AFTER THE REVOLUTION

A Review of Mainline Protestant Clergy Leadership Literature Since the 1960s

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ABSTRACT

The post-1960s literature on the mainline Protestant clergy bears a striking resemblance to post-Revolutionary debates in France; a massive and irreversible shift in the ideological landscape has raised the question, "Where next?" Our *Old Regime* is the Protestant ministry of the 1950s, replete with professional aspirations and exemplified by H. Richard Niebuhr's portrayal of the Pastoral Director. Despite changed social assumptions about ministry, structural continuities in seminary training and church bureaucracies remain far more striking than changes. We are left with a ministerial calling stripped of its professional *raison d'etre* by a series of theological critiques that have yet to outline or achieve corresponding structural changes.

INTRODUCTION: THE STRUCTURE of THE FIELD

The underlying structure of literature on the clergy since the 1950s reproduces in miniature the dichotomy of the great political and sociological debates between *ancien regime* Europe and postrevolutionary Europe. While its parameters are not quite as well defined as those of the French Revolution-with its decisive beginning on July 14, 1789, and clear disintegration on Thermidor (July 27, 1794)-the literature on ministry written within the white, mainline churches before the 1963 March on Washington and that written after the 1968 assassination of Robert Kennedy come from different worlds. Today, almost every study of ministry and the wider mainline church contains at its outset the expression "over the last x years," with x always being the time that has passed since the great changes of the 1960s. Although there has never been an officially proclaimed Year Zero in the Protestant mainline, there is a point in the 1960s from which all developments seem to follow and in which all debates appear to be anchored.[1] Of the many watersheds of the 1960s, three themes dominate the literature on ministry: (1) the transformed perspective of race relations, which comes to stand for a transformation in all authority relations; (2) the de facto

disestablishment of mainline Protestantism and the removal of its privileged place within the wider culture; and (3) the significant decline in the relative numerical strength of mainline Protestant denominations. For Catholics, Vatican II (1962-5) represents perhaps an even greater watershed moment. Internal division over whether to mourn or celebrate these denominational changes has in some ways concealed their common starting point.

The painstakingly constructed analogue to the *ancien regime* for ministry in America was the publicly acknowledged professional leadership of modem American clergy, carefully nurtured for one hundred years and reaching its apex in the ten years following H. Richard Niebuhr's formulation of the role of Pastoral Director.[2] While Niebuhr entitled his chapter on clergy in *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* "The Perplexed Profession," he saw the Pastoral Director model as becoming ever more established.[3] James Glasse argued in 1968 that not only was the ministry the first profession from which all others emerged, but the role of the minister, properly understood, fits into the modern conception of the professional, namely an educated specialist with a defined expertise working through historic social institutions, having specific responsibilities, with a particular code of ethics and values dedicated to the improvement and betterment of society.[4] Clergy were growing into an increasingly public role, as professionals were seen as central figures in modern society. Sociologist Everett C. Hughes proclaimed of clergy in 1966 that "[w]e are in the professional age." Clergy were beginning to recognize the common problems they faced and the common skills they needed, and they were becoming ever more like members of other professions.[5]

This is not to say that all writers in the 1950s and 1960s were overly optimistic in then assessments of ministerial life. As early as the mid 1930s, H. Paul Douglass saw the profession of ministry as a "victim of a mild vocational psychosis."[6] Overestimating the social value of the work they did and putting a religious gloss on earthly administrative and economic problems within the church, clergy were limited in their ability to effect any significant change in church or community. Moreover, their congregations seemed to desire likeableness in their pastors-not challenging and prophetic preaching, or any other gift or skill nurtured within seminary walls. Samuel Blizzard points to the stresses and strains created by the multiple roles and expectations placed on ministers and by how little most members of the congregation valued the minister's core professional roles.[7]

While one could certainly sense by the mid-1960s a growing conflict within mainline churches between progressively minded young pastors and established middle-class congregations, as well as a growing dissatisfaction with the "professional" label, the underlying assumptions of the professional ministerial model remained generally accepted in academic and mainline church circles. Research on these rumblings of congregational discontent, while excellent in its discernment of the underlying fissures, did not fully anticipate the massive upheaval that was to come in a post-1968 universe.[8]

Although published only four years after James Glasse's *Profession: Minister*, Henri Nouwen's *Wounded Healer* speaks of an entirely new world of ministry. Glasse wrote of institutions and Blizzard of multiple roles. Nouwen, in contrast, saw the minister as living in a world of "fragmented life experiences" with an "absence of clear boundaries."[9] Niebuhr focused the minister's attention upon the existential angst of the "other directed" organizational man; Nouwen pointed to that combination of mystic and revolutionary trying to reach beyond himself that could be found "in the eyes of the guerilla, the young radical or the boy with the picket sign. You will notice him in the quiet dreamer playing his guitar in the comer of a coffeehouse, in the soft voice of a friendly monk, in the melancholic smile of a student concentrating on his readings. You will see him in the mother who allows her son to go his own difficult way, in the father who reads to his child from a strange book, in the loud laughter of a young girl, in the indignation of a Young Lord, and in the determination of a Black Panther."[10]

Niebuhr's understanding of ministry was still centered upon the church as an institution, even if it was now understood to be the church in the world. Nouwen asks the minister to look both inward to examine his own wounds and outward, beyond the self and even the church: "The man of prayer is a leader precisely because through his articulation of God's work within himself he can lead others out of confusion to clarification; through his compassion he can guide them out of the closed circuits of their in-groups to the wide world of humanity."[11]

Nouwen's writings are representative of a wider "de-institutionalization" that affected religious, social, and economic organizations that had reached their peak in the 1960s.[12] The literature since the "end of the old order" can be divided schematically into two parts: (1) a large

body of theological literature celebrating the end of this old order, along with supporting academic literature; and (2) a large body of academic literature documenting and analyzing the decline of the old order, along with theological literature that recounts and mourns, with certain caveats, the end of the old order and the problems its demise has created for ministers.

