

CHAPTER FIVE

AN INCARNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

The researcher defines spirituality as a faith-filled and faith-fueled way of embracing life and the world. Spirituality encompasses and permeates one's being and may or may not include denominational beliefs. Thomas Matus in a conversation with physicist Fritjof Capra and Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast describes spirituality as experiential, a direct knowledge of absolute Spirit in the here and now.¹ Pinkerton's spirituality is born of an experiential faith. Pinkerton experiences this faith as a dialogic relationship with a God who became one of us in Bethlehem and whose recorded life demonstrates how to be in relationship. According to James Fowler, the quality of a relationship with God depends in part upon the process of maturation in faith.² Maturation is also a factor in adult education.

The Process of Maturation as Related to Adult Learning

Malcolm Knowles described adult education, "viewed in its broadest sense," as "the process of adult learning."³ Adult learning, according to Knowles, is guided in part by the process of maturation. The word *process* warrants particular attention. Harry Overstreet once defined a mature person as "one whose mental habits are such that he grows in knowledge and the wise use of it."⁴ Notice that the mature person is not one who reached a certain level of growth and stopped. The word *grows* indicates that the mature person, in Overstreet's mind, is one that is always in process—in other words, a lifelong learner. Not all adults, however, are open to learning, particularly in areas that may challenge previously held cherished "truths." This rejection or acceptance of information that challenges cherished "truth" is particularly visible in the stages of faith development proposed by James Fowler.⁵ For example, people for whom Fowler's Stage 3 describes their level of faith development, find their locus of authority in "consensus of valued groups and in personally worthy representatives of belief-value traditions."⁶ For Catholics, that authority would be the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. Teaching from other than those authorities regarding matters of faith would more than likely suffer rejection as uninformed. In contrast, those whom Fowler includes in Stage 6 of faith development find their locus of authority "in a personal judgment informed by the experiences and truths of previous stages, purified of egoic striving, and linked by disciplined intuition to the principle of being."⁷ Fowler says Stage 6 is extremely rare, and persons best described by it "have generated faith compositions in which their felt sense of an ultimate environment is

¹ Fritjof Capra and David Steindl-Rast, *Belonging to the Universe* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 12.

² James Fowler, "Stages of Faith and Adults' Life Cycles," in *Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle*, ed. Kenneth Stokes (NY: W.H.Sadlier, 1982), 179-207.

³ Malcolm Knowles, "An Adult Educator's Reflections on Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle," in *Faith Development in the Adult Life Cycle*, ed. Kenneth Stokes (New York: W.H. Sadlier, 1982), 64.

⁴ Harry A. Overstreet, *The Mature Mind* (NY: W.W. Norton, 1949), 43; Knowles, "An Adult Educator's Reflections," 71.

⁵ Fowler, "Stages of Faith.;" James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

inclusive of all being. They have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community.”⁸

A Structure for Exploration

Chapter Five examines Pinkerton’s embrace of life and the world for revelation of her spirituality. Fowler’s Stages of Faith Development aid in recognition of an expanding spirituality. An account of Pinkerton’s experience with the Depression and a struggle of faith as an adolescent provide an indication of the way in which Pinkerton embraced life as a young person. Pinkerton’s experience as a new sister reveals maturing aspects of her spirituality.

Examples from her life as a mature woman religious, one who grows in knowledge and the wise use of it, illuminate Pinkerton’s embrace of challenging changes in the church, religious life, consciousness, and society. Finally, Pinkerton’s embrace of a universal community concludes the search for indications of her spirituality.

A Young Woman Embraces Life and the World

Pinkerton did not experience, personally, deprivation or poverty during the Great Depression, but she witnessed poverty and embraced as her responsibility help for those who did. As a high school student, she volunteered with others to help clean and paint a house in a notoriously rough section of Cleveland. For a period of time, she withheld knowledge of her participation in this project from her parents lest they perceive the involvement too risky. The house, run by the Catholic Workers’ Movement, was a Hospitality House for the homeless for whom Pinkerton returned on Saturdays to cook meals. After more than a decade in Catholic schools, Pinkerton would have known well the scripture from Matthew 25: 40, “As often as you cared for the least of my brothers, that you did also for me.” She understood that message from scripture to be a directive for her, and she acted. One other teaching she struggled with, however.

Pinkerton recalled that in her adolescent years, she questioned how she could ever emulate Mary, the mother of Jesus, as Catholic girls were supposed to do. Pinkerton said, “As I went plodding along my bumpy road to becoming what I thought Jesus wanted me to be, I wondered what impact she [Mary] had on me.”⁹ According to Pinkerton, a scripture scholar who stressed the concept of freedom helped her realize an informed freedom from which Mary agreed to be the mother of Jesus. Mary’s act was not one of “passive acquiescence,” an act that probably would be abhorrent to Pinkerton. Pinkerton said, “He [the scripture scholar] stressed that upon the degree of one’s freedom as person, largely depends one’s growth in Christ Jesus and one’s ability to be called forth by Him as Mary was.”¹⁰ Pinkerton understood that Mary had the freedom to refuse, but had she refused, Pinkerton said, “She [Mary] would never had known the fullness of person to which she was called.”¹¹ Applying that lesson to the twentieth century, Pinkerton continued, “Like her, if we do not exercise responsible freedom, we will not know the

⁸ Fowler, “Stages of Faith,” 193.

