

THE EFFICACY OF CONTEXTUALIZATION FOR MINISTRY

by

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This study contends that the basic principle underlying ministry (and rostered leadership) in a multi-cultural church is contextual. For it is in context that we find the key to the nature of unity in diversity.

If God in Christ is to be found in the context of culture and if theology is a human enterprise then Christian theology is contextual by definition. Therefore we shall attempt to explore ministry in this paper within the scope of a multi-cultural context in North America utilizing the African American culture as paradigm.

Since the Lutheran Church is a global multi-cultural church, it is our purpose to help the reader understand that ministry must be wrestled with in a pluralistic form, i.e., from an African, Asian, Hispanic and Native American and White perspective. In other words we must begin to think of ministry and other dogmatic issues from other cultures historical lines and not merely the straight line from Europe. It is envisioned that an exploration from this perspective will provide the lively challenges of contextual pluralism to ministry styles, especially in light of Lutheranism's self-definition as being a multi-cultural global church.

The following two components will be examined in this paper:

1. The nature and meaning of contextuality for ministry.
2. The nature and function of the Holy Spirit in contextual ministry.

Within the ingredients of this material, I will be arguing that one's understanding of the context will effect one's shape and function of ministry. The purpose is not to make the ministry more acceptable

to a multi-cultural church by trimming the church tradition of the ministry, but to make clearer to the diverse cultures the unity we have in the Christian faith. Therefore my attempt to offer diverse perspectives on the function of ministry is only an attempt to clear away one monolithic view of ministry and posit the secret of God's unity, namely God's diversity within the priesthood of all believers. My tentative hypothesis is that contemporary Lutheranism in its zeal to establish anew its understanding of the nature and function of the ministry will once again limit itself by ignoring the contextualization of the minister's message to the needs of the world cultures. As a result the ministry will be robbed of its rich gifts of diversity and will be once again enslaved religiously, politically, economically and culturally.

My concern, in short, is that the 21st century might very well continue to not recognize culturally, religiously and philosophically opulent multicultural voices. The challenge of ministry is in its diversity, the victory in its unity in the risen living Christ. After some twenty-five years of experience, study, reflection, prayer and action, I have come to the conclusion that the context must be taken seriously if pastors are to be the catalyst which helps congregational ministry happen. Probably one of the greatest heresies of the past was to speak in behalf of the people without the people or to be concerned about the soul at the expense of the body or preach the gospel with little or no concern for the context. I would submit that text without context is a pretext.

To raise the question: "what is the context of a pastor's ministry?" is to raise a host of questions related to our understanding of the nature of God, of humanity, of the Bible, of history, of Jesus Christ, and of the church. We must ask these kinds of questions because the ministry of the Gospel denotes an activity which has its origin in the heart and will of God, which embraces both the indigenous culture as well as the entire world and all that happens in it, and which is directed at the total life of people in and out of the congregations in this world and their eternal destiny. How a pastor answers these basic questions under the tutelage of the people in a given context, or more

particularly, how a pastor applies the answers in a given cultural context and place in history, has a critical bearing on the methodology of his or her ministry in that time and place.

When a pastor's ministry is engaged in the simple but profound act of sharing the love of Christ and salvation in word and sacrament with the people, that activity presupposes an entire spectrum of theological assumptions which determine and control the style and objective of the pastor's activity. What I am saying here is that in word and act there must be an understanding of the pastor's faith, i.e. his or her self in which the pastor makes it possible to be a true channel through which the love of Christ can flow in the particular context in which the pastor finds her/himself.

The study in question within this section of the paper might be for some about as newsworthy as a discussion on the latest state of TV ministry but that would be admittedly only symptomatic of the deeper issues of the ministry. However, the crisis behind the crises cannot be submitted to technology for the basic crisis is a crisis of thinking. In our case it would be thinking contextually. One only has to examine the scholarship of Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and M. L. King, Jr. to raise a few in order to perceive that the misuse of the Christian faith is coming to an end. There are many great issues inimical to thinking, whether in Christianity or in civilization itself. Only a thinking faith can help the world survive. North American Christianity has been guilty of not thinking the faith. It has been lacking in intellectual depth in theology as well as dysfunctional competence. Where thought is concerned it has been quite comfortable with racism, classism, and sexism. What would it mean to think through the faith in our context? This, then, is the confronting challenge that I see within this subject matter of the socio-cultural context of the pastor's ministry as it relates especially to the ministry.

