

## CHAPTER THREE

### DIALOGUE AND ACTION

Chapter Three first offers a general review of dialogue and interconnectedness. This review serves as a springboard to place Pinkerton's action into a scholarly context. Chapter Three then illuminates Pinkerton's sense of interconnectedness as reflected in her advocacy and practice of dialogue and action. Her life of commitment to the common good is rich with such examples.

#### **Dialogue and Interconnectedness**

Recall that dialogue surfaced throughout the review of scholarly literature as a necessary component for the common good to be operationalized. In ancient Greece, Plato used the dialogic method of dialectics. Dialectics, a process of questions and succinct answers, was much more than that, however. The final and highest education for philosopher-rulers was the study of dialectics. Irving Zeitlin notes that, for Plato, prior education pursued knowledge in separate subjects, and dialectics, the capstone, revealed the relations among the separate subjects.<sup>1</sup> From Plato's *Republic* we read:

Dialectics stands above mathematics. The latter trains students to ascend from objects of sense to objects of thought. Dialectics, however, is the means by which we attain the knowledge of the objects of thought themselves—the absolute of pure Forms and, ultimately, the final object of thought, the Form of the Good. The dialectician is one 'who is able to provide an account of the essence of each thing' (534B), and who is able to bring this account together with others to yield a comprehensive view of the nature of things (537C).<sup>2</sup>

According to John Randall, Jr., "Platonic dialectic is no method or theory of logic—it is the soul of discussion."<sup>3</sup>

Aristotle used the term civil communication. Michael Smith, writing of the common good in the Aristotelian tradition, said, "All common human undertakings presuppose civil communication."<sup>4</sup> Contemporary authors, also, cite the importance of dialogue. Novak referred to mutual cooperation<sup>5</sup> and Sherover to communal reasoning.<sup>6</sup> Others spoke of associating, civil discourse, telling, hearing and talking.<sup>7</sup>

Robert Grudin sees dialogue as a spiritual necessity; "our individual identity is validated by participation in social discourse."<sup>8</sup> According to Grudin, the genuine contact of dialogue

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<sup>1</sup> Zeitlin, *Plato's Vision*, 114.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> John Herman Randall, *Plato: Dramatist of the Life of Reason* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1970), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Human Dignity and the Common Good*, 64-65.

<sup>5</sup> Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good*.

<sup>6</sup> Sherover, *Time, Freedom, and the Common Good*.

<sup>7</sup> Marty, *The One and the Many*; Robert Grudin, *On Dialogue* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996); Daloz, Keen, et al., *Common Fire*.

<sup>8</sup> Grudin, *On Dialogue*, 128.

requires an act of self-disclosure which, when received in the dialogic act of listening to discover, allows participants to see themselves as social beings moved from self-absorption to active participation in society. According to O.C. McSwite, the act of listening--opening up to really receive the other--is another key element of dialogue. McSwite describes this way of relating as "becoming less reasonable and more real."<sup>9</sup> This self-disclosure or speaking from one's personal experience and listening to really receive the other has the potential to enlarge perspective. Grudin says, "Dialogue frees the mind from ritualized thought and enables the mind to discover its own potential for inventive solutions."<sup>10</sup>

The two acts of self-disclosure and listening to receive, the researcher believes, make dialogue different from discourse and discussion, two other widely used communicative terms. The etymology of the word discourse is *dis* (Latin) apart and *currere* (Latin) to run. Discussion derives from *dis* (Latin) apart and *percussio* (Latin) striking or shaking asunder.<sup>11</sup> Pinkerton, with her return-to-the-root proclivity in search for new perspectives, points out that *dia* (Greek) means between or across, and *logue* stems from *logo* meaning the word. To find the word between requires genuine contact.<sup>12</sup>

John Stewart describes the use of dialogue as moving from "rhetorical sensitivity" to a commitment "to speak and listen into being genuine contact, and even genuine community."<sup>13</sup> Rhetorical sensitivity is awareness of the best way in which to say something to convince the listeners to support your agenda. Anderson, et al., the editors of *The Reach of Dialogue*, define dialogue as "a dimension of communication quality that keeps communicators more focused on mutuality and relationship than on self-interest, more concerned with discovering than with disclosing, more interested in access than in domination."<sup>14</sup> This chapter is based on dialogue as defined by Anderson, et al. Dialogue brings into being the possibilities of each other and fresh perspectives that emerge both within each other and in the middle--the space between them.

### **Dialogue and Action in Adult Education**

Dialogue and action in adult education bring Paulo Freire to mind. Freire believed humans are naturally participative in the world, but they become passive through the experience of repressive power.<sup>15</sup> "Passivity and cultural immobility," according to Freire, "can only be overcome through experience,"<sup>16</sup> and this experience requires an active, dialogical, educational program.<sup>17</sup> Denis Goulet in his introduction to Freire's book defined the mark of a successful

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<sup>9</sup> O. C. McSwite, *Legitimacy in Public Administration* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997), 277.

<sup>10</sup> Grudin, *On Dialogue*, cover.

<sup>11</sup> Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, 167, 172-73, 442.

<sup>12</sup> For more information regarding dialogue, the interested reader is referred to the works of Martin Buber: *I and Thou* (1958), *Daniel: Dialogues on Realization* (1964), "Afterword: The History of the Dialogic Principle" in *Between Man and Man* (1965a), and *The Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman* (1965b).