⁹ Catherine Pinkerton, “Untitled” (St. Angela Merici, May, 1976e), 1.

¹⁰ Pinkerton, “Untitled,” 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

depths of relationship with Him to which each of us is called¹² Examination of these two events reveals some characteristics of Pinkerton's embrace of life as a young person. Pinkerton reflected, questioned, sought to learn, valued freedom of choice, and applied the lessons of her faith in active participation.

A Young Sister Embraces the Dark

The early part of religious life Pinkerton described as a dark night of the soul, and she questioned her decision to enter religious life. The sisters who had been her lifelong teachers, whom she had admired as role models in their joyful embrace of teaching, lived lives of rigidity beyond Pinkerton's imagination. How did Pinkerton choose to embrace this way of life that she couldn't understand? She could have left; her parents had told her repeatedly that she was welcome at home anytime. Indeed, Pinkerton admits she almost left several times, but "something" kept her there. The "something" she described simply as an interior sense that this was the place where she was supposed to be.¹³ She stayed and mostly adhered to the rigid rules covering every aspect of daily life but she never stopped questioning or listening to her inner voice. Pinkerton struggled to unify opposites in the behavior and beliefs of women religious.

Once when the sisters were required to attend a retreat—a retreat, according to Pinkerton, led by a priest "with all the theology of a second grade first communicant"—Pinkerton decided after a short time that she could listen no longer.¹⁴ So she slipped unnoticed out the rear door and crossed the grounds to attend another retreat. Among the retreatants there, Pinkerton spied Mother Margaret Mary, the Superior of the convent, who also had slipped out of the other retreat. Pinkerton did not let herself be seen, but her willfulness surfaced for all that evening at supper. The other sisters were planning their answers to a question posed by the priest, and Pinkerton, completely unaware of the question, of course, had no answer to give. Pinkerton readily admitted that she went to another retreat. The sister in charge said she would have to report this disobedience to Mother Margaret Mary. To which, Pinkerton replied, "Very well, but Mother was there, too!"¹⁵

Hungry for contact with the outside world, Pinkerton, whose assignment was to pick up and deliver the sisters' mail, used to sit in the tunnel on the grounds and read all the magazines in the mail before delivering them to the sisters. She said, "They were all the same magazines my father read."¹⁶ Intellectual curiosity overcame discretion in that instance, but Pinkerton apparently embraced life on the outside (of the convent) as well as on the inside.

Pinkerton seemed to embrace the rigid life as new sister with faith that things she didn't understand would somehow be revealed if only she waited through them. Pinkerton remembers one particular struggle as a young religious: "of responding deeply during retreat to the essential truth—it is the love of Christ that has brought us together in community."¹⁷ This teaching

¹² Pinkerton, "Untitled," 2.

¹³ Interview with Pinkerton on July 31, 1995 in Onset, Massachusetts.

¹⁴ Conversation with Pinkerton on February 4, 1996, at home of researcher in Falls Church, VA

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Catherine Pinkerton, "Integration: Prayer and the Local Community" (Dubuque, Iowa, no date given, 1976k), 2.

“clashed with reality in her experience of community living,” and Pinkerton says, “I was ultimately forced to accept the unpleasant fact that in the ordinary-day-to-day grind the ‘structures’ of religious life were more important than the ‘spirit’ of it [religious life].”¹⁸ Pinkerton further elaborated:

In practical matters the principle seemed pretty much to be: we have an important job to do for God; how can we best ‘order our lives’ that we may do it well? It was out of this mentality, apostolic though it may be, highly motivated by love of God as it surely was, that our religious structures took shape. A pattern of life that should have been geared to forming apostolic persons tended rather to perfect an apostolic machine.”¹⁹

Pinkerton allowed her faith to be experiential even in its darkest moments, while continuing to embrace life with intellectual curiosity. Fowler says in this stage of faith development one is “alive to paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions,” and the person in this stage is “ready for closeness to that which is different and threatening to self and outlook (including new depths of experience and religious revelation).”²⁰ According to Fowler, a danger arises in this stage of faith development—the danger of “a paralyzing passivity or inaction, giving rise to complacency or cynical withdrawal,”²¹ but we shall see this was not the case with Pinkerton.

A Mature Woman Religious Embraces Change.