In order to obtain the maximum clarity and coherence for our subject matter, we will briefly examine the ministry under the components of contextuality and the call of the Holy Spirit. The complexity and the urgency of the questions we have raised thus far concerning our subject in relation to the

components of ministry obviously cannot be answered thoroughly in this small chapter. But since the people of color have been historically victims of racism in North America and since they have, in some measure, grappled with our subject-matter, I only hope that I can raise the right questions and point us in the direction where the answers might be found.

The Nature of Contextuality

The basic contentions of this material are implicit in its title, namely the interpretation and meaning of the Gospel within *The Efficacy of Contextualization for Ministry*. The key terms in these contentions are familiar within the church and the theological enterprise. However, these are terms which need to be clarified for the usage that is made of them. By 'Gospel' we mean the Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel, the dialectical process by which a person experiences the demand of God's law that finally breaks through into freedom in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At times Gospel is used to express Gospel only, but this is determined by the context in which the term is used in the material. By 'context' we mean: those patterns and language of a culture which most distinguish it from other cultures. Other synonyms for 'context' used are 'culture', 'indigenous', 'ethos' and 'particularity'.

Whatever else the church may be, it is a human institution and thus finds itself wide open to the analysis of the sciences, analysis both helpful and irritating but nonetheless necessary when dealing with many cultural contexts within one denomination. It goes without saying that the modern individual exists in a pluralistic world, migrating back and forth between competing and complementary cultures. This pluralization of socially available cultures with all of their differences was of particular importance in perceiving a Law/Gospel process with unique content. It is relatively easy to be a Lutheran in a social situation where one can readily limit one's significant others' sociologically speaking to fellow-Lutherans. The story is quite different in a situation where one is compelled to rub shoulders with a variety of 'those others' (who might even happen to be of the same 'ethos'), where one is saturated with communications that deny, reject or ignore Lutheran ideas, and

where one has a difficult time even finding some quiet Lutheran corners in which to withdraw. This description is among other things one of the dynamics experienced by Lutherans in other cultural contexts. While the Lutheran Church has much to offer a pluralistic society, it must be big enough to accept the different life-style which these cultures bring with them. Once we grasp the context to which the Gospel is applied, we also must grasp the inability of people to jump out of their skins. The forces of our immediate context or ethos work on each of us even when we understand them and even when we become Christians because we are social beings.

Each 'ethos' is immediate to God, which is to say that we reject the approach of a Gospel which stresses universality apart from particularity. We submit that there is no universality apart from the particularity of the Gospel. The proclamation is always directed toward humankind not in general but humankind wrapped in all of its cultural diversity. The tentative hypothesis is that Lutheran theology is contextual theology, that is, the Law must be related to the context of the people so that the Gospel can free them to live God's life in that context.

What has achieved the reputation of theology in North American church and society is not only noncontextual, it is anticontextual. Most Christians do not regard Christian theology as a mode of engaging this historical cultural, socioeconomic milieu. On the contrary, where they consider the subject at all, laypersons tend to think of theology as a more or less fixed set of beliefs, contained in embryo in the Bible, codified in various historical creeds, confessions and faith statements, refined in forbidding volumes of doctrine, and relayed to congregations in simplified form through sermon, catechetical instruction, and (for a few) college classes in religious knowledge.¹

While it seems to be true that the human spirit seeks truth to be fixed, stable and predictable in this world and the church, it is equally true that faith is the very medium through which we experience an ever changing world. Therefore it is through our faith that we engage the world not flee from it. This means engaging our context. Any attempt to claim the contextuality of theology for our ministry is to engage ourselves in doing theology which presupposes comprehending all of the aspects of one's culture. All of this is a part of the theological task of a pastors' ministry. Paradoxically, theology will be contextual even when it is not consciously thought to be so. True contextuality means initiating and nurturing dialogue with one's culture, a partnership in discovery and investigation of the truths of the

