

Presidium

SPIRIT ANALYSIS OF THE MOVEMENT:
 "THOSE WHO WAIT ON THE LORD"

The Shock of Eternal Demand		Waiting on the Lord					
		Spirit Laziness		Sleepy Weakness		Heroic Failure	
1	17	18	28	29	36	37	59

1. Do you remember the Bob Dylan song about the man who was wandering through the world and said that a hard rain was going to fall. I don't know whether rain means the final judgment, or whether it means the final baptism, but I always sort of liked rain on the other side of finding it uncomfortable.

2. Up to this point in time, the masses of mankind have nestled securely in their own Ur. Most men did not achieve the kind of self consciousness that now is common. You had Moses stick his head up and Jeremiah, Jesus, Paul, Augustine, Buddha, and Confucius. They rose to a height in the midst of the low level of self-consciousness and returned to enable a few others to take that kind of a depth journey and to enable a crucial turn in history. But until this hour, the masses of mankind have probably never achieved the depth of self-consciousness that any one of these figures represent.

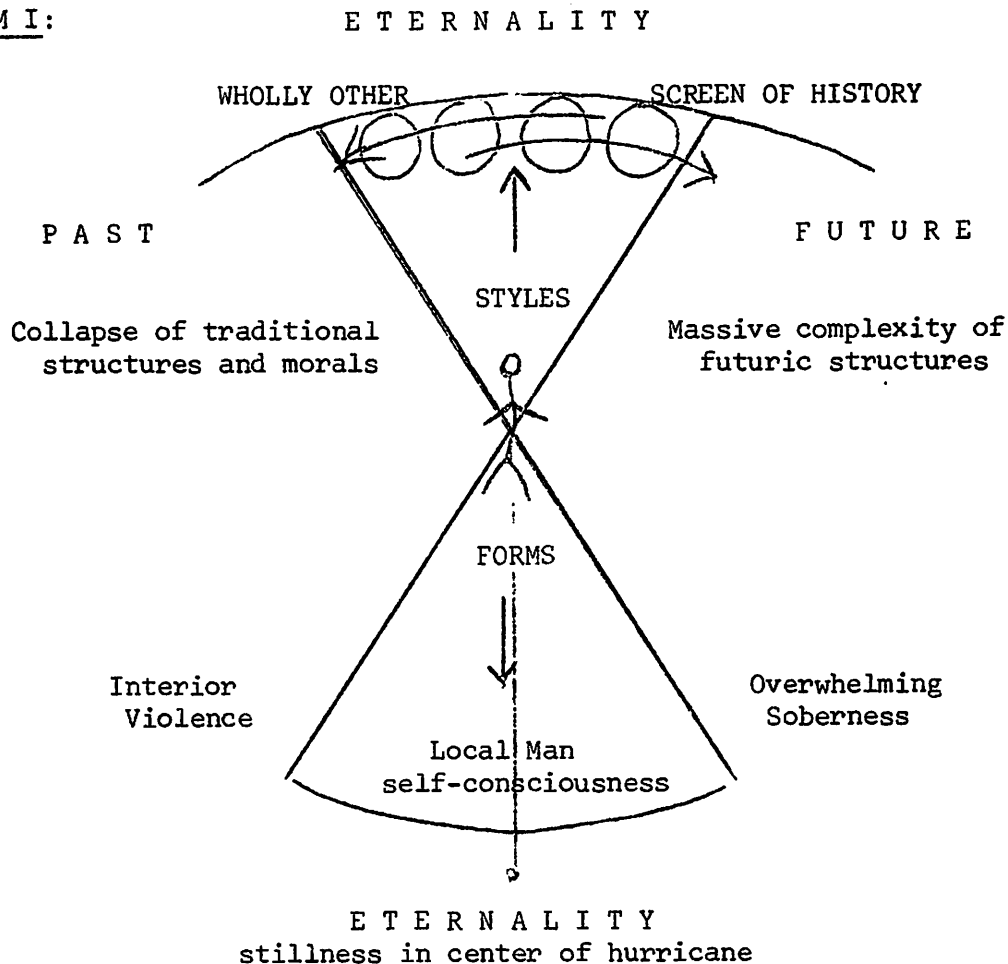
3. But today, as the global ur cultures clash over against one another like two violent symbols, every single atom that makes up those Ur cultures has to take a journey. Therefore local man, the last fat lady on the planet earth, is on a spirit trip just as profoundly as anybody else who might grasp themselves to be on a spirit trip. If you think of each one of those urs also banging over against the common future, a future that is so radical that you can't handle it without a complete modification of your whole life, again, you get the feel of why local man is being jarred, and not just some local men. Never before in history have men at large been forced to such heights of self consciousness. And in the midst of that, they have to grasp new forms for getting ahold of that self consciousness.