Thus, whether the literature is celebratory or mournful of the passing of the old order and its model of the minister as professional, almost all of the literature since the 1960s takes the old order as its grounding point of reference. After reviewing the literature, surveying both the original literature on the professional model and then the subsequent theological and academic reactions to its demise, I will propose some areas for further research and analysis that, because of the particular structure of the field, have been overlooked to date. I will further attempt to show how these overlooked areas might hold clues for understanding the present plight of the clergy and pointing the way forward for policies that would encourage excellence in ministry.

"THE PROFESSIONAL AGE"

While the ministry cannot claim to be the immediate progenitor of the other modern American professions, children of ministers--according to Robert Crunden--made up a disproportionate number of those who entered the burgeoning professions at the beginning of the twentieth century, investing "that choice with the religious and moral significance that the family environment had placed on the ministry a generation earlier."[13] This sense of a common motive of service among the professions, including the ministry, can be seen in Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), where he states that "A minister, a doctor, a teacher, an artist, a soldier, or a public official" are each members of a profession that has "a consciousness that it exists to serve mankind," and that, though the individual "may forget it often ... he will always feel the constraint of the higher principle upon him."[14]

While Rauschenbusch explicitly excludes businessmen from the occupations that he believes feel the constraint of a higher principle, some of his contemporaries, such as authors Louis Brandeis and Ernest Poole in *Business: A Profession*, do wish to place a higher ethical burden upon businessmen.[15] It is a burden that Kenneth Andrews, speaking in 1969 as a representative of

business schools to an ATS-sponsored convocation, on "Theological Education as Professional Education," claimed that business itself increasingly was embracing.[16] Thus the ministry, by taking on the imprimatur of a profession, could be both a part of modern society (thereby seeming to save itself from irrelevance), and at the same time poised on the ethical cutting edge of the professionalization of society, in a sense leading the way for the other professions in taking up Rauschenbusch's "higher principle." Talcott Parsons laboriously articulates the functional niche that liberal Protestantism and its clergy occupied, contending that Protestantism served as that element within the American cultural matrix that allowed the society to embrace technological advance, while preserving a normative framework and avoiding descent into the ennui of a purely instrumental rationality.[17] But for Parsons, Protestantism's social influence followed from the abandonment of its doctrinal specificity. Thus, Parsons articulates in his structural-functionalist theory an implicit bargain Protestantism made with the wider society: Society would accept Protestantism's moral guidance, provided the churches diluted their teachings for mass consumption. But when widespread popular disillusionment with social institutions set in--a disillusionment that Murray Leiffer recognizes was shared by younger clergy in the late 1960s-- Protestantism was seen by many of its own clergy and seminary faculty as having compromised its theological integrity. Hence, new theologies of mission soon would be articulated setting themselves against the prevailing vision of ordained ministry dominated by the professional model.

RETHINKING THE PROFESSIONAL MODEL: THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUES

Liberal Critiques

One of the most striking aspects of the literature on ministry in the last few decades is that some of the most forceful critiques of the professional model come from the very quarters--the liberal-leaning theological and intellectual centers of the mainline churches--that did so much originally to establish the model. In the opening chapter of the 1980 study *Ministry in America*, David Schuller, describing the previous decade, writes, "The predicament of the minister became as serious as that of the people whom he or she would serve."[18] This difficulty was caused by a sense of pastoral ineffectiveness and a crisis of ministerial identity that reached a crescendo in the late 1960s.[19] In the same volume, Daniel Aleshire, taking the professional model as his starting point, quotes Henri

Nouwen's comment, "The question that is brought to ministers' minds with increasing urgency is `What is there beyond professionalism-is ministry just another speciality in the many helping professions?'"[20] Aleshire argues that the most important pastoral qualities identified in the extensive survey data from the Readiness for Ministry Project frequently ranged beyond the professional competencies taught in seminaries.[21]

While *Ministry in America* sought simply to supplement the professional model, others within the mainline were more trenchant in their criticism. A 1982 report by the Board for Theological Education of the Episcopal Church states: "The ordered ministry ought not in the first instance be an occupation or a profession; it is a product of a community."[22] The report views professionalism as a largely "unexamined" secular model of ministry, one that, though increasingly widespread, nevertheless is an "inadequate model for ordained ministry."[23] The report views the professional model as limiting lay participation in the life of the church by setting the ordained minister too significantly apart. Moreover, the professional model, based on formal academic training and a competence-based appraisal that tends to define the ordained minister in terms of a chief executive officer, contributed to the racial, ethnic, and social exclusivity of the Episcopal Church. With the professional model reinforcing rather than transforming existing social inequalities, the question became one of "establishing criteria that make it possible to recruit persons whose culture and life experience is unlike that of the church in general, while at the same time not setting up a separate and potentially unequal 'track.' We believe this is truly the work of the Spirit into which a COM [Commission on Ministry] could enter with hope and excitement."[24]

