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**THE BENEFIT  
OF  
A CLERGY UNION  
TO THE UNITED CHURCH OF  
CANADA**

**BY**

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B.A. ('78), M.DIV ('86)**

**THESIS**

**SUBMITTED TO WATERLOO LUTHERAN SEMINARY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
MASTERS OF THEOLOGY**

**IN**

**CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

**WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis was motivated by the question of the effect of the union organizing efforts of some of the clergy in the United Church of Canada. The topics of work, call and covenant/contract are examined in a secondary, qualitative manner to establish the way in which they affect the relationship between clergy and the various levels of the church. The work of philosophers, such as Hannah Arendt and sociologists, such as Richard Sennett, as well as theologians Martin Luther, Jean Calvin, John Wesley, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Abraham Heschel, and Walter Brueggemann are included in the study. A Biblical understanding of the relationship between clergy and congregation is the underpinning for the study. From this information benefits and detriments of unionization are examined. The research led to the conclusion that the formation of a clergy union would not only be of benefit to the clergy, but also to the institutional church.

Lovingly Dedicated  
to  
Robert and Doreen Wilson  
who  
do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with their God

Many thanks to Dr Allen Jorgenson and Dr. Robert Kelly  
who were patient and encouraging advisors  
to  
Dr. Oscar Cole-Arnal, Dr. Roger Hutchison and Dr. David Pfrimmer  
who challenged me  
and to  
Dr. Mary Joy Philip

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## PROLOGUE

At the end of October of 2004, Vision TV reported on the efforts of clergy in the United Church of Canada (UCCan) to form a union as a response to the reported increased and widespread bullying of clergy by members of various congregations. The organizers of this endeavour claimed the bullying was systemically reinforced by the structures of the church.

Much of the Canadian Christian community reacted with surprise on November 4, 2004 when international media reported that the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) was prepared to assist the clergy of the United Church to form the first ever North American clergy union (Clergy United). Additional response to this news included support, derision and simple dismissal.

From the beginning of the union drive the organizers knew that local union ratification would be a lengthy process. UCCan has approximately 2,000 work locations in all areas of Canada, most with only one clergy. This creates isolation and many communication challenges. It was also decided that ratification would first be sought in Ontario and that a ratification vote would not be requested until 60% of Ontario UCCan clergy had signed a union card. Clergy United, with the assistance of the CAW, began to create education tools specific to the needs of clergy. While organizing was the primary goal, Clergy United also believed that it was important to respond both pastorally and protectively to clergy who reported either personal or systemic bullying. For these reasons volunteers were often diverted from organizing efforts to provide advocacy, organize prayer vigils or facilitate workshops, including a three-day retreat with Dr. G. Lloyd Rediger (author of *Clergy Killers* and *The Toxic Congregation*, etc.)

Certain trends were noticed by CAW staff organizers, including:

- clergy take a very long time to decide to sign a union card;
- every person who signs a union card for the first time resigns annually (Ontario labour legislation requires that each person who has signed a union card recommit each year until the union is ratified);
- clergy are very consistent in their approach to unionization;
- membership increase is slow and steady without the usual highs and lows;
- clergy report consideration of signing a card as contemplative and prayerful process

During 2012 and 2013 the CAW engaged in discussions with the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP) to form a new union that would incorporate non-traditional models. Clergy United adjusted its priorities, including active recruitment, in order to participate in the formation of the new CAW-CEP union, and on Labour Day 2012 a national clergy unionization campaign was announced.

**Unifor** the Union was created at a specially convened joint CAW-CEP convention in September, 2013. Clergy United was recognized at **Unifor's** founding convention as one of the first groups to be a **Unifor** Community Chapter. The community chapter model is a new approach for the Canadian Labour movement, and like the UK model allows individuals rather than work places to join the union and allows the union to provide some benefits to those that do not yet have a ratified local or a collective agreement with the employer.

Following submission of this thesis, November, 2013, **Unifor's** National Executive Board approved Clergy United's application and bylaw for a community chapter to be known as **Unifaith**. **Unifor's** National President, Jerry Dias presented **Unifaith** with its charter on December 7, 2013 at the Ontario Regional Conference. The first general meeting of **Unifaith** is currently scheduled for January 14, 2014.

## CHAPTER 1

### WORK! WHAT IS IT?

#### **In the beginning...**

Scripture speaks! It speaks to God's people through the centuries, using many different voices. Scripture is alive and passionate, full of family trees and family stories, family arguments, family disagreements, births and deaths. It speaks of the love and joy, the anger and the pain in the relationship between God and God's living, breathing people. Family stories differ depending on who tells them.

Within the panorama of this story there are as many presentations and understandings of human labour, work and toil, as there are narrators and listeners. Some understand scripture's definition of toil to be the result of humanity being fallen (Gen 3:22, 5:29). Some argue that the human worker is one of the expressions of being in God's image (Ex 20:9-10, 23:12, 34:21, 35:2). Still others maintain that scripture invites humanity into the creative labour of the Divine (Gen 1:28-31, 2:15, Mt 24:46, Lk 12:43). Recollection of events, details, the interpretations of understanding and learning have subtle nuances that result in a variety of responses to even a brief examination of the scriptures. Some scripture passages find work a rewarding means of expression and accomplishment while others consider it toil and drudgery to be escaped whenever possible.

Work is highly regarded by God and, according to Joel Nederhood, is an integral part of the Divine plan. The value of work and workers, as Nederhood has put forward, is affirmed. Creating is work, and God is a creating God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Nederhood, "Work in Biblical Perspective," in *Labor Problems in Christian Perspective*, ed. John H. Redekop (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 302.

Nederhood maintains the very first action within the Biblical account is the story of the work of God's creation. God is a worker. In both the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and of Genesis 2 it is God who is the creator, the maker, the doer, the worker. God is pleased with the results and values the product of the labour, one could say that God's work of creation is fulfilling for God. As the author of Genesis describes, after various actions of creation, the Divine stops to peruse the work, and we are told "God saw that it was good."<sup>2</sup> This understated satisfaction on the part of God leads the reader to believe God's work of creation is fulfilling to God. One part of God's creation is the human being, who is created in the Divine's own image, and as such is created both with personality and the desire to work. Creating is work; therefore this God of Scripture who created humanity, is a working God. In the story of the Garden of Eden God calls the people to join in the work by tending the garden (Genesis 2:15). Later, when the covenant between God and the Hebrew people is offered, it is not one in which the people are promised power, might and the ability to rule over all, rather Abram is promised that he will be the father of nations, and Sarai will be their mother. However, they and their descendants are expected to continue to work, and in the working to know both its joy and its pain.

God's incarnation was as a carpenter's son. As the son of Joseph he would most likely have worked for and with his worker father as a manual labourer. In the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul's discourse on various gifts includes those related to the gift of work. From the story in the Garden of Eden to the expanded Christian community God is engaged with and relating to people through and with work. God is active and God is personal.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 302–3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 302–3.

## **And God saw that work was good...**

Reformer Martin Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* was intended to be used primarily as a teaching tool by forming its readers into theologians of the cross. The intent of the document is to lead people to an encounter with God in Christ. "Theologians of the cross then, are born by grace through faith into that reign of God from which they are able to construe the significance of the cross for justified life."<sup>4</sup> The cross is concretised in *vocatio*. (The manner in which Christians live in God's two realms of church and world and the way in which the Christian is shaped by the cross.) These are resources for the new life in Christ and its vocational interaction in the modern world.<sup>5</sup>

Luther's term vocation is not used exclusively for clergy. For Luther the term vocation is inclusive of the comprehension of creation, preservation and redemption, and it places the Christian in the world and its consummation. For the faithful, vocation flows from participation in Christ's vocation. Therefore "vocation is the means by which God cruciforms the faithful at the intersection of church and world".<sup>6</sup>

For Christians vocation has a unique character because of its being at the intersection of the two reigns of Luther's theology. The world has received the gift of order to the extent that it is under God's benefice. This gives Christians a place in the world which allows the world to advance. "The blessed burden that attends living under order, that is ordinary life, becomes the occasion for God's work upon us."<sup>7</sup> We understand our vocation by our baptism because by our

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<sup>4</sup> Allen Jorgenson, "Crux et Vocatio," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 3 (August 2009): 283.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 283.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 289.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 291.

baptism we know our place in a different way. God's working in my vocation is what makes it an object of faith. *Vocatio* places a concrete demand on us for engagement in the joys and challenges of all life, both domestic and civic affairs. It is this that makes it transformative. This is the case solely in the shadow of the anticipation of the resurrection power. Vocation is where the church meets the world and the person is attentive to both law and gospel in a vocational response. Bonhoeffer and Wingren agree that law and gospel function in both realms.<sup>8</sup> Our work is simultaneously praise, worship and gift positioning us firmly in God's world.

Almost concurrent with Luther's theological challenges was the teaching of John Calvin, based in Switzerland. Calvin is often credited with being the originator of the Protestant work ethic. In our modern world we rarely hear this term used with affection or in a positive way. In fact, it is customarily used in a negative context to imply a somber life of rigidity without joy. It has also, on occasion, been used to promote a theology of wealth, whereby it is promulgated that those who work hard and are blessed by God, are also blessed in the reward of their work. These modern interpretations of Calvin's view of the ethic of work are evolutions that do not accurately represent Calvin's view of vocation.

The medieval world had many distinctions including distinctions in class (usually assumed as birthright), and distinctions between those inside the church, and those outside the church, with the authentic Christian life being inside the cloister or as a priest. However, for Calvin the distinction between the ordered and the lay life did not exist. His acceptance and development of Luther's notion of the "priesthood of all believers" and vocation was such that he did not even use the word laity. The variety of vocations within the elect are of value. He

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 291.

encouraged those in all stations to appreciate the value of their work. “The last thing to be observed is, that the Lord enjoins every one of us, in all the actions of life, to have respect to our own calling.”<sup>9</sup> Calvin believed that each calling or occupation is appropriately given to each person in order that individuals “may not be always driven about at random”.<sup>10</sup>

Calvin maintains that if one goes against the call of God by attempting to work outside the station ascribed to that individual there will be no human pleasure, contentment or joy. The reason to go outside the ascribed station is removed as Calvin believes there is no class distinction among various vocations. “This, too, will afford admirable consolation, that in following your proper calling, no work will be so mean and sordid as not to have a splendour and value in the eye of God.”<sup>11</sup> Throughout Calvin’s work the sovereignty of God is the focal point. This acknowledgement and profession of the Divine sovereignty is expected to be present in all aspects of human life.

One aspect of Calvin’s regard for other humans is his concern for the treatment of labourers. Within his *Instruction in Faith* Calvin’s understanding of respect and responsibility to workers is made quite clear. There are three reasons for the fourth of the ten commandments. The third reason is “...in order that we do not oppress inhumanly with work<sup>12</sup> those who are subject to us.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Thomas Norton (London: Reinold Wolfe and Richard Harrison, 1561), 3.10.6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 3.10.6.

<sup>12</sup> The Latin text does not include the words “with work”, but the French does.

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, “Instruction in the Faith (1537),” in *Instruction in the Faith (1537)*, Paul (Translator and Editor). Fuhrmann (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 32.

In short, Calvin advocated the value of all work and workers as fulfilling the will of God by living in accord with the various gifts of the Spirit. He promulgates the understanding that there is no class distinction between individual occupations, and eliminates any distinction between ecclesial and lay vocations.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Calvin states that it is God's desire that workers be respected and not be exploited. Calvin's view of work and worker is positive, and he indicates that the roles of preacher and teacher are types of work.

Such an acknowledgement of Divine sovereignty results in the desire to live according to God's will. One aspect of God's will is that humanity enjoy contentment through both individual freedom and individual responsibility. This individual responsibility is highlighted in Calvin's understanding of the law and particularly the didactic of law and gospel. For Calvin law is a gift of the gospel for the development of human community and peaceful coexistence. Although much of law is interpreted, viewed and enacted in new and/or different ways with the coming of Christ the law is still the framework in which God's people are informed of the way in which to do God's will. It is very clear that it is the Divine will that individual's will have regard for other humans both in community and as individuals.

### **Shall bring us relief from our work and the toil of our hands...**

Pope John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens*<sup>15</sup> maintains that God has actually invited and continues to invite humanity to be co-creators with the Divine. When this document was written it was at the beginning of a technological transformation that was expected to have as much influence on, and provide as much change to the world of work, as did the industrial revolution.

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<sup>14</sup> This does not eliminate the distinction between function of vocations.

<sup>15</sup> This encyclical was written as both a celebration and a statement of the relevance of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on its ninetieth anniversary.

The initial premise of the document is that any manual or intellectual activity, regardless of class or context is work. Humanity works both as a means to obtain the necessities of life and also as a reflection of the image and likeness of God. The discovery of personal and communal fulfilment through work, compared to mere individual and species survival, makes humanity unique from other worldly creatures. "Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense it constitutes its very nature."<sup>16</sup>

Between *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, two major encyclicals on humanity--its communal relationship and its relationship with work, the Roman Catholic Church focused on labour justice within specific individual nations. Since that time the Roman Catholic church has increasingly been focusing its attention on labour justice world wide, including inequitable distribution of wealth, and discrepancies between developed and developing nations.<sup>17</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church believes that work is a fundamental dimension of humanity. In the very first pages of scripture this reality is revealed. In fulfilling the mandate to subdue the earth each human being reflects the action of God as creator of the universe. "...these words placed at the beginning of the Bible, never cease to be relevant."<sup>18</sup> They include the past, the present and the future civilizations and economies.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, Encyclical Letter (Vatican City: Papal Library, 1981), 1–2, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091981\\_laborem-exercens\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens_en.html). Date accessed: 03,05,2008

<sup>17</sup> Ibid 4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 7.

A developed perspective within *Laborem Excercens* is humanity as the primary basis for the value of work because humanity is the subject. Humanity is for work and work is not for humanity. "...let us try nevertheless to show that each sort is judged above all by the measure of the dignity of the subject of work, that is to say the person, the individual who carries it out."<sup>20</sup> Work's purpose, in and of itself, is not a definitive meaning of human activity. Humanity is the purpose of work, even when it is service that humanity considers most menial.

Humanity's work remains within the Divine ordering,

Man dominates the earth by the very fact of domesticating animals, rearing them and obtaining from them the food and clothing he needs, and by the fact of being able to extract various natural resources from the earth and the seas. But man "subdues the earth" much more when he begins to cultivate it and then to transform its products, adapting them to his own use. Thus agriculture constitutes through human work a primary field of economic activity and an indispensable factor of production. Industry in its turn will always consist in linking the earth's riches—whether nature's living resources, or the product of agriculture, or the mineral or chemical resources—with man's work, whether physical or intellectual. This is also in a sense true in the sphere of what are called service industries, and also in the sphere of research, pure or applied.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the encyclical maintains that it is the nature of humanity to work with the earth because humanity is in the image of God. Humanity, because of rationality and self-realization, is the subject of work. The action of work serves humanity's self-realization. Human work has its own ethical value that is conditioned by the subjective dimension. The ethical value of work is linked to the worker, the human being who carries out the work, and who is free to make self-directed decisions.