<sup>13</sup> John Stewart, "Forward," in *The Reach of Dialogue*, ed. Rob Anderson, Kenneth N. Cissna and Ronald C. Arnett (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc, 1994), viii.

<sup>14</sup> Rob Anderson, Kenneth N. Cissna and Ronald C. Arnett, "Introduction," in *The Reach of Dialogue*, ed. Rob Anderson, Kenneth N. Cissna and Ronald C. Arnett (Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1994), 1-5.

<sup>15</sup> Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 19.

educator as “not skill in persuasion—which is but an insidious form of propaganda—but the ability to dialogue with educatees in a mode of reciprocity.”<sup>18</sup> Reciprocity involves a search together. In a sense, dialogue is ego-transcendent. One doesn’t defend a position; rather, one joins with another in search for solutions. Goulet further explains that dialogue in education frees the educator to be educatee and allows the educatee to be educator; “both partners are liberated, as they begin to learn.”<sup>19</sup>

### **A Dialogue with the Past**

This historical study of the development and enactment of a commitment to the common good in a contemporary life is itself a dialogue: a dialogue with the past and with Pinkerton to enlarge perspective. While one can never fully realize the past, Grudin very picturesquely says, “. . . we can inhale it, savor its irreconcilable unlikeness, play with its alternative ways of being, sift through its soil carefully in search of our own roots. In so doing we can build from chronological diversity an awareness of change and continuity that can well equip us for the future.”<sup>20</sup>

Many of Pinkerton’s speeches recount dialogic events and actions, a fact that assigned importance to the process in Pinkerton’s mind. Pinkerton’s peers, chapter records, and secondary sources that trace the 20<sup>th</sup> century changes in U. S. communities of women religious relate the dialogic processes of religious life. Also, through dialogue with Pinkerton, the researcher became even more aware of the importance Pinkerton assigns to dialogue for the common good and of her penchant for action. This chapter will first illuminate the stories of a remembered childhood, stories that indicate the seeds of dialogue and action sown in Pinkerton’s life, and then look at the gestation and birth into action of those seeds throughout sixty years of religious life.

### **Dialogue and Action’s Genesis in Pinkerton’s Education**

This section covers the years 1921-1939 from Pinkerton’s birth in Cleveland, Ohio, on September 22 to graduation from high school immediately after which she entered the convent. Pinkerton, fifth generation American, was born into an upper middle class Catholic family whereas most Catholics in the United States at that time were working class at the lower income levels and thought of themselves as a minority in a land that was considered Protestant.<sup>21</sup> The feeling of exclusion as well as a firm belief in the church of their faith, Pinkerton says, to some degree prompted the institutionalization, impressive churches, schools, universities, social service agencies, and hospitals built by Catholics.<sup>22</sup>

This faith was quite dogmatic. Catholics were “to accept with docility a series of truths divinely guaranteed by the church . . . and] few ever questioned these truths or penetrated the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. , xii.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. , ix.

<sup>20</sup> Grudin, *On Dialogue*, 136.

<sup>21</sup> Pinkerton, "NAWR: A Vision for the Future," 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

spirit of the Law . . . ”<sup>23</sup> Pastors executed considerable influence and control over parishioners. As within any denomination, however, some members question rules and sometimes dissent. Pinkerton’s parents retained a deep faith but openly criticized certain practices of the church in the presence of their children and freely dialogued with them their reasons for nonconformity<sup>24</sup>.

Dialogue began early in Pinkerton’s life. Pinkerton’s parents thought children should know what was going on in the family and the work that mother and father did to make life the way it was for them.<sup>25</sup> Pinkerton’s parents’ conversations with her both respected her as she was at the moment and respected the possibilities within her. She recalls with special fondness conversations as a young girl with her father on Sunday afternoons as they’d walk down to Lake Erie together. When she was fearful of storms on the lake, her father listened and explored with her the formation of storms. “He taught me all about how the forces moved in nature,” Pinkerton said.<sup>26</sup> At other times, these dialogues concerned the interdependence of countries as her father explained that the cargo arriving from other countries was needed in Cleveland, and Cleveland, in turn, shipped steel needed for building in other countries. “My understanding of the Cleveland area, the industrial base of it, came from my father [on those walks],” Pinkerton said.<sup>27</sup>

Pinkerton’s justice orientation also began at home even though her first encounter with concern for the common good was heartbreaking to the 8 or 9 year old youngster at the time. Her father’s foundry supply business had been successful, and the Pinkertons were going to buy a house in the suburbs of Cleveland. The chosen house had a paneled library which so impressed young Pinkerton that she urged her dad, “Let’s just give them the money and move in.”<sup>28</sup> It was not to be, however, for in 1929, the U. S. economy worsened, and two weeks after Pinkerton first saw the “new” house, her father took her and her two brothers aside to explain, as Pinkerton remembers, “that we weren’t moving to that house because something terrible was going to happen in the country. We would be all right, but other people wouldn’t be, and we had to be able to help. I didn’t know why we had to be able to help; they should help themselves. I can remember that [incident], because I thought his decision was like shards of glass falling at my feet. I had so wanted to live in that house.”<sup>29</sup> Pinkerton recalls that later she accompanied her father when, following the advice of business friends, he withdrew his money from the bank the day before the banks fell.<sup>30</sup> The Pinkertons struggled but were fortunate because between 1929-1932, forty-four percent of U. S. banks failed with many families losing everything. Pinkerton remembers well another advocate for the common good, Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) who as President (1933-1945) expanded greatly the role of the federal government with economic and social programs, called The New Deal, to counter the Great Depression. Pinkerton says, “In our house we’d sooner miss Mass on Sunday than miss one of Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "The Meaning of Renewal to the Teacher," 2-9-1 (Sister of Saint Joseph Mother House, Cleveland, OH, 1968), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Pinkerton on July 31, 1995 in Onset, Massachusetts.

