

By CHARLES SHELBY ROOKS

The Minister as a Change Agent

My first task in this discussion is to define and narrow the limits of the subject. It is possible to interpret the clergyman's role as being a "change agent" in every aspect of his or her endeavors. Proclaiming the Word, for example, is one attempt to produce change: hearing of the Word induces people to live differently in relation to God. Healing the souls of human beings is another such attempt: persons are enabled to move from ill health to good health or even to perfect health. Every action or responsibility of ministry, therefore, could be conceived to involve the minister as a change agent of some sort.

Obviously, the scope of this discussion is much narrower than that. It is concerned with the peculiar and historic role of the black minister in the attempt to produce change in the economic, social, and political conditions under which black Americans have lived and continue to live. Three things should be clear about that definition. First, its focus is on the *black* clergyman, the *black* churches, and the *black* community in *this* country. I focus there despite the fact that nothing in the advance publicity for this conference says that I must. I do so partly because I have been saying to ITC for over ten years that its *distinctive* concern is what is happening in and to the lives of black people. I do so also because I believe specifically that the primary and creative ministry of blacks must be consciously and unremittingly to and for and with blacks rather than elsewhere. Second, the focus is upon ministry in the local church rather than upon the varieties of ministry in which blacks may be engaged because the local church in the black community is still the heart and soul of where the change agency of the black minister occurs. I am saying, in effect, that change in its most important aspects occurs only where there is a community and constituency. The other varieties of ministry which blacks now perform have insufficient community or constituency aspects to command our attention here. Third, the focus is upon ESP in a somewhat different usage of that anagram. The dream of blacks, from slavery to the present, has been freedom; the methods by which they have continued to be enslaved have involved economic, social, and political methodologies. Only as those essential conditions of life are changed can full liberation of blacks occur. That task has challenged, frustrated, and sometimes killed black ministers in this nation since they first stood up to preach. It continues to be the fundamental issue for our generation. These are the limits, then, which I would impose on our discussion.

In accordance with this definition, I want to discuss three things with you: expectations, goals, and models of the minister as change agent. The *first* point concerns *expectations*. It is my belief that *the black minister is expected by the black church and the black community*

to provide leadership, energy, and wisdom in the struggle to change the oppressive economic, social, and political burdens of black life in America. That seems a non-debatable conclusion. Interestingly enough, however, that expectation has been assumed but has rarely been examined in any detail, particularly by blacks themselves. In their analysis of the *Black Church in the Sixties*, Anne and Hart Nelsen call our attention to the Gallup Poll studies in the 1960's and to Gary Marx's article, "Religion: Opiate or Inspiration of Civil Rights Militancy," in 1967.¹ But specific studies of the attitudes of the black church about the social agent role of the minister have not been tackled by blacks themselves. At the same time, it is clear from every book about the black church that the social agent role is expected and assumed. For example, E. Franklin Frazier made that assumption in a negative way when he said,

... the Negro church and Negro religion have cast a shadow over the entire intellectual life of Negroes and have been responsible for the so-called backwardness of American Negroes.²

This acid conclusion implies Frazier's bitter frustration that his own expectations for black churches and their ministers had not been realized.

Mays and Nicholson in 1933 were explicit in a far different way. They closed their study of black churches with these words:

It is taken for granted that Negro ministers will courageously oppose lynching, Jim Crow law, and discrimination in the expenditure of tax money, especially as applied to schools, parks, playgrounds, hospitals and the like.

(The) fellowship and freedom inherent in the Negro church should be conducive to spiritual growth of a unique kind. It furnishes the foundation for the Negro church and the Negro ministry to become truly Christian and prophetic in the truest sense. The Negro church has the potentialities to become possibly the greatest spiritual force in the United States. What the Negro church does and will do with these potentialities will depend in a large measure upon the leadership as expressed in the Negro pulpit.³

Illustrations of assumptions and expectations about black ministers are frequent and include many contemporary ones, such as James Cone, Joseph Washington, Gayraud Wilmore, and Deotis Roberts, but the Mays-Nicholson quotation indicates the usual fault of all these writings: both inadequate examination of the assumptions and hasty conclusions drawn therefrom. Mays and Nicholson studied many facets of black church life, but nowhere explicitly examined their own or the church's underlying assumptions or beliefs about the minister's actual activities and conclude that some potential or other, described as "spiritual

¹ See Nelsen, Hart M., and Nelsen, Anne K., *The Black Church in the Sixties*, University of Kentucky Press, 1975, Chapter 6.

