

## CHAPTER VI

### RECONCILIATION: THE WHOLE CLOTH

In this study, the literature reviews of the common good and transpersonal psychology uncovered the themes of dialogue, participation, inclusivity and spirituality. The study of Pinkerton's education and later educational outreach revealed the same themes. Each theme has been singled out and examined individually in the preceding chapters. The researcher sequenced the chapters in the order that she became aware of these themes in Pinkerton's life. Awareness of dialogue and action surfaced first—both from observation of Pinkerton's interaction with others and from copies of her speeches. Next, inclusivity stood out, particularly in the accounts of personalism or psychotherapeutic thought of the humanistic psychology movement and the women's movement. Finally, the researcher realized that Pinkerton's spirituality—her faith-filled way of embracing life and the world—encompassed and permeated each of the themes. Now, using reconciliation, the charism of Pinkerton's religious community, as a theme for the final chapter, the individual themes are reconciled in their interaction and educational significance in shaping a life committed to the common good. Reconciliation implies an 'as-meant-to-be' wholeness.

First, an analogy of weaving a seamless garment describes the wholeness of Pinkerton's life. Next, a brief chronological revisiting of Pinkerton's life allows the reader to view the development of an extraordinary commitment to the common good through a Deweyan lens of education—education that is continuous, participative, and experiential. A connection of Pinkerton's education with educational processes advocated by Jack Mezirow, Stephen Brookfield, and Paulo Freire follows, and a citation from a 1976 talk given by Pinkerton reveals an interaction of mind, body, and spirit in a life of ministry. This ministry flows from a truly radical, relational freedom that emanates from a wisdom within. The chapter concludes with the significance of this study for the field of adult education.

#### **The Wholeness of Pinkerton's Life**

Reconciliation of the themes in Pinkerton's life brought the analogy of a seamless garment or whole cloth to mind. The seamless garment image comes from John 19:23-24:

After the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and divided them four ways, one for each soldier. There was also his tunic, but this tunic was woven in one piece from top to bottom and had no seam. They said to each other, "We should not tear it. Let us throw dice to see who gets it."<sup>1</sup>

The significance of the seamless garment, according to William Barclay, is that it describes the linen tunic that the high priest wore. Barclay says, "The function of the priest was to be the liaison between God and man. The Latin for priest is *pontifex*, which means *bridge-builder*."<sup>2</sup> Current Christian teaching regarding the sacredness of all life gives

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<sup>1</sup> *New American Bible*, 136.

<sup>2</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, The Daily Study Bible Series, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1956), 296.

contemporary significance to the seamless garment image. To those who oppose abortion as murder but advocate the death penalty as justice, the teaching reminds them that life is a seamless garment, a whole cloth that cannot be valued at one end, the beginning of life, and not valued at the other end of life.

Pinkerton's advocacy and championship of the common good are so interwoven into her personhood that her life is a seamless garment always in process. Richly hued threads of the past along with threads of the present are continuously being woven and rewoven with the threads of an envisioned future. The warp, the vertical threads through which all others are woven, is Pinkerton's radical spirituality that embraces persons as good and moving toward fulfillment in Christ Jesus, life as a gift, and the planet as home. A shuttle called dialogue carries the threads through the seamless garment of her life. Dialogue guided by relational freedom enhances the potentiality of a vibrant, whole cloth woven through interaction. Non-coercive dialogue finds joy in letting new designs emerge through interaction. Radical, responsible, relational freedom provides the pattern that guides the weaving of this vibrant, ever-changing whole cloth of being and becoming. Pinkerton's whole cloth advocacy and championship of the common good is an artistic creation--a living of a life woven from the threads of history, threads from the present, and threads from the future all interacting through dialogue guided by freedom.