<sup>25</sup> April 14, 1990 interview of Pinkerton by Sister Jackie Bidden in Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>26</sup> July 31, 1995 interview with Pinkerton in Onset, Massachusetts.

<sup>27</sup> April 14, 1990 interview of Pinkerton by Sister Jackie Bidden in Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>28</sup> July 31, 1995 interview with Pinkerton in Onset, Massachusetts.

<sup>29</sup> July 31, 1995 interview with Pinkerton in Onset, Massachusetts.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

A less personal and less painful lesson in just action came from Pinkerton's mother one Sunday morning at church. The pastor had instituted a Five- Dollar Club to encourage parishioners to give five dollars, a considerable sum at the time, in the weekly offering and published the names of those contributors in the Sunday bulletin. The Pinkerton family was in the pew early one Sunday when Pinkerton noticed that her mother was missing. As Mass began, her mother slipped back into the pew but offered no explanation. At the conclusion of the Mass, the pastor announced that the names of five-dollar donors would no longer be published, as a lady in the parish had brought to his attention the elitism and resultant divisiveness of the practice. Pinkerton and her dad exchanged knowing smiles as they realized who "the lady" was. Pinkerton's mother had told the pastor if he ever published their names again, he had seen their last five- dollar contribution.<sup>32</sup> These actions of Pinkerton's parents were lessons in the importance of the common good, but they also set an example of being self-directed in the meaning-making of life's experiences. Fear wasn't to be denied; fear was felt, expressed and rendered powerless through dialogue. Misfortune and injustice called for compassion and commitment to action.

Pinkerton also says her parents were good role models for a working, loving relationship of mutual respect that valued equally with man the contributions of woman. Pinkerton recalls that her mother had "an excellent business sense," which her father trusted. They made decisions together.<sup>33</sup> Hence, Pinkerton grew up not doubting her right as a woman to participate in meaningful decisions and actions.

Lawrence A. Cremin notes the importance of these lessons learned early in life within the family. Cremin writes, "The family is the institution in which children have their earliest education, their earliest experience in the learning of languages, the nurturance of cognitive, emotional, and motor competencies, the maintenance of interpersonal relationships, the internalization of values, and the assignment of meaning to the world."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, continues Cremin, citing the work of his colleague, Hope Jensen Leichter: "The family is the institution within which children first develop their educative styles--their characteristic ways of engaging in moving through and combining educative experiences over the lifespan."<sup>35</sup> Lagemann's educational biography of Grace Hoadley Dodge (1856-1914) notes that "one learns who one is through reflected images. Especially during childhood, one's sense of self is largely derived from the reactions one elicits in those to whom one is most closely attached."<sup>36</sup> The reactions Pinkerton received from her parents would have given her a sense of being valued as a thinking person. Her father's weekly walks and talks with her reflected an interesting person with whom one enjoyed sharing life.

Pinkerton's early education at St. Ignatius Elementary School staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph built on these earlier experiences. "I had a wonderful education," Pinkerton said. It was

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<sup>32</sup> July 31, 1995 interview with Pinkerton in Onset, Massachusetts.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *Popular Education and Its Discontents* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 53.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.; Hope Jensen Leichter, "Some Perspectives on the Family as Educator," in *The Family as Educator*, ed. Hope Jensen Leichter (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974), 1-43; Hope Jensen Leichter, "The Concept of Educative Style," *Teachers College Record* 75(Dec. 1974b): 239-50.

<sup>36</sup> Lagemann, *A Generation of Women*, 13.

a lab school in which teachers were trained in all the latest techniques of teaching.<sup>37</sup> Pinkerton remembered that her education was called the Winnetka Plan. The architect of the educational system that later became known as the Winnetka Plan was Carleton Washburne.<sup>38</sup> Actually, Washburne believed it was more than a plan. He declared that “. . . instead of a *plan* there was a *spirit*, a way of thinking, a way of living within the faculty.”<sup>39</sup> Washburne described the Winnetka Plan as a confluence in 1919 of three streams of educational innovation: (a) that of individualized instruction in math developed by Mary Ward at San Francisco Normal School in 1912, (b) Washburne’s own early teaching experience of a “special class” in Tulare, California, during which he became “acutely aware of the inefficiency and harmfulness--even cruelty--of trying to force widely differing children into the same mold,” and (3) the desire of parents in Winnetka, Illinois, to establish a school of which they could be proud for their children.<sup>40</sup> These three streams had their origins in the work of earlier educators,<sup>41</sup> John Dewey being the best known and the one with whom Pinkerton associates her education.

Dewey believed that “all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race:”

I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. To prepare [a child] for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities; that his eye and ear and hand may be tools ready to command, that his judgment may be capable of grasping the conditions under which it has to work, and the executive forces be trained to act economically and efficiently.<sup>42</sup>

The Winnetka Plan, built on this philosophy, was a spirit of experimentation, individualizing for half of the morning and afternoon sessions the instruction of knowledge and skills, which everyone needed to master. Students learned at their own rate and reinforced the content with sessions spent in group and creative activities. The curriculum emphasized social learning and attitudes and stressed good mental health practices, self-instruction and responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

St. Ignatius School structured the school day a bit differently, but retained the essential elements of the Winnetka Plan. Pinkerton recalls the group activities and choices students were permitted to make regarding their activities and the welfare of the group that each felt. When a

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<sup>37</sup> Conversation with Pinkerton on February 4, 1996, at home of researcher in Falls Church, VA.

