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HISTORICAL IMAGES OF THE WAY

This is the first of eight spins and collegiums on the Way. The first two spins are contextual and the last two are the implications of our reflections. This morning we want to talk from the perspective of history. Tomorrow morning the Way will be put into the context of theology; we will try to answer the question of why we are doing these talks on the Way. The middle four spins cover the same categories as were used during the Global Research Assembly. They are the grounding of the Way, the finality of the Way, the thinking of the Way, the acting of the Way, and the presence of the Way. The final talks will ask the question of the implications for our corporate style. Today's spin is on the historical images of the Way.

You have heard this poetry before:

When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was. The Word, then, was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him. All that came to be was alive with his life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines on in the dark, and the darkness has never quenched it.

There appeared a man named John, sent from God; he came as a witness to testify to the light, that all might become believers through him. He was not himself the light; he came to bear witness to the light. The real light which enlightens every man was even then coming into the world.

He was in the world; but the world, though it owed its being to him, did not recognize him. He entered his own realm, and his own would not receive him. But to all who did receive him, to those who have yielded him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God, not born of any human stock, or by the fleshly desire of a human father, but the offspring of God himself. So the Word became flesh; he came to dwell among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

Here is John's testimony to him: he cried aloud, 'This is the man I meant when I said, "He comes after me, but takes rank before me"; for before I was born, he already was.'

Out of his full store we have all received grace upon grace; for while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; but God's only Son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, he has made him known.

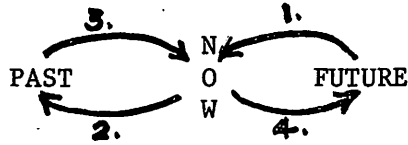
John 1: 1-18

Why are we dealing with the Way? I do not know. It seems right, however. We stumbled on to the Way this last year---in fact, some years before. As we have listened to the Area and Centrum reports, it is obvious that we really did something last year. Yet, the year was costly. The troops have been attacked from every side. Yet, we look better than ever, even if there are a few invisible scars and bruises and a lot more grey hairs. We sense that the work on the Way is right because we have emerged corporately on the Way.

This Order has itself become holy ground this year. By holy I mean important for history. There are a lot of things that I would rather do in the first instance. I could be a great seminary professor now. Also I could have a great time creating my own great life style with all the great methods I have learned over the years. And there are some exciting people around to go off with, to create that style. Furthermore, wouldn't it be great to make this outfit into your own ideal community? It is too bad we are now in a time of populism when even the responsible elites die out in time, as does all charisma.

I came to this summer with one of the finest sets of "axes" I think I have ever forged. There was one about symbology, and very early I put it back in the bottom drawer. There was one about world cultures. You might hear a little more about that one this morning; but I put it into the drawer for a while and it has been greatly tempered by our corporate body. There is one about classical mythology, and I am still keeping that one in the drawer although it keeps sneaking out from other sources. There is one about these "Blue shirts" in the Order. We are going to have to get that one out again, sooner or later. The funny thing about axes and being on the Way is, you have to put them aside for the sake of corporateness. At the same time, you have to trust the intuitions upon which they are based. After all, what is an axe except that it is the finely sharpened blade, honed to the glistening point, of your intuitions? They are only dangerous to us when we use them for ourselves or for status and even then they usually do us more harm than anyone else.

I commend to our recollection a particular historical method in order to allow us corporately to go in depth for the sake of our future. The infinity sign is the image that I am referring to. An impingement comes out



of the future that creates the Now. This intrusion raises a question for us in the Now. Then we go back into the past with that question to specific places and times in order to bring back the gold that is there to forge the future.

We are having the time of our lives this year. The five a.m. meetings, the GRA, the Maharashtra 232 last year, financial auditing, the family, the ICA story. But I want to issue a warning to all of us in our relation to the world cultures. The Church got off the track of the Way as early as the second century A.D. on the question of religion. The man who symbolized it was a wealthy ship owner named Marcion. He went to Rome in 140 A.D. and died in 160. He was thrown out of the Church. He not only insisted that the Way encompass all the natural religions of the day, but also he threw out of the emerging canon all of the Old Testament, kept a few of Paul's letters and a mutilated Gospel of Luke. Irenaeus was the champion of the Faith. He came up with a theology based upon a concept called, "The Two Hands of God."

