

REPORT ON THE OOMBULGURRI CONSULT

Grace is yours and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,
Amen.

I was trying to recollect, as I trust you do from time to time, when I first took up the calling of renewing the church. I find that very difficult to answer, but I suppose it was when Edwin Lewis, who was a theologian at Drew Seminary came to a Biblical Seminary in New York and introduced me for the first time to the theological revolution of Century 20. That was in 1937, a long time ago. I suppose it was not until in the midst of World War II that it finally got through my mind that this was a far more difficult task than I had surmised, but that sounds almost like a ridiculous statement. It wasn't until 1956, when I went to the Christian Faith and Life Community in Austin, Texas, that it really became clear to me that the task was profound beyond compare, but that sounds ridiculous too. I sometimes think it was the summer that we talked about the Great Turn that it finally got clear to me, and then I even have to confess that sounds a bit ridiculous. I think it was last week. However, I want to thank God publicly that, however brokenly and however sinfully I have been kept on the March, I want to thank God that I am on the march, that my life has only been about the renewal of the church.

I wanted to read from The Shape of the Church to Come by Karl Rahner:

The Church should consider the fluidity and the indefiniteness of their frontiers in a positive way. She should consider as belonging to her rather than separated from her those who cannot yet identify themselves with the Church through their faith but regard her with positive good will as the concrete bearer of the Christian idea. For this is her attitude also towards those who belong to her as registered members, although they are far from possessing certainly the faith which constitutes the membership of the Church. Those who are thus close to the Church should not be given the impression that she is interested in them only when they are palpably candidates for self-identification by faith with the institutional Church... They are really in our time what used to be called the catechumens. The catechumenate does not begin only when one firmly declares his decision to become a full member of the Church.

We must oppose the very widespread feeling that a person must be either a committed member of the Church as a result of a personal decision with all the obligations resulting from this, or necessarily hostile or absolutely indifferent toward the Church. This feeling, without reflection, is often the reason why older, mature people no longer find their way back to the Church from which they disassociated themselves in earlier years...From a theological standpoint, returning to the church by no means always has to be the homecoming of the prodigal son, the finding of the lost sheep...If love of neighbor requires us to treat no one as an enemy in the ultimate meaning of the word, then Christians are certainly permitted and morally required to consider these marginal settlers as brothers without suggesting at every turn that they are not really in the Church and not really Christians in the true sense. To adopt the language of Augustine, these people may "at heart" belong to the Church in a way that is more efficacious for salvation than that of some Christians who belong to the "body," who are in the Church merely in a religio-sociological sense.

I still believe that we have to go back to Rahner and study him step by step all over again, for what we are about is the renewal of the Church, the renewal of the Church. The Church is that without which the civilizing process itself has never moved, and cannot now move into the future.

Now, I want to talk about the less exciting aspects of Oombulgurri. I want to deal with primarily what we learned about social methods. The Oombulgurri consult had the depth support of the local aboriginal people. And yet when I hear myself say that, it doesn't sound right. To say that it had the support does not even begin to get at it. You have the feeling that these people have been waiting for this all their lives, when you see them stand tall and with pride look you in the eye, and truly be your hosts. Their attention span enabled them to participate wholehearted in the consult. They were in there from the first and they stayed in there until the very last. You could almost say they sensed their life depended upon their sticking with it.

After the consult we went to Canberra. In two weeks we were able to accomplish what it took us nine months to accomplish in Washington. The government seems to be waiting for precisely this kind of thing even as the local people themselves were. Because of the way that we who are Americans have conducted ourselves so many years around the world, an American is not the most desirable thing to show up in Canberra in the nation of Australia, but I found no picking at my Americanism at all. I believe that the reason for it is that we had something to lay before them that made whether or not you were American or a citizen of Timbuctu quite incidental. I was absolutely overwhelmed. The

third thing that got to me a bit is that the Guardian movement in Australia is just made. I have never seen a group of mature middle-aged men come so alive as the guardians did in Australia. I believe that through their good efforts the whole private sector of the nation of Australia is going to be awakened to the possibilities of their nation, not only relative to the Aborigines but in many other ways also. This is what I mean when I say that we are at the right place at the right time with the right idea that the world is waiting for. Now, I want to say a few words about what we came up with, and then look at how the methods, in my opinion, have been advanced. Now in the two weeks we wrote the documents. All of it is parallel to everything we wrote on Majuro only much better. It took us 8 or 9 months to write Majuro. We did this in two weeks, because it had taken us 8 or 9 months to do Majuro. The next one that we do, especially at certain places in this latter document, is going to be improved on because we learned more in this arena. I would like to see this in a decent form. It ought to remain two books. Actually, if you look on the master chart, book one is the planning of the project and book two is the actuating of the project, but it is one report. I would like to see somebody go back and put the Majuro document in this form. And then we do the same thing at Jeju and we do the same thing at Taj Gunj until you have eight of these documents to put before the people of the world that you want to be affected by the emanations from these 24 global demonstrations. To me it is unbelievable that so much work could be done in two weeks. Your colleagues in the Houses in Australia worked extremely hard to get that done, and you will notice that a good bit of this could not have been done without the people who knew the situation in Australia. It certainly could not have been done by any outsiders.

