

New Directions for Religious Communities

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We are in a crisis

We can continue to say that

Someone else is going to solve our problems.

The evidence is now clear that

In reality nobody is going to solve our problems.

Will we act to solve our own problems?

THE CHOICE IS OURS.

-- Robert Theobald

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INTRODUCTION

When I first entered Chicago Theological Seminary, my intention was to focus on constructive theology and to write my thesis in that area. However, as the years progressed and I read more contemporary theological writings, I grew increasingly aware that most of the major theological breakthrough of our century had preceded me by several years and their authors -- Niebuhr, Tillich, and Barth -- were old or dead. I sensed that what was needed was neither rehashing nor compilation of these men's thoughts, nor a writing of an entirely new theological system. Rather, as I talked to churchmen and worked in corporation offices, I became aware of the serious need to build a new style of life which would reflect this century's theological insights as well as overcome some of the blatant social evils of our time. To this end this thesis is dedicated.

the twelve methods for maintaining missional religious communities dedicated to serving all the society.

Written from a "Christian perspective," Chapter I defines the functions which a religious community must perform and shows briefly how these same roles were assumed by Jesus of Nazareth in his preaching, healing, death, and resurrection. Relating these rather abstractly defined functions to our time, Chapter II seeks to define the major underlying problem of our age. While it attempts to be sociologically accurate, no attempt has been made to include a lengthy data base or the opinions of all major social analysts. Nonetheless, many of the major issues are discussed and related together into four categories from which one main issue can be explicated. Chapter III sets out a brief characterization of the possible societal conditions which would eliminate the kinds of problematic issues seen today.

Finally, in Chapter IV twelve new directions are discussed for a religious community. While not being the universal panacea, these twelve considerations are designed to enable and sustain groups of people who have decided to attempt to begin to minister to individuals and to transform the society in which they live.

In writing this thesis I have been indebted to Drs. Victor Obenhaus and Clyde Manschreck as they consistently pushed me to clarify my wording and document my presumptions and perceptions. Also formative in the creating of this thesis have been the Order of the Ecumenical Institute and the members of the Chicago Religious House in which I have lived for the past two years. These people sharpened my awareness of our times and provided examples of, and support for, creating

Preface

To 3rd Edition

The original version of this document was typed on a manual typewriter and submitted to the faculty of Chicago Theological Seminary in 1970.

In 1988, the author compiled a collection of past and current writings for self-publication under the title *Exploring the Crystal Mountain Foothills*. The text of the thesis was retyped into a word processor for inclusion in that document. At that time, some of the obvious grammatical, typographical and spelling errors were corrected.

In 2011, the electronic version is once again being made available to the public. Some formatting adjustments have been made to incorporate technological advances in word processing and printing. However, gender bias has not been removed in any of the sections. The author is aware of the problem of the rampant use of the male gender and has eliminated this from his contemporary writings. The gender bias in this document serves to highlight the social change that has occurred in churches, business and other social institutions since the document was originally written.

Furthermore, the original document was specifically written within the Christian context for approval by a Christian seminary. Since writing the thesis, the author has travelled extensively in non-Christian parts of the globe. Clearly, the justifications used in some sections will not be convincing to some contemporary audiences. These matters will be addressed in future editions. Suffice it to say, here, that the author does not believe, or intend, that the guidelines and principles outlined in this document are the exclusive property of any of the great religious traditions that brought global civilization through the 20th Century.

Current information about the author and access to recent writings are available on-line at:
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The document is being made available as a service of greenschemes' Educational Division. Input, comments and suggestions for further development of the themes of this thesis will be appreciated.



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CHAPTER I

FUNCTIONS OF A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

Discerning the Major Contradictions

Throughout the history of the cosmos, creatures and other bundles of matter have discovered that all too frequently the situation in which they find themselves is not conducive to their own well-being and growth. Giant planets formed over long ages of building and molding are destroyed by the very star which holds them in the universe; likewise, even the minutest atoms composed of myriads of sub-atomic particles held in a delicate, mysterious and creative balance are eliminated as entities in the universe by high-velocity electrons and other still unnamed destroyers of atoms. The once abundant American forests were overrun by encroaching glaciers and the stark, white beauty of the massive ice cap was evaporated by the Sun which itself is headed toward cold ash or un-materialized energy.

Not only do perils from near and far confront the non-living portions of the universe, but also animals and humans, in all periods of history have faced famine, flood, earthquake, hostile enemies, and internal conflict, both individual and social. The Hebrews, when they began to create their life story, placed at the very beginning the story of Adam and Eve, and with this story described the nature of humanness as they experienced it. For them, and still for us today, being born entails being the descendant of Adam and thus all men live under the same indicative.

To all of us comes the reminder that:

In toil you shall eat of it [the ground]
All the days of your life;
Thorns and thistles it shall
Bring forth to you;
And you shall eat the plants of the field.

In the sweat of your face
You shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
You are dust,
And to dust you shall return.¹

The struggle between separation and reunion ... in our relation to others, in relation to ourselves, and in our relation to the Ground and Aim of our Being...

In both mankind and nature, life is separated from life. Estrangement prevails among all things that live.²

To exist means to encounter pain, destruction, and separation; to continue to exist involves overcoming these very contradictions; but attempts at eliminating all of these contradictions inevitably fail, for

The state of our whole life is estrangement from others and ourselves, because we are estranged from the origin and aim of our life.³

At this point one may be tempted to evade and ignore the problems of life or continue to exist each day as a repetition of the previous one, hoping that matters will not get worse and confident that they will not improve. On the other hand, some people decide that the contradictions cannot destroy them and thus set resolutely about overcoming the separation. This latter group of people will be the focus of our attention from hence forth.

In our day of heightened lucidity and expanded scientific competencies, many persons feel the struggle of human existence and turn to science as the savior from chaos. Unable to find constancy, continuity, and completeness in the world of the living and acting, they conceive of science as that uniquely human area of existence which grows through cumulative acquisition of data, encountering no radical shifts in direction and never reversing its statements and conceptualization. On the contrary:

Cumulative acquisition of unanticipated novelties proves to be an almost non-existent exception to the rule of scientific development. The man who takes historic fact seriously must

suspect that science does not tend toward the ideal that our image of its cumulateness has suggested.⁴

Rather than successively adding data onto corollaries to support an already existing theorem, science proceeds by making expectations or projections and then conducting tests to confirm them. However, there have arisen times when many projections have gone unconfirmed and the body of theory required to explain all of the anomalies grows so complex that one finds it difficult to conceive that the universe could be so irrational. Realizing that there have been times of crisis within the scientific community, and subsequently examining the cause, nature and result of these times leads us to the awareness that "crises are a necessary precondition for the emergence of novel theories."⁵ For when theories no longer fit reality -- a not infrequent occurrence -- the scientists must forge new patterns of organizing their observations. For example, when Newtonian physics began to become increasingly inapplicable, Einstein had to replace $E=mc^2$ as the organizing principle of physics. This was not a modification or addition to an existing paradigm; rather all of physics was understood in a new way and the seemingly overwhelming contradictions became conceivably solvable.⁶

Using this new image of the scientist as the confronter of contradictions and seeker of key problems, we can now focus on society itself to determine if this same role is played by any part of society. We have already seen that individuals and societies encounter difficult and contradictory times. This happens not because sometimes men behave wrongly and sometimes rightly, but because as the authors of Genesis knew so profoundly, humans constantly live in an adverse world from which they must eke an existence. More critical than the specific historical events of success and collapse, the human response to social phenomenon may be seen to describe a pattern which coincides with the advance of science. When we look at the long range of human history we discover that:

During long periods of time, societies and cultures are profoundly stable. The actions of individual human beings, or even of large groups, only have marginal effects on their own lives, for the norms within which they live are considered fixed and unshakable. At certain points, however, a culture ceases to be stable, for its underlying bases cease to be suitable to the changed environment in which it finds

itself. At this point, it must either find ways to survive within changed conditions or it must resign itself to collapse.⁷

Realizing the alternatives of societal collapse or social transformation, many people attempt to convince themselves of the illusionary nature of the choice while others hope for an obvious solution; still others pick one manifestation of the chaos and seek to solve it alone. In our time, for example, even once the plight of the Black Man had been known, many people maintained that really no major problem existed and that if everyone would be patient and behave properly, justice and tranquillity would prevail. Those slightly more daring persons admitted the problem existed and maintained that a few new laws and food baskets would solve this problem as they had solved other contradictions in the past. Finally, upon seeing -- or after allowing themselves to see -- the complexity of the problem others chose one small facet -- like housing or welfare -- and poured their entire life into changing that particular dimension of the complex problem. All of these stances, while they may affect society, are finally incapable of bringing about the massive shift which we need to make.

When men know that they stand before an infinite judge and creator, the context of their obligation becomes infinite; they are required to exercise moral freedom in all areas of existence; no part of conduct remains a matter of indifference or subject to pure necessity; nowhere can man act without the liberty and obligation of moral agencies.⁸

Men like Martin Luther King, Jr., who affirm the complexity and expanse of the problem and give their whole life to creating the new solution, find their place in history as the ones who became the focal point of the groups who changed the course of history by dealing with central problems of an oppressed people.