Gospel. To put it concretely, it is possible for us to learn from each other. Tillich in his book on *Theology and Culture* puts it better when he speaks of the Christian community as a participator with the world. Therefore to know one's context is to participate in one's context. "When one is conscious of contextualization, one becomes aware that there is no such thing as non-contextual human thought, including theological thought".²

Here I would like to turn to the Europeanization of the Christian theological tradition. Many of the Christian doctrines like *creatio ex nihilo*, *creatio continua*, *imago dei*, etc., echo the many diverse movements of evolving European civilization. For example, with the development of the doctrine of atonement, one can see the history of Europe's anxieties and its ways of coping with anxieties. For all kinds of reasons this European theological contextuality in several typical forms (Augustinian, Thomistic, Calvinistic, Pietistic) has been permitted to conduct itself throughout the inhabited world as if it were not contextual but universal. This clearly is a misappropriation and misunderstanding of Tradition as a source of theology.

K. E. Skydsgaard³ gives us a clear and penetrating survey of tradition. He helps us see tradition first in the proper sense of the word, named with a large "T." This is the 'Holy Tradition' where we find the teachings of the Lord and the Apostles in doctrinal forms and doxological, liturgical, and sacramental forms. Secondly, he helps us to see tradition with a small "t". This is a given culture's indigenous or particular Christian tradition. I would now invite you to see Christian culture as *Christian* (small "t") traditions, not as independent entities, but in relation to their common history. When we observe the many cultures in the global Lutheran church tradition, we are cautioned that Tradition tends to be absolute and to forget that the Holy Spirit dwells in living persons and not in human traditions. Skydsgaard further states that true tradition and freedom belong together, but in the history of our traditions, we all too often see how human traditions come to be much more than supports for the Christian life; instead, they become positive controls and norms for human conscience. When they do that, members of the church quickly cease to be temples of the Holy Spirit

(I Cor.6:19) and become simply curators of a vast museum of relics left by their Spirit-guided ancestors. These are the conditions we must take into account no matter to which culture we belong within the institutional Church. We must be careful not to see our own Christian cultural tradition as the Christian Tradition. All of the various Christian cultural traditions have a right of existence only insofar as they are vehicles for God's revelation, God's self-delivery to us.

The nature of contextualization always causes theological discourse. Theology like all intellectual academic disciplines move very close to ideology. Subsequently, all human knowledge will always become an ideological tainted product.⁴ To determine the spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*) is the whole vocation of theological discourse. The Christian community must have access to the sources within its host culture in order to proclaim the proper usage of the Kerygma (Law/Gospel).

The Christian community is always engaged in cultural transcendence⁵ and immersion in the context. We can only express Christian identity (Baptism) by being immersed in the cultural context, plunged beneath the threatening waters of sin that Grace might abound. As CIBL gathers here in celebration of another Lutheran Reformation and the subsequent historic signing of the joint Catholic and Lutheran declaration in AUGSBURG, we must be aware that these glad tidings have come to African and African Americans clothed in German and English cultures and preserved in 16th century doctrines of salvation for 21st century sinners.

Immersion in the context is one of the key elements in one of our courses at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. This means for our students simultaneously becoming contemporaneous. My thesis is that the pastor's ministry (and the congregation) can only become what God has called the person to be as one is immersed in the context. Tillich asserts that a Christian pastor:

must participate in the human predicament, not only actually - as he (sic) always does - but also in conscious identification. He (sic) must participate in man's finitude, which is also his own, and its anxiety, as though he had never received the revelatory answer of 'eternity'. He must participate in man's estrangement which is also his own, and show the anxiety of guilt, as though he had never received the revelatory answer of 'forgiveness'. The theologian does not rest on the theological answer which he

announces. He can give it in a convincing way only if he participates with his whole being in the situation of the question, namely, the human predicament. In the light of this demand, the method of correlation protects the theologian from the arrogant claim of having revelatory answers at his disposal. In formulating the answer, he must struggle for it.⁶

So to participate in the context is the *sine qua non* of communication for the outreach of the congregation and pastor. Most Lutheran pastors are aware of the phrase 'Viva Vox Dei' as the living word of God if they have taken courses from me and other professors in our course on 'The Lutheran Heritage.' They know that this means the proclamation of the Gospel to a particular context in which that Gospel is heard with clarity. In this respect the challenge and warning for the pastor is never to substitute teaching for Gospel. Therefore ministry is a distinct indoctrination because it assumes love and a subsequent response, through the power of the Holy Spirit, of acceptance and confession.

