

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

On the way, Grace and Peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Most of you, I am sure, are aware that the dynamic within the established church that I represent is comprised of the hardened, old revolutionaries within the structures of the church which are a part of that larger and varied body known as the renewal force of the 20th century. I like to look upon such gatherings as this one and they are about the only thing I'm interested in any more because they represent the local parish. I like to look upon these gatherings as the moment in which the movemental dimension of the historic church reports to the established dynamic of the historical church and such occasions to deliver accountability are not always easy to find. So I want to take advantage of this gathering and report up on the 55 years that now the renewal of the church in so many different ways has been going on in our century. And I want to try to pull out what I think has been the heart of the artichoke, relative to these past 55 years. This I would like to put on the mantle of the prophet and say what I think is going to happen in the next 50 years, from the vantage point of the movemental dynamic of the church.

On July 1st, our particular thrust has been in being for 20 years. That's a long time. The highway of the last 50 years is littered with the debris of this little outfit and that little outfit who had their own little thing happening outside the church that they wanted to do, not that God has not gleaned a harvest from these, who finally thought they could renew the church from outside the church. Outside a fanatic loyalty and devotion and love for the church, sooner or later, they all have fallen by the wayside. Anyway, as I thought in terms of our own group in the next 20 years and what it might look like, I was forced to do, for myself at least, this task of trying to get a hold of what has happened up to this moment. And so I want, very quickly, to do that.

It's pretty obvious, I suppose, to those in this room, that the most important thing that has happened in this moment of church renewal, is the recovery of the Christ figure. No sentiment here, no piouisty, no religion. In our day, we grasp, afresh, that the Christ happening was a human happening. And it was a happening...not an idea that was superimposed upon an ex-God, intellectual world. The Christ happening was a happening that happened to people and turned their lives upside down. It gave them a new posture toward existence itself.

I don't know whether this is quite as astounding to you as maybe it ought to be, or I believe it will be, before another 20 years have passed. The centrality of the Christ figure has been recovered for our time and then in the midst of that recovery, a kind of radicalizing has taken place in which the church has discovered that the Christ happening is actually the disclosure of raw humanness in itself. Whatever else, the Christ happening is, it is that happening in which a person becomes an authentic individual, in which he becomes authentically human.

Now, I repeat again, for most of the people sitting in your pews, at least, it's going to take 20 years for them to realize that that's happened in our lifetime. When they do understand that it happened, they are going to understand that it happened along time before they became aware of it. In the one sense, when you say that, you've said everything.

But, let me go on. The next accomplishment in terms of church renewal is rather obvious. That the church has forged for itself, a brand new operating image. Namely, that of MISSION. Now, I just returned from the General Conference of the church of which I'm a part, the Methodist. And I sat there a little smugly, but really, very, very, very delighted, as I heard coming off of that platform for the princes of the church, the things that they wanted to hang and quarter the movemental forces for 20 years ago. I say that with a little smugness, but, fundamentally, just a deep rejoicing. They were hurling this image of mission

out across that sea of faces as it were just common jargon.

But, you and I need to be filled with glory, I believe, recollecting the fact that that has been forged in your lifetime. The church not grasping, any more, really its function in the civilizing process; forging a brand new image that she was here, not as having a mission - no, no, no...that's the sickness of the church - but grasping herself as mission to the civilizing process. And, in the midst of this unbelievable happening, a radical dimension also was exposed and, it seems to me, it was something like this: the church grasping that she mission saw that history is not history without the people of God.

Now, I want to say that again. Some people have suggested that in our day the church is finished. But what the church finally saw is that the church cannot be finished. The rhetoric of "the Gates of Hell shall not prevail" is not some kind of abstract poetry, but a way of articulating just the way it is in history. History is not history save those people who dare to call into question what is and build the vision of what can be. God's people were there at the very dawn of history and God's people shall be there when history is all wrapped up. And no force and no authority can ever wrong this reality that I articulated.