By broadening certain aspects that already belonged to the Old Testament, Christianity brought about a fundamental change of ideas in this field, taking the whole content of the Gospel message

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 10–11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 7–8.

as its point of departure, especially the fact that the one who, while being God, became like us in all things devoted most of the years of his life on earth to manual work at the carpenter's bench. This circumstance constitutes in itself the most eloquent 'Gospel of work', showing that the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person. The sources of the dignity of work are to be sought primarily in the subjective dimension not in the objective one.<sup>22</sup>

The church has always believed in this principal of the priority of humanity and humanity's labour over capital "... in this process labour is always a primary *efficient cause*, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere *instrument* or instrumental cause. This principle is an evident truth that emerges from the whole of man's historical experience."<sup>23</sup>

Stanley Hauerwas directly challenges the papal encyclical, in his book *In Good Company: The Church as Polis*, and in so doing, places himself in a unique place regarding the scriptural understanding of work. "A great chorus of praise greeted Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, but I cannot join it."<sup>24</sup> In fact, he takes exception with the very core of the encyclical's understanding of work.

In his view one of the interesting features of scripture's treatment of work is that work need not be regarded as ultimately significant. Work is simply common as it is the way most of us earn our living. Indeed, if there is a grace to work it is that we do not need to attribute to it or find in our work any great significance or salvation. "Our work does not need to have or contribute to some grand plan; its blessings are of a more mundane sort. Work gives us the means to survive, be of service to others, and, perhaps most of all, work gives us a way to stay busy. For while work may not be ultimately fulfilling, it is at least a great

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.17.

<sup>24</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 109.

gift--a hedge against boredom. Attributing greater significance to work risks making it demonic, as work then becomes an idolatrous activity through which we try to secure and guarantee our significance, to make "our mark" on history."<sup>25</sup>

Whether one agrees with John Paul II or with Stanley Hauerwas, the reader will notice the scriptural text has many references to work, labour, toil, service and slavery. There are stories of oppression and injustice committed against God's chosen people and also committed by them (Exodus 1-4; Jeremiah). There is the story of the Israelites in Egypt and the cruel way in which the situation of their forced labour is worsened as a punishment for seeking independence (Exodus 5). In Jeremiah there is evidence throughout the text of the chosen people's abuse of work, and abuse of one another in relation to work. The teachings of God that demonstrate care for the community relationship, care for the community's relationship with God, and care for the need for physical rest and refreshment are clearly articulated (Ex 20:9-11; 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:2, Lev 23:1-8, Deut 5:12-15, Jer 17:21-24). These teachings encourage the reader to believe that work is not just for the benefit of the individual worker, but work is for the benefit of the community.

In addition, the worker should not be exploited, nor should the worker exploit (Ex 223:10-12; Deut 14:28-29; 15:1-10 Jer 22:13). Within the story of the building of the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, the Table for the Bread of Presence, and for all other times considered holy, it becomes clear that there is a Divine expectation that only the best of humanity's work is to be offered to God and that God ensures there are people who are gifted for the various types of work necessary (Ex 35:25-31). It is shown that God cared that the people have breaks from work to engage in celebrations and festivity. These both honoured

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 115.

God and gave recreation to the people (Lev 23:9-22,33-38; Num 28:16-28; 29: 1-6, 12-39, Deut 16).

The New Testament's teaching both reinforces and challenges some of the contemporary understandings of work. As stated above God was born the son of a carpenter and learned carpentry, and so God chose to work. Humanity is created in God's image and that includes humanity as worker. In the first letter to the Corinthians Paul highlights the importance of giftedness for engaging in specific work and at the same time he emphasizes the importance of all work for the sake of the community (1 Cor 12).

"While there is very little if anything in the opening chapters of the Bible that suggests how formal worship should occur, [humanity's] worshipful response to God's presence expressed in [humanity's] work is described as a very natural element of human experience."<sup>26</sup> The world of work is not separate from God's world. A distinction between secular and sacred cannot be made. God addresses the nature of work and Christians cannot leave all the decision making regarding work to the experts. When labour and the Word of God are kept separate from one another both business and labour will make wrong decisions.<sup>27</sup>

As seen throughout scripture and much of Church history, Hauerwas aside, work is known to be a blessing that can be misused or abused. For many work was seen to be a method of self identification. In fact, it is not unusual for people to identify their ancestors' vocations by their own last name, eg. Coopers are descended from barrel makers, Maclvors from carpenters, Goldsmiths from goldsmiths, etc.

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<sup>26</sup> Nederhood, "Work in Biblical Perspective," 303.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 307–8.

### **And the labour was separated from the leisure...**

In the mid to late twentieth century, there were examinations of work and the human creature from different perspectives, by different people. Some of these studies of work deserve special attention. Although not specifically related to a Christian understanding of work--they demonstrate ways in which work or labour influence the individual and community life.

In her book *The Human Condition* Hannah Arendt explores a lengthy examination of what she calls *vita activa* comprised of the three activities of labour, work and action. Labour is the activity that meets the biological needs of humanity, such as food and shelter. Work, as defined by Arendt is that activity that can engage a solitary individual but is not required for the continuation of the human species. It is the activity in which arts and crafts are found. Labour provides food, and work provides a table and chairs. Action, Arendt's final form of activity involves engagement between human creatures. Political and social life are derived from and dependent upon the human activity of action. Action is the sole activity between human beings. It is what allows humanity to interact and to be political. "Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live."<sup>28</sup>

Labour provides for survival, work provides for permanence, and action provides for history. These three combine to provide a world and preserve a world for those who are born into the world. In this instance action is most important. All of human action has a state of natality about it because it is a continual offering to a new individual and newcomers have the capacity to begin something new. Because action is the political activity natality is the central

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<sup>28</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7–8.

category of a political thought that is distinct from a metaphysical thought. For Arendt work had a definite sociological component.

She begins her study in the time of the ancient Greeks who were concerned with the *bios politikos*, the realm of human affairs and the *praxis* necessary to maintain it. Neither work nor labour was sufficiently dignified to be considered authentic human living. Political life was the authentic life, based on the Greek word *polis* of a freely formed group association and political organization. The despot's life was not considered free and had no relationship with the *bios politikos*.<sup>29</sup> The distinction between the household and the *polis* was strictly observed. Household allowed for commands and violence rather than persuasion, with the head of the household having uncontested and despotic powers.<sup>30</sup> The *polis* had only equals, while the members of the household were completely unequal. To be free meant that the person was neither subject to command nor the giver of commands. Equality meant "to live among and to have to deal only with one's peers, and it presupposed the existence of 'unequals' who, as a matter of fact, were always the majority of the population in a city state."<sup>31</sup> Therefore equality had nothing to do with the current understanding of justice.

Arendt follows the transition of human thinking regarding the authenticity of the political life through time. In the medieval period of Augustine, political involvement was considered as much of a necessity as labour and work, and therefore it had come to be considered as confining as the other two activities. The *vita contemplativa* or the contemplative life had usurped the political life as the ideal and was sought by those who were able. This thinking was influenced

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 32–3.

by some of the Greek philosophers. Plato promoted the superior insight of the philosopher with the sole purpose of making the philosopher's way of life possible. Aristotle too believed that freedom from political business was as important as the freedom from labouring for the necessities. The unique development in the medieval world was a belief that the contemplative life that had previously belonged only to a select few came to be considered the right of all.<sup>32</sup> The reason given for elevating contemplation over labour, work and action was the existence of a belief that nothing made by humanity could be equal in beauty and truth to the *kosmos*. The beauty of *kosmos* is only visible when everything, including human movement, is at rest.<sup>33</sup>

The medieval period had its own separation between the sacred and the secular: "The medieval tension between the darkness of everyday life and the grandiose splendour attending everything sacred, corresponds in many respects to the rise from the private to the public in antiquity."<sup>34</sup> It was with some difficulty that the church had assumed the public role of the *polis*; however the secular world of the feudal system fully subsumed the role of the household. This influenced the guilds and the companies that were formed.<sup>35</sup> It is not surprising that the secular medieval world did not consider the gap between the shelter of the household and the cruel exposure in the *polis* and the virtue of courage in its political thoughts.

Arendt also emphasizes the linguistic changes regarding humanity's interaction and the influence of these changes on the human understanding of work. Latin use of the word *societas* was different from the Greek word *polis*.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 34–5.

*Societas* was an aligned group of individuals who had been constituted with one purpose. Originally the word implied organizing a “takeover” to rule others or to commit a crime. Later the concept *soceitas generis humani* evolved to mean “social” and developed a non-specific meaning of a “fundamental human condition”.<sup>36</sup>

According to Aristotle anyone outside of the *polis* was deprived the faculty of speech and the way of life in which only speech made sense.<sup>37</sup> Aristotle and Plato had both considered the need for social companionship a limitation that resulted from a biological need that is the same for humans and animals. Social companionship was not to be equated with the seriousness of the *polis*. The social sphere that was neither truly private nor truly public was a new phenomenon that grew out of the nation-state. The modern division between the public and the private spheres is blurred because the political communities came to be seen as if they were a family to be cared for by a nation with an administration of housekeeping.<sup>38</sup>

The language used to describe the social sphere has made another transition from the world of political science to the word of economic science, or what has come to be known as “social economy”. This indicates that housekeeping is no longer a separate private practice but becomes a “collective housekeeping”. The collection of families in an economic structure is called society. The social concept had become common, and had expanded during the twentieth century to the point that we “...find it difficult to realize that according to ancient thought on these matters, the very term ‘political economy’ would have been a contradiction in terms: whatever was ‘economic’ related to the life of the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 28–9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 24, 27–8.

individual and the survival of the species, was a non-political, household affair by definition.”<sup>39</sup>

Arendt maintains that in the modern world the social and the political are indistinct. They have merged into one world. The political world is a function of a society whose economic activities have risen to the public sphere and have become a collective concern.<sup>40</sup> In recent history labour has been glorified and the whole of society is now glorified. Labour, work and action have come to be almost synonymous. Self-identification is derived from one’s work/occupation/job. To find freedom from labour will therefore be self defeating. Modern society no longer knows those higher activities of the ancient Greeks. All people are now considered equal because of labour. Even heads of state consider what they are doing as a job for the good of society. There are only a few individuals who think of what they do as work rather than making a living. “Within this society, which is egalitarian because this is labor’s way of making men live together, there is no class left, nor aristocracy of either a political or spiritual nature from which a restoration of the other capacities of man could start anew.”<sup>41</sup>

Arendt maintains that three events initiated the transition from the medieval to the modern age: the European arrival in the Americas and exploring the whole earth; the Reformation, during which possessions that were both ecclesiastic and monastic were expropriated and then distributed to royal favourites, becoming the introduction of both individual and accumulated social wealth; and the invention of the telescope which began humanity’s examination of the world from the perspective of the universe. All three events were both

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 28–9.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 4–5.

initiated and developed by individuals who were not revolutionaries but were, in fact, firmly rooted in tradition.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout European languages there are two etymologically different words, based on ancient Greek thought, for what the modern western world thinks of as the same activity. Labour is the activity of John Locke's labouring body or the Greek's slave or tame animal. Work includes Locke's working hands and the Greek's craftsman.

### **Sweat of the brow...**

A different perspective on the history of work is presented by Richard Sennett in *The Corrosion of Character* and it opens with a very provocative statement. "The conditions of time in the new capitalism have created a conflict between character and experience, the experience of disjointed time threatening the ability of people to form their characters into sustained narratives."<sup>43</sup> His historical examination of work maintains that it is the restructuring, or perhaps 'destructuring', of the work-place that inhibits this personal narrative from being developed.

Sennett's portrayal of the history of work from ancient Greece to what he acknowledges is called the post-modern time, includes a more detailed account of Denis Diderot's and Adam Smith's opposing opinions on routine work than does Arendt. He pursues this history through to Ford, General motors and the effect of routinized front line work and patriarchal systems on workers and society. He is in accord with *Laborem Exercens* in his explanation of the rise of the union movement as a way to make this routine work to the worker's benefit. He piques the reader's interest by diverging from the Pope's statements about

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 248–9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 31.

unions and saying that the struggle to overcome routine has been won and that is why the current difficulties exist. In today's world we defeat routine by advocating flexibility, especially flexibility of time and institutions. In our attempts to make a more flexible workplace, however, we focus on the forces that bend people, and not on the people.<sup>44</sup> There is uncertainty and disconnection because of the constant flexibility of time, a separation of workers' time and employers' time, flexibility of locations and colleagues. And for the first time the uncertainty has no specific historic cause, but is a part of everyday corporate society.<sup>45</sup>

There is constant change for the sake of change and short-term gain in various markets. This is manifest in the team approach to specific projects. There is no longer sufficient time for workers to develop long term associations that permit loyalty and commitment to develop, yet at the same time there is a focus on team friendliness and process. This lack of opportunity to develop relationships and commitment, as well as the need to be focused on the team process in doing the project, and unconcerned with consequences surrounding the project, leads to an ethical conflict for many individuals. This is particularly evident in their intimate relationships. There is a change in the personal character of the worker, which causes the person to become dysfunctional and has its greatest effect on the family life.<sup>46</sup> Although Sennett focuses on the family relationship's damage, it is hard not to wonder about other non-work related relationships, including service clubs and faith communities. Due to the flexibility of the modern workplace, and the transience of the worker, would these latter organizations be approached by individuals in the same non-committal manner

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (London, England: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 1998), 46.

<sup>45</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

<sup>46</sup> Sennett, *Corrosion of Character*, 24.

as the workplace, or would there be an ethical conflict, as there is with the family?

Loyalty and experience are no longer valued, and are both directly and indirectly maligned as people with experience are referred to as too old.<sup>47</sup>

According to Sennett there are several reasons for this emphasis on youth. It is easier to keep wages low; youth is seen as more flexible where as age is seen as more rigid. It is then possible for those with power to place older people in a group of candidates to be dismissed when there is corporate re-engineering.<sup>48</sup>

Worker uncertainty is compounded in the “we’re all equal members” team approach with a concentration of power that is decentralized and allows the powerful to refrain from assuming responsibility for failure. This is particularly true when the project does not achieve its goal or there is a corporate downsizing. The manager, who has become a team leader, can deny any responsibility for the lack of achievement or the lay-off/termination decisions.<sup>49</sup>

“Of course, those who have the power to avoid responsibility also have the means to repress dissent. They do so in repressing the power of ‘voice’ as Albert Hirschmann calls it, among older workers, transmuting the voice of experience into a negative sign of aging, of being too involved in the way things have always been done before... To imagine communities willing to confront the new capitalism, we have also to consider strength of character.”<sup>50</sup>

Sennett also looks at the opposition of traditional Anglo-American and European social economic models arising from different definitions of “the common good.” Europe has high unemployment with little discrepancy in material acquisition and the U.K. and U.S. have low unemployment with a large gap in material acquisition. However, it appears that the two systems are

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 144.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 111.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 144.

becoming more similar.<sup>51</sup> (This is particularly evident in the recent debt crisis in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland and the proposed credit solution.) Throughout history it is shown that all systems of work, both routine and flexible, the maximum benefits are realized by the privileged while those without power or privilege find they do not receive these benefits. What is evident in the modern flexible system is the divide between the privileged and the non-privileged segments is growing. While the numbers of privileged individuals is decreasing, the number of the non-privileged is increasing.