Still using Overstreet’s understanding of maturity as a process of growing in knowledge and the wise use of it, we see Pinkerton’s embrace of life and the world become stronger and richer. Overstreet says the mature person is rather a *maturing* person—“one whose *linkages with life* are constantly becoming stronger and richer because his attitudes are such as to encourage their growth rather than their stoppage.”²²

Gradually, following the humanistic psychology movement and, later, Vatican Council II, Pinkerton said the sisters began to move away from a grace-salvation centered spirituality, “a kind of Jesus and me spirituality.”²³ The sisters moved toward a philosophy which Pinkerton described as “grounded in God in the deep levels of our being, but . . .radically relational and profoundly human.”²⁴ According to Pinkerton, religious communities began to understand the mission of Jesus as “enfleshed in the world, situated in the religious, social, economic and political structures which human beings create as they attempt to organize and control the world. Our mission springs to life in the midst of the people, in encounters with men and women who were formerly shut out from our safe conventual life.”²⁵

¹⁸ Pinkerton, "Integration," 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Fowler, "Stages of Faith," 191.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Overstreet, *The Mature Mind*, 3; Knowles, "An Adult Educator's Reflections," 71.

²³ Pinkerton, "Justice and the Poor," 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Through personalism stressed in humanistic psychology, the women religious sought to be in touch with their own persons, to be women of integrity and responsibility. When wholeness became the emphasis in formation, Pinkerton said the sisters were like “a new wine that cannot be contained in old wineskins.”²⁶ Structures of religious life, the old wineskin, could not contain the new life.

Pinkerton remembered personalism from an earlier period, however:

Anyone who read *The Catholic Worker* back in the ‘30s imbibed personalism from the pen of Peter Maurin, the colorful French ‘personalist teacher’ of Dorothy Day and co-founder with her of the Catholic Worker Movement. His terse essays, graphically set forth in pointed phrases, would draw your attention the minute you opened your weekly issue; and, if you were a people-person by nature, you fed yourself on his bread gladly. And if you did, then in the ‘40s and ‘50s your person-centered thinking and love-directed mode of acting frequently clashed with the static structure-centered thinking and legalistic-directed decisions of not only some administrators but of many professional associates.²⁷

This issue of personalism signified a major switch from spirituality as denial of self to spirituality as delight: “delight,” as Joan Chittister, OSB²⁸ writes, “in the people we serve, delight in the things we do, delight in the spiritual life itself.”²⁹ Personalism stressed recognition of the unique gifts given by the Creator to each woman for the transformation of society, recognition of the parts of one’s personality that prevented the full flowering of those gifts, and the process of becoming free to be the one called by God to be. The concept of freedom reappears, freedom to become the person one is called to be. Pinkerton spoke often about this process of “coming to the fullness of human growth and fulfillment.”³⁰ To know the will of God for oneself in community requires the balance of solitude, deep, personal, loving relationships with others, a “poverty of spirit” and courage.³¹ Solitude provided a time for self-reflection entered into with what Pinkerton called a poverty of spirit. Poverty of spirit, as spoken of by Pinkerton, is an agenda-free openness to revelation. Pinkerton explains, “If I am already filled with theories, convictions, opinions, there is no space for me to listen, to discover the mysteries of life and of God...I cannot receive the gift which is the other...because my heart is not open.”³²

To approach self-reflection filled with opinions, convictions, etc., Robert Grudin refers to as *taking oneself along*.³³ According to Grudin, “Inner change, ...growth is difficult, if not impossible, if one ‘takes oneself along;’ that is, if one confronts every new situation with an armored identity, imposing a familiar perspective on unfamiliar events.”³⁴ Grudin, an advocate of self-reflection, says self-inquiry can be effective if we “renounce the goal of some designated

²⁶ Pinkerton, "Integration," 5.

²⁷ Pinkerton, "Integration," 5.

²⁸ Order of Saint Benedict (Benedictine Sisters)

²⁹ Chittister, "Climbing the Eight Mountains of Religious Life," 29.

³⁰ Pinkerton, "Justice and the Poor," 9.

³¹ Pinkerton, "Prayer and New Ministry," 20.

³² Pinkerton, "Justice and the Poor," 3.

³³ Grudin, *On Dialogue*, 198.