Now, maybe you are not quite like I am, but when I was as young as some of you, I hunched my shoulders a bit, relative to being a part of the church. I am trying to communicate to you that, even though now I am past sixty, my shoulders feel like they are very square. I am prouder of being a part of the church of Jesus Christ at this hour in history than I have ever been before.

Now, a third thing that has happened in these fifty years that you are will aware of, has to do with ecumenism and praise the lord for these broad designs of ecumenicity that have come, such as Vatican II and the World Council and the coming together of various denominations and sects. That's important and it is a manifestation of the ecumenism I am speaking of, but that only just barely touches the surface, where the real ecumenism that is going to change the total life of the church has happened and is happening is on the grass-roots.

Now I happen to be a Methodist and you take your own communion and think for a moment. I no longer care, like my grandfather or grandmother did, about what it means to be a Methodist. I do not say that is good or bad...I say that is just the way it is. More important, as I work with laymen and have for many years, that this is even further true in terms of their own life. There has been a coming together on the grassroots level that is simply astounding.

I think of our local congregation experiment in which you have Roman Catholics and Lutherans and Methodists and Baptists, all in one Galaxy, and you can hardly tell the difference between them in terms of what they are out to see happen within the church. It makes my heart soar something not like a hawk but an eagle.

But we haven't gotten to the radical dimension that has happened here, and this is a little harder for me to get said. Ever since World War II, there has been a return to nationalism or the nationalistic spirit in many different ways. We have become nations anew; we have become areas of the world anew - the non-West, the third World. The woman have become women, the black man has become a black man and forced the white man to become a white man. Young ones have become young and forced the old ones to be the elders.

What has happened, in terms of this new sense of ecumenism, the whole wide world of what that means, is what I call the new essentialism. That is, we have penetrated through the very depth of humanness itself.

I am ashamed to tell you that it has only been in recent times, as old as I am, that it became clear to me that I was not first delivered into this world into a family.

I was not first delivered into a nation, I was not first delivered into a church or to a sect, I was not first delivered into whiteness or blackness. I was pulled out - you women, be gentle with me here - out of the womb of an animal. I belong first of all to humanity and only secondly to my family and to my nation.

You would have thought that a man would have learned that when he was much younger that I am. That illustrated this sense in which it has happened in the church. This sense all over again that we are, first of all (no sentiment here, no pioucity here) discovering that we are Man. Period. And, out of that, you watch it, is going to come the new practical, concrete forms of the sense of the universality of the church of tomorrow.

The next thing I want to point to is the disciplined community. Church renewal has instigated a fresh awareness that whatever else a man of the spirit is, he is a disciplined human being. In our early work, it slowly became clear that if any man kept on doing his own little thing, he might as well get up in the morning. In this complex, massive globe alone, you could do nothing. I say that to some of my younger colleagues, "if you think that all by yourself what you are doing in your little, old parish is important, you might as well sleep." Only if you join hands with this one and this one and this one and this one...and those invisible ones who care in all quarters of this globe that some way or another, only through corporateness do you have the foggiest chance of accomplishing anything within the church of our day or within the society of our time.

And I mean corporateness. And where my own limited creativity is shoved into a corporate thrust rather than into something that can satisfy my own ego or get for me certain kinds of smaller or larger recognitions. Church renewal means the discovery, once again, that whatever else the rest of society may be, the church is corporate. Not corporate out of any pious sense, but corporate out of necessity, relative to the mission. As long, I suppose, as the church really has a mission, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ except the mission of preserving herself in being. Corporateness was not essential and even the memory of it faded away. I have been looking at the Roman brothers here, but you Protestants, you have been so undisciplined for so long, you forget that at the very beginning of your communions, there was discipline, because there was a job to be done in the world.

