

THE PASTORAL PSYCHOTHERAPIST IN DISCIPLE MINISTRY: ANOMALY OR NEEDED PARTNER?

By Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

PASTORAL MINISTRY as an activity of the church has existed for centuries. Its roots lie in Jesus' own healing ministries and before that, in the Hebrew notion of caring for the "poor and needy." People see the church as a place of refuge and the minister as a person offering solace, counsel, and guidance. Yet today when we say "pastoral counseling" or "psychotherapy" we speak of a relatively new phenomenon. We mean those fields of particular expertise that draw upon insights from the modern psychological sciences as well as faith traditions. Pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy in particular consist of in-depth, sometimes long term, engagement between minister and one or more persons suffering emotional turmoil and spiritual conflict.

In many respects, persons in mainline churches have yet to acknowledge pastoral counseling and psychotherapy fully as an authentic and valuable form of ministry. For instance, when a friend of mine recently moved from parish ministry to a position in pastoral psychotherapy, many of the people in the church struggled to see the new job as ministry. When I explained to one of the pillars of my ordaining congregation my hopes to teach and counsel following ordination, she was unable to conceive ministry as other than in the congregation. She replied, as if to comfort me, "Don't worry, someday you will return to ministry in a church"--in other words, to "real" ministry. Most persons expected that I would seek a church after ordination, even though my vows stated explicitly my desire to teach and counsel. Such examples raise subtle questions about Disciple attitudes toward counseling and the ministry of pastoral psychotherapy. What is the nature of the relationship between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and pastoral therapy?

This question has implications beyond specific denominational lines. Pastoral counselors in almost all Protestant churches suffer mild identity problems in relationship to their ordaining bodies. Typically church people do not quite understand the meaning of the title or the context of the profession. And pastoral therapists experience some difficulty in feeling connected to their

***Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore is Assistant Professor of Religion, Personality, and Culture, associate staff at The Center for Religion and Psychotherapy, and currently doing research on conflicts of work and love.**

respective church bodies. A latent, often unvoiced, sentiment of alienation prevails. Many pastoral psychotherapists see the colleagues where they work as their preferred religious community, despite often widely divergent denominational lines. These loyalties often substitute for particular commitments within local churches and wider denominational structures. Attendance at regional and national gatherings of pastoral counselors superseded attendance at similar denominational meetings. In and of itself, this kind of differentiation does have some important advantages. It allows a quality of specialization that benefits not only the church but the wider nonchurched public who seek the services of those at pastoral counseling centers. The separate institutions--pastoral counseling centers and institutions--enhance the possibilities of ministry beyond the local parish. Pastoral counselors may experience a spiritual community among themselves, distinct from the formal structures of the denomination and across denominational lines. These are certainly goals that Disciples would endorse. But to ignore the deeper conflicts that surround denominational affiliation for some pastoral therapists would be to overlook a significant dilemma.

Time has come to begin to consider some of the roots of the dissonance. A look at the ways in which Disciples both respect and reject this special vocation may shed some light on the broader pattern of the connection and disconnection between pastoral counseling and churches at large. My comments here are merely a small step toward deeper exploration of this issue. They amplify and reflect upon impressions gained from my own experience with the hope of starting a discussion that will continue to unfold.

Images of Ministry: A Gathering of Disciples

When I first began to explore the question of the relationship between pastoral counseling and Disciples as fellow in the training program at The Center for Religion and Psychotherapy of Chicago, I felt a certain sense of both envy and superiority toward my Methodist and Presbyterian colleagues. On initial impression, their road seemed easier: the Methodist simply turned to the big black *Book of Discipline* and the Presbyterian to a less formidable but nonetheless reliable *Book of Order*. As these titles reflect, their formal positions were ordered, clear, and easily obtainable. One simply had to read the written word. And when it came to naming a distinctive metaphor that captured the unique thrust of denominational views of ministry, the Methodist

had no trouble--the circuit rider. Attitudes toward pastoral counseling could be understood within this framework.

My path was less direct and self-evident. On initial impression, Disciples seemed to lack a similar singular image of the minister. And although I eventually ran across a smaller but comparable document, "The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), adopted provisionally in 1968 in the move toward becoming an officially recognized denomination, no one that I talked to in either administrative positions (regional and general) or educational positions suggested that I look at this. When I asked if Disciples had a "position paper" or doctrinal proclamations on pastoral counseling, most persons remarked that there is "little written." Although similar in general intent, the "Design" simply does not figure as large in our theological imagination or in our enactment of church polity as the bigger books do for other denominations. Disciples have tended to see themselves as a people adverse to official doctrinal statements or, for that matter, to any human accretion to the faith that might bar someone who believes in Christ from approaching the common table of fellowship.