4. The six urs are real historical cultures that are banging over against one another and over against the future. But the banging does not take place only out there. It takes place also down inside of the selfconsciousness of each local man. That is the terrifying thing about our time, this wild self consciousness that everybody has to deal with. Wherever you go you run into people who are coming to and staring with wide eyes into their times. The incredible imperative is upon any responsible man to attempt to give form to this self consciousness that is breaking loose, to give people a chance to relate to it. Human beings are thrown out into a wild new world they never head of. They don't have a map, they don't have any way to maneuver out

there--but they are there, and they're just as much there as anyone else.

5. Then, when you lead people into their external life, it's as if all the external ways of relating are shallow and new kinds of style in terms of the externality of life are required of us. What is demanded is a new style that is authentically giving expression, as a poet might give expression, to the deep consciousness that is that man's life; but it must also give expression to the broad historical relationships that are also man's life. It must obediently be the style that fits the external situation. The internal situation is not just your problem. It is the problem of every single human being on the surface of the earth.

DIAGRAM I:



6. If you looked at it in terms of the external reality, you could talk about a collapse of traditional structures and morals or mores, just the fundamental fabric of living. Then as you walk over against the future, there is just a massive complexity. The strange thing about our time is that even though you are experiencing collapse to the bottom, things aren't really collapsed, and there are jet planes flying all over the world, there are buildings going up in all the cities, incredible industrialization and ships sailing back and forth everything is booming. There isn't any slow up of the technological boom, or of the massive complexity. It just gets worse and worse. There are gifts in this, but there is also a destructive potential. What is going to become of us? What's going to happen to man in the midst of this? What kind of new styles are appropriate to it?

7. Now this external situation is internalized in your will. But people attempt to ward it off, and one of the tragedies is that you find people who have built themselves a shield to keep themselves out of the twentieth century. There is no hope of that, of course, and finally you lose; you give up that entire people. Interior violence is a way that some of my colleagues used to describe this. It's as if there are loud voices screaming down there, arguments going on, angry debates, between these gods and those gods.

8. I have been intrigued with this particular psalm ever since it was introduced to me. The psalmist is talking to the gods and telling them about the Lord's power over against the gods. Now remember that when he starts off this psalm the Psalmist is talking to the gods of our time, to the family, to the job, and to the industrial success mechanisms, and so on:

Ascribe to the Lord, you
Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, ascribe to the Lord glory and light
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name;
bow down to the Lord in the splendor of holiness.
The God of glory thunders:
The voice of the Lord echoes over the waters,
the Lord is over the mighty waters.
The voice of the Lord is power.
The voice of the Lord is majesty.
The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars,
The Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon skip like a colt,
Syria like a young wild ox.
The voice of the Lord makes flames of fire burst forth.
The voice of the Lord makes the wilderness writhe in travail,
The voice of the Lord makes the hinds calve
And brings kids early to birth;
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
The Lord is king above the flood,
The Lord has taken his royal seat as king for ever.
The Lord will give strength to his people;
The Lord will bless his people with peace.

9. When you stand over against the future you have just overwhelming soberness. It is a soberness of patiently waiting and dealing with the situation, while in midst of the historical situation man has been driven to the limits of human existence. In his interior being, man is experiencing eternity of power never experienced before, like a violent stillness in the center of a hurricane of spiritual experience. There is a sort of dizziness, and on the other side a merry-go-round of happenings in his life. When we talk about experiencing the other world, it seems to me that you experience it learning at you from the wholly other, and at the same time from history. The other world pounds through the external realities that I'm related to at the same time that it pounds through the interior relationships to which I'm being related to.

