

Developing Mature Ministers for Diverse Cultural Contexts

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There was a time when effective ministers were not expected to develop intercultural skills because they ministered among their own people, homogenous in ethnicity and culture. The thinking behind that perspective was narrowly ethnocentric and certainly wrongheaded because, paradoxically, human beings are all the same and yet all different. To fail to notice and handle differences is to fail to encounter other people fully. There are no generic pastoral ministers, nor does God make generic people. Notwithstanding human similarities, every person is particular, and each was formed in and works in a specific context. This article explores some implications of these statements and identifies some issues that need to be considered in forming and supervising for ministry in diverse contexts.

I write as an ordained Roman Catholic and a theologian-anthropologist. As such, my view of both human nature and human culture is quite positive; I see both as *loci* of grace. While acknowledging human sin, I also acknowledge and look for grace. If I believed that humankind is essentially

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corrupt and that literally “all is grace,” I would probably have a more jaundiced view of culture and a deconstructivist view of ministry that would seek to correct, confront, or even replace what has gone before. Believing that grace builds on nature leads me to take people’s social location and cultural heritage very seriously as the foundation in seeking the restoration of a person or the transformation of a community. From these introductory comments, everything else I say about pastoral priorities for ministry will flow.

This essay will propose in a brief way the skills, knowledge, and virtues necessary to minister in diverse contexts. These themes were originally developed to prepare men and women who were to be missionaries in a radically different cultural context. They have been modified for a context, whether hospital or parish, that is inevitably cross-cultural.

A SMORGASBORD OF SKILLS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY

There are a number of skills that seem particularly important for today’s ministers. Skills can be acquired. They are not innate and are, thus, something to be seriously considered and worked for through formation and supervision in ministry. Given the scope of this article, it is only possible to sketch their general features; the actual skill-level achieved will depend on the ability and commitment of individuals. Moreover, these skills will need to be adapted for the particularity of diverse situations.

Respect for the Human Person and for Human Cultures

Ethnicity refers to people’s identity: who they are in terms of group membership (tribal, racial, national); culture also denotes a people’s identity: what they believe and how they behave as a social group. To attack and undermine people’s culture is to break people’s spirit. Conversely, it is possible, though not easy, to rehabilitate—to revitalize or transform—a culture. Invariably, people’s actual culture (not some imaginary state where we might like them to be) is the point of departure for any communication, whether inter- or intra-community. Historically, some Christian ministers (most commonly “foreign missionaries”) have brought a devastating approach and perspective to their encounters to diverse people and cultures.

This has sometimes been referred to as the “Clean Sweep” approach and is built on the conviction that some people (pejoratively labeled “primitive,” “tribal,” or simply “pagan”) have nothing but sinful habits and corrupt morals, which must be swept away before the good seed of the Gospel

can be sown. The Clean Sweep approach considers certain cultures to be fundamentally bad, superstitious, evil, or inveterately sinful. And the damage perpetrated by devotees of this approach has sometimes proved irreparable. The perspective used to justify the approach, considers people to be like blank slates or tablets (Latin *tabula*), and culture to be what is written or stamped on them. Since what is written can be erased (*asa*), the people's cultural scripts must be erased before, and so that, a new script can be inscribed: the "correct" script of "Christianity." Unfortunately, this attitude and perspective still remains for some individuals, either implicit or explicit. The first bundle of skills, focused around respecting the other, has been honed by social scientists, chiefly social anthropologists and social psychologists. These skills would give us some finesse in approaching the existential reality, the social location, or cultural context of the people among whom we presume to live and minister.

Commitment to a Search for Truth through Respectful Dialogue

Dialogue must be taken very seriously. Roman Catholics used to assert, infamously, that "error has no rights." Current Roman Catholic teaching officially disassociates itself from this formulation, as indeed should we all; truth is not a commodity, so it is quite unhelpful to assert that (other) people are lacking truth or only possess the commodity error. Whether considered as infinite or simply as objective, truth can never be fully possessed or understood by any human subject, community, or institution. But all persons of good will can be said to be striving for and, thus, in contact (often in some mysterious way and always partially) with God's truth.