At the same time, both colleagues found that while their written documents sounded nice and their ministerial images projected clarity, they did not begin to tell the whole picture. Indeed, they tended to obscure the conflictual realities of their own struggles for ministerial identity within their denominations. In contrast, in its brevity the "Design" left more room for discussion and for developments necessitated by real life. It does contain specific definitions of ministry essential to understanding specialized ministries such as pastoral counseling. And when I looked a bit further, I discovered that Disciples do possess an image of the minister that influences us indirectly but no less powerfully; just as Methodists title their denominational magazine *The Circuit Rider*, it is not without significance that we call ours *The Disciple*.

The church emerged in the early 1800's among settlers who had a need for freedom and a respect for diversity. The early pioneering Disciples established congregations and led in mission and worship, often without ordained clergy. Behind this image of the hardy pioneer stands the ideal of the first disciples, dropping home and livelihood, leaving family and friends to follow Christ. Reflective of these images, the section on "Ministry" in "The Design" starts by stating that "By virtue of membership in the church, every Christian enters into the corporate ministry of God's people." As Kenneth Teegarden, former General Minister and President, observed, Disciples even have a lingering "resistance . . . to use of the title *reverend*," particularly

among those who recall the church's earliest traditions.¹ Congregations continue to encourage laity to take on ministerial duties traditionally assigned to ordained clergy--acting at the communion table, preaching, leading public prayer. This democratic approach to ministry includes the ministry of pastoral care and pastoral counseling.

Hence although initially images, polity, and doctrinal proclamations offer less overt direction about a theological position on pastoral therapy as ministry, in the long run the stance of the Disciples allows for a good deal of freedom and encouragement. As in its early 1800's reformation, Disciples continue to understand faith and ministry, as Clark Williamson observes, without "abstracting it from the whole of life, depersonalizing it, rendering it into a property to be owned, dividing believers from one another, and substituting propositions about God for communion with God."² Lack of formal doctrinal attention to pastoral therapy then does not mean disinterest or lack of felt importance for theological beliefs about the nature of ministry or pastoral counseling. Broadly speaking, the tradition invites persons to discover and articulate theological positions for further debate within the wider community. Disciples are thus relatively free to offer their reading of the received tradition, describing the Disciple ethos as experienced, known and reflected upon. On the one hand, we find silence and ambiguity; on the other, we find receptivity, affirmation, and vitality.

A Mixed Reception for Pastoral Psychotherapy

Within the framework of these general remarks, two specific observations about how the Christian Church understands pastoral care and counseling can be made. First, in contrast to the formal rules and structures of many denominations, Disciples allow extensive freedom for the development of specialized ministries. Second, Disciples emphasize deed, behavior, action, experience, and moral practice. We focus more upon *how* we act on our belief than on *what* we feel, think, and believe. Simply stated, we favor an action model of faith, ministry, and by extension, mental health. Both of these ideas

¹Kenneth L. Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1983) 69, 75.

²Clark Williamson, "Theology and Forms of Confession in the Disciples of Christ," *Encounter* 41.1 (Winter, 1980), 56.

have critical implications for the church's attitude toward pastoral counseling both as part of the church's ministry at large and as a specialized ministry--who does it, how it is done and how people feel about it.

So, who does pastoral care and counseling and how is it done? Growing out of ideals of freedom in community, diversity in unity, all are considered ministers one of another, depending upon the gifts of the Spirit. Nothing, according to Thomas Campbell drawing upon Paul, more truly embodies the possibility of oneness in Christ as the unity of the body with "its multiplicity of parts all performing their several functions, yet helping and supplementing one another."³ According to the "Design," elders and deacons may share not only in the acts of baptism and in the Lord's Supper, but also "in pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the congregation."⁴

