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# ABSOLUTION FOR THE CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

Collegium, October 21, 1969

--by Joseph W. Matthews

I learned just recently that a colleague at the New York City religious House works at the Board of Missions. One of the things he has reported is that the people on the Mission Board of the Methodist Church are quiet and in despair. This underscores for me the intuition that the established Church is in need of absolution. And that, finally, the only people who can provide that for the established Church is the movemental church.

I've wondered, as I'm sure many of you have, just how this was done in the whole sweep of history. For if the Church is to be the dynamic among the latent church, the established church, and the movemental church, then the movemental church has been providing this aspect of the dynamic from the very beginning of the People of God, or of the League. Though the movemental church sometimes is hidden--and in terms of the eyes of the world and the other dynamics of the church, non-existent--there are particular times when the movemental church actually pronounces absolution. More and more I'm convinced this is not done by anything said, but by action, which is fundamentally being.

I'm not quite clear on how to get this said, but in the times of crisis when the established church is in despair, then the movemental church, in the economy of God, becomes overt; and it becomes overt in a way that is not observable in the sense of being able to say, "Lo, here! Lo, there!" I've oftentimes said that I thought Vatican II really started in the midst of Vatican I in the 1870's. But in the 70's and the '80's, and even the first part of this century, no one could observe the movemental arm within the Roman Catholic Church that finally produced Vatican II. When the movement, or the movemental church, begins to emerge from underground or out of the eternal womb of the established church, there comes a time in which it has to raise a flag and make itself known. There comes a time in which it has to make a decision about itself; to begin to make itself a part of the establishment, though that might take 500 years, 100 years, 1,000 years. And in that move, overtly making itself a part of the establishment, it pronounces absolution upon the establishment.

This, I think, is what is behind our slow move to become the Order. Our timetable calls for it--no one knows whether or not such timetables are the way God intends history to move--but our timetable calls for that to happen in 1972. There is little doubt that things have happened in the world, particularly in the established church, that cause one to reflect upon the fact that maybe that time line needs to be speeded up--not necessarily any kind of a final move in this direction, but beginning to put up the flag.

I want to emphasize that what I suggested previously as the fundamental edge of the spirit problem in our time, in our particular moment, is the death-urge.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps I ought to repeat that the death-urge as a spirit problem is never when things are collapsing. When the structured world in which you and I live is going to pieces, then is manifest the life-urge. That is only spiritualized or radicalized when you stick your fist through it and embrace your death. Now that twist is just crucial--I want to reemphasize that.<sup>3</sup> When the death-urge comes when life is filled full, and you stick your fist through the death-urge, there you find the life-urge. That dynamic is within the whole movemental dimension of the Church, to the degree

1. Excerpts from context for Move 222.
2. Refer to Thanatos and Eros, Collegium 9/29/69.
3. Clarifies section in Thanatos and Eros; see par. 4, p. 1.

that it is authentic in reflecting at any given time the mood of mankind at large. One cannot say that to themselves too frequently. This is one thing meant by trusting your intuitions--that the movemental arm of the Church is a reflection of the spirit-mood of man at large inside and outside the Church at any given time.

In order to receive itself in history afresh, the establishment is now in need of the sign being raised by the movement in the world manifesting its intention to become a part of the establishment for the next thousand years. That's sticking your fist through the death-urge and finding life. It is always the red-hot life of possibility.

The new missionary movement has already taken place in the world. It is pretty obvious that the great century of the Church--the 19th century, which took the gospel geographically to the whole world--is now gone. That is, of course, part of the despair of the establishment. But the spirit man of the world has been raised up afresh, and the spirit movement within the dynamic of the People of God has meant spirit men throughout the whole world. This is why our international program has moved forward with such great rapidity. I do not think that 10 or 15 years ago anyone could have dreamed of the possibilities at hand. Certainly the mission boards of the various denominations in this country could never have dreamed of it; for in the last 20 years they saw the handwriting upon the wall--they saw the end of the great missionary decade that put a capstone upon the 19th century.

Now, the only thing that could stop us from moving forward to create a spirit movement across the world is, first of all, forces, and second, funds. With the increased overseas work, the hope for three international academics, the return to the local congregation (Return: Ecclesia), and the increased momentum of the 5th City work, the demand for increased funding is with us.

Within Development there needs to be a full-fledged project-producing body of people; and, what Pierce called the image-makers within our group. They have got to be backed up now by a broad research division. You can see that if that happens, then the management and finances of our group must become an independent division in itself, with more people placed within that body.

The time has also come when we must build a global board--a board of consultants out of the civil forces and the Church forces across the world. Without that, the kind of momentum our program has taken cannot really be realized.