

THE CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE SOUL OF MAN AND THE RADICAL RELIGIOUS:
ST. FRANCIS AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

We are in a time of a great vacuum of the Spirit amidst unbelievable change. Everywhere we look around us, the failure of institutions to push into the future is evident. Education, particularly in the cities, has lost its vision. Welfare and the dehumanization involved on all sides corrupts everywhere. Government and the defense priority has become increasingly alien to larger portions of the population. At a recent meeting of churchmen the question was asked: "What image holds for you the state of the world today?" One said it was like barnacles collecting on the bottom of a ship so that eventually the ship would sink. Another mentioned an oil well fire that just doesn't go out, unless that is, you use dynamite to blow it up.

On top of this comes the frustration of having been through year after year of attempted change. Students and liberals have for years lived in the utter clarity about a wrongness in our society and have formulated valiant campaigns. There was a great deal of concern and some things happened. People's images were shifted or institutions rocked into change. But there crept in and finally exploded into every consciousness--I would point to Kent State and Cambodia as symbols of this--the no-thing-ness of all the efforts. We were finally unchanged as we hadn't yet grabbed ahold of what had to be grasped in order to create significant long range change. As a result we found ourselves empty and in searching for meaning and direction. This was a time for

reflecting and brooding, where brooding must be understood as not musing to oneself but dialoguing in a community of history--past, present, and future--and finally being forced up against the horrifying decisions that each of us faces. There aren't too many of those who were previously committed to change who are now copping-out in the sense of returning to the bourgeois life-style, or our other past idol worship, but there is a retreat within the self, searching for the core that will point the direction we should follow. We are caught in the fires of becoming the authentic self and creating the community with its structures that spell out the shape of human life in the future. This thesis presents itself as a contribution to that brooding, using history, theology, and culture as bellows to forge out decision of Spirit. We will be struggling for the religious solitariness and corporateness as dynamics, not as concepts or ideals.

As we lay out the dimensions of that struggle, we will look more carefully at our situation in the twentieth century by reviewing the statements of two of the most inclusive observers of our time, Paul Tillich and Eugen Rosenstock-Huëssy. Both of these men are "second generation" in the sense of following the breakloose of historical critique of western culture accomplished in the nineteenth century by Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, among others. Tillich and Rosenstock-Huëssy represent a wholeness, a having taken-placed-ness, a reflective conclusion to the process the giants of the nineteenth century pointed to in horror and fascination.

On the other side of having articulated the problems of our age, we will then study the fascinating passion of St. Francis and his religious life. By becoming as self-conscious as possible of our situation and life questions, we are freed from them to search for the life

questions of the thirteenth century and to authentically judge what St. Francis said to his culture and finally what he might say to ours.

This will be the task of the third chapter as we propose the demand on our theology to recover the reality of soul alongside of the self as the complementary dynamics of spirit. This fundamentally shapes our context as Christians as we participate in the struggle to create culture.

CHAPTER I

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: OUR LIFE QUESTIONS

The Crisis

Paul Tillich's very succinct statement about the twentieth century found in The World Situation gives us a broad overview while raising the key issues. Most important is his articulation of the world as a unity, one reality. The twentieth century, through the wars and depression as well as the appearance of liberated but impoverished third world nations, has shown the dependence of life on life. Decisions made in America very directly affect what goes on in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The world is one in our consciousness. We are forced to live before the comprehensive demand of the globe.

Tillich dares to interpret the context for the total world situation as that of the rise, victory, and present crisis in bourgeois society. The three stages are articulated by him as follows:

In the first the new society struggled to establish itself over the remnants of a disintegrating feudal society--the period of bourgeois revolutions. In the second, mainly through the creation of a world mechanism of production and exchange, the new society came to triumphant power--the period of victorious bourgeoisie. In the third, mankind struggles to regain control over the self-destructive forces loosed by a regnant industrial society--the present crisis in civilization.

Most fascinating is Tillich's relating of various cultural phenomena to this development. In the economic sphere he traces "laissez faire" principles based on the belief in reason through its shift from its revolutionary character into technical reason and finally to the breakdown in the expectant automatic harmony. In art, he traces the journey from naturalism to impressionism to surrealism and then talks about the same rise, victory, and crisis in bourgeois society.

For our purposes his analysis of the general cultural development as it relates to Christianity is most interesting. The development of the relationship between the personality and the community was key in all levels of society from the family to the nation. In the first period of bourgeois society the individual no longer admitted to the ruling absolute authority but joined with other colleagues to wage the battle against authority following a common purpose. "The spiritual center of this community lies in the future."² In the second period of bourgeois development even the spiritual purpose was lost and the forms of community disintegrated into solitary individuals living "for himself in the service of the mechanism of society."³ Tillich added that this dynamic wasn't successful everywhere but it is the dynamic that every culture on earth had to deal with at some time. The third stage is marked by the attempt of anti-bourgeois groups to re-establish the power of community by oftentimes using mechanical means which became even more de-humanizing. The determining center for culture is lost in the bourgeois world and the struggle to redefine community is based on this search.

Christianity also succumbed to dissolution before the Leviathan of reason.

Religious community. . . requires objectivity. And since the rise of autonomous reason, there was no universally potent objectivity except the mechanical objectivity of a technical process. Therefore religious community was largely destroyed, as was religious personality, because a determining spiritual center was lacking.⁴

The appearance of a reduced spiritual center such as nation or race has made the quasi-religious names of totalitarian regimes appealing while actually eliminating both personality and community.

Christianity is up against the demand to rearticulate the spiritual center of man and its relationship to authentic community. Tillich offers guidelines in terms of adaptation and transcendence of culture which succeed in underlining once more the practical need. Key though is the understanding of authentic personality and its relationship to community.

As an answer, Tillich mentions again the universal character of the demand that in turn requires that the Christian Church be also the universal church.⁵

Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy in his account of the modern situation found in The Christian Future parallels Tillich but emphasizes the interior alienation of man caused by the sociological situation. His example of America is imaginatively drawn. The suburb has become the general cultural expression. "Suburban life is unreal because it shuns pain and conflict."⁶ We are all taught from childhood to avoid anything that might hurt. We are taught, "If you don't have anything nice to say to somebody, then don't say anything at all." Suburban life accordingly is prudent, kind, and barren.

There is a special word for its lukewarm atmosphere; it has a mentality. Mentality is what is left of the soul when you subtract the crucifying experiences that bear fruit in more energetic and vital human relationships. Mentality knows nothing of jubilant joy and black despair, of yelling and cursing, moaning, and groaning, shouting and dancing and weeping and singing.⁷

The second arena of America's alienation is symbolized in the factory. The goal is always the maximum of efficiency, and whatever is necessary is done to achieve this end. Inspiration is reserved only for a few managers and scientists. Life loses its continuity and its meaning.

As a result, modern man's work is no longer something he can throw himself into for a lifetime, something through which his whole personality can ripen and take shape.⁸

Human relationships are taken lightly and irresponsibly as everybody avoids the pain of serious relationship. Man becomes impatient with life, seeking the short cut, "unwilling to pay the price of living with our fellows in creative and profound relationships."⁹

Rosenstock-Huussy finds the real spirit of man then riding on the highway between the alienated worlds of his home and his business. There the "deeper" self stands in an air of condescension over his two less human selves, the suburb and the factory. He would never call them his life meaning, but instead stands over against them detached. Man lives in a state of seeming sinlessness.

The great name of sin rests on the assumption that I can act and that it matters what I say. Sin is the contradiction between words spoken by men, and my own acts. Wherever the acts are not mine and my speech is verbiage without effect, sin becomes impossible.¹⁰

Sin gets shifted to the collective without any feeling of responsibility for the collective. Man is separated from his sense of community. Engagement in terms of life commitment simply makes little or no sense. The challenge for Christianity today is to re-establish the power of the Spirit that would bring man out of his alienation back into a unified whole; authentic person and authentic community in the Spirit.

These brief sketches of the thoughts of two great observers and analyzers of culture are not meant as comprehensive description but as sensing after the spirit of our age or sensing after the deepest human problems that Christianity, if it is to be authentic in our times, must deal with seriously. Their analyses, though, seem only to be repeating what we already know and have known. The frustration of the 70's will no longer be the search after the source of the knowing ache. Our frustration now stems from the fact that we have utter lucidity about the world's situation and about the spirit condition of the Industrial Age's human machine, but are locked in neutral before the future that must be created as if from nothing. Cynicism results as one response to this frustration. It is an inner refusal to see the possibilities of life out of the horrible vision of the reality of the absurdity of all things. Another response is romanticism. We call to mind again the great ideal, a significant past or the warmth of sustaining human relationships.

What kind of human dynamic would it be that could free us from the paralysis and put us authentically back on the track of creating history not for our own good but on behalf of the world? The answer is not found in the temptation to retreat from history except as we

might re-focus our energy and strengthen our interior stance.

Tillich and Rosenstock-Huessy have suggested the two areas where the key struggles lie.

- 1) Man's commitment to a center of value that gives his personal life ultimate meaning.
- 2) Man's creation of a human community that authenticates his whole self and offers creative possibility of living on behalf of the world.

The frustration of life as it revolves around these issues and the relationship between them has been the central focus of much of the edge of 20th century theology. We will look at this tension under the rubrics of The Religious Man: Faith and Freedom, and the Religious Community: Church and Mission.

Religious Man: Faith and Freedom

For me, the main trend in theology during the last 20 years has been the increasing awareness of the subjective nature of the man of faith. The concern is to make faith come alive again so that it once more points to the central nature of man. We struggled to make faith possible as the context within which the rest of life makes sense. But faith as a word was and still is burdened with detracting connotations from past times (believing what you know isn't true). We used words like "freedom" that pointed to the center of life in a fresh way and made sense to 20th century people. While probing the existential depths of life, we had a way of standing over against the machines that were now in the 3rd cycle of revolution and saying that being enslaved by the machines wasn't what it was all about.

Man's subjective freedom did not rely on the external situation and thus couldn't be victimized by it. Man's freedom was found in his own

ability to make the free decision. The lifestyle of the free subjective self is the lifestyle of decision.

To understand this more completely we would have to point to the fundamental work by Soren Kierkegaard that so significantly underlies our present stance. His great gift to us was the description of man's consciousness as the dynamic of relationships.

The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, . . . ; the self is not the relation but (consists in the fact) that the relation relates itself to its own self . . . : by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself the self is grounded transparently in the power which posited it.

The self was thus understood basically in terms of relations. In relation, man finds out the basis of himself as an individual. He comes alive in his solitariness. This solitariness can be described in various stages characterized as the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. They reflect man's levels of consciousness as he progresses from a distinct naivete to a circumspect detached stance and then finally to the paradoxical religiousness that proclaims the eternal present at a definite moment. The relation between man and his world is then not dependent on the world itself but on man's inward appropriation of the world and his inner decision about it. This is his freedom. It is only in the depths of religiousness that man is totally free from the world, but this depth then becomes his goal.

Kierkegaard was interested in combatting speculative philosophy as the haven for the objective nature of reality. Probably we would more closely identify with the technological world as that objective reality which says that human existence is not the primary concern. In any case, the objective world is only to be understood in terms of its

relationship to the inward subjective self.

The basis that was set by Kierkegaard in the last century has become an integral part of recent theological thinking. Rudolf Bultmann has used man's self as relation to talk about the New Testament understanding of the grace event. Man in his encounter with the kerygma has the opportunity to give up his old self-understanding and be transformed. He is given the possibility of being obedient to God and thus give up his boastful ways. In an event God challenges man to accept new conditions for his life. He calls man to make a genuine decision.

For Paul the acceptance of the message in faith takes the form of an act of obedience because of the fact that the message which demands acknowledgment of the crucified Jesus as Lord demands of man the surrender of his previous understanding of himself. . . . Faith's attitude is the radical opposite of the attitude of boasting.¹²

Grace is an existential encounter that calls man to a new decision or relationship about his life. Man is his essential self in his inward relationship to life. Bultmann's emphasis is on the "here and now" of existence. Faith is not contained in past events but is found in the encounters of everyday life. The encounter is seen in its appropriation by the existing self. Objectivity is understood as that situation which enables the salvation occurrence to take place. Man is summoned from the stance which says that he can save himself to participate in a "personal" history that is a series of events based on his salvation and which holds him in every moment before the possibility of living his life in obedience to God.