The two hands by which I counteract whatever Marcionism may be within me are Awakening and Engagement. They are the only two campaigns I know. This third campaign is not yet a campaign upon which I have much clarity. It is simply an intensified deepening of the being of the first two campaigns. To put it another way, we, the Order: Ecumenical, are the edge of our task. We are that intensification. The question we have to solve in this council is how we do this campaign without turning inward. We have to keep our attention on the new ones who are our colleagues, this larger "we" that we are. If this "third X" is a campaign at all, it has to be utterly external to ourselves while, no doubt, it effects us internally. The two campaigns all seem to disappear for me as campaigns; they all begin to flow into this "X". That does not mean that awakening and engagement cease to go on in life. Quite the contrary, the two campaigns are more than simply the campaigns of the last few years. They are master modes. They are all that we have ever been about and, as far as I can tell, are all we ever will be about. The question of strategy has to do with immediate, effective directions not the overall or the language. Some of us are willing to wait until next year to get more external focus on this "X". My guess is, if we wait a year, we will wait another year, and another year, and another year, until one day we will look around and see that we have become a fine institution but cannot even remember what being on the Way is all about.

Fulfillment as the focus of a campaign has to do with the building of a structural, spiritual undergirding of the troops as they do the first two campaigns. Therefore, the "third X" has to do with the symbolic and intellectual life, discipline, witnessing and justing love: primal community in every local community. We are the new economics; management centrum should take heed. We are the new polity; we should pay heed to this Council, the Panchayat, and the bottom-up Order ways of polity. We are the new symbolic life. We are the new exemplars, or we are a joke. We must somehow transmute this that we are into on-going local communities. Is this taking the cover off ourselves, I ask? We have no choice. I was shocked to see the amount of our stipends printed in the newspapers last year. History has yanked the covers off who we are. We have moved from knowing our

doing (beginning around 1971) to the doing of our doing (in the last four or five years). In the last year we have moved into the being of our doing. By the way, all this means that Town Meeting is not a gimmick to get us more established by doing a Bicentennial program or to remove the ten-ton crane we put ourselves under several years ago. No! You want to get out from under the ten-ton crane? You want to go off and seek a little comfort somewhere? Go right ahead; the rest of us will go on with the mission. No, Town Meeting is no gimmick. It is an instrument through which we can touch the wellsprings of humanness and awaken all men to the life of service. If it does not do that, it is a joke. Even some of our more professional Town Meetings seem like jokes. Oh, I am sure that it can be done as a joke, but God forgive us if we do any more like that. These are the eyes with which we need to read the GRA documents and to look at all our impact courses. The same can be said about Human Development Projects and the consults that initiate them, especially the last seventy-five projects in Maharashtra. The same is true for every centrum.

The religious dimension is breaking loose today. Islam knows how to touch the depths of humanness in the geography where it treads, and it is moving today. We ask what is happening today. Local man's rise is taking sociological shape into a new populism. It is more religious than economic or political in its expression. Witness Morarji Desai, a serious religious; witness Jimmy Carter; witness events in Iran; witness Sadat's peace initiative. Y.B. Chevan, head of the opposition in the old Congress Party in India has been asked to form a government. My prediction is he will do it only if he taps the rise of local man at the point where his deeper passions burn.

Local man is religious today, and he is increasingly secular. He is profound care. What irritates me these days is when people say, "We need local man songs," meaning something less than sophisticated---something simple. When the black people of Mississippi sing and get their bodies swaying, that is local man elegance. Local man elegance requires something out of you. Try African drum beating. The Zambian song, Tiende Pamozi, is not easy for all of us to sing well. Local elegance also touches the deeps of the archaic.

That is why we must deal with the classical poetry of mankind. The arena of prayer is the key. No other source is capable of giving the world anchors to the bedrock of humanness out of which the new liturgy will emerge. More intellectual work on Christian theology will not do it unless it is in this context. To see the human factor fully, we need eyeglasses as deep as they are broad.

I look around today and I see things emerging on the horizon. I see the Malay culture getting named for the first time in history. I see in India one of the most nationalistic grassroots movements imaginable. We may wish that we could leave the transparentization job for the next generation, but I see a freight train coming right at all our treasured beliefs, theologies and religious practices. When I see this freight train coming which we cannot avoid, I say to myself, "I had better do some homework." I had better educate myself at least on the broad parameters of what is coming. I have begun that process. Terms like God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, and Church have become transparent windows into Profound

Humanness in our day. We are in the process of looking in depth globally at the task we are about and revitalizing our vision from a global perspective. Tillich's vision of doing theology based on the poetry of the world's cultures has to be done by someone. On the basis of what we are doing in many local situations, I predict a new systematic theology will someday be written.