10. What has always amazed me is how civilization seems to be on its own journey quarter by quarter. Quarter by quarter everybody else you run into is on the same journey--out in a religious house, in the academy, and at base. Wherever you run into people, the same thing went on. Different humanbeings have a different consciousness about what's going on, but--what's going on is what's going on. Quarter by quarter and hour by hour, externality decides what is going.

to go on and that's what goes on, whether you want it to or not. I always thought you could finally get straight and be really prepared for the next quarter, but quarter after quarter comes thundering in on you as a complete surprise, with little relationship what so ever to the previous quarter.

Fall 1970	Winter 1971	Spring 1971	Summer 1971	Fall 1971
Weakness of Interior man	Creating Style	Pain of Spirit life	Contingency of human action	Shock of Eternal Demand
Live your weakness Ash of Interior life	Live the shedding and invention of powerful roles	Despair and bearing with it	Work diligently and expect setback	Wait on the Lord
<p>plunge into the sensual noble accomplishments descent →</p> <p style="text-align: right;">defiance →</p> <p style="text-align: right;">return</p>				

11. I have the rather rare privilege of being able to sit down at the end of an Academy with a group of sensitive faculty to try to analyze what happened during the quarter. What happened in the fall quarter of 1970 was that man was experiencing weakness. The ashes of his interior life were his problem. How in the world do you live when you are aware of how impotent you are over against what's demanded of us? There was collapse over the fact of experiencing impotency.

12. In the Winter of last year, creating a style in spite of being impotent seemed to be where everybody was struggling. How do you be, in spite of the fact that you are made out of what you are made out of and weak like you are? How do you put on a role that does something in history. How do you shed your old forms of integrity and just build a new role right in the breach of the situation and go out there and play it? Everybody was struggling in some way with that.

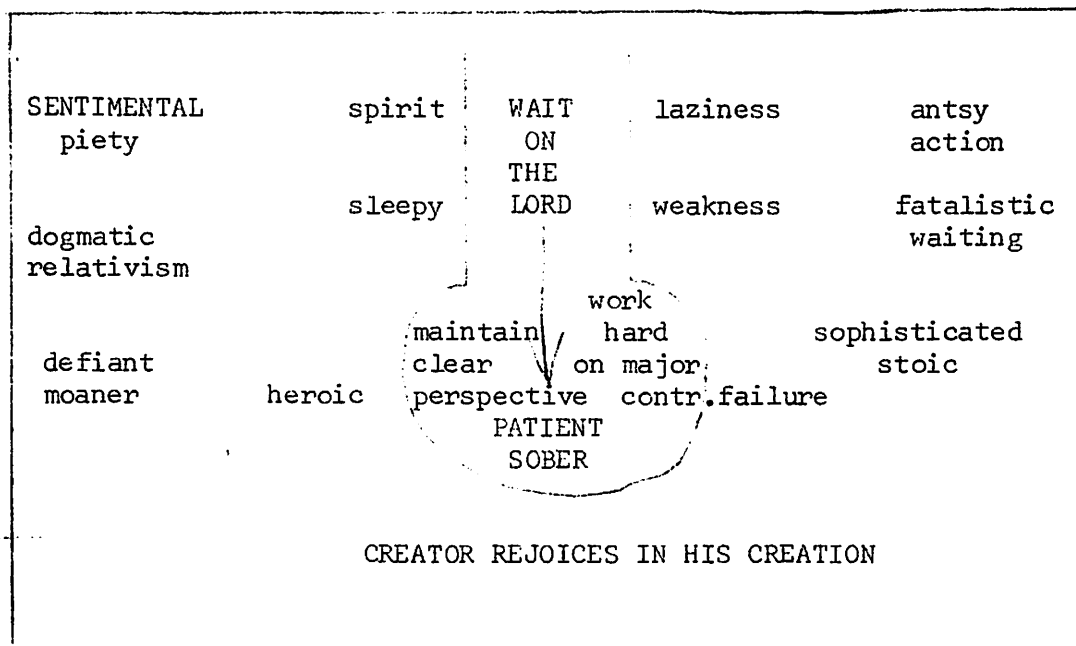
13. In the Spring of 1971 I was all prepared for hot issues of style, but it seemed as if people had somehow got that straight. Where they were struggling was with just the pain of being a spirit man. So the thing that came up most often was: The problem with this is it hurts." We were all clear that you had one day of crucifixion down there somewhere. But to bring that day of crucifixion back into every single solitary day for the next forty years was something shocking, and that awareness was what was being struggled with. There was despair over the prospect of bearing with constant handling of the interior war fare of life.