Such rethinking of the professional model of ministry within the liberal mainline has not been confined to the Episcopal Church. Donald Messer, President of the Methodist Iliff School of Theology writes, "H. Richard Niebuhr's portrait of parish pastors as 'pastoral directors' . . . hardly inspires, motivates, or sustains a person in ministry. Essentially an administrative model, it mirrors the management impulses of America in the latter half of the Twentieth Century."[25] While acknowledging the importance of certain properties of the professional model, such as norms of competency and standards of excellence, Messer argues that "[m]oving beyond professionalism is essential for the clergy," warning that defining ministers in terms only of their functions runs the risk of turning the minister into a "captive flunkie of the status quo."[26] Moreover, like the

Episcopal Church report *We Need People Who*, Messer sees issues of race and gender in the preference for the professional model, claiming that images of Christian ministry such as "the facilitator" or "the professional" are too abstract and sterile. Such conceptual system-building is, in Messer's opinion, a particularly white male trait that contrasts with the ministry images of African Americans and women, who come out of storytelling and consciousness-raising traditions.[27]

Following the Wounded Healer and community-activist models of ministry that were prevalent in the 1970s, the Servant Leader model of ministry that came to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s also looked to the 1960s as the pivotal moment of change in authority relationships, linking the changing conception of ministry to race issues and the civil rights movement. Bennett Sims, commenting on post-World War II "churchianity," writes, "All in all it was fairly easy to be an ordained minister until the 1960s."[28]

The turning point in Sims's own life and ministry--and the event that he says transformed the ministry as a whole--was the 1963 March on Washington and the challenge laid down by Martin Luther King Jr. According to Sims, "There was no way to avoid a new and for many people painful choice: we were either for him or against him."[29] This "for and against" was just one of a succession of liberal-versus-conservative splits within the Protestant church over the subsequent thirty years, including conflicts over the clerical status of women, liturgical language, openly homosexual clergy, and blessing homosexual unions. While Sims argues that the servant leadership model of ministry merely brought preexisting divisions out into the open, he also claims that an authentic servant church must stand on the liberal side of each of these issues. Thus, he transforms a choice between different models of Christian ministry--the servant model versus the professional model--into a morally charged judgment between authentic and inauthentic Christian leadership.

Moreover, Sims identifies servant leaders as being Jesus-like in their opposition to established religious institutions, represented by those who take their authority from their credentials, ordination, and office (the pre-1960s model), as opposed to those who rest their leadership in "the character and quality of a person's soul."[30] Sims aligns support for racial equality with servant leadership and, by similar logic, aligns opposition to racial equality or acquiescence in racial inequality with institutionally based models of ministry--positions indicated, respectively,

through either support for, or opposition to, King in 1963. Like so many writings on ministry by theological liberals within the mainline churches, Sims's book on servant leadership, though published in 1997, is rooted in the 1960s and its discourse on race. This discourse on race authorizes a particular narrative of both the immediate past and the future of the church, a narrative structured by a governing dialectic in which, to paraphrase Marx, the professional conception of ministry is on "the wrong side of history." Of course, the construction of a racialized dialectic by a predominantly white church is not tied to or a part of debates about ministry within the black church. Moreover, the question should also be asked of the liberal critics of the professional model: Does the dialectic they constructed still govern? If questions need to be asked of the professional model, are these still the right questions?

The End of the Establishment

The defining historical moment in Bennett Sims's book on servant leadership is the 1963 March on Washington. Coincidentally, the defining historical moment in Stanley Hauerwas's and William. Willimon's book *Resident Aliens* was also in 1963: the opening of the Fox Theater in Greenville, South Carolina, in defiance of the state's Blue Laws.[31] Hauerwas's and Willimon's theology of ministry also makes its pivotal point the momentous changes of the 1960s-in their case the withdrawal of the cultural privileges once accorded by the wider society to the morality and mores of the Protestant mainline. In this post-Constantinian universe, the minister's role can no longer be that of the religious functionary prodding the church to serve the local community and the wider society with some general goal of social progress.[32]

Hauerwas and Willimon, like the post-1960s liberal critics of the professional model, take aim at H. Richard Niebuhr, singling out Christ and Culture as a particular hindrance to an understanding of the church's relationship to the world. Niebuhr, they argue, "merely justified what was already there-a church that had ceased to ask the right questions as it went about congratulating itself for transforming the world, not noticing the fact that the world had tamed the church."[33] And the seminaries, guided by the model of the helping professions and flooded with recruits who were keen to meet people's "needs":

have produced clergy who are agents of modernity, experts in the art of congregational adaptation to the status quo, enlightened facilitators whose years of education have trained them to enable believers to detach themselves from the insights, habits, stories, and structures that make the church the church .... The new pastors are trained to help the individual be a bit less miserable within the social status quo-just like doctors and lawyers, they are-and the poor old church is interested only in a pastor who can help it remain the church.[34]

Despite such trenchant criticism of the professional model of ministry, Hauerwas and Willimon do little to articulate a new ecclesiological structure. Like the liberal mainline critics, they dislodge the fairly weak theological and historical foundations of the professional model in the post-1960s era. But while articulating a new ecclesiological culture, they leave the professionally based ecclesiological structures of seminaries, pension boards, and church hierarchies intact--intact, though without any intellectual foundation, and thus lacking any real force or credibility. The question is whether the Hauerwas and Willimon prescription for a new kind of minister actually can be realized within existing church structures, or whether it requires the construction of a new set of ecclesiological structures to match the ecclesiological culture of the colony. Without this correlation of means and end, it is hard to envision how the ministerial crisis they point to can be solved. And without the articulation of these new structures, we are left with a critique of the professional model that, like the liberal critiques, cohabits with the institutional world of the professional model, while having removed its *raison d'etre*.