In summation, one can identify several reasons why theology is contextual:

1. Theology is a human enterprise
2. Theology attempts to speak of the Living God and of God's relation to a dynamic creation.
3. Theology exists for the sake of the church's confession.
4. Contextualization is a conscious element in the theological enterprise.
5. The role of tradition as a source of theology in contextualization.
6. Theological discourse is a necessary ingredient in examining the nature of contextualization.
7. Theology and the meeting of stories with the big "T" (Tradition) and the little "t".
8. Contextualization means immersion in the context and cultural transcendence.

But you might say at this point in our discussion: is it not somewhat artificial to divide the world into contexts? Has not the Christian message stressed unity as the basic principle of humankind? Should we not, then, spend all of our efforts in constructing a Global theology? While these questions are very authentic and expressive of our world today, given mass communication, jet travel, the global village, etc., these world events have themselves made us aware of our divided state. We speak about

economic and political walls; we speak about many worlds in one world, i.e. 'First World and Third World.' These worlds are real and tragically different. And as M. L. King, Jr. has said: in these worlds we must learn to live together or die together as fools. Christian theology and particularly the Christian pastor who brings the Christian message cannot afford to ignore these real contextual divisions any more than he/she can ignore the unity we have in Christ.

The Christian pastor should be sharply aware that while the Christian Gospel places an emphasis on divine grace; it is aware of the reality of the divisiveness of human nature, and the threats to life. The Christian doctrine of sin is devoted to this issue. This is why Lutheranism structures its ecclesiology under the law and lives its life under the Gospel.

The argument of the entire Christian tradition is not with difference (rather it celebrates difference) but with divisiveness, brokenness, alienation, segregation distorted by sinful human. The Biblical God does not ignore this but sends his apostles and pastors to engage this reality. The theology of the cross describes the reconciling work of Jesus Christ who turns the destructiveness toward good and not evil. The point is not to dissolve distinction, but to eliminate from it the sin. What this translates into for the minister is this: pastors must initiate a praxis of Justice. They are to embrace the drive for prophetic faith toward the universal understanding of God's reconciling work; without losing the truth of the divine universality we are simultaneously in the indigenous context. This is, with some precision, the intention of contextualization in theological formation for the ministry. What this further translates into for the minister is that faith will be contextualized and made specific in the relation to the culture: for example, love to the neighbor must function in a radically particularized way, for love is not a principle to be conceptualized but an event in which it is involved (see The Parable of the Good Samaritan). Conceptualization too often ends up in generalization. It has been said that this is the primary theological thinking in the western world, i.e. all doctrines have been turned into entire networks of ideas.

My argument at this point should not be seen as a rejection of conceptualization since this is my unique obligation as a professional theologian. Our purpose, again, is to consider the nature of thinking within our subject matter. Theological thought, when examining the ministry, certainly involves the formulation of concepts. However the question which must be posited is: to what end do these concepts/ideas serve? If they serve as a detachment from the context, then we must surely question them. If the minister's theology does not bring us to the context of the neighbor, it has remained an idea or theory; for faith without works is dead (James 2:17). [See CIBL's "Harare Message"]

Finally, it would be hard for me to see a Global theology which did not root itself in culture. Conversely, it would be impossible to pursue a theology of culture which did not lead to thinking of the whole. In correlating the two, the minister is aware that the universal thrust of the gospel prevents theology from becoming only indigenous; and the indigenous character of the Gospel prevents theology from becoming merely theoretical or transcultural. Having now established the importance of the context to which the Gospel is proclaimed by the pastor, we now turn to that which is the authority, source and grounding for the function of the minister, i.e. God the Holy Spirit.