Had I done a survey of various congregations, many would agree that we all share in this ministry in some way. Although members look to the ordained minister for leadership and example, they do not see the clergy as sole authority on questions of doctrine, faithful action, or caring and counseling a neighbor. The church recognizes the locally elected offices of elder and deacon as crucial to its wider ministry; and since these offices can often include a wide range of people, especially in smaller churches, pragmatically this recognition tends to include a good part of the membership. Many Disciple congregations pride themselves on their caring atmosphere. Members care for persons in their midst through a variety of lay ministries such as women's fellowship, choir, adult education and more informal contacts in times of duress. The sanction of ordination is not what equips anyone to provide pastoral care. As an external act, it should not matter whether a person is ordained or not in terms of their ability and commitment to do ministry or at least, it ought not bind us. At the same time, this is not meant to denigrate the importance of personal beliefs or ordination as a part of one's recognized ministry as a counselor. It is just that, as Teegarden puts it, "there is little awe

³Ralph G. Wilburn, "Disciple Thought in Protestant Perspective: An Interpretation," in *The Reconstruction of Theology*, ed. Wilburn, vol. 2 of *The Renewal of the Church: The Panel Reports*, W. Barnett Blakemore, general ed. (Bethany Press, 1973), 2:309.

⁴"The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," 14 (also published in the back of each *Year Book and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* [Indianapolis, Indiana: The General Office of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)]).

for any ministerial office." Far more important is "the quality of the servanthood" of persons involved in caring.⁵

A random survey might also reveal that many think that the minister of the church performs the function of pastoral care and counseling more formally and oftentimes with more expertise and experience than the laity. But most would probably not understand fully a term like "pastoral psychotherapy," "psychotherapeutic psychoanalysis," or even "pastoral counseling" or know many such ministers. Many would have some trouble with the term "pastoral" when connected to the idea of therapy. They would understand the idea of therapy as a part of the known secular world but would seldom link it with any religious component. In some ways the two realms of therapy and church remain separate realms. Many would be happier to keep them that way. Some in fact would be disturbed if told that they needed such treatment or at the prospect of being "sick" in this way.

W. Barnett Blakemore describes Disciples as "reasonable, empirical, pragmatic."⁶ As Williamson points out, Disciples are "situated more in the direction of a behavioral system than toward a creedal system."⁷ Faith does not entail discovering truth, whether religious or intrapsychic, but, as Charles C. Morrison states, it means "divine action in the field of events . . . not a truth uttered, but a deed done."⁸ Williamson notes our close affinities with the Jewish understanding that commitment implies action and not a recanting of our sins; it is through our involvements that sins are recanted and faith proved: "How things are done, what one does, is the primary form of confession."⁹ We

⁵Kenneth L. Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1983), 69, 75.

⁶W. Barnett Blakemore, "Reasonable, Empirical, Pragmatic: The Mind of Disciples of Christ," in Ronald E. Osborn, ed., *The Reformation of Tradition*, vol. 1 of *The Renewal of the Church*, 161-183.

⁷Williamson, "Theology and Forms of Confession," 57.

⁸Charles Clayton Morrison, *What is Christianity?* (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1960), quoted by D. Ray Lindley, "The Structure of the Church: Freedom and Authority in Matters of Polity," in *The Renewal of the Church*, 1:186.

⁹Williamson, "Theology and Forms of Confession," 57.

have what he calls "a quintessentially American theology of sanctification, the goal of which is to baptize or transform the worldly into the spiritual."¹⁰

This emphasis on action colors many dimensions of faith. The purpose of the frontier sermon was to instill a conviction leading to action.¹¹ Adult baptismal immersion requires participation of the believer as a second actor, an active person coming voluntarily, not helplessly or passively. In communion the clergy do not intercede, placing the bread in the mouth of each recipient; we participate by feeding ourselves. Power from God in these acts is "released rather than imparted."¹² This attitude is also a carry-over of an early trend in Disciple history. Both Barton Stone and the Campbells disagreed with the Calvinistic emphasis upon the utter helplessness of human nature and the distant sovereignty of God. They emphasized the importance of the exercise of the free will and obedient response. Humans, it is assumed, possess a basic freedom and power to respond as they see fit.

This ideal has significant impact on the perception of pastoral psychotherapy by Disciples. People *act* on their problems and are less prone to seek intrapsychic exploration in a setting outside the church community. Equally important, the understanding of human change in the Christian Church embodies assumptions at odds with much modern psychotherapeutic practice. Change is reasonable, interpersonal, operative and gradual. Just as Disciples do not have a "born-again" view of conversion, neither do they understand change as any kind of overnight proposition. There is strong emphasis on time and process. In faith, for instance, there is no one single moment for a "decision." Even preparation for baptism around age twelve has a strong emphasis on long term formation. Barton Stone, one of the forefounders,

¹⁰Ibid., 65.