<sup>38</sup> Carleton W. Washburne and Jr. Marland, Sidney P., *Winnetka: The History and Significance of an Educational Experiment* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), v.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-19.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," *The School Journal* LIV, no. No. 3 (January 16 1897): 7780; Martin S. Dworkin, *Dewey on Education: Selections*, Classics in Education, vol. 3 (NY: Teachers' College, Columbia University, 1959), 19-22.

<sup>43</sup> Washburne and Marland, *Winnetka*, 199.

student mastered a skill or required knowledge, before continuing to another level, he or she then helped another child master the lessons.<sup>44</sup> Thus Pinkerton's early schooling was active, experiential, respectful of students' potential, and built on the lessons of commitment to the welfare of others already begun at home.

Pinkerton's secondary school experience was also unique and creative. Whatever period of history the students were studying, they learned the mythology, music, art, science, inventions, and great thinkers of the period. Students had to know "what went on in every section of the world at the same time."<sup>45</sup> It was an integrated, participatory, interdisciplinary education not learned in passive receipt of another's knowledge. In fact, the tests were "the east bulletin board" which the students designed together to display all of those aspects of culture.

During Pinkerton's high school years at St. Joseph Academy, a Catholic priest, supportive of the Catholic Worker Movement founded in 1933 by social activist, Dorothy Day (1897-1980) and Peter Maurin (1877-1949), asked several students for assistance in renovating an old house in Cleveland for use as one of the Movement's hospitality houses for the homeless and hungry. Pinkerton volunteered along with others, cleaned and painted, and eventually helped cook and serve meals to the residents. In the process, she met Day, who, Pinkerton remembers, was searching for venues to promote the Catholic Worker Movement. Pinkerton volunteered her high school auditorium and even set with Day the date of the talk. Excited about her coup, Pinkerton told the principal and received a tongue-lashing that left her stunned. "Who did I think I was? The principal of the school?" the principal asked Pinkerton.<sup>46</sup> Pinkerton since childhood had made decisions and taken action when action was necessary. Youthful enthusiasm and practiced behavior, even with the best intentions, proved to be a volatile combination, however, as the principal perceived a complete disregard of protocol. After the principal's temper abated, she accepted Pinkerton's apology. Pinkerton's mother, meanwhile, didn't wait for the moment of reconciliation and chided the principal for destroying initiative in a student rather than praising it. Dorothy Day's talk was allowed to take place as scheduled, and the principal asked Pinkerton to introduce Ms. Day--which she did "wearing a beautiful fuchsia suit my mother had bought me just for the occasion," Pinkerton said with a smile.<sup>47</sup>

An excellent student, Pinkerton in her senior year won a scholarship to St. Mary's College at Notre Dame University but advised her parents she was considering entering the convent rather than accepting the scholarship. Pinkerton's parents clarified their preference for education, but entrusted the decision to Pinkerton. Disappointed when she chose the convent and probably sure the choice was wrong, her parents, nonetheless, steadfastly adhered to their belief in her right to decide. Pinkerton's paternal grandmother, however, disowned her when she chose the convent.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> September 27, 1998 conversation with Pinkerton on automobile trip to Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>45</sup> Conversation with Pinkerton on February 4, 1996, at home of researcher in Falls Church, VA

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Conversation with Pinkerton on February 4, 1996, at home of researcher in Falls Church, VA.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

In summary, Pinkerton saw herself, in reflection of her parents' response to her, as an interesting, intelligent, valued person. She began to develop an educative style of engaging in dialogic, active, participative learning that was reinforced throughout her formal schooling.

### **Dialogue and Action's Development in a Life of Commitment**

Pinkerton remembers the day well when her parents took her to enter the convent. Pinkerton's mother said to her, "Your trunk your father is carrying might as well be your coffin to him."<sup>49</sup> From an upstairs window, Pinkerton tearfully watched her parents drive away and then began what Pinkerton called "the dark night of the soul."<sup>50</sup> This independent young woman, reared at home and educated in school to be responsibly self-directed, would no longer be permitted to make even simple decisions or choices. "The sanctity or laxity of the person was determined by her fidelity to rule, to order, to observance. Structures were experientially more important than persons," Pinkerton recalls.<sup>51</sup> Quick to put into context and balance the picture, Pinkerton added:

This is not to undermine the sanctity of the persons who lived their [entire] lives within those structures, persons who in ministering to the needs of the people of God, created and nurtured the vast complex of institutions and services which have made such a monumental contribution to the service of the church. Because they had entered religious life at the period of its stabilization, they were nurtured by these structures, valid as they seemed for that historical moment and monastic as they were in origin.<sup>52</sup>

Obedience, not dialogue, was the order of life. Pinkerton experienced great lows as a novice<sup>53</sup> and in later theological reflection, metaphorically described this period as a long road back--in contrast to the road ahead on which she used to walk with her father to Lake Erie. Pinkerton almost left the convent several times, knowing that she would always be welcomed at home, but "something," as Pinkerton says, tugged at her to stay.<sup>54</sup>

Pinkerton also credits her remaining in the convent during that bleak period to the wisdom of the head of the religious community at the time, Mother Margaret Mary, who would calmly reassure Pinkerton that religious life was going to change soon. Mother Margaret Mary taught Pinkerton in high school and was instrumental in her decision to enter the convent. Pinkerton remembers Margaret Mary as "an awesome person" who loved Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven* and read the story to the students as a basis of vocation.<sup>55</sup> Pinkerton stayed, made her final vows of commitment, graduated from Saint John's College in Cleveland and began teaching in Catholic schools during World War II.