³⁴ Grudin, *On Dialogue*, 198.

product in favor of an ongoing process of discovery.”³⁵ The reward in doing so, he says, is a new perspective of “one’s own multiplicity and capacity for change,” “an ability to identify and reduce the forces that produce knee-jerk, self-limiting responses,” and an ability to “discover and try to heal the conflicts that produce self-defeating patterns”.³⁶

Pinkerton also noted that poverty of spirit was a fruit of authentic renewal,³⁷ a grace that enabled one to receive the other, “whether the other be God, nature, a friend, a culture, group...”³⁸ Truly receiving the other, Pinkerton says, “...means more than being mindful of God and His glorious creation (persons, gifts of nature); it means more than being concerned. It [truly receiving the other] means taking them to heart--...making them part of self. I communicate and enter into communication with. I create the climate in which another can be liberated.”³⁹

Creating the Climate in Which Another Can Be Liberated

As structure-centered religious living continued to shift to person-centered living, many sisters began to desire more person-centered communal prayer. Friction developed between those sisters who wanted a praying fellowship and the sisters who wanted rote prayers said in union. According to Pinkerton, the CSJ leadership then offered a wide range of choices as to number in the group, location, kind of authority, and prayer desires and let the membership participate accordingly. Those in leadership desired to honor each sister’s needs with a flexible structure that would prevent feelings of isolation or alienation for anyone. The plan succeeded beyond anything the women had envisioned. Pinkerton reported, “As a result of this person-centered planning, warm human relations became an outstanding characteristic of every house...creating an outstanding pervasive atmosphere of joy.”⁴⁰

At a gathering of women religious in Dubuque, Pinkerton read from the report of this experiment the description and effect of the joy:

And now something remarkable happened: out of this joy of togetherness sprang, unexpectedly, a readiness for genuine solitude. We are dealing here with an existential fact: the joy-effect of togetherness seemed to be a necessary condition for the flowering of the deeper joy of solitude. Some sisters came to a House of Prayer this summer hurt, wounded, even warped, through frustrations in trying to live community; they came to be healed, and they were. Solitude was unbearable to them until they had experienced the healing power of a warm, supportive community. The poet says that ‘man on the way to silence stops to hear and see.’ It would seem that this summer, sisters on the way to solitude had to stop and drink in and taste deeply human togetherness.⁴¹

³⁵ Grudin, *On Dialogue*, 199.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, *On Dialogue*, 199-200.

³⁷ Pinkerton, "Justice and the Poor," 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Pinkerton, "Ministry and Spirituality," 3.

⁴⁰ Pinkerton, "Integration," 20.

⁴¹ Congregation of Saint Joseph, *Exploring Inner Space* (Ohio, 1969); Pinkerton, "Integration," 20.

Slowly, but steadily, faith sharing and subjective prayer became more and more a part of the sisters' spirituality. Pinkerton, who tends to be one of the first to embrace reflected-upon change, described the old objective prayer done in unison as "beautiful in its time." However, she pointed out, "It is a law of creativity that once an art form has been brought to perfection, there are only two paths open..." One can either "go on marking time with the old form, trying to inject new life into it by ingenious ways, or...strike out on an entirely new path with a diametrically-opposed form."⁴²

Liberation Begets More Change and More Friction

Interpersonal relations among women religious were still in a hesitant, infant stage of development, however. According to Pinkerton, in the 1940s and '50s, "interpersonal relations were not only discouraged, they were nearly forbidden."⁴³ Pinkerton said many elements in the sisters' training and in the structures of living together had militated against normal, human, interpersonal relations.⁴⁴ Remembering how Sister Margaret Brennan, a leader in spiritual renewal, once described their dilemma, Pinkerton said:

If we prayed too much, we were a bit suspect because we should be working. On the other hand, if we gave ourselves too much to our students, to the people for whom we worked, if we stayed out too long or were a bit too popular, that was a problem, too, because we should be home in the convent. Thank God that innumerable women religious kept their cool, as it were and, after weathering novitiate restrictions followed their intuition rather than the masculine logic of spiritual books. If this were not the case, we would not have so many dynamic women religious today leading the way in spiritual renewal.⁴⁵

Each person and each community has a unique rhythm for integrating change, a phenomenon that can cause friction in groups. For Pinkerton, the call of Pope John XXIII to a new Pentecost "was like bursting of chains and an opening of doors, such as Peter must have experienced when the angel released him from prison."⁴⁶ For others, Vatican II ushered in a period of dislocation, loss, confusion, even wandering.⁴⁷ Everything familiar and thought to be unchangeable was now changing. Many women religious left religious life, unable or unwilling to accept the renewal. Pinkerton, on the other hand, told a group of Catholic school educators the renewal was:

A plan, a vision that has been obscured time and again in the evolution of the world's history. But it's like that piece of a jigsaw puzzle that makes all the difference in the picture. Events and men have a way of obscuring the plan and action of God. [He said,] 'I came that all might have life and have it more abundantly.'⁴⁸

⁴² Pinkerton, "Integration," 5.

⁴³ Pinkerton, "Integration," 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷ Catherine Pinkerton, "Focusing Ministry for Our Times," *LCWR Newsletter* 9, no. 2 (April 1981): 1.

⁴⁸ "I come that..." John 10:10. Pinkerton, "The Meaning of Renewal to the Teacher."

Pinkerton seemed to have a sense of history and an on-going revelation of God throughout history.