One last thing remains to be done before leaving this analogy. Artists title their creations, and Pinkerton has titled hers, although she probably is not aware of it. "A Passion for the Possible" is a phrase repeatedly used by Pinkerton in conversation and is an appropriate title for her whole cloth life of advocacy and championship of the common good. A passion for the possible allows Pinkerton's championship of the common good to be on going, multi-dimensional, and ever changing as dialogue reveals the needs. One with a passion for the possible tends not to get snagged by dichotomous *either-or* thinking. Rather, some threads from the *either* and some from the *or* are freshly combined and recombined into 'the possible' for today and for the future.

### **A Deweyan Education That Was Continuous, Participative, and Experiential**

The development and educative embodiment of Pinkerton's transpersonal commitment to the common good is an interaction of education, spirituality, and history. Pinkerton's championship of the common good evolved historically through continuous, interactive and participatory engagement with learning. In childhood, Pinkerton began learning who she is. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann writes "...one's sense of self is largely derived from the reactions one elicits in those to whom one is most closely attached."<sup>3</sup> When Pinkerton's father set a special weekly time to be with her—a time in which he was truly present to her—he was telling Pinkerton who she was. She was an intelligent conversationalist, interesting and enjoyable. Pinkerton's mother's active, decision-making role in the family business provided a strong female role model. Pinkerton saw a woman using her intellect, and, even more importantly, she saw her mother's intellect being valued by a man. In the same way, as a young girl, Pinkerton experienced her intellect being valued by her father's obvious enjoyment of their dialogues together.

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<sup>3</sup> Lagemann, *A Generation of Women*, 13.

When Pinkerton's mother confronted the pastor before Mass one Sunday about the injustice of publishing the names of parishioners who contributed five dollars in the weekly offering, Pinkerton learned that even the church, a good institution, needed critical evaluation. Actions were to be weighed by their effect on others. In many Catholic families, "Father said" bore almost as much weight as "God said," but not in Pinkerton's family. Through her mother's interaction with the pastor, and through the pastor's willingness to confess his error in judgment, Pinkerton learned that a position of authority does not guarantee "rightness," and mistakes in judgment can be freely admitted and corrected.

Her father and mother's decision not to buy the house in the suburbs was another action that allowed Pinkerton to see the two people dearest to her always caring for others. The common good was important to her parents. The importance placed on listening to President Roosevelt's Fireside Chats on the radio and conversation about Roosevelt's New Deal programs for the common good had Pinkerton participating as citizen as a young child. Her early education--based on the Winnetka Plan in which students had a part in helping their peers master skills--built on the early learning of social responsibility. The Winnetka Plan also emphasized social learning. Children daily learned the art of dialogue through participation in project planning and enactment. Pinkerton's work in the Catholic Worker Movement reflected the lessons learned from the actions of her parents and early schooling. Even Pinkerton's invitation to Dorothy Day to speak at her high school, the action that reaped a "tongue-lashing" from the principal, reflected experience of a valued intellect and experience with taking responsibility. Pinkerton's secondary schooling continued the development of dialogue and action. The interdisciplinary instruction in which students learned the music, art, mythology, science, inventions, great thinkers, etc., of any given period, and events occurring in every section of the world during that period, must have provided and expanded understanding of system interrelatedness. When the examination required the students to design a bulletin board to display all of those aspects of culture, intellect interacted in dialogic, participative, experiential education.

The spiritual life was an important part of Pinkerton's formal education in Catholic schools. In addition to learning the teachings of the Catholic Church, she learned the life of service espoused and modeled by Jesus in the scriptures. Pinkerton learned and practiced reflection both in making religion lessons relevant to her own life and in preparation to receive periodically the sacrament of reconciliation. The sacrament of reconciliation included: (a) reflective examination of ways in which one had failed to live up to the ten commandments and to the teachings of the church, (b) confession of these sins with a firm purpose of amendment, and (c) penance—usually several prayers to be said in atonement. Atonement is the state of being one that comes from reconciliation. The Catholic practice of attending periodic retreats in which one "comes away from the world" for a period of spiritual renewal also fosters reflection and integration of the daily outward life with the inner spiritual one. As a Catholic school student, Pinkerton made periodic retreats.