Dialogue is therefore the appropriate way to share and to become mutually enriched. Here are three points to ponder. First, dialogue and hierarchy are incompatible, as David Augsburger has reminded us. The Roman Catholic tradition has experienced some discomfort here, explicitly endorsing dialogue yet tenaciously holding to a hierarchical magisterium or teaching office. We can deeply espouse dialogue and yet also believe in the Christian Creeds as the bedrock of faith. Second, dialogue changes both parties, or else it is coercion or monologue. And third, the outcome of true dialogue cannot be known in advance; it leads to a *tertium quid* or third point, different from the starting point of either dialogue partner. The second set of skills would foster our capacity for real dialogue, which is not monologue-in-disguise. Skills can be sharpened only by using the direct method: learning by doing, with help from those with wisdom (which we consider below).

Cultivation of a Learning Posture

Closely related to dialogue is mission in reverse, which refers to a style of mission or pastoral encounter. The designation derives from the work of Claude-Marie Barbour, a colleague from Chicago and a Presbyterian elder and it teaches that an explicit part of the pastoral minister's agenda is being a recipient as well as an agent of grace for others. We do not take God to others who are completely deprived of God. On the contrary, God takes us, and God's Spirit precedes us. There is no place, no society, and no culture in which God is not. Mission in reverse identifies a philosophy and an attitude of mutual search, mutual discovery, and mutual conversion or transformation.

The Swiss Reform theologian Walter Hollenweger describes the process:

Evangelization is *martyria*. That does not mean primarily the risking of possessions and life, but rather that we gamble, as it were, with our understanding of belief in the course of evangelizing. We, so to speak, submit our understanding of the world and of God and of our faith, to the test of dialogue. We have no guarantee that our understanding of faith will emerge unaltered from that dialogue. On the contrary, how can we expect that the person listening to us should be ready to change his or her life and way of thinking, if we, the evangelist, are not prepared to submit to the same discipline?³

Hollenweger is here talking about our understanding of the world (and God and our faith). We do not gamble with our faith itself, of course, much less with God; but we "submit our understanding to the test of dialogue" in the hopes of deepening and broadening that understanding, since our understanding is very limited. If we thought, naively, that our image of God is actually God (rather than our own very limited notion of God) and if that were what we worship, then we would be, literally, idolaters! Idolatry is worshipping one's own creation or representation of God, whether in stone, wood, or imagination.

Unless we gamble, as it were, with our partial understanding, God will be unable to open us up to deeper insight. Likewise, we must gamble with our very limited understanding of the world, so that our narrow perspective might be expanded. And God, we trust, will strengthen our faith by deepening our relationship with God, in the context of our authentic dialogue with other people's lives and experiences. "Gamble" may seem either frivolous or demeaning, but it need not be understood that way. If we are to be vulnerable to God and open to God's grace, we need both risk and prudence. Risk without prudence is sheer foolishness or irresponsibility, but prudence without

risk is over-cautious faith or faltering trust. Unless we are prepared to be tested, and to hone skills to face the challenge, Hollenweger poses, it is difficult to see how we could become the kind of people that others would want to emulate or would even find to be respectful listeners. This third skill is the risk-taking capacity to be changed by our actual pastoral encounters, and the commitment to seeking and to seeing the grace in the people we encounter.

Learning “Downward Mobility” and Accepting Marginality

As ministers reflecting on our specific pastoral contexts, is it possible to shift our usual perspective and visualize ourselves as outsider or stranger to those we encounter? After all, we are often a rather strange or unfamiliar presence in their lives. Our responsibility includes seeking the lost sheep, going to the outcast, the abandoned and forgotten, and listening to stories from people living on the edge. Therefore, we must be able to move from familiar to less familiar places and from a more comfortable center to a less comfortable margin. If we remain at the center of our world, literally or metaphorically, we cannot encounter those on the edges.

We will need skills that would enable us to stand alongside others without patronizing them. Theologically, this is kenotic ministry (Philippians 2:6ff); it is also strongly counter-cultural and an acquired skill or grace. Many would-be ministers, while being ready in principle to extend hospitality to the stranger, are not adequately skilled at actually accepting the status and role of the stranger themselves. Furthermore, given that the fastest growing group of people in the world can be simply described as “the poor,” and given that the poor get poorer as the rich get richer, the gap between poor and non-poor widens over time. But Jesus deliberately made a preferential option for the poor. To incarnate or actualize such an option requires a commitment to shrinking the gap between the rich and poor. This is called “downward mobility.” This fourth set of skills would help to form all who are dedicated to authentic encounters with “the other” in the spirit of Jesus, in the practice of kenotic ministry or “downward mobility.”⁴

Cultivation of an Ecumenical Approach

Every Christian minister should know his or her tradition well. At the same time, we need to ask whether a minister is primarily concerned with the extension of a particular denomination or with the extension of the Realm or Kingdom of God. There are some subtleties to be encountered here, but at issue is the unity of the body of Christ and the question whether all people need to

recapitulate the history and experience of the divisions of Reformation Europe. I submit therefore, that all ministers must be deeply committed to practical ecumenism. This will not entail the repudiation of our specificity and our traditions, but requires that we embrace each other in reconciliation, unity, fellowship and worship: a monumental task. As we approach the half-millennium anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, deep wounds still mark the body of Christ. A fifth skill—if we may call it that—is measured by our ability to model truly ecumenical ministry and put the unity of the body of Christ before the division of the Christian churches. There can be no authentic Christian endeavors that are not also ecumenical in spirit and action.