Bultmann's demythologizing has had a tremendous effect because of his ability to make the Christian experience of life existentially powerful in the lives of his readers. Man can no longer blame his life

on his situation but is given the word of possibility that is the freedom of total surrender to God and the acceptance of his forgiveness. Bultmann has succeeded in recovering the depth of Luther for the 20th century. In following Paul carefully, as Luther did, he recovered the radicalness of the Word that would call into question any form of self-seeking no matter how subtle and disguised it might be. God is no cosmic process but a personal encounter.

Religious Community: Church and Mission

But this is not the extent of man's deepest awareness in our time. Every human being knows or can know about the total interrelatedness of life with life. The last 20 years have been years of ever increasing awareness of the social responsibility of man and the church for the world. The communications media has made world social events as everyday as eating. We often know more about what is going on in Vietnam than in our own home town. The Civil Rights Movement made us all acutely aware of the suffering that is the daily experience of the black man. In the face of our burning clarity about the crises of human civilization, theology has been forced to take a new and deeper look at the relationship between religion and culture. Paul Tillich's oft quoted phrase "Religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion"¹³ has given us impetus, but after our initial involvements in social action we are clear that we have not found the correct models to effectively embody the demand.

Theologically, we are aware that the Social Gospel was naive in assessing the depth of human sin and in relying on the principle of progress. However, the Social Gospel was right in viewing the importance of the Gospel in the entire cultural sphere. The problem is that we have

kept theology so far away from ethics that ethical conceptions lost sight of their theological underpinnings. The relation of man to his culture is as deeply as part of the question of life as the question relating man to his God. Part of what we will be doing is seeing that they are indeed only one question, but before we can do that we need a theological statement speaks to both man as person and in community at the same level of ontological relevance.

H. Richard Niebuhr has laid the basis for understanding the depth of the issue in his understanding of the church and its relationship to culture and social responsibility. In holding up the image of Christ as the transformer of culture, he binds the church to its social task. He stands over against the existentialist view by first agreeing that Jesus' stance was one of radical obedience, then disagreeing that the core of the Gospel message refers to Jesus' obedience rather than the God he was obeying. He quotes from Bultmann and replies to him in the same breath.

"God himself must vanish for the man who does not know that the essence of his own life consists in the full freedom of his decision." The animus of such existentialism against speculative and naturalistic ideas of God can be understood, but the ascription to Jesus of this twentieth century view of freedom results in a caricature of the New Testament Christ. For the Jesus who is radically obedient knows that the will of God is the will of the Creator and Governor of all nature and of all history.¹⁴

He describes the church's relationship to culture as that of a social pioneer. The church acts on behalf of society in being sensitive to the ills of society and setting the example by eradicating these ills within itself as the pioneering act. Here we can see the shift of emphasis from the individual Christian to the dynamic of the church.

Niebuhr is not pointing specifically to the institutional church but that part of every cultural structure, including the church, that so responds to God and obeys His will.

The focus of Christian life is mission or following the commandment of "love of God and of the neighbor in God." ¹⁵ These are inseparable from one another and point towards the unity of a Christian life-style. Faith, hope, love, humility, and obedience find their unified thrust in the love of God and service to fellow man.

We are often drawn to the more familiar theologies of various liberation movements that have struggled to relate the church very concretely to the dynamic of historical social change. Rubem Alves, writing from the perspective of the Latin American liberation movements, talks of a messianic humanism which begins with political humanism but adds Christian categories of hope and trust in the future. The language of hope is the language of freedom from the oppression that rules the 3rd world societies. Humanization is seen as the coming gift of God forged by free creation.

Human liberation is the result of man's responsible activity, as he takes the task of creating a more friendly tomorrow.¹⁶

Practically, theology that relates the mission of the church to social involvement abounds. Most movements are developing theologies of revolution as they struggle to ground in faith and ontology the drive that engulfs them. One of the clearest and most direct usages of theology for this purpose is James Cone's book, A Black Theology of Liberation. He states his purpose in the preface boldly.

It is my contention that Christianity is essentially a religion of liberation. The function of theology is that of analyzing the meaning of that liberation for the oppressed community so they can know that

their struggle for political, social and economic justice is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any message that is not related to the liberation of the poor in the society is not Christ's message.¹⁷

But even without such closely formulated theologies of liberation we have been involved in social action for some time. Even if the theological stance of the social gospel has been shown to be somewhat naive over against the realities of life, we are deeply aware of the necessity for a concrete social responsibility. As we were involved in marches and demonstrations, we were comforted by understanding our methodology as being one of action-reflection-action. In the face of the need, we couldn't wait until we had all the answers. The various "pop" theologies captured the mood and at least articulated the confusion. Joseph Fletcher, Harvey Cox, and the "Death of God" theologians symbolically hold the various attempts to bring the divine once and for all into significant relationship to the world as we experience it, even if that means utterly refusing to allow any understanding of transcendent "Other." More conservative churchmen were thrown into a deep reactionary stance but this didn't bother a confrontation methodology. We were clear that dealing with the church seriously in our age meant dealing with social transformation.

The questions that we are now posing to the church in social involvement are not questions of whether or not be socially involved but questions that point to the nature of an effective change agent or group that can sustain itself over long and sometimes arduous periods. For example, what is the power of symbols and the necessity of corporate identity? What is a covenant and its relation to being corporate? What are those stories which we tell ourselves everyday about what it means to be human? These are all questions that require the most profound

religious insight. For this reason fields like Old Testament, New Testament, and Church History are regaining interest. What does our tradition have to communicate to us about primordial humanness?

Before the church can extend itself effectively in its mission, we must rediscover and redevelop a sense of the authentic corporate religious style.

Individual Freedom versus Corporate Mission

Thus far various other religious emphases alive today such as fundamentalism and forms of liberalism have not been discussed. The thought is that the above stated dynamic is the central issue toward which the various forms of religious understanding must take their relation.

A religious style for the future must involve relating the insights and demands of individual faith and freedom to corporate church and mission. This is finally not a theoretical issue but a very practical one. Understanding must be accompanied by experimentation so that we are articulating reality and not our latest guess.

Most impressive about the existentialist theologies is the way they speak to life. Faith and decision are for Bultmann never abstract, unapproachable concepts but dynamics that you can sense are going on in yourself. He has brought to religion a new sense of reality that implies life commitment and speaks against any kind of hiding and floating above life. As you read Bultmann, you are aware of it somehow "making sense." With the kind of tools given to you by existentialism and phenomenology, it is possible to recover by yourself the power and human meaning of the New Testament. Existential theology has uncovered the tremendous gift of Luther's doctrine of grace that speaks so directly to the anxieties

of the 20th century.

However, Niebuhr's and other theologians' criticisms of existential theology are justified. Man is left finally with a sense of being cut off from the rest of the world. Man's relation to God, being understood as the continual calling forth to make a free decision, is frustrated by the question of "where from" and "where to." Ethics seems to be of secondary importance as that natural result of the authentic life in faith. Existential theology becomes susceptible to a radical individualism that exchanges Bultmann's injunction of radical obedience for the promised reward of total freedom without the prerequisite of cruciformity.

The insights of existential theology, as they relate to an understanding of history, must be further developed. Consideration must be given once again to the reality of time as being eschatologically important in both the past and the future as well as the now. Obedience can then be dealt with in the added dimension of the interior stance towards the God of the moment, as well as the dimension of commitment or lifegiving to history.

As existential theology has brought man a new depth awareness of what it means to be human, so the social involvement of the last years has awakened our sensitivity towards our neighbor. There is no longer any place on earth about which we dare to not be concerned. The church is charged with articulating the Word that will speak to the tragedy and suffering brought about by the inadequacies and injustices inherent in the present political and economic models. We must struggle to recover from the individualism of the past towards a new sense of wholeness and communal responsibility for the whole earth. We must

take back the power from the machines and technologies that have so fragmented us and left us as slaves. They have seduced man with the bait of luxury and leisure, but we are now awake and the battle has begun.

Uneasiness in the face of this demand is grounded in a lack of the religious depth that also makes historical action "make sense." The last half of a century has seen untold misery brought about under the rubric of following the Will of God. Man does not have the awareness of the nearness of God in history that was acquired through existentialism in personal lives. The task here is a deeply theological one. Recovering the sense after the God of history would provide the handles to deal with authentic corporateness as His people.

The goal of the next chapters will be renewing the awareness of the sovereignty of God in history. Only in this way can one push beyond the schizophrenic state of the drives toward authentic selfhood and social responsibility. The collapse into relativity of all normative understandings of the meaning of history has freed the church to appropriate the gifts of historical consciousness in enabling the faith task. Faith must no longer hide from history, but is free to engage it as the battleground and stage.

As background for the theological task of articulating a doctrine of God as a reality in history, St. Francis will be studied, as he offers a model of man and a community with a powerful awareness of the nearness of God. Furthermore, St. Francis was a man who at the same time was creator and transformer of his total culture. This is the goal and will always be held in the forefront of this thesis. Renewal of the church through recovering the depths of theology makes sense only as the church is used as a tool to serve the world.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

- 1 Paul Tillich, The World Situation (Social Ethics Series, ed. Franklin Sherman, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), p. 2.
- 2 Ibid., p. 14.
- 3 Ibid., p. 18.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
- 5 Ibid., p. 48.
- 6 — Eugen Rosenstock-Hussy, The Christian Future: Or the Modern Mind Outrun (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 12.
- 7 Ibid., p. 13.
- 8 Ibid., p. 18.
- 9 Ibid., p. 19.
- 10 Ibid., p. 30.
- 11 Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and the Sickness Unto Death, trans. Walter Lowie (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 147.
- 12 Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 315.
- 13 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), III, 248.
- 14 H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 24.
- 15 Ibid., p. 16
- 16 Rubem Alves, A Theology of Human Hope (Washington: Corpus Books, 1969), p. 16.
- 17 James Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), p. ii.

CHAPTER II

ST. FRANCIS - POVERTY, OBEDIENCE, AND JOY

The Cultural Crisis of the 13th Century

St. Francis points symbolically to a time of deep social and religious unrest in the history of Europe. The setting for the Crusades was a time when the whole relation of church and state took on a new dimension. Papal authority had to be appropriated in a new way after it had served the function of being a unifying force for all of Europe. There came into being a town culture that called into question the traditional relationships of noble, peasant, and the church. There developed a new emphasis on the personal individual side of what it meant to be human. This chapter will focus on St. Francis and his times as he struggles to carve out a new understanding of a lifestyle that is grounded in the Christian faith yet served as an appropriate response to the questions of his times. We shall be attempting to describe the religious power found in the Franciscans that not only deeply affected the church but also helped forge a new Christian response that created culture. What is the powerfully religious in St. Francis's style that effectively creates change in people and in structures?

Effects of the Crusades

Almost every source agrees on the importance of the Crusades as the culture-forming event that raised for the medieval culture questions

which point toward our modern era. The first effect of the Crusades was they initially brought together all of Europe for a purpose far beyond the national squabbles which had held the various societies separated.

It marks a turning point in the history of the West: ending the long centuries of weakness and isolation and cultural inferiority and bringing the new peoples of Western Christendom back to the old centres of Eastern Mediterranean culture.¹

Europe had finally come of age. The barbarian stigma, while still to be seen, had been overridden by a new image of the unified Christian culture. The struggle between the Popes and the Kings and Emperors continued but the context had shifted and thus the old struggles took on a new form. Dawson describes the conflict as follows:

The rise of the new Western European culture is dominated by this sharp dualism between two cultures, two social traditions and two spiritual worlds -- the war society of the barbarian kingdom with its cult of heroism and aggression and the peace society of the Christian church with its ideals of asceticism and renunciation and its high theological culture.²

The Crusades not only brought together peoples from different nations but also from different classes. The nobles fought alongside the vassals and the suffering and death they both experienced narrowed the distance which had previously been maintained in the rigid feudal structures. The feudal system was further impoverished by the fact that many nobles lost fortunes causing them to sell their estates or pledge them to the church.