² Frazier, E. Franklin, *The Black Church in America*, Shocken Books, New York, 1963, p. 86.

³ Mays, Benjamin E., and Nicholson, Joseph W., *The Negro's Church*, Russell and Russell, New York, 1933, p. 291 f.

force" and related to certain specific change agent activities, is largely in the future.

The problem with conclusions about the potential of the black church — and they are frequent in studies of the black church — is that, while they probably have some intuitive validity, they make realization of potential impossible to achieve simply because they are unexamined assumptions. Suppose, for instance, the Mays-Nicholson catalogue of ministerial activities, which are "taken for granted," is accurate for their own time. Were there any limits to the list — any ESP activities which were *not* acceptable? A good many contemporary black ministers have come under too sharp criticism by their own congregations for the question of limits to be ignored. Indeed, even as far back as 1921 Carter G. Woodson noted that "the majority of (black) people would prefer that their ministers hold themselves aloof from politics . . ." and "the public complains . . . that . . . influential ministers have not only gone into politics but have brought politics into the church."⁴ In 1972, fifty years later, Charles Hamilton's book, *The Black Preacher in America*, provided a contemporary illustration of the conflict which can occur when differing expectations collide with his account of what happened to an Episcopal church in New Rochelle, New York, and its rector, Lorentho Worden.⁵ Beyond that, however, do we really know what are the contemporary expectations of black people? Lynching and Jim Crow law are gone. What are the issues now? In other words, how do black ministers today determine the scope of possible change agent activities and assess the vague expectations, rarely articulated about their work, against which their professional future and survival will be measured? The failure to examine the basic assumptions is an unnecessary handicap for the present.

I believe one beginning point is the development of a clearer conception of the black church's historic and contemporary concept of its nature, function and role. We have operated far too long with an intuitive ecclesiology rather than an articulated one. The conditions of black life in America up to one hundred years ago were such that intuitive ecclesiology was perhaps sufficient. During slavery, the black church had to build a community which could counter the terrible dehumanization of black personhood and to provide the means for personal survival, the development of the community's social and moral order, and the encouragement of hope and activity for freedom. It was the only agent in black life which held those necessary possibilities. Its ecclesiology was, therefore, not only God-centered but was inclusive of the entire black community rather than exclusive of some portion of that community, and its focus was plain. In a radically different way from its white counterpart in the same period, the black church was

⁴ Woodson, Carter G., *The History of the Negro Church*, Associated Publishers, Washington, D.C., 1921, p. 298 f.

⁵ Hamilton, Charles V., *The Black Preacher in America*, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1972, Chapter VII.

more than just a voluntary institution in the black slave community, at least conceptually if not actually, because it was the only agent for rationality and survival that community had. Except for very rare instances, black people did not desire to remain slaves, and that fact had tremendous importance for the intuited ecclesiology and functioning of the church.

The period of Reconstruction provided no essential relief for the social conditions affecting blacks. Indeed, it can be charged that the term "Reconstruction" actually referred to the reconstruction of slavery under a new name. The ecclesiology which had been instituted rather than rationalized, and the necessary functions of the church which derived therefrom, remained basically unchanged. Personal survival, a healthy moral and social order, and encouragement of hope and activity for freedom in its most elemental form remained the clear issues. Everywhere in the nation blacks continued to be at the mercy of the oppressor — in the South through the ease with which thousands of blacks were murdered, in the North by more subtle means of economic and political oppression which nevertheless also produced the death of thousands.