The Nature, Function and Call of the Holy Spirit to Contextual Ministry

Luther puts it quite plainly in his explanation of the third article of the Creed: *I believe that the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel....* As we begin this brief discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit for ministerial formation in a multicultural context, it may be helpful to engage ourselves with the source of authority and power which only comes from God. The pastor who proclaims the Gospel in word and deed makes a confession of faith in God the Holy Spirit.

Consider as Luther and others have done that it is the Holy Spirit who calls us by the Gospel enlightens us with his gifts; gives us faith; convenes a congregation to hear the word; it is the Spirit who inspires the lessons of the day, and it is the Spirit who sanctifies the whole Christian church.

I am fully aware of the Lutheran church's reticence about referring to the Holy Spirit because of historical doctrinal positions. Some ministers and lay people would rather avoid the issue lest they be understood in terms of modern movements concerning the Holy Spirit. Still others fear being caught up in an invisible presence we cannot domesticate nor control. How will I feel if I truly surrender myself to God? Rudolf Otto in *Idea of the Holy* (p 12f) calls this strange feeling of attraction and dread *mysterium tremendum*. It is the experience of God, albeit an awesome experience.

This experience is so unthinkable in our scientific age of modernity that in his book *Christian Spirituality* (p 83) Wolfhart Pannenberg notes in the generation of the "death of God" theologians that they had a lost sense of the Holy Spirit. No matter what we experience today, however, we are expected to give scientific explanation of a faith that often defies explanation.

Yet, if we intend to get at the source and authority of our contextual witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we need some sense of the Spirit accompanied by power which is sufficient to deal with the reality of evil and so we turn to Jesus as all Christians have need to do so.

The Call of Jesus - A Model for Our Call to Service

In the New Testament, Matthew, the third chapter we read:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he consented, and when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water and behold the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him and lo, a voice from heaven saying 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'

And normally one would expect that the next words would be: 'Now go and get him a Mercedes Benz.' But that's not what we're told here. We're told: 'Here is my beloved Son, get out in the wilderness. That's how much I love you. Get out in the wilderness.' That's a different kind of love, it seems to me, than the kind that we've heard about.

Luke chapter 4, again you all know this. You know the story. Jesus is sent into the wilderness, (indeed some translations say this man who is loved by God is driven into the wilderness) tempted by the devil, ministered to by the messengers of God's love and then Jesus returns from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit. One cannot talk about spirituality without talking about the wilderness; it can't be done. Jesus returns from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit, comes into Galilee where a report concerning him went out to the surrounding country; he taught in the local synagogue, being glorified by all; he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and he went to the Synagogue as was His custom was on the Sabbath day; he stood up to read and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to feel good, to feel warm, to tell everybody how I'm anointed with the Spirit. No! He has anointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. To set a liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.. Wow! Isn't he great? Filled with the Spirit!

But you all know the rest of that story, too. Don't you? Because Jesus doesn't find it to be adequate to be general about things. Jesus gets very specific with the folks. He gets very concrete about a particular group of outcasts, who the Lord seems to love at least as much as he does the good folks. And when he started talking about the particular, the good synagogue folks say in essence 'Lord now you've gone from preaching to meddling.' And they not only put him out but they tried to do him in.

For a sermon, how do you like that? For a sermon after the baptism, he'd been called by God, wrestled in the wilderness, preached his sermon and they want to kill him. How do you like that for spirituality?

Now let me try to say quickly something about what all of this may mean for us. Spirituality is not only knowing that we are free, but spirituality is knowing that we have been set free. It is knowing how we got free. And our freedom is a direct function of the redeeming, delivering, father/mother God. And we have been delivered, set free, not for our own selfish purposes, but to serve God's purposes in the winds; winds of change.

Spirituality then is the way of being which finds us continually struggling, to know what are those purposes and what in my calling and what is our calling; that kind of reaching out, that kind of asking, that kind of saying: What Is going on here? That is spirituality, it seems to me. Not any kind of comfortable floppiness, but that constant tension of trying to understand what is it that God is calling us to be and to do. Spirituality is that expectant waiting on God and God's purposes more than they who wait for the morning. As I understand it, what this event in the wilderness is saying to us is that spirituality at its deepest (where Christian faith is concerned) is recognizing the cleansing, frightening, empowering, but absolutely necessary role of the wilderness in our lives. The wilderness meaning, of course, many things I cannot possibly begin to go into, but for certain it is meeting the need for solitude.

