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By- Nelson, Clifford A.

THE RESIDENCE HALL MINISTRY AND THE ROLE OF THE CAMPUS MINISTER.

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An experimental program, the Residence Hall Ministry, incorporating religious activities into the Pennsylvania State University residence hall systems has expanded from pastoral and personal counseling into broad program activities. A case approach was instituted in conjunction with the college counseling division, illustrating the adaptation of parish procedures to college settings through ecumenical procedures. For the future, seminary education will change toward involvement in the on-going processes of academic inquiry. Campus ministers must abandon their postures as campus critics, moral guardians, and superior beings because these produce schisms. Campus and church representatives must cooperate toward mutual objectives, discussing differences and seeking the truth. To effect changes, campus ministers must work through existing educational personnel and structures, and must have distinctive, visible, and identifiable functions. The minister's contributions and role stem from his concern with the application and development of the Judeo-Christian view in the lives of academic community participants. This involves assisting and advising students and administrators in developing the individual's worth and integrity, in dealing with crisis situations, and coping with the social action arena. (WR)

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THE RESIDENCE HALL MINISTRY

and

THE ROLE OF THE CAMPUS MINISTER

Clifford A. Nelson
Coordinator of Religious Affairs
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

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In 1960 interested individuals of the Office of Student Affairs of The Pennsylvania State University entered into discussions relative to an "experimental program" of incorporating religious activities into the residence hall system. The motives for these discussions were both educational and practical. It was felt that religious activities should be brought to a more available and meaningful level in order to achieve their purposes in the academic community. In the near future the enrollment of the University was to reach 25,000 students on campus. Residence halls were to expand to quarter 13,000 students in seven complexes. Decentralization of many student affairs activities was necessitated by this expansion. The small central chapel facilities could not cope with this increased need.

The "experimental program" called the Residence Hall Ministry is legally rooted in a 40-page brief by the University attorney in consultation with a Philadelphia law firm. It is considered legal because: (1) there is opportunity for participation of any religious sect, (2) it is a service function completely optional to students, (3) no University funds of any source are used in support of the program, and (4) traditional worship services are not held in conjunction with the program. It is important to note that there has been no legal challenge of the program.

The Residence Hall Ministry is a program of volunteer work staffed entirely by local clergy, interested lay persons, and religious affairs student interns from various theological institutions. These individuals are referred to as "Religious Affairs Associates". Presently, there are 23 such individuals working in the program.

The objective of the Residence Hall Ministry is to bring a two-fold program of pastoral and personal counseling and programs to the residence halls complexes. Greater and more meaningful involvement of the students in religious activities is the end sought not merely the convenience of the religious staff.

Office space is provided in the seven residence hall complexes for these volunteer religious workers. (Residence halls are built through private funding, not state appropriation). Office hours are kept daily. Some Religious Affairs Associates spend as much as 20 hours per week in this effort, some as little as two hours per week. Informal staff-student contacts in dining halls, social gatherings, etc. has proved to be the most profitable approach to the program.

Since its beginning in 1960, the emphasis of Residence Hall Ministry activity has changed from personal and pastoral counseling to program activities of a broad nature. Once our students survived the "collar shock" of 1960, we find that they freely relate to the ministry staff regardless of either's denominational affiliation. Inter-faith marriage panels, comparative religious traditions, and book and movie discussions are often the starting points from which more in-depth relationships develop between ministry staff and residence hall students. Still much individual attention is given students who question the meaning of life and the traditional sophomore's search for God.

Staff turn-over is the most obvious and difficult problem in the operation of the program. Administratively, the program is under the Coordinator of Religious Affairs, himself a staff member of the Office of Student Affairs. Much of the Coordinator's efforts in relation to this program are in orienting new Religious Affairs Associates to the campus--its climate and its policies. Staff sensitivity to their peculiar role on a state-supported campus can be a major operational problem. The need to integrate the efforts of the program with the total efforts of the student affairs offices is another potential problem. For example, the necessity to refer troubled students to our professional counseling psychologists is always evident. The Religious Affairs Associate must constantly insulate himself against the possibility of becoming

cast as the "Inspector General" of the residence hall complex less he undermine his relationship with the residence hall staff.