14. The word that holds Summer '71 for me is just contingency. People realized contingency of action, that their work, work, work out into the future was going to be built by people who literally did not know what they were doing, and who were in the midst of other people who literally did not know what they were doing, either. The sense of just utter humanity over against the wild demand of history was the struggle there.

15. Now, I want to say a word on this Fall under the rubric of the shock of eternal demand. This is not just the demand of everyday life. One of our temptations is to reduce the demand down to something that you can get your mind around. But it's the shock of the eternal demand. It is the shock of a demand that is radical and total breaking through all the other demands that so complexly surround you.

16. As we have taught the Kierkegaard paper before this Fall, it always seemed to me that people were struggling primarily with how to get out, through sensual extravaganzas or noble accomplishments, and they were always shocked to find themselves in that pathway, coming slowly to the realization that it was a dead end street.

17. This Fall, what surprised me was that everybody was already clear that it was a dead end street. And you smelled a new smoke that had to be labeled later as a very self-conscious kind of defiance. Something happened this Summer in the subterranean depths of the spirit that I am sure we do not have hold of. The plunge into escaping spirituality has now ended.



18. I have been deeply impacted by that song, "Those Who Wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." That song is on target. I want to use it as a symbol to talk about how people are struggling. To wait on the Lord is a hard struggle. It drives you to the deeps of life, and the temptation is to slip out in some way.

19. The first way of slipping out I will call sentimental piety. You can see that everywhere you look. It's like the Jesus movement, a sentimentalization of piety. But there are much more subtle forms of that in the movement, in the church, and in the secular world. We try to take one more rung of the old fundamentalism, one more rung of the old liberalism, and one more rung of something out of the 18th century, if we can make it work. It is a desperate need to make old things work, and to take the new breath of air that you feel blowing around you and use it to prop up some old emotional need. It's like a last gasp effort to mix the 20th century dynamic of consciousness with a little old emotionalism and not realize the fullness of the fact that spiritual life is always a radical detachment from the emotional dynamic.

20. Another way of slipping out is a kind of antsy action: "Do something. Don't think it through to the bottom, just get out there and do something." It is seen in the inability to wait for a good model to come up. You get half way through your spiritual clarity and you run and do something before you forget what you think you know. It is a mindless kind of thing. I remember Matthews being irritated last year when some people got in a hurry to go overseas.

21. He said, "If you have ants in your pants, spray them." So you are just sitting there waiting, waiting, waiting. What that does is allows the deeps to bubble up. It allows the real sins to come to the surface, the real victories to be struggled with. Waiting on the Lord is in tension between not being duped by some old sentimental piety, and at the same time not being quite ready to grab hold of the whole grip of history and rock it, but just having to move day by day a little bit into the tomorrow.

22. Underneath both sentimental piety and antsy action is a common thing that you might call "spiritual laziness." You do your work, you do what is asked of you. No one could really blame you by rational criteria for being lazy, but you don't do the quality of the work that he needed. You stop short of thinking through to the bottom what really must be done. You bugged out when the depths of your action reached a certain level of acceptability. It wasn't that you didn't have time. It wasn't that you didn't have ability. You were just lazy. Externally, you worked really hard, but you were spiritually lazy. All day yesterday and the day before you were spiritually lazy and you'll be lazy again all day today if you don't watch out.

23. Life is so complex. It is like a housewife with four pots boiling on the stove at one time and the phone's ringing and the door bell is also ringing. Besides that, she wants to reflect on a speech she is to make the next morning. And there you are in the midst of overwhelming complexity, paralyzed, in a catatonic state, doing nothing well, running from pot to pot, running from door bell to phone.