The wilderness is that time for fasting, real fasting, for praying. The wilderness is that time and place for feeling sometimes parched and stretched out and attacked. Spirituality is recognizing the need that the wilderness presents continuous confrontation with our own demons, the demons within that we often ignore by making a lot of noise outside, the demons who will not go away unless they are faced in utmost honesty. Spirituality is living! As I understand it, these texts are saying to us that spirituality

is living in the presence of God's living, creating, healing spirit, recognizing, that as we live in the presence of God's Spirit we are actually connected to all life.

We are called to all life. And of course, that has all kinds of implications that again we can't get into. It means that we are called to Russian life, and Nicaraguan life, and Communist life, Socialist life, and all kinds of crazy people life, and poor people life. Spirituality means that we are connected to all life, and we have to find out what that connection then would drive us to be and to do, if we are not to let it become totally dried up.

To be anointed by the Spirit, if I understand these texts, if I understand the experience of ministers and many magnificent anointed people, to be anointed by the Spirit is to be anointed to action, to praxis, as they say in some circles. To be anointed by the Spirit, is to be anointed very often to action for the poor, that's the testing action, to action for the outcasts, to action for the weak and exploited, oppressed, the rich, et.al. Spirituality is, it seems to me, living constantly with the blowing, driving, compelling, loving, breath of God. Breath on me, breath of God? Watch out! If you start talking about that! Because that breath of God can be a might powerful thing, pushing us, driving us, pulling us, upsetting us in ways that we never expected. Not just soothing us, and making us feel nice and warm all over. This is a wind that bloweth where it wishes. And we have to be ready for it if we are concerned about spirituality, our spirituality. If it is based in the Spirit of God it is absolutely unpredictable and uncontrollable. What it is always doing is what it began to do way back In the wilderness of that Old Testament. It is trying to develop us, to service to the least of the children, that's what it is all about. Finally, ultimately, there is no other deeper purpose for the ordained ministry in a multi-cultural context than to discover the face of God in the least of the sisters and the brothers.

So, what it seems to be is being said to us here is that there can be no authentic response by the minister than responding to the Spirit. There can be no authentic response to the Spirit for us unless it

includes a call for help, a call for guidance, Precious Lord take our hands. Lead us to see, to know, to be, to do, whatever it means, to serve you in the wilderness of this historical moment in this very difficult time.

That is the response. Somebody is calling my name. Sounds like Jesus. Oh, oh! Yes! And of course, for us in a place like this and with the tradition we bring, it is important to remember that we are part of a very long tradition of Christian women and men who understood something that we've been sort of talking about on the surface here today. We are part of a long tradition of women and men who understood that their spiritual identity wasn't a Black identity or blue, white, brown identity, for that search for identity is not sufficient unless It is informed and washed with the Spirit.

There are all kinds of searches for identity that have led to millions of dead people, so be careful of identity by itself. Identity without Spirit, identity without purpose may be very dangerous. And we are a part of the people who have learned that, and knew that concern for identity without purpose can lead to chauvinism and death, and to murder and worse. And a concern for spirituality without service to the least can lead to nothing but empty piety. What a vision, that God has set free these Africans and slave people, not just to make it, not just to survive, but to speak to the nations of the world, a word in action that will make them and us free.

And I like Langston Hughes, too. (An African American Poet). For me he was a real spiritual man, even though he didn't always sound like it and he did the kind of thing that spiritual people don't appeal to, but there was something about him that was trying to find what is it that we should really be as human beings which is one of the fundamental questions of spirituality, it seems to me. He ends up with one his magnificent poems, one of my favorites, in which he says of this country, We, we the people must redeem our land, the mines, the plants, the rivers, the mountains, and the endless plain, and all the stretch of these great green states. We the people must redeem our land and make American again..