Evaluation of such a program is accomplished in several ways. Activities and their attendance give us an indication, however superficial, of the desirability of these programs from the students viewpoint. The desire on the part of our residence hall student governments to incorporate these staff members into their structure as advisors to educational-cultural committees was a completely unsolicited indicator of student acceptance. Continuous staff meetings of the Religious Affairs Associates with the residence hall staff are an added method of evaluation. We now believe that this program is ready for a carefully controlled study on our campus.

Our indications to date are that the program is educationally and legally sound and desirable from all viewpoints.

This past term we held several joint meetings with the Division of Counseling. This division provides counseling services for freshmen and upperclassmen. Each freshman admitted to the University is given a series of tests and provided educational and vocational counseling. In most cases, this counseling service is provided prior to the student's first-term registration.

Any student may request help from the division at any time. Confidential counseling by professional staff members is available for all types of problems including social, emotional, and marital concerns. A special counseling program for freshmen during their first year on the campus is also provided.

Freshmen or upperclassmen who are uncertain as to their career and educational objectives or who need special help in achieving satisfactory grades may become students in the Division of Counseling. Such students transfer to a College once they have chosen an appropriate major and met the standards of that College.

It was generally felt, by those who attended the meetings, that they were both provocative and productive. In utilizing the case approach we were able to note a good deal of shared concerns with regard to handling, disposition, and referral of educational, vocational, and personal adjustment cases. More specifically, it became apparent that the terminology and ways of conceptualizing these cases were perhaps the major areas where we were able to learn from one another.

It is clear that campus ministers cannot simply translate procedures effective in parish settings into the academic context and expect them to succeed. Particular procedures specific to the target group and designed within the academic setting have to be developed.

Whatever the procedures turn out to be, they must be ecumenical. The academic community - the students, the faculty, and the administration - are simply out of patience with what they regard as petty interdenominational disputes, and a violation of what would appear to be a central core of religion: the brotherhood of man; mutual respect for one another's differences, but with collaboration and cooperation between one another in order to effect the goals.

The American public is steadily waking up to the fact that education does not stop at the High School diploma, or the Baccalaureate degree, but is something which continues on throughout a person's life. The knowledge explosion demands this. Estimates are that we are now doubling the extent of our knowledge every 5-7 years, and in another decade we will be doubling it at the rate of every two or three. All of this requires the college worker to become an active participant in this business of never-ending learning. He must not merely keep up, but he also must do so to remain well informed with others in the community - students, faculty, and staff alike.

I am aware of the fact that seminary education, like everything else in this society is undergoing close scrutiny, and there is every likelihood that in the next era it will undergo a drastic change. The fact remains however

that at present the study of homiletics, Old Testament, and classical Greek (regardless of their individual merits) does not prepare one for the rigors of college work. To my way of thinking there is no substitute for formal training, advanced beyond the BA and the BD degrees which must go along side-by-side with the direct experience the campus minister may be gaining in his day-to-day service. He should be part-and-parcel of the ongoing process of academic inquiry; he should be as much of a student as are the faculty, staff, and students with whom he will be working. Perhaps it should be possible to specify the types of knowledge he needs and perhaps even the subject matter, course by course, which he should have: some courses, perhaps psychology, pointed toward helping him to understand what has been learned about humans and their development for help in his work with groups; still others concerned with the principles of behavior change and behavior modification for help in persuading and influencing people; perhaps a series dealing with the philosophy and history of higher education in the United States so as to help him in his understanding of the educational context within which he will be working. But, above and beyond the specifics of degrees and courses, the important thing is that he be constantly studying, thinking, talking, and up-dating himself in some respect - in a sense it is less important which advanced degree he gets, so much as that he be working on one and get one, and keep on beyond that level as long as he remains in the educational context.

He must give up a role which has been a favorite of the local parish priest, and to many in the earlier days of campus ministry. Too often a deep schism has been allowed, indeed, encouraged to develop between the clergy and the university, wherein the one has been sitting back comfortably, looking for opportunities to criticize (and missing few such chances), playing the role of guardian, protector and watch-dog superior. Often colleges and universities have been pictured as destructive of religious commitments and

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insidiously erosive of student morals. Frequently representatives of churches have sought to implement a role, antagonistic to the emphases they saw on campus, and endeavoring to protect the religious and moral welfare of the student. This type of schism has been unfortunate. There are few colleges and university faculties and administration which are not equally concerned with the moral welfare of their student body. They both seek the same objective, and differences of opinion as to what they should be in detail, and how to implement them are not only legitimate, but the discussion of such differences is an integral part of a university's commitment. I was interested to learn that Father Ratterman, Vice-President for Student Affairs at Xavier University in Cincinnati, has said that the Catholic university in the United States is gradually learning that the primary goal of the denominational college is not the religious and moral welfare of the student - although this has been its primary emphasis in earlier years. What Catholic universities are recognizing is that the primary goal is the pursuit of truth and things which are relevant to truth - its preservation and its communication.