At this point we can affirm the contradictions and struggles which form an integral life itself as profound and critical gifts. In times of crisis men are required, actually enabled, to forge a new response to existence. Men must decide.

Never forgetting that our attention is focused on that group of people within society as a whole who respond to the major contradiction of their time, we can now begin to examine how that body relates to society. In the latter sections we shall examine our own times, and chart

the course for those who choose to assume this role in our age.

Proclaiming the Possibility of Responding

Sensitivity to the critical problem of one's time, however, places one very near the brink of despair, often pushing him into heightened despair, anger, or immobility. "When a human existence is brought to the pass that it lacks possibility, it is in despair, and every instant it lacks possibility it is in despair."⁹ To see no possibility and then to call the lack of possibility the problem, while solving nothing, heightens the despair. Not only does the real contradiction continue unsolved, but the individual, while focusing on himself, continually finds himself confronted with and consumed by that over which he is despairing. Furthermore, to escape heightened despair by lashing out at the problems of the world, shouting them out of existence, or wishing them to be non-existent in the universe rarely proves successful and finally one may only lash harder, shout louder, and wish more wildly. Following these responses one is often driven to immobility and resignation before the all-too-well known problems of his situation. Although the individual as such may perform a variety of activities, he constantly senses meaninglessness in his living and dies having contributed little to the solution of the problem which his times called him to confront.

Confronted by our own awareness of the contemporary human problems, we must not fall into despair but must, rather, acknowledge that the passing away of individuals and the looming up of problems constitute the nature of life itself. Nowhere in the world do we find creatures or things which last forever. Despair results from our refusing to accept the world we know. When we affirm problems, suffering, and death as basic characteristics of humanness, then new life itself becomes a possibility. For Christians, in particular, seeing life in all its complexities demands the realization that:

It was certainly not Christ's intention to take men out of the world and into paradise, where there is neither need nor any wretchedness; or to transform as if by magic the earthly life into worldly peace and gladness. This would be only a Jewish misunderstanding and it is a light-minded and sensual one.¹⁰

The only possibility for responsive human action and full human life, therefore, begins with the self-conscious understanding by an individual that, "humanly speaking his destruction is the most certain thing of all."¹¹ The issue that one faces then shifts away from "How, amidst the trials and dangers of this world can I preserve my life?" Man is rather left with the question, "Which of the problems of this world must I die solving?" The former stance leads inevitably to fear and despair for death never leaves; the latter decision, while not eliminating pain and uncertainty, provides a context for joyfully bearing them in order to do the necessary deeds. As long as one is able to affirm the possibility of responding, free response comes. "The loss of possibility signifies either that everything has become necessary to a man or that everything has become trivial."¹² Finally, no certain proof of either decision can be constructed; yet we at least know, from our forefathers in the Church, that some people have decided in the midst of, not in spite of, the spectre of death, creative living could continue. "To understand that, humanly it is his own destruction, and nevertheless to believe in the possibility, is what is meant by faith."¹³

The primary responsibility of the person who, seeing the issue of his day, decides that responding constitutes a real option is to proclaim the same possibility to nations and individuals. To serve fellow humans, then, does not imply simply catering to their desires and wants and in so doing, escaping -- or deluding the other by the lure that life might be all pleasures and no death -- rather life is given to another by calling him out of lethargy and escape from life's problems into faithful living and acting. Nonetheless, each individual all too often thinks of society as "a physical and not a spiritual form of humanness and tends, therefore, to confine care of society to interest in the prosperity and peace of men in their communities."¹⁴ Calling a person to joyous living without reminding him of the problems and demands of his time as well as the contingency and ambiguity of life itself leads only to delusion and despair. One who speaks of faith, announces the possibility of life in the universe as it exists, and calls each nation and individual to respond to the inescapable call and life-consuming demands of their age, we shall call the *apostle*.

Embodying the New Life Style

The greatest danger that the apostle faces arises when, at his deepest level of despair, he no longer believes in his own insights and fears part of the world in which he

lives. Either he attempts no action, and yet demands others transform the world -- obviously hypocrisy -- or else he deals with only one facet of the total situation -- obviously reductionism. Whichever he chooses, the unbelieving apostle falls into the trap of floating over, of evading a situation to which he himself knows a serious response is demanded. Without doubt, our times place a great struggle before any person who seeks to acknowledge and relate to life.

We had a graphic illustration of the pathos of this struggle to comprehend our new reality in the reaction of Billy Graham to the riot in the Watts area. Billy Graham was concerned about these events and took a helicopter ride over the Watts area during the riot. He had a bullet-proof seat and hovered about 800 feet over the riot area according to one report. In later comments on the riot, Billy Graham noted that the Watts area really was not a slum! The houses and street were not those of a real slum. In light of this observation, Billy Graham concluded that the riot was the work of disorderly hoodlums who did not deserve the sympathy of decent people.¹⁵

Given the unrest and confusion of our world, one cannot be surprised at attempts by even the most devout persons to escape face-to-face encounters with problem areas. Nonetheless, the true apostle knows that a flight over chaos and subsequent dismissal of the problem will not enhance his ability to proclaim real possibility for existence.

The apostle, when he hears himself, embodies the necessary response, and reminds his followers that:

We start the pursuit of discovery by pouring ourselves into subsidiary elements of a problem and we continue to spill ourselves into further clues as we advance further, so that we arrive at a discovery fully committed to it as an aspect of reality. (This discovery) creates in us a new existence, which challenges others to transform into its image.¹⁶

Clear that the structure, styles, and powers of his present are filled with contradictions, he makes no attempt to argue with them or destroy them, for in the midst of their decay they still retain the poison and passion to destroy the emerging new. Rather, he knows that the future structures must be built, the life styles created lest the

present decays into nothingness and the new is killed in the womb of history. Finally, the apostle embodies the styles necessary for the future generations. Thus, the believing apostle becomes a radical experimenter -- the one who responds to the problems, notes the inadequacies, encourages others to probe, to experiment and build, and gives his whole self to the process -- and serves as the pioneer for society.

Those who are serving as society's pioneers have no easy or well-defined task; rather they are celebrated as those who "crossed the uncharted seas of possible thought."¹⁷ They use all of the bodily senses to perceive their world, focus all of their intellectual power toward building possible patterns of response, and push their faith in the goodness of existence to its limit to discover the source of their problem and the radicality of the solution. Though considered to be weird, insane, or radical in the minds of their contemporaries who would rather leave well enough alone, these pioneers -- especially in our time -- seek out colleagues in order to focus more energy on the problem at hand. Banded together and focused on the major problems facing their society, these people, then, forge out and embody a new direction for the rest of society. This task is not completed by following various individuals' whims, fancies, and feelings; rather, the pioneering body realizes that "every step is an effort to meet an immediate necessity; their freedom is continuous service."¹⁸

Assuming Responsibility for the Future

The persons who saw clearly the contradictions of their times and the brokenness of all existence could easily fall into despair, but some chose to believe. Those who spoke the word of possibility for life were tempted to speak loudly, yet in their acting, floated over the real issues; but some pioneered the future -- so the great image of the pioneers is built. In response to rebuffs from their contemporaries and their own internal anxieties and ambiguities, an adventurer sets out alone, disconnected from his contemporaries and leaving no trail for his successors. In a time of crisis and uncertainty, when a whole people exist on the brink of extinction and when the unknown seems to outweigh the known, any wisdom gleaned by any part of society must be made available to all, or the energy spent in obtaining it was expended for naught. Furthermore, all enjoyment of the old simply perpetuates the problem, and seeking personal satisfaction or solutions to non-crucial, though

interesting problems only decreases the effort which can be focused on breaking open a new mode of existence.

Not self-seeking fulfilment, but rather a group responding to the necessary has accomplished the task of clarifying a new response to the givens of existence. Always their first reflection showed them that nothing they could do would save their own lives, finally. Such a revelation, then, allowed them to act without fear of dying, for fear of the inevitable appears senseless. The person who has no fear of death can neither be intimidated by an opponent's threats nor be impeded by seeming life-consuming demands. To completely do the pioneering task, we find those people who offer their whole selves to the task at hand.

Released from perpetual concern over their own well-being and dedicated to creating a new and more human life for all men, these selfless pioneers cannot only experiment with themselves, but minister to other individuals. Lucid about the depth problems of their age, no individual's situation surprises them, for they understand the underlying causes. Committed to the new, their own life style conveys real hope and their message points to a transformed future rather than a warmed-over present. No longer serving self, they serve all men in particular and mankind in general. These persons, then, are the ones who love all men. Through their actions the pioneering deeds become universally actualized.