Educating Educators in the Embrace of Life

In the tumultuous time of the '60s, Pinkerton advised frustrated teachers of skeptical students: "Love the youngsters as individuals and respect them."⁴⁹ Pinkerton's advice reflects an experiential, inclusive spirituality, as she explained, "Christ never let anyone close to His divinity until they had first accepted His humanity."⁵⁰ Stated another way, humanity, no matter how personally annoying, can never be disregarded as "other," if one wants to find God. On the same theme, Pinkerton told another group of educators that the youngsters before them were responsive to "the sacred, to contemplation, to searching," and "were hungry for truth and love."⁵¹ "They [the students] cannot be fed a religion that takes priority over Christian living, that refuses to hear the questions so basic to its search."⁵² Pinkerton reminded the educators of the example of Jesus:

Christ always satisfied the need or answered the question as a takeoff. 'Master, what about the coin?' 'They have no wine.' 'Lord, that I may see...' 'Master, where dwellest Thee?' 'Master, what is the greatest of these commandments?' He always took people in the situation they were in and satisfied their longing for the kingdom of peace, truth and justice. He was constantly opening their eyes to the possibility of transforming the work-a-day commonplace world of their era, seeing beyond the situation to its ultimate meaning.⁵³

According to Pinkerton, the key word was *process*: "It's not a package you can wrap up and give. True communication of the Gospel means making possible a decision for or against it."⁵⁴ Throughout Pinkerton's life the process of freely making a decision surfaces as important. Pinkerton posed some difficult questions to the educators: "How do you define faith? What do you look upon as lack of faith? Non-assistance at a meaningless liturgy? Do you accept the child's right not to accept your way of faith? Do you allow the faith of others to take a different course? Do you clutter the child with answers before you've heard the questions?"⁵⁵ Then Pinkerton told the educators if they were going to teach human beings to become whole personalities, "able to be still and wonder, to live and love nature as reflecting God, to live the dark journeys as part of the one journey leading to fullness of life," they themselves had to be whole.⁵⁶ "Those who stand before youngsters today to proclaim the Gospel," continued Pinkerton, "must be fully human, or they cannot be fully Christian."⁵⁷ Examination of Pinkerton's advice to the educators through Fowler's stages of faith development illuminates a

⁴⁹ Pinkerton, "The Meaning of Renewal to the Teacher," 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Pinkerton, "A Picture of the Contemporary Situation," 3.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁴ Pinkerton, "A Picture of the Contemporary Situation," 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

locus of authority in “dialectical joining of judgment-experience processes with reflective claims of others and of various expressions of cumulative human wisdom.”⁵⁸

Embracing the Process of Becoming Fully Human

Turmoil and confusion often reigned in community life, also, as the women struggled to understand what “fully human” meant and how interpersonal relations integrated one into community. They had called community what they always had, and this new structure was completely different. Pinkerton likened the period to a time of exodus, “moving from a church and society that was familiar and secure and into new forms not clearly mapped out for us. “The evolutionary process of integration in community is not automatic,” Pinkerton said, citing William Johnston.⁵⁹ William Johnston, SJ,⁶⁰ according to Pinkerton, said the process “...must be carried forth by men and women in an ongoing dialogue with one another and with the world.” Meditation was a key factor in dialogue and even, “in the march forward of humanity.”⁶¹ According to Johnston, “. . .the meditator or the mystic, going beyond thoughts and concepts and images to a deeper level of awareness, finds himself in an ever growing union with the universe and with others—a union which is enacted at the core of his being.”⁶²

The education-oriented community combined dialogue and meditation in guided retreats, workshops on prayer, on spiritual direction—all focusing on spiritual growth. Additionally, they offered sensitivity training, workshops on interpersonal relations, on human sexuality, on “affirmation of the person through an understanding of self-defeating behavior.”⁶³ The women grew in self-identity and acceptance of diversity. Experiments with new types of governance brought more into positions of responsibility, and new competent leaders emerged.⁶⁴

Embracing Societal Challenges through Responsible Freedom

The theme of responsible freedom arises again in Pinkerton’s talks. When women religious felt powerless to make changes for the common good in light of the complexity of world problems, Pinkerton reminded them of the presence of God’s life within every person to “direct our existence and our activity in the world towards the definitive fulfillment of humankind.”⁶⁵ Pinkerton called this a presence and direction that “radicalizes our responsibility to be serious actors in the area of history transforming the world in Christ,” and said:

⁵⁸ Fowler, "Stages of Faith," 192.

⁵⁹ William Johnston, *Silent Music: The Science of Meditation* (NY: Harper & Row, 1974), 173; Pinkerton, "Integration," 22.

⁶⁰ Society of Jesus, members of which are known as Jesuits.