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<sup>49</sup> September 27, 1998 conversation with Pinkerton on automobile trip to Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>50</sup> The phrase "dark night of the soul" refers to the poem of that title written by Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591), a Spanish mystic and poet. The dark night of the soul is a time of purification of the soul--a time often accompanied by feelings of absolute aloneness and despair when nothing makes sense. The mystic, St. John of the Cross, described this period as a necessary step on the spiritual journey to a mystical union with God.

<sup>51</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "Prayer and New Ministry," Formation Conference (Dubuque, Iowa, 1976), 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> A novice is a new sister. The novitiate is a period of learning before taking final vows.

<sup>54</sup> Conversation with Pinkerton on February 4, 1996, at home of researcher in Falls Church, VA.

<sup>55</sup> April 14, 1990 interview of Pinkerton by Sister Jackie Bidden in Cleveland, Ohio.

## An Era of Change Ushered in by Dialogic Planning of A Holistic Education

Pinkerton doesn't remember daily life being much affected by World War II (1939-1945); however, the passage at war's end of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, popularly known as the G. I. Bill, had great import for U. S. Catholics, according to Pinkerton. The education assistance provided by the bill enabled Catholics, she said, "to mirror the class composition and diversity of American society in general."<sup>56</sup> A ripple effect of this legislation prompted accreditation standards for schools and teachers, especially vocational schools, to ensure that the soldiers were indeed gaining an education. Soon, the quality control means spread to the public schools with licensing requirements for public school teachers. Catholic schools would need to be accredited in order to attract students, which in turn meant college degrees for Catholic women religious teachers before classroom assignment.

Remember from Chapter One that the sisters' education was called "the twenty year plan" because the education took that long to complete in summer schools. Realizing that change was necessary and taking charge of the planning process, the sisters founded The Sister Formation Conference (SFC) in 1952 to ensure a holistic education for women religious.

Pinkerton says the inter-community planning of the SFC and the increased communication attributable to a meeting of all Major Superiors of religious communities called by Pope Pius XII, in which sisters were urged to work together to become agents of change in the world, issued in an era of dialogue and participation that changed forever the structures of religious communities and the lives of its members.<sup>57</sup> The dialogue between religious communities, which before had little or no communication with each other, began a collaborative process and strengthened inter-community relationships. Pinkerton said, "There developed an openness to persons and a solidarity further strengthened by mutual sharing, probing, questioning."<sup>58</sup>

Nonetheless, it was a time of great tension and stress as old traditions and customs coexisted with new theology and new ways of living as women religious. Sister Margaret Mary, who began another term as President of the community just prior to Vatican II, read all the documents preparatory to that council and saw to it that all members of the community became familiar with them. Pinkerton credits Margaret Mary's early insistence on the community's in-depth exposure to Vatican II theology as the main reason the community came to be on the cutting-edge of change.<sup>59</sup> An example of the conflict of old ways and new at the time, however, is evident in the story Pinkerton tells of her assignment as Director of Formation of the newly professed. Mother Margaret Mary told Pinkerton she was to be Director of Formation and to remember, "You are preparing these young women for a church and a community that doesn't exist yet."<sup>60</sup> A visionary of change in some ways, Mother Margaret Mary still operated in traditional ways, for when Pinkerton claimed an inability to perform the job, Margaret Mary

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<sup>56</sup> Pinkerton, "NAWR: A Vision for the Future," 7.

<sup>57</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "Organizing for a New World," *New Catholic World* 218, no. 1305 (May 1975c): 142.

<sup>58</sup> Pinkerton, "Organizing for a New World," 142.

<sup>59</sup> April 14, 1990 interview of Pinkerton by Sister Jackie Bidden in Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

responded, "I didn't ask you if you could; I told you you're doing it."<sup>61</sup> The move to dialogue had begun, but it would take many more years to achieve full acceptance in practice.

### **Dialogue and Action Through Times of Upheaval**

The watchword of Vatican II (1962-1965) was dialogue, and the most important result of that dialogue, according to Pinkerton, was the new perspective of the church as inserted into the modern world rather than apart from it.<sup>62</sup> "The vision of the Church was widened to embrace positively the whole world and to answer its needs. God comes to every generation in terms of its needs," Pinkerton insists.<sup>63</sup>

The decade of the '60s had many needs. A time of social upheaval, the '60s saw rebellious youth whom Pinkerton saw as desirous of real dialogue--not rules and regulations which they were expected to obey without question:

The dialogue of youth is, '...What have you, Christian, to tell me about life and how it is to be lived? Are you really in contact with the crucial problems of my world? Who is this Christ of whom you speak, and what has He to do with the contemporary scene?'<sup>64</sup>

Pinkerton urged teachers to enter into dialogue with the youth, to start where the students were and search for answers together. To start where the students were gave a respect to the youngsters--an acknowledgement of their ability and right to engage in critical thinking. Pinkerton said the teachers should recognize students as sources of wisdom, limited perhaps, but containing a valid part of humankind's search for understanding. Dialogue with students in a search together for answers required a belief in the process and courage to change previously entrenched attitudes regarding authority. The belief in the process and the necessary courage to change possibly arose from the experience of the women religious in their own communities.