Especially significant for the development of the Franciscan movement was the increase in number and importance of the towns along with the beginnings of the bourgeois and merchant class. Towns became more and more central to the life of Europe as travel and trade routes were opened up by the Crusades.

It was in this atmosphere of economic renaissance, the expansion of commercial life, and increasing opportunities of personal freedom, that the great flowering of the religious culture of medieval Christendom took place; . . .

Towns had been a part of Italian life ever since Roman times, but in the 12th and 13th centuries they grew and expanded and took on new significance. The Italian town had the basis of the contracted peace. Nobles, artisans, and the poor were bound together within the walls for their common defense and began to develop the idea of the common peace where every member of the town was obligated not only to help in defense but also to maintain peace within the town. The key to the town structure was the craft guild. These were powerful unions that not only cared for their own trade but also had their influence on the town life as a whole. They were like microcosms of the total community and reflected the kind of common agreement among men for the betterment of the whole.

Within the town itself, the town class did not have a social role which could be explained by the feudal hierarchy that was based on an agricultural economy. The growing merchant and artisan classes were left without a social definition. These were the people who finally were open to the religious mood of the Friars and created the backbone of the mendicant orders. In these orders, the middle class could discover personal perspective that enabled them to relate to the entire society.

Religious Revival Among the Masses

The key to understanding the tremendous popularity of the Franciscan movement is in study of the popular religious revivals that took place in the 12th century. Much is said about the development through the early Middle Ages in the Roman church from the image of a

praising congregation to a mystery laden cult that rose above the people and remained hidden in sacraments and rituals. It was this kind of state that had set off the monastic reforms and the reforms of Gregory VII. The church had become alienated from the people and they were left with a meaningless religious life. Friedrich Heer in his analysis in The Medieval World gives two reasons for the development of the popular religious movements.

First, Christ was no longer directly accessible to the people; direct contact with Him was first and foremost the privilege of monks and after them of the secular priesthood. . . . Secondly, the Roman Church's veto on the translation of the Gospels and other religious texts into the vernacular was a most effective means of keeping the people at arm's length.⁴

One can thus see how the church had developed along the lines of the feudalism that it was supposed to serve. As the feudal society changed, new demands were placed on the church. But the church changed much too slowly for vast numbers of people seeking depth religious experience.

At the beginning of the 13th century there were all sorts of hermits and wandering preachers throughout Europe. Many joined together and formed movements of various sizes, while others formed congregations and sought church approval. They were found throughout southern France, Flanders and northern Italy.

The driving force behind all these manifestations of religious fervor was the urge to lead the apostolic life in imitation of the poverty and humility of Christ.⁵

Many of these groups were termed heretics although they were grounded in the belief that they, not the Church in Rome, were the true Christians. The Franciscan movement differed in spirit from the other religious groups on this point. Whether through tactical insight or religious

intuition, St. Francis never understood himself as separate or better than the church but always as a servant of the church. In spite of this, Innocent III struggled with the decision as to whether or not to grant permission to Francis to found his brotherhood. Nonetheless, in spirit, we can see affinities between Francis and the other popular movements of the time.

The Cathari movement was also powerful and widespread at the end of the 12th Century and the beginning of the 13th. It was situated in most of the major cities in southern France and northern Italy. Supporters arose in every class, especially among noble and patrician women who were so scorned by the male-dominated society and the monastic religious elite. The Cathars were influenced heavily by the eastern religions and particularly by the Manichean understanding of the wickedness of the world. They reacted strongly against the wars of the Crusades and were so successful in their anti-war propaganda that the Catholic Church was forced to make a reply.

In their voluminous tracts justifying war and the Crusades as a means of "defending the social order" we find the theologians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries using arguments similar to those of theologians in the twentieth.⁶

Important for our study is the Cathari understanding of the "Perfect" or he who has renounced the world.

The "perfect" (perfecti) renounced the flesh in all its forms, abstaining from sexual intercourse and marriage; they practiced the severest ascetism, living as nomads, dedicated to poverty and preaching and wholly without resources.⁷

The success of the Cathari movement was overwhelming. Many people were influenced by the deep piety and self-sacrifice they demonstrated. Many of these very same things were what attracted so many to the brotherhood of St. Francis.

Heretics or Churchmen?

In the face of so many religious movements, there was a great deal of confusion about their relationship to the Catholic church. Even when the Popes were revolutionaries, as Gregory VII, it was entirely possible that groups would be persecuted for imitating the papal direction by bishops who were more jealous about the stability of their realms than the new directions from Rome.

Most important for us is the case of the Waldensians. Valdes was a merchant in Lyons when he began preaching on the countryside for a return to apostolic simplicity and poverty similar to St. Francis or St. Dominic. His bishop was strongly against him and when he appealed his case to Rome he lost.

. . . he had the misfortune to be out-talked and humiliated before a papal synod by a smooth, fast-talking, and unsympathetic English prelate. He returned with the laughter of the council ringing in his ears, continued to preach in defiance of the bishop, drifted into more and more extreme condemnations of ecclesiastical order, and was finally branded as a heretic.⁸

In each case, there seems to be a kind of historical development that allows conditions to be ripe for acceptance at one time but not at another. Perhaps one should list several of the elements that contributed to the development of the cultural atmosphere that determined the particular historical situation of Francis of Assisi.

First of all it is important to note the political shift that was occurring near the end of the 12th century. For hundreds of years, teutonic lords had ruled over the basically law oriented Latin civilization.

By the end of the 12th century it was high upon seven hundred years that the fair land of Italy had been a constant prey to intrusions of military bandits of Teutonic race.⁹

This is what many have termed to be the darkness that ruled over the middle ages. It was within this kind of insecurity that monasticism could flourish. In Italy, however, the northern invaders encountered a town culture that was more flexible than the feudal estates of northern Europe.

The Teutonic invaders of Italy occasionally destroyed, but never subdued the cities in any social sense. They little affected the language. They only enslaved the undefended peasants, a different stock, an older race, bound immemorially to the soil. The vivid voluble life of the town was alien to them; if they ever entered it, they were speedily absorbed.¹⁰

It was in Francis' time that the citizens of Assisi overran the neighboring German castles and used the stone from the castles to build city walls. This was possible under the general ascendancy of the Pope and in particular under Innocent III who decreed that all German counts in northern Italy should either make submission or leave the land. This Papal power was certainly not as effective throughout Europe as it was in Italy, but it acquired for the Franciscan movement a sort of protective umbrella that enabled such a peaceful group to flourish.

For Italy in the 13th century was perhaps the one part of Europe in which a St. Francis could have occurred. and this is because on the whole the secular life was gentler there than in other lands.¹¹

Another cultural precondition for the general influence of the Franciscans was the approval given by Innocent III. We have already noted how the lack of approval had branded many as heretics. The story is that Francis' first audience with the Pope was cause for his prompt dismissal but before a second audience which was scheduled by a sympathetic

cardinal, Francis had had dreams which were strangely similar to the dreams of Innocent. They were dreams of "the Lateran falling, when a little man stepped forward and propped it with his back."¹² Any attempt to grasp finally why Innocent approved the order results in speculation, but the possibility that seems most evident is Innocent's awareness of the necessity for reaching laymen who were being lured away by the heresies of the time. A popular movement under the approval of the Pope could thus be a very important tool. This should not be interpreted purely politically but should emphasize Innocent's sincere concern for the church. Even if he managed to bring all the secular rulers to their knees, the church's foundation would flounder on an alienated laity.

To sanction a new wandering order was a risk; it might only add to the rebels. But apparently the movement was already going forward and so far directed by the Church. Should it be drawn into control or permitted to join the enemy?¹³

Most basic, though, to the cultural milieu of St. Francis was the attitude of the laity towards the Church. Estimates vary widely as to how incensed the populace was, but there is general consensus that there were large numbers who were unsatisfied and upset at the luxury and almost feudal arrogance the clergy had assumed.

Beyond that, various authors emphasize different aspects of the alienation. One element was the superstitious overlay that had become a part of the church rites.

Mystery, the mystery of the Mass, ritual and liturgy, proliferated an outgrowth of the miraculous which eroded the edges of wholesome piety like a cancer. The supreme reality was no longer to be found in sober and sanctified participation in that mystery which proclaimed the transformation of mankind, "the putting on of the new man," but in the miraculous and marvellous.¹⁴

To this must be added the sense of distance that developed with the advent of scholasticism. The people increasingly lost touch with the core of their faith. There evolved a "formality that had hidden from men the embodiment of God's live."¹⁵ It is also important to mention once more the influence of the eastern religions, particularly Manichaeism, as one of the chief sources of ferment.

For the doctrine of the eternal and essential evilness of matter, besides implying a denial of the Incarnation, led its votaries on the one hand to the denunciation of marriage and to extreme asceticism and self-torture, and on the other hand to the grossest immorality.¹⁶

In 1203 the citizens of Assisi even elected an anti-clerical heretic to be the head of the town council.

Strange as it may seem, religious contemporaries in the late 12th and early 13th centuries were aware of their time not as the summation of all Christian history (as we might believe) but as a time of foreboding radical change. Dawson, with his poetic flair puts it like this:

This sense of imminent crisis, of the pressing need for moral reform and spiritual renovation, runs through all the religious thought of the twelfth century. That century which seems to us the Golden Age of medieval Catholicism--the age of St. Anselm and St. Bernard, the age of the crusades and the Cathedrals, of the new religious Orders and the new schools--appeared to contemporaries dark with the threat of the coming doom.¹⁷

Jeffrey Russell discusses this period from the point of view of the question of the tension between prophecy and order. He states that the rise of the papal system of order and the formal masses and sacraments performed without meaning for the participants helped the rise of the religious enthusiasts.

The powerful thrust of the prophetic spirit is thus the result not only of popular enthusiasm for reform

in general but of rebellion against the advance of the spirit of order.¹⁸

To avoid the danger of an over "spiritualization" of the times, we must keep in mind the sociological background of the ferment that we will refer to with the Franciscans. Most important are the Crusades and the concomitant ascendancy of the Pope as a European power. Along with this is the interplay of the nobles and the peasants and the shift to developed town cultures with their increased trade and new experiments in self government.

Cultural Questions

In summary, the various phenomena pointed to seem to form three areas of concern which are powerful clues towards understanding the influence of the Franciscans. The first is the search for a personal religious meaning and experience amidst a growing formalization of religion. How could the individual be directly related to the final reality? Where would there be room for inspiration and authentic religious enthusiasm?

Secondly, amidst the social changes that were happening as a result of the Crusades and town growth, how was it possible for it to be appropriated: Was the world that was becoming increasingly strange truly evil and needed to be renounced? There was a demand for a retelling of the myths or stories that had enabled Christians to relate to their secular culture. How could they rearticulate the goodness of creation?

Related to this, but somewhat separate, was the continued developing awareness of the unity of western Europe. The strict feudal parochialism simply did not speak to a culture that had unified itself sufficiently to march to the near east with a common sense of mission.

What sort of spiritual strength could speak to so many diverse cultures?

Dealing with these three areas required the most radical response, a response of example as well as intuition. St. Francis spoke to every man as he espoused and exemplified the ideal of evangelical perfection. He affirmed the goodness of all through his profound naturalism that pushed all men to glory in the world as it was. His joy in suffering was a constant witness to that. Thirdly, his sense of service and mission throughout Europe was a style that belonged to all not just to Assisi. This was how St. Francis exemplified the radical religious.

St. Francis and the Franciscan Ideal

Simple answers to the deepest questions of the 13th century were not enough. A new life-style was needed that would be an example of a life-stance which would enable man to live before the realities of the day. A most powerful expression of this urge for spiritual renewal is articulated later in William Langland's poem "Piers Plowman." Christopher Dawson writes about "Piers Plowman" with a certain degree of romanticism but nonetheless expressing the main point.