Evangelical Critiques of the Professional Model

The belief that professionalism, and its accompanying notion of specialized training for a salaried ministry career, would corrupt and enervate the clergy was hardly new to the 1970s, nor confined to the United States.[35] Nevertheless Dean Kelley's 1972 book, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, although not written as an advocacy piece for conservative denominations, shines a spotlight on the numerical decline of the Protestant mainline churches in the 1960s and points to the professionalized ministry as a major factor in explaining their weakness.[36] While Kelley expressed his fears to his own mainline audience, by the 1990s Roger Finke and Rodney Stark served as sociological champions of the conservative churches in their book, *The Churching of America*.[37] The bulk of the book attempts to substantiate the "strictness hypothesis" as a

determinant of whether churches historically won or lost in the religious marketplace. The book also follows the traditional evangelical suspicion of a seminary-trained and professionalized ministry. While the Southern Baptists have had, and continue to have, strong local control based in democratically constituted congregations willing collectively to discipline any pastor or seminary professor who becomes too enamored of "modern" thought, the Northern Baptist clergy from the beginning of the twentieth century "[w]ere well-paid professionals, their theology was becoming compatible with 'modern' thought, and their members tended to be affluent. But their market share was in decline."[38] Thus, for Finke and Stark, the lesson of Southern Baptist growth and Northern Baptist decline in ministers points to the dangers of an established, professionalized ministry, particularly one that is trained in a university-based seminary.

"NEW PARADIGM" CHURCHES AND DE-INSTITUTIONALIZATION

As with the literature reviewed so far, literature on the "New Paradigm" churches also views the 1960s as a crucial determinant of the contemporary Protestant scene. Don Miller sees the 1960s as a "watershed" that effected a lasting rejection of institutional authority, and Lyle Schaller marks 1958 as the last' yeti of mainline Protestant stability before four decades of discontinuity and change.[39] These fast-growing "made in America" churches, as Schaller terms them, set themselves against the established organizational, institutional, and architectural forms of the 1950s mainline Protestant church. The New Paradigm churches' theology of ministry, like other post-1960s theologies of ministry, is critical of the professional model. As Don Miller describes it: "Special degrees and theological certificates were not required to do the work of ministry. They were the inventions of established churches to professionalize the ministry, but they did not give these professionals a purer heart or a clearer vision of the sacred than dedicated lay members."[40] And Schaller points out that today's large, growing churches seek out "entrepreneurs" to compete in a tough religious marketplace, rather than those who carry on the established practices of ministry.[41]

Transcending Liberalism and Conservatism

The New Paradigm churches do not fit easily into Kelley's thesis; they are growing, and they are not liberal, but they are not exactly conservative either. While sharing certain core themes with

Finke and Stark's exemplars, such as emphasis on the high commitment demanded of members and the importance of lay leaders, the New Paradigm churches do not adhere entirely to the Finke and Stark model. Finke and Stark place a lot of weight on "strictness" and world-rejecting characteristics of a church as determinants of growth--the Mormon church being a paradigmatic case of a winner.[42] But Don Miller points out that many of the fast-growing New Paradigm churches appeal to the anti-institutional and anti-authority attitudes of Baby Boomers returning to church. Hence the absence of clerical vestments, traditional music, and churchly buildings that were hallmarks of 1950s churches.[43]

New Paradigm churches reflect a fusion of different themes. For example, both the anti-hierarchy themes typical of more liberal ministerial theologies and a Hauerwasian sense of living in a "post-Christian" culture are found in New Paradigm churches. And though New Paradigm churches stake out a position in putative opposition to the perceived excesses of cultural liberalism, they nevertheless utilize that same culture's favorite tools of transmission in church music and drama. It is this combination of seemingly competing attitudes, and the refusal to fit into the neat categories of "conservative" and "liberal" that make these "New Paradigm" churches. But these churches also represent a new paradigm because, among the Generation Xers, the 60s simply do not seem to matter in the way they do for the mainliners. Even if New Paradigm churches were constructed in the shadow of a "seismic shift" in American religion, both the liberal sense of political purpose and conservative anger at the wider culture are largely missing in these churches. These churches are led by the kinds of ministers that Loren Mead anticipates in *The Once and Future Church*. They see the ministry of the laity as the norm and ordained ministry as needing special justification (possession of extraordinary gifts)--unlike the liberal mainline's leadership without apologies. And they seem to be free of the anger and depression that Mead sees as a feature of mainline clergy, as they indulge themselves in a cycle of mutual recriminations and blaming for their denominations' decline.[44]