As you look at that chart, 1-10 is probably the crucial part. Roman numeral I which says "The Shaping of the Project," is the description of the consult, or what we called "the brief" in the Majuro document. It gives the broad picture of the project as the consult forged it, plus the history of how the consult came to be. That is what is called "The Prolegomena" and then "The Phasing of the Project." I am not so sure that it ought to be that last section but it is absolutely crucial. Then in the rest of the chart, you have the two movements; and one is the planning, one is the actuating. When I try to say who we are relative to social demonstration, I say that which separates us from other community development people is first of all we are a not-for-profit organization and then secondly we specialize in methods of actuation and not just planning. Of course both have to be present. Without the methods of actuating or actualizing a project, we really have nothing to peddle because planners are a dime a dozen. Even though I believe that our methods of planning are better than most others that I know, that alone could not sell an outfit like ours.

Now, let me point out the things that we have learned as we go from Roman numeral II through number IX. "Analyzing the situation." Analyzing the situation

means getting hold of the latent operating vision of the people that you are dealing with. This presupposes the fact that any community, however unconscious, has a coagulation of hopes and dreams and expectations relative to the future. Community reformulation does not mean superimposing some kind of ideology on people, or a set of dreams or visions from the outside. From our point of view it does not. It means coming in first of all and getting hold of the visions of local man himself, and our methods are designed to make this possible. The way we do this is to bring these outsiders in (they are the Guardians) and sit down with the leaders of the people. That objective force bumping up against the local mindset forces the local hopes and dreams to the surface. The way you get hold of this, first of all, is rather informal. It is a matter of these two groups, the subjective element and the objective element, existing together in fellowship for a period of time. It is a matter of conversation. The two forces walking together through the situation in constant dialogue brings to the surface the latent hopes and dreams, the practical vision, or operational vision of the people themselves. It was rather exciting to see this particular one take shape. It is obvious that the objective force has its own particular bias. This is no problem for anyone who has any understanding of the scientific and unscientific dynamics in sociology. You just grasp this and operate in the midst of that awareness. One of the exciting things about it is that any set of guardians who go to a consult are naive to one degree or another. That is their advantage at the point I am speaking to, and it is certainly to the advantage of the people. You take a bunch of old war horses like ourselves relative to the social triangles and you are moving in with twelve-inch guns. The naivete of the guardians, I discovered, was really a great asset. Now you could carry that too far: if we brought everybody in there naive, we would have nothing, absolutely nothing. Those guardians in there by themselves could accomplish nothing. You need three forces in there. You need a handful of people who know what they are doing, and a handful of the ones that aren't so clear of what they are doing, in relationship to the local people themselves, in order to put pressure that brings into being the local people's own operating vision.

There were two things that they were after: one was social self-dependency. The second was economic self-sufficiency. You could subsume all of their dream categories and their hope categories underneath those two basic principles. My guess is that that would fit any Aborigine community in Australia.

Now, getting that vision is only the first step. The second is the contradictions. We learned a great deal about the contradictions. First of all, we saw that the only way you could get hold of this is to have the objective and subjective forces moving through the concrete situation, paying attention first subjectively to their irritations. What is it that disturbs you about the future of these people? Then objectively, you tried to spot concretely what we called the "deterrents." By spinning both of these, we arrived at the blocks to the people's own hopes and dreams, or to their practical vision. Once we got this series of blocks, then we did a swirl gestalt to get at the primary contradiction. But in order to get at the primary contradiction we had to back up

and look at the great deep currents of history, for a contradiction is a profound deterrent or block to a specific operating image which combines the elements of the local situation and the profound waves of history. Let me illustrate what I am talking about. You and I are living in a moment in which not only must the Aboriginee disassociate himself from his past, but every human being in the world is in a situation in which he must experience the disassociation from his particular past. That is a mighty current in history. Then you can see how the unique local situation of the Aboriginees blends with this to get at the basic underlying contradiction. Now I will not go further into that, but we have come closer to spelling out the methodologies than ever before.

Our proposals were about the same as before. The important thing is that if you are out for effectivity, you never deal with goals, you deal only with contradictions. That is to say, you write your proposals, not off of your goals but off of your contradictions. I would say that the hardest part of the whole consult really has to do with those contradictions--getting them clear enough to write practical proposals relative to releasing those blocks toward the future, which is the realization with alteration of the practical visions of the people themselves. After that was done, we rendered the tactical systems in relationship to the proposals, and we used the same methodologies that we used before.

At this point the consultants were tired and weary and worn from 24 hours a day in wind and dust and tents at night with snakes and other items. They were worn out. It seems to someone who is experiencing the methods for the first time that you are doing the same thing nine times. It is only after reflection that you see the movement in this direction, which is somewhat rocking.