He is the voice from the underworld of the common people, speaking their language, using their imagery and sharing their ideals. And his poem seems to prove that the fundamental principles of the creative period of medieval religion had been more completely assimilated and incorporated by the new vernacular culture of the common people than it had been by the higher and more literary culture of the ruling elements in Church and state.

A direct quote from the poem expresses this point and refers specifically to St. Francis.

And in the apparel of a poor man and a pilgrim's likeness many times had God been met among poor people . . . and in a friar's frock once was he found But it is far ago in St. Francis time.²⁰

The Franciscan ideal became the spiritual backbone of the popular culture. It was universally regarded as the core of medieval religious creativity and brought to everyman the awareness that the religious expressed what it meant to be most deeply human. This was not unconnected with the secular spirit of the time but represented a radicalization of it. Knightly courtesy and valor were ideals that arose through the Crusades and were reflected in Francis' early life as he yearned to participate in the Crusades.

And on the other hand we find in Italy a really profound and fruitful assimilation of the ideals of the courtly culture by the spiritual life of medieval Christendom. We see this above all in the case of St. Francis, who owed more to the vernacular culture of the troubadours than to the Latin culture of the Schools and the old monastic orders.²¹

Perhaps the beginning point for looking at the life of Saint Francis and his culture is to recall his ideal. Saint Francis radically marked the end of the Age of the Crusades even though there were ideas about Crusades up to 1500. This was the recognition of the failure of the Church militant to win the infidel over by force, and the beginning of new search for the basis of Christianity. Saint Francis, who had lived the gay life throughout his youth, symbolized the failure of the Crusades when, after starting off on his great dream to be a knight, returned after a few days. Something had changed in him.

Nevertheless a great change had taken place in him. Neither pleasures nor work could long hold him; he spent a portion of his days in long country rambles. . . .²²

Saint Francis began thus the long inward struggle that would eventually end in his marriage to the beautiful bride, Lady Poverty.

Evangelical Perfection--The Imitation of Christ

The imitation of Christ has been a powerful symbol that has been

carried throughout the thought of many Christians. Saint Francis, though, does not allow us to reduce the image to moral virtue, but returns us to the paradoxical base of the individual soul. Man is created freedom bound in obedience to the Father.

By an ineffable mystery he felt himself the Man of his age, him in whose body are borne all the efforts, the desires, the aspiration of men; with him, in him, by him humanity yearns to be renewed, and to use the language of the Gospel, born again.²³

The poetry belongs more to Sabatier than to Saint Francis, but the reality is that imitation of Christ is not an exterior or ethical imitation but a oneness of purpose with the Lord. Man lives for the single purpose of doing the will of God and there is no institution, like the Church, that can stand between man and that demand.

The bases of Saint Francis' call were Prayer, Poverty, Humility, and Simplicity. These were all grounded in the gospel and became the cornerstones of the first Rule. Poverty was the most emphasized of the four. As the son of a well-to-do merchant, he wanted to possess absolutely nothing, and he gave up all. Even as a youth he gave away his father's goods in fits of compassion to the poor. Money was an object of greatest disdain.

He taught his brethern to have equal regard for money and dung, and when one of them had merely touched money, Francis sharply reproved him, and bade him lift the money from the window with his mouth, and convey it without the hedge of the dwelling, and put it with his own mouth on the dung of an ass.²⁴

This was a revolutionary reversal of values for the then wealthy Church, but more particularly it was an offense to the developing bourgeoisie. Francis begging for food was the object of scorn and mistrust for years.

In some of the towns they entered, people threw mud, attacked and insulted them, and tore off their clothing. The simple, wise brothers took it all smiling, as something to the good; these things

only made them happier, not from a perverse love of pain, but because thus they could bring men more quickly to a better understanding.²⁵

There are many stories of his joyful suffering in poverty and each one is more disconcerting than the next. One that spoke to this writer was the following.

One day he was going through the town begging for oil for the lamps of St. Damian, when he arrived at a house where a banquet was going on; the greater number of his former companions were there, singing and dancing. At the sound of those well-known voices he felt as if he could not enter; he even turned away, but very soon filled with confusion by his own cowardice, he returned quickly upon his steps, made his way into the banquet-hall, and after confessing his shame, put so much earnestness and fire into his request that every one decided to co-operate in this pious effort.²⁶

Writing about Saint Francis is simply telling one story after another. Each one reveals yet another angle of the kind of paradoxical religiousness where pain is joy and obedience to God is the only true freedom. In Saint Francis, the soul of man came alive again.

He preached by parables, but more eloquently in act than word, and presenting his message of love as a personal equation, became himself the actor of a mystery which he bore with him from place to place.²⁷

The true power of man's being was found in his relation to the divine. There man is most fully man. Saint Francis' form of simplicity could perhaps be stated as a natural gesture growing from love. It was this deep joy and peace that he so delighted in communicating to others.

The radicalness of St. Francis' poverty can best be seen in the model that he required for himself and his brotherhood. Almost from the beginning there were brothers who desired to own books or build decent houses for the friars. They wanted nothing extreme but even the simplest desires met stern rebuke from St. Francis. The Mirror of Perfection, that

collection of short episodes presumably going as far back as the personal reminiscences of Brother Leo, the close companion of St. Francis, reflects both the severity and humility of St. Francis' poverty.

One of the friars, a deeply spiritual man, who was very intimate with blessed Francis, had a cell built standing a little distance from the hermitage where he lived, so that blessed Francis could remain at prayer there whenever he visited the place. So when blessed Francis came there, this friar conducted him to the cell; but although it was built only of wood, rough-hewn with axe and hatchet, the Father said, "This cell is too fine. If you wish me to stay here, have a cell made with branches and ferns as its only covering inside and out." For the poorer and smaller the house or cell, the readier he was to live in it.²⁸

The following story points to his humility and understanding of God's charity. When one of the brothers was questioning Saint Francis about why, of all people, God had chosen him for all to follow, Saint Francis answered:

It is because the Eye of the Most High has willed it. He watches continually the evil and the good; and as He has not found among sinners any smaller man, more insufficient, or more sinful, therefore He has chosen me to accomplish the work He wills. Me He chose because he could find none more worthless; and so would he confound the dignity, and grandeur, the strength, the beauty and the learning of the world.²⁹

Yet this was not a humility of weakness, but a decisional humility before God and his creation. Radical humility authenticated poverty by guarding against self-righteousness. Having been under ecclesiastical rule for so many centuries, people looked to this new individualism of the spirit that later was put on canvas by the Renaissance.

It was a great adventure; he had found it so in his own soul; it was greater still when he set out to pursue it in the souls of others.³⁰

Naturalism--The Brother of the Birds

Most people remember stories or at least have seen the painting of St. Francis preaching to the birds. He was deeply in love with all of God's creation and wondered in joy at the beauty of nature, again not for its own sake, but as one more monument to the glory of God. Francis had a series of huts in the hills of central Italy where he stayed on his wanderings. These were his chosen sights for prayer, and his hideaways, and a supreme joy to him. His ecstatic communion with God in all of life was so prevalent that he made joy one of the precepts of his rule.

Praised be thou, Lord, with all thy creatures,
especially for my brother Sun which gives us
the day and by him thou showest thy light.
He is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
of thee, Most High, he is the Symbol.³¹

Saint Francis; love of animals was not sentimental--which tends to be exclusive--but more mystical. It was a union with creation itself.

The thirteenth century was prepared to understand the voice of the Umbrian poet; the reunion to the birds closed the reign of Byzantine art and of the thought of which it was the image. It is the end of dogmatism and authority; it is the coming in of individualism and inspiration.³²

The naturalism of Saint Francis had another aspect that fit in well with the political as well as artistic development. This was the notion of landscape and its relation to the territory of the Italian province. He was intimately related to the land. All of nature formed a unity much like the 148th Psalm. Christ did not come to redeem only mankind, but the whole cosmos.

. . . he did not, like the Psalmist, look up to the Lord after having looked down at his creatures. He kept his eye on the soil. In this his attitude differed from that of the Hebrew psalter.³³

In St. Francis' love of the world we see one of the key distinctions between him and cloistered monasticism. He met the other-worldly in the everyday encounter with other men. He encountered God in this world and it was in this world that the ideal of apostolic virtue must be made known and preached.

Thus every state of life in Christendom is a Christian life in the full sense--an extension of the life of Christ on earth. And the supernatural order of grace is founded and rooted in the natural order and the common life of humanity. . . . religion was not a particular way of life but the way of all life.³⁴

The Franciscan attitude toward the world contributed greatly to the development of the modern scientific attitude.

It [their approach to life] implied a realism almost modern in its patient and scrupulous observation, and in its freedom from medieval prejudice and superstitious fear.³⁵

Direct connection can be drawn between great Franciscans and modern science through people like Roger Bacon. But the important point for our purpose is the sympathetic and loving relationship to nature as God's creation. It is from here only a small step to an understanding of the compassion of the Franciscans for all men, especially the poor and suffering. This is love generated not by a sentimental search for self-fulfillment and meaning but a response of praise and glory to God's commanding presence in creation.

The Religious Life

We must go beyond these brief descriptions of the Franciscan interpretation of the ideal to make some comments about the dynamics of the religious life. What is going on that enabled that kind of radical example to take effect? What are the elements of the religious that so deeply moved people?

St. Francis had immense authority wherever he went. At first people reacted to his authority out of fear and later out of profound respect and admiration. His life-style, as rigorous as it was, attracted thousands by its authenticity. We are talking about the depth of his religious intuition or how he manifested his nearness to God.

Generally speaking, it is most important to mention that the Franciscan ideal was never an experience as much as it was an attitude, an intentionally assumed life-stance. Religious life was not something delivered to St. Francis but a life-demand that required his decision, his creating an inner relationship to his life experiences. To describe the religious depth of Francis we must describe the nature of the relationship that Francis took towards life. We can talk about his relationship under three headings: 1) Goodness of Creation, 2) Joy on the other side of poverty, and 3) Freedom in the midst of obedience to the goal of evangelical perfection.

Francis' awareness of the goodness of creation has been described previously as his love of nature that expressed itself in song and prayers of praise. The body was as much a part of nature as anything, and he made it a part of his rule that the Brothers were not to partake in inordinate bodily punishment. Even on his deathbed he apologized to his own body for the rough life that it had. The radicalness of the Franciscan stance though, is seen not in the romantic visions of nature, bird, and flowers, but in the affirmation of the harshness of life. This was reflected most simply in the cold winters and rain in the life of the wandering preacher of northern Italy, but must be extended to include the suffering at the hands of suspicious townsmen, the scoffers and the persecutors. Francis responded to adverse situations by bursting out with prayer and song. His was not the

response of the Stoic who grimly accepted all trials, but the response of affirmation in every situation as a gift from God. This was how God communicated to him. God was active in all of life and every situation must be praised for the gift that it was. From this came a deep sensitivity to every moment. Every encounter presented the possibility of perceiving a new aspect of God's will.

The same thing, but seen from another perspective, is the joy found on the other side of self-negation. This is deeply offensive to 20th century secular men, as he understands joy only in self-fulfillment. Not only does total affirmation reign in the face of every life situation, but Francis also intentionally forged his religious stature out of self denial. He always warned against joy found in earthly things.

The Saint constantly recommended spiritual joy, the joy of the soul, and his zeal in fostering this joy was as ardent as his zeal in avoiding all unbecoming hilarity. He regarded as unbecoming not only that a Religious should find pleasure in earthly amusements and vanities, but also in vain and idle laughter and gossip.³⁶

Joy wasn't present in spite of poverty but precisely because of poverty. Spiritual joy is made possible by the lack of earthly joys. Spiritual joy is always firmly anchored in God and found in those who relate to the mystery of life as persons created by the Mystery and loved by it. Spiritual joy is the joy of resurrection.

Still another way of pointing to the same religious depth is Francis' total freedom in his obedience to God. Francis was always responding to life in prayer. Prayer was his freedom as it bound him to God. He always responded creatively to life situations. The very essence of St. Francis' life was contained in his freedom as found in his obedience to God. The freedom of St. Francis was found in total affirmation that not only recognized the situation but also searched in prayer for how he might radically

engage his life in the struggle.