During the novitiate period, Pinkerton was unable to reconcile the sisters' dynamic, enthusiastic embrace of life and teaching that she witnessed as a student with the rigid, exclusive way of life she experienced as a novice. The stressful period put to the test Pinkerton's learned skills of reflection, dialogue, and action, her attitude of inclusion of the other for the common

good, and her understanding of a God of freedom. Pinkerton reflected, questioned, reflected, obeyed (listened for God's will), questioned more, reflected anew, and, very importantly, she waited. Pinkerton essentially agreed to remain and thereby experienced fully a disconcerting period. She allowed traditions of religious life to interface with conflicting prior experience and with her understanding of a God of freedom. Pinkerton called this period "the dark night of the soul." Walter Brueggemann reminds us, however, that "energy comes from the embrace of the inscrutable darkness."<sup>4</sup>

Energy to persevere through the darkness also came from the embrace in friendship of an older sister whose wisdom Pinkerton had learned to respect. This sister, Mother Margaret Mary, somehow sensed that renewal was on the horizon and reassured Pinkerton that change was coming. This reassurance from a respected authority figure also signaled Pinkerton that her thinking was valid. Pinkerton had hope—hope for reconciliation of her spirituality and her chosen life as a woman religious. Integrity or wholeness would evolve.

As communities of women religious faced the task of educating the teaching sisters for certification, the women began a process of taking responsibility for their own lives. The collaborative process of dialogue among the different communities, active participation in planning a holistic education, and resource sharing strengthened intercommunity relationships. Even before completion of the education plan, the humanistic psychology movement with its emphasis on the wholeness of personhood-- body, mind and spirit—swept the country . Women religious referred to this emphasis as personalism which in their lives stressed "the person, the importance of human development, the relation of the person to community."<sup>5</sup>

The sisters were somewhat prepared to embrace the lessons of dialogue and inclusivity and the call for change that emanated from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The embrace required hard work, however, as interpersonal relationships were in an infant stage of development. Decisions and trial experiments of changes in governmental structures, dress, community prayer, ministry left such a feeling of instability that many left. For Pinkerton, however, a feeling of hope and wonder at the work of the Lord accompanied the hard work. She had been ready for years to embrace this opportunity for dialogue, action and inclusivity.

Full inclusion in the institutional church continues to elude the women, however, which is a source of sadness for Pinkerton. The women learned to see themselves and their talents as integral to their communities. They benefited from courses in theology, philosophy, history, psychology, and they gained practice in reflective, dialogic, participative, experiential learning. Their heightened consciousness from these preceding events prepared them for an awareness of oppressive systems ordered by power not only over themselves, but over all women, over minorities, and over the poor—a lesson learned from feminism. This awareness broadened ministry. Service for the common good now included work to change systems that deny the common good. Theological reflection, experience, and scriptural reflection increased understanding of the interconnected systems necessary to sustain life. As Pinkerton said, "We can no longer look at the quality of our persons, our lives together, our prayer/spirituality, our

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Pinkerton, "Prayer and New Ministry," 7.

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.”<sup>6</sup>

The design of this dissertation and the above summary were structured to enable the reader to view the educational development of Pinkerton’s extraordinary commitment to the common good through a Deweyan lens of education. John Dewey’s conception of education as experiential, continuous, and participative illuminates the processes of interaction by which Pinkerton’s potential was activated, and developed.

### **Pinkerton, Mezirow, Brookfield, and Freire**

This study of the development of Pinkerton’s advocacy of the common good reveals educational processes advocated by three well-known adult educators: Jack Mezirow, Stephen Brookfield, and Paulo Freire. All three emphasize critical thinking, critical reflection, dialogue, and action for change.