⁶¹ Johnston, *Silent Music*, 173; Pinkerton, "Integration," 22.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁴ Catherine Pinkerton, "The Transferability of the Principles of Organizational Development Employed by Renewing Religious Communities" (Think Tank on Organizational Development, Cleveland, OH, 9-12 August, 1976g), 13.

⁶⁵ Pinkerton, "NAWR: A Vision for the Future," 4.

It is in the dialogue between the absolute freedom of God and in His Self-communication to each of us and our responsible freedom before the call of His love that the Kingdom of God will come. Our radical involvement in the tasks of the world is an imperative.⁶⁶

Pinkerton's spirituality of freedom in Christ is paradoxical in the sense that the seemingly unfree act of allowing Jesus full possession, for her, radically expands spirituality into "an active, dynamic, questioning, critiquing" relationship.⁶⁷ Because "God is made manifest in the signs of the times and in those with and among [whom] we live," Pinkerton said, "Obedience then requires not doing what another says, but rather requires communication, dialogue, listening, mutual search, openness—a dialogical spirituality."⁶⁸ Relationship is seen here as dialogic and free in nature. To Pinkerton, God is a God of freedom, a freedom, she says, that is "both relational and radical."⁶⁹ It is freeing in the sense that "the choice to be in relationship with Him is ours and that the choice for relationship gives one radical internal freedom "that is operative even in situations where exterior restraints limit the right to do what one chooses."⁷⁰

This freedom, Pinkerton says, "is a challenge for us to be for others as Jesus was for us," and coupled with the freedom we enjoy in this country, gives U. S. Catholics "awesome responsibilities individually and collectively." She explains, "As citizens of a world power which in a real sense can effect the humanization or oppression of peoples... we must respond as persons who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Resurrected."⁷¹ "Whenever evil exists in our midst and we do not name it or try to work against it, we reinforce and validate it," Pinkerton says.⁷² Some of the evils Pinkerton named include: "allowing the elderly to be treated as unnecessary," "building in the name of national security the largest and deadliest arsenal of weapons in the world," "arming other nations," "teaching other nations the art of killing one another," and "believing that people wouldn't be poor if they worked."⁷³ To those who lamented the prevalence of violence in society, Pinkerton reminded them to look beyond the acts "to the WHY," and when they began to see "poverty, lack of education, racism, sexism, classism, unjust foreign policy, unfair trade as causes of violence," then they would know the need to take action for change.⁷⁴

Pinkerton urged women religious to learn social analysis of systems: "Such development of a critical conscience in the light of gospel values must become the art of the one who ministers out of the justice agenda."⁷⁵ But intellectual analysis wasn't enough, she told them; "to serve means experiencing some of what those you serve experience." Pinkerton pointed out, "One who truly ministers in the name of the poor Jesus is credible only in terms of how her life reflects the discipline of enoughness or the asceticism of simplicity."⁷⁶ "Analysis and experience should

⁶⁶ Pinkerton, "NAWR: A Vision for the Future," 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶⁸ Pinkerton, "Ministry and Spirituality," 9.

⁶⁹ Pinkerton, "NAWR: A Vision for the Future," 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷² Catherine Pinkerton, "Untitled" (St. Paschal Baylon, 5 April, 1984b), 4.

⁷³ Pinkerton, "Untitled," 4-5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁵ Pinkerton, "Focusing Ministry," 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

then be followed by intense reflection,” added Pinkerton. “What is Jesus saying to me/us in all of this?”⁷⁷ According to Pinkerton, “Congregations and individuals who have allowed the Lord to pass through them in these ways of analysis, experience, theological and scriptural reflection on the global reality, indicate that the primary ministry agenda for the foreseeable future may indeed be the focusing of ministry and resources of time, talent, funds, and land on the economically poor.”⁷⁸ Pinkerton said the women should not fear to “rock the boat,” be called different, and be seen as radical. They should remember, “Jesus was in the true sense radical, rooted in the mission of His Father. He questioned systems. He worked with some and denounced others. Are we equal to such a challenge as a community of prophecy?”⁷⁹

Embracing the Raised Consciousness of Feminism

“Maleness and femaleness are physiological; masculinity and femininity are cultural designations,” Pinkerton told students at John Carroll University.⁸⁰ “The Church,” Pinkerton continued, “relies on cultural designations in its treatment of women when clearly scripture reports male and female as made in God’s image.”⁸¹ Pinkerton recalled the words of St. Paul who said all are baptized in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between male and female. She related the inequality of women in church and in society to the whole issue of human rights and even saw the inequality of women as a model for all types of oppression.⁸² The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cleveland, Pinkerton said, expressed a concern with the wholeness of humanity, “the full stature of every person, male and female, their probing beyond their stereotypes and restrictions to a fullness of human consciousness yet unrealized.”⁸³

