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## Essay One: ON THE PLURIFORM ORDER

Transparentized Christianity began in the lives of the great 20th century theologians and was focused for us through the life of Joseph Mathews and through a format called "RS-1." Other formats, like CS-1, the 144 charts, and the Other World charts continued to express this profound transposition of doctrinal Christianity into a message addressed to secularized humanity in secular terms, a message that addressed the absolute deeps of human existence.

Those of us who internalized all this became aware that Christianity, as we had once known it, was over. Not only was second-story thinking gone, but also ended was the practical form of the church as a public institution protected by the state and functioning openly as an evangelist for a particular set of traditional beliefs and practices. Although many forms of church life still function and some efforts to enthuse these old institutions do succeed, the era of Christian Church life is, in principle, already over. The entire edifice is dying along with all the rest of the old social vehicle.

What will the continuation of the people who were and are formed by the Jesus Christ event look like? Will they live entirely in secular modes and never again use the names of God, Christ, and Holy Spirit? Or will they have a secular face in public, but then also a private life in which they re-member the heritage of Christianity and teach it passionately to their children and to anyone else who wants to learn it?

I think it will be the latter. I think the latter because that best interprets my own life experience. I am clear that it was with the help of self-conscious Christians that I entered into transparentized secular living. I am clear that my backward look at my Christian heritage is now shaped by a thorough-going secularity. Nevertheless, I have Christianity as my archaic memory, and with that memory I inevitably compare all the secular forms I create to give form to my spirit consciousness. If some particular secular forms cannot be squared with RS-1, OKed by Tillich, Soren Kierkegaard, and Luther, supported by the New Testament, etc.--then I reject such forms as less than profound. I am bored with them, I relegate them to a category like "incomplete experiments" or I criticize them as reduced, misleading and humanly wrong.

In other words, if I am pushed to be totally honest, I have to admit that I am a Christian. Not only is that so, but also I have no genuine possibility of ever becoming a person who is not a Christian. My rather extensive study of Hinduism has only resulted in enriching my Christian formation. However deeply I may respect Hindu heritage or some particular Hindu, I am not a Hindu myself. Neither am I something half way between Christian and Hindu. I'm not trying to find a middle course that pleases everybody. However, I am curious to see how each particular Hindu I encounter is going to work out his relation to me and to my being Christian. I don't want to hide the fact of my Christianness. Yet, I am not anxious to demand that this Hindu become Christian in the sense that I am a Christian. I do, however, wish for this hypothetical Hindu that he or she become a deep human being; and I am committed to express that possibility to him or her in utterly secular terms. I may even use Hindu terms in a secular way, but I do not consider that very important. I do not feel called to master Hinduism or reform Hinduism or transparentize Hinduism or anything of the sort.

For me, Hinduism is already transparentized (and so is every other religion on earth). And if Hindus hear what I have to say, this same experience will happen to them. All the religions on earth will be suddenly transparent. What do I mean by that? I mean that they will experience that "God is dead"--not just the Christian God, but every God. Religion in all its classical forms is over. Only the carcasses of once-living religions remain. Paradoxically, these dead forms can all be brought to life again by us at any time we choose. We can do this insofar as we are alive in a transparentized Christianity that has, in truth, totally died and in so doing become alive again in a whole new era of living. And all this actually happened to me the day RS-1 really took in my life. And this transparentization happens to anyone for whom RS-1 has took, no matter what form of RS-1 took him or her.

I understand myself to be a member of something I call the spirit movement. I consider the task of the spirit movement to be one basic thing: occasioning the "RS-1" happening in individual lives. And I do not see this as a means to some other end like missional engagement. I believe it is of secondary importance to gather those took people into communities of took fellowship and took action on behalf of all. I want such fellowship and such action myself, and I feel deeply impoverished without it. So I will gather and I will act. If others do not feel themselves called to gather and act, I have no need to belittle them.

Meanwhile, those of us who wish to be the gathered took people -- do we want to forget the basic motif of our gatheredness: namely that we have each been took? Surely we will want to rehearse what took us. Surely we will want to study the history of the took people.