Now, this need for corporateness has brought a new awareness into the church. You wonder how we forget these things. The man of faith is a man who is disciplined and lives out of his own interior resources. One of the greatest tragedies of the whole piagur of so-called pastoral counseling within our church is that, and God bless it it has to be, it teaches people to have to lean on somebody else in order to waddle to the grave. But to do the task of the church there has to be--I like the figure which I got originally from the first chapter of Jeremiah - IRON MEN - who submit to no external discipline, but have internalized discipline and therefore can submit to any discipline necessary to get a task done.

When I think in this area I think of Archbishop LeQuan in Taiwan, one of our sponsors in the Catholic church there, who called me into his office one time and he said, "You know the biggest problem I have here?", (and this is something for an Archbishop to say)"is that the religious and the clergy are more and more thinking that their religious discipline is not important." Now whether he be right or wrong, I sort of smiled inside because the radical dimension of the recovery of corporateness and discipline is the recovery of the holy life. Its been a long time in Protestant circles, since we knew there was such a thing as the holy life, let alone engaged in religious exercises as disciplined people.

The refreshing thing for me there is that the exercises are not for the sake of the monk developing pious character, but for the sake of the discipline that enables the corporateness. That enables the task of the church which is to build a whole new vehicle for society.

The last thing, and church renewal didn't start out with this last thing, is the recovery of what I call the "other world." As a matter of fact, I think that any group who would move head on to recover the spiritual dimension of life as the real dimension of existence, would never find that realm. The renewal movement in our day stumbles upon the other world. I'm not talking here about what's just happening within the formal church, it's happening in our world. The renewal of the church is the catalytic force of this when they're beholding the other world that is always in the midst of this one. But is other than it.

Sometimes I smile, as I behold what I'm trying to describe. I think of that movie when I was a boy... The Lost World... was that the name of it?... there in the Amazon... where the dinosaurs run, and so on. Well this discovery--and you'll not be able to read a book of a decent article anymore--you watch from now on--that you won't see it indicated.

Seems to me that this other world, in the midst of this one, has been lost and you Protestants listen and listen well. The so called Protestant principle was necessary, and was important, and in Vatican II they took it into themselves. That, in itself, made us aware that we lost what Tillich called "the Catholic substance," and it's been lost for 500 years, at least to those of us who are Protestants and it's lost for you too.

But this other world. I say if we knew enough about it to even to begin to plot a bit of it's topography. I'll not bore you with the details, but it's the mystery that never goes away. The awareness of which is awe itself, and with terrible dread, and fascinating desire, at the same time, out of which and only out of which comes the dawn of consciousness itself. Consciousness of consciousness is born and nurtured only in the encounter with the mystery, the subjective side of which is awe. Which itself comes to you as objective as if now awe ever exists in you but you exist in awe. This other land, the land of the mystery, which only exists in the midst of the every-daynesses of life is being beheld anew.

It's also the realm of freedom. I like to say that this comes to me, in terms of understanding that I have to keep my own conscience. It's been a hard thing for my wife to understand that I keep my own conscience and no one can keep my ~~st~~ for me... not my wife, not my family, no my nation, no my church... but I alone must keep my own conscience. This is the other realm, the realm of God in the midst of this realm. It's the understanding that you are responsible not to the world. I am not responsible to my wife, finally, I am not responsible to my nation, finally, I am not responsible to my children, finally, to my church, finally; I am responsible to the mystery. I am responsible to God. And when I get to heaven (if you'll allow me that mythology) they're not going to ask me about whether or not my wife approved of me, or you approved of me.

Do you understand that this world has been lost, but now it's being found? And then the flip of that in the other world, the man who is responsible only to God, discovers then that he's responsible for the world. And that's for the whole wide world. The man who lives in the realm of the spirit... and this is an indicative... there's no imperative in what I'm talking about... INDICATIVE... He becomes responsible for Africa, Russia, China, Europe and India. He is responsible for them. He is no longer responsible simply to his children. (If you hear this in the imperative, close your ears, this is the indicative.) He's responsible for all children. We're just about to grasp once again what Christian love is, not human love, in which I seek for your approval and you seek for mine.