The break in the dike which brought us to a new era was the demise of legal discrimination in the last decade. Not only were such symbols of oppression as segregation in education, employment and public accommodations torn down, but the legal means to do something about them were made more explicit. We discovered, however, that the fundamental oppression continued. The problem was that the eyes of blacks had always been too much on the symbols and not enough on what lay behind them. The essential difficulty has always been finding some way to overcome centuries of psychological overlay — supported by countless concepts and ideas, and woven into a consistent whole — by which white America and most of the North Atlantic perimeter believe themselves to be vastly superior to every other race and culture on the face of this globe. That psychological overlay has been compromised only when it was to the self-interest and advantage of Caucasian superiority. It was economically, socially and politically advantageous in the last decade, for instance, to end unrest and violence on the streets of the nation by passing desegregation laws. Letting blacks into a few hotels or a few jobs would not really change the system very much. The essential psychology of superiority remained. Only a small hole in the dike was made.

The fact that the old symbols were torn down has created a new ecclesiological problem for the church, however. That problem is the clarification of black life in America in the face of our new understanding of the true nature and subtlety of oppression. The seeds of this problem had been sown earlier by the inability of blacks to arrive at any clear unanimity about the fundamental goal of economic, social and political activity. Gayraud Wilmore reminds us that after the death

of Bishop Henry McNeill Turner in 1915 the "mainstream of black radicalism in America split in three directions." He defines radicalism as the endeavor to achieve freedom, and maintains that this is the one unwavering devotion of black America. These three directions were: (1) a quasi-nationalism in Garveyism and the syncretistic cults of the ghetto; (2) a belligerent and thoroughly secularized black racism, characterized by cynicism and violent hatred of whites; and (3) a "vision of a democratic or socialist society, unabashedly inter-racial, moving toward realization of the American Dream for all people."⁶

As these directions developed the ecclesiology of the church began to be altered. It could no longer be a semi-voluntary institution in the black community, but was forced to become essentially voluntary. It could not conceive itself inclusive of the whole community, but only as exclusive since neither black nationalism nor black racism of a radical sort could fit easily into Christian concepts or ecclesiological frameworks. As a matter of fact, appropriation of the American Dream had been and still is the basic hope and expectation of the black majority, and to that the black church remains committed even though the word "integration" has fallen on hard times. At the same time, frustration and bitterness flamed when blacks discovered en masse the true magnitude of the issue, and large numbers began for the first time to consider seriously those other alternatives as viable possibilities. It is that fact which has resulted in a re-thinking of the previously intuited ecclesiology of the black church in our time, although it has yet to be put in those terms. Uneasy with "integration" as an actual or conceptual understanding of black existence, and unable to accept black nationalism or black racism as alternative models, the issue is what concept of black life can now be developed by the church which makes social activity acceptable and viable.

It is not my intent to do a lecture on the Doctrine of the Church. However much a black ecclesiology may require articulation for our time, my purpose in this discussion is served by pointing to one aspect of the Doctrine of the Church only: as J. S. Whale once put it, the fact is that one major "mark of the Church is that its corporate life is new life." He says,

To live in the Spirit means to be redeemed from the clutches of this present evil world and to walk in newness of life. This can only mean newness of social life, since there is no other kind of human life. If our faith is not indefeasibly social we are walking in craftiness and handling the Word of God deceitfully. . . .

God's holy will has to be done, even here in Babylon. . . . There is no other way of knowing God than by responding to his claims upon us; and his claims are made here, just where we live. . . . The Gospel can never be unethical without ceasing to be the Gospel. From beginning to end it is concerned with moral realities, and therefore with time, and

⁶ Wilmore, Gayraud S., *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, Doubleday & Co. Garden City, N.Y., 1972, p. 232.

with this strange world of necessity and freedom wherein God has set us. . . .⁷

It is the social emphasis of new life that Whale articulates to which I call your attention. I have no doubt whatever that Christians are called to spiritual and moral rebirth, in part by the activity of the church. A Doctrine of the Church for the contemporary period must be absolutely clear, however, about the necessity for new life in the social context of black America. It is that to which the Gospel also calls us. The structure, doctrines, and liturgy of the black church must be constructed, then, to create new life for black people in this social context, and the essence of that context is economic, social and political. There are those in black churches, clergy and laity alike, who have resisted the necessity for confronting the black condition, who feel that black theology is unnecessary, who emphasize spiritual conversion and regeneration, who think they are doing the whole work of the Lord by preaching and healing ministries. Any Doctrine of the Church that omits the requirement to create new life socially is insufficient for this time or any other. It is inadequate for black people in a hostile world. It is, in fact, a deceitful handling of God's Word.

