



SPRING 2003

I write this on the afternoon of March 19 while the world anticipates a declaration of war. The situation warrants fear. Or does it? Is there another response possible for those who belong to God? In Isaiah 7, Israel and Aram were threatening Jerusalem and King Ahaz was considering an appeal to Assyria, the menacing superpower to the north. Into this situation of impending war and panic strode the prophet Isaiah with a message for the king and the people. Take heed. Be quiet. Do not fear. Do not let your heart be faint. He issued four invitations that are also commands. The words must have had a familiar ring to the Hebrew nation for these were the words commonly used when Israel was being mustered for a great battle. It was in the context of impending war that the people of God learned what it means to trust.

When fear is legitimate, when fear is not only warranted but perhaps even sensible, being afraid is precisely the last thing believers are to do. Instead, those who know God, certainly those who are involved in the formation and training of theological students, are to take heed, be quiet, and do not let their hearts be faint. Isaiah 7:9 says that if we do not stand firm in faith, we shall not stand at all.

The focus in theological education is so often on faith as a matter of cognitive belief or intellectual assent. In this text we learn that faith is something in which we actually stand. Frederick Buechner says that faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun. Faith is what we do as we embrace the intentions of God for compassion and justice and holiness. The reason why trust and faith are possible is that the One who invites us to stand firm in faith this day and all the days to come is the same One

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who is revealed in holiness and glory (Isaiah 6) and also as the One who promises the sign of a Child (Isaiah 7:9-14). The context immediately surrounding the invitation-command to trust demonstrates a holy, compassionate, present God. In every way, God is with us and our students even when fear seems warranted. Stand firm in faith or you shall not stand at all. May ancient words bring hope to your heart this day, and may the resources in this issue of TFEA equip you for your work of training and helping students engage with intelligence and compassion the issues of our day.

-Barbara Horkoff Mutch
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Before the Fall--Preventing Pastoral Sexual Abuse by Nils, C. Friberg and Mark R. Laaser. Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998. 143 pages. ISBN 0-8146-2391-3

Given the incidences of sexual abuse within the Church at the hands of those in fiduciary relationships, prevention is seen as critical. To this end, Church and seminary leaders have desired a guidebook to help address issues of sexuality with candidates preparing for ministry. *Before the Fall* is such a book. Authors Friberg and Laaser attempt "to describe a set of conditions embedded in a person's inner life, which under certain conditions, and given an attractive opportunity, may emerge in a decision to "cross the line."" (p. 12). They then proceed to lay out helpful guidelines on how to prevent problems before they occur.

Easy to read, practical, and pastorally and clinically accurate, *Before the Fall* is comprised of two parts. The first part, chapters 1 through 5, focuses on identifying the problem with the intent of identifying areas requiring healing before active ministry can proceed. The authors here describe general conditions of vulnerability to sexual misconduct. The interplay between conditions in the offender, potential victim(s) and the environment are emphasized. In part two, chapters 6 through 10, a model of healthy sexuality is presented which incorporates spiritual, cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. This book is a most helpful introduction to a pressing issue in the Church, and its insights easily generalized to broader formation questions.

--Suzette Phillips

Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions, by Donald A. Schön, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987. 355 pages. ISBN 1-55542-220-9 (paper)

This book by Donald Schön builds on the concepts of professional competence introduced in his earlier book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, and shows how professional schools can utilize a “reflective practicum” that will help prepare students to navigate the complex, unique, and indeterminate dilemmas of real-world practice. Schön forcefully challenges the long-dominant technical/rational paradigm of professional education that treats competence as the application of privileged knowledge to practice situations. Instead, he maintains that students mainly learn by doing, arguing that what they most need is “coaching” from experienced practitioners in the artistry of reflective practice. Schön uses the example of the architectural design studio as a prototype for reflective learning in other fields of professional practice.

