

6/30/70

FOUR PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE LOCAL CHURCH STRATEGY

I think what we've got to think of is understanding just where we are not clear. Push and you may discover

that nobody's clear but then at least we understand that we are not clear. Now I think we have to begin with having clearly in our mind the comprehensive strategies of the movement. These are **contextual re-education, social or structural reformulation and spiritual re-motivation**. Now these are the overall strategies. The war is humanization in lost - modernity, that's where the war or "battle" is. The fundamental goal as far as our outfit goes, (or the fundamental intent, the primary objective) is renewal of the people of God for the sake of renewing mankind, history, or the world. This is just jarring our memory backwards and getting the broad picture. The strategies for accomplishing this are contextual re-education, structural reformulation, and spiritual re-motivation.

Now, then we have master tactics and that's why I want to say a little bit later that I do not think we can call those basic local church sheets master tactics, those are tactics whatever we do down below. Our master tactics look like this: **penetration, formulation, permeation**, and this is knowing, being, and doing with your inside enablement triangle of **development, management and control**. Now these are our master master tactics for achieving our strategies to renew the church for the sake of winning the war which is humanization in post-modernity. And when you move to the tactical, if this is not there just burnt on your imagination you get lost.

I'm not clear here but something is happening to me and I want to write here, but don't pay any attention to it unless you get clarity that I don't have. There is something tactical, something fantastically tactical behind all of this, I believe. It's not as if you're trying to invent something. If this is trying to invent anything for God's sake throw it in the waste basket. When you build models you're only looking for what you're already doing so to speak, and never trying to super-impose some kind of a rational system upon a body of data. [Here I guess I'm an incurable Aristotelean over against Platonism, though I'm a Platonist, and I use those poetically and not literally. Those figures are always made up out of experience and you know that is somewhat of a caricature of both Aristotle and Plato.]

But something is going on here and the reason it's going on there is that this year is the reconstructing of the local church. Next year, the NSV and I am not sure that that belongs in this sequence relative to the above but it's pretty obvious that you're not going to complete the reconstruction of the local church without the NSV and then you're not even going to begin to do Permeation which is the following year if you do not have a NSV. That is why it was genius that the people in permeation did what they did last week ago in that PSU. For their destiny, they cannot really become a division until this is done, I mean in terms or action. It's this theoretical work that's holding them up. But, clearly if you do not have a local network such as the reconstruction of the local parish, well, you may just as well forget this business about permeation. It builds on one another. And, then the following year the Historical Order.

Some people say "What are your priorities?" And again I want to repeat, that kind of question always irritates me for these kinds of things are your priorities and you don't create them, and they are just there, so to speak. Any other priority system that you may create has to subsume itself under some kind of a master priority system that's just there in the way things are.

It seems to me that there are something like four basic principles within the strategies relative to the local congregation and I want to quickly go over them. **The first one is that the church is renewable from within**. Now when I say what we go for broke on this program I mean that our destiny is at stake as in other programs that I can remember of. I mean fundamentally this. Just supposing (and one or these times I think we've got to get one where our basic self-doubts are, for you cannot be a guru to someone else if you don't know where your self-doubts are. I don't want to go into that in detail now) that those who say that God has said no to the present manifestation of the church just may be right. That's the question.

Therefore are we slowly walking into the image of being the colossal jackasses of history? This is crucial at this point. But I am increasingly persuaded that the time has come when we do not answer this question as a hard headed revolutionary which is to say that if you don't have this structure then you have to capture the volunteer fireman's association. That's a tactical statement and I always (or trying to whenever I make that statement) say I have theological reasons or philosophical reasons but in those moments you just have to shove hard headed realism -- if you didn't have this structure you have to build your own and that becomes ridiculous for anybody who's concerned for more than interior satisfaction; of doing some petty little thing in history. My point here is that the church is the essence of "humanness" or, it is the fundamental substance of the league that it is renewable from within.

There has never been any stopping of the spiritual dynamic within history. Christianity is simply the radical revolutionizing of Judaism, just period. Buddhism is the radical revolutionizing of Hinduism. And that Hinduism was the revolutionizing of both the Aryan religion and the Dravidian religion. And as you and I well know that Judaism was the revolutionizing of Hebrewism and Hebraism was the revolutionizing of God only knows what but you would point to at least two streams. One is the Egyptian where

they got their basic monotheism and then the Babylonians out of which they got their basic governmental and moral construct. So that what I am trying to say is that the people of God have always been and have been the only on-going body of people without ever experiencing temporary discontinuity - only eschatological discontinuity - which is to say that this established church today is going to be renewed whether we do it or not.

Now I want to hit that real hard, and you could go on with a million illustrations. My point is that the time has come, I think, to turn (without giving it up) from the hard headed revolutionary tactical reason to the theological reasons or the divine reasons - the reasons within the divine economy - radical humanness.

The second basic principle within the strategies relative to the local congregation is that **the renewal of the local congregation is a radically new creation**. And that you've to say right after above.

The figure that we have used here is Harry Truman's white house. You'll remember that he moved across the street, he kept the walls intact and gutted, literally gutted the white house and put a new set of guts in it which from the outsider, the same old white house yet inside it is utterly new. The picture is that you do it in such a way that it is not even observable. So you put props under this part of the floor while you take out this part and put in that new floor while you take out this one and so on. No one even knows what's going on but when you finish I mean you have radical metamorphosis.