Conclusion

Changes in the shape of society, we have maintained, occur through a four-fold process: 1) the central problem is isolated, 2) a vision of possibility is created, 3) the first stages of the vision are embodied, and 4) those first attempts are made available to all men. This process does not occur in the abstract, but rather in and by the living and dying of particular persons at various times throughout history. Those who probe the depths of the problem may be called the men of faith for they would quit or die in the face of the unlimited chaos did they not possess faith that life had meaning. Those who then see the actual possibilities of the future and announce this world function as the apostles who allow others to see that they too, can live in the world, thus freeing them to become change agents in history. Likewise, those who embody the newly-demanded response, perform a pioneering function for society. Finally, those who accept the long and laborious task of

seeing that the new life is made available to every human being serve as pastor of their people. These faithful people who function as apostle, pastor, and pioneer of society we will call the Religious Community. The use of the title Religious for this group of people becomes especially applicable when we realize Jesus Christ their Lord sensed that with which all human beings struggle, and illuminated this in his preaching. He realized that sick persons with no will to live will not live, and thus he cured people by giving them permission to live. He saw that until death was conquered, life remained unliveable and hence he died as a sign of death overcome. Finally, he had such a powerful effect on men that he appeared to men even after he had been crucified. The task of the contemporary Religious is to continue in the manner of the Christ and in the heritage of their Christian fathers so that once again "the invisible Church becomes visible and the deed of Christ is reduplicated."²⁰

CHAPTER II

MAJOR CONTRADICTIONS OF OUR AGE

Men are Forced to be Aware of the Entire Globe

Our part of the 20th Century differs from other ages primarily in the way each individual, each group, and all decisions are impacted and influenced by events and style from around the globe. The pony express rider and the local grapevine -- basic communication modes for 5,000 years -- have been replaced by inter-planetary television and communication satellites. People around the globe simultaneously watch the opening of the Olympics or a lunar landing, and husband and wife separated by 200,000 miles talk and watch one another as a crisis evolves and is settled. While, on one hand, we must celebrate these as fantastic gifts and accomplishments, they nonetheless place great burdens on each man. No longer will a ten-page weekly paper keep one abreast of the goings on of his time; rather, each man is inundated by data, overwhelmed by possibilities and alternatives, and confused by a multiplicity of pictures and stimuli which bombard his body.

The living of one's life, once a rather well-defined procedure of providing sustenance of one's family by following in one's father's footsteps, now has become an open issue. The poor, who once were told to accept their status, now see people growing wealthier and demand equal rights. Children see the wide spectrum of vocational opportunities and know that no specific one is reserved for them. Furthermore, medical advances which have pushed the average age of death beyond 72 years have increased the number of days which each person must fill. What to do with one's life can no longer be considered in the category of a trivial question.

Complicating further the overall life decision, a growing lucidity pervades our times, pointing out to all that final authorities cannot be utilized in crucial decisions. For many Protestant clergy and also many laymen, both Protestant and Catholic, the Scripture can be regarded as neither literally nor divinely inspired.¹ The rapidity of change within the scientific discipline has convinced many scientists that rather than gathering data to unlock external truth in the universe, scientists are forming "an

interpreted universe populated by entities the particulars of which ... (they) have interiorized for the sake of comprehending their meaning in the shape of coherent entities."² Furthermore, the ancient wisdom concerning making personal decisions -- has lost relevance for most persons today. We no longer can merely list the good points, list the bad points, and then decide. Our increased ability to create and envision possibilities and disasters has demanded the consideration of the third column, the unknowable, which invariably ends up forming the longest list. "Problems have become so complicated, and so many different elements enter into them, that a simple clear-cut judgement in terms of black and white no longer is possible."³ Beyond the authorities of days gone by, people in our age struggle to make a decision which will withstand their own critical analysis.

In the midst of the radically expanded context for knowing and acting, even the family structure is impacted. No longer do the parents provide the major portion of their children's education, either practical, formal or vocational; the world teaches our children.

The sensitive adolescent feels that all kinds of voices -- parents, teachers, books, entertainment celebrities, public opinion engineers -- are attempting every hour of the day to gain entrance to his consciousness and seduce him to their style of life...

...Parents are often unable to present much evidence or thinking which would support the morality they try to require of adolescents. So often adults end by throwing up their hands or acting as rigid authoritarians.⁴

Possessing the compound wisdom of their elders and lacking personal or societal vision, youth are able to point out the errors of their ancestors and then begin to wonder what can stand. Furthermore, baffled and made to feel inferior by the arguments of their children, the adults forfeit leadership and relax discipline, frustrating

themselves and allowing lucid youth the flounder and discover.

Each person in this world is a consciousness. An awareness that sees and feels the "world out there" and is constantly organizing meaningful worlds in which it acts.⁵

This consciousness -- the ability to organize and interrelate experiences -- has characterized human beings whenever they have existed. However, in our time, as we have observed, sophisticated communications systems and the awareness of increased vocational possibilities have weakened traditional sources of authority, destroyed previous imperatives for family education, and reduced respect for parents. The problem, however, in all of these situations, is not that we are conscious creatures. No, consciousness plays an essential part of humanness. Rather, at this time the complexity of the world society has superseded the limits of our consciousness, unconnected bits of data and strange emotions collect without pattern or organization and the level of the fearful chaos is slowly increasing.

Individuals Appear Insignificant in the World They Know

Just as the mouse hides when the eagle swoops down and the antelope darts when the lion approaches, so man, rather even man, flees from his consciousness when the events and demands of the world surround him with the awareness of chaos and death. A prevalent method among the younger generations utilizes any one of a wide range of drugs of various potencies and properties. Although among the users there does exist some motivation to "go against the establishment" or follow their peers, finally drugs slow one down and enable a trip through an imaginative and peaceful world where music strikes the soul and friendship comes easily. On a less controversial, yet no less effective level, one contemporary commercial tells of a gentleman who complains about all the bad news to which, though it bothers him, he continues to listen. In order to listen without cutting himself while shaving, he takes a little blue pill which eases the tension, not in the world, but in himself. Likewise, as a people, we provide ourselves with a wide range of drugs, pills, and potions which enable us to feel that a problem has gone, to erase it from our consciousness, without actually doing anything to alleviate the source of the unrest.

A more physical and more obvious escape from the life which has been given to us occurs in the movement to and creation of suburban communities. One, in particular, claims to offer prospective purchasers "their own little world." Aided by high-speed commuter trains and submerged expressways, suburban dwellers can pass through areas of strife, unrest, and poverty without seeing more than an occasional church steeple or factory smokestack. Many people in "rural" America, likewise, contend that it has none of the cities' problems and has no relationship to them. The residents of one small town for instance, believed and publicly affirmed:

1. That the basic traditions of American society -- "grassroots democracy," free and open expression, individualism -- are most firmly located in rural society. The American heritage is better preserved in the small town because it can resist bad city influences and thereby preserve the best of the past.
2. That the future hope of American society lies in rural life because it has resisted all "isms" and constitutes the only major bulwark against them.⁶

In short, we have become masters -- both individually and as a society -- at escaping the world which is bombarding us and in the process we create our own illusionary world. We then proceed to live as though our imagined world really existed. As a result, the major social issues become a crisis before they are recognized as problems.

This same form of response to our times through escape has led to the creation of a principle of existence which maintains that if I can just feel at one with, if I can just love, if I am just sensitive to my wife, friends, and those whom I meet in business and leisure, then my problems will be solved. Books -- like Joy by William C. Schutz and Encounter by Arthur Burton -- have been, and continue to be, written describing techniques, games, and theories, which are designed to bring people closer to one another and to themselves. Though groups and communes are created in which such principles and actions are espoused, these have short life-spans for the fact remains that:

Any community turned in on itself already has begun to die. The most genuine love cannot

live long nourished by its own substance. Love must be placed at the service of that which transcends it; only in this way can it resist the attrition of time and habit.⁷

The complex, rapid, and dynamic age in which we live constantly reminds us that longings for stability, peace, and love are not possible for the majority of our mobile and vital society. Persons in our time are constantly driven to the awareness that their life must be lived for a mission external to the placating of their own emotions and stimulations of feelings.

Even in many places within the institutional Church, we sense that worship services encounter increasing difficulty in addressing the real lives of the worshippers. Ideal lighting, comfortable pews and powerful orators, even when they all function together, do not suffice to bring power to worship. Sermons often attempt to ignore the social issues and focus on one issue and pretend that if this one were solved, peace would reign. The congregation participating in the capacity of a spectator, though a pious one, becomes increasingly aware of its separation from the dynamic of the service and of the service from life. Thus, attendance gradually falters. The Church, when it tries to reduce the context in which it worships, even with its long and glorious past, cannot continue unless it responds to the wide range of issues at the spiritual level.

"At the moment we feel imprisoned by the fact that the circumstances of our social existence has greatly expanded while the scope of individual power has drastically shrunk."⁸ Aware of the entire world and unable to comprehend it intellectually, and thus unable to respond to it, we strive to build imaginary, simple, and private worlds through using drugs or moving to the suburbs. Or else, in response to the demand for expanded or heightened consciousness,⁹ we attempt to reduce the world to inter-personal relationships and worship with empty words in restive sanctuaries. Confronted by a world which we cannot comprehend, our escape and reductions are themselves proving futile.