This kind of responsibility for the world has to do with all of history. The man in the other world knows that he's all that has ever been, and He's responsible for all that's ever happened. He takes upon himself the tragedy and suffering of all of history. He knows that he is responsible for the future. In the other world, you can try to say "I can't do anything, cause I am only one," but no noise comes out. That's what you say when you live in this world. In the other world you're responsible as if you were the only one.

Lastly, in this other world that we've stumbled onto, you've discovered there aren't any problems. I don't know how you are going to get said for all time words like "the peace that passes the capacity of man to comprehend" which is not the peace of this world that you and I give our right arm for. Or the joy which is literally unspeakable and full of glory, how do you get that said? Well we've discovered in this other world that you haven't got any problems.

Not too long ago I said to a group of people that I can't remember when the last time I had a personal problem. You should have seen that woman across from me come unglued. But you see that's the truth. Problems have to do with final attachment to wives, families, and children, and nations and churches and honor and success. And in the other world your attachment is finally to God.

There are no problems, you've got a contradiction, and the contradiction is Satan. Whoever invented that was a genius. But Satan is drawing all the complexities into himself. He guards the other realm to keep you from going in there. It comes down to the issue of your authority. I wonder if you grasp that. Paul said in the sixth chapter of 2nd Corinthians "my sure defense, my only weapon is a life of integrity." I could see the tail of Satan rise at a statement as that. No more problems.

Now I'll do the future quickly. That's the past. Oh Boy. I want to do the future in two ways. Very quickly, I just name them off. The next 20 years relative to the paramount pull in the establishment itself--which is just like one.

First of all, there is going to be and there already is marriage between the established dynamic and the movemental dynamic. The very fact that we are here is indicative that this has already happened. And there is humiliation to it, of course, because of mother church married the child she didn't want. You know quite finally. And then the movemental force is embarrassed because what happens in the marriage is not himself. Do you understand that? Without dreams of the movemental church, the new church can't be. But the new church will never be the dreams of the revolutionaries. The new church comes authentically out of the marriage of the movemental church and the established church. The form will come there. You watch for that place if you want to get a preview of the new sociological forms of the church.

Secondly, there will be a reactualization of practical universality in the church. I don't know quite how to spell that out, but this nationalism, what happened after WWII, got into the church. It even got into the Catholic church. But you see it more in the Protestant church in which the Canon in Japan was founded the National Church of Japan. I want to be very kind, but I mean they're in trouble. Do you understand that the Church of Jesus Christ never was and never can be national? Do you understand that there is not such a thing as the black church? There cannot be, there never has been. That is not what the church is.

One of the things that excites me these days is that the business community has the only authentic international community, I think, in the world today. With all its combined influences they are taking over that dimension of what it means to be the church. Let all hell break loose, the church is universal. Oh, one of the fantastic things the Roman Catholic church has is that up until almost this time, they have maintained that. If you ask me where I would have feared for Romanism, I would have fear about decentralization. Too much of that and you will be out of touch with what is going to happen. I happen to be a Methodist, as I said. In my recent years, the bureaucratic structures have presided over the disintegration of world Methodism. And interestingly, the movemental church is out demonstrating that that isn't necessary at all. Now, I'm not making a case for the going-on-ness of Methodism but somebody is going to be embarrassed.

Third, there is going to be a re-appropriation of missiology. It has been a long time since there has been real tactical thinking. Oh, in the early church, look at their tactics. In order to conquer the world, they built the great strongholds. They built one in Rome, in Constantinople, in Antioch, in Jerusalem and Alexandria... five of them. They spread out like that. And then they put a dynamic force, monasticism, into it. Not the latter. Roman Catholic monasticism, this was early monasticism in which there was not this order and that order... there was the order of monasticism. I wish I had time to talk about this, anyway. This was the generating force which enabled these strongholds to reach out and they literally conquered the world.