Modern workers also feel demeaned. There is very little personal satisfaction or self-esteem to be found in the modern flexible working place. Nor do workers form any attachment for their work, or their employer.<sup>52</sup> If the work being done is automated then it is quite likely that workers do not even understand the work they are doing. Despite the appearance of classlessness in the flexible workplace this technical order promotes the new type of class distinction--the distinction between the superficial and the deep. The superficial are those whose positions are important but the individuals filling the positions are unimportant because the work can be done by almost anyone, and is so unfulfilling and rarely requires any knowledge about the final outcome. The worker cannot self-identify with the work, and as a result identity confusion continues into other areas of the workers' groupings. "And the new cooperative ethos of teamwork sets in place as masters those 'facilitators' and 'process managers' who dodge truthful engagement with their servants."<sup>53</sup> Neither modern corporations nor employers have maintained any remnants of the feudal sense of loyalty or concern for their workers. An example is a flexible arrangement that

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 54–5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 70–1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 117.

benefits the corporation but is offered to a worker as a benefit--and justifying lower wages! It had been the norm for people to identify themselves by their profession, or employment--an outgrowth of the historic identification of people by their craft, guild or lord.

In Sennett's examination of both a bakery and an ad agency in the modern world the companies do not focus on quality of product, or anything else tangible to which a worker can point and take some pride. Neither is there a sense of responsibility for failure--burned bread is thrown out and failed contracts are ignored. Looking back is not allowed. The importance of learning from mistakes, or recognizing and accepting failure is further explored in the study of the reformation of IBM and the realization that failure is expanding into the middle class.<sup>54</sup> The "winner take all" and the shrinking numbers of winners (or elite) results in redundancy for a significant number of educated people. (There is a surplus of PhD holders for the academic system in North America.) The traditional middle-class individual is suddenly being struck with the company re-engineerings and downsizings that were previously known only to front line workers.

At the same time, the impersonal nature of the modern corporation that is fixed solely on "the bottom line" has removed many racial barriers, and made for a work environment that is physically less stressful. These positive outcomes must be recognized and there is no desire to undo them.

A key element pursued by Sennett is risk. In the flexible regime, the difficulties crystallize in a particular act--the act of risk-taking.<sup>55</sup> "In risk taking people focus on loss... ...people are much more sensitive to negative than to positive stimuli... There are a few things that would make you feel better but the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 75.

numbers of things that would make you feel worse is unbounded.”<sup>56</sup> Being at risk is more depressing than promising. Risk and flexibility go well together. Constantly living in a state of vulnerability is what the proponents of daily risk-taking in the flexible corporation are proposing. This leads to constant worry. In this constant risk-taking environment individuals are always starting over. In the modern world of risk refusing to change or move is seen as failure. Opting for stability is seen as weakness, even in situations where that stability is effective to the final outcome. Where one moves is less important than the move itself. “To stay put is to be left out.”<sup>57</sup> Risk taking is no longer a single or occasional act of character development, but rather it has become a daily expectation. It often requires decision making with insufficient information and insufficient structure, with workers of all types being asked to live with the possibility of loss. This constant anxiety eats away at character, and has an impact on life and relationships outside the workplace.

One of the last areas that Sennett explores is that of the human requirement to be needed. In the ever changing workplace, time changes, team mates change, and the team leader is to be considered an equal. (Although there is evidence that the team behaves differently depending on the leader’s presence and absence.) There is no affirmation from an authority figure to promote a worker’s sense of worth or of being needed. Can a worker be concerned about the work performance if there is never any indication of work that is well done? The workers take the risks and they find the responsibility rests on their shoulders alone when there is a mishap. Although they are responsible after a

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 82.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 82–7.

mishap, while they are working they do not feel their contribution is important or needed.<sup>58</sup>

What is of particular interest is that despite the recent economic turn of events (2008), the approach to work that encourages short-term, flexible, immediate gratification without consideration of long-term implications is still being utilized and promoted. The middle class is still disappearing, and many of the super-rich individuals are super-richer. Could this be the result of a transference of the difficulty in developing a life narrative for the individual worker to a difficulty in developing a narrative also for communities and societies in which these workers reside?

Life narrative is the story of inner development unfolding. Narrative offers healing through structure. It is developed within a community. The workplace is no longer a guaranteed place of community, and people are looking for community in other places.<sup>59</sup> However, given the demands of workplace behaviours and attitudes, how do these people go about building community? Are they able to participate in honest and open relationship that is inclusive of criticism and conflict? Is it a facade of loyalty at all costs, right or wrong? Do they make a change when commitment becomes too difficult? What is the role of the church in this modern need for community relationship? How does the church guide individuals expected to live by the modern capitalist credo of short-term goals without commitment?

In the modern world the gift of vocation espoused by Luther has all but disappeared and each human now chooses a career. In this way the burden which is placed on our shoulders is that of self-invention. Luther's affirmation of what is ordinary has now become an expectation of the extraordinary. There is

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 68, 109, 141–2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 138.

no sense of stability in vocation. Change has become the status quo. The modern world has become one of ever changing jobs that are not careers in the traditional sense. Humanity is expected to be in a constant state of reinvention to fit into today's society. This demonstrates society's obsession with novelty.<sup>60</sup>

The stability of the workplace has disappeared. For a work ethic to flourish institutions need to be sufficiently stable for workers to practice delayed gratification. When institutions change, and change rapidly, it becomes absurd to think in terms of delayed gratification. The employer's main concern is to make as much as possible in as short a time as possible and then move on.<sup>61</sup>

Thus there is a transformation of the understanding of labour and work from something that is considered a gift to something that is either exalted or becomes an activity that is only for the purpose of providing an outcome with immediate results. How does this transformation affect a sense of work as self-identification? How does it affect the sense of vocation? Particularly, how does it affect vocation within the church?

How do these histories influence work within the United Church of Canada? Ministers, musicians, and secretaries all engage in labour, work and activity. The church also promotes the team concept within the congregation that confuses the lines of authority and responsibility. (The clergy trained in liturgy must adhere to the desires of a Worship Committee of caring but untrained people.) Is the flexibility and constant desire for change having an effect on member relationships within the congregation? Is commitment to the Divine becoming less important than the societal needs of the people? Is the inability of the member to self-identify worthiness resulting in attempts at forging a worthy

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<sup>60</sup> Allen Jorgenson, "Crux et Vocatio," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 3 (August 2009): 293.

<sup>61</sup> Sennett, *Corrosion of Character*, 99.

identity within the congregation? Is the recent trend for clergy to serve in pastoral relationships for longer periods of time than in days gone by have any differing impact on the relationship of clergy with members?

## CHAPTER 2 WHO'S CALLING?

### **I heard you call—here I am!**

Creator and creation have been entwined from the beginning. Humans and the Divine have invited one another into relationships of different types in different ways, and called upon one another at different times. From the beginning the relationship has highlighted trust and expectation, hope and disappointment, and the realization of impossibilities becoming possible when invitation and call are offered and accepted.

Within the Hebrew scriptures the Divine invitation is presented in many ways. It is that of a parent trying to ensure safe boundaries are respected and companionship is enjoyed. (Genesis 2:19-24) Sometimes it is a playful coaxing from cowardice into courage (Judges 6-7), and sometimes it is a blatant request, instruction or command. (Genesis 22, Exodus 3, Jonah 1, et al.). Frequently the call is full of promise as with Abram and Sarai, and often it requires that the called be prepared to accept danger, as with Moses and Aaron. The Divine call is one that cannot be avoided, no matter how one might try, and no amount of whining or complaining will relieve one of the responsibility that the call necessitates (Jonah). In all cases it demands faith and trust in the Divine. The human call upon the Divine frequently results from need (Exodus 2:23) or anger (Job 7:20-21), or despair (Psalm 42) or gratitude (Exodus 15:20-1, Judith 16:1-17).

It was not unusual for God to call more than one person to fulfill a promise--Abram and Sarai (Genesis 17:15-21), to fulfill a task,--Moses and Aaron (Exodus 4:14-28), or to celebrate God's salvific action--Moses, Aaron and Miriam (Exodus 15:20). There was a distinction to the calls that were issued. Individuals

were often called to different functions. Aaron was called to speak to the enslaved Israelites and Pharaoh (Exodus 4) and he and his descendants were called to fulfill the functions of the temple, its worship and sacrifice, as well as oversight of the political/legal processes (Exodus 28-40). Concurrently, Moses was the one to have the word of God revealed to him (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers) and he delivered the word to the people and was knowledgeable about the signs to demonstrate God's will (Exodus 7:9). The role of priest and prophet appear to be distinct and successive prophets were called to reveal the meaning of God's word, to inform the people as to how they have strayed from God's aspiration, the consequences of their actions--a type of discipline, instruction for reparation and a promise for reconciliation. (1 Samuel 12) It was demanding work and often placed the prophet at odds with God when pleading for the people (Genesis 18:23-33) or with the people when speaking about God's revelation (Jeremiah 37:13-38:6, et al.) At the same time it was often the prophet to whom the people would turn when they became aware that their community/communal behaviour had become inappropriate for those who are in a relationship with the great "I AM" (1 Samuel 12:19).

Call appears to be central to the maintenance of the Divine-human relationship. There is the relationship of a people called by God which is enhanced and safeguarded by the intimacy of another relationship with those who will represent the people in acts of offering and sacrifice, as well as the intimate calling of those who will represent God to the people with words of explanation and correction. At this time the call of both priest and prophet was the call of God, and of God alone. The priest's position was hereditary however, it did have parameters for qualification and fulfillment, and it was a position that was considered distinct from the laity. (Leviticus 22:12) By contrast, the prophet could emerge from anywhere, including from the priestly caste--such as Samuel,

or not--such as Jeremiah. The community frequently shunned the selection of prophet, especially when the message the prophet proclaimed was not agreeable to the ears of the community members. (Jeremiah 37ff.) Although there was occasional overlap between priest and prophet, the division of responsibility continued until the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

The separation of the priesthood in Roman occupied Palestine would have been the norm for the world in which Jesus was raised, lived and fulfilled his ministry. However, unlike the Aaronic priesthood called by God, the Roman prefect selected the chief priest from the appointed families. The operation of the temple was parallel, but subject to the operation of the Roman political structure. It had become kinship based with an elite that kept the poor indebted through temple taxes and tithes.<sup>62</sup> There was a specified order and value to the sacrifices, and the temple sacrifices that were the most expensive were also the most important. The communal sacrifices which could be done in homes were the least important.<sup>63</sup> Although a formal temple priesthood continued, the established tradition of Aaronite priesthood was no more. Concurrent with this was the continued recognition of the prophet (Matthew 14:5).

In the New Testament it is quite clear that Jesus is a lay person. Most of his metaphors are secular rather than from the world of the Jewish priest, and he also desacralizes the Jewish cultic practices in much of his teaching. (Mark 1:44 and parallels.) However, there are two ironies that arise in the letters of Paul and others. First: 'Priest' appears in the letters of Paul and the later New Testament writings as a recurrent metaphor for Christ's sacrificial death and its basic

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<sup>62</sup> K.C. Hanson and Douglas E Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 147–48.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 150–2.

significance for the community of faith, rather than as a title for an official role in the church. Only in Romans 15.1 does Paul approach the designation of himself as a priest when he explicitly uses the image of priestly role and sacrifice in describing his ministry 'of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles' as 'priestly service of the gospel of God.' Yet the term he uses here for his role as minister, *leiturgos* is clearly akin to our word 'liturgy' and implies a mode of sacramental service. Similarly he uses the verb *hierourgonta* with reference to his ministry as 'priestly service of the gospel of God' and describes his success in converting Gentiles to faith in Christ as a 'sacrificial offering' that he is presenting to God. The terms are largely metaphorical, but they draw on the Jewish tradition of the priests as the divine agents through whom ritual renewal of God's people is accomplished.<sup>64</sup>

Second: The word lay or laity does not appear in the epistles.<sup>65</sup> The Jewish meaning of priest, influenced by the Pauline understanding of priest, underwent a transformation in the infant Christian community recorded in scripture. The priestly element and the prophetic element are seen to be within the community as a whole.<sup>66</sup> The whole community is the "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9) similar to Old Testament language found in Exodus 19:6. Yet even in the initial selection of a replacement for Judas, humans are becoming involved in the selection process. Historically it has been portrayed that the apostles felt the choice had to be left to God, but they did develop criteria and created a short list and presented the two names to the Divine so that one could be chosen. (Acts 1:23-5) Would there have been a willingness on the part of the apostles

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<sup>64</sup> Anthony J. Blasi, "Early Christian Culture as Interaction," in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (Walnut Creek, California: Altamira Press, 2002), 354.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Presbyter to Priest: Ministry in the Early Church," *Worship* 41, no. 7 (August-September 1967): 429.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 430.

selected by Jesus to accept someone other than the two that they offered to God?

### **And you shall lay your hand...**

It appears that as the church grew and numbers increased, needs enlarged and socio-economic conditions changed. As a result, there was a necessity for a greater degree of structure for the performance of those functions that at one time were exclusively those of priest and prophet. It is interesting to note the vocabulary used to describe the offices to perform these functions. *Diakonos* meaning servant, *episkopos* meaning guardian, or *douleou* meaning slave, would lead the reader to believe that these are very humble positions, ones that would not be chosen, but would be thrust upon the person responsible. *Episkopos* can be translated as overseer, but even this would not be considered a position to be sought as there would be great responsibility, including the assurance of equitable distribution of goods and money, without recognition or earthly compensation. The community was so concerned about the importance of the qualifications of the people who are to fulfill these roles that great detail about the requirements is given. (1 Timothy 3:2-7, 8-13, Titus 1:7-9) Many of those selected by God in earlier days might not meet the qualifications set out in the letters of Paul and others. The assessment of the people (prayerfully considered) gained in importance for the recognition of those who had been called to service.

It is difficult to pinpoint when the concept of servant began to transform into that of leader. The first time the word priest is used for a Christian minister is by Polycrates of Ephesus at the end of the second century.<sup>67</sup> “By the time of

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 431.