Social Structures Are Crumbling

That we, as individuals, lack a way to conceptualize our world might not cause concern and anxiety if the present conditions appeared stable and certain to provide an alternative. Unfortunately, even uneducated citizens realize that political, economic, and religious institutions

have become inadequate and often dynamic. Except in possibly a few locations, nations and states have been unable to institute a political system which allows the wide masses of people which must be governed to participate in decisions. Thus the world's poor are seen as a burden to be borne or a power to be coerced and the uneducated remain baffled by the times hoping for the simple life to return while finding little assistance in catching up to a fast paced age. Furthermore, serious dissent is not dealt with, rather the majority, or ruling class, either demands submission to their own way or completely ignores alternative solutions.

Most elections these days merely add to cumulative evidence of the decade, that the party system which is supposed to lift political leaders of the people's choice is in fact stifling or dissipating leadership. Campaigns are mostly irrelevant and a few are vile; the results too often are inconsequential to society The system of politics and of government appears at the moment not to be competent to solve the problems the people feel are important. In times of social disruption and war there is possibly nothing as dangerous in a government as this appearance of incompetence Large numbers every day suspect that the places of influence and power are occupied by incompetents, and that nothing better is to be expected. The history of mankind suggests that this is a very revolutionary vision.¹⁰

Hence, in a time when the number of people is expanding rapidly, we lack the political structures and methods through which common decisions concerning the conduct of the present and the directions of our future might be achieved.

Nonetheless, even if we were to devise a decision-making method, the practical economic girding would be insufficient if the present understandings and procedures are utilized. The basic operating principles for economic distributions enable those persons and societies who possess mechanical and material resources to utilize those as they desire and thus create a wide variety of consumer goods and labor-saving machines. The poorer nations, to the contrary, must pour virtually all of their human energies into merely staying alive and thus they possess very minimum amounts of economic capital, a gift available to and enjoyed by mechanized societies.

Money is important -- but over-emphasis on money has bred enormous sorrows in the divided world of the past -- and it will repeat these sorrows and bring on World War III -- unless it ceases to be the world's prime polity-objective and end-in-itself, becoming, instead, merely an (essential-but-subordinate) element in the building of a peaceful competitive-cooperative space age world-society -- a society within which people are willing to be "earners" and do not merely aspire to be conspicuously-successful cheats, profiteers and exponents of "conspicuous consumption and of Megalomaniac Egotism."¹¹

Relative to both the necessary goods for sustaining and poisonous pollutants, allowing their possessor to fully determine distribution is disabling to society, ultimately wasteful of resources, and finally reduces the overall effectiveness of the initial possessor.

If changes occur, if new economic perspectives must be conveyed and different political practices learned, then the centrality of the educational institutions becomes obvious. In fact, although mass advertising is able to mobilize persons to purchase a product, public and private schools encounter increasingly serious problems and challenges. College and seminary students are clamouring for serious education through their mass social demonstrations, in remaining absent with some regularity, or by falling asleep in class when the boredom of the classroom leads to mental stagnation and physical relaxation. Many students and teachers alike know, and are becoming increasingly aware, that the contemporary structures of education are simply inadequate.

These inadequacies, both in combating illiteracy in the lesser developed areas and providing full educational opportunity in those more fortunate regions are certainly related together.

..... The magnitude of our present task requires that we re-examine and reorganize the content as well as the channels of education; we reshape the curricula as well as the buildings and classrooms..... Now perhaps we need to ask what is the minimum amount of knowledge necessary to understand a field or group of fields. As rote learning was rendered obsolete by the printed book so intensive specialization

of "human books" may now be obsolete by mechanized data storage.¹²

In the political, economic, and educational dimensions of society, we have discovered serious structural inadequacies when faced squarely with contradictions of our part of the 20th century.

As Churchmen, moreover, we must realize -- all cynics to the contrary -- that "the Christian community of our time whether or not formally united, is one of the great organizations and movements in civilization; it is one of the oldest human societies; it has been the teacher of most nations now in existence."¹³ Yet even this ancient nurturer of nations today finds its influence over people waning and structural solidarity shaken. While many priests and pastors are leaving the Church, the laity are increasingly discovering that the theological doctrine and orthodox behavior patterns are "irrelevant for their privatized civil religion that espouses the good, the true and the beautiful."¹⁴ As a result of this waning influence economic support grows weaker and internal discipline, organization, and morale decline as the external mission is reduced to balance budgets. All of which serves to further reduce economic support.

"There have been times when the Church felt itself more seriously threatened from without than it does today, but it has not often questioned its own adequacy so much as it does now."¹⁵

Society Has Become Fragmented Due to Undefined Mission

Facing crumbling structures, our age longs for those people who will build or rebuild economic, political, educational, and ecclesiastical structures for society. Nonetheless, left as it were with our life and death in our own hands, discovering as a nation that all our material wealth has guaranteed nothing, being in a world more complex and compact than ever before, and seeking some structure which will sustain us, indirection and uncertainty pervade our society. President Richard M. Nixon articulated our predicament in the 1970 State of the Union address when he observed that we have always been a nation with a vision, but lacked the means; let it not be said that now we have the means but lack the vision. From hunger campaigns to war efforts, between space exploration and foreign aid, choosing either

abundant manufactured goods or polluted environments, our nation, and groups within it, lack clarity of purpose and thus find themselves divided and impotent. Compounded by the lack of purpose in the present we remain unable and unmotivated to determine a concerted direction into the future.

What the people ... have in common is an anxiety about where the country is going. The malaise cannot be released simply by protest against policies. It is an inner anguish at the signs of dissolution -- of schools, universities, museums, of hospitals and welfare agencies, of political parties, of homes and communities -- not a dissolution of a particular power structure but of the social contract itself.¹⁶

Positions are stated, plans created and actions attempted but without national structures, and a common vision; fragmentation, division, anxiety and despair continue.

In addition to the nation, the individual families which serve as the basic building blocks of the nation, encounter increasing difficulty in determining their task in history.

Our general impression ... is that the role complementary of husbands and wives has ceased to function effectively in many families ... In instances when wives had been drawn into remunerative jobs or other community activities a new balance based on cultural change had not yet resulted ... the symbolic value of money as family power and status rather than its basic purchasing potential seemed to be the issue causing finances to be listed as problem number one ... In the area of household management, the conflict pattern ... centers about who should do the routine housework chores when both husband and wife are employed -- an unlikely issue one generation ago. Conflicts around personality and sex often represent expressions of intense disappointment of inflated expectations, unreal goals and misconceptions of psychological theory in its semi-popularized form.¹⁷

Thus wives take jobs or serve in community work, and men seek relevance within or beyond their jobs. These decisions resulted in a family divided or undirected in mission and thus unclear about where and how to expend its economic power and inhibited in communication

about personal concerns and practical needs, and thus turned the home into a bedroom for individuals rather than a headquarters for a team.

Aware of the seeming purposelessness and apparent injustice of their parent's generation, the youth are driven to raise serious questions about their own lives and the structures of their society.

What is most important today, after years of tumultuous activity by the younger generation, is the simple fact that they see what is happening in the world with freshness. They reject the assumption of those who have grown up with existing institutions that -- no matter how irrational, cruel, or pointless our present ways are -- they must be accepted as basically unchangeable except in the long run.

They believe we have alternatives.¹⁸

Yet building a new society in the midst of an established and often defensive society demands the concerted effort by a mass of people. In the face of all too clear demands, furthermore, many of the young are being worn out by the burdens of work. One 19 year- old California college student confessed in the closing remarks of her letter to Time Magazine:

The young people -- my brothers -- I see them growing ugly and irrational and I hear them saying things that are not different from Johnson's words and justifications about Viet Nam. Our parents hate us, our politicians desert us, our hope simply grows old and dies.

I sound as though I am wallowing in self-pity because the world is too harsh. I'm not. I am only very tired.¹⁹

Between anger and despair, energy and wariness, vision and illusion even the youth, the hope of the future, oscillate as the weight of the times overwhelm and divide them in the midst of the constant demand for unity and action.

As within nations, families and youth cultures, the institutional Church struggles to maintain itself in history and present a united front strong enough to minister to the complex and demanding conflicts and chaos of the world in which it finds itself. Nonetheless, "the American Association of Fund Raising Councils predicts

a freeze on religious giving in the 1970's due to inflation and competition for the consumer dollar."²⁰ As money becomes tighter and the contemporary issues more critical and confusing, the churches, especially at the denominational level feel the economic pressure of decreased giving and individualism on the part of particular organizations. The reluctance of congregations to support their denominations will have to be squarely faced as the ratification of the Consultation on Church Union resolution brings the issue to the attention of individual congregations and denominational meetings. The Reverend Doctor James O. McCord, President of Princeton Theological Seminary and chairman of the Presbyterian Church's committee on the Consultation on Church Union has conceded that winning support of the various congregations and church members "may prove more difficult ... than drafting the planned union itself."²¹ Thus, while creative experiments continue to be conducted, the institutional Church moves, with great hesitation and doubt, in the direction, at least, of uniting to minister the world. Yet even in this moving faces the real possibility of lack of support from its constituency and the failure in its mission.