The necessity for this statement of the social responsibility of the church grows out of widespread difference of opinion in the black community regarding both the necessity for and scope of social change activity. In 1944 Gunnar Myrdal observed that

... the Negro church fundamentally is an expression of the Negro community itself [and] if the church has been other-worldly in outlook and indulged in emotional ecstasy, it is primarily because the downtrodden common Negroes have craved religious escape from poverty and other tribulations. . . . When the Negro community changes, the church will also change.⁸

Later writers, particularly Gayraud Wilmore, have examined black church protest and social activity more cogently than did Myrdal and his team, but Myrdal was correct in calling attention to the effect of attitudes in the black community on the activities of the church and its members. My point is, however, that beyond the development of an articulated ecclesiology which provides the foundation for change agent activity, there is a continuing need for attitude assessment to determine what can and what should be done. In other words, the black minister who is wise will constantly be in discussion with his parishioners and the black community about the nature and direction of his activities as a change agent.

The reason for this continuing attitude assessment is plain: no leader can afford to get too far in front of those he or she leads. For instance, Nelsen and Nelsen report that the March, 1965, Gallup survey indicated that 88.3% of black respondents replied affirmatively to the question, "How would you feel about clergymen in your own church taking part in protest marches on civil rights issues?"⁹ Those of us

⁷ Whale, J.S., *Christian Doctrine*, Cambridge University Press, 1952, p. 141 f.

⁸ Myrdal, Gunnar, *An American Dilemma*, Harper & Row, New York, 1944, p. 877.

⁹ Nelsen & Nelsen, *op cit*, p. 94.

who know the black church would have expected that response. Yet that overwhelming approval seemed not to be accompanied by an increase in church attendance. Indeed, the Nelsens report later on that:

The black Protestant curve shows a steady decline in church attendance throughout the non-violent, King-dominated period of the revolution when goals were sharply focussed on integration . . . [but] By 1967 and 1968 with the effective abandonment of the earlier approach to civil rights, the black graph begins a sharp upward climb which continued into mid-1969.¹⁰

We should take care not to draw too many conclusions from limited data. Nonetheless, it is obvious that a conceptual framework in an articulated black ecclesiology and continuing attitudinal assessments of the black church and community are necessary tools for determining the scope of the black minister's role as a change agent.

I believe that the minister is crucial to the process of helping the church understand the role of the clergy as change agents, and that this proper understanding is crucial to our time. In too many places the black minister is seen *only* as preacher. Yet the evidence of black church history, such surveys as have been taken of community attitudes, and the unrealized expectations of every black author who has written about the church, each suggests a climate of opinion which is positive about this specific role of ministry. We do not fight a negative attitude in the community. We do have widespread misunderstanding of what the rationale for such activity might be and of how the minister should function in this responsibility. The black minister's task, therefore, is to educate the church and community about what this role should be contemporaneously. In order to do that, black ministers must be educated or educate themselves about the historic understanding of ecclesiology and function which have made the black church vital to black survival and life on these shores. I believe the expectation is clear, but that it requires a new suit of clothes appropriate for this moment of history.

My *second* point concerns *goals*. *Black ministers will never meet whatever expectations the black church and community hold about their activity as change agents unless the goals of that activity are clearer than they are today.* It is undoubtedly true that the ultimate goal of the black community is freedom, but neither the content of that freedom — what it means — nor the methods of achieving it are nearly so clear. At one point freedom simply meant freedom from the chains of slavery. At another it meant freedom from legal segregation and discrimination. Today both slavery and legal separation are gone. What, then, is the present goal of the freedom and liberation we talk about so much? And how shall blacks achieve it?

These questions are clouded, on the one hand, by the fact that black Americans have always believed wholeheartedly in the documents of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

American history. Ours has been an almost unbelievable devotion to the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution with its Bill of Rights. Vaguely black folk understood that those documents were not written with them in mind, and in fact deliberately excluded them, but we took them for what they said, and they were one basis for our hope for eventual freedom. We believed also that the Civil War was fought to end slavery and was for us another expression of the idealism of this nation when in fact the reasons were far more expedient, economic and political. Thus, in the popular mind Jefferson and Lincoln were the heroes who provided the words and foundation for our belief that America could live up to its ideals. Because blacks wanted so much to believe, they did believe, and freedom, the ultimate goal, had the same content it held for all others who came to these shores.