24. What you need to do as a spirit man is to learn how to say No to something, but you can't say No to anything, and you are spinning in a catatonic state. A spirit man has to say No to that telephone, No to pot number 1 and No to pot number 3, so he can go say Yes to that doorbell with all the passion and power and depth

of his being. He has to be able to say "You telephone, you can ring your silly head off and you four pots can just boil away; I am going to the door." It is that kind of a decision that has to happen down in the deeps of the spirit man.

25. Spiritual laziness is just the opposite of that. It is to live all day long in some kind of frenzy before the complexity. Or perhaps it is to find some meaningful distraction where you can forget everything. Or you say, "Well, apparently I am an inadequate person anyway. I am spiritually underdeveloped and nothing really can be done in the first place." How do you get something like No said across your images of spiritual inadequacy and give your spiritual inadequacy to your neighbor and let God straighten out your spiritual inadequacy when he is ready?

26. Faith in God is openness in this sense. It is openness to do a sociological act, patiently, thoughtfully, deliberately and from the bottom of your being, in some kind of celebration that this is the day which the Lord has made, and we can rejoice and be glad in it. That means maintaining a clear perspective. It means just hard work on the major contradiction. That's what waiting means, maintaining ruthlessly clear perspective and maintaining day by day by day hard work where it counts. That means there is a certain kind of patience going on there, a certain kind of soberness. It is sober when you realize that maintaining your perspective and doing the next deed for the next 175 days is what you are facing.

27. And yet there is a certain way in which you can talk about what waiting on the Lord means as just watching the creator rejoice in his creation. You see God smiling over how complex you made everything. You see him with a broad smile over the frustrations that you are having. Everything that is going on is being eternally rejoiced in up above there.

28. You have to listen for God's forceful comedy on all of Satan's wiles. Satan is all around, trying to wile you out into antsy action, and the Lord is making big jokes about all the antsy action that comes up, and all the sentimental piety that comes up. Once in a while you hear one of these jokes and get to repeat it to yourself and tell other people about what a joke it is that somebody got hung up again in 19th century piety, and what a joke it is that somebody went off and did something utterly ludicrous in his own eyes once he looks at it.

29. Now let's look at the next stage in slipping out of waiting on the Lord. There is a fatalistic type of waiting that one can be wiled into. You are waiting for something to change. You say "Perhaps this will all go away. I am in a tough spot right now, but I will just sit down and last through it. When this rough spot is done, I will join in the real work later on down the road. I will just go back to bed until I feel better, after a month's rest."

30. Waiting on the Lord means waiting on a Lord that keeps impinging on me right now. It's a creative waiting, not fatalistic waiting. It is self-consciously knocking on the door for an illumination of what you're to do. It's prayer, it's tension, it's insisting until responsibility is organized for you and then this happens you are always unclear whether you have created the new vision or whether it has been forced upon you. That reminds me of an old Scripture text that says "Ask and it shall be given, knock and the door will be opened." Then it tells the story of a widow who came up and pestered a magistrate until he finally opened the door and handled her problem. Then Jesus says something like, "Even wicked men in this world will finally give in if you pester them long enough, so don't you think your father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask? But you have to ask."

31. On the other side, you can slip into dogmatic relativism. Asking for the Holy Spirit is a treacherous sort of thing. When people realize that if they do ask, they will get their lives addressed again, they run in the other direction. Maybe this phrase is helpful--a man of faith will run 50 miles to get his life addressed again. That is what waiting on the Lord means. Now, dogmatic relativism means that all things are equally insignificant. A little nobility, suicide, murder--you do your own thing. The only absolute is that there is no absolute. To deal with that kind of relativism always seems to me rather difficult.

32. For instance, you are in the midst of teaching a seminar on the Christ story and you are trying to get it said that this is the story. "This is my story, this is my song". There is no absolute comes pounding through there. "Praising my savior." There is no saviour comes pounding through there. Or you read a phrase out of the Bible. "I am the light of the world." Preposterous. There is no light of the world. "I am the good shepherd. I lead the sheep into the center of being and out from the center of being, faithfully. I am the door. If you come through this door you will make it in and out safely." Preposterous. There isn't any door. there isn't any shepherd. "I am the truth, I am the way. I am the light" There can't be such a thing anywhere, no matter what it is. Stop, let's keep things fuzzy. Now you have to distinguish between what you might call a genuine concern not to be duped and just a total despair over truth.