Conclusion

With four categories -- global awareness, individual insignificance, crumbling structures, and fragmented mission -- in which to group major problems of the world laid out before us, we stand on the brink of despair and long for our mother's womb, or some similar warm, peaceful and undisrupted shelter from the chaos and separation of our own world. Nonetheless, if we do not despair but rather seek the underlying and central problem, there -- our theory tells us -- will a workable solution be discovered.

The multiplicity of problems enumerated and the myriad of other particular contradictions which could be added in each paragraph, can be dealt with under at least two rubric: 1) surviving under demand for heightened consciousness, and 2) remaining human amidst intensified global complexity. Whichever holds the key, that one we must pursue. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a modern-day Jesuit priest/palaeontologist gave his whole life to probing these very issues and, after travelling around the world, examining remains of ancient life forms, and constantly probing his religious deeps, discovered that: whatever instance we think of, we may be sure that every time a richer and better organized

structure will correspond to the more developed consciousness.²² Our searching, therefore, has lead us to one problem -- how to create the corporate structures to utilize creatively and to sustain heightened consciousness. First, however, we must build an image of existence within this new level of consciousness, the response to the contemporary contradictions

CHAPTER III

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

A New Consciousness Emerges

First of all, consciousness will play an essential role in the future. That which makes man unique is not derived from his physical stature nor his internal feelings; apes walk and the five of man's senses are shared by various other animals, often to more highly developed levels. On the contrary, man's uniquely developed cerebral capacity both distinguishes him from other creatures and allows him to envision and build ways to care for others, and to create tools for utilizing the given gifts of nature. However, the new kind of knowing must keep itself fully global. "We can no longer think it terms of static subject division -- one thing, one isolated area, one problem, but only in terms of dynamically interrelated processes and relationships."¹ All human beings will be linked together by mass communication or other form of media yet to be developed. Having decided to allow themselves to be aware of all earthly events, no deed or activity will overwhelm or surprise any individual. This global consciousness serves precisely as that which enhances personhood. Although in order to escape building the future, we often strive to develop ourselves in isolation from others, to become an individual we must soon come to understand and embody the awareness that:

When individualization reaches the perfect form which we call "person" participation reaches the perfect form we call "communion." No individual exists without participation, and no personal being exists without communal being. The person as the fully-developed self is impossible without other fully developed selves ... In the resistance of the other person the person is born.²

Encountering of and interrelated to other persons around the globe, then, allows each person to become a great and unique individual at the same time participating in a sphere of consciousness which encompasses Earth.

Through such corporate wisdom, men will then be able to accomplish tasks unimagined by even the most optimistic individuals. Already we know that 2,400 men, working simultaneously, are required to return a

damaged spaceship from lunar orbit. Certainly no fewer will be needed for ventures to follow. Likewise, no single creature invents a computer or designs an automobile. When accomplished on a global scope where ends the potentiality?

Universal Theology is Articulated

Yet more crucial significance and formative influence will be attributed to the depth understanding of humanness itself. Each of the major peoples of the Earth -- Chinese, African, Indian, etc. -- bring with them a long history of struggle, success, and stories to explain those events. As the imperative for global consciousness is heeded we will begin to look not only at our own culture, but at mankind as a whole. To aid our probing:

We can use religious symbolism not as a language of the doctrine of man, as the language of anthropology, not in the empirical sense of the word, but in the sense of doctrine of man -- in his true nature. The religious symbols say something to us about the way in which men have understood themselves in their very nature.³

From the perspective of the symbolic we will come to know ourselves, and our race, but not occupy ourselves with describing the molecular and sub-atomic composition of our body and chemical reactions which produce sensation; for such a direction leads to a curious result.

Man, the center and creator of all science, is the only object which our science has not succeeded in including in a homogeneous representation of the universe ... Man, in that part of him which is the most human, is still, as an achievement a monstrous stumbling block.⁴

To focus, however, on man's conscious reflection upon his own existence, to examine his symbolic representation and worship activities, allows us to realize that man's gifts lie in his ability to look at his own life. As men interrelate with a wider range of people and live and travel through various climates and cultures, parochial stories and conceptions of the nature

and powers of life will no longer remain adequate. People will realize that man no longer simply hunts seals and lives in igloos, ekes out a living from an arid desert, nor lives in a city in an air-conditioned home. Rather men will know that they inhabit and control the earth as one interrelated species. "What is needed -- what we may confidently predict by the perspectives here adopted -- is the emergence ... of a more truly universal, set of religious symbols answering the deepest questions of human existence in a manner touching both metropolitans and non-metropolitans to the quick."⁵ This will allow the delineation of the gifts and depths of the human being and with this awareness, the symbols, rituals and stories which will unite and empower men around the planet.

A Long Range Mission is Accepted

As long as men continue to strive only for their own physical survival, the world is doomed. This understanding was made conscious to men nearly 2,000 years ago by Jesus of Nazareth whom his followers have called their Christ. In one instance, so the story goes, when confronted by a rich young ruler seeking perfection, Jesus commanded him, "Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me."⁶ The ruler, we know, turned away saddened and most likely continued in his old ways. In our time not even turning away solves the problem for the poor know that they do not need to be starving and living in poverty. What originally was set out as a guideline for action has now become a mandate for survival.

The fundamental change in our social system is from the past when it was necessary for man to continue to strive to achieve the power he needed to create the environment he wanted to the immediate future when it will be possible to do what men wish ... Everybody knows that mankind has power. And the fact that some continents do not yet have the power does not prevent them from knowing that they ought to have the power, and that they can have the power if the rich are willing to develop and share it with them.⁷

Nonetheless, to decide that the task of humans is completed when everyone is adequately housed, clothed, fed and free, leads to exactly the same perversions, on a global scale, as the rich young ruler

was warned against as an individual. Just as some individuals, we have seen, have satiated their physical wants and now flounder for meaning, so a satiated planet would stagnate or be rent by internal quarrels over the excess of production goods. Clearly now we possess the possibility of physically caring for all men, this must be done or self-destruction certainly lies ahead. At the same time, to set solely about this task seems of little necessity as the final goal.

Rather, dedicated to expanding the sphere of consciousness and unafraid of increasing the complexity and tenacity of existence, people will set out to establish a network of conscious creatures throughout the solar system and the universe beyond. While this task may never be done, always people will see that it is being accomplished. The question about the existence of conscious life on the moon will forever more be answered affirmatively, for men have been there. For Mars, same questions, same answer. Yet to do these tasks demands that all the world participate in supporting the work with their resources, enabling with their actions, and sustaining in their worship. No voyage into the unknown succeeds without being toward a demanding task to be accomplished -- such as expanding consciousness to the universe beyond the solar system -- the immediate problems will be dealt with as crucial, but solvable, impediments to a necessary endeavor, and not as issues in which someone is trying to get the better of another or take what rightfully belongs to another.

Direction is Determined by Free and Responsible People

What, we now ask, will bring off such an undertaking by the human race? We in this century know not to expect some divine savior to appear overnight. On the contrary, the deed will be done by those who realize that "Man's first and foremost duty is to go forward and think about his future course."⁸ At the same time, we know not to expect that some event which will occur will solve all the problems of the remainder of history. Rather, change and contradiction lie at the core of existence and therefore, in every time, some people will be probing the problem, building plans, and vision, and doing the tasks that must be done to overcome the problems of their age.

This role carries no glory and little pleasure. Constantly one is forced to look at myriads of problems. Perpetually ideas fail, and plans must be changed. Yet this body of people is aware of the graveness of their times, the cruciality of their task for which they are responsible, and their own inherent guilt and perpetual inadequacies to do the task. However, they understand that:

When a man takes guilt upon himself in responsibility, and no responsible man can avoid this, he imputes this guilt to himself and to no one else; he answers for it; he accepts responsibility for it. He does not do this in the insolent presumptuousness of his own power; but he does it in the knowledge that this liberty is forced upon him and that in this liberty he is dependent on grace. Before other men the man of free responsibility is justified by necessity, before himself he is acquitted by his conscience; but before God he hopes only for mercy.⁹

Only this mercy, however it comes, allows those, who choose to receive it, to live joyously and creatively in the real world in which they live.

On these free and responsible people, the coming into being of the future depends. This function has been borne by groups and such can be birthed again. With an image before ourselves of the task ahead and the characteristics of the core group to bring the vision into reality, we must now turn our attention to the practice which will be necessary to create and to sustain such a transforming force in our time.

CHAPTER IV

CONCRETE RESPONSE FOR THE CHURCH

Conduct Practical Reflection

Those who decide to accept the challenges and dangers inherent in bringing about a new social order and a new style of life, will immediately discover themselves, even more than other men in their time, burdened and overwhelmed by the data available and the information necessary for survival. The greatest danger will lie in assuming that major sections of the knowable world can be ignored, for inevitably that facet of his world which one chooses to ignore will be one's downfall. As did the heel of Achilles bring about his final downfall, so in our time a government which sets out to ignore students sitting by the thousands on the doorstep of the capitol will fall. In the same manner Blacks only a few years ago simply demanded that their presence as human beings be acknowledged. Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give her bus seat to a white man, thus costing many lives and causing more than a decade of internal strife.¹ These events serve as contemporary reminders that consciously to fail to deal with problems at hand allows an illusion to be built, and illusions never survive the thorny pathway through reality.