¹¹See Granville Walker, *Preaching in the Thought of Alexander Campbell* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1954), 86ff and Blakemore, "Reasonable, Empirical, Pragmatic," 169.

¹²Stephen J. England, "The Holy Spirit: In the Thought and Life of Disciples of Christ," in *The Renewal of the Church*, 1:129.

describes his conversion as having the quality not of "a blazing meteor but of growing continuance."¹³

Moreover, in any change there is a strong reliance on the function of human reason as a middle ground between rationalism and emotionalism. As Alexander Campbell insists,

All of God's dealings with man must include the reason as well as the emotions. . . . The action of the Spirit must therefore be intelligible. . . . The spirit must move men in the same way that one person moves another; by words and ideas rather than by mysterious indirect influences.¹⁴

The reasonable, common sense orientation created a suspicion among early Disciples of overt display of inner emotions. Most Disciples still retain a residual skepticism about "varying moods and emotions of the mind," "inward impressions or transient feelings,"¹⁵ and about claims of emotional conversion experiences, whether salvific, spirit-filled conversions or conversions to pop psychology or transcendental meditation. Reasonable feelings are permitted, irrational feelings questioned, unconscious feelings slightly out of the question. When this reasonableness is coupled with empiricism and pragmatism, we have a system in which people believe that intrapsychic problems can be acted out or worked out rationally, pragmatically, interpersonally.

We should not find ourselves surprised then at what Joyce Coalson, a minister in the Division of Homeland Ministries, identified as a lack of consultation and referrals between parish pastors and pastoral counselors within the Christian Church.¹⁶ There exists a lack of knowledge or understanding about pastoral psychotherapy, a lack of trust and perhaps even a fear. This oversight of pastoral psychotherapy is also a result of lack of

¹³Barton Stone, *Christian Messenger* IX, no. 10 (October 1835), 220-223, quoted by Frank N. Gardner, "Man and Salvation: Characteristic Ideas Among Disciples of Christ," in *The Renewal of the Church*, 1:152.

¹⁴England, "The Holy Spirit," 114.

¹⁵Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, vol. 1, 144ff, quoted by England, "The Holy Spirit," 113.

¹⁶Joyce Coalson, Division of Homeland Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), personal correspondence, April 1985.

perceived need. The focus is on action, reason and interpersonal or community interaction rather than emotion and intrapsychic meaning. In many ways, the emphasis on healing in psychoanalytic psychotherapy through a therapeutic relationship in which understanding and insight predominate, but "acting out" one's problem is more or less ruled out, would be alien to many Disciples. Pragmatically, resources and relief come through greater involvement in the community, through doing something about one's problem, by participating in the supportive fellowship or perhaps, through seeking counsel in the minister's office.

This partial failure to understand the nature of pastoral counseling as a specialized ministry is not confined to the congregation. The organizational structures of the Disciples value the ministry of pastoral care and counseling.¹⁷ At the same time, they tend to pay pastoral counseling less heed as a special form of ministry than other specialized forms.

The official definition of the order of ministry by the general church does not refer explicitly to the function of pastoral care. Rather the minister is "responsible to lead in transmitting the Christian tradition . . . , translating and interpreting the Scriptures, proclaiming the gospel of Christ, administering the sacraments, serving to maintain a company of Christians in continuity with the life and faith of the Apostles, and acting as pioneers and leaders in the church's reconciling mission in the world."¹⁸ We do not find specific reference to the ministry of care and counseling.

Nor do the general policies of endorsement take the distinction between pastoral *counseling* and pastoral *care* seriously. In response to my inquiry on this topic, the Division of Homeland Ministries of the general church sent me the "Requirements and Procedures for Endorsement for all Chaplaincies." Endorsement procedures equate chaplaincy with therapy, pastoral care with pastoral counseling. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) lacks an endorsing body for pastoral counselors specifically. When a pastoral counselor seeks endorsement in ministry, she or he comes under the auspices of Disciples of Christ Chaplains Association. Begun in response to

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸"Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry," adopted by the General Assembly in 1971 and distributed to ministerial candidates by the Committee on Licensing and Ordination, Commission on the Ministry, Division of Nurture, Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin, 1983.