Hippolytus the terms *kleros*, *klerikos* are already in common usage and the difference between deacons and presbyters on the basis of priestly ordination is established (the term *ordinatio* first occurs in Tertullian). By the early fourth century the process of assimilation is complete in all basic essentials, at least as far as the Roman Church is concerned: the distinction between *clerus* (*ordo*) and *laici* (*plebs*), the use of the term *laicus* (layman) in the restrictive and negative sense (as in fact it is defined in canon law), and the presbyter as sacrificing priest.”<sup>68</sup> The offices of pastor, teacher, priest, prophet and evangelizer remained distinct. (Ephesians 4:11) The variety of gifts articulated by Paul (1 Cor-inthians 12) were distributed among various members of the community. Individuals were not considered to be gifted in all areas.<sup>69</sup>

At some time a change began to occur and too often the understanding was no longer seen to be fulfilling an office but, holding a position. The position’s entitlement and superiority entered into what was intended as a vocation. The clergy began to be less concerned about serving the people than about the people serving the church, with the consequential effect of serving the clergy. The institutional church became more important than either the clergy serving it, or the children of God within it. It could be, and was, argued that the institution became more important than the Divine.

During the Council of Elvira (306) the church first began to discuss the possibility of clergy celibacy and by the Nicean Council (325) clergy celibacy was

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Ibid. 431–2.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 431–2.

encouraged in order to maintain church property.<sup>70</sup> However, this did not mean that individual clergy refrained from sexual activity.

In the eyes of the Church, for a priest to marry was a worse crime than to keep a mistress, and to keep a mistress was worse than to engage in random fornication--a judgment which completely reverses secular conceptions of morality, which attach importance to the quality and durability of personal relationships....The simple clergy found it difficult to accept this scale of values, and frequently settled down to permanent relationships....For this they were periodically expelled from their livings and the women driven out or seized by the Church."<sup>71</sup>

Vocation seemed to be determined more by consanguinity than by call.<sup>72</sup>

### **Go where I send you...**

Throughout the medieval period selfish and political behaviours on the part of clergy and the church hierarchy seemed to increase. There were many who were concerned about these behaviours and the empire building in which many clerics were engaged. Luther's passion for Christ caused him to explore his concerns about what was happening in the church. He, and colleagues such as Philipp Melanchthon, articulated his increasing anxiety in his writing and eventually, with the support of his abbot, in scholarly dialogue and disputation--in order to persuade others to engage in a rehabilitation of the church's clerical offices.

If the bishops wanted to be true bishops and to attend to the church and the gospel, then a person might "for the sake of love and unity but not out of [323.1] necessity" give them leave to ordain and confirm us and our preachers, provided all the pretence and fraud of unchristian ceremony and pomp were set aside. [324.1] However, they are not now and do not want to be true bishops.

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<sup>70</sup> William E. Phipps, *Clerical Celibacy: The Heritage* (New York, New York: Continuum, 2004), 120.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 144.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 129.

Rather, they are political lords and princes who do not want to preach, teach, baptize, commune, or perform any proper work or office of the church. In addition, they persecute and condemn those who do take up a call to such an office. Despite this, the church must not remain without servants on their account. [324.2]<sup>73</sup>

Luther wished to return the offices of clergy to what evidence indicated they had been in the early church. In many of his writings the early church is referenced on subjects pertaining to clergy. “For at the time of St. Augustine monastic vocations were voluntary. Later, when proper discipline and teaching became corrupted, monastic vows were contrived. With them, as in a prison of their own devising, people wanted to restore discipline.”<sup>74</sup> He was critical of the way in which monastic vows had become more important than the sacrament of baptism and the monastic life was considered more holy and worthy of redemption than the life of the ordinary person of faith.<sup>75</sup> His writing indicates that he disagrees with the prevalent view of the church that there is a Divine preference for the monastic, and upholds the view that God’s concern and grace is available to all, and that all vocations, whether ordered or lay are of value to God, in fact, the term vocation, itself, can be applied to all. “There are so many ungodly notions and errors attached to monastic vows: that they justify and make righteous before God; that they must be Christian perfection; that through them a person may keep both the counsels of the gospel and the commandments; that they contain works of supererogation, [90.62] beyond what is owed to God.

Since, then, all of this is false, useless, and humanly contrived, monastic vows are null and void.”<sup>76</sup> and,

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<sup>73</sup> Martin Luther, “The Smalcald Articles,” in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* Robert Kolb, and Timothy J. (eds.) Wengert,(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 323–4.

<sup>74</sup> Philipp Melanchthon, “Apology of the Augsburg Confession,” in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* Robert Kolb, and Timothy J. (eds.) Wengert,(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 80.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 82.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 90.

Once this appearance of wisdom and righteousness has deceived people, then all sorts of troubles follow. The gospel concerning the righteousness of faith in Christ is obscured, and vain confidence in such works replaces it. Then, the commandments of God are obscured; for when these works arrogate to themselves the title of a perfect and spiritual life, they become far preferable to the works that God commands, like those that deal with the works of one's vocation, the administration of the state, the management of a household, [227.26] married life, and the raising of children.<sup>77</sup>

In fact, he goes further than merely to disagree with a preferential righteousness for clerics, he holds that such a position is harmful to the well being and souls of the laity.

“When compared to such ceremonies, these things are judged to be profane, with the result that many carry them out with certain doubts of conscience. For it is a matter of record that many have given up their administrative positions in the government and abandoned their marriages in order to embrace these “better and holier observances.”<sup>78</sup>

Luther maintains that it is wrong to hold vows as being worthy of offering forgiveness of sins and that this is a type of idolatry of human tradition, for the human tradition has become more important than the benefit of Christ and thereby has destroyed the doctrine of faith.<sup>79</sup> He believed that those called to secular vocations were no less likely to find redemption than those in monastic orders.<sup>80</sup>

By the time Luther accepted his monastic vows the clergy had achieved a status of power in the civil and civic life that was commensurate with their standing in the ecclesial hierarchy. The church participated, some would say interfered, with contracts, in judicial issues (both in establishment of laws and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 227.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 227.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 227.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 82–3, 227.

legal outcomes) and government concerns. This was not a part of the clerical vocation or call as Luther understood scriptural teachings. Although both the earthly and the spiritual realms are to be respected, honoured and recognized as a gift from God, it is inappropriate to mingle them, for they are distinct and are intended to remain so.<sup>81</sup> This does not mean that those who lead in the earthly realm cannot be called by God to serve the church or vice versa, however, the two roles, the two offices are, in fact, quite distinct and should remain so.<sup>82</sup>

So, when asking about the jurisdiction of bishops, one must distinguish political rule from the church's jurisdiction. Consequently, according to the gospel, or, as they say, by divine right, this jurisdiction belongs to the bishops as bishops (that is, to those to whom the ministry of Word and sacraments has been committed): to forgive sins, to reject teaching that opposes the gospel, and to exclude from the communion of the church the ungodly whose ungodliness is known--doing all this not with human power but by the Word. In this regard, churches are bound by divine right to be obedient to the bishops, according to the saying [Luke 10:16], "Whoever listens to you listens to me."<sup>83</sup>

Over the centuries the clergy had developed into a vocation of superiority and of sacrifice. One of the main functions of the office was to offer sacrifice for the sins of the laity, similar to that of the ancient Israelite priests. They represented Christ and, in this capacity would intercede for others. This core function of clergy vocation was re-examined and eschewed by Luther and his colleagues. They espoused that Christ was the ultimate sacrifice, therefore the ultimate intercessor, and as such, the sacrificial role of clergy was both unnecessary and misleading. The core function of the vocation for Luther is to teach and preach the Word and to offer the sacraments. There is no effective ex

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 95.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 95.

*opere operato* to be performed by the rite of ordination, teaching the Word is essential since ministry is of the Spirit, and not of humanity.<sup>84</sup> Since the difference between clergy and laity is of vocation and not ranking there is no need for intercession by clergy on behalf of laity.<sup>85</sup> In short, Luther believed in the clerical vocation that is a response to a call by God, that is educated and educating, that pastors the people.

Concurrent with Luther's examination and analysis of clergy, call, function, vocation and place in society John Calvin was examining many of these same issues. Although often juxtaposed as being divergent there are often points of convergence of thought with these two reformers.

Calvin too, believed in the importance of the integrity of the call of the individual. However, his emphasis pertained more to the manner of the call, and the place of the clergy within the church structure and governance. He also clearly defined the separation of church and state, maintaining that a person who was serving the office of pastor could not serve the officer of magistrate or government official. Calvin believed that many offices were filled by people who were responding to a divine call and have a divine commission, including that of magistrates. "...they are invested with divine authority and, in fact, represent the person of God, as whose substitutes they in a manner act."<sup>86</sup> Also the powers of just government is given from God when one understands Paul correctly (Romans 13:1,3). "Wherefore no man can doubt that civil authority is in the sight of God, not only sacred and lawful, but the most sacred and by far the most

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 220, 268, 272.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 246.

<sup>86</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Accordance Electronic, Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), n.p., epub ebook.

honourable, of all stations in mortal life.<sup>87</sup> The secular and the clerical offices were equally called and gifted by God but were separate.

Now, the whole jurisdiction of the Church relates to discipline, of which we are shortly to treat. For as no city or village can exist without a magistrate and government, so the Church of God as I have already taught, but am again obliged to repeat, needs a kind of spiritual government. This is altogether distinct from civil government, and is so far from impeding or impairing it, that it rather does much to aid and promote it. Therefore, this power of jurisdiction is, in one word, nothing but the order provided for the preservation of spiritual polity. To this end, there were established in the Church from the first tribunals which might take cognisance of morals, animadvert on vices, and exercise the office of the keys.<sup>88</sup>

His understanding went beyond that of the separation of powers of church and state, clergy and magistrate. Calvin adheres to the belief in the “Divine Right of Kings” as part of his understanding of call. “But Scripture, to obviate these unjust judgements, affirms expressly that it is by divine wisdom that ‘kings reign,’ and gives special command ‘to honour the king,’ (1Peter 2:17)”<sup>89</sup>

As there were unique types of giftedness to work in either the sacred or the secular world, there were unique types of giftedness to fulfill the specific functions within the church, and these two were recognized through call and examination. Based on his understanding of Paul only those of sound doctrine and holy lives are to be considered to be elected as bishops. This should also hold true for elders and deacons. It is important to ensure that these people are suited and equal to the burden that is imposed upon them to fulfill the office. It is important to pray for both wisdom and discernment in selecting these people. Bishops should be called and designated by humans as it is supported by

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. (4.20.4).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. (4.11.1).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. (4.20.7).

Scripture. Ministers should also to be humanly appointed.<sup>90</sup> His explanation of the various office functions is very detailed. “For from the order of presbyters, part were selected as pastors and teachers, while to the remainder was committed the censure of manners and discipline. To the deacons belonged the care of the poor and the dispensing of alms.”<sup>91</sup> There are two classes of deacons. There are those that administer the funds of the poor and those who physically serve and tend to the needs of the poor. This latter position is the only public office that women could attain.<sup>92</sup> “Next come Pastors and Teachers, with whom the Church never can dispense, and between whom, I think, there is this difference, that teachers preside not over discipline, or the administration of the sacraments, or admonitions, or exhortations, but the interpretation of Scripture only, in order that pure and sound doctrine may be maintained among believers. But all these are embraced in the pastoral office.”<sup>93</sup>

The nature and response to the call was discussed in great depth by Calvin. There is a formal call that relates to the public face and governance of the church and a secret call before God that each minister experiences but that the church does not witness. The call is not a personal motivation resulting from ambition or avarice, nor any selfish feeling. It results from “a sincere fear of God and desire to edify the Church.”<sup>94</sup> It is possible for the church to call someone that has a bad conscious and whose wickedness is not evident. “It is usual also

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. (4.3.12), (4.3.14)

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. (4.4.1).

<sup>92</sup> John Calvin, *The Institution of the Christian Religion*, Thomas Norton (London: Arnold Hatfield, 1561), (4.3.9).

<sup>93</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, (4.3.4).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. n.p.

to say, that private men are called to the ministry when they seem fit and apt to discharge it;"<sup>95</sup>

The acceptance, and endorsement of that call by laying on of hands was not to be left to a hierarchical elite within the church, but rather was the necessary action of the entire body. The ordination, itself, is to be performed by the laying on of hands. In the early church there was a discrepancy as to who was allowed to appoint ministers. Originally the whole body of believers had to concur in the selection of a person to be admitted to the clergy. As the preparation for clergy, including an extensive probationary period, and responsibility for unimportant functions increased the consultation with the entire church decreased. Increasingly it became the practice for the bishops and the presbyters to select those who would be fit to be admitted to the clergy.

“Nor is it strange that in this matter the people were not very anxious to maintain their right, for no subdeacon was appointed who had not given a long proof of his conduct in the clerical office, agreeably to the strictness of discipline then in use. After he had approved himself in that degree he was appointed deacon, and thereafter, if he conducted himself faithfully, he attained to the honour of a presbyter. Thus none were promoted whose conduct had not, in truth, been tested for many years under the eye of the people. There were also many canons for punishing their faults, so that the Church, if she did not neglect the remedies, was not burdened with bad presbyters or deacons... ..In fine, all ordinations took place at stated periods of the year, that none might creep in stealthily without the consent of the faithful, or be promoted with too much facility without witnesses.”<sup>96</sup>

Calvin’s understanding of the Scriptural institution for bishops did not promote the hierarchical development of the church of his day. The evolution of archbishops and patriarchs was for the purpose of preserving discipline, although it was rarely practiced. The name hierarchy is not proper and is not

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. (4.3.11).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. (4.3.16).

used by Scripture. There is no provision by the Holy Spirit for the primacy of one person or the domination of one person in regard to Church government. A hierarchy was not the intent of the ancient bishops. In the early church teaching was committed to presbyters. These presbyters would select from among themselves a bishop to avoid the dissension that usually occurs in situations of equality. "The bishop, however, was not so superior in honour and dignity as to have dominion over his colleagues, but as it belongs to a president in an assembly to bring matters before them, collect their opinions, take precedence of others in consulting, advising, exhorting, guide the whole procedure by his authority, and execute what is decreed by common consent, a bishop held the same office in a meeting of presbyters."<sup>97</sup> This practice of ranking was developed by humans rather than divinely prescribed. Bishops became greater than presbyters only from custom. Jerome shows the development of this practice and eventually each city's pastors and teachers comprised a college of presbyters, with an elected bishop. The responsibility of all of these presbyters by virtue of the office was to teach, exhort and correct. The bishop was subject to the meeting of the presbyters and if the geographic area was too large, presbyters called *Chorepiscopi* (rural bishops) could be distributed to act as bishop substitutes in minor manners.<sup>98</sup> Presbyters, including bishops were to employ themselves in the administration of word and sacrament. They were to preach the gospel. The first responsibility of a Bishop is to feed the church by the word of God "or to edify the Church in public and private with sound

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<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* (4.4.4).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* (4.4.2).

doctrine.”<sup>99</sup> Initially bishops and deacons were faithful and so the administration was voluntary. When improper behaviours became bad examples the Canon was developed to correct the evils and divide the revenues for the bishop to offer hospitality, the clergy, the poor (strangers or neighbours), and to the maintenance of the churches and other buildings. The money entrusted to the bishop was not for his own use, but rather so that he might exercise the hospitality demanded by Paul.<sup>100</sup> In the early church when there was a disagreement between two Christians that could have evolved into a lawsuit, a bishop was approached to make a decision that would resolve the difference. This was done because all people could agree on the instruction of the epistles and the integrity of the bishop. The bishops did not wish to fulfill this function, but did so in order to avoid “contentious tribunals.”<sup>101</sup>

Calvin also is quite specific about the need for each pastoral charge to have a minister and each minister to have a pastoral charge and the importance of non-interference in one another’s congregation’s on the part of clergy. It is right to help other churches if asked, or if there has been a disturbance. However, just as Paul instructed to appoint presbyters for each town, so each minister should be with a specific church.