Sometimes you feel psychotic about even thinking that the little old shriveled up church really could re-create the social vehicle to further the humanization of mankind. But then you look at the early church. It will not be done by thinking about abstract goals, but concrete tactics. I'd like to go on with that. You'll find this happening in the future.

Then, next is the future of the established church is a metamorphosis in pluriformity within the church. The church will always have a pluriform dynamic. I was at a Presbyterian board meeting up here, not too many months ago. Some board member, when I asked him what he thought he was really out to do said, "to get the Presbyterian denomination out of existence as soon as possible." Now the Presbyterians ought to have shot this man before morning. This man is naive... that is why you should shoot him, not because he is naughty. To put a naive man at the helm of a vessel is to risk thousands of lives. That's why you ~~xxx~~ shoot him. And you shoot him before dawn. The pluriform dimension will always be there in the church. It has to do with the unrepeatable uniqueness of an individual... like myself.

But the pluriformity of the church takes many faces. The Roman church solved that with your various religious orders. And something is happening in the midst of those and something is happening to the denominations. So it is not going to be a cutting off of denominations, as if there's going to be one single church. If you ~~were~~ create a single church, within it you'll find the pluriform dynamic before the day after tomorrow. It's a part of what life is. We are not sheep in the sense that I am using that. I would like to go into somewhat of the form, but I won't. There is going to be a metamorphosis. A pluriformity, not a cutting off of it.

Lastly, there is going to be what I call a re-assertion of social individual symbolism. In brief, that means the whole idea of the cleric and the religious is going to be re-constituted. Now don't think you're going to get rid of it because it is going to be re-constituted. I suspect that in the future, there will not be such things as simply individual clergy, but there will be cadres. There will be groups that constitute the clergy in any given situation.

Now, very quickly, where is the movemental church going to go? You have to realize that, in many ways, church renewal is finished. And renewal forces ought to turn in their weapons. As of immediately. For they started out to ~~see~~ make the church aware and the church is aware. And, if that is done, then they are finished. But about the time you see that job is done, then you see another job that has to be done. And you could all turn in your guns but somebody else would have to pick them up. March on! If you've got disciplined soldiers, then you march, but this time you march hand in hand with the awakened edge.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ This touches into the "other world" and religious discipline. Without being deeply spiritually grounded, this cannot happen. Instead of spending less of your time training certain people, you are going to have to spend more time in the future.

Secondly, there is a new brand of person who is missionally dedicated in the sense of finding almost a new kind of a vocation. His job is in not to come off in history but to see that history, in his time, comes off. That is going to define your new revolutionary.

The third characteristic of this person is that he's going to be corporate. The movemental edge of the church, as she moves in the next 20 years, cannot possibly be anything else but corporate. And God bless somebody who cannot be corporate, but they are going to be useless in terms of the forces required in the renewal of the church.

And these people have to be skilled. I mean, they can be laymen or they can be clergymen, but they have to be highly skilled. I mean, they ~~may~~ have to know the dynamics of the church. They have to know the times in which they live. They have to know the methodologies, the intellectual methodologies. They have to know the methodologies for social change. They have to know the methodologies of human motivation.

Lastly, this person, or these people, have got to be global pioneers. These are the ones who are going to renew the local congregation. These are the ones who are going to inspire and pioneer the new social vehicle that has to come into being. These are the ones who are going to forge the new, elite troops, of service to the church anywhere. I mean, by that term, the religious orders without which this is not going to happen.

Now I call upon the established church to foster and support the movemental forces in the next 40 years; both in terms of authorization and in terms of facilities and material enablement. Then I ~~will~~ call upon the movemental church to grasp afresh what the renewal forces in the past grasped; that they are to be never anything more than the servants of the church. I am a friend of Ignatius Kopley. When his order put itself before the established church, it was to go anywhere, at any time, to do any job that was necessary for the established church to fulfill her God given mission in civilization.