape the contexts for ministerial formation and supervision to become more diverse? What does it mean for the process itself when formation occurs in a diverse or interfaith context? How does each faith tradition enhance and impede responding positively to diversity? What present assumptions about formation need to be challenged in order that future religious leaders will be prepared to lead in changed and changing contexts? We hope these questions will generate future essays for this Journal.

Herbert Anderson
Editor