The online ministry magazine *Next Wave* provides an excellent example of this obliviousness to the social impact of the 60s. The magazine is aimed at Generation X pastors in New Paradigm churches, and the article "Everything I Ever Needed to Know about Ministry I Learned from ... MTV?" is a typical contribution.[45] The article is written by David Hopkins, a

former student and youth pastor program director of the Wesleyan Campus Ministry at Texas A&M in Commerce, Texas. What makes Hopkins so interesting is that, while he follows a classic ordination track in some ways, the church he wants to build and the ministry he wants to carry out are far from either the liberal mainline or traditional conservative churches. Raised in the United Methodist Church, Hopkins now attends the nondenominational Pantego Bible Church, and on his web page he outlines a fairly conservative theological stance in his "What I believe" page: "I believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the verbally inspired word of God, the final authority for faith and life, inerrant in the original writings, infallible and God-breathed (II Tim 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20, 21; Matt 5:18; John 16:12, 13)."[46]

But in his Next Wave article, Hopkins states:

I realize good Christians have been raised to avoid MTV at all costs. MTV is evil, carnal, worldly, and superficial. Right? Yes and no.... MTV has something to teach the Church of the 21st century, if we are willing to listen .... MTV knows its audience .... How many Churches know their own communities at this intimate a level? ... Image is not everything, it's the only thing .... This obsession with image frustrates older generations to no end, it seems vain .... TV's Unplugged epitomizes what this generation considers an intimate experience: not in rows, but in-the-round. Churches need to stop arguing from the standpoint of what works, but what is most pleasing to the eye, to the ear, and to the touch for a more meaningful worship. With MTV, sound becomes sight and sight becomes sound. The music incarnates itself as video, so the experience becomes more accessible to the viewer. The word becomes flesh. (John 1:14) .... Identity is meaningful, transitional, and communal .... My parents were raised in an era when identity was something that lasted. When someone was told they "have character," it meant their ways were unchanging. It was synonymous with "integrity." And it's no surprise, people had jobs that lasted from the time they graduated to the time they retired .... Back then, it was a compliment to call a person steadfast, unmovable, unshakeable, and to be "like a rock." Today, those words are closely associated with a person who is close-minded or stubborn.... We can learn from MTV to strengthen our identity, one that must be meaningful, transitional, and communal.[47]

What is so interesting about this article and others in Next Wave is their complete lack of mourning for the lost past of the 1950s--for its rules and structure, its purer culture, and the greater certainty provided by a 50s sense of community and belonging. Unlike their counterparts in traditional conservative churches, contributors to *Next Wave* use the term "postmodern" in a positive way. For them it signals not a new front in the culture wars, but the irrelevance of those conflicts. In fact, the

very features of today's society and culture that are the objects of criticism in so many sermons--a lack of stability and an obsession with appearance over substance--are normative features of New Paradigm church life, rather than targets of reform and redemption. Where Niebuhr saw the minister as inhabiting the stable universe of the "organization man," Hopkins's world is that of the software engineer, where the minister needs to join a people by living within a fluid cosmos where lines of demarcation between reality and imagination are blurred.

Structural Consequences

If the church Hopkins pictures in *Next Wave* were to become the norm, the structural changes would be enormous. Many writers who criticize the professional model of ministry focus simply on changing the culture of ministry, while ignoring the structural implications of such change. Loren Mead, however, lays out in stark terms the structural parameters of a "restructured" church. While the latest management gurus have attracted much interest for what they can tell the church about excellence in ministry, less reflection has occurred about the consequences of this management style for America's corporations. Mead, by contrast, in comparing today's churches to big corporations of the 1950s, is quite willing to talk about a massive "downsizing" that will mean laying off large numbers of professional church staff members in ministries, programs, and seminaries. The news for local congregations is not much better: "We have fostered a way of thinking that leads every church member to expect a professionally trained clergy person, pulling all sorts of subsidies and subterfuges to cloud over the fact that congregations are increasingly unable to afford that style of living. We continue to foster an image of church that the overwhelming number of congregations do not and cannot pay for. We are unwilling to name the truth that more than 50 percent of our congregations are below subsistence level."[48]

If Mead is correct in his analogy of the mainline church and the old-style corporate giant, then the changes that will be required in the pursuit of excellence in ministry will be wrenching indeed. While Mead's and Schaller's diagnoses may not be correct, they set a benchmark for any writer who prescribes a new culture for the ministry or asks the church to follow the precepts of the latest management guru--namely, to clarify the likely structural effects of any proposed change in organizational philosophy.

MOURNERS AND RENOVATORS OF THE OLD ORDER

The most important question that the New Paradigm literature raises is: What are the alternatives to a radical restructuring of the church? Lyle Schaller sees those who reject his prognosis of a religious landscape dominated by Wal-Mart-style "Made in America" churches as being either in denial or in mourning that the era of European-style institutionally based churches is over.[49] But the very fluidity that the New Paradigm writers see as a key to the growth of these churches also makes their future hard to predict. Schaller points to the Promise Keepers as a quintessential example of Made in America religion, and to those skeptical of it as the backward-looking mourners of the European tradition. Writing in the late 1990s, Schaller first saw the Promise Keepers as the wave of the future. The years that have since passed, however, represent a long time in organizational terms, especially in a postinstitutional society, and Schaller's confident assertions now look hasty. If our society has lost its ability to create institutions with any real longevity, then it is possible that those who are involved in the gradual renovation of the existing institutions of ministry might be just as likely to find success in the long term, and so cannot be, written off simply as mourners for a lost past.