The first two chapters summarize the key arguments covered in *The Reflective Practitioner*, a particularly useful feature for readers looking for a concise overview of the reflective practice framework. Schön goes on to describe the threefold structure of coaching, with an emphasis on the reciprocal dialogue of coach and student. He analyzes the institutional forces that often restrict education for reflective practice. The final chapter, “How a Reflective Practicum Can Bridge the Worlds of University and Practice,” offers a storehouse of stimulating ideas and cross-disciplinary insights that will resonate with many of the issues faced by Theological Field Educators.

--Janet L. Clark

The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action, by Donald A. Schön, New York: Basic Books, 1983. 374 pages. ISBN 0-465-0687-2 (paper).

Theological Field Educators who are interested in cross-disciplinary perspectives on professional practice and education will find Schön’s seminal work, *The Reflective Practitioner*, to be a rich and stimulating source of highly transferable concepts, principles, ideas and insights. Schön’s focus of interest is on understanding how competent practitioners “think in action,” particularly in the complex, uncertain, conflicted, and indeterminate situations that typify the world of professional practice. Based on extensive case-study research into five different professions—architecture, psychotherapy, engineering, town planning, and management—Schön concludes that competent practitioners do far more than deductively apply theory and technique to practice. Rather, they

reveal highly developed capacities for intuitive, artistic, creative, improvisational thinking as they engage in a process of ongoing "reflection-in-action."

Schön identifies a key dilemma in professional pedagogy that has relevance to theological field education, namely, that the intuitive understandings and experienced knowledge of competent practitioners (such as ministry supervisors) are typically tacit, unarticulated, and thus unavailable to learners as a source of professional knowing. The challenge for field educators thus becomes helping supervisors and students to bring out the intuitive understandings, tacit theories, values, and assumptions that are implicit in their actions. Schön's formulations offer theological field educators epistemological and empirical support for the paramount importance of cultivating reflective practitioners.

--Janet L. Clark

I Come to Do Your Will by Rob Taylerson. Veritas Publications, 2000, ISBN 1-85390-506-2

"Pastor, what is God's will for me?" It should not strike us strange that Christian disciples be interested in knowing how to and where to follow Jesus. Yet frequently, when the question of God's will is raised, many Christians practice divination rather than discernment. Taylerson's book, divided into eighteen brief chapters, is a guide to discernment practices grounded in the Scriptures and tradition of the Church. Some of the most important topics which Taylerson covers, include: "relationship with God"; "prayer, listening and choice"; what we mean by God's will; the importance of courage in doing God's will; the Ignatian method of discernment; the role of passions; the role of the conscience; and the importance of community.

This book would serve well as a discussion starter for Field Education reflection groups. Seminarians are all in a discernment process. Field education placements frequently bring many confusing issues to the surface. Understanding better their own discernment process can help the would-be pastor help his or her congregation do the same.

--Suzette Phillips

Is it I, Lord? by James O. Chatham. Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. 107 pages. ISBN 0-664-22672-8

The subtitle of this brief and valuable book is: *Discerning God's Call to be a Pastor*. Chatham, Pastor Emeritus of Highland Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, offers wise and measured counsel to anyone seeking vocational clarity. Chatham begins by offering a brief theology of call followed by his own experience of call and the stories of several others from diverse backgrounds. These illustrate well his contention that, "God calls the people God wants, and I tread humbly on God's ground (3)." Chapters 3-6 explore basic pastoral tasks and each ends asking the question in various forms: "If this describes you . . . then perhaps you should consider strongly..." The reader feels a gentle probing, nothing intrusive or awkward. Finally, Chatham concludes with "advice" chapters: a final checklist of questions, "Don't become a pastor if . . . and "Do consider . . . if" and his thoughts on seminary selection and how to benefit from other voices besides his. Here is a humble and honest aid to the discernment process.

--Matthew Floding

Lazarus Come Out! Why Faith Needs Imagination by Richard Cote. Novalis Press, 2003. 183 pages. ISBN 2-89597-307-4.