We very quickly become clear "that the only way to run the complex society of the second half of the twentieth century is to use the computer."² While on one hand this realization seems obvious to most of the population of the world's developed countries we, nonetheless, fear that our privacy is being jeopardized by a nosey and dehumanizing super-power. On the contrary, we must constantly remind ourselves, and each other, that our freedom lies in our collective awareness of our past, present, and future and in our ability to give order to this knowing. Failure to keep track of our times invites chaos in which no individual or group can be free. While in the midst of a consciously built order, temporal and imperfect as it may be, a context for decision is created and unexpected intrusions and demands are reduced.

Organize

The creation of this level of consciousness promises to be no simple task, but the complexity provides no excuse for evasion of work. We must begin by raising to consciousness that long and unrecorded past which holds the story of our origins. Each venture to the

moon, each look into the universe, each swing of the geologist's hammer and journey of the anthropologist provides more data and knowledge about those events which occurred during the unconscious eras of history. With his increased mental capacity and auxiliary memory and calculating devices, these events can now be reflected upon. This reflection, it must be emphasized, justifies the energy expended in probing the past, for awareness of events alone benefits no one unless they can be related to the present situation and our eventual journey into the future. An example of this sort of interrelation is found in the writings of the anthropologist and palaeontologist Loren Eiseley when he concludes his poetic description of the emergence of the first fish, the snout, from water with the reminder that:

It was a monstrous penetration of a forbidden element, and the snout kept its face from the light. It was just as well, though the face should not be mocked. In three hundred million years it would be our own.³

Such reflection prevents us from excluding ourselves from history and constantly reminds us that all of the past is a part of us and we are an integral part in all that lies ahead.

Our recalling to consciousness of that part, however, must not include only the historic unknowns of ancient times but in addition we have ways to recall our own most immediate experiences which so often slip from consciousness. To help keep pace with the rapidly changing times, to remain adequately conscious of his own immediate past, each individual and group will need to spend, for example, the major portion of two weeks, four times each year, recalling, organizing, and reflecting upon the major accomplishments and impinging contradictions encountered during the past quarter. Without this time, events of days and years flow past like torrents over a falls and one lives from day to day like a grasshopper jumping from event to event without pause to think - a minute here and a minute there hardly allows one to deal with the enormities of the 20th century.

Image

As the events of the past must be probed and organized, so must the present be systematically handled. In our time the difficulty in keeping track of the present lies not in the lack of ability to communicate, the networks span the globe and combined visual and audio transmissions bring people into immediate contact. Rather, the difficulty today has become:

How to prepare and condense the ever more forbidding mountains of facts and intellectual skills for proper presentation through a limited program of formal instruction school and college. The prevalent effort has been to cram more factual knowledge into existing structures, to the point, often, of snuffing out all intellectual curiosity and originality among students, with a net intellectual loss to society.⁴

Rather, then, than attempting to "know" all the facts and details about contemporary events, we must learn how to create images which hold vast amounts of data, which could be retrieved if necessary, simply in our minds. Television commercials and newspaper headlines provide specific examples of this method. The headline "WAR IS DECLARED" need not describe the details of when, by whom, or why in order to convey a sense of urgency and danger -- though some readers might continue on to learn the specific details. Furthermore, the headline, by conveying the situation and evoking a response, does most what needs to be done to mobilize a people to action.

Any people, then, who decide to respond to our times must set aside their desires for interesting data and become masters in the use of images; they must become imaginal, not factual, educators. With these images, both pictorial and verbal, these persons will conceive the order behind contemporary chaos, utilize the gifts of files and electronic memory banks, and convey to their children an organizing principle, a paradigm, for their future experiencing.

Plan

However, striving only to build a common mind or imaginal gestalt in the present also reduces the comprehensive consciousness known to be possible, and demanded, from persons in our time. When you:

Look deeply enough ... you will find that there are only two classes of men in the human race: those who stake their soul on a future greater than themselves, and those who through inertia, selfishness, or because they have lost heart, have no wish to press on. Those who believe in what is to come and those who do not.⁵

The stance of the believer, then, is grounded in the decision of faith that the future contains new and more humane possibilities coupled with the lucidity that no one will descend from above to create the future. Men as individuals within groups form a race of humanity which is deciding, by its every action, the course of the future. The conscious believer knows only too well that, just as he strives to recover and re-appropriate his past, he must put equal time and energy to envisioning, and planning the shape of the future. Taking the best possible account of predictable changes, and envisioning discontinuous occurrences, the believer must plan for the not yet in order that his activities in the present might enhance, rather than disable, his people's overall mission.

Participate in Spiritual Exercises

The previously discussed reflective activities of organizing, imaging, and planning, we have seen, begin the practical job of building the spatially global and chronologically comprehensive consciousness required for survival in this complex era. While they must not be omitted or slighted, nonetheless, they cannot be carried out alone. When considered to be infallible tools for creating the world, they allow men to think that they alone control the universe. Even though man's every action influences the world around him and in addition we have been given immense rational and technological gifts, still the best plans fail to account for some seemingly insignificant element which ruins the whole project; even the largest most open group of people pooling all their wisdom lack the ability to enact all of their decisions, and whenever we examine the past we discover that much we wish to know has been erased by the processes of time.

We have already seen in Chapters I and II that escaping from these conscious and reflective tasks leads to despair and in addition lies near the heart of our contemporary problems. If, however, we persist and do not escape, doubt enters in perplexing ways and we are forced to decide -- whether a more perfect way of living

exists, or if, in fact, the affliction we encounter must be affirmed. For:

Doubt wishes to make the sufferer wonder if it might not still be possible for the affliction to be taken away, and he still continue to walk on the same way -- without affliction. But if affliction is the way, then it is indeed impossible for it to be taken away, and the way still remains the same. Doubt wishes to make the sufferer wonder if it were not possible that he had mistaken the way, that the fact that there is affliction might not mean that he is on the wrong road. But when the affliction is the way, the fact that there is affliction on the way cannot possibly signify he has gone wrong; on the contrary, this is the sign that he is on the right way.⁶

Our attention must now turn to specific, practical ways through which people will be able to hold themselves conscious of the realities of life. Since doubt and uncertainty can have such a powerful influence upon us, we do not have an easy or trivial task ahead of us. Rather, we must give as much attention to structuring our reflection on our relationship to the events of life as we do to our awareness of the events themselves. Whether we affirm life itself or dream about the other universes either must be dealt with as a serious spiritual question for "in a spiritual sense the way is: how it is travelled."⁷ While not a deductively rational issue, our spirit relation to life must be given serious and intentional attention.

Meditation

As we encounter the past we must seek more than intellectual clarity about the sequence of events and must recreate more than a description of the dynamic interrelations involved. While accurate history and descriptive dynamics are required as we utilize the past in responding to our present and planning for the future, this objective analysis has no relation to our own personal spiritual struggle to affirm the afflictions of life. In order, rather, to be able to affirm what we know we must look for the ways in which past men and creatures themselves related to their situations. In so doing we receive absolution from the awareness that our struggle is not judged bad or good but rather represents a part of the eternal struggle of existence; and yet when we encounter persons who gave their lives for the struggle we are judged and called to

account for our actions and how they have influenced history. Likewise the struggling, creating, and dying of our predecessors serves as guidance for our own acting. As we discover these colleagues of history we find elation in the realization that we participate in the task of building a universe, a task completed thus far at the cost of billions of lives.

Thus each person must, unless he attempts to continue to live cut off from his past, prepare a list of personal heroes who have given their lives to serving God through building a society of all people. With each of these, at regular intervals, the contemporary religious must dialogue about their lives and how they affirmed their world and in the midst of affirming it, transformed it. This move beyond intellectual knowing ties us into the long sweep of history and provides support and strength for doing the necessary deeds in our own time no matter how severe the affliction becomes. This activity we may call "Meditation" for in meditation we focus on the writings and actions of humble saints and heroes of days gone by in order to live as men of faith in our own age.