The 1960s and '70s for women religious was a period of searching for answers together. Pinkerton says Vatican Council II asked the sisters to return to the spirit of their founder, "to recapture the original myth or ideal which inspired the foundation and to seek its contemporary expression."<sup>65</sup> The original charism of the Sisters of Saint Joseph was reconciliation, but to know its contemporary expression necessitated hours and hours of dialogue in theological reflection and among themselves. Each new "truth" arrived at through dialogue brought forth more questions that necessitated more dialogue. Questions of suitability of habit or regular street dress for the contemporary expression of reconciliation, relationships of superior/subject or of equal participants engaged in discernment together, the direction of the community, and individual ministry discernment challenged members. Margaret Ann Leonard described this process as a journey into the world—a journey that required of the sisters:

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> April 14, 1990 interview of Pinkerton by Sister Jackie Bidden in Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>63</sup> Pinkerton, "The Meaning of Renewal to the Teacher."

<sup>64</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "A Picture of the Contemporary Situation," 2-9-1 (Sisters of Saint Joseph Mother House, Cleveland, OH, 1969a), 3.

<sup>65</sup> Pinkerton, "Prayer and New Ministry," 6.

a faith like that of Abraham: going far from a homeland we knew well, a religious sub-culture oriented to an other-worldly transcendence, reinforced and kept in place by an American culture which tolerated well religion celebrated in a private sphere. We went forth without knowing where we were going, guided by a Church sifting its own self-awareness in relation to the world, in relation to salvation, in relation to the Kingdom. All of these new awarenesses began to be appropriated by us, perhaps in unique ways. A People of God Church, the Universal Sacrament of Salvation, created enormous changes in our sense of ourselves in mission and ministry.<sup>66</sup>

Such dialogue was not without pain and controversy, for in the process participants sometimes discovered “THEIR truth” did not emerge as “THE truth.” Through the pain of opening firmly held, often ritualized viewpoints to critical reflection through dialogue, the sisters discovered their own potential for inventive solutions. A social self-knowledge increasingly awoke of what Grudin calls, the “things that matter: oppression, suffering, sympathy, love, pain” in the world.<sup>67</sup> As assumptions underlying beliefs and previous behavior surfaced for examination, many seemed no longer justifiable in the constraints they placed on the sisters’ understanding of the world. “The frame of reference changed from the previous values of structure and order to those of person, freedom, responsibility, dialogue, friendship, participation in the life and direction of community,” Pinkerton wrote. “The new emphasis became the person, the importance of human development, and the relation of the person to community. The individual was called to responsibility for choice in ministry and lifestyle.”<sup>68</sup>

The critical reflection of this period fostered transformative learning, a process that, according to Jack Mezirow and associates, results in “the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one’s experience.”<sup>69</sup> Once the women experienced the social knowledge of self in community, the church, and the larger society, they seemed corporately to become increasingly aware of oppression, suffering, and injustice in the world. According to Pinkerton, their own “journey into the transformation of authority-obedience structures” resulted in a self-determination and increased free, responsible participation that enabled them to “listen more intently to those under the power of others.”<sup>70</sup> Not every woman religious or every community experienced the same perspective transformation at the same time or even to the same degree, but the ongoing dialogic process continues to foster freedom from ritualized thought, trust in one another, and a willingness to search together for inventive solutions. Some communities of women religious moved more quickly than others into new perspectives. The Congregation of Saint Joseph, Pinkerton says was on the cutting edge of change.<sup>71</sup>

The evaluation of their communities and the awakened social knowledge of self in community led to a further study of the relationship of the women and their communities to the

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<sup>66</sup> Margaret Ann Leonard, "Reality of United States Women Religious Past and Present," National Assembly of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (Kansas City, Missouri, 27/August, 1984), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Grudin, *On Dialogue*, 152.

<sup>68</sup> Pinkerton, "Prayer and New Ministry," 7.

<sup>69</sup> Jack and Associates Mezirow, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), xvi.

<sup>70</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "World Issues and Congregational Leadership" (New York Community, 1981h), 7.

<sup>71</sup> September 27, 1998 conversation with Pinkerton on automobile trip to Cleveland, Ohio.

local church, which Pinkerton wrote, “often gave little indication that a Council [Vatican II] had taken place.”<sup>72</sup> In contrast, Pinkerton noted, women religious “had by reason of the Sister Formation Movement of the ‘50s become well-prepared ecclesially, theologically, educationally, professionally for the call of the Council” and found themselves in the position of nurturing the U. S. Church toward the movement of Vatican II.<sup>73</sup>

Pinkerton’s speeches clearly indicate that women religious expected to enter into a dialogic process with priests, bishops, senates, and laity to facilitate collaborative ministry.<sup>74</sup> This dialogic relationship meant inclusion in the decision-making process of the Church. Unfortunately, Pinkerton wrote, they often found themselves mistrusted by the clergy and less respected by many segments of the church: “They were prepared to serve a church which did not exist and, in some cases, was not in the process of becoming.”<sup>75</sup>