Although assigned to only one church pastors may assist one another, and they may seek out when another which crosses congregational lines. But because that policy is necessary to maintain the peace of the Church each has his proper duty assigned, lest all should become disorderly, run up and down without any certain vocation, flock together promiscuously to one spot, and capriciously leave the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid. (4.4.3).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. (4.4.7).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. (4.11.10).

churches vacant, being more solicitous for their own convenience than for the edification of the Church. This arrangement ought, as far as possible, to be commonly observed, that every one, content with his own limits, may not encroach on another's province.<sup>102</sup>

Discipline is one of the dominant themes in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in section 4. Discipline for the church, for the members of the church and for the clergy is mentioned in a way that is absent from Luther's work.

Discipline, therefore, is a kind of curb to restrain and tame those who war against the doctrine of Christ, or it is a kind of stimulus by which the indifferent are aroused; sometimes, also, it is a kind of fatherly rod, by which those who have made some more grievous lapse are chastised in mercy with the meekness of the spirit of Christ. Since, then, we already see some beginnings of a fearful devastation in the Church from the total want of care and method in managing the people, necessity itself cries aloud that there is need of a remedy. Now the only remedy is this which Christ enjoins, and the pious have always had in use.<sup>103</sup>

However, the unique responsibilities of the clergy pertaining to the exercise of discipline places them in a particularly vulnerable situation. A pastor's office is comprised of two parts: 1) to preach the gospel; 2) to administer the sacraments. Teaching includes public address (sermons) and private admonitions. The pastor "...must train the people to true piety by the doctrine of Christ, administer the sacred mysteries, preserve and exercise right discipline."<sup>104</sup> The pastor is responsible for a congregation in the way the apostle was for the whole world. This discipline can only be done if the office of ministry has the right to summon individuals for private admonishment or rebuke, and when necessary, the right to withhold the Lord's Supper from "those who cannot

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid. (4.3.7).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. (4.12.1).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. n.p.

be admitted without profaning this high ordinance.”<sup>105</sup>The ability to discipline did not belong to any individuals but to the council of elders. This is based on Calvin’s understanding of Biblical discipline, “But the common and usual method of exercising this jurisdiction was by the council of presbyters, of whom, as I have said, there were two classes. Some were for teaching, others were only censors of manners.”<sup>106</sup> By the time that discipline would be proscribed, there would already have been the admonition offered by the clergy, the reporting to the elders would be done by the clergy, the guidance for the discipline would be offered by the clergy, and the clergy would guide the disciplining body, even when not the chair or clerk of the body.

Now discipline depends in a very great measure on the power of the keys and on spiritual jurisdiction... ..But as some, from hatred of discipline, are averse to the very name, for their sake we observe, -- If no society, nay, no house with even a moderate family can be kept in a right state without discipline, much more necessary is it in the Church, whose state ought to be the best ordered possible. Hence as the saving doctrine of Christ is the life of the Church, so discipline is, as it were, its sinews; for to it, it is owing that the members of the body adhere together, each in its own place. Wherefore, all who either wish that discipline were abolished, or who impede the restoration of it, whether they do this of design or through thoughtlessness, certainly aim at the complete devastation of the Church... ..But this must happen if to the preaching of the gospel are not added private admonition, correction, and similar methods of maintaining doctrine, and not allowing it to become lethargic.<sup>107</sup>

Every individual in the church should be working together to remove every defect from the church, so that pastors are not alone in doing this traffic.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid. (4.3.6, 4.11.1, 4.12.1).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. (4.11.6).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. (4.12.1).

Those who do not accuse the bad are also guilty before the Lord, even if not engaging in the acts personally.<sup>108</sup>

Both Luther and Calvin were concerned about the direction and practices of the church in their time. Both wished to reform the clerical life of the church, but they each had a different focus as to the priority for this reformation, to the manner of call and to the function of the clergy and its relationship with the community of the church.

Approximately two centuries later John Wesley, familiar with both Luther and Calvin, introduced different ideas to the role and function of clergy. In some ways he elevated the clergy and in others he did not. Clergy were responsible for “the final destiny” of their parishioners, and he believed that “Soul care is not strictly speaking a job, but a vocation. A job is a paid position of regular employment. A vocation is a calling from on high, transcending the economic, political and domestic spheres.”<sup>109</sup> However, he also did not confine the preaching of the word to clergy. He thought there were many gifted lay preachers, especially when the preaching was of an evangelizing nature. “Methodist lay preachers had learned from Wesley to regard themselves as a special ministry within the broader church. They had been taught to understand themselves as ‘extraordinary’ evangelists within the Church of England.”<sup>110</sup> However, until very late in his career he refused to agree to permit lay preachers to administer the sacraments. Even at the end of his life when he agreed to permit some lay evangelizers to administer the sacraments it was under very

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. (4.12.11).

<sup>109</sup> Thomas C Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, John Wesley’s Teaching (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2013), Chapter 1 n.p.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. Chapter 6 n.p.

limiting circumstances such as the emergence of the American revolution.<sup>111</sup> His major difference from Luther and Calvin was his belief in an itinerant clergy as opposed to the clergy & parish relationship.<sup>112</sup>

Despite these differences between Wesley and his predecessors he believed many of the same things that they did when it pertains to the skills, educational requirements and function of clergy. He concurred with their understanding of a convergence of functions. "After Nicea the two offices of pastor/priest and evangelist/prophet were combined and vested to a single person, yet the distinction of the two offices persisted underneath the surface."<sup>113</sup>

Hence the same person acted as Priest and Prophet, as Pastor and Evangelist. And this gradually spread more and more throughout the whole Christian Church. Yet even at this day, although the same person usually discharges both those offices, yet the office of an Evangelist or Teacher does not imply that of a Pastor, to whom peculiarly belongs the administration of the sacraments;<sup>114</sup>

Like Luther and Calvin he believed in the importance of education of the clergy. A good classical education coupled with natural gifts and some knowledge of the sciences were all necessary for the minister.

No less necessary is a knowledge of the Scriptures, which teach us how to teach others; yea, a knowledge of all the Scriptures; seeing scripture interprets scripture; one part fixing the sense of another. So that, whether it be true or not, that every good textuary is a good Divine, it is certain none can be a good Divine who is not a good textuary....  
But can he do this, in the most effectual manner, without a knowledge of the original tongues...

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Chapters 9, 10 & 11 n.p.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Chapter 10 n.p.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. Chapter 6 n.p.

<sup>114</sup> John Wesley and Charles Wesley, "The Ministerial Office (Sermon May 1789)" (Almonte Springs, FL.: Oak Tree Software, 1997), n.p.

Is not a knowledge of profane history, likewise, of ancient customs, of chronology and geography, though not absolutely necessary, yet highly expedient, for him that would thoroughly understand the Scriptures since the want even of this knowledge is but poorly supplied by reading the comments of other men...

Some knowledge of the sciences also, is, to say the least, equally expedient. Nay, may we not say, that the knowledge of one, (whether art or science,) although now quite unfashionable, is even necessary next, and in order to, the knowledge of the Scripture itself I mean logic.<sup>115</sup>

Education was also a requirement for the lay preachers in his Methodist Societies and he went out of his way to assure individuals that lay preachers were not uneducated. Their education in areas other than the Scripture might be lesser than an ordained clergy person--but when afforded the opportunity to acquire education in other areas they were expected to do so.<sup>116</sup>

Wesley also agreed with both Calvin and Luther about the clergy's need to discipline, to correct gently, "Compassionate discipline is one of the gifts the Spirit has provided for cultivating the vineyard."<sup>117</sup> Late in his life when lamenting the lack of evangelical and social success of the societies he commented there had been too little discipline regarding wealth and generosity."In what part of England (to go no farther) is Christian discipline added to Christian doctrine? Now, whatever doctrine is preached, where there is not discipline, it cannot have its full effect upon the hearers."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> John Wesley, "An Address to the Clergy," in *Wesley Centre Online* (1872), n.p. Date accessed 10, 11, 2013

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* n.p.

<sup>117</sup> Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, Chapter 10 n.p.

<sup>118</sup> John Wesley, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," in *Wesley Centre Online* (1872), n.p. Date accessed: 10,11,2013

## **To word, sacrament, service and pastoral care...**

The United Church of Canada was formed of the descendants of Calvin (Presbyterian and Congregationalist) and Wesley (Methodist), each of whom was influenced by Luther. There are two streams in the order of ministry (ordained and diaconal), as well as designated lay ministry. The ordained clergy is ordained to Word, sacrament and pastoral care. The diaconal ministry is commissioned to education, service and pastoral care. There is no specific function listed for the designated lay ministry position.<sup>119</sup> The ordained minister must have a Bachelor of Divinity, a Masters of Divinity or “another degree in theology approved by the appropriate General Council Working Unit”<sup>120</sup> There are exceptions to this, but they must all be appropriately approved.

The commissioned (diaconal) minister “must obtain a diploma in diaconal ministries from the Centre for Christian Studies; b) obtain a diploma in diaconal ministries from a Native ministry theological centre; or c) obtain another degree in theology approved by the General Council Office.”<sup>121</sup> The education requirements for designated lay ministry personnel listed in the guideline of the United church state:

1. Supervised Ministry Education. Three years of reflection and integration on the practice of ministry with an educational supervisor and Lay Supervision Team in a presbytery appointment at a Conference-approved learning site. The appointment is at least half-time.
2. Learning Circles. Six residential learning circles over three years, each of 10 days’ duration to be held in January and June. The learning circles introduce theory and theology, guide students in reflection on integrating the content with the practice of ministry, and provide a peer setting for deepening formation in lay ministry. A Web-based online community supports preparation for and follow-up after the learning

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<sup>119</sup> *The Manual* (Toronto, Ontario: United Church Publishing House, 2013), H 1.1., 1.2.

<sup>120</sup> *Entering Ministry*, Guideline for Ministry Candidates (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2013), 16, The United Church of Canada.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

circles. The learning circles are required for all students regardless of previous formal learning or experience.

3. Complementary Courses. Complementary courses are chosen to round out the educational program based on the learning needs and particular ministry focus of the student. Three courses, each a semester or equivalent, are taken at theological school, university, or educational centre or other venue, as approved by the Designated Lay Ministry.<sup>122</sup>

With the session, or its equivalent, the minister also exercises discipline of congregational members.<sup>123</sup> It is also the responsibility of the Presbytery to have oversight and be responsible for the discipline of the pastoral charge as a whole, but only in so far as they adhere to the policies and polity of the United Church of Canada.<sup>124</sup> Another function the clergy now has, is the responsibility of being the senior paid staff person in a not-for-profit organization. Although this function is not given by the church, it is one that can be assumed in the secular world.<sup>125</sup>

While addressing the annual general meeting of the Division of Ministry, Personnel and Education of the United Church of Canada in 1989 John Webster Grant made several meaningful observations about the denomination since its inception in 1925. As early as 1949 he learned that many students at Union College Vancouver “felt an uncomfortable lack of certainty about what [the United Church of Canada] stood for...”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *Process for Discernment, Appointment and Recognition as a Designated Lay Minister* (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2010), 5, The United Church of Canada.

<sup>123</sup> *The Manual*, Basis of Union 5.10.1.

<sup>124</sup> *The Manual*, C 3.1.1.

<sup>125</sup> At one time when representing a pastoral charge before the Canada Revenue Agency the Crown Attorney told this writer that she thought of the minister as the CEO of a not-for-profit who is required to advise the Board appropriately.

<sup>126</sup> John Webster Grant, “Roots And Wings,” Annual General Meeting-- Division of Ministry Personnel and Education (Toronto, 1989), 8, Photocopy.

There came about a situation in which... ..there was in many quarters not only an almost complete ignorance of Luther, Calvin, and Aquinas, except when one of them could be quoted in support of some favoured doctrine like the priesthood of all believers, but a complete absence of embarrassment about this ignorance. After all, these people were representative of the elitist and patriarchal culture of the West, and in any case the authentic source of theology was out there in the streets.<sup>127</sup>

Not only was there a change in the education, that no longer included the traditional theological grounding of Christians in centuries past, but also appeared to lessen the study of scripture.<sup>128</sup>

In 1973 Gerald Hobbs published in the *Bulletin* of the United Church Archives an article entitled “The Nature and Exercise of Authority in the United Church of Canada,” in which his main themes were that church courts exercised little oversight of congregations and that congregations paid little attention when they tried to do so. In 1977 Philip Cline submitted to St. Stephen’s College a Th.M. thesis with the very similar title “The Concept and Practice of Authority in the United Church of Canada”. Cline seemed generally content that the United Church seemed to operate on a consensus model that promoted inclusiveness, but he too observed that authority was exercised so seldom that attempts to exercise it were perceived as outside interference.<sup>129</sup>

There was concern that the church courts did not oversee congregations sufficiently.<sup>130</sup> The United Church emphasized inclusiveness--for very good reasons but, “One casualty of this emphasis on inclusiveness, however, was the emphasis on disciplined membership that had at one time been typical of all the

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 9.

uniting churches.”<sup>131</sup> Clergy discipline, however, continues. Between 2006 and 2013 there were 13 clergy placed on the Discontinued Service List (Disciplinary).<sup>132</sup> This is the most extreme outcome of a disciplinary process. The number of disciplinary processes that occurred but were resolved at earlier stages is unavailable.

The change in the focus of education as well as the apparent unequal approach to behaviours and discipline contribute to an environmental uncertainty within some pastoral charges.