Religious freedom was not an escape from life but a creative response to all of life. This ideal wasn't like a light switch that could simply be turned on, but the faith struggle that preoccupied all of St. Francis' and the Friars' energy in each historical situation. St. Francis regarded himself simultaneously as the greatest of sinners yet was charged with setting the example of religious perfection for the others. Only in the midst of human finitude and sin does the religious ideal communicate its true worth. Evangelical Perfection is not the possession of the few but the possibility for everyman. This also pushes us to the discussion of the religious community and the social dimensions of the religious idea.

The Franciscan Mission

The great danger of religious ideals is that they remain nothing more than ideals. We must always ask the question of religion, "What does it look like? How does it make my life and the life of my culture any different?" The Franciscan Movement is singularly powerful in communicating by example the model of world mission that forms so much of our own consciousness concerning the purpose and life of the Church.

The Franciscans responded to their times and lived out of the developing town ethos. Along with the Dominicans they originated the mendicant orders. Instead of leading the cloistered life of the monastic orders, Franciscans were wandering preachers going from town to town throughout the country. When they entered a town they would preach at the Church, and care for the sick, especially those like lepers whom nobody else would care for. They understood themselves to be auxiliaries of the local secular priest, whom they served in any way they could. The sermons they preached were popular not relying on elaborate knowledge but on the presence

and meaning of the Gospel in everyday life.

To understand the impact of Franciscans in their culture we must formulate a picture of this wandering style.

First of all, the opening of trade routes and the flourishing towns had quite a few people on the highways and trails. Country folk were very hospitable and had the necessary food to provide the courteous stranger.

Imagine the pilgrims pouring down to Rome from all parts of central and northern Europe, the knights and soldiers, bound for some crusade, the minstrels, the pedlars (sic) and merchants. How many footsore stragglers, victims of fever, sickness, sunstroke, dropped from their fellows; how many were robbed or lost their way overtaken by nightfall before they reached their goal!³⁷

The Franciscans lived in caves or huts outside of the towns. During the day they went into the feudal villages to preach and beg for food.

Begging was as difficult for the novice Franciscan reared in a comfortable home, as it is for us today. It was the ultimate in rejection of an exclusive self-oriented integrity. It also represented a radical risk as they begged only for one day's food at a time. Trusting that the Lord would provide was a very concrete day to day experience for the early Franciscan. Even though many were hospitable there were also many deeply suspicious of the wandering troop, seeing them as mere heretics or creators of civil disorder. They were charged as vagrants and beggars, particularly since they once had property and gave it all away. Women feared them and all tried to dissuade them from the harsh life of no possessions. When one Bishop tried to get Francis to have an established Religious house Francis replied:

But if we have goods, we must have arms to protect them, for it is from possessions that come quarrels with one's neighbors, injurious to the love of God and men, that is why we are absolutely decided to own nothing in this world.³⁸

We must come to understand the relationship between the strange life-style of those wandering brothers committed to poverty and the cultural service they performed. What is the relationship between the religious man and the religious community? The Franciscans in their time offered a powerful witness to this question. It was very clear how the Franciscans would describe service to his neighbor. The finest service and the first demand of the Franciscan was to offer his neighbor the same possibility of renewed life that he had received. Service to his fellowman was for Francis always the flip side of the renewed human heart. This was a gift that had to contact every man. This sense of mission made Francis different from the ascetic orders that emphasized maintaining the purity of the Word above the distractions and temptations of everyday life.

A graphic story that tells the thoroughness of Francis' love was the overcoming of his revulsion to care for lepers. Seeing a leper on a road one day he was first inclined to throw him a coin and ride on, but was drawn not only to offer him alms but to kiss the wounds of the leper. This became one of the key moments in the conversion of St. Francis to the religious life.

Francis named the order the Friars Minor, indicating in the title that they were to be servants of all men. These words came from Matthew 10: 7-10, which he turned to by chance after prayer.

As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass for your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat.³⁹

One of the strangest manifestations of this calling was how St. Francis continually gave away what little he had to anyone in need. He

gave away his habit many times even though his own body was frail and needed protection. The only way he could be prevented from doing this in his compassion was under direct order from the Bishop.

In service as in poverty, the ideal was never a romantic or sentimental idea but always a direct task. Every act of service required an expenditure of self. The religious depth was made real only in the concrete acting out of "if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it." Again this was not caused by some form of new level of awareness as the Manicheans thought be a decision in the face of concrete need. This was the cause of profound joy, never as an accomplishment but as a gift. Francis, in expending his life for others became transparent to the Mystery of all life.

Besides the human compassion for the souls of men, Francis and his brothers created a spirit that engulfed the whole world. The Friars Minor spread quickly throughout Europe. Between 1210, when the order was recognized by Pope Innocent III, and 1217 great changes had taken place.

The Order had now grown out of all recognition, and Francis' vision of men coming along the road from all parts of Europe was being fulfilled. There were now friars in France and Spain as well as in Italy, and before long they would be spreading out into Germany, Britain, and the Holy Land.⁴⁰

Francis had already tried to go to the East but was driven back by a storm. He had succeeded in reaching Spain on his journey to evangelize the infidel but was driven back to Italy by sickness.

The great gift of the outreach of the Franciscans was at the same time the cause of a great shift in the nature of the Order that caused many difficulties. As the Order got bigger, the personal leadership of Francis became impossible and the ministers of provinces, established in 1217, became the actual leaders. With this arose many problems concerning

types of houses, strictness of obeying the rule of poverty, and the value of study. These problems were much greater than Francis expected with his small group of brethren.

The spirit of mission pervaded the Franciscan order beyond St. Francis to this day and was evidenced by the Pope choosing the Franciscan Order as far Eastern emissaries. Thus the Order became the concrete manifestation of European unity that was the spirit of the high middle ages. They could be seen preaching and serving anywhere one went.

Perhaps most offensive to us was the style of corporateness manifest in the body of brethren that enabled the mission of preaching and service to succeed. As poverty and joy were the outward signs so humility and obedience formed the inward stance. In our age of the radical independent spirit, humility and obedience are connected mostly with submission to an authoritarian structure. It is very difficult to recover an authentic religious grasp of what they are pointing to.

Francis was out to create an Order dedicated to being the lowest of all Orders more submissive and unassuming than any of them.

But, above all, Francis endeavored constantly to humble himself, to be the least and lowliest of all himself. That was directly contrary to the spirit of the time. It was a time marked by social unrest, by ambitious craving for aggrandizement, by a mad scramble for honors and fame. The princes despised the lower nobility, the nobility despised the bourgeoisie, these despised the peasants, and these again the serfs as lesser and meaner.⁴¹

Humility reigned in the brotherhood with each deferring to the next. When Francis saw pride slip in amongst his brothers he was quick to call it into question by his own humble example. Once when the friars had set the table for Christmas with more elegance for guests, Francis came in and dressed as a beggar and asked for scraps from the table of such well-off people. The

lesson was quickly learned.

The obedience in the Order was equally strict. "This perfect submission to the will of the superior must be rendered by the Friar in all things, under all circumstances, and at all times." ⁴² One time a Friar came to Brother Giles complaining thus:

"Father, I was just now in my cell at prayer, and my guardian bids me go begging; now it seems to me that it is better to pray than to beg." Giles, who had inherited the true spirit of Francis made answer: "Brother, believe me, thou knowest not yet what prayer is, for the most true and perfect thing is to do the will of thy superior."⁴³

Obedience was to be reflected in zeal as the superior represented not a man but God. Disobedience was allowed only if the command was against his soul. Perfect obedience sides with humility in instantaneous response to the will of the superior. Even if unspoken, the wish and desire of the superior may be intuited and carried out as if spoken. The radicalness of the Franciscan obedience contains all the elements that cause us to be cautious out of the fear of tyranny. This was balanced in the Franciscan rule by understanding the superior as ministers and servants of the brothers. They were told to be the least of the lowly with St. Francis always struggling to be the lowliest. They should always be the first to do the menial tasks. They should always be available to counsel the brothers at any time. Out of these relationships of radical obedience and service the corporate sense of the Franciscans developed.

The Franciscan sense of mission has enabled us to see three things about the depth awareness of the Holy: 1) it is experienced in the encounter with the neighbor, 2) it can be the awareness of everyman, and 3) the individual ideal is embodied in the servant.

The awareness of God is grounded in man's encounter with all of creation and his neighbor. God doesn't take form in institutions and

doctrines. More important for the 13th century, God is found in everyday life. His mystery is experienced in nature and in contact with fellow man. This deprives the mass of magical qualities and allows it to reassume its role as the rehearsal of the community's self-consciousness about life where God is encountered in the neighbor.

The religious awareness is for everyman and not only for the select hierarchy. Political power or intellectual insight were unrelated to the depths of the religious consciousness. It was possible for every man to give up his possessions in obedience to the Gospel and lead the life of poverty. Religion then breaks loose from the walls of the Church and is real in the market place. The example of the Franciscans shakes us loose from the conception that the Gospel among the people somehow conformed to the standards of the market place. We have already mentioned how the call of the Gospel was a deep offense to the developing town culture. It was never an attempt to make life richer or more meaningful but a call to repent and find new life in love of God and neighbor.

Thus the ideal of poverty, humility, simplicity and obedience was understood in no way apart from the mission of the Franciscans. The truly religious ideal has built within it checks that prevent self-righteousness and significance-seeking from finding a home. Humility and simplicity authenticated poverty and obedience. The individual ideal was the same thing as being the servant of God and man. This was not a stoic decision of submission but the opportunity for the greatest joy. Joy in the work of the Father and serving in His name was what it meant to be a human being. There was no way for self-depreciation to take hold, because the self had already been offered up to God. To depreciate the self would be then to depreciate God.

This ideal was, of course, not humanly possible. Francis spent long periods of time in solitude lamenting his own unworthiness and inability to follow the Rule. Even the earliest Franciscan history is replete with stories of Friars and communities rebelling against and struggling with the Rule. The reality of divine forgiveness thus grounded for Francis the reality of Jesus Christ. It was no abstract doctrine but the permission-giving reality that pointed to the future. The Franciscan could live again in his striving to follow the Gospel ideal of service. Only with the Word in Jesus Christ does the Franciscan ideal make any sense.

The Franciscan ideal dealt head-on with the searching problems of the day. A deep religious consciousness open to all spoke to the changing social structure of the 13th century. It was European in scope and shook the medieval culture loose:

The Franciscan movement had the effect of an earthquake. . . . It would be much more true to regard early Franciscanism as a form of Christian revolution by which we mean that reversal of values with which Christ prefaced His message concerning the coming of the Kingdom. . . . For it resulted in one of the greatest upheavals of medieval Christendom and was aimed as one authority has put it, at changing the face of the earth. ⁴⁴

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CHAPTER III

SPIRIT: SELF AND SOUL ON THE JOURNEY

The Recovery of Soul

As we discussed St. Francis we pointed briefly to those areas of his life and mission that are particularly striking to us today. Reading story after story about his life becomes more and more deeply offensive to the thought forms and values held by the large portion of our culture. Churchmen in search of modern relevancy and secularized religion are perhaps most offended by the style of poverty, obedience, and humility of St. Francis. We are continually striving to become "ourselves" and free ourselves from the psychological and sociological blocks of self-depreciation, submission to authority, and powerlessness which the message of St. Francis often seems to mean.

First we must attempt to articulate more specifically the nature of the offense of St. Francis. He stood at the point of shifting emphasis in the understanding of the spirit of man in Western history. St. Francis was, first of all, grounded in poverty and obedience and assumed the role of the servant. In this way man understood the religious center of man as soul. Soul came to earth and returned to the Father. If life was only tragic here on earth that was fine because there was eternal life after death. This should not be flippantly regarded as superstition but was for the early church a positive way to relate in hope and faith to the inexplicable realities of birth and death. At the same time, though, St. Francis brought into mass

consciousness another element of man's spirit which we today call the self. Man was not only significant as the soul that existed before and after life, but also utterly significant in life as God's worker. This is manifested in the previously described differences of the mendicants and the monastic houses, service of the sick and poor, and joy in nature as well as the possibility of seeing God's work being accomplished. We have shown in the last chapter how these issues grew out of and were related to the culture of the times. This was the beginning, however unself-conscious, of the glorious articulation of man's significance in the Renaissance and received religious self-conscious articulation with the Reformation.