The campus minister must become equally committed to this college and university objective. He cannot stand aside and be a critic - he must join in and become part-and-parcel of the overall, guiding, quest for truth - part of the truth being the question of religion and morality. He must become a co-worker within the University, in its efforts to implement its overall objectives.

Ronald Barnes, Dean of Students at North Dakota writes:

The campus ministers who care about the university have both feet in it, not with blinders on nor apologetically, but because they believe their work must happen within and through the campus, not something they bring to it. If campus ministers don't share in a lover's quarrel with the academic community, they aren't qualified to be called colleagues.

He then goes on to indicate how the campus minister at North Dakota has come to operate, and how much more richly the academic community has become as a result of it.

The campus minister must learn that, to effect opinions, policies, and procedures, he must work through personnel and structures which are given in the educational environment. He cannot work by himself - indeed he cannot work as a member of an 8-plus man unit of campus clergy who are united some way in an ecumenical organization. Again, quoting from Dean Barnes, effective college workers have discovered that they can work more efficiently, and can accomplish more substantive progress on the campus, particularly with students, by working through those of us who are already there. This is nothing more than learning to use the laity and lay talents in the development of the Judeo-Christian emphasis, and is of course equally applicable to the parish clergyman as well. Traditionally, the layman has entrusted the church's mission to the clergy while we (the laity) remained supportive. A strong case can be made for the reverse arrangement.

To be effective within a university context, the campus minister has to be distinctive, and visible, and he has to have an identity all his own. He cannot simply step into a university setting and begin to do things other people do. He cannot offer courses, because this does not distinguish him from the thousands of faculty members in general. He cannot simply begin to do pastoral counseling with individual students as they arrive on his doorstep, and he cannot do this for a variety of reasons. First of all, if he does, he will find himself swallowed up in the mass of individuals who are seeking a personal and individualized hearing from a concerned and loving person. One campus minister told me that between 80 and 90 per cent of his time was devoted to individual counseling. What time did he have for anything else? What impact on 25,000 people is he going to have if he talks on an individual basis with 75 of them? But, in doing so he also places himself in competition with professional counselors - another set of specialists who can probably outperform him on a case-to-case basis simply because they are specialists.

What any person in the academic context must do is to find that role or identity which no one else can fill. Thus, the question becomes, what is the distinctive contribution which a clergyman in the academic world can make - what can he do that no one else can do, what role can he fulfill which can be duplicated by no other? This is the only way in which he can be distinctive, make a contribution, and in the last analysis become significant to the people with whom he is involved and whom he wants to influence.

One thing he cannot do is to try to be all things to all people. In Colonial days, the parish rector was in many respects the headliner in the community. Even today, the typical rector has to be something of a business manager, an educator, an accomplished speaker, a counselor, ad infinitum. But, the campus minister (especially in a large multi-university of today) is surrounded by talent. In our era of specialization there are people who can do most any of these kinds of things better than he can. So what is it he can do that no one else can do? If not a counselor of individuals, if he's not going to try to compete with professional philosophers concerning issues in theology, if he's not going to try to establish a parish on campus, just what does he do? What role can he carve out for himself?

It is precisely this which is presently under development all over the country. The campus ministry is undergoing radical changes, and differing patterns are emerging as different efforts become applied in different locales. According to reports some are becoming involved and significant, others continue to grope to find ways and means. It seems to me that the one thing that the campus clergyman has which is traditionally and clearly his particular domain is his concern with the application and development of the Judeo-Christian view in the lives of the participant members of the academic community. He knows his theology, but he is not a professional theologian. His concern is with awakening interest in the student and faculty bodies with theological

questions and their treatment by significant writers, and helping them to see the relevance of these to their day-to-day lives. To this end many campus ministers are working with discussion groups, study groups, and setting up resource facilities - helping academic members to become acquainted with Buber, Bonhoeffer, Tillich, and others: arousing their interest and concern, showing them the relevance of these writers and thinkers to the questions which face the individual, faculty member, and student alike. Often these are excitingly successful. They show the campus minister, however, leaving his office, going out to where the people are, and playing an important instructional role outside the traditional curricular structures. In a sense they are applied theologians, in a way which is analogous to the field of medicine where a physician is an applied biological scientist.