In one sense, Schaller correctly assesses the New Paradigm *refuseniks* as mourners for the lost order. Some in the church studies establishment do lament (with some significant reservations) the loss of the old order, trace the current problems of ministers to that loss, remain skeptical about the durability of new religious movements, and believe in the renovation of older institutions. They tend to inhabit the world of the established universities and to remain loyal to the old mainline. But such critics have played an important part in past social transformations, providing workable models of social relationships drawn from the past--from the invocation of the dubious virtues of the feudal village by British Anglo-Catholic reformers, to the Progressive Era ministers' sense of the lost virtues of smalltown America.

While Robert Bellah, Robert Wuthnow, and Mark Chaves do not explicitly mourn the loss of the old order of the 1950s, each chronicles the breakdown of relatively stable patterns of religious identity, institutional life, and clerical authority over the past forty years.[50] As an example

of the many ways of belonging, Bellah's composite character "Sheila" became the star of *Habits of the Heart*. Sheila seemed to strike a chord with clergy, perhaps because she represents so many members of their congregations over whom they feel so little hold. *Habits of the Heart* is a fairly optimistic book, but its more pessimistic predictions about social fragmentation became tied to Alan Wolfe's and Robert Putnam's works on the breakdown of civil society since the 1960s.[51] The sense of loss is also strong in Wuthnow's *Christianity in the 21st Century* and *After Heaven*, though both books balance pessimism and optimism. While they are optimistic about what the future might be, they are pessimistic about what is occurring today. In contrast, Mark Chaves, while not ruling out the continuing importance of religion, nevertheless locates the greatest losses in religious influence in the decline of once stable patterns of institutional authority and membership and, unlike Bellah and Wuthnow, does not even point to possible countertrends.[52]

The sociologists' sense of dislocation, fragmentation, and loss of institutional power and authority is, I would argue, the basis of the contemporary literature on clergy problems. In Ballis's *Leaving the Adventist Ministry*, the key events driving pastors from the "normal" cynicism of professional life into deep despair are sparked by church doctrinal controversies concerning revisionist and orthodox ministers.[53] Rediger's provocative, though largely anecdotal *Clergy Killers* also cites the declining authority of the minister.[54] Rendle's work, *Behavioral Covenants in Congregations*, focuses on the rising level of incivility within congregations and their relationships with ministers, and argues that the institutional order of the 1960s is "unraveling."[55] In their study of clergy stress, Moms and Blanton also look to social breakdown (the public/private divide) for an explanation of why certain clergy families experience more stress than others. Those who can maintain the divide tend to have happier families and experience less stress.[56]

Some writers have tried to come to terms with the changes of the 1960s, to mourn selectively rather than simply celebrating those changes, and to renovate existing structures rather than reconstructing the religious landscape wholesale. Prominent among these writers are Jackson Carroll, James Fenhagen, and Dean Hoge. Carroll starts from the premise that, although older, rule-based models of professional authority within the church (represented by writers such as H. Paul Douglass) are unsustainable in a post-1960s environment, in the rush toward lay empowerment and a corresponding suspicion of the professional authority of the clergy, something critical has been

lost.[57] Carroll believes that ministers still need to be skilled and knowledgeable practitioners; while the ministry of the laity is critical, the danger is that the crucial and distinctive role of the clergy will be lost. Carroll believes that clergy leadership can be vital--but that leadership should be reflective, not rule-bound or procedural. Carroll draws heavily on the work of Donald Schoen and his notion of the reflective practitioner.[58] Thus Carroll does not dispose of the professional model, nor does he attempt, as do the more liberal writers in the mainline, to attach disclaimers to the clergy profession. Instead he asks: What is the best manifestation of professionalism, and can clergy learn from this practice?

James Fenhagen, unlike Carroll, comes from a more sacramental Episcopal tradition; but like Carroll, he attempts to renovate the clergy role to counter ordained ministry's relative loss of status, both within and beyond the congregation.[59] Fenhagen sees the critical task as rediscovering the theological roots of ministry. New paradigms and older traditions do not necessarily conflict, but can work together in the context of, a renewed appreciation and understanding of the theology of the priesthood.[60]

Dean Hoge's *The Future of Catholic Leadership* examines the endemic priest shortage within the Roman Catholic Church.[61] While radical changes already are occurring in the Catholic Church, Hoge claims that even more radical changes will occur in the future, if the church does nothing to implement any of its major options for change. Hoge points out that the increasing prevalence of Communion without the eucharistic prayer, and thus the effective end of the Eucharist as the central worship experience for Roman Catholics, is a far more radical change in the life of the church than even the ordination of women, the marriage of clergy, or the celebration of the Eucharist by deacons.

CLERGYWOMEN: WILDCARDS IN THE EVOLUTION OF MINISTRY

If this article has depicted enormous changes in the theology and organizational culture of ministry since the 1960s, it has also, with the exception of the New Paradigm churches, pointed to a large degree of structural continuity. The majority of the faithful in America still attend churches in which seminary-trained ordained ministers, drawing salaries and participating in denominational

pension plans, preside over services in which hymns are sung, prayers are recited, and a sermon is preached. But within this relative structural stability, the greatly increased presence of women in ordained ministry represents a radical change in the Protestant mainline church since the 1960s. According to a Hartford Seminary study, the number of clergywomen rose from 4512 in 1977 to 16,321 in 1994 (from 1.5 percent of the clergy to 14.5 percent). The number of clergywomen in the United Methodist Church rose from 319 in 1977 to 3003 in 1994.[62] The expanded presence of women clergy raises the question how the nature of ordained ministry has changed and will change.