The offense of St. Francis has to do with the radical notions of poverty and obedience. In the 20th century we speak of creation and history in deterministic categories. We have lost a sense of God and therefore that part of the spirit of man that points to God, the soul, is buried with Him. As person victimized by technological conformism and the "scientific" laws of nature and economics, we don't sense ourselves as having a soul. Our spirit becomes totally defined as self and thus poverty and obedience can only be understood as absurd self-denial.

St. Francis will be our crutch to recover an awareness of soul as a reality of man's spirit for the 20th century. We can then see the self in relationship and begin to grasp the religious paradox of spirit.

In the first chapter we talked about the tension between the search for personal meaning in the midst of alienation and the collapse of social forms that give meaning to the cry for human social justice

throughout the world. We have followed this trend in the development of modern theology and we could talk at length of the schisms in the insitutional local church. Personal piety versus social relevance has split many congregations, caused many clergy to leave the ministry, and has created an air of crisis around the whole future of the Church.

The study of St. Francis pushes further discussion methodologically in two ways. First, a hunch is affirmed that the expression of the religious in society emerges from the depth cultural questions that everyman is struggling with. Religion is never imposed on culture but speaks to its problems, exposing creative possibility. Secondly, we are pushed to look again at the description of the modern problems. We must articulate the spiritual struggle of man today so that it might be addressed by the religious. Even mentioning spiritual and religious as categories of thought requires a new contextual understanding so that they might be used with authenticity.

It is in view of the cultural revolution of our time that I would point to the continuing high interest in theological themes while at the same time the interest in the institutional forms of the church is declining. Several thinkers have been particularly helpful in struggling to grasp the nature of the present situation. John S. Dunne in his book A Search for God in Time and Memory begins to uncover new aspects of thought.

The actual experience of violence in the revolutions and wars of the two centuries, especially the twentieth, seems to have severely shaken the sense of the self's importance and power. Against this background the individual self seems impotent to change the world; it seems able only to change its own relationship to the world.¹

At another place Dunne describes in high short hand a comparison between

the spiritual journey of the early modern man and our present spirit journey.

The spiritual journey men traveled in early modern times appears to have involved (a) living in terms of the hierarchical order of the world with all its ranks and distinctions among men, (b) facing the prospect of death as the common lot of mankind, and (c) searching with varying success for a uniqueness which would set one apart from the rest of mankind. These elements contrast sharply with the corresponding ones that tend to appear in more recent lives: (a) living in terms of the uniform order of the world in which there are in principle no ranks and distinctions among men, (b) facing the prospect of death as something that has to be undergone alone and that singles one out from the rest of mankind, and (c) searching with varying success for a bond that will unite one to the rest of mankind.²

Post-modern man is trapped in the realization that the self, which described the essence and spirit of modern man, is no longer adequate, but his language and conceptual framework has become devoid of authentic possibility of describing in another way the spirit of man. We are entrapped by the self. "Self-realization," "self-fulfillment" and search for our true "selves" are all phrases that most completely describe the goal of modern man's spiritual growth but are becoming more and more shallow and momentary. The social collapses and mass dehumanizations force us to question the self. Vietnam refuses to go away while our nation is just beginning to recover from the shock of our new consciousness of ecology and possible disasters. We are so painfully aware that life is related to life and that the 20th Century world is built on structures. Very complex institutions are needed to hold our world together. But many have become alien and separated from us and are no longer breathing new life into culture. In the midst of hierarchical collapse or "crisis of authority" many want to return to the early modern man and just get away from the horrendous mass of 20th Century structures.

For others, like myself, at times, there is a romantic tendency toward a return to the middle ages when there was no doubt who was in charge. The philosopher-king dream is still part of us. Friedrich Gogarten quotes Jakob Burkhardt as one who succinctly states the break-away of the spirit that eventually formed modern man and the spirit as self.

In the words of Jakob Burkhardt, man became "a spiritual and intellectual individual and recognized himself as such." It is no longer as it was in the Middle Ages, when, according to Burkhardt, "the two sides of man's consciousness toward the world and toward the inner man lay, as if under a common veil, dreaming or half awake."³

We have shown St. Francis as a key medieval figure who from religious depths calls our escape routes into question. But we must first affirm the development of the modern self. This signal spirit creation, as it developed through the Renaissance, Reformation, and Modern era, cannot be lost in a naive search for a unified society. Nonetheless we must struggle to expand the consciousness of man's spirit to respond to the task of building civilization as was accomplished in the High Middle Ages and grounded in the Franciscans religious intuition. We must be wary of the romanticism of the "Weltgeist" but determined as we search for an authentic expression of the unity of life with life.

We are moving into a new era that reflects a basic shift in the way we articulate our experience of reality. Our past mode of experience grew from the Enlightenment grounded in Descartes. We are now becoming conscious of man's being rather than mind as the primary awareness and question. Thought and logic then are no longer primary but ensue from man's being. The question of being binds man ontologically to the totality of reality. Most recently, Michael Novak stated in Center

magazine this shift in the article "The Enlightenment is Dead." His poetry at the beginning of the article captures the mood that more and more is altering our deepest consciousness.

The Enlightenment, despite its unarguable advances was a great escape from dense human reality. Kant stated its meaning best, in answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" The Enlightenment is consciousness: consciousness of individual autonomy, It is commitment: Commitment to the procedures of universal Reason. Individuality and Mind. Will.

Enlightened Reason: no more Persian myths about Light and Darkness. Progress: no more living according to mere symbols. Cocktail parties: no more communal celebrations and empty rituals. The rationalization of industry, commerce, and nation life: no more heteronomy. The limits of Reason alone: no more imagination, sensuousness, mystery, incantation.

The ironies are palpable.⁴

Novak argues that the questions now being raised are once more theological. We are concerned with the question of "Who am I?" or "What do I do?" not in order to discover our psychological makeup or the ethical imperative but to establish a basis of faith. Where do we sense a source of authenticity and integrity? The phrases "Each individual should make up his own mind," "Each person should develop his or her own individuality," "Each person is the equal of every other," "Each person should do whatever he decides to do, as long as it causes no harm to others" have been the core building blocks of our consciousness.⁵ The Romantic side of the Enlightenment stressed more subjective elements. "Needs should be satisfied, instincts expressed, will given reign."⁶ These statements strike more and more as half-truths. They simply no longer speak to the reality of living. They point directly to the kind of "alienation, fragmentation, and consumerdom"⁷ that creates the suicide of industrial society. We need new ways to talk about the unity and sociality of culture. Novak climaxes with a sharply stated

paragraph pointing to the split in American consciousness.

What stands most in the way of an adequate contemporary religion is the dominant religion: the religion of Enlightenment, its clergy the avant-garde, its pagans middle Americans. Much is written about anti-intellectualism in America, not quite so much about the contempt intellectuals have for Rotarians, Rednecks, truck-drivers, and church-goers. The hatred on both sides is theological. They trumpeted mutually incompatible images of man's humanity.⁸

We are moving into a time when we are conscious of our consciousness. Something more is needed to hold the depth of this consciousness and to relate it to all of reality.

Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy did most of his writing in the 40's and 50's and never really became popular at that time. More and more readers are paying attention to him now precisely because he confronts the questions we're asking with deep profundity and a broad historical sight. In his book I am an Impure Thinker, he attacks the problem at its root in a chapter entitled "Farewell to Descartes." He shows how Descartes replace the basic scholastic image of Anselm "Credo ut intelligam" (I believe so that I may understand) with "Cogito ergo sum." Rosenstock-Huessy states that after the tragedy of the world wars, the question of truth must be once more stated.

We post-War thinkers are less concerned with the revealed character of the true God or the true character of nature than with the survival of a truly human society. . . . Our specific endeavor is the living realization of truth in mankind. Truth is divine and has been divinely revealed - credo ut intelligam. Truth is pure and can be scientifically stated - cogito ergo sum. Truth is vital and must be socially represented - Respondeor etse mutabor (I respond although I will be changed).⁹

With his statement we can also see the touching points of our fascination with the middle ages as well as the impossibility of imitation. The Middle Ages lived before the vision of truth embodied in social order

but the same kind of hierarchical social order can never be on the other side of the modern era. New understandings of authority and social structure must forge the future.

The signs that point us toward the new articulation of man's spirit are pressing in more and more. Liberation movements are striving not simply for social justice, but for a new sense of society. The black movement speaks of this vague grasping after brotherhood as 'soul'. The dramatic new awareness of ecology and the tragic possibilities there force us to expand our awareness to the entire world. The struggle of renewal in the Catholic Church has been one of developing new ways to talk of the total church community. Youth's search after some form of communal life is becoming more universal. Even after communes have failed the youth still maintain that something like that is what "it's all about." In all these phenomena ambiguities and perversion arise, but there is a common cry for a unified way to understand man in the world, not separated into mind and body, but whole and living authentically. Our point of view has been called into question. The 20th Century has become deeply theological as it asks for a source of value.

The thesis is that man is becoming freshly conscious of himself as spirit. Spirit is a relationship. Man exists as relationships, e.g. covenant of marriage, student, white man, etc. Man does not have relationships; he is relationship. Man also takes a relationship to his relationships. He likes or dislikes, is interested in, his relationships. He is excited by, cognizant of, opinionated about, or conscious of his relationships. This relation to relationships we describe in psychological and sociological categories. Relations to relationships can even be categories as normal or abnormal, etc. This is not yet spirit. Spirit

still another step removed. Man as spirit is conscious of his relations to relationships or is conscious of his consciousness. Man creates myths, rites, symbols to articulate his spirit consciousness about life. This is not the strange activity of a few pious people but the human activity of every man. Religion brings the process to consciousness and pushes it to its ultimate.

We will be talking about the recovery of the soul, as exemplified in St. Francis, within the framework of the recovery of spirit. When we say we are entering an age of the spirit, we are pointing to the reality of man as the dynamic relationship of self, soul and their grounding in raw consciousness of consciousness as the journey of life. In theology, self is the relationship that enables man to accept in the Word of Jesus Christ that he is forgiven and totally received. As the Son reveals the Father, man relates as soul to the mystery of all creation and history in faith. Man is not fatalistically related to the Father but can talk once again of the joy of perceiving God's will. New for our time is the consciousness of the Spirit as both self and soul or that man's life is a spiritual journey. Our description of spirit is finally how man can say Yes to all of life.

But first we must go back and discuss the soul as that most difficult element to recover. This recovery of the soul so alive in the early church is possible only at the bottom of man's consciousness as self. William James provides suitable caution.

But if the belief in the soul ever does come to life after the many funeral discourses preached over it, it will be only when someone has found in the term a pragmatic significance which has hitherto eluded observation.¹⁰

The practical imperatives have been laid upon us by the 20th Century.

Soul responds to the thou in the Thou - I dialogue of life.

Only because you are a listening "Thou", listening as to a command, as much as you are a thinking Ego, can you be a person. He who has not listened cannot think.¹¹

Soul is my relation to the "not-me" part of me created out of the whole past and future of the world. Soul points to before, after, and beyond life. Finally it is the response to the reality of death. It is the response to the death urge. Soul related to the NO's of concrete situation. Soul relates to the repelling crisis of life out of which the cry for justice explodes and is called God's wrath. The soul relates actively to the wholly-other which the self is always talking about. Soul says yes to the fears and threats of life and stands joyfully while being seared by raw reality. Poverty, chastity, and obedience, the exercise of the soul, detach man from the things of this world so that man has a clear view of what he really is: utter freedom. Soul is listening and obedient, searching for the Will of the Father. The soul relates to time and history like a brother. The soul is eschatological and universal, concerned only with the moment as the moment is transparent to all. The soul lives on after death.