A source of hope for some women religious was the formation of inter-community groups, according to Pinkerton. The first of these groups were Sister Councils or Sister Senates, but soon so many organizations emerged that “diffusion and duplication of efforts was a danger,” reported Pinkerton.<sup>76</sup> Groups specified different justice agendas, and Network, where Pinkerton currently works as a lobbyist, was founded to address in Congress the legislative aspects of the justice agenda. Sisters Uniting formed to be a channel of communication among the groups. The National Assembly of Women Religious (NAWR) focused on the utilization of its corporate power in a ministry for justice.<sup>77</sup> Pinkerton was President of NAWR 1973-1975 and, in her last term, addressed NAWR members in a speech later printed in the journal *Brothers’ Newsletter*:

Our life choice calls us to develop in concert with others a vision of a world of justice and peace in all its global ramification. It further calls us to critique the institutions of which we are a part against this vision of global justice, to decide what we as individuals, what NAWR as a grassroots group can do to make that vision reality. We need to know how to go about the business of systemic change, how to league with others also painfully aware of the present global disorders. I believe this is our Gospel mandate at the moment.<sup>78</sup>

### **Dialogue Leads to Awareness of Institutionalized Values**

In the dialogue of theological reflection, Pinkerton became aware of her own complicity in what she called “a success-oriented value system rather than a Gospel-oriented value system.”<sup>79</sup> Pinkerton realized that when she was Principal of St. Joseph’s Academy, her encouragement of youngsters “to get good SAT scores, to seek admission into fine universities, to pursue highly remunerative, prestigious positions and careers” had stemmed from a desire to

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<sup>72</sup> Pinkerton, "Organizing for a New World," 142.

<sup>73</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "A Sister Views the Church of the '70s," Ecumenical Meeting-Avon, 2-9-1 (Sisters of Saint Joseph Mother House, Cleveland, OH, 1968-9), 1.

<sup>74</sup> Pinkerton, "Organizing for a New World."

<sup>75</sup> Pinkerton, "NAWR: A Vision for the Future," 142.

<sup>76</sup> Pinkerton, "Organizing for a New World," 142.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid; Catherine Pinkerton, "Vision for the Future," *Brothers' Newsletter* 17, no. No. 3 (Fall 1975d): 33.

<sup>78</sup> Pinkerton, "Vision for the Future," 34.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. , 35.

have the most successful graduates rather than “to better bring the impact of the Gospel values of peace and justice to bear on societal structures.”<sup>80</sup>

Pinkerton’s realization of her own complicity in a success oriented value system stemmed from many hours in dialogue in which the sisters centered on: What are our values? Does our lifestyle give credibility to our ministry? Is our lifestyle speaking to the Gospel message of justice and freedom, or are we too enslaved by the institutionalization of values? Pinkerton explained this institutionalization of values to the NAWR members:

U. S. Society today is one committed to the institutionalization of values, one which is based on consumerism, identifying success with the gross national product. An individual is respected not so much for his/her gifts of person and expertise, but rather for the needs he/she is wealthy enough to purchase or for how many new needs or service he/she can demand. Our dependence upon nature and the individuals has been replaced by our dependence upon institutions.<sup>81</sup>

Pinkerton believes that a country that lives such institutionalization may be the most developed nation in one sense, but the least developed in a “real sense.” She recalled a theologian at the 1974 Inter-American Conference on Religious Life held in Bogota who decried the use of the terms ‘developing, developed, under-developed’ in describing Latin-American and North American relationships. Pinkerton cited the theologian, whose name she could not recall: “We are developed in the values of person, family, leisure, reflection, which you in the North have sacrificed in large part for the values of technology, industrialization.”<sup>82</sup>

A moment of reflection on the continuity of education in which all learning is built on previous learning is appropriate at this point. Women religious had passed from a concern for structure to a concern for community. The concern for community passed from an inward focus on self to an outward concern for systemic change in institutions and organizations that exclude others from dialogue. This experiential, participatory learning evoked a new maturity and sense of identity that allowed the sisters to confront the institutional church’s authoritative, non-dialogic actions.

### **Solidarity in a Dialogic Kin-dom**

When the Vatican Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRIS) imposed a deadline for religious communities to send revised constitutions in for approval, women religious were assertive in response. Sister Theresa Kane, RSM, in a 1980 presidential address to NAWR, later reprinted in a 1981 issue of *Probe*, NAWR’s official publication, questioned, “Are the systems of the institutional church such that a close scrutiny of details affecting women’s congregations might be another example of paternalism?”<sup>83</sup> Kane suggested that the women religious might develop their own review panel: “Canonical approval of

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<sup>80</sup> Pinkerton, “Vision for the Future,” 35.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>82</sup> Pinkerton, “Vision for the Future,” 36.