Some writers contend that ordained women believe they are changing the nature of ordination and that their style of ministry is fundamentally different from that of their male colleagues. For example, one Episcopal clergywoman commented that "Clergy men tend to work for a hierarchical system from the top down. Clergy women try to work from concentric circles. We try to bring lay people also into equality in decision making."[63] But what does this gender difference mean in terms of changes in the structure of the churches, as opposed to their organizational cultures? Ironically, in the New Paradigm churches, where female positions of authority are clearly circumscribed, structural innovation is most evident, while in the relatively static structures of the white, mainline Protestant churches, women are moving into positions of power and influence only gradually.[64]

It would certainly contradict most previous expectations if the presence of substantial numbers of women clergy did not fundamentally change the nature and structure of the church's ministry. One common strand in the thinking of both those who strongly advocated, and those who strongly resisted, the ordination of women was that women would change the face of ministry (whether this was seen positively or negatively). The sociologist Paula Nesbitt celebrates the post-60s end of the old order in the church:

> Women's continued movement into positions of religious leadership in numerous denominations during the political and economic turbulence at the close of the twentieth century optimistically could herald both a religious and a social transformation, forming new linkages across not only gender but also racial/ethnic lines, if the evidence of their more egalitarian and congregationally empowering leadership style are any indicator.[65]

Moreover, Nesbitt believes that this influx of women will bring about major structural changes in the church because clergy authority historically has been bound up with the status of being male:

> Any transformation of gender relations therefore necessarily must involve a radical analysis, re-articulation, and re-appropriation of authority .... .[T]he legitimation of women's access to authority involves not only the renegotiation of unilateral male guardianship and control but also creative opportunities to reconceptualize the meaning of clergy, church, tradition, and human relational roles and responsibilities with values grounded in the transcendent.[66]

What makes the realization of this vision unlikely, in Nesbitt's view, is the backlash that inevitably has occurred as women have pushed for greater positions of authority in the church. This backlash takes a number of forms, some subtle and some not so subtle. In addition to those who are openly hostile to women in pastoral positions, others, in lamenting the loss of numbers and influence by mainline churches, speak obliquely of a need for "leadership." Leadership in this context, Nesbitt argues, is a gendered term whose invocation signals nostalgia for a younger, masculinized church.[67] Nesbitt also claims that one possible response to the perceived feminization of the clergy will be for men to move into other institutions where they can still dominate. Indeed, the relative decline in membership among Protestant mainline churches, contrasted with the rise in membership of megachurches dominated by strong, male leadership, may manifest this phenomenon.[68]

While I concur with the basic outlines of Nesbitt's analysis, I believe that the development of the ministry and of women's place within it presents a more complex picture than she acknowledges. For example, Nesbitt links the ordination of women with empowerment of the laity, the end of traditions, and the transformation of authority structures. Yet it is the New Paradigm churches (where women are excluded from top leadership positions) in which the laity have the greatest influence, where "churchly" traditions have been most readily discarded, and where traditional patterns of seminary-trained, career-track clergy have been overturned. Moreover, women have been attracted to the Methodist Church because of an appointment system that gives congregations minimal say in the choice of their pastors.[69] In addition, the modern notion of the professional minister and the rational universalistic criteria that provided the route to that status were the basis for the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches' ordaining of women in the 1950s.[70]

Thus, hierarchy and the formalism of the professional model have been advantageous as well as restrictive to women's progress in the church, and one cannot conclusively say that any particular ecclesial structure historically has favored or hampered women's advancement.

More significantly, perhaps, it is unclear whether the ordination of women will bring major structural transformation of the church. As Mark Chaves points out, women's ordination in the 1970s came to signify more than just a place for women in the leadership of the church--more even than feminist concerns about the place of women in society that inspired many women to seek ordination. Women's ordination became an issue through which proponents and opponents expressed their hopes and fears about modernity and society in general.[71] Both sides in the women's ordination battle endowed their arguments with these broader concerns, while those favoring women's ordination also used extra-institutional strategies to achieve their goals, promising long-term, structural transformation similar to that Nesbitt views as a consequence of women's rise to power within the churches. But, as Chaves points out, the wider social and ideological upheaval represented in the more narrowly focused issue of women's ordination and the use of extra-institutional strategies occurred at a specific historical moment. It is possible that, as gender did in the 1970s, so social issues surrounding sexuality now will carry the burden of the wider liberal versus conservative social conflict.[72]

Even as the ideological context of social and political struggle changes, making sexuality the new defining issue for the church, women in ministry continue to struggle in a professional environment at best disadvantageous, and at worst hostile, to their career development. While seminaries may be preparing large numbers of women for parish ministry, only one-fifth of women, as opposed to one-half of men, end up as pastors-in-charge in a congregation.[73] Moreover, even in the denominations that have ordained women for some time, influential clergy and laity still seek to block women's advancement in the church, and very few women are appointed to very large congregations.