“...the fading of a coherent and generally accepted vision of the church and our inability as yet to replace it with another that is equally coherent and as a widely accepted has left us exposed to indecisiveness on the one hand and internal dissension on the other.”<sup>133</sup>

### **...and in your teaching show integrity...**

Over the millennia there have been dramatic changes for those who have been called as clergy. Originally called by God alone to fulfil functions that were separated and delineated as priestly and prophetic. The functions became redefined in the early Christian community. As the church grew and structure was necessary all the ancient priestly and prophetic responsibilities converged into the clergy role. The earliest Christian clergy were seen to be filling an office of service, but as the church grew in numbers and status the clergy filled a position of power. This power included newer hierarchical functions that frequently went beyond church boundaries into the secular realm. Following the reformation there

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>132</sup> Department of Statistics and Information, “Discontinued Service List(Disciplinary) 2006–2013” (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 2013), n.p., Email.

<sup>133</sup> Grant, “Roots,” 12.

were changes in the understanding of clergy who again were seen to be filling offices of service, and clergy functions could not delve into secular leadership or governance.

Throughout this history the importance of education has been highlighted. Initially education in God's word was all important, as was a call from the Divine. The responsibility for interpreting that word, administering the sacrifice or sacraments, admonishing, rebuking and disciplining were the primary functions. During the medieval period educational requirements were increased to include theology and history while the functions were reinforced and rearticulated. The Reformers maintained the educational requirement as necessary for the preparation of clergy.

Currently, in the United Church of Canada, the education for some areas of ministry seems unclear and the rigours of past education seems lessened.<sup>134</sup> Also, the minister who is ordained or commissioned to Word, Sacrament, Education and Pastoral Care finds the responsibility for interpreting God's word appears to be more uncertain as the responsibility for admonishment and rebuking have been minimized or eliminated. These changes can cause a lack of clarity around function. Is the clergy's function simply to be a people pleaser? This uncertainty is similar to the uncertainty of the worker in Chapter 1.

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<sup>134</sup> One example of this lessening of education would be that it is no longer required for a seminarian to study an original Biblical language.

## CHAPTER 3 FROM COVENANT TO CONTRACT

### **I will establish my covenant with you...**

Relationships have many and varied forms and can be both delightful and daunting. Relationship with the Divine can be both and is usually defined as a covenant. Abraham Heschel explains that,

Kind and compassionate in all his ways, the God of Israel chooses to bind His people in a covenant, in a reciprocal relation with Himself of rights and obligations. He will, if their deeds disturb the covenant, plead with them and go to all lengths to restore them to their loyalty. 'He will and can never rest until the defaulter is brought, not to punishment (which is a minor matter) but to a re-entrance into the old personal relations.'<sup>135</sup>

The word "covenant" conveys the permanence, steadfastness, and the mutuality rather than the personal depth of that relationship. Is the covenant a tether, a chain, or is it a living intercourse?<sup>136</sup>

Walter Brueggeman further explores the nature of covenant and covenantal relationship with the Divine. He maintains that God has a covenantal relationship with Israel, with individuals, with nations other than Israel, and also with creation, itself.<sup>137</sup> However, one thing that is significant in each of these relationships is the inequality of the partners. In covenantal relationships with God the Divine being continues to be sovereign and the covenant initiates from the love of the Sovereign being for the covenantal partner(s). "Therefore this relationship, marked by awe and gratitude for inexplicable generosity, brings with

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<sup>135</sup> Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 288.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* 50.

<sup>137</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), Preface ff, n.p.

it the expectations and requirements of the sovereign who initiates it.”<sup>138</sup> Israel as a designated covenant partner is obliged to meet God’s expectations. The great I AM’s covenant partner is defined by obedience.<sup>139</sup> The sovereign God created humanity to be both dependent upon and obedient to God. It is from and because of God that human life is possible meaning that humans are not autonomous with full freedom. “The human person is not, and cannot be sufficient to self, but lives by coming to terms with the will and purpose of the one who gives and commands life.”<sup>140</sup> “The initiatory act of love, rescue, and designation is made by a sovereign who in this act of love does not cease being sovereign.”<sup>141</sup> It’s a relationship that has the expectations of a sovereign and the partnership of the dependent, Israel, is defined by obedience. “The common rubric for this sovereign expectation is “covenant.”<sup>142</sup> God created the world first and then gave humanity law and order. The covenant existed before the Torah.<sup>143</sup>

Brueggeman also maintains that a relationship that recognizes the sovereignty of God is central to the covenantal relationship between the human and the Divine. Humans are dependent upon God and God created humans to be obedient to God.

Even before any concrete content is applied to the commands of YHWH and the obedience of human persons, the category of sovereignty and obedience is a crucial and definitional mark of humans. The One who makes human life possible is holy, glorious, and jealous. Consequently, the force, possibility, and

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2 n.p.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2, 3, 4, 5 n.p.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. Chapter 3 n.p.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. Chapter 3, n.p.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. Chapter 3, n.p.

<sup>143</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 230.

significance of human life are not lodged in an autonomous agent who has been either given full freedom or abandoned, but are lodged in and with the One who makes human life possible by the constant, reliable giving of breath. The human person is not, and cannot be, sufficient to self, but lives by coming to terms with the will and purpose of the One who gives and commands life.<sup>144</sup>

...the central concern of Israel regarding humanity: *namely, that the human person is a person in relation to YHWH*. This *mutuality* invites a “matchup” between the character of YHWH and the character of human personhood; that matchup, however, does not compromise the decisive *incommensurability* between YHWH and human persons. All of that--concerning relationship, mutuality, matchup, and incommensurability--is articulated in the supple notion of *covenant*, for it is affirmed in Gen 9:8-17 that there is an “everlasting covenant” between God and “every living creature” (*nephesh hayyah*) of “all flesh” (*basar*) in the earth. thus human persons are covenant partners with YHWH. This is not the same as YHWH’s covenant with Israel...”<sup>145</sup>

Heschel highlights the unique, demanding and compassionate nature of this covenant relationship. It is one in which God has the ability to consign to exile the people when they break the covenant.

The covenant is an extraordinary act, establishing a reciprocal relation between God and man; it is conceived as a juridical commitment. Pathos, on the other hand, implies a constant concern and involvement; it is conceived as an emotional engagement. From the point of view of the unequivocal covenant-idea, only two forms of relationship between God and people are possible: the maintenance or the dissolution of the covenant. This rigid either-or is replaced by a dynamic multiplicity of forms of relationship implied in pathos.<sup>146</sup>

Scripture also mentions covenant relationships between various peoples and groups of peoples. Jacob and Laban enter into a covenant relationship (Gen 31:44), as did David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3, 20:8,16, 23:18), Abner and

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<sup>144</sup> Brueggemann, *Unsettling*, Chapter 3 n.p.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. Chapter 3, n.p.

<sup>146</sup> Heschel, *The Prophets*, 230.

David (2 Sam 3), Jehoida and his captains (2 Kings 11:4), David and the elders (1 Chronicles 11:3) and the various kings and populaces (2 Chron.). Prov 2:17 also alludes to the marriage covenant. However, in these cases and others, the relationship is also between parties of incommensurate standing--either socioeconomic or geopolitical inequities exist between the partners. These incommensurabilities are clearly articulated and recognized. Within the Gospels and the Epistles, covenantal relationships between individuals and groups do not appear prevalent.

### **The Lord our God made a covenant with us...**

Within certain Christian Traditions, including the United Church of Canada the covenantal relationship is used to describe what exists between the clergy, the congregation and the church institution's representational oversight body. "It shall be the duty of the Presbytery:<sup>147</sup> to provide an Act of Covenant through which a new relationship is established between an individual and a Pastoral Charge, the Presbytery itself, or a United Church related ministry accountable to the Presbytery;"<sup>148</sup>

The presbytery is responsible for providing an act of covenant for each new pastoral relationship between a member of the order of ministry, the presbytery, and a pastoral charge or other presbytery-recognized ministry.

The act of covenant must include any other ministry personnel and staff in the pastoral charge.

The presbytery must ensure that the member of the order of ministry has been settled in the pastoral

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<sup>147</sup> *The Manual*, 6.4.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* 6.4.8.

charge or presbytery-recognized ministry before providing the act of covenant.<sup>149</sup>

For all appointments made by the presbytery for a term of at least six months,

**(a)** the presbytery is responsible for providing an act of covenant for each new pastoral relationship between a ministry personnel, the presbytery, and a pastoral charge or other presbytery-recognized ministry; and

**(b)** the act of covenant must include any other ministry personnel and staff in the pastoral charge.<sup>150</sup>

Unlike the scriptural examples of covenant relationship, the covenantal model in the church does not have a clearly articulated consistent incommensurate relationship between the parties. Power resides with different parties in different scenarios and circumstances. The relationship between the parties is similar to a folk dance in which different moves require different partners (either as individuals or as a group) to take the lead and assume responsibility.

The Presbytery has the power to disallow mission or subsidy funds, it has the power to approve or refuse a call, approve or refuse the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, approve or refuse the disposition of church property, and other similar responsibilities.<sup>151</sup> As with any institutional governance body there is a variety of qualities and skills among presbyteries and its elected members. Congregational laity and clergy together comprise the Presbytery. Their membership in this court of the church is as equals.

The clergy finds itself in positions of power within the intricacies of the day to day life of the congregation. This is especially true in pastoral care situations

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* I.1.2.6.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* I. 1.3.9.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* B of U III.

involving life passages, misfortune, or trauma that leave individuals, families and groups vulnerable and uncertain--the confidential information that clergy have about various parishioners, and the social position of some clergy in some communities imbues clergy with a power that comes with trust . The clergy in the United Church of Canada are ordained and commissioned to various functions, one of which is pastoral care.<sup>152</sup> This particular function is undefined in The Manual. The functions Word and Sacrament are defined.<sup>153</sup> Although the majority of clergy in most faiths appear to exercise power in an appropriate manner, news stories make it clear that there are scenarios and situations in which some clergy abuse power in relationships. The recent publicizing of sexual and financial abuse by a variety of clergy in a variety of faiths demonstrates that similar to many other institutions, as varied as children's hockey teams and seniors personal care workers, there are, on occasion, those who violate the trust that develops from situations of vulnerability and the provision of comfort. There are also those who will intentionally place themselves in these positions of power with the intention of abusing it.

The congregational members are responsible for the financial contributions and disposition within the congregation. They are responsible for the maintenance of the clergy's compensation package and working conditions. They can offer or withhold participation in all aspects of the congregational life--worship, programming, maintenance, outreach. The power of the pastoral charge, especially its indication of support by participating in congregational life, is a significant determinant in the well being of the clergy.<sup>154</sup> The congregation

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 7 ff.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* Basis of Union VIII, XVI.

<sup>154</sup> Paul Fairlie, Gerry Smith, and Scott Fagan, *Study of Isolation in Ministry for the United Church of Canada, A Survey of Ministry Personnel* (Toronto, Canada: Warren Shepell Research Group, 2006), 10, Photocopy.

also has responsibility for pastoral care<sup>155</sup> and, as with the clergy, pastoral care is undefined. This is the only specified function that is shared with the clergy. The Manual does say that the governing body of the congregation is responsible for public worship, but not for the administration of the sacraments or the Word.<sup>156</sup>

This shifting of power between the three parties in what is supposed to be a covenant relationship does not fit the model whereby one party has complete power and acts from generosity, and the other parties have complete trust and act with obedience. This is especially true with the shared function of pastoral care. Within the vows, there is little definition or delineation of responsibility. This lack of delineation can cause ambiguity making effectiveness in ministry, and failure to recognize the authority of presbytery as the only reasons given to the church for the discipline of clergy. Effectiveness in ministry does not need to be defined in greater detail for action to take place.<sup>157</sup>

It is also significant that both the presbytery and the congregation are comprised of numerous individuals, while the clergy is usually one individual. There is power in the group formation that does not exist with the individual. When the group's members belong in a healthy manner they work together and cooperate. They listen to one another. In a healthy group when one member exerts too much power and attempts to control the others there is a sincere effort to resolve the conflict. Those with capacities and abilities that are different are respected and given attention. Power is not imposed but emerges from the body

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<sup>155</sup> *The Manual*, 7.4.1(i).

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* 7.4.1.

<sup>157</sup> Prior to the publication of *The Manual* 2013 failure to maintain the peace in the pastoral charge was also reason for discipline procedures to be implemented.

of members. Each member is seen as a person and not a tool to an end. Each person engages in decision making for the group.<sup>158</sup>

But communities that start out as healthy places of belonging can become too closed, rich, and elitist. What is the hunger for power that groups so readily acquire? Members come together to confirm each other's value. Communities can become like clubs for self-congratulation and flattery, status symbols of mediocrity. Rather than opening up to others.<sup>159</sup>

Such groups close in on themselves. They lead to the death of the spirit.<sup>160</sup> "It is easy to fall into idealizing one's group and all its certitudes. It is easy, in our weakness, to devolve individual moral responsibility to the collective."<sup>161</sup> This can and does happen with congregations.

Closed groups can be found any place. They have their norms, principles, vision. In these groups the members are encouraged not to think for themselves, but to obey for the sake of efficiency and cohesion. The group's purpose is to obtain power to fulfill the mission. "Such groups, which have become a kind of basic unit in our society, insist more on belonging, cohesion, and the unity of the group than on the growth of individual members to inner freedom or service to others. Those who leave are seen as unfaithful; those who question authority, as rebels."<sup>162</sup>

Often this closed group can exist in normal day to day living. It is innocuous and people, even members, are unaware of the necessity to adhere to the group's strictures until an event or a circumstance develops to arouse such behaviour.

...while most of us abhor the more extreme and obvious manifestations of sects, we can be blind to

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<sup>158</sup> Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: House of Anansi Press, 2008), Chapter 2 n.p., Electronic Book.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2 n.p.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2 n.p.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2 n.p.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2 n.p.

the innocuous sects that are a part of our society. Our places of work, for example, can become like sects, where we have to sacrifice our personal consciences in order to keep our jobs, have a good salary, gain a measure of security. We need to be vigilant in any situation where it is necessary to obey blindly. Rigidity, a demand for ideological conformity within the group, is rarely necessary; it is not, I think, the sign of a healthy group. Not only that, but the price that we pay, as a society, in the repression of individual growth and the denigration of individual creativity, is too high.<sup>163</sup>

There are a variety of reasons offered by numerous experts as to why these closed communities where ideology supersedes individuality come to exist. The reason for their existence is beyond the scope of this research. Suffice it to say, they do exist in a variety of ways, national, linguistic, racial, cultural, as well as religious, community and family.

Here the importance of groups is manifest. When believers define themselves first and foremost by their membership of a symbolic community (a group defined by its members' shared and cherished beliefs), personal identity is built on the assumption of the group's continuing existence. Groups, however, are not people, because groups don't have bodies of their own. A symbolic community may gain a kind of body by developing physical institutions. Its identity then resides in part in the presence of those buildings and the communities which use them. Without this embodiment, however, a group's symbolic identity and its physical existence are one and the same. Both will continue only as long as there are faithful adherents. What matters is that the beliefs are preserved, not which bodies preserve them.<sup>164</sup>

Beliefs are not confined to religious understandings. A group's belief can live and be the group's self-identification until such time as the belief is challenged. "Beliefs which are never tested, or indeed could never be tested, may nonetheless be widely accepted. In such cases the key question becomes

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2 n.p.