the increased numbers of military chaplains seeking official endorsement for governmental service, the Association continues to reflect the dominance of military chaplaincy. Although the procedures have come to serve those needing endorsement in other specializations, the distinction in function between the kind of training and work required of pastoral counselors and that required of chaplains is still not made. Since this is the primary means of accountability for the pastoral counselor, it would make sense either to broaden the definition and nature of the office from that of military chaplaincy or to create a separate office. Although both chaplaincy and pastoral counseling are basic forms of pastoral care, the educational process, the necessary credentials, and the pastoral formation necessary for pastoral therapy are distinct from that of chaplaincy. While the continuities between these two ministries are significant, they are not the same and there are some important differences in training, formation, focus and intent.

In 1981 the General Assembly of the Disciples reviewed the question of ministerial standing and voted in favor of a new resolution as an amendment to the "Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry." Motivated in part by concern about the "Jonestown tragedy of 1987" and shock that Jim Jones held ministerial standing in the Disciples church, the resolution suggests tighter requirements. The amendment emphasizes the necessity of serving in a congregation or in a church in order to be recognized as a minister. In contrast to the common practice of reinstating standing "after a person has been temporarily employed outside the church," it was suggested that "a person will not be continued in standing who is neither employed by, nor actively seeking employment in, nor accountable to a congregation, organization, related institution or regional or general unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)."¹⁹ Pastoral counselors practicing in an institution not directly affiliated with the Christian Church might be technically perceived as "outside the church." Although perhaps not intended, it would be a sad consequence if this vote affects the church's position on and general attitudes towards persons in specialized ministries in a negative, conservative way.

While a General Assembly may pass such a resolution, this does not officially obligate those at the regional or local level to implement it. As it stands, this is determined largely by individual regions and churches. Ultimately, the consequences depend upon who serves on each particular

¹⁹*Yearbook and Directory 1982 of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*, 334-335.

commission on ministry and on each regional staff and whether they recognize a specific occupation or service as ministry deserving of standing.

But the resolution on ministerial standing does point to the need for a more adequate means of accounting for those in less traditional forms of ministry and for keeping them within the fold. Other than the bare bones of endorsement requirements, there is little that explicitly draws or keeps persons in pastoral therapy in a relationship of accountability and commitment to the wider church. The endorsement requirement itself is rather minimal, involving primarily paperwork. Regions may or may not take interest; churches may or may not be open to this ministry; the Congress of Disciple Clergy, formed in 1974 to provide "mutual support and concern," may or may not include pastoral psychotherapists among their primary members.²⁰

Pastoral Therapy in a More Positive Light

Notwithstanding, if we look in another direction we find a rich understanding of pastoral counseling as a specialized ministry. In many ways, the Christian Church is less inclined to define a minister as one "who has a church" than many denominations. Teegarden states, "The Christian Church never has limited use of the title minister to pastors of local congregations," largely as a result of that time when many Disciples "felt that a congregation should not have a single designated pastor."²¹

Deployment is a variety of ministries. Of the 6,706 ordained and licensed ministers listed in the 1982 edition of the *Year Book and Directory*, 2,559 were pastors. The second largest group was 1,450 retired ministers. There were chaplains, campus ministers, staff members of regions and general units, missionaries, and a dozen other categories besides those that come immediately to mind.²²

The "Design" includes in its list of those recognized as ordained ministers "pastors, associates, chaplains, ministers of Christian education and

²⁰Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples*, 74.

²¹Ibid., 68.

²²Ibid., 74.

missionaries, teachers with ministerial standing, administrators and ministers serving the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) beyond the local congregation and in ecumenical relationships.²³ This definition leaves room for the recognition of pastoral counselors and therapists. Coalson writes,

Our 'stance on specialized ministries' is that ministry can be performed in any of a variety of settings, and pastoral care/chaplaincy settings are among the variety. Although you would find typical Disciple diversity on this as on any other subject, overall the ministry of pastoral care is valued. Seminaries take it seriously as a part of basic ministerial education, congregational search committees list it among the skills they seek, ministers themselves value it as part of their ministry.²⁴

Disciples honor the diversity of its ministers and grant those called to a therapeutic ministry considerable liberty and latitude in their pursuits. Whereas some churches demand a call to parish ministry and service in a parish setting for a designated number of years as a prerequisite for ordination, Disciples do not follow such a general rule but rather allow each region's committee members to consider situations as they present themselves. At best, this autonomy and situational approach means openness to individual need and encourages the growth of pastoral counseling. At worst, it leads to a vague connection between pastoral counselor and the church and in some rare circumstances, misinterpretations of the nature of ministry.