The process of critical thinking involves questioning the assumptions underlying our usual ways of thinking and acting, and a willingness to change these habitual ways as a result of the questioning. Mezirow speaks of a perspective transformation that can result from learning how one’s meaning perspectives may be limiting their growth. According to Mezirow, “Our tasks as educators are to encourage the multiple readings of ‘texts,’ to make a wider range of symbol systems or meaning perspectives available to learners, and to create reflexive dialogic communities in which learners are free to challenge assumptions and premises, thereby breaking through the one-dimensionality of uncritically assimilated learning.”<sup>7</sup> Pinkerton’s system analysis that she urges others to learn is a skill that permits multiple readings of texts.

Adult educator, Stephen Brookfield calls critical thinking “one of the most significant activities of adult life.”<sup>8</sup> Pinkerton and other women religious evidenced the first phase of critical thinking when they questioned why is “the good sister” humble, self-sacrificing, quiet, prayerful, hard-working, diligent, submissive to authority? Critical thinking usually results from a trigger event in one’s life, and people often think of these trigger events as negative events that raise self-doubt. Brookfield, however, writes that positive events can also provide the trigger.<sup>9</sup> In fact, for women positive events are more likely to provide the trigger. Brookfield cites the research findings of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule who say doubt is probably not an incentive for women to question underlying assumptions “because so many women are already consumed with self-doubt.”<sup>10</sup>

The exact event that triggered critical thinking in the women religious as a group is difficult to identify, but it is safe to say the process of going back to their roots to learn the history of their particular community and the history of religious communities in general had

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<sup>6</sup> Pinkerton, "Call to Assembly," 1.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Mezirow & Associates, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 360-61.

<sup>8</sup> Brookfield, *Learning Democracy*, ix.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Brookfield, *Learning Democracy*, 32; Mary Faith Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing* (USA: Basic Books, Inc., 1986), 228.

considerable influence. During that period of historical research, the women realized the word *obey* did not mean automatic submission to authority.

The second part of critical thinking is a willingness to change one's usual way of thinking or acting as a result of questioned assumptions. The women religious became assertive, dynamic, knowledgeable women who insisted upon their right to define themselves, their lives, and the operation of their religious communities—a change in thinking and acting.

Once aware of their own oppression, women religious developed increased awareness of the oppression of others and of planet earth. Pinkerton began to educate others in ways to uncover hidden oppression. Pinkerton frequently begins her talks with a denial of any expertise in the topic but with a willingness to give a “grassroots” viewpoint. Then she proceeds to speak with such assurance and conviction that her enthusiastic words carry an authority that inspires others to work collectively for change. According to Brookfield, people who transmit “the sheer inspirational force of their vision” trigger critical thinking in other people. They can cause people to take seriously the idea that, if enough of us are willing to work for the collective visions of change we share, these visions can become reality.”<sup>11</sup> Pinkerton inspires her audiences.

Paulo Freire also worked to bring collective visions of change to reality. According to Richard Shaull, Paulo Freire in his work with the poor in Brazil, discovered a “culture of silence of the dispossessed.” Shaull explains that Freire discovered all the systems—social, political, economical, and paternal—that kept the oppressed unaware of any alternative response, and he used the field of education to initiate change by breaking the culture of silence.<sup>12</sup> Women religious in this country lived for decades in this same culture of silence. For years, they were held to a standard of compliance to those in authority as the standard for sanctity. The prescribed behavior for “the good sister” was to be humble, self-sacrificing, prayerful, diligent, and submissive to authority. When the women began to dialogue among communities to plan a holistic education for the younger sisters, they became subjects in their historical reality in a new way. The disapproval of their plan by some in positions of authority provided further proof of oppression. Freire calls this process of coming to awareness of contradictions in one's life and taking action against the oppressive elements—*conscientizacao*. *Conscientizacao* or conscientization, in English, entails reflection and action and occurs through dialogue “with,” not imposition “from.”<sup>13</sup> Dialogue added to the theological reflection of religious life an emphasis on critical reflection. In the subsequent years of changing governmental structure, dress, prayer, living arrangements, etc., the women questioned why and how these rules and prescriptions for living emerged and their continued relevance or non-relevance in the twentieth century. Dialogue with its emphasis on finding together solutions to problems gave the women freedom to experiment with new ways. Searching together is a critical component of dialogue that prevents any one person or group from becoming another oppressor and frees all from the fear of that happening—a fear that would prevent action. Freire says, dialogue “requires an act of faith