The self is man's spirit deciding in event. Self is authenticity in the moment. It is powered by the fascination of life. Man as self relates to every event in the mode of uncertain decision. As self, man is utterly unique and significant. Self relates to the compelling experiences of life which birth mercy called God's compassion. Man creates in total risk as he dares paint the mask of God. Meditation, contemplation, and prayer, the exercises of the self have the fine edge of decision. Self is exposed, audacious, and particular. Self lives only in the interval of existence between birth and death.

Both self and soul are man's relationships to the concrete experiences of life. Man generally, though not always, says yes to the compelling fascinating experiences and no to the fearful, wrathful experiences. This is sin. Christianity relates the Word that life is all about saying yes to both kinds of experiences, the totality of life. This runs contrary to our feelings and our thoughts. The activity of the Holy Spirit brings about the paradoxical union of soul as surrender and self as risk in the cruciform reality. Life becomes transparent to utter mystery and man sees himself finally as nothing but complete absurd freedom.

For the remainder of the chapter we will look more carefully at the questions, first considering the soul through the eyes of a doctrine of God and the question of freedom and obedience. Secondly, we will consider the question of spirit in history as we articulate the question of corporateness and finally deal with implications as regards religious life today. Out of the context of the spirit as surrender and risk we can come to new clarity on men as creators of history.

The Solitary Religious: Freedom in Obedience

St. Francis has forced us to restate and develop a new point of view from which to appropriate man's spirit. The radical religious forces us to regain sensitivity for the religious paradox. The Word in history which unites crucifixion and resurrection into one event requires new grammar as well as a new process of thinking. One way of getting clearer on the articulation of Spirit is to view the modern theological struggle again.

Most deeply, the modern era has left man struggling for an

awareness of God. Nobody doubted that the "Death of God" theologians and renegade priests were pointing to a reality in the life of many secular men. The shock came at grasping the abyss that was being pointed to. David Woodyard pulls together many of the current attempts to look at this problem in his book The Opaqueness of God. He sees the situation to be a result of the secular spirit of our time.

The more modest claim would be that man neither intuitively nor reflectively is disposed to respond to his lived experience in the framework of a theistic affirmation. . . . The more radical claim would be that man's responses to reality, meaning, and truth are in self-contained, self-explanatory, and self-enclosed terms. The category of transcendence is inherently alien to the contemporary sensibility. . . . Nothing in our lived experience prepares us or enables us to be responsive to the question of God. Whatever is not self-evident is non-existent.¹²

Woodyard continues to describe the despair of the modern man in terms of autonomous isolation. The psychological and sociological situation that was pointed to in the first chapter seems to support him.

Modern man experiences himself as "on his own;" any authority or support beyond history is inconceivable. Modern man experiences himself as the determiner of existence, the creator of values, and the source of meaning; none of this can have the character of a gift from beyond the human horizon.¹³

But we are no longer modern men. We are moving into the post-modern age. The post-modern man raises the question of God much like Job did. He lives in the utter awareness of human suffering, not at all self-evident and self-determined, and asks why? John S. Dunne offers a helpful articulation of this problem while at the same time points towards some theological grounding for the distinction of self and soul. He associates the soul with the dark forces in men that point to the before and after of life as well as the hiddenness of God. The modern man sees the self as a splotch of brightness in a sea of darkness. This

was the dead God of the 19th Century. The 20th Century is waiting for God.

The soul that waits for God in the twentieth century is like the soul that sought union with the hidden God in the sixteenth. It is a soul that loves the darkness that lies ahead of life; it passes into that darkness by detachment and purgation from the "self" which has become so central in modern life and thought; and it waits to meet the dark God concealed in death and the future.¹⁴

The turning in the 20th Century must involve the return to interest in the realm of before and after life, time, and history. Raising the possibility of soul as the stirring of man in this century requires us to look at the dark domain of God with new eyes.

We defined the "self" as that principle in man that loves the brightness of life itself, and we defined the soul as that which loves the darkness behind and ahead. To distribute the light and darkness this way, however, is to speak from the standpoint of the self. They would be reversed from the standpoint of the soul. The kind of thinking that is commonly associated with the name "existentialism" has the self as its point of reference. Existence is luminous for this viewpoint, while being is a surrounding darkness. The reverse of this sort of thinking makes existence a kind of shadow cast by the brightness of being. Such thinking probably has the soul as its implicit point of reference, for the soul, as we are conceiving it, loves being just as the self loves existence.¹⁵

Dunne's insights seem to be the gift of a Roman Catholic theologian and the symbol for the gifts of Catholicism that Protestants in the future may appropriate. The self is losing its sense of control but that becomes a positive movement enabling us to recover the sense of soul.

The problem is in recovering an awareness of God, talking about a nearness or personal presence. Jesus' authority came from his nearness to God. We seem to come close to this kind of understanding with the idea of authenticity. The awareness of God must be in everyday life.

It is a deep consciousness of concrete reality, not "other-than" reality.

The most impressive attempts to do this recently come from those who begin with future as the locus of revelation. Wolfhart Pannenberg has been most helpful. We can vividly experience future coming at us. We all live in vision of what will happen. We make plans and predictions. Yet future becoming present acts as both judge over our plans and redeemer of our hopes. Future is creation. The future breaks in upon us demanding that we live in our concrete situation. Most of the time, we don't want to live in these situations. Man wanting it to be some other way than the way it is, is in sin, in a state of rebellion. This is not an ethical but an ontological statement. God is not the situation, He is the power of the future that creates history. The mystery behind history becomes then the source of all history both past and present as all moments have the same eschatological future. Naming that reality God is then calling that reality the final reality or making the faith statement that the mystery of the future is the creator of my creatureliness as well as everything else. It takes priority over all the processes of my "self" such as social responsibility, rational moral systems, and even the ability to weigh up alternative possibilities of action. Modern man has not so much lost God as he has become polytheistic and living before many gods, such as job, family, status, etc. We must recover the sense of ultimacy but not in the sense of vagueness or abstraction.

God's word is always spoken from the future back into the times, calling us out of the past to incarnate the one thing needful in the unique present.¹⁶

It is within the discussion of eschatology and the Kingdom of God that man is freed to see again the mystery, fear, and fascination behind all existence. The Kingdom of God is not ethical but eschatological.

Because of embarrassment concerning the radical nature of Jesus words about the Kingdom of God, Pannenberg explains the misleading tendencies of Bultmann and the younger Barth.

The intention of Jesus was an embarrassment, for it was all too obvious that his expectation of a cosmic revolution in the near future had been illusory. So theologians focused on Jesus' words about the presence of the Kingdom of God now. And where Jesus' words about the future have a clearly temporal meaning, these were modified by means of Christological or anthropological interpretations. No longer was the eschatological reality to be worked for in the future.¹⁷

God's death in the 19th Century was a death of a God that was the maker of the past, but a new awareness of ultimacy requires a sense of meaning that includes all history and the whole world.

These assumptions show that no one can open his mouth in this world without implying belief in an identity of meaning: for the world as created in the past, for the end of time as inviting us to bring it about, and for the present opportunity of fellowship to realize that end. And faith in this identity of meaning, for death, birth and consciousness, i.e. for end, beginning, and our own present in between, is faith in the living God, who gives new commands from moment to moment, yet is one from eternity to eternity. He alone can satisfy man's deepest need, to lead a meaningful life.¹⁸

Rosenstock-Huessy helps us avoid the trap of referring to God in reduced jargon of future, by holding up the comprehensive past and the intentional present as grasping the total experience and significance of life.

Man's spirit is related to the ultimate reality not as formal thereness but in personal relationship. Our awareness of God must be like that of Jesus when he used the word "abba."

Jesus called God, not merely "Father" in formal terms as we translate it, but "abba" the familiar form in Aramaic, an unprecedented usage. What is more, he taught other men to speak of God and to God in this way, as though they too were unconditionally acceptable to God.¹⁹

That part of man's spirit that names the mystery of all past and future, that lives before the comprehensive, futuristic, and intentional is the

soul of man. The soul cries out "abba" or "Daddy" or "Papa" and stands fascinated and afraid before the warmth of being.

With this in mind we can return to some sense of understanding of what past times have called the sovereignty of God. The classical book that served to recover for our time the sense of utter sovereignty was Rudolph Otto's The Idea of the Holy. He phenomenologically works through fascination, dread, and awe and invents his own word for this experience, the numen. The Holy for Otto is this experience of numen given rational significance by a community of faith.

For the religious conception in the notion of pre-destination is nothing but that "creative consciousness" that self-abasement and annulment of personal strength and claims and achievements in the presence of the transcendent, as such. The numen, overpoweringly experienced, becomes the all-in-all.²⁰

As we become clearer about the possibility of recovering an awareness of God, we can begin to see the relationship of trust and surrender that we speak of as soul. It might be helpful here to recall the paradigm of humanness, Jesus the Christ. We are reminded throughout the New Testament of his authority, e.g., Luke 4. His authority grew precisely from his sense of nearness to God, to the point of being transparent to the Mystery or one with God. He became totally free in his total identification with the source of all creation.

Pannenberg deals with the freedom of Jesus in his book, Jesus, God and Man in terms of his relationship to God and the coming of his Kingdom.

Jesus' dedication to the Father and his mission leaves no room for other possibilities that Jesus could have chosen in independence from God. . . . Jesus' freedom consisted in doing the will of the Father and pursuing his mission.²¹

This relationship of Jesus to God is what it means to be human.

John Dunne offers a profound insight into the future of man's spirit based on the necessary development of self.

When the story of Jesus is told as the story of a self, it has equal and opposite effects. One effect is to profane Jesus, to make him out to be only another man. The other is to hallow man, to suggest that man is capable of being what Jesus was. When it is taken this second way, it becomes a story of man's future. Although ideas of following Christ, imitating him, participating in his divine sonship are all quite traditional, the long centuries of worshipping him have never permitted the thought that man is capable of being what he was. The profaning of Jesus in the modern epoch made it thinkable. The thought was purchased too cheaply, however, by this means. It came to reducing Jesus to something man already is. Only when one gets beyond the profanation of Jesus, by realizing the relationship of his self to his God, does the thought become significant. Then it seems to reveal the deepest and greatest possibilities latent in man. It seems to be the clue to the future of man's spiritual evolution.²²

Man's sin is found in his rebellion against this kind of freedom in obedience.

A man falls into sin and thereby into contradiction against God through his relation to things and men, through his refusal to transcend and thereby to affirm his particular finite situation, (or, more precisely, through insisting upon a supposed interest in others) that, focused on egocentricity, denies the openness to God of just that self.²³

Man is spirit. Man is the possibility of conscious relationship that we have talked about as self and soul, relationship to the uniqueness he is and relationship to the sovereignty of all of existence in history. Man is most deeply not the intellectual, physical, psychological characteristics he has but his ability to be conscious of himself and his world as he relates to them. Modern man has reduced the understanding of spirit to understanding the self. World and history become an obvious determined and contextual framework. By recovering soul as an equally important ontological element as the self, not as an ethical after-thought, we are broken loose from having to confine

salvation only to self-actualization. We can also recover obedience as hearing, being aware of, responding to the will of God. Obedience in other languages, e.g. German, has this possibility already available. Obedience viewed from the relationship of self is submission, but viewed from the relationship of soul it is commitment. The relationship of self is manifest in the dynamic of freedom, and the relationship of soul is manifest in the dynamic of obedience. Christianity speaks through its paradigm to the possibility of their paradoxical unity. The total absolute surrender of self in obedience is nothing other than total absolute freedom. This is the fulfillment of the self and the immortality of the soul.

Reality itself--not the abstract reality of physics, but the full-bodied reality of human life--is cruciform. Our existence is a perpetual suffering and wrestling with conflicting forces, paradoxes, contradictions within and without. By them we are stretched and torn in opposite directions, but through them comes renewal.²⁴

We would correct Rosenstock-Huessy only to say that reality is cruciform from the point of view of the soul but resurrectional from the point of view of the self. They are the same thing, but the emphasis creates an entirely different mood.