I sometimes feel that we ought to give the blue garb away to the rural development of India or Africa or wherever. And that we who are the self-conscious RS-1 spirit movement should set up a new garb. Red underwear would be my recommendation. We would never allow it to be seen in public. It would symbolize an unending pentecost of transparentized Christianity. We would meet in secret to study Luther and Amos and Tillich and even the New Testament. We might even, in secret, with the doors locked, put on red robes and stomp and yell and sing and act out some dramatic form of the daily office. Anyone who gave signs of having been took by some secular form of RS-1 would, after he or she had asked three times, be admitted to an eight-week period of intensive training in Christian heritage, after which he or she would be allowed to share in the secret fellowship. No status would be attached to all this. It would just be viewed as the ridiculous practice that some of us needed. We might well believe that keeping this resource alive was important and that the missional function of it was to have liveliness maintained somewhere in history in order that liveliness could be injected into the many secular campaigns that may need such liveliness over the next 100 years or so.

I realize that my little scenario is somewhat tongue in cheek, and yet I want seriously to break our minds past the half-conscious paradigms that now limit our thinking on these crucial issues. Nothing would be more offensive to me than belonging to an order that was either one of these two things: 1) a secular "religion" devoid of any genuine ongoing grappling with RS-1, the Christian heritage, or the general religious heritage of the race, or 2) a tolerant mixture of all the old, now totally dead, religions.

Our identity and integrity as an order are tied up with RS-1. It is our door both to the past and the future. Through RS-1 we have a way to make all the religions on earth our Old Testament. We have a way of understanding Christian heritage as the continuing story of how best to teach RS-1. We have a way to live in the secular world with an utterly secular word to say.

I have been clear for some time that whenever a member of the 85% actually joins the order in a fully responsible way, that person has become part of the 15%. Any other way of understanding their existence is illusory. No member of the order can be omitted from the care fabrics of the developed world. I have now come to believe that it is also true that anyone who joins the order in a fully responsible way is also a Christian in the same sense that I am Christian. Any other view is basically dishonest.

Someone reading this will surely be curious to know what I think needs to happen to a Muslim who has been took by some secular RS-1. Does he get together with other Muslims who have been took? Who knows, perhaps the Muslims are meeting now to decide what color underwear to wear. Frankly, I don't care; what the Muslims do with RS-1 is their business. And the Hindus? How many religions are there? Have any of us actually counted all the religions that still exist on earth? How complex would we like all this to become?

All our questions about the future form of the order would be relatively simple if we began thinking from our own experience and from our own concrete need. We don't even need to ask abstract questions like, "What is the emerging form of the pluriform order?".

ORDER

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### Essay Three: ON SOCIO-SPIRIT

Why is this term being used and precisely what does it mean? Does the word "spirit" used alone seem to mean something airy-fairy? Does the naked use of the word "spirit" imply something ungrounded in social and historical reality? Certainly Soren Kierkegaard, the other RS-1 theologians, and many secular writers use the word "spirit" in a fully grounded way. In RS-1, we said that spirit is an external impingement on my life occasioning an interior crisis from which I am in flight but in which I am confronted with an existential question about my whole life. That is certainly not airy-fairy. Why then, do we suddenly need a term like "socio-spirit"?

Does the use of this term indicate a shift away from our heritage? Are we still attempting in our secular religious thinking to give full secular form to the well-known dynamics of RS-1? Or are we moving (intentionally or unintentionally) into a whole new viewpoint -- antithetical to RS-1?

If "socio-spirit" is a serious idea and not just another fad--here one summer and gone the next--then such questions as these must be answered.

In an old JWM essay, spirit is likened to the wind--it blows where it wills through individual lives and historical peoples. And the spirit cries out, "Give me form. Give me form." Joseph then spells out how no form we give to the spirit will hold it, but we must give it form anyway. And then when spirit breaks out of one form, we must give it new form. This point is not easy to understand fully, but at one time many of us understood it very well. We knew that all the forms of the order and of its mission were experimental attempts to give form to spirit. The spirit itself was blowing. It was our job to find out where, and then run fast to catch up.