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<sup>11</sup> Brookfield, *Learning Democracy*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Shaull authored the forward to Freire's work. This excerpt is found on pages 10-11 Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.

<sup>13</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 20.

in each other.”<sup>14</sup> Through faith in each other and dialogue, these women claimed the right to define themselves and enact communally determined changes. Dialogue is always a part of every election of leadership teams and every educational gathering of the Cleveland Sisters of Saint Joseph. Pinkerton, also, provides her sisters with a never-ending source of topics for dialogue from her current political ministry and from her avid perusal of books that concern changing thought in science, theology and ecology. Dialogue with the past, present, and future, with herself, with others and with God, gives Pinkerton a truly radical freedom to act—to embrace life with enthusiasm.

### **A Truly Radical Freedom**

Pinkerton, in a 1976 talk, describes her understanding of this relationship between freedom and dialogue in the weaving of the whole cloth of life. While the citation is rather lengthy, its incorporation is justified by its revelation of a truly radical relational freedom that culminates in a commitment to the common good.

. . . we must remember that freedom is relational; it never exists apart from other values. It is rooted in our relationship to others, in community for us, but also rooted in our history, past and present. He (God) lives, breathes, moves within us IF we allow Him full possession of us. This point makes freedom paradoxical. I choose total dependence on Jesus; I allow Him possession of me IF I would be free. The free person, therefore, is the totally humble person, aware of being gifted and responding as gift. This is radical internal freedom. It brings peace, the ability to respond, to say “Yes” to ministry, to life situations, to risk, because one is responding in Jesus who calls. Rootedness in Christ, rootedness in life is the secret of prayer, no matter what our ministry, our lifestyle is the answer to prayer. Here is where Jesus is speaking to us, in the persons around us, in their needs and concerns and in ours. A person so oriented walks before God in peace and serenity because she realizes He is within, He is in possession. We cannot hide who we are or what we are, but we can refuse to let Him call us forth. We can hide behind our individual burning bushes (we never choose the right ones anyway), we can deny our individual capabilities and potentialities, our loves and hates, our weaknesses and limitations, the things that make us joyful or sad. OR we can acknowledge all, knowing that in His presence it doesn’t hurt to admit because His love is ever faithful. He is calling us to affirm Yahweh’s I AM by affirming our own I AM.

Our attitude then as we go into new areas of ministry should be that of walking before Him, centered in Him, walking straight and tall into life, embracing its beauty and its hardships. But to truly embrace life is a process of developing awareness, of meditating on its mysteries, of responding to that which is good and uprooting that which is evil and to appreciate the gifting.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

<sup>15</sup> Pinkerton, "Prayer and New Ministry," 13-14.

The reader can see the dialogic relationship Pinkerton has with a divine inner wisdom. Both freedom to act and desire to act for the common good arise from that relationship.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Pinkerton's life radiates with dialogue, action, and inclusivity—all elements of the common good. All three elements are necessary components of the common good, but dialogue stands out among contemporary research as having critical importance for the millenium. *Dialogue* is the process that brings “the Other” into “one of us” who search together for solutions to contemporary problems. Dialogue fosters awareness of interconnectedness, and interconnectedness is the awareness Daloz, et al. found common to participants in their study of those with a long-term commitment to the common good.