<sup>83</sup> Theresa Kane, “Dialogue: Constitutions of Women Religious,” Presidential address, Leadership Conference of Women Religious (Philadelphia, PA, August, 1980); Theresa Kane, “Dialogue: Constitutions of Women Religious,” *Probe* X, no. 4 (March/April 1981): 1.

constitutions might neither be requested nor even granted; an ongoing dialogic posture between the religious community and the SCRIS structure would reflect a new relationship of maturity, mutuality, and equality between that structure and the religious communities.”<sup>84</sup>

Dialogue had brought these women to a new vision of the kin[g]dom of God. Omitting the “g” in the word kingdom is something both lay women and women religious in the church increasingly do to show that God really wants kin-dom, a world of brothers and sisters, rather than kingdom with one in power over others. Pinkerton saw the trinitarian image of God as a community of persons in dialogue.<sup>85</sup>

The building blocks of the kin-dom are dialogic steps. Pinkerton says kin-dom begins with “recognition and affirmation of one’s own history, real knowledge of where we have come from and in what direction we are going” and communicating with others “who we are at each stage of life.”<sup>86</sup> Pinkerton believes we cannot affirm ourselves or embrace life alone. We need others in a friendship that “implies mutual exposure of all that we are and can be to one another and acceptance” and a wrestling with questions together.<sup>87</sup> Sister Amata Miller, IHM, who worked with Pinkerton at Network, echoed the importance of dialogue in a 1992 speech to the Sisters of Charity in Leavenworth, Kansas:

[Your local house and community gathering places should be places] where each is encouraged to speak, each is respectfully heard, and each is willing to be changed. [And we need to] learn to think in win-win rather than in win-lose terms, to use our imaginations and creativity to form new options in situations where there is potential for conflict.<sup>88</sup>

Pinkerton’s and Miller’s encouragement to sisters reveals self-disclosure received in the act of listening, a focus on mutuality and relationship, and a desire for fresh perspectives--all qualities of dialogue cited in this chapter. The almost five decades of dialogue have brought many new perspectives. In a 1986 talk, Pinkerton identified some of the changes in vision:

We had the courage to face our own exclusivity, our cultural apartness; to risk our identity and position within the Church and society; we have relinquished and assumed different responsibilities; we have changed our concept of consecration as apart from to immersion. We witness a diversity of ministries bringing us into spheres we never before imagined. We are more in touch with the Gospel as the core of our lives, but we have only just begun.<sup>89</sup>

Pinkerton sees this Gospel core of life as dialogic and participatory by nature with freedom to learn and change. On a copy of a speech given by Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers entitled “Bringing Life to Organizational Change,” Pinkerton underlined, “If we

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<sup>84</sup> Kane, "Dialogue.;" Kane, "Dialogue," 1.

<sup>85</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "Ministry and Spirituality" (place not given, unknown date, 1981e), 9.

<sup>86</sup> Pinkerton, "Prayer and New Ministry," 10.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. ,15.

<sup>88</sup> Amata Miller, IHM, "Expanding Our Horizons," Sisters of Charity (Leavenworth, Kansas, June 13, 1992), 14.

<sup>89</sup> Catherine Pinkerton, "Presentation to the Sisters of Providence," 2-9-1 (Congregation of St Joseph, Cleveland, Ohio, no date), 6.

remain curious about what someone else sees, and refrain from convincing them of our interpretation, we develop a richer view of what might be going on.”<sup>90</sup> Pinkerton also noted agreement with Wheatley’s and Kellner-Rogers’ assertion that “participation is not a choice.” When people “are engaged in figuring out the future, while they are engaged in the difficult and messy processes of participation, . . . they are simultaneously creating the conditions--new relationships, new insights, greater levels of commitment--that facilitate more rapid and complete implementation.”<sup>91</sup>

Pinkerton educates others, as citizens of a democracy, to participate in dialogic awareness of the common good in the United States and the world and to know the creative power each person brings to the dialogue. In 1998, Pinkerton urged Maryknoll Sisters to probe through dialogue such questions as: “How is each country and its people whom you serve presently situated in the global scale of things? How do they reflect international, global trends? What international bodies or corporations or movements are affecting them and how? What needs to be done? To what vision of this world reality are we being called and what are the obstacles to the preaching of the Word globally? What are the forces at work at this moment which devalue the environment, human dignity, militate against healthy communities in the name of power, greed and competition? What are the causes of the great disparities between wealth and poverty? Who are those persons, groups, dynamics which divide races, ethnicities, religions? What multilateral institutions or corporations are affecting the lives and cultures of the people among who we minister?”<sup>92</sup> Lest the Maryknoll Sisters stop at the point of inquiries, then Pinkerton reminded them, “There can be no authentic contemplation which does not flow into action toward transformation.”<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

As we saw in this chapter, Pinkerton’s life resonates with dialogue and action. At home, she learned through the social conversation and constitution of the family. Early schooling included cooperation, action, interchange of ideas, and social responsibility. Dialogue enabled women religious in the United States to determine the elements of a holistic education, collaborate, plan and execute the education in the face of some pastors’ objections. Dialogue carried the sisters through the tumultuous ‘60s and ‘70s, in which they exchanged medieval, floor-sweeping black habits for colorful secular dress, progressed from a hierarchical authoritative structure to collaborative government, and went from the one ministry of teaching to multiple ministries—including Pinkerton’s current political ministry. Dialogue freed the educators to be educatees and fresh perspectives emerged.

Dialogue and change continued in religious life with the emergence of the humanistic psychology movement. Other social movements also influenced the structure of religious life

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<sup>90</sup> Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers, "Bringing Life to Organizational Change" (1998), 7. Pinkerton could not recall where she heard the speech. Note on speech said paper was to be published in the *Journal of Strategic Performance*; however, no journal by that title could be found. The researcher did find an article by the authors in the journal *Futurist*.

<sup>91</sup> Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, "Bringing Life to Organizational Change," 5.

<sup>92</sup> Pinkerton, "Global Spirituality," 18-19.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

and the development of individual women religious. Chapter Four includes these movements as educationally significant in the development of Pinkerton's perspective of the common good.