Grounding the Embrace in the Present

Women religious who asked Pinkerton if she thought religious life had a future, heard the reply: “The more Gospel question is, ‘What do we do with the present so as to make a difference?’ What is asked of us now that cannot be asked of anyone else for reason of the very identity and maturity we have as women religious in this country?”⁸⁴ In the keynote address at a national gathering of the Congregation of Saint Joseph, Pinkerton spoke frankly about lamenting “the demise of religious life:”

I look upon our penchant for pathologizing about the future of religious life as a slap in the face of the Holy Spirit. Instead of asking, what are the causes of our diminishment? Why are we failing to attract new members? Are we dying? Can we die gracefully?, we need to stop pathologizing and begin remythologizing. There is a world out there that is falling apart; a world which cannot take time to plan its future and is hungering for what

⁷⁷ Pinkerton, “Focusing Ministry,” 2.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Catherine Pinkerton, “Broadening the View of Parish” (Resurrection Community, 16 March, 1981f), 4.

⁸⁰ Pinkerton, “Talk to Students,” 3.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Catherine Pinkerton, “Call to Assembly” (Cleveland, Ohio, 1980i), 2.

⁸⁴ Pinkerton, “Justice and the Poor,” 2.

we have. That conflicted reality in need of reconciliation is the imminent place of God and the source of our future. Can we see it?⁸⁵

Pinkerton's embrace of life and the world reflects the belief that God is always calling one to minister. To hear that call, one must not worry about future security.

Embracing the Future

While Pinkerton sees clearly the global problems and inequities, she is hopeful that a healthy, vital, human global community is possible. She refers to the world reality as "a moment in salvation history."⁸⁶ Undaunted by the complexity of problems, Pinkerton says, "We can no longer look at the quality of our persons, our lives together, our prayer/spirituality, our service of and by themselves, but always in the context of the interdependent space we share and the people whom we are with, everyone who inhabits this diminishing planet, Mother Earth."⁸⁷

Pinkerton recognizes a hegemony of free market capitalism, the growing disparity "between the haves and the have-nots," and the "destruction of the environment for greater corporate profit," but she embraces and urges others to embrace the job of social reform.⁸⁸ She explains the root of her conviction:

Properly understood, the Gospel is a **RADICAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT!** Jesus fought the prevailing attitudes of His time. He tried to teach another way of thinking and being and acting. His whole mission was about transformation in order to bring fullness of life. He came, not to die for us, as we were so well drilled⁸⁹, but to give life and to continue to give life through us.... We are called to really put on Christ, to be Christ, the life-giver for our times.... Every great spirituality is born within the great historical moment of the age in which it is formulated. The concrete forms of the following of Christ are connected with those moments.⁹⁰

Pinkerton told a group of women religious that there are three requirements for transformation of the global reality: (a) contemplation/theological reflection, (b) systemic thinking, and (c) action for systemic change.⁹¹ For Pinkerton, all authentic contemplation ends with action for transformation. The action, she said, should be for the human dignity of those persons "caught in poverty and oppression, in the violence of the home or workplace, in child prostitution or child labor, in prisons and refugee camps, or in the violent squalor of our central cities".... "But," continued Pinkerton:

⁸⁵ This article is edited from Pinkerton's keynote address delivered at the United States Federation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, National Event held in Philadelphia in July, 1995. Catherine Pinkerton, "Membership," Box 2-9-1 (Cleveland, Ohio; Sisters of Saint Joseph Mother House Archives, November 2, 1996, 1996), 1.

⁸⁶ Pinkerton, "Global Spirituality," 7.

⁸⁷ Pinkerton, "Call to Assembly," 1.

⁸⁸ Pinkerton, "Global Spirituality," 5, 15.

⁸⁹ Father Ed Kelly told Catholics in a 1997 Good Friday homily the teaching that Jesus came to die for us was bad theology. Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly, Father Kelly said, and the religious and political authorities had him killed. (Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Arlington, VA)

⁹⁰ Pinkerton, "Global Spirituality," 15, 17.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

It is not their human dignity alone which we must seek to address. We must also address the human dignity of those who have sold their humanity, their potential for human greatness, sacrificed their moral values, trampled under foot any ethical considerations in the process of exercising power over people, making judgments that are driven by greed, developing strategies that lead to unbridled competition, living lives of consumption.

They have no compunction about their corporate decisions made with access to power and technology, decisions which move workers and families around the world OR seek out cheap labor in another nation in order to make production more profitable. We know that they transfer trillions of dollars in investments daily within the flick of an eyelash—most of which enrich the few and consign innumerable families and communities to poverty and devastation....

