

***Chaplain as servant of the quality of life and sanctification  
A Protestant Perspective***

By Sten Lundgren , Sweden

I will tell you some life experiences that two persons have had.

The first is a young black person who is in prison in Southern California. He is almost 20 years old. The place where we met is dark and glum. There is not much for him to do. He is drawing a sketch. I came closer to see what he had drawn. I saw a picture of the Last supper. I could not resist asking him why he had such a motive. (without telling him of my special interest in the scene). He answered : Well, You see – He knows what it is all about. – I could only reply Yeah , he does know what it is all about

Jesus was in reality the one who knows what it is being in prison- accused- neglected taken away from the respectable people. This young boy could identify himself with him who was rejected

The story which this youngster had drawn gave him a pattern for understanding the situation where he found himself. Personally I was standing at his side – silent listening to what he had to say. I was not preaching or counseling, only letting him give his view of his life.

What has this to say to us about quality of life and the role of the Chaplain. I think it stresses the value of listening to persons and their own discovery of meaning. It has also the possibility of integration of the dark side of reality without whitewashing. Since we do not have to cure the person and have to show therapeutic results we are in a position to be together with the other person in her or his struggle in life.

Let us now turn to the other person. In my travel from New York to California to have my CPE I wanted to visit Worcester, Massachusetts. There a middleaged man about 40 year old had been hospitalized for schizophrenia 1920. He had delusions and suffered from them. One night without sleeping, he saw a sign. The moon which shone through the window created a cross on the floor. This meeting with the cross gave his life a new direction. He began to see his illness as a message to himself and to others. It was not only a purely psychological breakdown- it also held promise of a greater reality. You have probably identified the person in the hospital as Anton Theophilus Boisen. One of the parents of Clinical Education. He writes 1930 in *Theological Education Via the Clinic*.

“It will thus be seen that from the beginning this undertaking has had to do with the service and the understanding of the mentally ill. It has been my view that the functional group of mental disorders are of peculiar interest to the religious worker. According to this view they are disorders of emotion and volition, of belief and attitude, rooted not in cerebral disease nor in breaking down of the reasoning processes but for the most part in the age-old conflict which the Apostle Paul so vividly describes, the conflict between the law that is in our minds and that which is in our members. Such conflicts when they result happily, as in the case of Augustine, Georg Fox and John Bunyan, we recognize as religious experience. When they result unhappily , we send the sufferer to a hospital for mentally ill and speak of him as insane.”

Out of the Depths came his insight – He himself was not spared from illness. He suffered five times from mental breakdowns due to stressful happenings in his life. Richard Cabot wanted to take away from Boisen his acting as supervisor. As a loner he died in 1965.

I am reminded by another loner who says:

“To this day we know the entire creation sighs and throbs with pain; and not only so, but even we ourselves who have the Spirit as a foretaste of the future, even we sigh to ourselves as we wait for the redemption of the body that means our full sonship. We were saved with this hope in view. Now when an object of hope is seen, there is no further need to hope. Who ever hopes for what he sees already?

But if we hope for something that we do not see, we wait for it patiently.” Rom 8:22-25