Transparentization is happening all around the world in every local situation. Everything seems "foreign" while at the same time nothing is unfamiliar. How do the local people use their money? What is their humor? How do they operate their family structures? Transparentization is happening! How do we capture the gifts of humanness present in every situation for the sake of the globe? How do we prevent secular ubiquity from surfacing global culture out to the lowest common denominator?

Suppose we decided to expand the human development projects in this country. Suppose the site selection team chose my home town. Suppose I were assigned as the project director. What would I experience? I can see the local pub and the local church right now. The pressure our colleagues are under in their national turf is astounding. Imagine yourself in your home town and see how it feels. Imagine about twenty brown people, or tan people, on the auxiliary with you---how does it feel now? Well, I do not know about you, but my home town would probably panic. No wonder our colleagues sometimes forget all the methods they have ever learned. Suddenly authorization is not even an umbrella anymore; it is a life and death necessity.

The historical images of the Way are present in every culture. I am impressed with John Dunne's image of what it means to be the nobodies of history. Lest you think Dunne is a new law for some of us, I would point out that he would never recognize all the ways we have talked about him. I have found his book helpful with which to dialogue, but I do not expect him or even ask him to agree with us, necessarily. He has a classical theological base and is well-versed in the world religions. The tendency to psychologize in the process of "passing over" is not predominant in The Way of All the Earth. I did not get interested in that book until I was sent to the Sikror Consult, where my colleagues and I were not able to handle a rather difficult situation in a creative way. Being boldly global and honoring the local at the same time was beyond us all. We managed to turn loose the local, the Indian, and the opening night of the consult was a uniquely local performance amidst a global event, any HDP consult is. It certainly intruded on our global methods. However, did you hear that report yesterday on Sikror? Being has won in Sikror; the Way has won, in spite of and through us all.

Either we learn to tap the wellsprings of the global cultures or we will have no way to sustain our global colleagues---Christian and non-Christian alike. Secretly I suspect we "pinkies" only think we are sustained in terms of what is coming ahead. We had a great time with the movie, "Tea House of the August Moon." It has a translation situation taking place in which the other one, the Oriental, made fun of the white man. That is not the first time that I have seen that happen. These brown and black

and yellow people, they fool us. Worse than that, they snooker us. In translation they say what they decide to say to their people. I suspect they will put up with our bigotries only so long; and then what they are going to do is take whatever they can get, leave, and we will be sitting around without them, wondering what happened.

Dunne called being nobodies being "gods in disguise." Power, autonomy, and solitude are the attributes he ascribes to God. I translate them as effectivity, intentionality, strategy-mindedness. We have something to learn from the bodhissattva's of Buddhism who attained nirvana or fulfillment, left it, and then came back to lead all men to nirvana! There is wisdom there. The avatars of Hinduism who act without concern for the products of their action have something to teach all of us. We must be watchful of ourselves relative to our accomplishments in the last year. I am reminded of the movie Becket and the scene when he was under attack because of his defense of the honor of God. "Watch what you do....." We are not seeking respectability or recognition for its own sake; we seek them only to serve the rise of local man. "Whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's."

We are called to be the logoi-- the little words incarnate who show what God is. We interfere with history itself because that is who God is. He is the way, the truth and the life. This is, in fact, another way of walking. This is our service. I am talking about Maharashtra 232 and Mississippi 200. It is not some sewer cleaning job unblocking the structures of society, except where it takes cleaning sewers in order to interfere with history itself. This is where primal community is born. This is where the new social vehicle and the new religious mode converge into the profound human style.

I discover that these days I am focused. My eyes are set on Jerusalem which looks more and more like the rural 85 percent. I do not ask you to agree. We will do the urban---yes, but in a creative new way. Calcutta is urgent, but it cannot absorb all of our time and people. The 15 percent yes! We care for all men. They are our colleagues in very specific ways, but they will be most effective as they expend themselves in 100 percent service. I no longer care where I am assigned! Send me where you will. Local man is everywhere; I see him. He is profound care. Everywhere I see him.