We need to touch into their evolution as human beings, to challenge them. What brought them to this level of consummate greed often couched in what they would term “good intentions?”⁹²

Pinkerton’s spirituality embraces all—those whose human dignity has been denied and those who contributed to the denial, either knowingly or unknowingly. She urged the women religious also to help heal the divisions that separate people of differing races and cultures and help others gain “a new radically different vision of the way people might live with each other and enrich each other by their very uniqueness.”⁹³

“The same is true in religious pluralism,” Pinkerton says.... “We need to go beyond denominationalism to that deep core of spirituality at the heart of humanity made in God’s image and likeness.”⁹⁴ Pinkerton warned that “unwillingness or temerity in working to become multiracial, multicultural, multireligious societies will stunt the development of a global spirituality.”⁹⁵ To those who thought the development of a global spirituality was overwhelming, Pinkerton replied, “Not in community! Each of us makes her/his own contribution not only out of the movement of the Spirit within, but also with the Spirit active within the community.”⁹⁶

Clearly in possession of a “felt participation in a power that unifies and transforms the world,” one of the characteristics of Stage 6 in Fowler’s development of faith model, Pinkerton has a sense of an ultimate inclusive, universal community.⁹⁷ Fowler says those who reach Stage 6 of faith development are persons of universalizing faith, and they are “‘contagious’ in the sense that they create zones of liberation from the social, political, economic, and ideological shackles we place and endure on human futurity.”⁹⁸

⁹² Pinkerton, "Global Spirituality," 22-23.

⁹³ Ibid. , 24.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid. , 26.

⁹⁷ Fowler, "Stages of Faith," 193.

⁹⁸ Fowler, "Stages of Faith," 193.

Pinkerton's "shed shackles" show in this dream she shared with other women religious. The heart and spirit of an educator also shows:

...I envision a time soon when men and women religious across the globe will convene a huge global meeting or retreat—comparable to Copenhagen and Beijing—in which we come together to share our knowledge of all the aspects of globalization. How do we together define our mission in this ever-expanding global and planetary reality which offers the possibility of Christ's prayer 'that they all may be one'. How can we listen together to what the Spirit asks of us at this moment? What a wake-up call such a mass meeting would be for the globe! Such a teachable moment!⁹⁹

The Wholeness of Pinkerton's Spirituality

Our look at the ways in which Pinkerton embraces life and the world reveals a wholeness to her spirituality. Let us examine the findings in light of contemporary authors' calls for a return to the common good that were reported in Chapter One. Martin Marty advises every citizen "who wishes to participate in American life" to "start talking, hearing and keep talking."¹⁰⁰ Marcus Raskin urges an "empathic awareness of the Other, whether nature, animal, or the person."¹⁰¹ John M. Bryson and Barbara C. Crosby see a need to share power in confronting public problems and a need to encourage motivation of others to pursue the common good.¹⁰² George Rupp says we must counter individualism and urges religious communities to focus on a spirituality "concerned with corporate historical life."¹⁰³ A study by Daloz, et al. of a group of people with a long term commitment to the common good revealed themes of community, compassion, conviction, courage, confession and commitment. Findings revealed that these people had a broad awareness of connectedness and interrelatedness.¹⁰⁴

This look at Pinkerton's spirituality reveals every component associated with a commitment to the common good that these authors name. Pinkerton embraces those in religious life, both her own community and others, the laity, U.S. senators and congressmen, and her God in dialogic relationships. She embraces participation in U.S. civic life, at age seventy-eight still pounding the halls of Congress for social justice more than a decade after the usual retirement age. She encourages others to embrace responsible freedom and to get involved in civic life.

Pinkerton's embrace of feminism, while belonging to a patriarchal church that expands and restricts opportunity to serve on the basis of gender, shows courage born of conviction. She is a woman of action who asks, "What do we do with the present so as to make a difference?"¹⁰⁵ Pinkerton embraces the world and the universe with an awareness of the interconnectedness of all creation. She envisions a world community working together for the common good of the planet and all in it. Pinkerton's spirituality is inclusive—an embrace of all as integral to the

⁹⁹ Pinkerton, "Global Spirituality," 29.

¹⁰⁰ Marty, *The One and the Many*, 225.

¹⁰¹ Raskin, *The Common Good: Its Politics, Policies, and Philosophy*, 326.

¹⁰² Bryson and Crosby, *Leadership for the Common Good*.

¹⁰³ Rupp, *Commitment and Community*, 77, 81.

¹⁰⁴ Daloz, Keen, et al., *Common Fire*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Pinkerton, "Commencement Address," 2.

common good. Each person's vision and action is needed because it is in dialogic action together that justice is accomplished.

Finally, Pinkerton's embrace of life illuminates an interrelatedness of intellect, emotions, body, and spirit. Pinkerton engages her intellect in social analysis, her emotions in empathic concern for those deprived unjustly of human dignity and those who deprive, her body in action, and her spirit in reflective, dialogic relationship with her God and her community. Pinkerton's spirituality is whole. Her embrace of life and the world "incarnates and actualizes the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ This is James Fowler's description of Stage 6 faith development, a stage Fowler says is rarely reached. Fowler, "Stages of Faith," 193.