Form is always social and society always has form. The term "socio-spirit" is no less jarring to me than the term "formio-spirit". The term "socio-spirit" blurs the distinction between form and spirit. The spirit can no longer cry out, "Give me social form." The spirit has been caught and tied down in some man-made "socio". No longer can the spirit break out and cry, "Give me new socio." Do we think we already have the final "socio" and that all we need is for some obedient spirit to blow through it?

Or could it be that we want to add "socio" because we have become frightened of the solitary spirit individual and his or her spirit creativity? Some say we don't deal with individuals anymore, just with communities. Any understanding of community that is not in polarity with a very clear understanding of the solitary individuals that comprise community is a strange understanding of community. Such a view of community is antithetical to RS-1 and to common sense.

The term "spirit" in our order heritage is very much tied up with the solitary individual. As Kierkegaard said, "What is spirit? The spirit is the self." The spirit is the self in its capacity for despair and for faith. The spirit is the self in its capacity to relate to all of its relating to both time and eternity. The spirit is the self in its capacity to ground itself transparently in the power that posited it. Whenever we talk meaningfully about the "spirit of a community" we are referring to the fact that the individuals of that community share a common spirit struggle. But it is each individual that struggles. To say that a community "literally" has a spirit struggle is as confusing as to say that a table has a spirit struggle. So what do we mean by "socio-spirit"? Are we trying to outlaw the solitary spirit being?

The confusion of meanings is further deepened by replacing the term "New Religious Mode" with the term "New Socio-Spirit Mode." What did the term "religious mode" mean in the original NSV-NRM dynamics? And what did "religion" mean in the social process triangles where common religion is the top ninth of the cultural dynamic? Here is one way to summarize that briefly: religion is social form given to spirit. "Religious mode" is simply another word for "religion." We used the term "religious mode" to avoid the confusion centering around the charge that we were starting a new religion. "Religious mode" or "religion" is myth, rite and icon used to capture in social form the experience of awe. We have used the term "religious experience" to mean the experience of awe itself.

For example, the Other World charts are an attempt to chart the various types of "religious experience." As such, the charts are themselves "religious mode" or simply "religion." The Other World charts give form to spirit. They contain mythic elements that awaken in us our various awe experiences. The basic image "the Other World" is itself such a mythic element. Now, myth is social form. Myth is not awe. Myth is not spirit.

So why would "socio-spirit mode" be an equivalent term to "religious mode?" If the term "religious mode" is equivalent to "spirit form", then the term "socio-spirit mode" would be equivalent to "form spirit form." Perhaps our anxieties have prompted us to sandwich "spirit" tightly in between two "forms" so it won't sneak out and upset any more of our forms. More likely the whole usage has not been thought through. And such thought-less-ness blurs many critical issues.

For example, one of the critical issues faced by the order right now is the task of evoking spirit community within the order, within the movement teams, within the projects, within the world. Without community that is profoundly rooted, we will not achieve our greatest promise and much that we are doing will fly apart. Two contradictions to this deep need became visible to me this summer: 1) We are blocked by moral and ideological considerations from building an adequate nurture life for the solitary individual. 2) We are blocked by these same considerations from evolving a polity that encourages spirit creativity.

In terms of the first contradiction, our minds are so filled with images of engagement, vocation, action, that we are over-anxious about where spirit nurture might lead. We are so anxious to slot people in some currently operating missional form that we don't allow them room to grow naturally into spirit persons who have the skills and courage necessary to create better missional forms. We frustrate spirit nurture whenever we are so urgent about "getting people engaged" that we lose attention to whether they are conscious inside themselves of the passion that makes engagement meaningful. If ideological and moral maxims comprise the bulk of our nurture, we will produce a few wooden soldiers rather than a host of spirit leaders.

In terms of the second contradiction, we are half-hearted in our willingness to allow the fully emerged spirit person in our order or movement to make a creative impact upon the social shape of the whole movement. Such a political style is not as easily developed as mouthing slogans on participation in the decision making process. It means creating a political policy of genuine trust of any person who is indeed enlivened by the spirit. And it means finding a different way to test the authenticity of the spirit than whether it issues in loyalty to our current forms of mission. The fresh wind of the spirit is always disloyal to current forms.

Conclusion: The term "socio-spirit" is an oppressive category and needs to be eliminated from our vocabulary entirely.