Part of the diversity that Coalson mentions appears in terms of the regional structures which implement policy and make decisions about ordination. This structure varies depending upon the character of each region and the persons on the ordination committee or council. In the Illinois-Wisconsin region, this structure is called the "Commission on the Ministry" and is composed of persons from many walks of the church's life. Besides practicing church ministers, lay persons and specialized ministers are represented. The meetings are tailored to the diversity of each candidate and become what might be called "informal formalities;" that is, within the institutional formalities of the ordination process, a serious attempt is made to respond sensitively to each person's own experience, practice, and gifts.

²³"The Design," 14.

²⁴Coalson, personal correspondence.

This approach is stated more formally in the "Policies and Criteria For the Order of the Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," a brief paper which describes in greater detail the order of ordained ministry for those considering ordination. Requirements include study and experience "with emphasis upon that form of ministry in which the candidate hopes to serve" and not service at a specific church for a certain number of years. Although a certain amount of experience in church ministry is expected, it is never a foregone conclusion and can take many forms. There is equal emphasis upon each person's experience, personal faith, informed decision, and ongoing active membership and participation in a congregation and the church in general. These policies affirm the importance of seeking experience in the area of ministry which best reflects a person's gifts.

The "Policies and Criteria" state that the interactions between commission and candidate ought to be an opportunity "for personal and spiritual growth" in a context of "nurture and care." The statement of the candidate's concept of ministry, written for the Commission, provides an opportunity to integrate specialization in one form of ministry into a cohesive definition of ministry. Discussion of this statement is more likely to be a mutually engaging conversation than a testing of proper doctrinal adherence. "Ordination to the Ministry," another brief document used by the Illinois-Wisconsin region to describe the ordination process and the role of the commission, expands upon this emphasis: "The commission [is] to provide guidance to the candidate . . . as the candidate's professional education progresses;" it "accepts the responsibility for counseling those preparing for the ministry, interviewing . . . , reviewing . . . , authorizing . . . co-sponsoring . . . , and participating in the service of ordination." In brief, the commission acts more as a guiding and reflecting than a screening or judging body. In a church without formal or official liturgies, ordination ceremonies themselves allow for the diversity of specialized ministry. Candidates draw upon formal and informal tradition to structure their ordination service, writing their vows, choosing responsive readings, scriptures, music--in essence, making the tradition their own.

According to Alexander Campbell, the authority of those ordained by the laying on of hands does not reside in the office. There is not an "hereditary official grace" bestowed. When he was asked how a calling to such an office is made known, he replied, "By the word and providence of God." When asked

how this is ascertained, he responded, "By the voice of the people and the written word--'vox populi vox Dei.'²⁵

Imposition of hands [in the early church] was not instituted for conferring divine grace or authority on the persons so ordained, but simply the authority of the community in whose behalf hands were imposed on them. . . . It may be said that persons so elected and set apart . . . , have the authority of god in consequence of their receiving authority from Christ's people to officiate for them.²⁶

Although Campbell limited the authority to ordain to congregations, his position is still evident today. Disciple ordination today, though authorized by the region acting in behalf of the whole church, symbolizes the support and endorsement of the church which itself is God's representative and servant in the world. In ordination, as in ministry and in pastoral counseling specifically, the authority rests in the hands of the community. The emphasis is on the horizontal as much as it is on the vertical; a primary concern remains the church's action in the world.

As we have seen, this can lead to a genuine openness to the ministry of caring and counseling as it takes on new and different forms during the twentieth century. Yet the tradition of freedom, diversity, and empirical rationality can also result in a lack of clarity about what is and who does pastoral counseling; it can foster a denial of emotion and an oversight of psychological meanings. On the one hand, persons can freely choose to specialize in pastoral counseling as a valid ministry. Yet at the same time, when they do so, they may face moments of misunderstanding and problems of isolation from normal ministerial support systems. These are issues for the future of the church at large and for those in pastoral counseling, whatever the denomination and capacity.

²⁵Royal Humbert, ed., *Compend of Alexander Campbell's Theology* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1961), 162, 171, 173.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 184.