Learning the Wisdom of the Midwife

Finally, an image that might help us gauge whether we already have or are acquiring some of the necessary skills: we are midwives, those in attendance as people come to new life through the power of the Holy Spirit. The birth-attendant or midwife is by no means unimportant. Midwives need real skill, wisdom, and competence, and the ability to cajole, encourage, commend, and urge, so as to channel the birthing process in a way that is most beneficial for mother and child. And lest anyone think that midwives are only women (which is not true historically: “midwife” means a “with-woman” or one who accompanies the woman giving birth; it does not strictly mean the midwife is a woman), here is Socrates in one of Plato’s dialogues, in an astonishing reflection:

Have you never heard that I am the son of a midwife, brave and burly, whose name was Phaenarete? I myself practice midwifery. Bear in mind the whole business of the midwives, and then you will see my meaning better. It is said that Artemis was responsible for [determining the rules]. She could not allow the barren to become midwives because human nature cannot know the mystery of an art without experience; but she assigned this office to those who are too old to bear, honoring their resemblance to herself.

Such are the midwives, whose task is a very important one, but not so important as mine. My art of midwifery is in most respects like theirs; but differs, in that I attend men and not women, and I look after their souls when they are in labor, and not after their bodies: and the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of the young man brings forth is a false idol or a noble and true birth.

A sixth skill is encapsulated in this image. How might we best be prepared for this service to others when those who must give birth to something new are ‘other’ to us? What characteristics can we identify as harmful or unhelpful?

IDENTIFYING AN APPROPRIATE KNOWLEDGE BASE

If the road ahead is to lead to life (for ourselves and others), we need more than good will: we must make a constant companion of knowledge (Latin, *scientia*; Greek, *techne*) and wisdom (Latin, *sapientia*; Greek, *sophia*, *phronesis*).⁶ The knowledge we need as ministers is not an end in itself but a necessary means to a noble end: sanctification, personal and communal. Good will is inadequate: so many injustices have been perpetrated by people whose putative good will was built on ignorance and prejudice, basic lack of respect for people, or an inflated sense of their own importance. A philosophical maxim—whatever is received is received according to the capacity of the recipient—reminds us that our good will is insufficient. But more, it should remind us that there are culturally appropriate ways for people to receive gifts, ideas, or other people.

I do not minimize the priority of faith or grace: we are called to a deep and abiding faith in the God who saves, and it is God's grace alone that saves. But knowledge is not the enemy of faith; and grace, as Thomas Aquinas said, builds on nature. "Faith seeking understanding" is a maxim for the Christian life. We will never plumb the depths of God, yet we simply cannot stop tending, yearning, learning. We will never fully comprehend or understand mysteries of God; even so, we can and must reach out and "stand under" God's self-disclosure. Wisdom is the capacity to use knowledge, and it is ultimately wisdom we seek as ministers of the Gospel. The knowledge that produces wisdom is not solely knowledge of God, Creator; we need knowledge about God's creation, including knowledge of people, cultures, human institutions, human aspirations, and values. Wisdom would seem to be a precious alloy of knowledge and experience. The following areas of knowledge are imperative for ministers to be effective in diverse cultural contexts and especially significant in helping to generate wisdom.

Insights from the Social Sciences

The science of human-beings-in-groups is social/cultural anthropology.⁷ It can be very helpful as a hermeneutical key to understanding the diversity of people and their contexts. Social/cultural anthropology is, therefore, a particularly beneficial resource in forming cross-cultural or intercultural ministers. It seeks to understand human groups and generalizations about what it means to be human in the midst of myriad cultural expressions. Anthropology tries not to privilege any particular culture but to illustrate that

different cultures represent a myriad of responses to the challenge to live a human rather than merely animal existence.