A keen sense of the interconnectedness of every element of life also surfaces in studies of people who access a divine wisdom from somewhere deep within them. Transpersonal psychology research indicates that these people are aware of a sacredness of the planet, even the universe, and aware of the planet and universe being a part of themselves. Pinkerton understands interconnectedness. She has lived and continues to live a life structured with all the practices that can lead to an extraordinary commitment to the common good. But, of what significance to adult education is the development of this commitment in the life of woman religious, Catherine Pinkerton?

### **Significance for the Field of Adult Education**

This study of Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, advocate of and educator for the common good illuminates an education in formal, informal, and non-formal ways that resonates with dialogue, action, and inclusivity and culminates in an identity with the common good. Adult education can learn from that education to help adults search together for solutions to global problems.

We've learned from adult educators like Jack Mezirow, Stephen Brookfield, and Paulo Freire the importance of critical thinking with its components of reflection and action and the potential such thinking has for perspective transformation. Mezirow, Brookfield, and Freire, also advocate a dialogic education with Freire placing the most emphasis on dialogue. Dialogue in Freires's conscientization process was the tool that developed unity and subsequent ability to act among the Brazilian poor. If one accepts the premise of contemporary writers calling for a return to the common good, dialogue seems to be a missing component in contemporary life, and it is dialogue that connects us together.

Adult education has a history of bringing together and an opportunity to continue this action in a socially significant way. Indeed, according to historians of American adult education, Harold W. Stubblefield and Patrick Keane, the field of adult education developed when scholars recognized diverse educational programs as having the same purpose and brought them together into one field.<sup>16</sup> Stubblefield and Keane report that as early as the 1920s scholars brought together “educational activities conducted by individuals or offered by a sponsoring agency as

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<sup>16</sup> Stubblefield and Keane, *Adult Education in the American Experience*, 1.



part of a larger phenomenon called adult education.”<sup>17</sup> Additionally, adult education has brought together in practical application research findings from psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and history among others. Adult education at certain periods in the history of the United States, brought together laborers, women, farmers, African-Americans, among others, in an attempt to change a culture that excluded them. At other times, however, adult education reflected the exclusivity of the dominant culture. According to Stubblefield and Keane, regulated access to education as early as the Colonial Period in the United States kept adult minorities (Native Americans and African Americans) and women in prescribed social roles.<sup>18</sup> Adult education reflected the hegemony of the dominant culture.

Evolution of consciousness now recognizes the error of such exclusive practices. Yet a hegemonic influence exists today that keeps some in conditions of poverty and others working two and three jobs to stay ahead of poverty and a planet increasingly devoid of unrenewable natural resources. Sister Joan Chittister names some of the characteristics and results of today’s hegemonic influence: “profit-mongering,” “concentration of resources,” “unparalleled development,” “planetary poverty,” and “incommensurable international hunger.”<sup>19</sup> Adult education can help adults question how this can be in such comfortable economic times, or adult education can reflect the hegemony of the dominant culture. Adult educators without a vision of the common good and without a vision of the need to help adults read the multiple texts of the dominant culture will reproduce the dominant culture with both its productive and non-productive features. Non-involvement in a global common good does not reflect a neutral stance. Non-involvement in the common good is complicity in the demise of the common good.

As a result of this study, the researcher sees a need for dialogue among adult educators and transpersonal psychologists regarding increased human potential. Dialogic educational research into increased human potential can lead to educational methods, practices and courses of study that allow adults to recognize their interconnectedness with others and with the planet. Dialogue’s focus on finding solutions together encourages learning and a learning society. An understanding of interconnectedness broadens the use of education merely as a tool for material success to education as a tool for the common good.

Will adult education help adult students from the corporate world balance human resource development for the bottom line with human resource development for the common good? Will adult education become a dialogic education to help adults develop awareness of interconnectedness? Society’s need is providing an opportunity.

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<sup>17</sup> Stubblefield & Keane, *Adult Education in the American Experience*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> Joan Chittister, "Millennial Wisdom Stirs in the Desert," *National Catholic Register*, 19 February 1999, 33.