At North Dakota, campus ministers are invited to attend all divisions of student personnel staff meetings, to share in all reports and discussion of problems, to join within various committee assignments, and to become well acquainted with the workings of the various student personnel departments so that they can better advise and assist students. But, they are also in a position where they can better advise and assist administrators. The Judeo-Christian view seeks to maintain and implement the notion that each individual is worthwhile in and of himself, and should be given the opportunity, nay the freedom, to grow and develop according to his own goals and objectives. The individual human is important - he has a bit of God in him. A huge problem in our universities, and throughout our country, is the preservation of the person's capacity to develop his own identity, and to be surrounded by warm and helpful persons in order to accomplish it. The reverse statement of this problem is given in the phrases: the dehumanizing, depersonalizing, de-individualizing factors on the American scene. Rules and regulations too often are set up for economic reasons and for reasons of administrative efficiency. Administrators and officials need to be constantly reminded that

the individual person cannot be ignored. A campus clergyman, serving on committees, can operate so as to help to implement this critical ingredient in the Judeo-Christian view, the protection of the individuality and integrity of the human. Note, that in this respect his influence is the greater if he becomes a valued consultant to the people who shape the college community.

Pursuing this role as an applied theologian (I don't know what else to call him) he can fulfill a valued role in helping students to work out the implications in their immediate lives of various aspects of the Judeo-Christian role. Questions abound in the student population. What is the relevance between my beliefs and my behavior? All of their questions boil down to two major types: What really is the Judeo-Christian view, and what does it mean to be one? In many locales campus ministers find themselves in great demand to engage in discussions with students about precisely these questions. Typically these are at night, or over the lunch hour, times squeezed in around the tight academic schedule, but their popularity reveals how salient such questions remain in the minds of students, and how compelling these questions are. If a student gives up valuable study time at night to go to one such session, one knows he is concerned. Hitherto, he has had to content himself with all-night bull sessions with his fellow-students on such matters (Is there a God? How does one know?). Although he has known that it has been a matter of the halt leading the blind, he has often had no one to turn to for help in sorting out these issues in his thinking. Some more traditional clergy have tended to dismiss these as typical sophomore concerns, inevitable at the adolescent stage of development, and something out of which the student would gradually grow. Now, with the possibility of a campus minister, representing the Church or Synagogue at large, we have the possibility of providing more effective help, at the point of crisis, within the living college situation, and patently we can have more influence in how the searching and

groping on the part of the student comes out.

Finally, an essential ingredient in the Judeo-Christian view over the centuries has been the arena of social action, reflecting a concern for one's fellow man, an effort to introduce this view into one's treatment of his neighbor, and in general a commitment to the betterment of one's fellow humans. Social action is applied - Christianity and Judaism, and the successful campus minister will not only help students to see this, but will guide and direct their efforts to implement it. Some campus ministers work with teams preparing themselves for an inner city project, others with student groups concerned over civil rights, poverty, or mental health throughout the community. Still others help to organize and develop student groups who want to help their fellow man upgrade himself, by forming Big Brother programs, tutoring programs, mother's aids, and the like. In many respects our present generation are infatigable idealists - even the hippy is an idealist, despite his rather usual method of trying to achieve his goals. The number of students who volunteer for the Peace Corps, Vista, Upward Bound, and Project Head Start are simply staggering. These are students who are anxious not only to mouth their ideas and beliefs, but to go out and actually do something concrete and immediate - to apply their Humanism, or whatever it is, to their own lives and the real world.

According to reports these seem to be some of the things which are welcomed in academic circles - the sorts of things which fill a need in students, are of assistance to university administrators, and which cause Academia to begin to regard the campus minister as a valued and significant component in the educational system. It is my conviction that properly done, college clergy can have a wide-spread influence upon a college campus, depending

upon how they go about their effort. The Church or Synagogue as a whole would do well to keep close contact with these exploratory efforts, and really keep score of what turns out to be useful and what is not. It would appear that over a period of five years or so, it should be possible to perceive what methods are working, and what the most effective role for the campus minister should come to be.