It could be argued that all prospective and actual pastoral ministers have a moral responsibility to take the social sciences—especially anthropology—seriously. These sciences (which include physical geography, political science, psychology, sociology, and sociolinguistics) have built up a legacy of knowledge and explanatory schemata, analogous to grammars of natural languages. One cannot simply pick up sufficient knowledge by exposure to another culture through formal study without the assistance of “direct-method” learning. Every Christian minister should be in direct relationship with people from the culture they wish to understand. We are more likely to understand diverse peoples if we can appreciate the dance and music, art and architecture, language and worship, dress and diet, values and symbols of their culture.

Insights from Theology

Though this takes second place here, it is not subordinate to the previous point. Jesus asked, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”; and to Peter he said, “But who do you say I am?” We all have to answer the same question, and the answers given over the centuries and among different peoples and traditions have been very wide-ranging. H. Richard Niebuhr asks a supplementary question about the nature and meaning of culture, and, in *Christ and Culture*, he discusses the implications of various understandings of culture as they impact on ministry.⁸ His point of departure is the absolute transcendence of God: God is above history; humanity is not; and humanity has responded historically in many ways.

Although the book is flawed, he raises some incisive points appropriate for the formation of religious leaders in and for a diverse context. As pastoral ministers, we need to learn enough about culture so as to be able to determine some of the likely consequences of our ministry in the lives of those we meet. Niebuhr lists five possible understandings of the relationship between Christ and culture and explains the implications of each and how people have responded to Christ from various standpoints:

- *Christ AGAINST Culture.* Some people see Christ opposed to culture. Therefore a choice must be made between them. According to this characterization, one cannot endorse both Christ and culture. Such a perspective has been used to justify a Clean Sweep approach to other people and their cultures.

- *The Christ OF Culture.* Others recognize that Jesus confirms the best in culture, and they clearly identify with his own cultural heritage. When we conflate “Salvation History” and the history of Christendom without acknowledging the contingent nature of Christendom and the authenticity of other histories, we are also likely to assume that all Christians need to recapitulate Western experience before they can become fully mature in the faith.
- *Christ ABOVE Culture.* Some see Christ as the fulfillment of legitimate cultural aspirations and the “restorer” of the noblest of human (cultural) aspirations. Yet he was not submerged in, or identified completely with, his own Jewish/Galilean culture. It is difficult to grasp how this perspective might enhance ministry in diverse contexts.
- *Christ and Culture IN PARADOX.* This formulation indicates a fundamental polarity. The implication is that each and all of us must live in some tension with our culture, just as we live in some tension with Christ because we are sinners. Our hope is of a justification beyond history. But since every human being is a person of culture, cultural identity must at least be acknowledged as the basis of identity-formation. To say that every culture must “bend the knee,” that every culture must be relativized in order to be revitalized by the Gospel, seems less negative than to say every culture *ipso facto* in an adverse relationship with Christ. Culture is, after all, part of God’s creation.
- *Christ, TRANSFORMER of Culture.* Those who favor this formulation agree with the first and fourth group, that human nature is fallen, and that culture perpetuates the finiteness of humanity. Yet Christ is understood to work through human culture in order to bring about transformation of humanity and of human cultures. This is because humanity subsists in culture: there is no nature without culture, and no turning from self to God except in society. If we acknowledge that all people have a context, a history, language, values, and so on (in other words, a culture), then we know that the only way we can respond to them is through their culture. If that is true, then anthropology becomes a critical resource in forming ministers in and for diverse contexts.

Appropriate Knowledge and Communication

People who do not believe we respect them are not likely to respect us. They might—for various reasons, not all of them noble—change their behavior but not necessarily their belief. It is relatively easy to teach a set of beliefs, but that is far from teaching or transmitting the faith. My point here concerns the knowledge we need in order to transmit more than propositions and regulations. It

relates to prerequisites for communities of faith. If those who minister in diverse contexts are to be appropriate midwives of local congregations and other ministry contexts, they will need to understand the dynamics of enculturation (another name for socialization or the sum of the processes that transform a newborn child into a mature person of culture) and acculturation (or culture-contact that ranges from the benign to the crushingly oppressive). Ignorance of social dynamics and of the relative openness or closedness of microcosms will lead to largely fruitless and palpably inappropriate methods in ministry.¹⁰ Naive assumptions about acculturation will make us closed to the challenge faced by us all: to be transformed. The *terminus ad quem* end-point or outcome of the encounter between culture and gospel or faith and humanity, is something new, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Many cultures transmit wisdom through proverbs and folktales, stories and parables. Many societies identify certain people as appropriate tellers of tales and singers of songs. In our ministry across cultures, we have a serious responsibility not only to know the message we seek to proclaim and embody but to proclaim it in culturally relevant ways and invite and truly collaborate with the people we serve. This requires both theological and cultural knowledge. We should remember that literacy is not the only door to Christianity. Unless we acquire appropriate knowledge, and the culturally appropriate means to share it, our message may be incomprehensible or frankly irrelevant.