In the light of this discussion James Forbes in his book *The Holy Spirit and Preaching* ⁷ lists a number of summary points which helps our argument concerning the fundamental awareness of God's authority, power, appointment and guidance for the vocation of the ministry as it relates to Jesus life and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The dimensions are as follows:

1. Jesus had a unique relationship to his heavenly parent. As only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, he stands in a class by himself.
2. Jesus was nurtured in his family and the family of faith.
3. Jesus reached the point of vocational readiness to get on with doing that for which he was sent into the world.
4. Jesus acted upon the impulse of the Spirit by obediently following the guidance to submit himself for baptism.
5. Jesus experienced sacramental grace, which comes when one acts in obedience, i.e., the baptismal experience.
6. Jesus experienced divine approval, acceptance, and appointment.
7. Jesus experienced power from beyond the self, from on high.
8. Jesus was tested in the wilderness where he was able to come to clarification of mission, methodology, and the system of guidance by which his work would be done.
9. Jesus experienced the ministry of angels.
10. Jesus demonstrated strength to bear witness In his community of faith regarding his spiritual formation for the vocation to which he had been called.

The intention here is not to have an exact formula but only to call attention to an enriching understanding of spiritual formation for ministry in a multi-cultural context. To follow Jesus is the true route for minister's faithfulness and fulfillment. Therefore, as the laity of the church stand in the power of their anointing (symbols bearing: Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, Laying on of Hands) they stand in fulfillment of vocational readiness for the ministry.

When wrestling with the demons of classism, sexism, racism, et.al., we can count on the Spirit's help. Paul Tillich notes this in one of his sermons:

The Spirit can work in you with a soft but insistent voice, telling you that your life is empty and meaningless, but that there are chances of a new life waiting before the door of your inner self to fill its void and to conquer its dullness. The Spirit can work in you, awakening the desire to strive toward the sublime over against the profanity of the average day. The Spirit can give you the courage which says yes to life in spite of the destructiveness you have experienced around you and within you.⁸

Each person knows her/his own contextual experience of how the Holy Spirit nourishes hope in the midst of hopelessness. I guess what we all share together is that we would not be here today if it were not for the blessings of God the Holy Spirit. M. L. King, Jr. was able to say:

We've been to the mountaintop. And my eyes have seen the coming of the glory of the Lord. I may not get there with you, but I know that we as a people will make it to the promised land

It seems to me that a minister in a multi-cultural⁹ context who has experienced the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as we have noted already, has a headstart on following Jesus rather than Judas. Finally, all of us must offer ourselves as instruments for the continued development and understanding of a renewed spirit in our sacred vocations of pastors (and laity) as it applies to contextualization and the call of the Holy Spirit. How sinful it would be for us to continually avoid or tamper with the Holy Spirit's methods to bring forth new persons for the vocation of ministry in a multi-cultural world

Questions for Discussion

1. What determines the content of what is to be proclaimed by the minister?
2. In what sense does the context impact on the content of the Gospel? What is the purpose?
3. Discuss the theological significance of correlating contextualization and universality.
4. Why is contextualization so important in the formulation of ministry?
5. What is the nature, role and function of the Holy Spirit relative to ministry?
6. How should the minister exercise authority within a congregation under the call of the Holy Spirit?

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ENDNOTES

¹ Douglas John Hall. *Thinking the Faith*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), p 69.

² *Ibid.*, p 76f. See also p. 93 for an in-depth explanation on the why of contextual theology.

³ K. E. Skydsgaard. "Tradition as an Issue in Contemporary Theology" *The Old and the New in the Church*. WCC. *Paul Minear Commission on Faith and Order*. (Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961) p 22-35.

⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr. *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p 194f.

⁵ Albert Pero, Jr. "Cultural/Self Transcendence." *Currents in Theology and Mission*. *Tol 20, No 5*. (Chicago: Lutheran School of Theology, 1993) 380-389.

⁶ Paul Tillich. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p 15.

⁷ James Forbes. *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p 37f.

⁸ Paul Tillich. *Spiritual Presence. The Eternal Now*. (New York: Scribner, 1963).

⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr deals with this issue in *Christ and Culture*, Chapter III, p. 115 and concludes that: "It becomes more or less clear that it is not possible honestly to confess that Jesus is the Christ of culture unless one can confess much more than this."