On the other hand, black America saw its own blackness as a handicap to realizing the dream. Like many another group which came to these shores, there was a vague understanding that only as the group identity was lost could real appropriation of the dream occur. In this sense blackness refers to much more than color of skin. It means loss of distinctive culture and acquisition of as many characteristics of the dominant society as possible. Thus, when the end of legal separation seemed close, much of the advertising in the black community aimed at making us straight-haired, sunburned editions of our white counterparts. Our hopes and ideals centered around the hopes and ideals of middle class white America — big cars, plush homes, etc. Even the language and common idiom aimed at conformity. In a word, we were to be *integrated* into this society.

By far the best expression of this dilemma is to be found in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, speech at the 1963 March on Washington. "I have a dream" voices with amazing clarity both black belief in America and black expectations about integration. King began by saying, "Five score years ago, a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today signed the Emancipation Proclamation. . . . But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free." He compared the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence to a promissory note which has not been cashed but has been stamped "insufficient funds." "But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt," he said; indeed, this check "will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice." And he concluded with his dream — our dream — that freedom would ring not just from the mountains of New Hampshire and New York, but from "every hill and molehill of Mississippi" until, black and white together, we are all free at last. The faith in America is clear. The expectation of freedom and equality — in a word, integration — is plain.

The last decade has helped blacks to see not only that America will not permit integration in any complete sense — that housing, educa-

tion and employment, along with real power, can be open to only a very few blacks — but, more important, that the price of integration was loss of black identity and to some extent humanity as well. Integration always meant black folks becoming something else; it meant being accepted or tolerated rather than the fundamental right to be and to become. Is it any wonder, then, that black America is as schizophrenic in its attitudes toward this country as the nation is hypocritical about its ideals and dreams? This place is our hope and our despair, and both the goals and the methods for reaching them remain unclear.

I want to posit here what I believe the past ten years of black existence in America has finally forced us to take seriously, namely, the fact and reality of cultural diversity and pluralism in this nation. There are a good many people, black and white, who see the concept of pluralism as divisive and separating. I do not. I believe, in fact, that it could well be the unifying principle around which the future of America is built. What I mean by taking pluralism seriously is threefold: (1) seeking to destroy the means by which one culture dominates or exterminates another, (2) developing the strengths which exist in each segment of the pluralism, and (3) creating new means of interchange among the pluralisms. We are at the edge of phases one and two. Phase three lies down the road ahead. But this brief statement contains both the goal and the method for the black minister as change agent in the years ahead. Let me be just a little more explicit.

For the foreseeable future the black community has two simultaneous tasks: breaking the dominance of the white community over its entire life and developing the peculiar strengths which have always been inherent, but often overlooked, in black people and black life. We have been dominated mentally (socially) because not only the books about blacks but the very standards by which the books were written and behavior judged have been produced by those hostile or insensitive to black aspiration and thought. We have been dominated economically because the flow of capital has always been from the black community to the white community and never vice versa. We have been dominated politically because we were not in very many positions of political power. Our lack of any voice whatever at the Republican National Convention last August is one clear example of that. The black minister who is an effective change agent must help the black church organize its resources so that this domination can end. We must become economic, social, and political producers and entrepreneurs rather than simply consumers in the American marketplace.

Alongside that development is the rediscovery of who we are as black people and a fundamental valuation of ourselves and our existence. One major effort of the black minister as change agent is to change the way black folk conceive of themselves. Our experience in America has been deliberately designed to devalue us — in our own eyes as well

as the eyes of the world. We have been generally omitted from the records of achievement in this nation, and we have possessed little of its land or worth. Black teenagers today are very much unemployed, for instance — over 40% at latest count — largely because they have few value concepts about themselves and are of little value to those in the employment market. Yet the truth is that without blacks this nation could never have developed as quickly or as strongly as it did. We have made contributions to the growth of America that are surely in proportion to our numbers here, but they are little known or largely ignored even by blacks themselves.