Contemplation

In the same way, mere gathering of opinions representing even the widest gamut of perspectives, while enabling responsible decision-making, sheds little or no light on the mysterious and the unknown power in the face of which we continually exist though we often pretend it is only commonplace. As time moves on, each thing which comes into being likewise passes out of being, where it goes no one knows. Although we create fantastic speculations and imaginative stories, each man must finally admit that the past has gone to he knows not where and being there it may never be relived nor can it fully be ignored. Furthermore just as the past remains utterly past, so the future contains unlimited possibility; the spiritual relation to this does not involve our attempt to categorize the potentialities, but rather to realize the freedom, joy, and power which lie at every man's fingertips. However, the unknown lies not only where the past consumes the present and the future becomes the present, for even within one's self one can discover an unexplainable uniqueness and unlimited passion for living which often surprise one. Or finally, even if it were possible to explain all the physical reactions and chemical properties which comprise even one other creature, still one would have to say, unless he wished to reduce himself also to a mechanical machine, that:

If "dead" matter has reared up this curious landscape of fiddling crickets, song sparrows, and wondering men, it must be plain even to the most devoted materialist that the matter of which he speaks contains amazing, if not dreadful powers, and may not impossibly be, as Hardy has suggested, "But one mask of many worn by the great face behind."⁸

This mysterious unknown which interweaves time and matter and self and world must be the directed object of "Contemplation" in order that we begin to raise to self-consciousness that which after encountering we realize that

Verily it was not I,
It was the unknown.
... The real unknown,
the unknown unknown.⁹

Prayer

Finally we must take a self-conscious spiritual relationship to our planning for the future. We encounter problems when we begin to believe that we totally control the future and thus have become God, when we attempt to justify our existence by our actions, and when for ourselves or society we fail to see any possibility for creative response to the contemporary chaos. Only a modicum of lucidity allows us even in our century to acknowledge that no individuals or groups can control the universe or even succeed in every venture they attempt. Thus, before one can begin any action he must consciously acknowledge his actual unworthiness for the task, for whatever the task any individual begins as unequal to it. Furthermore to every happening, whether we like it or not, we must relate with conscious gratitude for to despair over or deny that which has occurred demonstrates that one longs for another world or believes that everything should or could go his way. Either relationship to the events is built upon an illusion. At the same time each person, unless he futilely decides to play God, must articulate his perpetual reliance on that which comes from beyond himself. He must petition for himself that which is required for his physical and spiritual sustenance, for especially today no man can deal with all of his own needs. Likewise, he must lift up those areas of society with which, due to his finiteness, he cannot deal fully or in part. Seeing all the needs of the world, immediate frustrations will beset any man who

has no way consciously to seek intercession of an other in those areas which lie beyond the reach of he himself. These then, confession and gratitude, petition and intercession constitute the conscious activities in which one participates in order that he may act in free responsibility.

It is time to drop the ideal conceived in the novitiate books and simply do what we can with the materials which actually make up our lives. An historical religion, whatever else it does, ought to look forward to where God comes to meet us in this dishevelled, daily turn of events. Instead of obsessedly trying to perfect some Catholic system, we ought to go out to participate ... in community prayer.¹⁰

In "Prayer" then, we must not conduct mental gymnastics, emotive excitations, or mystical communion, with some generous creature which sits either in the heavens above or within the souls of men. "Prayer" involves articulating one's human conditions and to do so enables one to begin the otherwise defeating job of dealing with the chaos of the present and building for the future.

Build for Societal Structures

The whole question, ... is the rapid emergence of the soul which will organize, lighten and vitalize this mass of stagnant and confused material. But this soul can only be a "conspiracy" of individuals who associate themselves to raise to a new stage the edifice of life.

The resources we enjoy today, the powers and secrets of science we have discovered, cannot be absorbed by the narrow system of individual and national divisions which have so far served the leaders of the world.

The age of nations has past. The task before us now, if we have would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices, and to build the earth.

The more I look at the world ... the less I see any other possible result apart from it active and conscious unity.¹¹

No longer, we must confess, will striving for individual fulfillment be either possible or sufficient or responsible as a mode of acting on the planet Earth. Not that the individuals have been reduced in importance, but now, to have a chance of becoming an individual, one must participate actively and self-consciously as a member of a corporate body.¹² Already, in previous sections, we have come to realize that knowing no longer is accomplished by isolated individuals but only by persons encountering and reflecting upon experiences with other individuals. Furthermore, as we recall some of the great accomplishments in recent decades -- the Apollo flights, creation of electronic computers, and the civil rights organizations -- we quickly notice that most were accomplished by groups of people working at one task, to have attempted any of these alone would have required sheer stupidity, self-righteous glory hunting, or naive venturing. The response demanded now involves participation in corporateness. Now we must consider what forms it must take.

Inclusive

Crucial significance must be given to the perpetual concern that all conceivable perspectives be considered and all persons' opinions heard. No free individual is bound by habit for "whenever a habit becomes convenient, smash it!"¹³ Habits and tradition bind one to a past which must be recognized and honored but cannot be heeded as the source of eternal truth and authority. Likewise, within groups and societies, and of individuals also, no person or clique can be allowed exclusive influence on a decision or action. Yet we must realize that influencing a decision entails much more than simply voting or controlling votes.

Up to now we have assumed that power is the ability to affect immediate events. But it would seem that in the future, power will be the ability to participate in the defining of issues; for how effectively the issues are posed determines the answers.¹⁴

Toward this end St. Benedict, in the 5th century required that, within his monasteries, when major decisions were to be made, all monks were to be summoned and allowed to voice their opinion on the issues and ways of resolving it. After all were heard, the decision was based on a conscientious evaluation of all views, not a tally to ascertain a majority. "In this way is eliminated the danger that is so prevalent in

modern democracy: the choice of the mediocre as a result of the right of the majority."¹⁵

While for Benedict the final decision was left to the abbot, in our time the role of the abbot may be seen as a function which could be assumed by any person who, having heard his fellows, would state a consensus. In such a consensus the objective must be not as any person winning an argument, but a group of people defining the problem at hand and then forging out the appropriate response. Always the group must remind itself of the ancient practical wisdom that, "if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."¹⁶ In our time, such a method of decision by consensus can be utilized by any small group who see themselves as experimenters for society. Likewise, given the sophisticated communications networks of our age, sufficient experimentation of such a polity would mark a positive step forward toward universal suffrage.

Dynamic

Every person has many gifts, many deep-seated weaknesses, and many undeveloped talents, as well as perpetual wants and desires. If everyone did what he wished, without conscious reflection, driven by bodily desires for pleasure and psychological conceptions of peace and happiness, each man as he sought to better himself would destroy not only his neighbors but also himself. Furthermore, just as desires consume his neighbors, doing only what one does best leaves vast areas of the necessary uncovered. As new demands are realized persons are required to fill jobs for which no training procedures are yet developed, while at the same time the increasing number of mundane tasks -- garbage collection, housekeeping and cooking -- must often be done by people who possess competencies for more sophisticated and seemingly more important and fulfilling tasks. Hence it appears that desires and skills, while not non-existent or irrelevant, finally cannot serve as the basis for determining the utilization of manpower. For when any decision-making unit, any polity, succumbs to individual desires or parochial interests,

It has lost its former society-building magnetism; it cannot fulfil the rising generation. In the resulting, needless to say, a polity's ability to mobilize its resources for the sake of its place in the global world suffers; it cannot regain its former unity, try as it may. Its

weakness (sic) causes new instability regionally and globally, which the traditional frameworks of collective existence brings untold tribulations in its wake.¹⁷

To rebuild an alternative to our present time demands new images of being successful which encourage those acts which are sustaining and necessary for the total society as well as new practices for interchanging, rotating, and assigning personnel. When the past is reviewed and the necessary future actions consensed upon, the only remaining question can be, "Who will do the work?"

Aware of talents and desires, but conscious primarily of the necessary deeds, each individual must be given a set of responsibilities to be carried out. In this manner each individual sees how his task fits into the overall mission of the society and the question of status disappears along with the question of promotion for only one class of work exists -- the necessary. If the degree to which any society is able to succeed in placing all of its people in critical tasks -- eliminating tangential energy distribution, duplication of effort and direct undoing of one's work by another -- to such a degree will it function as one unit, and to that level will that society be able to bring into existence the vision they possess.

Futured

Finally, though, no decisions, however many persons' wisdom was utilized in arriving at them and no distribution of human resources, irrespective of how adequately it guarantees that all tasks are accomplished and all persons are assured of significant and stimulating activities, will be able to sustain the humans which participate unless they constantly remind themselves that their "only options are total and final elimination of man and the continuing creation of a truly human world. We cannot stay where we are."¹⁸

When any individual decides to stop creating the future in order to sustain himself or when a group stops to fulfil its own desires, external dangers appear as threats to existence which must be destroyed and problems are encountered as unnecessary disturbances to peace and stability. On the other hand, when the decision has been made to build the future, external threats can be recognized as part of the perpetual contingency of the process and problems, rather than intrusions, become the very source of call to existence.

Perpetually oriented toward the future the stance of the beginner will be seen as far more appropriate than that of the finisher of the product. Working for that which lies ahead, rather than perfecting that received from the past, increases the rate of speed of development and evolution by focusing energies on the solutions to the basic problems at hand. Hence, the initiator and experimenter, aware that life always involves change, keep accurate records of their successes and failures and work together to create the breakthroughs which will provide future generations with responses to the particular problems which impede their society.