<sup>164</sup> Kathleen Taylor, *Cruelty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 156.

not 'Is it true?' but 'Has it been challenged?'"<sup>165</sup> The trust a person has in a belief or another individual is not necessarily related to the truth. If the person or the belief has never been challenged then the truth has not necessarily been discovered.<sup>166</sup> When those beliefs are challenged, conflict can arise. The lack of clarity within the covenant relationship allows for escalation of this conflict, it allows for otherization and bullying, by any of the parties. It creates an environment whereby it is difficult to ascertain truth. We tend to otherize for small challenges and difficulties as much as we do for situations of real crisis. We will otherize when we feel that our social status, our sense of honour or our assets are being jeopardized. In fact, the majority of situations in which otherization occurs are minor. "...for most adults otherization is generally the default setting for social interaction..."<sup>167</sup>

This otherization occurs, not only with conflict resulting from an individual questioning the beliefs of the group, but also by other perceived threats, the changing demographic of the group, financial threat, the world outside changing. Unlike a covenant that is based on two completely incommensurate entities, where one offers complete generosity and the other complete obedience, where trust is paramount, an attempted covenantal relationship between individuals, groups, or individuals and groups does not have the element of complete dependence, there is not complete obedience or generosity. The human-human response is different from the Divine-human response. The response is not predictable, "Context also matters. People placed into specific situations, or playing specific roles, can make very different moral judgements from what they

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 152–3.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 152–3.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 9.

would consider their 'normal' response."<sup>168</sup> It does not have to be extreme or the result of disagreement or challenge. Otherization can be a response to circumstances that to an uninvolved observer would appear inconsequential or insignificant or even positive.

In a covenantal relationship between humans, as individuals or groups, there is no opportunity to examine responsibilities and expectations, and there is a great opportunity for confusion. The tools used to otherize foes include misdirection, obfuscation and generalization, so as to ensure that the other's point of view might never appear reasonable. If the foe is incomprehensible the burden of them appearing reasonable is removed.<sup>169</sup>

In the United Church of Canada the examination of the adherence to the covenant is conducted by one of the parties to the covenant, usually the Presbytery.<sup>170</sup> (There can be as many as four processes that are conducted with various governance bodies of the institution making evaluations prior to any independent person assessing the situation.) It is one party to the covenant that now holds all power.

The examination is done by designates of this court conducting private interviews. There may, or may not be written concerns about the minister being investigated.

A review has been ordered because the presbytery has a concern about your effectiveness, and/or whether you have maintained the welfare of the church, and/or your recognition of the authority of the presbytery. The concern may have come to presbytery's attention in a number of different ways. It may have been reported orally to the presbytery, it may have come from a number of sources, and there

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>170</sup> *The Manual*, 9 ff.

may be no written material relating to it other than the presbytery motion to order a review.<sup>171</sup>

There is no specified process for conducting reviews in the United Church, however, there are best practice guidelines offered.<sup>172</sup> The accused is not present. People are encouraged to express their feelings, with some investigation as to fact. The existence of the interview is not secret, but the interview itself does not allow others, including individuals accused of any wrongdoing to be present. Only the information being used for the final report will be made known outside the interview process itself. Discretion is admirable, but when such discretion becomes secrecy it is cause for concern. Such secret discussions of one member of a community about another member of the community damages, if not destroys the community.

Thus it must be a decisive rule of all Christian community life that each individual is prohibited from talking about another Christian in secret. It is clear and will be shown in what follows that this prohibition does not include the word of admonition that is spoken personally to another. However, talking about others in secret is not allowed even under the pretense of help and goodwill. For it is precisely in this guise that the spirit of hatred between believers always creeps in, seeking to cause trouble. Where this discipline of the tongue is practiced right from the start, individuals will make an amazing discovery. They will be able to stop constantly keeping an eye on others, judging them, condemning them, and putting them in their places and thus doing violence to them.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> The United Church of Canada Ministry and Employment Working Unit, *Pastoral Charge and Ministry Personnel Reviews*, The guidelines for investigating and disciplining pastoral charges and ministries i provision with The Manual 2013. (Toronto: United Church of Canada, 2013), 62, <http://www.united-church.ca/files/handbooks/pastoral-charge-ministry-personnel-reviews.pdf>. Date Accessed: 6,11,2013

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>173</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*, vol. 5 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, Eberhard Bethge, et al., Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), Chapter 4 n.p., Electronic Book.

## The people began to write in their documents and contracts...

In most countries that are based on English Common Law the term covenant is, on occasion, used within a legal context. There are several definitions, most dealing with indebtedness, land, chattels, etc.<sup>174</sup> However, one definition pertinent to this paper is:

An agreement between two or more parties, reduced to writing and executed by a sealing and delivery thereof, whereby some of the parties named therein engage, or one of them engages, with the other, or others, or some of them, therein also named, that some act hath or hath not already been done, or for the performance or nonperformance of some specified duty.<sup>175</sup>

This understanding of covenant is quite separate from the scriptural understanding of complete generosity and complete obedience, but is closer to the modern legal understanding of a contract.

An agreement, upon sufficient consideration, to do or not to do a particular tiling... ...A covenant or agreement between two or more persons, with a lawful consideration or cause... ...A deliberate engagement between competent parties, upon a legal consideration, to do. or abstain from doing, some act... ..A contract or agreement is either where a promise is made on one side and assented to on the other; or where two or more persons enter into engagement with each other by a promise on either side... ...A contract is an agreement by which one person obligates himself to another to give, to do. or permit, or not to do. something expressed or implied by such agreement... ...A contract is an agreement to do or not to do a certain thing.<sup>176</sup>

A Contract, although entered into by parties that may be unequal, recognizes that neither party is acting in a totally generous manner, and neither

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<sup>174</sup> Henry Campbell Black, M.A., "The Law Dictionary: Featuring Black's Dictionary Free Online Legal Dictionary 2nd Edition," contract in *Black's Law Dictionary [2nd Edition]* (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Company), n.p., Ebook.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. n.p., Ebook.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. n.p., Ebook

The word tiling refers to land that was to be tilled as opposed to land that was to be allowed to lie fallow. This was one of the first instances in Common Law of contractual obligation and the language has continue.

in a totally obedient and trusting manner. It outlines the rights, the well being, and the protection of each of the parties. It clearly establishes expectations and identifies parameters of responsibility, as well as articulating accountability. In Canada contracts are different in Quebec than other provinces and territories. Most of Canada's contract law is based on Common Law developed from the English legal system whereas, Quebec's is from the Civil Code--a descendent of the French Civil Law.<sup>177</sup> However, there are elements of all contracts that are the same. For some contracts, usually medical, there is a need for all parties to be entering freely and be informed; each party must be serious about the contract, and there must be an equity in the give and take on each party's part; although not always necessary, in some situations a contract must be written; the mental capacity to enter into and adhere to the contract is necessary; and finally the contract requires a purpose.<sup>178</sup>

Occasionally contracts can be entered into from an adversarial stance. Examples of this would be the dissolution of a partnership or marriage. Some are entered into collaboratively, often in the formation of a new partnership or marriage. The majority are entered without either rancour or rejoicing, such as in a simple contract to purchase. Contracts can be achieved with collaboration, animosity or neither in almost any situation.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Jean-Louis Beaudoin, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Toronto: Historical-Dominion Institute, 2005), n.p. Date accessed: 21,10,2013

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. n.p.

<sup>179</sup> Dr. David S. Weiss and Steven R. Bedard, *Contextual Negotiations, A paper on the different manners to engage in management/union negotiations*, Current Issues Series (Kingston, Ontario: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen's University, 2000), 2, [Http://irc.queensu.ca/sites/default/files/articles/contextual-negotiations.pdf](http://irc.queensu.ca/sites/default/files/articles/contextual-negotiations.pdf); Justice Canada, "The Emerging Phenomenon of Collaborative Family Law (CFL): A Qualitative Study of CFL Cases," in *The Negotiation Experience in SFL*, n.p. Date Accessed: 6,11,2013

When one party to a contract feels that the contract has been violated, there is a process which provides an opportunity to achieve a consensus and resolution between the parties. When this is unsuccessful an independent body will assess each party's adherence to the agreement, for they are legally binding, and such an adjudication will take place in an expeditious manner. There is an independent body adjudicating the contract's implementation and adherence. If this adjudicating body finds that one of the parties has not complied with the contract, it may enforce the contract and may or may not assess additional penalties.

The covenantal model currently used by the church is most likely an attempt to follow a spiritual example of agreement. When Israel, or any individual violated that covenant God would deliver punishment. The people however, individually and through the prophets, would lament and plead their case to the adjudicator--the Divine who was all generous and loving and whose ultimate goal was the repair and reestablishment of the covenant. This may be the intent of the United Church's covenantal system. However, its covenant pertaining to discipline appears to prohibit such a reconciliation and repair. Establishing an investigative body that promotes discretion and confidentiality by encouraging secrecy, no matter how well meant is damaging to the body of the church. Establishing one of the parties to the covenant as the judicial body--comprised of individuals with all the strengths and weaknesses, the sensitivities and hurts, the power and vulnerability, and the biases that are endemic to humans is not the covenantal relationship of generosity and trust found in Scripture. God's purpose in punishment was to reestablish the covenant. This is not possible with the current covenantal model enacted by the United Church. A contract model within in the church deserves consideration.

The contract model, is not dominant within the church, although it does exist in other areas of the church, such as property purchases, insurance, consulting, etc. It does not purport to adhere to religious principles or beliefs. The contract process also relies upon an adjudicatory body that is comprised of humans, but they are people independent from the institution and the contract. Most important, a contract model demands openness and transparency where accusations can be questioned, responded to, and where everyone is privy to the same information.

The covenantal relationship is wonderful. It is wonderful because of the incommensurability of the parties. In the modern world the covenant relationship between a generous Divine with an obedient humanity is to be celebrated. However, the scriptural covenant is not the appropriate model for human parties, for they are not God, even when acting in the name of God and for God. For this reason a contractual model deserves careful attention.

## CHAPTER 4 BEING COMMUNITY BY COMING TO AGREEMENT

### **By the sweat of your brow...**

In examining the place of work in the first chapter, it became clear that the human understanding and appreciation of work has changed over the centuries. Humanity has changed its views regarding work and the human relationship to work--theologically, philosophically, historically and sociologically. Work was at one time the great stratifier but many believe it has developed into the great equalizer, whereby even government leaders see themselves as 'simply doing a job.'

Scripture has a great deal to say about humanity and labour, about exploitation, about working as an individual and working for the community. Only the best work is to be offered to God and God ensures that there are sufficient numbers with sufficient gifts to meet the needs of the community so that all necessary work is done. Scripture is also very clear that in creation and in the incarnation God chose to work. In Christ's example it becomes evident that human work is worshipful and all work is sacred. The separation of work from God's word means that wrong decisions will be made both by workers and business. Work is a blessing, although it can be misused--or even abused.

Hannah Arendt explores work, labour and action as defining the human condition throughout history. Greece requires inequality so that one person can give commands and the other can obey them. In fact, there is a presupposition that a majority of individuals are lowly workers allowing the elite to engage in the *Polis*--to do politics. In the medieval period this changed because it was believed that nothing that could be made by humans could equal that of the *kosmos*, and so the life of the cleric, particularly the monastic became most highly regarded

and the secular world less so. The world of the church became the medieval *polis* and the secular feudal world assumed the position of the ancient household. Eventually this developed into the social, the social society and the social economy.<sup>180</sup>

At the conclusion of this time period Luther and Melancthon, followed by Calvin emphasized that all work was of value. Luther put forward the understanding that all work and not just that of the clergy is vocation and Calvin developed this further in conjunction with his understanding of the law being a gift of the gospel. He maintained each person should have respect for the calling received--recognizing that each place on the social ladder is of value and important. Labour and the value of the labourer has been an ongoing concern for faith communities that has been demonstrated in the Roman Catholic church by the development of several encyclicals, the most recent of which, *Laborem Exercens* states that humans work both to survive and as a reflection of God's likeness. It is both individual and communal and is what differentiates humanity from other creatures. Humanity's labour is of more value than capital. Within these voices advocating the value of labour is one lone voice that differs and maintains that labour, in and of itself, is insignificant.

Currently it is difficult to differentiate labour from either the social or the political. Labour has, in many ways, been glorified and labour, work and action have become almost synonymous. People have begun to identify themselves by the work they do and it is said that all people are workers and are equal. Few people think what they do is good work, rather than simply making a living.<sup>181</sup>

Finally Richard Sennett explains the way in which the modern workplace, its transformation, the revaluation of workers, and the changed work environment

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<sup>180</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28–9.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. 4–5.

effect the modern worker's relationship with individuals and groups outside the workplace. With the rise of the industrial revolution and the development of factories work became routinized and the workers formed unions in order to obtain benefits of this routinized work. In the latter half of the twentieth century that routine has become a flexible workplace. The flexibility does not focus on the needs of the worker, but rather on ways in which the worker can be bent.<sup>182</sup> This flexibility includes time, location and colleagues and has resulted in uncertainty and disconnection for many workers. It is the first time in history that there has been such a major shift in work without any type of identifiable cause-- other than the desire of corporate society. This flexibility becomes constant change for the purpose of short term gain and results in a lack of commitment and disinterest in consequences and, for many, ethical conflict that leads to dysfunction in all areas, including family.

This flexibility means that loyalty is no longer valued, and is frequently maligned. Sennett also discusses the modern approach of the team in the workplace. Its decentralization of power allows the powerful to refrain from acknowledging their power and responsibility when failure occurs. This is particularly true in situations of corporate downsizing. Modern workers are feeling demeaned. An inability to self-identify with work creeps into other areas of life, and therefore loyalty and commitment are compromised outside the workplace. The one outcome that must be highlighted as a positive result of a modern corporate focus on the bottom line is the reduction of racial discrimination and workplace physical stress.

Other stresses are increased, however. Constant flexibility results in a feeling of constant stress. Although occasional stress can be exhilarating,

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<sup>182</sup> Sennett, *Corrosion of Character*, 46.

constant stress is debilitating. Stability, even when it will promote a positive outcome, is perceived as negative and change is regarded as positive. This constant instability creates risk and in this environment of risk people are asked to make decisions without adequate structures or information. "One of the ways in which people strengthen their favourite unfounded misconceptions is to lower their standards for evidence (conversely, disliked ideas risk icy scrutiny worthy of the most skeptical philosopher.)"<sup>183</sup> In 1989 John Webster Grant, at a presentation given to The United Church of Canada Annual General Meeting of the Division of Ministry, Personnel and Education noted that the United Church had also begun to practice an invitation to change that preferred an existence partial to risk.<sup>184</sup>

Examining the history of work, the theological and sociological aspects, of employment relationships and the effect that work has on the workers outside relationships and associations indicates that many of those with decision making authority in the United Church would carry some of these practices and expectations into the church. As the workplace community has disappeared people search for community elsewhere. They do this without a skill set for developing community as had traditionally been developed in the workplace.