More important, however, there is in the heart of black America an understanding of human life which is profound and compelling. We know that life does not consist of riches alone, but that joy comes from being at peace — somehow, some way — with one's God, one's self, and one's existence in this world. We know that not only from the bitterness of our suffering here, but, as Cecil Cone puts it, from our encounter with the Almighty Sovereign God on these shores. The discovery of who we are as both black and American, and the development of underlying strength from that discovery, is the other side of the dual task. It will require the development of contemporary rituals, calendars, symbols and whatever else. In our churches, it is not enough simply to follow the liturgical calendars of other churches or of the Western Christian year. The historic events of black life must be celebrated also so that black pride and confidence may grow. The black heroes of our history must be remembered along with the places of importance in our past. Just as Jews across the world look back to celebrate their history in Israel, this land holds our history and the remembrance of black events, heroes, and places here can provide unity, solidarity and pride for black life.

In the midst of these dual tasks, the third phase is important to keep in mind. When the domination of one culture in the pluralism is finally destroyed, and when each culture develops pride and strength, it is then possible for all of the cultures to be in new relation to each other. Each can be and become what is important and endemic to its life. Because each has strength, all are forced into new relationships with the others. America will be a stronger nation when First Americans, Chinese Americans, black Americans, Spanish Americans and all the rest are able to develop their uniqueness, and are free to become themselves instead of some synthetic being which they are not and never shall be. Freedom in this conception means respect and appreciation rather than acceptance or tolerance, and there is considerable difference in being and becoming. It is a worthy task of the black minister as change agent.

Finally, let me speak about *models*. My *third* point is that *both the expectations and the goals I have articulated require cooperative rather than individualistic models of ministry*. The freedom and individualism

of the black church and the black minister have been both a bane and a blessing. There has been tremendous advantage to the black struggle for liberation to have had a large number of strong, vibrant, charismatic personalities to lead the battle. They have been of different sorts from Nat Turner to Martin Luther King, Jr. The records show that the vast majority of our leaders have come from and been nurtured by black religion generally and the black church in particular. Without charismatic, and usually religiously charismatic, leadership we might still be in chains. The freedom of the black church has enabled individual leaders to emerge and to provide us with imagination, hope, and the example of great courage. Yet, in a very peculiar way the very examples themselves have proved disastrous to the development of continuity and consistency. While it may be fortunate that we have produced leaders as we have required them — and we usually have — the course of the warfare has often been uneven. There have been terrible periods when we have slipped back from the crest of the freedom hill because we had no one to lead us over the top. Indeed, as Charles Long points out, America has had three distinct times in its history when it could have resolved the issue of black freedom. Each time it has compromised and failed to do so. The first occasion was the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, the second was the end of the Civil War, and the third was the uproars of the 1960's, each of them almost exactly one hundred years apart.¹¹

It is precisely at these junctures of history that black leadership has proved ineffective because it has been too individualistic. The fact is individualistic styles have within them seeds of self-destruction. Such models are inherently exclusive, egotistic, and triumphal. This style of leader demands confidence that the leader not only is right, but that his goal is absolutely correct, and his method the only way to accomplish it. Every leadership competitor must be seen as either less correct or incorrect. Consultation or conference may occur, as in the case of the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, but neither the organization nor the effort can progress if there is a fundamental disagreement with the basic goals and philosophy of the individualistic leader. If anything happens to such a leader, the organization dies or its effectiveness is sharply reduced unless a similar leader is found, and that is usually impossible. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference is one good contemporary example of this sequence, but there are countless black churches across the nation which testify to its accuracy, the strength of these churches ebbing and flowing with the charismatic individualism of their clergy.

Individualistic leadership models pose a major difficulty for black America because of the ease with which such leaders can be destroyed by determined persons. One tactic has been subversion by offers of

¹¹ Long, Charles H., "Civil Rights — Civil Religion," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. by Rickey, Russell H., and Jones, Donald G., Harper Forum Books, 1974, p. 216.

power, sex and money, the eventual problem of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., for example. Another tactic is murder: witness the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nat Turner a century apart. Still another tactic is discreditation, the prime example perhaps being Marcus Garvey. Yet another is harrassment, Paul Robeson one example among many. Or yet again, frustration of one's dream, the best instance having been W. E. B. DuBois. Whatever the methods, and there are many, individualistic models are prone to easy attack and are an essential weakness of those models.