Nevertheless, these continuing structural barriers may produce differing responses from female clergy. For example, more recent female seminary graduates tend to foresee fewer problems in their careers and less need for strong organizational solidarity among women in ministry.[74]

Zikmund and her co-authors frame this view as an essentially mistaken response to the continuing structural barriers to women's advancement.[75] But with the establishment of a critical mass of women on the "inside" of many of the major denominations, newer female ordinands may feel that small-scale, individual networking (rather than large-scale, collective, gender-based solidarity) is more effective in addressing these remaining problems. Also pointing to a more ameliorative and less transformative feminism is Edward Lehman's finding in *Women Clergy* that a female pastor's presence in the church tends to defuse the conservative sense that women's ordination is part of a wider, liberal social transformation.[76] Overall, the literature seems inconclusive about whether a substantial increase in the presence of women in the ministerial ranks of the mainline Protestant denominations will bring about a transformation of church structures.

Both advocates and opponents of women's ordination were perhaps hoping and fearing too much from the ordination of women; but the question remains: What will be the effect of large numbers of women in the ministry? While some have argued that women, in general, tend toward a more democratic, less controlling leadership style than men, other factors, such as denomination, also are important determinants of leadership style. Moreover, both clergymen and clergywomen tend to exhibit a more "feminized" style of leadership than those in most other occupations.[77] Thus, we might be seeing a general feminization of the organizational culture of those denominations that have ordained women. One small, but significant finding is that clergy generally believe their leadership styles are more appreciated by professionals and educators in their congregations than by business executives.[78] If there is a process of mutual selection between church members and clergy, then we may see a tendency for persons from the human services sector of the economy, where occupations are also more "feminized," to cluster in denominations where "feminized" leadership styles are becoming prevalent. And there may also be a countereffect, in which those in the business world are more attracted to New Paradigm churches.

What are the likely effects of these developments on styles of leadership within the mainline Protestant churches? I would argue that the tendency toward symmetrical expectations between pastors and their congregations will lead to a style of leadership and a career pattern in the mainline

churches that is similar to those found in other human services sectors of the economy. This trend may have both positive and negative aspects. While there may be little radical, ideologically driven structural change or transformation, macroscale changes in the nature of work and careers may by themselves transform the nature of the ministry.[79] Following up on Nesbitt's theme, a feminized profession characterized by relatively short careers (being one of a number of careers in a working life), a relatively flat earnings trajectory, and a large number of part-time or temporary employees may be the developmental path of most occupations. On a positive note, the quality of women seminary graduates may create a push for higher standards of excellence in ministry. Ironically, while women may not be mourners of the end of the old order, they may turn out to be the chief force behind renovation rather than innovation.

GAPS IN THE LITERATURE: THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Like Jackson Carroll and James Fenhagen, Dean Hoge aims fundamentally to preserve and renovate the core characteristics of the church. Unlike Carroll and Fenhagen, however, he also outlines specific structural changes that he claims must occur. For example, the best professional practice includes a constant process of peer review and monitoring of each professional's performance. Expertise in professions such as medicine is gained through lengthy, rigorous practical training that most M.Div. programs fail to provide. What would a church look like that really cared about standards of professional performance? What if the standards for pastoral counseling and preaching were similar to those for surgery? How would seminaries and church administrators actually enforce such standards? These questions are not answered in the literature.

James Fenhagen, coming out of the Episcopal Church, has a strong ecclesial structure to renovate. But by tying the bishop to a theology of servant leadership, Fenhagen deprives the episcopacy of the opportunity to provide leadership that creates standards of excellence throughout the church. The neglect of church structures by writers within the mainline tradition has compounded that tradition's problems. The predicament of the mainline churches is the converse of that of the New Paradigm churches. The mainline churches have all the burdens of hierarchy; but seem to reap few of the advantages such supervisory structures can provide.

In contrast, the New Paradigm churches have minimal church structures, but a strong sense of working toward a common goal. The New Paradigm churches have positively outlined the structures that they want; the mainline churches, while comprising many who criticize the dominant model, have been largely unwilling to articulate any alternatives, thus robbing the existing structures of their already fragile legitimacy. One helpful approach might be to focus attention on structures that will be necessary to implement new cultures of leadership. Because the debate about the professional model of ministry has been framed largely as a political debate since the 1960s, it has failed to prompt the right questions about how to achieve excellence in ministry.

Another element that is missing from the literature is a truly close understanding of the leadership decisions that ministers in gradually declining congregations are making. Most research on the problems faced by clergy consists of outlining a background cause created by major sociological changes, and then pinpointing a single problem such as depression or termination. Case studies that examine leadership in a single context over time are invariably laudatory accounts (some verging on hagiographies) of particularly successful ministers. Studies of success, while interesting, are of limited usefulness unless set against a control group of cases where similar strategies of leadership have been used with little success. The type of study I am imagining can be seen in Stephen Warner's work on the leadership of Mendocino Presbyterian Church, where Warner critically analyzes crucial leadership decisions that determined the destiny of the congregation, both positively and negatively. The key to understanding what needs to be done to achieve exemplary pastoral leadership is to examine how pastors who work diligently with the best of intentions nevertheless find their congregations slowly eroding. What are the missed opportunities along the way? What roads are they not taking? A careful case-by-case study of well-intended leadership decisions that ultimately lead to congregational decline may help us constructively to discern much about how to achieve excellence in ministry.

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Financial Crisis," in The Christian Century *(Aug. 15-22, 2001) and of "Place, Race and History: Chicago's Prestige Churches and Then Neighborhoods," in Lowell W. Livezey, ed.,* Public Religion and Urban Transformation: Faith in the City *(New York: New York University Press, 2000). The author would like to thank Jackson W. Carroll and Tracy Constantine for their invaluable advice and assistance in the writing of this essay.*

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