In *Lazarus Come Out!* Richard Cote encourages the rehabilitation of the religious imagination for its necessary role in contemporary faith. He claims that the mistrust of imagination which has been a part of the Western faith traditions deserves and needs to be transformed for the deepening of spirituality and faith. Cote aims to awaken the pastoral imagination which is essential to personal and faith maturity. Using the biblical image of Lazarus throughout the book, he works with the realities of transformation, breaking barriers and coming out of the dead and semi-dead places into freedom that gives new life. All this is an integral part of Lazarus' story and our story too.

Using personal examples, as well as example from his students, Cote shows how imagination can help what can be imagined to become real in the human experience. He outlines how religious imagination has been lacking especially in liturgy, communications to the faithful and in sacred art. He makes suggestions for the reviving of religious imagination in these and other aspects of faith and church life. He attempts to analyze and articulate how religious imagination is rooted in a person's "play," gifts and talents, as well as in their "geographical landscape." He shows signs that the contemporary churches, like Lazarus, are beginning to re-

appropriate their religious imagination for the good of all. Concluding, Cote asks a number of poignant questions about the risk and daring that enable vital Christians to “Come Out” into the full light of Christ. This book is a valuable resource for practitioners of ministry who are working to transform aspects of church life and enable faith to mature.

--Colleen Mahoney

Listening: A Pastoral Style by Frances M. Moran. Melbourne, Australia: David Lovell Publishing, 2001. 167 pages. ISBN 1-86355-087-9

The inner world of a person seeking support, as well as that of the person assisting him or her, can often today be overlooked. Dr. Moran’s book, *Listening: A Pastoral Style*, reminds its readers of the art of listening within the therapeutic and pastoral contexts—listening to the hearts of both the seeker and the listener. The listener is invited to consider both the effect of his or her inner world when assisting another, and the theological, philosophical and theoretical models influencing his or her practice. This book is a must read for anyone pursuing or engaged in pastoral ministry.

Moran’s book is comprised of three sections. In the first section, (chapters 1-3), she provides three illustrations of how a listener’s world acts as a lens through which one attends to another. The necessity of listening to one’s self prior to attempting to listen to others is emphasized. The second section, (chapters 4 and 5), provides an understanding of the listener’s inner world. In the third and final section, (chapters 6 and 7), listening to the inner world of the other is addressed. Moran here notes the influence of various Christian philosophical/theological and psychological viewpoints on the listener, and the import of the listener being aware of the various models he or she may adopt.

--Suzette Phillips

On Becoming a Counselor – A Basic Guide for Nonprofessional Counselors and Other Helpers by Eugene Kennedy and Sara C. Charles, M.D. New York, NY: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2001. 433 pages. ISBN 0-8245-1913-2

On Becoming a Counselor, co-written by psychologist Eugene Kennedy and psychiatrist Sara C. Charles, is an indispensable resource for all those (clergy, teachers, physicians, nurses, family and friends) who, without

extensive psychological training, must deal with troubled individuals: the confused, the suffering, the grieving, the immature.

This completely revised and expanded edition provides nonprofessional and professional counselors with essential tools needed to respond to other people's problems with intelligence and compassion. Both common sense and an understanding of the human condition are presented as inseparable elements of true helping. *On Becoming a Counselor* is essential reading for those in formation for ministry.

On Becoming a Counselor is comprised of four parts. In part one, the authors lay out guiding principles in helping others, and discuss the relationship between the helper and another. In the second part, the initial stages of the helping process are outlined including interviewing, listening, problem identification, and supportive psychotherapy. In part three, issues that a helper may be confronted with when dealing with troubled or healthy individuals are discussed. In the fourth part, ways of approaching presenting difficulties related to marital breakdown, sexual problems, HIV/AIDS, suicide, death, grieving, and emergencies are considered.

--Suzette Phillips

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