Become Disciplined For Mission

Often we would like to think that this structured corporate body would come about rather naturally as a place for all of our personal desires for physical and psychological needs would be fulfilled, and in which no demands would be presented but only tantalizing opportunities from which each would choose as he pleased. However, today, one must realize, "people are ... no longer willing to be forced in actions through positive and negative sanctions, or as I prefer, the carrot and the stick."¹⁹ Still, one might respond, the corporate body necessary to do the job should include noticeably heightened joy and unity. While these may occur, the problem arises when feelings of joy and communion become the ends for which the community survives. "Nothing is easier than to stimulate the glow of fellowship in a few days of life together, but nothing is more fatal to the sound, sober fellowship of everyday life."²⁰

No longer can individuals or groups find fullness of life and meaning for existence in providing for themselves or their family. Rather than merely surviving, and achieving satisfaction in our times especially, we have realized that:

Becoming is the very nature of aliveness.
Restlessness is at the core of all human history.²¹

Yet we must never allow ourselves to long for this becoming as though it were to be accomplished by doing various exciting and helpful tasks which appear possible for us.

To be blown hither and yon by the winds of current fashion is not becoming. Becoming suggests a leap up into a new level of consciousness. It suggests a directedness toward something, rather than successively zooming off in all directions.²²

One central task, then, gives individuals their aliveness and allows them to form into cohesive groups based not on naive longings for personal satisfaction but only on the dedication to enabling the group's mission to be achieved. We have delineated the categories of contemporary problems which must be confronted (see Chapter II above) and created a vision of the world to be brought into being (see Chapter III above). Accomplishing their vision serves as the mission at hand. Yet even if we re-create the vision which we set out to bring into being, we still must finally consider what practices will enable the missioned group to remain strong and vital.

Decisional Poverty

If getting the necessary job done is considered to be the major requirement, the group must make a conscious decision that all their longings for comfortable surroundings and warm friendships will be set aside when they interfere with the work at hand. The decision to be detached from the pleasures of the world allows full participation in the necessary tasks at hand. Likewise, one must be detached from both success and failure which are necessarily encountered in the doing of any project. When a specific endeavor is completed successfully the joy of victory must be celebrated but most groups that justify their existence by one paramount accomplishment soon find themselves focused entirely upon themselves and unable to relate relevantly to the world. Similarly, perpetual bemoaning over a failure leads quickly to defeated stagnation. As from success and failure any group which sets out to deal with the seemingly overwhelming problems of our age must be detached.

Just as detachment from successes and failures does not imply inaction so detachment from good and pleasures does not imply privation. For, as even some Catholics are realizing, "detachment does not consist, properly speaking, in condemning and rejecting, but in penetrating and sublimating."²³ In his acting and speaking each member of the group must remind himself and his companions that in the final analysis one may only ask whether or not the job has been

completed and yet even this answer can, in no eternal sense, condemn or approve any man. In our own time the decision of "poverty" may well be the only way possible to appropriate the gifts of our age without becoming their slaves and the only way to act without becoming overwhelmed by the tasks which constantly face us.

Total Obedience

The turmoil and changes of this century, have shaken all sources of final authority. As a result groups find their members each doing their own "thing" and individuals possess little clarity what to do or why to do it. Nonetheless, "it is impossible not to work."²⁴ At every moment each man is doing something -- sleeping, inventing, watching television, observing the heavens, twiddling his thumbs, or building a spaceship. There can be no questioning whether or not one will be doing something: the only consideration concerns in what activity he will be engaged. Whereas the disengagement from things and actions was required lest people be consumed by immediacies, conscious engagement becomes necessary lest sleep and escape bring about death and despair.

That group, then, which expects to accomplish anything must keep itself totally engaged in that task and yet never reduce the complexity of the job nor the cruciality of their work for generations ahead. They must never forget "that no one lifts his little finger to do the smallest task unless moved, however obscurely, by the conviction that he is contributing infinitesimally (at least, directly) to the building of something definitive."²⁵ Total engagement, then, cannot occur to any person or under any set of laws, but only to the seemingly insurmountable, yet definitive and crucial tasks which need to be accomplished. "Total obedience" then becomes a necessary and possible response -- necessary in that without obedience to some external goal the group would fall apart as each person set out on his own tangent and possible because the task at hand stands as an external objective referent to which one is dedicated. Without obedience, chaos reigns; and obedience to anything other than the demand to solve the major problems will leave the real problems unsolved.

Corporate Chastity

When decisional poverty and total obedience both play a central role in a group's functioning, when persons are

detached from the cares of the world and yet totally engaged in transforming and building that same world, at this point will true singleness of purpose be possessed. To the extent that these relationships to life are embodied we may consider a person to be "Chaste." As such, then chastity also plays a critical role in building the corporate body which is required to cope with the complexities of the task at hand. In this way, the corporate body articulates that task for which it aims and dedicates itself solely to that task and in so doing unleashes a collective power unachievable by isolated individuals and which begins to be commensurate with the demand to build a new world society.

through three and seven through nine describe new responses to a new age while the other six categories begin to describe concrete ways in which the historically religious activities might be re-appropriated in our century.

Finally, if hope for the world survives, it lies, this author believes, in developing and embodying these, or similar practices, for these deal directly with the basic contemporary contradictions. Yet these too comprise the hope for the Christian religious communities which have the capability of giving skills and understandings to the world at large. In so doing the Church would both serve society and revitalize itself.

Conclusion

This final section has described twelve practices:

1. Regular recalling and organizing of past events,
2. Creating images to describe the present,
3. Building specific plans for the future,
4. Meditating,
5. Contemplating,
6. Praying,
7. Including all available perspectives in building a consensus,
8. Utilizing dynamic structures,
9. Beginning the undone,
10. Deciding for poverty,
11. Obeying, and
12. Willing one thing as a chaste person.

While on the first hand any of these practices are possible for any people, probably only a few will decide. Likewise, doing any or all of these may have no immediate effect on pollution or eliminate war or drugs. Rather, these activities are proposed as ways to sustain those people who have decided to re-create the human society on a global scale. Suggestions one

EPILOGUE

Having described in Chapter I the process by which the need for change has been discerned and new ways of living initiated throughout history, we have begun that task in the remainder of this thesis. In Chapter II we surveyed the contradictions of our time. When we sought to discover that key issue which lay behind them, we realized our collective inability to bear our expanded consciousness and to exist together as one complex world of people. Seeing these as two sides of the same issue, our attention in Chapter III turned to a vision of a world in which the issues of heightened consciousness and intensified complexity had been dealt with through affirming them rather than seeking to eliminate them as realities of life. Finally, in Chapter IV we began the task of describing the characteristics of that body of people necessary to accomplish the transforming task. This group as a whole and its members as individuals must at least strive toward: 1) comprehensive awareness of its situation, 2) spiritual reflections upon its situation, 3) corporate structures, and finally, 4) acceptance of the discipline necessary to achieve the one mission for which it has formed, the resolution of the human crisis and the transformation of society.

On one hand this paper stands completed -- the method is established, the problems discerned, the vision portrayed and the necessary response described. Yet on the other hand much work remains -- better historians than myself must describe more accurately societal change as a process of responding by part of society to the crucial contradiction of their time, in this same manner persons in all fields of social sciences must strive not to describe individual symptoms but probe beyond to clarify how the struggle with increased consciousness and complexity undergird the unrest of our time, the visionaries of our time must allow us to see a possibility ahead; but most essentially some group must decide to be the sign of possibility and thus become the embodiment of the new age. Clearly what remains will be accomplished with no little difficulty; nonetheless, I hope this overview will serve as the humble context for this monumental task.

Notes to the Chapters

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3. Ibid., p. 159.
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5. Ibid., p. 77.
6. Ibid., p. 82.
7. Robert Theobald, An Alternative Future for America, ed. by Kendall College (Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1968), p. 22.
8. H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Responsibility of the Church for Society," in The Gospel, The Church and The World, The Interseminary Series, Vol. III (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 117.
9. Soren Kierkegaard, Sickness Unto Death, in Fear and Trembling and Sickness Unto Death, trans. by Walter Lowrie, Doubleday Anchor Books, (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1954), p. 171.
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11. Kierkegaard, Sickness Unto Death, p. 172.
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16. Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, Anchor Books (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 80.
17. Ibid., p. 76.
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20. Ibid., p. 132.

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3. U Thant, "Education in Our Changing Times," in Conflict Resolution and World Education, ed. by Stuart Mudd (The Hague: Dr. W. Junk Publishers 1966), p. 29.
4. Ross Snyder, Young People and Their Culture (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 142.
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6. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society (Revised Edition; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 80.
7. Gabriel Moran and Maria Harris, Experience in Community (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 126.
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11. W. Taylor, Jr., "The discovery, Development and Constructive Uses of World Resources," in The Population Crisis and the Use of World Resources, ed. by Stuart Mudd (The Hague: Dr. W. Junk Publishers, 1964), p. 511.
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15. Max Lerner, "What Kind of Crisis?", Chicago Sun-Times, May 26, 1970, p. 24.
16. Emily Harshorne Mudd, "Conflict and Conflict Resolutions in Families," in Conflict Resolution and World Education, ed. by Stuart Mudd (The Hague: Dr. W. Junk Publishers, 1966) p. 60-61.
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