IDENTIFYING VIRTUES (HABITUS)

In addition to skills and knowledge, the formation of moral character is a necessary component in the preparation of people for ministries across cultures. How, and under what circumstances, is it possible to develop moral character in others? The processes of formation will vary but there is above all a need for sanctity and humanity in an uncommon blend. The call to God's mission and ministry is the call to embody the Good News in some profound way. We are responsible for the credibility and trustworthiness of the message we embody and proclaim. If there is a disjunction between who and what we are, and who and what we proclaim, how can we hope or expect people to experience God's healing and reconciliation through practices of inclusion and hope? We are called to radical discipleship; and that requires all manner of character qualities.

To paraphrase John Dunne: “The ‘passing over and coming back’ is the greatest religious adventure of our time.”² The nature of ministry across cultures is that we are always “passing over” to another view of the world and then “coming back” to what is more familiar. But in the coming back, we return a different person, changed by the adventure itself and by the encounters it entails. I propose a number of qualities or characteristics that appear particularly important to me. I might have included any of the Christian virtues. And you (the reader) will have your own to add to the list.

Patience, Longanimity, Tolerance: Virtues of a Servant

Patience is tolerant and even-tempered perseverance; longanimity is patient forbearance (from *animus*, soul: soul-full-ness); tolerance is the capacity to endure, and it can apply as much to oneself as to something or someone other. The reason for beginning with these virtues is that nobody warned me about how important they were! It came as a complete surprise to discover how impatient I was when under pressure in new situations or when I encounter an ‘other’ who expanded my world. Though I would readily have admitted to a lack of virtue and maturity in a number of areas, I thought I was a patient person. But the cross-cultural experience exposes us to fundamental or structural weaknesses in ourselves; and a cross-cultural situation is one in which apparent qualities can be exposed as built on very thin ice indeed.

The capacity to suffer, to endure over the long haul, may not be familiar yet, especially if we are young, “self-actualized,” and high achievers. We may even have avoided, averted, or otherwise manipulated circumstances that might call for our long-suffering or longanimity: our deep-seated or deep-souled resourcefulness. Etymologically, patience connotes a capacity for bearing suffering or adversity. Adjustment to diverse situations or inter-cultural living demands a capacity for handling the unpredictable, the uncomfortable, the undesirable: the virtue of patience or endurance. After all, we are, to virtually everyone we minister to, the stranger or outsider who must be tested before insiders can afford to trust us.

The root of “endurance” is *dur*: “hard”; we need to be hardened like fine steel, retaining our tensile strength and not becoming brittle. To cultivate patient steadfastness in the face of misunderstanding, personal ignorance or unfamiliarity, and even real suffering is to offer a powerful witness of compassion and commitment to those among whom we are called to minister. Without a care for these virtues, we can become our own worst enemy.

Humility: The Virtue of Earthy Fruitfulness

Hum-an and hum-ility are cognates of humus: soil, earth. The rich, fertile, life-bearing earth from which was formed 'adam' (the human one) and all of us. Pastoral ministers are called and sent not as angels but as human beings: embodied, incarnate, and therefore finite yet capable of growing and producing a harvest. From our humility God will likewise find a voice; and we will be enabled to be bearers of the Word of God in the lives of those among whom we minister. But this humility will test us to the utmost. It is counter-cultural; it challenges us to let God be God; yet it calls us to an awesome collaboration with the God of creation.

Wisdom: The Capacity to Use Knowledge, Experience, and Common Sense Well

All the knowledge in the world does not of itself accumulate to wisdom. Wisdom is the capacity to use, to apply, to share knowledge appropriately. One of its features is what we call common sense. Like wisdom, it implies the capacity to think on one's feet and to act appropriately even in novel situations. Given a store of common sense, one might, with time and humility and grace, advance in wisdom.¹³ If religion is more than formal propositions or rules, wisdom is a vital ingredient in the transmission of the faith. Without it, what will be propagated is simply what we have received. Wisdom helps distill what we have received and hand it on in an authentic way. Common sense may not be something we can develop in candidates for ministry, but it is something we can identify. Without it, I suggest, there is not enough character for wisdom to root in; and without the blossoming of wisdom (that quintessential gift of the Holy Spirit) in the lives of pastoral ministers, the effectiveness of our work across cultures will be diminished.