Now item number 6 was probably the second greatest breakthrough that we had on the other side of clarity relative to the contradictions. It had to do with the actuating programs. We discovered when we were working with Majuro that in order to fund the project we could not fund the tactical system. Therefore we had to coagulate the tactics into what we called "Actuating Programs." The function of an actuating program, therefore, is five-fold. First of all, your program organizes your forces. Your tactics cannot. Secondly, your actuating programs enable you to estimate the cost or to build the budget. You cannot do that off the tactics. Thirdly, therefore, your actuating programs enables you to fund the project. You cannot sell tactics. You can sell programs. And next your actuating programs enable you to focus your implementaries. Fifthly, your actuating programs are an almost indescribable morale factor for both the local people and the extended people--the government and the private sector. It is those programs that cause their eyes to pop. Now, if you didn't have the backup work behind those programs, they could not do it, but if it is done, they intensify the motivity of the people. I think this was our great breakthrough.

Now, the second lesson we learned is that you do not write implementaries off your tactics; you write implementaries off of the organization of your tactics into actuating programs. That is what it means to say you focus your implementaries. In one sense this is the most striking alteration in the method. We did not have time at the consult to do either the actuating programs nor the implementaries. At Jeju Do we want to do the actuating programs before the consult breaks up, and touch on the implementaries. At Taj Gunj we want to be so facile that we could finish the implementaries in one consult. This is the key alteration in the whole flow of the method.

Now the last part is called "The Framing of the Operation." You remember the framing chart - the practical operation of funding. First is organizing the implementing forces and this has to do with the private sector and the public sector on the local, regional and federal levels. It has to do with the actuating agents. In Oombulgurri they have a village council, and we set up an economic commission and a social commission that were the equivalent in Majuro of TASC (Trans Atoll Service Corporation) and MCAA (Marshalls Community Action Agency). Each one of those commissions was made up of council members, other local leaders outside of the council, ex-officio members of the auxiliary, and double-ex-officio members of the guardians across Australia. And then, of course, there is the auxiliary core itself which is the catalyzing force. I suppose that they are going to end up with 20 of our people in Oombulgurri in order to catalyze the job. You might be interested to know that in Canberra, we went to see the former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and he received us like long lost friends. We asked him to run interference for us to see the man who replaced him as Minister. He almost ran to the telephone, called him and set that up for us. Then I met an old friend in the House of Congress from Sydney, and he was the chairman of the board of the Aboriginees Foundation. We went to an annual meeting and had a fine time together. Then we saw the bureaucratic structures which are a little bit different and closer to the legislative branch than ours are. The head of that looked at the program and instead of being upset at the number of catalyzing forces there, he was surprised at the few that were there. Anyway, that deals with the organization of the forces.

The the fiscal pattern: that is a part of framing the operation. Without it you get nowhere. We had a very exciting time when we got documents out of Canberra to try to determine how the Australian government thinks financially. Their basic categories are first, capital costs; second, pay and allowances; and third, current operating expenses. We built a budget on each one of the 18 programs, and then we rendered those into summaries. The first one that summarized the whole first year cost comes to 942,000 Australian dollars. In American money that would be close to \$1.2 million. And then in the next page, we rendered the summaries

QUESTION: Could you say one more time what we learned about how to write implementaries?

RESPONSE: You write them off your actuating program, rather than off the tactics. Now, I think we would go at it the same way, and that is the six honest serving men approach. And of course, that would only come on the other side of digging out concrete actional data and swirl-gestaltling that. Then you would write it up. We tried to write them off the tactics. I think you have to write them off the program.

QUESTION: How is the category of "miracle" embodied in this?

RESPONSE: I am torn between believing that what we have called "the miracles" are the first step of getting a project off the ground and believing that it has a relationship, an ever-present relationship to implementaries. So I don't know. By the way, in the last three months, what your colleagues in Oombulgurri did in the way of miracles was absolutely unbelievable. Even to getting the grass cut. The didn't have a mower so they went in with a bulldozer and did it, and that made dust about a foot thick, but even so, at least it showed somebody around there cared.

COMMENT: Your comments about the three forces have given me a whole new way to talk about establishment, disestablishment, and transestablishment. People who are historically dislodged are the disestablishment, the guardian is the establishment, and then there is this third force. The authentic consultant is an aspect of the transestablishment.

QUESTION: Does the subjective/objective principle in the vision and contradiction follow through the whole process?

RESPONSE: Yes, I think so, but it is more dramatic in getting out the practical vision. The same thing would be true if you went to General Motors. General Motors by itself can no more tell you what its actual operating model is, than you can tell me about your own life. General Motors needs this external force. Probably, at times the Board of Directors of certain corporations have fulfilled that function. That is what a consult would be. You would bring in outside people who would pick the brains and look at the style and activity and the symbols, and they bring to the surface the actual operating vision of the people. Now that continues through the consult, that creative tension.

COMMENT: But that third pole is critical. It is the one that has no vested interest. We cannot, in a corporation consult play the second role. That means there has to be another group of people; that is to say no consultant can play both of those roles.

But in going into a community we bring to bear a cross-section of social reality as your guardian presence. It may be that going into a sociological formation like a corporation, that you want to bring in a cross section of geographical reality. That is to say, it may be that your guardian consultant is the intra-global. It may be your international presence from the local community that provides that dynamic in a sociological consult.