The meaning of the word *metamorphosis* has to do with dying and living anew. The word here is resurrection. We are out to engage in resurrection within the dead body and the bones that are dead. But you can't over emphasize that this is a brand new sociological form in history which is a metamorphosis or of the historical or established body. That's the second basic principle.

The third one is that **the congregation is the key** and we'll come to this when we get to that local church chart over there. The third beat is on the local congregation. I want to rehearse our memory. We first started with the cadre in terms of renewal and I think we had to for what you were after was to build across the nation and the world a disciplined people who were disciplined as iron across this world and you had to emphasize *this*.

In terms of your over all practices and your inroad strategies you have to remember that if we take our symbolic year as 1952 as beginning though you could very well put us all back into the 1940's but if we took that, now this is 1970 so that is 18 years ago. Well let's say that we have done nothing in principle for eighteen years but stomp this world with RSI. And what you were out to do was this" [None of us ever worried, I hope we prayed about it in our despair but never allowed ourselves to worry that there were only a few that of all the I suppose two hundred thousand people who have had RSI that only a few remained above the surface. I look upon the rest of these as just twelve inches below the surface which when you had a structure would emerge like the youth cult of Mao Tse Tung]

But what we have done is stomp the country to build the cadres not worrying that there isn't any structure to maintain them for that finally is what you are out to do and it is way down the line when you start out It may very well be that some of you people are going to have to have the same kind of patience in building the awakening local congregation. And early on some will awaken and collapse. What you're after now is those who are able to stand as a sign. You may go for eighteen years to do that.

The second place we moved was toward the parish and this was 5th City. It was very very clear at the beginning of 5th City that whatever else it was it had to be an example of what the missional parish would look like within the church of Jesus Christ.

This has set us aside from every other community reformulation groups in the whole country, that we were after something more than something happening in this hunk of geography that we call 5th City. Now I want to be critical of us in a very uncritical way. Both of these had to be done, but neither one of them enabled a grassroots dynamic that was able to maintain itself on its own feet. Now that leaves then very obviously this. George West is, I have said to most of you, the one who first called my attention to the fact that 5th City is also a congregation and that all the time that we thought that we were working on the parish we were also building a local congregation but we did not bring head on intentionality in it; so that we were not doing it. But at the same time we were doing it.

Now what this means is: let's say you can draw this picture. But to get this into operation you have to have the spirit troops as we have known. But in a way we did not know. And without those troops this little two bit thing trying to be the congregation at the same time might as well not get up in the morning. And you know that every cadre instead of being a cadre to the local congregation tried to be the congregation. Now that is the focus that put the fundamental emphasis upon that local congregation. The other reason for it is if you try to build a cadre of which the fundamental focus is not the congregation you don't get a primal cadre. You simply have another form of what we have called in our jargon a catalytic cadre.

We are now out to build primal cadres or the new cleric. And you damned well cannot be a cleric without a congregation. Therefore you shoot immediately your twelve inch guns at that congregation. It seems extremely important to me that we see this and to see that this is not a flip of the pickle. I think of Betty, she's so wrapped up in yankee activism just one inch short of her husband that she thought that it was a disgrace that we did not have three beats upon the parish. And other people who still enjoy their navel a great

deal thought that we ought to spend the first six years on the cadre. I would insist that our wisdom has taught us that we must put both of our six guns on the congregation for the first year.

The last fundamental principle within our strategies, relative to the local congregation is that **now the time is ripe**. All of these are go for broke. I didn't mention that. Could you imagine being asinine enough to believe what I just said. That's what I mean by go for broke. You have two problems here. The first is -is it too late? I'm sure you'd have a lot of Roman Catholics who would say immediately that it's too late. Five years ago maybe but now you are too late. I am sure that you would find a lot of concerned Protestants deeply concerned, intelligent Protestants who would say, "God, if you'd come up with this five years ago maybe there'd be a chance. It's too late."

And then the other side it's too soon. And what you look at I believe first of all is what I would call the symbolic and administrative hierarchy of the church. Are they ready? Or are they too far gone? The disillusionment at that level in the present historical manifestation of the church is simply amazing. Bishop Nior here wanted to be bishop like few people. Recently he made a statement that he has two more years to when he retires and he can hardly wait until he does. Can you imagine that statement. He wants to get his feet out of this quicksand. I suppose that's in the heart of 90%, no that is too big any more, 80% of the bishops of the Methodist church. Who is that guy in England with the umbrella. He said he is going to get to the grave before the whole thing blows up.

It's that kind of despair, cynicism, disillusionment, lack of belief in the divine activity of history or of the ruling power of the Holy Spirit that we are saying is that we believe that these people are ready. The other side of what I just said is - are they awake enough? Well everyone of them are wetting their pants every day about the local level. I believe that you've got two things there that so many local congregations are so self-consciously in despair that they are willing to try anything. That's kind of a negative hope. And then on the other side there are congregations where something has happened enough that they just waiting with a relative degree of excitement for some kind of an all-out experiment. I believe both of those are there and equally indicate that the time is ripe for us to make the go for broke.

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