33. Underneath both dogmatic relativism and fatalistic waiting is a sleepy weakness. The pain of the eternal demand, and the despair over my unclarity or over my clarity (clarity is probably causing more despair these days), the despairing over my despairing over foolish things--all of that causes a sort of weariness to creep in. This particular passage of scripture has been highly instructive and interpretive relative to sleepy weakness:

When they reached a place called Gethsemane, he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." [One thing that this passage illuminates is that what praying means is impatiently keeping awake to the situation.] "And he took Peter and James and John with him. Horror and dismay came over him, and he said to them. "My heart is ready to break with grief; stop here, and stay awake." Then he went forward a little, threw himself on the ground, and prayed; that, if it were possible, this hour might pass him by. "Abba, Father" he said "All things are possible to thee. Take this cup away from me. Yet not what I will but what thou wilt."

He came back and found them asleep; and he said to Peter, "Asleep, Simon? Were you not able to stay awake for one hour? Stay awake, all of you; and pray that you may be spared the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Once more he went away and prayed. On his return he found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know how to answer him.

The third time he came and said to them, "Still sleeping? Still taking your ease? Enough! The hour has come. Let us go forward!" Mark 14:32-42

34. This is a shocking passage. It is shocking first of all to really try to internalize the horror that Jesus is experiencing here. In the Phillips translation, it says "horror stricken and desperately depressed." I've heard people say that Jesus must have been a man of unfaith there. But no, it is wrong to say that unfaith is to have moments like these. Unfaith is to go to sleep when moments like these come upon you. For moments like these will come, when you are horror stricken and in dismay, and desperately depressed. Faith stays awake and prays through for clear perspective and for the major contradiction in the horror-stricken moment. That's the miracle of the story, that Jesus did not say to his disciples, "Move over, I am going to join you for a short rest." Instead he rammed into their lives with the shock of demand. "Stay awake. Live your pain. Fight with the Lord for an appropriate response."

35. Somebody said Jesus must be a man of unfaith to ask the Lord to let this cup pass, that Jesus was a coward or something. But that is just the way it is, when you are over against a rub like that. You have one prayer on your mind, and that's "Lord, if we can avoid this route, let's avoid it." That is your prayer. The faith in that is the surrender of which way it goes, the "whatever might be thy will."

36. How do you get ahold of the fact that, no matter how weak and trembling your flesh is over against these moments of horror strickenness, your real problem has nothing to do with your body or your external situation? Your real problem has to do with a spirit decision. That adds new force into the waiting on the Lord. "Those who wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength"--while the rest go to sleep. "They shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

37. Another stage of the abyss in slipping away from waiting on the Lord is the sophisticated stoic. The sophisticated stoic has achieved the ability to put on a cool smile in the face of the harshness of life. He comes over against the impossibility of living in this moment, and instead of struggling with it, wrestling with it, and living through it, he puts on a cool smile. "I can take anything." Or, "This is the way the cosmos works. I will make it." He is always bargaining for some kind of a word that gets him out of the pain, or at least gets him out of having to struggle with the pain as a significant part of his life. He seeks some way to find a little emotional security, a little intellectual security, or lucid unperturbability that he can get said in just a tolerant smile.

38. There is worry inside the stoic. It is a worry about practicals. He is always seeking resources from various angles to help him deal with life. He is looking for resources that will increase his ability to smile at life and not crack. It is as if he can anticipate for ten days ahead an address of the word that he has to live his life and can start building up resources to resist it. If a hard blow to his life takes place, he moves to a sort of mild restlessness, mild uneasiness.

39. When possibility just sort of sweeps over him one afternoon, then cynical cuteness breaks out. The spirit tone is like "Well, perhaps you can do that over here in America, but you can't do that sort of thing in England or in Georgia."