The relations of self and soul are the two observable poles of man's consciousness. Both must be present to speak of man's spirit. When man makes manifest the paradoxical unity of self and soul in a concrete situation, he stands in utter freedom as a dead man and is said to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The more man's free decisions speak to the reality of his present finite situation in faith and not rebellion, the more authentic he is and thus the more he speaks with authority. The union of self and soul is not obvious but paradoxical,

but when experienced is most real.

We can now return to St. Francis and begin to grasp the significance and address of his ideal for us today. Poverty, chastity and obedience, the exercises of the soul, were deeply a part of all medieval orders, but St. Francis added something new. His communion with nature and his life of deep joy transformed the soul from the dark mysterious relationship of magic and superstition to an affirmative relationship that deemed all creation as good. Poverty, chastity, and obedience were the cruciform dynamics that embodied joyous communion with world and history as they were manifestations of God's creation will. This was not the joy of "feeling good" about the situation but the joy of resurrectional participation in life as it was, full of mystery and fears, in obedience and trust. As Francis shifted the emphasis of soul from darkness to light, he opened up the possibility of seeing the self as the relationship of creative communication with the source of creation through meditation, contemplation, and prayer. These were the cruciform dynamics of man alone before God that had been articulated in the Reformation and have increasingly dominated religious life in modern times. Resurrection is an important theme in the latest discussions of celebration, hope, and cultural change, but we must be wary that we do not extrapolate modern tradition to view the resurrected man as a super-glorified self living in total freedom of the moment. The resurrected man who has "made it to the other side," lives in the joy of creation and does the will of the Father. The relationship of self has only then been fulfilled. He has joined the March of the world and millions of years. Resurrection is not ignoring or not admitting guilt but is on the other side of guilt conquered through grace.

Rosenstock-Heussy recovers the "name" and "calling forth" as dynamics to hold the becoming of spirit.

A person is not an individual that can think. But a person is an individual who soul has called upon his name and thereby determined the direction of his life. A person is a man who has been given direction.²⁵

I would call spirit what he names person. His comment also pushes us into the important question of the individual and the corporate which can only be dealt with after the discussion of the spirit and its structural dynamic.

The Corporate Religious: Individual in Community

The more we are able to focus on man's soul as a dynamic of man's spirit, related to the self, the more the world takes on new significance. The world for the self is full of impingements, demands and limitations to which one must adjust, but for the soul it is the concrete experience of God's will which demands creative response. The spirit of man reminded of the soul looks at the world in faith, the faith of trust and commitment.

The masses are plunged into night when the word "faith" is made dependent on human will, instead of meaning that God holds us in the palm of his hand. The Greek and Hebrew word for faith means God's faithfulness and trust. . . .

They also teach the "will to believe" in any kind of God or in many gods, instead of in the true God who does not trust in one man or one nation, but in us all, thereby unites us. [sic] . . . Man makes the world work, not pragmatically for his own ends, but as the faithful servant of some higher design and purpose, in honor and valor, with the eyes of the soul wide open.²⁶

Man's consciousness of God's work in time is articulated in history. In this way, history makes radical new sense. History is not past facts but man's present consciousness of the creation of

God's plan. History is information for the future. It is the overlay of consciousness that forms and is formed by our orientation towards the future. Karl Löwith in his disturbingly realistic book Meaning in History treats major attempts at understanding history in western culture from the ancient and Christian sources.

In the Western World the problem of suffering has been faced in two different ways: by the myth of Prometheus and by faith in Christ--the one a rebel, the other a servant. Neither antiquity nor Christianity indulged in the modern illusion that history can be conceived as a progressive evolution which solves the problem of evil by way of elimination.²⁷

While ancient man set out to see the future either through consulting oracles or divine revelation, "modern man does not believe in guidance, either by fate or by providence."²⁸ Löwith calls for a new consideration of the basic elements of the ancient and Christian understanding of history as the beginning of orienting ourselves for the future.

The ultimate reason, however, why "for us" the future remains opaque is not the shortsightedness of our theoretical knowledge but the absence of those religious assumptions which made the future transparent for the ancients.²⁹

The wild relativity in philosophy of history today as seen in Tocqueville, Spengler, and Toynbee can be traced to modern man's empirical point of view.

It is profoundly ambiguous because of their counter-belief in man's responsibility for history through decision and will--a will which is always directed to a future of indeterminate possibilities.³⁰

History has then run into the same dead end the modern age creates for the individual spirit. The great gift of self-consciousness closes itself off in a dark room of empiricism and logical positivism with only computer forecasts and technological hopes to relate to the future. Talking about history on the other side of a recovery of the awareness of God revives our most basic sense of community of corporateness.

History cannot be the sum of past events but the story that shapes our consciousness both past and future. Rosenstock-Huessy uses the paradigm of Jesus dying once yet for all men as the focus point of man's freedom to move in time.

If this is so, all men are men because they face backward and forward at the same time. We are crucified by this fact. Nobody lives in one time at any moment the community re-determines its own past as well as its future. The creation of the Church led to a perpetual renewal of our historical past. The "Renaissance" is only one act in this drama of our era by which all the times are re-enacted when they are needed. Real Man lives between a declared future and a reborn past.³¹

History as we understand it, requires the vision of Revelation. When we live before the radical reality of God, history is being sensitive and responsive to His Will. More and more today we experience the demand for the articulation of a concrete vision of the New Jerusalem. On the other side of the tragedies and alienation of the first two-thirds of the 20th Century, what does the last one-third demand: Rosenstock-Huessy begins his massive account of the history of western man, Out of Revolution, with a paragraph describing the process of history.

Our passions give life to the world. Our collective passions constitute the history of mankind. No political entity can be formed into the steel and concrete of government, frontiers, army and navy, schools and roads, laws and regulations, if people are not swayed out of their rugged individualism into common enterprises, such as war, revolutions, adventure, co-operation, by collective passions. Any political effort must single out the peculiar human passion which, at that moment in history, will create unanimity and coherence among men.³²

Paul Tillich lays out in a systematic fashion the relationship between history, historical consciousness, and man's spirit in Part V of the System, History and the Kingdom of God.

All history-writing is dependent both on actual

occurrences and on their reception by a concrete historical consciousness. There is no history without factual occurrences, and there is no history without the reception and interpretation of factual occurrences by historical consciousness.³³

History is thus directly related to man's conscious intention. Tillich is very hard on any sense of history that would do away with this.

In a historical event, human purposes are the decisive, though not the exclusive, factor. Given institutions and natural conditions are other factors, but only the presence of actions with a purpose makes an event historical. Particular purposes may or may not be actualized, or they may lead to something not intended. . . but the decisive thing is that they are a determining factor in historical events. Processes ³⁴in which no purpose is intended are not historical.

History is created by history-bearing communities which Tillich is very clear to point out have no personal identity of their own but are the collective and representative social function of the individuals of the particular group. However he concedes that "the direct bearers of history are groups rather than individuals, who are only indirect bearers."³⁵

It is in the intention that the spirit of man as self and soul joins the community. The corporate life of the Franciscans was just as offensive to the modern as their individual style. The style they lived was possible and made necessary by their purpose of bringing to the whole world the renewed vision of Christianity as love of God and neighbor. We have already mentioned the breakthrough of the wandering missionary as he related to the changing feudal culture. But the important consideration was that the individual was not in contra-distinction to community as we find ourselves thinking now. The individual was understood in relation to the task and the community was understood in relation to the task. The question of the Franciscan brotherhood was how to more effectively serve

and witness. Corporatedness was not out to destroy man's spirit but to enable St. Francis' spirit to actualize the conscious intention that it was. Stated another way, it was only when being an individual meant being about a mission that corporate style made any sense. "Man, in so far as he sets and pursues purposes, is free."³⁶

Tillich's rugged systematic holds before us the other dimension of history and community. Man transcends the situation by his spirit to create the new. Every event is utterly unique and human consciousness builds its meaning and significance. Nature also creates the new but it is human history that is related to meaning and value.³⁷ Man becomes God's partner in creating history but here modern man has gone too far by losing the sense of the sovereignty of God. The Franciscan moods of humility, gratitude, and compassion are important if we are to stand before man's raw power to turn matter into spirit in faith. Dietrich Bonhoeffer articulates in ethical categories the same thing for our time.

Good, as what is responsible, is performed in ignorance of the good and in the surrender to God of the deed which has become necessary and which is nevertheless, or for that very reason, free; for it is God who sees the heart, who weighs up the deed, and who directs the course of history.³⁸

Man is free as he is bound to all of reality and creative as he participates in creation. The free man of faith became "embodied" in the rule of St. Francis.

With the articulation of the solitary man of faith and the community of faith both related to the mission of love for God and neighbor, we can understand the "two sides of the same coin" and we are no longer forced into the useless struggle between the indicative and imperative theologies. Man's indicative is radical utter freedom and his imperative is obedience to God's will in love and service. If we push hard enough at one side we

come out on the other. Thomas Oden in his account of Bultmann's ethics in the book, Radical Obedience, makes this clear.

Another way of expressing the paradoxical juxtaposition of indicative and imperative is in the formula "no longer" and "not yet," which we discussed earlier. The paradox of eschatological obedience is that the redeemed man is no longer of this world, and yet his reconciled life as a new being is never so complete that it can be looked upon as an accomplished fact.³⁹

Oden is quick to critique Bultmann for his tendency to collapse obedience into pure moment which has tendencies towards anti-nomianism but is deeply spoken to by the re-instatement of religious obedience over against the Enlightenment.

Freedom is the ground of the demand and the demand actualizes freedom.⁴⁰

Once again, the Christian understanding of servant is an ontological category that talks of man's true nature in faith and hold man's spirit as self and soul in juxtaposition. The recovery of soul as man's yes to the will of God has made the word servant come alive again, not as an ethical reduction, but as man's basic nature. St. Francis and the radical religious of all ages are becoming more fascinating to post-modern man, as they are deeply enabling on the long journey we must travel. Ethical systems again make sense as the acting out of man's ontological servanthood and not as some addendum to personal salvation.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

- 1 John S. Dunne, A Search for God in Time and Memory (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 201.
- 2 Ibid., p. 121.
- 3 Friedrich Gogarten, The Reality of Faith: The Problem of Subjectivism in Theology, trans. Carl Michalson and others (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 22.
- 4 Michael Novak, "The Enlightenment is Dead," The Center Magazine, IV (March/April 1971), 13.
- 5 Ibid., p. 19.
- 6 Ibid., p. 19.
- 7 Ibid., p. 19.
- 8 Ibid., p. 20
- 9 Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, I am an Impure Thinker (Norwich, Vermont: Argo Books, Inc., 1970) p. 2.
- 10 Ibid., p. 22.
- 11 Ibid., p. 36.
- 12 David O. Woodyard, The Opaqueness of God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), p. 17
- 13 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
- 14 Dunne, pp. 173-174.
- 15 Dunne, p. 200.
- 16 Rosenstock-Huessy, Future, p. 97.
- 17 Wolfhart Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 52.
- 18 Rosenstock-Huessy, Future, p. 97.
- 19 Dunne, p. 11.
- 20 Rudolph Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 89.

- 21 Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus, God and Man, trans. Lewis L. Williams and Duanee A. Puebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 349.
- 22 Dunne, p. 195.
- 23 Pannenberg, Jesus, p. 353.
- 24 Rosenstock-Heussy, Future, p. 166.
- 25 Rosenstock-Heussy, Impure, p. 49.
- 26 Ibid., p. 29.
- 27 Karl Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 3.
- 28 Ibid, p. 10.
- 29 Ibid., p. 10.
- 30 Ibid., p. 11.
- 31 Rosenstock-Heussy, Future, p. 167.
- 32 Rosenstock-Heussy, Autobiography, p. 3.
- 33 Tillich, III, 301-302.
- 34 Ibid, pp. 302-303.
- 35 Ibid., p. 308.
- 36 Ibid., p. 303.
- 37 Ibid., pp. 303-304.
- 38 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), pp. 217-218.
- 39 Thomas C. Oden, Radical Obedience: The Ethics of Bultmann (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964), p. 96.
- 40 Ibid., p. 101.
- 41 Harvey Cox, The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 90-91.

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