With today's working world being one of constant change individuals are needing to reinvent themselves, and humanity is struggling with ways to self-identify. The individual with this need to self-identify and self-reinvent, enters into a Christian congregational community that is based on the Word of God.<sup>185</sup> This is a community of service and humility--and although there are leaders and it does improve the self--its purpose is for its members to serve God and serve

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<sup>183</sup> Taylor, *Cruelty*, 148.

<sup>184</sup> Grant, "Roots," 17.

<sup>185</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible*, Chapter 1 n.p.

God by serving humanity. It is not intended to be a creation that serves the organization or its members. It is also not a place where the current practices of the workplace are to be employed for they are detrimental to the work of the clergy within the church and to the congregation. The ability to accept and resolve conflict is dissipating to the point where loyalty is seen as support of an individual or group, right or wrong--rather than commitment to the Christian message.

### **I've picked you--I haven't dropped you...**

In scripture the call relationship between God and individuals, God and groups or even God and nations is varied and complex. Yet the call is central to the Divine/human relationship and is the response to call is the human's demonstration of complete trust in the Divine.

There were some specific calls, as with the priest and the prophet. Although, on occasion these two functions could be filled by one person it was more often that they were separate. The priest was responsible for the sacrificial worship life in the temple, but the prophet was charged with the responsibility of speaking "truth to power" and informing the people of the ways in which they have disappointed God and refused to follow God's laws. The prophet was often rejected by the very people who were supposed to follow.

Paul implies a priestly role that involves sacrificial service and holds the office up as a metaphor for Christ's sacrificial death. There is no mention of the laity in the epistles for the nascent church and the New Testament held the priestly and the prophetic elements resided in the entire community as a Royal Priesthood. It was during this time that the human being's involvement in the selection process of church leaders, presbyters, ministers, bishops, etc. began to emerge and evolve.

The increased numbers of people to join the church necessitated a greater structure and the organization of roles and functions. Initially the language around ministry roles was humble and the specific words implied service. People did not choose to fill these offices but had the responsibilities of the offices thrust upon them. The Qualifications for these roles were considered paramount and were carefully articulated in both Timothy and Titus. Over time, the servant transitioned into a leader and the various functions that were filled by different individuals coalesced into one person. No longer was the individual fulfilling an office, but was rather, holding a position. The institutional church became more important than the people--clergy or laity. Concern for the property of the church gave rise to the development of a celibate clergy--to protect church property from being inherited by the children of priests. With the assumption of position rather than office, abuses began to occur within the church, hierarchies developed and belief in the superiority of religious vocation over lay work evolved.

Throughout this history there were individuals and groups that were critical of this aspect of the church. There were individuals prior to Luther and Calvin who attempted to reform the church--however, with Luther and Calvin attempts at reformation came with public criticism, opposition and finally schism into a new expression of Christianity. The reformers wished to return clerical offices to what they believed to be the integrity of the early church. Neither Luther nor Calvin believed that clerical vocation is superior to others. They both championed the value of the vocations of all people. Both believed that qualifications of clergy should be clearly articulated and they believed in the importance of an educated clergy. Calvin, in particular, emphasized his belief that the clergy is to be educated and educating, as well as being pastors to the people. Both examined call with its function, vocation and place in society. Although there were many

areas where the theology of Luther and Calvin diverged there were also many areas where they converged. The integrity of the call and the education of the clergy were two such areas.

Calvin also emphasized the manner of the call and the place of the clergy in the church's structure. He was adamant about the separation of the church and the state, insisting that one person could not fill offices in both--and that both were vocation, equally called. Calvin's belief in the call of state authorities included his belief in the "Divine Right of Kings." Both the government worker and the church worker were called and gifted for specific functions and could be known through examination. Ministers and bishops were to be called and designated by humans, as they were in scripture. Calvin gave considerable focus to the presbyters who were to function as pastors, teachers, disciplinarians, and censurers of manners. The deacons were to care for the poor by dispensing alms--both as administrators and in practical deliverance of care. The practical function was the only one that could be filled by women. Presbyters filling the roles of pastors and teachers were essential but were differentiated. One person did not fill both roles.

Calvin believed the call to clergy to be both public and private. The public call of the church to fulfill the functions of ministry and the private call the individual receives from God. However, he stressed that there should be no personal motivation of selfishness, but a "sincere fear of God and desire to edify the church."<sup>186</sup> Calvin also recognized that on occasion, the church might call someone whose wickedness is not evident, but the church is still responsible for the calling of clergy. This call is by the whole church and so it is the whole church, and not just an empowered elite, who should lay hands upon the

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<sup>186</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, n.p.

candidate. In fact, Calvin did not support a church elite of any sort, including the Roman Catholic hierarchy of his day. Hierarchy is not in the scripture, but the few words that connote an overseer of a sort are for the purpose of discipline--a discipline that was not then being conducted by the church. There is nothing in scripture allowing one person to dominate others--this was not the intent of the early bishops. They are to be less like presidents and more like prime ministers, in that they are subject to the meetings of presbytery. It is a human custom, deriving from a human organization, to give the bishop power over the presbytery and it is contrary to scripture.

Presbyters were to provide Word and Sacrament--they were to preach the gospel and to edify the church with sound doctrine. They were also placed in the position of resolving disputes although they did not wish to do this.

Approximately two centuries later John Wesley began to present a slightly different understanding of clergy. He too considered ministry a vocation, but unlike Luther and Calvin he did not appear to consider other positions to be vocational in nature, and, it would seem, he thought more highly of ministry. Wesley also believed that gifted and educated lay people could preach, but they could not preside at the sacraments.

However, like Luther and Calvin he did believe it was necessary to have an educated clergy. Unlike them he did not believe that it was necessary for a minister to have education in all areas, but rather considered it important to balance gifts and education of the clergy as necessary. Like Calvin he believed the ordination was done by the whole church and the examiners were acting on behalf of the church, and also like Calvin believed it was important for the clergy to exercise correctives, or discipline as they were responsible for the souls of the flock. Similar to Luther and Calvin's experiences, Wesley's understanding of clergy led to the Methodist schism with the Anglican church.

Luther, Calvin and Wesley all had influence on the United Church of Canada's understanding of clergy. However, two of the elements, correction or discipline of the membership and education seem to be diminishing as shown by the fact that biblical languages and systematic theology are not emphasized in United Church of Canada Divinity programmes. It is difficult to ascertain the education status of Designated Lay Ministry personnel. The United Church emphasizes inclusiveness--for very good reasons but, this has resulted in the lessening of theological and biblical literacies and the increased acceptance of some damaging behaviours without appropriate discipline.

**We make a firm agreement in writing...**

As noted above--all relations are complex, and double edged. They can be both satisfying and unsettling. This is particularly true in a covenantal relationship with God where God is all powerful and all generous, and the covenanted partner is completely dependant and obedient. It is a relationship that cannot be destroyed. It can involve violation and punishment--there is always the opportunity for repentance, forgiveness and renewal. God's covenants are forever. The depth of the relationships are not defined in these covenants, nor do they need to be because of the incommensurable nature of the Divine--God's sovereignty is central to the covenant relationship. After the covenant has been established the law is given, it is clearly articulated, and it assists humanity by giving parameters of behaviours and practices that are acceptable to God. The covenant with God is filled with promise, but the Divine being also realizes the need for definition and acceptable parameters. The covenant is both demanding and compassionate. It is an agreement that is both reciprocal and juridical. There are only two types of relationship between God and

people. There is a relationship which maintains the covenant and a relationship that which dissolves the covenant.

Many human relationships are also between unequal participants, but in the modern world this inequality is not comparable to the inequality of covenanted people in scripture, nor is it comparable to the inequality of the Divine and the human creature who have made a covenant. The United Church of Canada uses the covenant relationship as the model for the pastoral relationship. This is a questionable practice given there is no consistent incommensurability, but rather a shifting of power. Within this attempt at covenantal relationship there are inherent weaknesses: the only responsibility shared by the clergy and the congregational laity is pastoral care--an undefined function; there is very little delineation of responsibility or expression of limiting parameters on the parties; any guidance such as that proved by God in the Torah is absent from this attempt at covenant. This is evident in the grounds for discipline of clergy listed in *The Manual*.<sup>187</sup> The grounds are vague and can be applied to almost any type of disgruntlement or disagreement. Clergy who preach the Word as intended by Calvin and Wesley may be displeasing to congregational members, who attempt to engage in the pastoral care of discipline in an unhealthy group setting, or who may, because of successful evangelism indirectly cause changes in the congregational demographic, find themselves in a very vulnerable position. The presbytery is also responsible for the disciplining of the congregation--however, there are no grounds listed for the disciplining of a congregation/pastoral charge in *The Manual*.

Another weakness of the covenant model being used by churches is the individuality of one party while the other two parties are groups. Groups have

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<sup>187</sup> *The Manual*, J.9.3.

power. Healthy groups are fine, but unhealthy groups can be very destructive. They are particularly destructive when their beliefs or perceived identity are challenged. The lack of clarity in the covenant relationship allows for any arising conflict to escalate. This can be compounded because the human/human relationship does not have complete trust/dependence--there is not complete obedience and generosity. Although well intentioned, and intending to follow a scriptural model the covenant relationship is not appropriate for a group dynamic in which responses can be unpredictable--this is especially true in situations where a person responds in the group in a different manner than as an individual.

The current covenant model does not allow for objective assessment. One of the parties to the covenant is responsible for the investigation of a concern that arises, that party also adjudicates and decides on any remediation, further examination or expulsion. Most of the investigation is done privately, and at no time is a clergy person under investigation allowed to challenge, or even face an accuser. The process uses resources, both personnel and financial of both the person being examined and the church's Mission and Service Fund.

The various courts of the church are comprised of an established membership consisting of both laity and clergy. This means that there is no place within the official structure of the church for clergy to gather together to discuss concerns, education, working conditions, compensation, or any other matter that affects them exclusively. At the same time those concerns that affect only the laity are never officially discussed by the laity alone. At all official levels concerns specific to laity or clergy discussed and considered by clergy and laity jointly.

A contract allows for each party to address concerns unique to itself. It allows for dialogue and negotiation around concerns. It offers specific language to define and offer parameters. The language chosen for the contract is determined by the parties to the contract and there is no reason for this not to be collaborative. The parties can work together to determine their assumptions and

understandings of the language within the contract and if they cannot agree an independent person/body can be asked to adjudicate.

### **Dreams and visions....**

It is most likely true that the majority of people who worship, join or claim affiliation with the United Church of Canada do not wish to see a church that is divided or unfair--nor do they wish to see a church that is viewed as being divided or unfair. However, as shown above, there are many church processes and structures which create a systemic unfairness that can affect anyone in the church as the power shift dance continues.

Would a clergy labour union be of assistance in eliminating this unfairness? Yes.<sup>188</sup>

A labour union for clergy would provide recognition and a description for the work of the clergy and of the laity. It would provide an opportunity for clergy to gather together to discuss both the highlights and the concerns of the work done within the vocation with a frankness that cannot be present when laity is attendant and there is concern for providing appropriate undefined pastoral care in all situations. It would allow clergy to consider and propose strategies and solutions for the concerns that arise. It would allow laity to gather together in an official capacity to discuss highlights and concerns with the same type of frankness. These strategies and solutions could then be discussed by the designated representatives of the clergy, selected by the clergy, and the designated representatives of the United Church of Canada's Ministry and Employment Working Unit, selected by the working unit.

There are those who believe that the establishment of a union would be a detriment to the church as it would result in increased acrimony, and perhaps

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<sup>188</sup> Currently clergy unions exist in the United Kingdom, in Scandinavian countries, and Brazil. There is little information about the relationships between the denominations and unions in the UK and Brazil, but the relationship in Scandinavia is positive.

increased conflict between the clergy members and the institutional church. This need not be the case. Most union/management workplace contracts are negotiated without any type of rancour. A labour union for clergy would allow a collective agreement, a contract, to be agreed upon between clergy and the United Church of Canada. It may use any language that is not contrary to law. It is possible for such negotiations to utilize a collaborative approach and be based upon Biblical concepts and even use Scriptural language of respect, obligation, responsibility, sacrifice, compassion, mercy, etc. It might also include specific, defined denominational or institutional language. Such a delineation would allow for a clear understanding of responsibilities and a lessening of misunderstanding. This contract would be able to articulate responsibilities, accountabilities, and vocational parameters. It would give clear cut reasons for discipline of clergy and would allow the possibility of an open and transparent discipline process where those facing accusations will also be able to face their accusers. There is a certain rigidity within the church's current processes. This rigidity would be replaced by a collective agreement, a contract, that would be as rigid or as flexible as the language chosen by the parties that agree to it. A collaborative negotiation process, incorporating the ecclesial and institutional language and vision on which the parties agree could lessen those instances of dissatisfaction that give rise to animosity. A clergy union would allow for a process that could be used when those dissatisfactions do arise, on the part of the clergy, the congregation or the presbytery. In this way dissatisfaction would not be given the opportunity to escalate and the negative aspects of a group dynamic would be inhibited. It would not guarantee there would be no negative action or that discipline would not arise, but the presence of a union would afford the clergy the opportunity to use resources comparable to that of the institutional church when it happens.

Although Christians operate with the best of intentions there is a history of the institutional church becoming more important than the people who reside within it. There is a history of human emotion overtaking human morality. There is a history of laying blame and pointing fingers. It is impossible to return to the practices of the early church since our situation, in the modern world, is so radically different, and no matter what we may think, we may view the past through “rose coloured glasses.” However, it is possible to examine the known practices of those earliest Christians to ensure that the principles are honoured in the church today. The gifts and talents of individuals and the vocations to which they have been called can be examined, honoured and respected in an open and collaborative process that clearly recognizes the value of all vocations to God and articulates the responsibilities of each. Disagreements that arise can be discussed candidly and openly and when necessary be referred to an independent arbitrator.

Is this a means of asking the secular government to administer the church? No it is not. It is asking for assistance in clarifying the language that was chosen by the parties to the contract. Yes, such a person might be secular, but the church currently asks individuals from the secular world to engage in many such activities--from providing insurance, to doing audits, to engaging in legal endeavours. A clergy union that negotiates with the united Church of Canada, and agreements and processes that would emerge from those negotiations would also give the church the opportunity to appear to the world as an institution that wants to be open to the toughest scrutiny in its attempts to follow the Christian command to do mercy and justice.

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