The other major difficulty with individualism is that such leaders rarely produce anyone to carry on their work after they are gone. It is one of the miracles of the black community that its few organizations have survived as well as they have despite inadequate attention to future leadership production. One which has done so is the NAACP. The continuity of able leadership from DuBois to Johnson to White to Wilkins is an amazing chapter in our history. Unfortunately, that history is now in danger because there is no heir apparent to Wilkins, and he has stayed on too long. In our churches, far too few of our prominent black ministers seem to have any concern about discovering others to succeed them. Many of them are so disillusioned about their own careers that they are unwilling to suggest even to the young people in their own congregations that a career in the ministry is a vital opportunity for service. God calls persons to ministry, it is true, but we need to help God a little bit! The great danger if we do not is that the work to which we have given our lives will die when we are finally done.

There is one other important factor related to my contention that cooperative ministerial models are necessary. In the not-too-distant past black clergy formed the largest and best pool of leadership in the black community. That is rapidly changing. Many more young blacks are now able to go into politics, business, government, education, etc. Their numbers have increased so sharply over the last decade that black clergy are rapidly being left behind in terms of specific skills to tackle the economic, social, and political problems facing the black community. Black ministers can continue to be oblivious to this change, they can attempt to continue in the old way to make a contribution to the struggle for freedom, or they can decide the time has come to find ways both to understand the languages and techniques of the new black professionals and ways of cooperating with them. I believe the latter option is the only viable one for a compelling reason, namely, there is no larger or better organized constituency in the black community than the church. Aside from the church, the black community is splintered, and there is no real prospect for any equal constituency development in this century. For that reason alone, cooperative leadership models involving the minister as a member of a change agent *team*, rather than as an individual, are absolutely required.

It is important, therefore, that a theological seminary such as ITC design its curriculum in such a way as to develop cooperative models of ministry. In nearly every case, including my own seminary, curriculum design in theological education is exactly the opposite. We teach students to interpret Christian faith and history for themselves, and to research and understand the issues of modern life for themselves, hopefully so they will be better able to articulate them to others or help plan a course of action for their congregation. But we do not assist students to become aware of other professionals in the black community who have a larger and larger input to make, and we do not force students, conceptually and practically, to develop methods of cooperation. It may be true that field education brings students into contact with other professions and skills, but the aim of such contact is individual learning. Such experiences are not specifically oriented toward developing cooperative leadership models and broad community team building.

This presentation has been far too long, and I will not articulate again what I have already written elsewhere about the details of such a cooperative model.¹² Suffice it to say that its basic ingredients are the development of specific economic, social or political skills by each clergyman, and the deliberate pooling of those skills in such a way as to produce a more comprehensive approach to securing the goals I have described. My hope is that the black church will become intentional about its change agent role, and that it will develop and encourage church leaders, clergy and lay, who can best enable the realization of conscious intention. The monopoly of individualistic models of ministry is past. The future belongs to cooperative styles.

In summary, I have tried to say three basic things: first, that the expectation of the black church and the black community is that a major role of the black minister is to help change the economic, social, and political conditions under which blacks live in America; second, that the goal of such change activity is to produce freedom in which all human beings, and particularly blacks, can be respected, appreciated, and enabled to be what *their own* culture encourages; and third, that the models of ministry by which expectations and goals can be realized is a cooperative model rather than an individualistic one. I hope, however, I have done something equally as important also: to express my confidence and pride in the black past and my hope for the black future. What we shall become as a people in this land is yet before us, with God's help. It is a dream of a new future for humanity in which justice shall roll down like waters and we shall indeed be free — free at last, great God Almighty, free at last!

¹² See my article, "Toward the Promised Land," in *The Black Church*, Black Ecumenical Commission of Massachusetts, Boston, Vol. II, No. 1, 1972, pp. 1 ff.; and the *Supplement*, *Theological Education*, Spring 1970, Dayton, Ohio, p. S-24 ff.