40. When that cynicism gets rocked another level, you may meet pouting and anger, for underneath that strength is a profound weakness. Underneath that stoic strength is a cowardly refusal to deal with the 20th century. Some day, some afternoon, maybe, that cowardly refusal breaks through that image of being able to manage, and then the word of God is to be declared: Living life doesn't mean taking it. Living life means to see the eternal celebration over it and living it to the deeps.

41. The other side of that is a passive moroseness, typified by the defiant moaner who is always saying "I am going to collapse in the future. My whole being is weakness. I am not going to make and therefore I had better not get out of bed." It is living out of self-depreciation, out of a sense of deep and profound weakness.

42. The defiant moaner is very subtle. He is always trying to trick you into giving him a rather stable excuse for being in his moan. He always makes a constant bid for attention. He comes up to you and says, "I am not going to do so and so." You think to yourself, "What are you telling me about that for?" You begin to realize that they want you to hear their moan hard enough and long enough and deep enough that you will say that anybody with a problem like that has an excuse. They say it in a thousand subtle ways: "I am going to leave. I don't see any way out of this. I can't hang on much longer." Or they tell a long dismal story.

43. You don't dare give any kind of affection or any kind of permission to the moan, because it is not really a moan. It is a refusal to pick up that moan as a creative part of their lives. It is a very intentional kind of moan. It is a passionate sort of "I have to have a moan, or else I will have to live--so if I don't have a moan, I will invent one."

44. What's needed in terms of both the sophisticated stoic and the defiant moaner is a very hard stance over against the possibility of living your life. I remember one particular occasion where this kind of a moaning response meant one woman didn't come to a pedagogy guild. You knew that she didn't come to pedagogy guild because she was scared that in that guild someone would give her a new context to see that despair was a very creative part of life, and could be picked up and used as gift for tomorrow. She was clear of what was going to happen and therefore she didn't go. So we schemed and fought and struggled as to how we could break through that and allow the decision to be made. Finally this gimmick was conceived: We sent one of the staff to the room, and she came up to the bed and said this to the lady: "Gene Marshall said that if you don't get out of that bed, we are going to call the police!" The woman started up and looked out from under her cover and said, "For what?" "For not attending your pedagogy guild!" Then the woman broke up and laughed, and a conversation took place. She went to the pedagogy guild and sure enough what happened to her there was what she anticipated.

45. Underneath both the sophisticated stoic and the defiant moaner is heroic failure--you are dedicated to failure, but dedicated to it heroically. This is one of Satan's most ingenious stories. It shocks me when I stumble upon someone who is with heroic passion dedicated to failing. It doesn't seem possible. But when you get inside the story they are listening to, you can understand it, because then you remember it. It goes something like this: "The external situation is so impossible that failure is excusable." That is the first part of Satan's story. Then he lets you forget that, and tells you the next part of the story. "The thing to do is to grab a little self respect. Do a bright flash on your way to oblivion." I am sure Satan dresses it up a little when he tells it to you. It is like: "Give yourself to some semi-great cause." But he says it more cleverly than that: "This cause is just as enabling as the next thing." Or maybe even more subtly: "There is someplace where you can go and do something heroic between now and failure."

46. You know there is something unheroic about being on the winning side, especially if it is the side that is going to win anyways. It doesn't even need me. Something happens to your heroism when you grasp yourself joining the winning side. If something hasn't any chance of winning in history, then I can go down there and show them how heroic I am by trying to bring off this impossible thing.

47. It used to be that people got worried about the spirit movement because they thought it would fail: "I don't want to be part of anything that is going to fail." I think that now people are worried from the other side of the fence. They are afraid the movement is really on the success side of history, and therefore they run to something that will fail. For to be a part of the responsibility, and the whirling gyrations of winning historical concrete victories in history has a scary spirit reality to it.

48. "I will go where I am needed, where I will get some love, affection, approval, and acknowledgement from my success." The trouble is that this kind of an escape is sociologically sound. It is the last ridiculous effort of this passing world to live on its own terms. Over against this final deeps, it is hard to declare the Word, to bring one back into this care of waiting on the Lord. It seems to me it has to do with grasping a total break with your past. Every single minute there is a total break. "I did a few good things--but you make a total break with a few good things

and move on in a wild run into the future. It is a wild run into the future as the son of God, a wild run into the future as one who has overcome the world, and who, therefore, has nothing to fear in that future.