Commitment to Our Own Ongoing Conversion

No individual minister is ever entirely adequate for the task. If, however, one is conscious of personal sinfulness-yet-perfectibility and committed to cooperating with the daily grace of God, one is (other things being equal) likely to model qualities appropriate to a fledgling pastoral minister. Conversion is both a lifelong process and an adventure whose surprises only occur as we actually proceed. We have no idea who is yet to be instrumental in our own ongoing conversion, nor of the places and the events that will contribute to our conforming more and more to the image of Christ. But if we are truly committed to minister at the margins, then we will pray for our own openness to the grace of God that will reach us through the steps we take each day. Such

commitment entails that each minister be a person of palpable faith and trust in the God who saves and who calls all people into service to others.

Trustworthiness and a Trusting Heart

Those who live according to double standards are not trustworthy. Those who do not trust those among whom they live are not worthy of trust themselves. Trustworthiness, once lost, is almost impossible to regain or re-establish. All the more reason, then, for us to be demonstrably trustworthy and virtuous enough to trust other people. Trust is an irreplaceable base on which to build local Christian communities of equals and to enter into the lives of people who suffer. "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" is Jesus' instruction to his disciples.¹⁴ The English word "perfect" translates the Hebrew word for "integrity" or "wholeness." We are not to be God, but to be Godly and to live lives of integrity (which will make us perfectly human and, being made in God's image, conformed to God's Son), just as God's integrity and, thus, perfect.

Everyone could legitimately nuance what I offer here; everyone could add something else. So perhaps, to conclude, we should simply return to Jesus, the Christ, human and divine, who did not cling to status and power, but who emptied himself to become, not only as we are, but even humbler. And God exalted him. The first part of the second chapter of the Letter to the Philippians is as important as the great hymn we know so well. A final recommendation about character traits for pastoral ministers working in diverse situations then might be an invitation to meditate on and learn from the passage immediately preceding the one we know so well, about Jesus' self-emptying:

If love can persuade at all, or the Spirit we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. In your minds you must be the same as Jesus Christ: His state was divine, yet he did not cling...but emptied himself...¹⁵

NOTES

1. See David W. Augsberger, *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1986); Anthony J. Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins: Strategy and Spirituality for Mission* (New York: Orbis, 2002); Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1993); *The Bush was Blazing but not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1996).

2. Claude-Marie Barbour, "Seeking Justice and Shalom in the City," *International Review of Mission* 73 (1984): 291: 303-309.

3. Walter Hollenweger, "Evangelization in the World Today," *Concilium* 114 (1979): 40–41.

4. For more on the stranger or outsider, Anthony J. Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins: Spirituality and Strategy for Missions* (New York: Orbis, 2002), 121–160; and *Presence that Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship* (St. Louis, Mo.: Liguori, 2002), 91–118 and 143–162. For more on downward mobility, see Gittins, *Presence that Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship*, 83–90.

5. Plato, "Theatetus," in *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, N.J.: 1969), no. 149–150. This quotation: 155.

6. *Phronesis* (Greek) is usually translated as "practical wisdom" or "prudence." Aristotle distinguishes *sophia* and *phronesis*. The former, "wisdom," is the ability to discern and understand the world; the latter, "practical wisdom," is the capacity to visualize and enact change that will enhance the quality of life.

7. A significant challenge to cross-cultural or intercultural ministry concerns language. "Language learning" (informal, interactive, the way children acquire language) and "learning a language" (formal, academic, the way many adults attempt to learn a language) can and should be combined by adults learning a new language. The process of learning a language should in fact become intrinsic to, rather than separable (in time and/or place) from, pastoral ministry. There is no space to develop this theme here.

8. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).

9. One of the most helpful texts remains: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1967). Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (New York: Orbis, 1988), 3–16.

10. Anthony J. Gittins, "Toward Integral Spirituality: Embodiment, Ecology and Experience of God," S. Rakoczy, ed., *Common Journey, Common Paths* (New York: Orbis, 1992), 44–55.

11. A brilliant reflection on this can be found in Clifford Gertz, *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 94–120.

12. John Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth: Experiments in Truth and Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978). I adapted his words somewhat in Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins*, 3ff.

13. An excellent treatment of this is by Jonathan Sacks, "Telling the Story," in *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society* (London: Continuum, 2007), 113–122.

14. Mt. 5:48 NAB.

15. Philippians 2:1ff.