49. It is in that context, I think, that the spirit man is making a cry for a new, authentic kind of hero, the hero who makes that wild break and moves, just day after day after day, into the future. That is why our fascination with the New Testament has become so intense; it is our fascination with the figure of Jesus there. If most of us in the spirit movement were honest, we would have to say that our meditative council is sort of a vacuum in the middle. Jesus is there, but he is a very fuzzy character. In the center of your meditative council, as king over your life, is sort of a hole, a fuzzy outline of Jesus there. Standing around the hole and pointing into it are two RS-I teachers, Luther, two literary figures, and a religious house prior. Those five or six people are sort of taking the place of Jesus in the middle of your council, or they are pointing over their shoulder to a Jesus whose outline is not quite clear.

50. To fill in that outline, to fill in with power that central figure to see what that Jesus election looks like--there is a certain kind of healing dimension to that that is overwhelming. For the future to which you are called is the future in which you put on this character that wanders through the pages of the New Testament as your own style of life. You are called to put on radical humanness, that is, to dramatize that as your own style of life.

51. What that means is just constant conversion. There is never any final accomplishment. It is always a becoming, a radical becoming, a total break and a total new start every split second. It is as if God's history ushers in a new world of historical possibility every quarter, and you have to make a total break with the past and surrender yourself to the tomorrow. Or, every hour you have to make a total break with the past and surrender to the tomorrow; or sometimes it's minute by minute.

52. Now, the past is a funny thing. Even though the whole past is obsolete, it is useful to the future, if you have a future. If you are not willing to have a future, then the past is useless. That is pretty clear, but to have a future, means that the whole past is now gone. All of its sins are obsolete. You have bigger ones now. All of its good points are obsolete. You moved through them.

53. I think our tendency is to say that my past is so bad that I cannot live the future. or at least I can't live it radically, and at the same time say "My past is not as bad as all that." We try to hold onto both of those at once. "My past is so bad I can't live the future," and "My past is not as bad as all that." So I have a million and one narrow little stories of my narrow little past all designed to protect me from launching naked into the future.

54. One way you can see people able to transcend that is when they are clear that just looking at my own little past is not really what there is there to look at. I am the whole of Western civilization. That is what there is there to look at. My sin is the sin of the whole of Western civilization, not just my little old dinky years that are behind me. My crime is the whole decay of the twentieth century church, not just my little old dinky years. The whole sweep of history is my real past, so why am I preoccupied with my little old piece of it?

55. Yet, on the other side of having a future, my little dinky piece is incredibly significant, because it is my own experience through which I am able to appropriate the experience of the whole past of mankind, of all time. And so, my little old

obsolete past becomes a great gift to the future, because it is all the experience I have.

56. I have experienced several times that there is no way to patch up my real past, and there is no way to ignore it. Just try to forget the worst thing you ever did. Just try to get loose from it. It stands there forever as a witness against you of just how sinful you can be. You never get rid of that. But it is a great gift to the future, once you decide to have a future. It is a warning for you in the future. It is a very useful guide for the future. So also the whole past of man is yours as a warning for you in your future, as a very useful guide for you in your uncharted tomorrow.

57. But there is no future in which your past and the whole past can become useful unless you are willing to be the future, to be patiently building the new historical world to be the place where being celebrates your being and celebrates all of Being. It is not useful unless you are willing to be the son in whom the father is well pleased. That is such an awesome figure that comes from the New Testament! It points to just the ridiculousness of believing that your own particular past and your own particular gifts, your own particular struggles and problems and experiences are no handicap whatsoever, but as a matter of fact are a phenomenal gift for you to move into the future.

58. In the Gospel of John, Jesus gets that said when he says this: "What matters is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven, but that my Father is giving you the true bread from heaven right now." That is the Word: There is never again any excuse for failure, once you are clear that your Father (I don't mean anything else than the wild eternity that is breaking in upon your life moment by moment by moment) is giving you the true bread from heaven right now.

59. Talking about the spirit reality of our moment is really sobering. But our sobriety is our moment, and it is a great moment. It is like the creator himself has decided to celebrate eternally this sober moment.

-Gene Marshall