

J. W. Mathews

Sometimes when I have to talk, I feel that I know something about what I am talking about. I do not ask you to agree with me. And sometimes I know a little bit about what I am talking about, and I do not ask you to agree with that. And there are sometimes when I know next to nothing about what I am talking about, and that's the situation tonight. And yet I think for me these are some of the more exciting moments, for it may be a neurotic need in me or it may be the fruit of deciding to live my life in the midst of the historical community that was always experimental, for on such occasions I am pushed out to the edge of my thought. What I have to say tonight about Corporate Mission, then, I have to say at the end of what I have to say. I have to go way back behind that and get a long running start in order to say what little bit I have to say. Even at the risk of being quite, quite repetitious. For I think' you know, as you have read the scriptures and the fathers and come down to the contemporary dialogue, that fundamentally, the Christian faith has only one thing to say: and if it were something that you and I could appropriate intellectually, we would only have to say it once. But you and I know that whatever it is, it is not that. Secondly, I feel that what I have to say must necessarily be addressed to the sentinel. This does not mean that somebody who is not a sentinel is not significant. But what I have to say must be addressed to the sentinel, and I must take the kind of risk involved in that upon myself. And I mean by the sentinel, the man who is standing out on the watchtower, looking over the bulwarks, reporting how the battle goes, to those who stand behind. Now I am not quite clear about this in my own mind, but I suspect that the Lord has need of the sentinel, and he has need of those to whom the

sentinels report. But as for me and my household, we must serve the Lord. We must be the sentinels. But before I begin, if you will forgive me, I have a bit of poetry to read, and I am not at all sure but what this poetry is passe, in one sense, and perhaps the value of it is just that. Harken.

"How beastly the bourgeois is, especially the male of the species.

Presentable, eminently presentable..... "

I want tonight, if I can, to draw together the fruit of my thinking. As we have moved together, and you know how grateful I ought to be to you on the business of mission thrusting in the direction with the end upon Corporate Mission. I have to begin with you by saying tht I think the mood of our time has changed. Which mood I think because the college campuses are a barometer of the culture becomes more sharply focused just there. And by a mood, I mean three things. The life image. An emotional tone. An existential question. The mood that is past is the modd that western civilization has come to an end, that the taken-for-grattednesses of life can no longer be taken for granted, that we have gone off like the pople who lived in Columbus' time the ~~smck~~ edge of the world is jumping into an abyss. This I suggest to you has been the unconscious image. That men in western civilization have lived before since the blow-up of the great liberal experiment ending with the first world war. We have lived with this image, and the accompanying emotional tone has been that of humility and the existential question ~~hz~~ that has been addressed to us, and nobody ever addresses an existential question to himself, life always does that for us, the question that has been addressed to us that had to do with our personal living and dying has been the question of "how in the hell do you live in a world which is not world" or "when life is all about nothing, what then is life all about?" That's been the kind of a question that we have grappled with. Now I say this

mood is gone.

You are the new mood. And I would describe that to you, though I am here not at all clear, as a brand new world emerging out of the abyss, but emerging isn't quite right. It's like a brand new world hurling itself at us at the speed of light. A world we didn't ask for, we do not understand, that we cannot manipulate, but by golly it's just here. And the most frightening thing about it, I suppose, is that it is just here. And I suggested to you that the emotional tone that accompanies this image is something like inertia, but I don't quite like that word, I'd rather focus in on the word immobility, like when you get frozen on the railroad track when the 20th Century's coming at you, and yet that's not quite right, is it? It's more like 20 20th centuries converging on the very spot. And it's not fear of the 20th Century coming at you in the sense of a railroad train coming at you. It's far more complex than that, this emotional tone that's present. And the existential question that comes out of this is not the question of how in the hell do you live in a world that is no world. But how in the hell do you respond creatively to a world that by golly is just there? It seems to me that's the kind of a question. Now I want to enlarge on that just a little bit. In Colin Wilson's The Outsider which, I think, in a tremendous passion drew together the prior mood that's gone in which you had a man left outside, but now that is shifted. The man who is an outsider and is a person who does not know that he is an outsider is still a naive person I suggest. Then the problem of the outsider is: how can he get back inside and not get back inside in the sense of surrendering what he knows but to get back inside preserving to the uttermost what he has discovered as an outsider. Or to put it in other words, his problem is: how can I, having faced the fact that I am finally up against the incomprehensible that I am finally up against the mysterious, that I am finally up against the no-

participate in this life that is actually given to me and not surrender this which I know from the very depths of my being that I am over against that which is unsynonomous with anything that I can finally get my mind about. How can I authentically live in this sense? How can I be the outsider who always remains the outsider while at the same time he is the insider who is thoroghly and utterly the insider. What a man this calls for. This is the problem. Now, it's as if, here is life and by golly we've been hurried out of it. The question of whether or not a man is up against no-thing, is no longer a question except the man who is so frightened by this that he chooses no longer to listen to it and make peace with some kind of a neat little community, illusionary community if you like, in such a way that he can forget. I meationed to you this primordial man, you can almost feel him oozing up out of the swamps of unconsciousness and sticking his conscious head up in this world, and seeing the world just there, and with all begins to strive. First of all, trying to understand this world. What's it all about? How can I master it by comprehending it? Or as Paul suggested this man strives to justify ~~justify~~ himself. It's as if when you stick your head up out into the midst of a conscious world, you begin to wonder if there isn't some kind of an excuse for having showed up in the first place, and you start seeking after some kind of an excuse by projecting one ideal image of yourself out in front of another ideal image, world without end, trying to some way or another justify having shown up in existence. Or Paul says: that you strive after pleasure, and I suspect that as you oozed up through the swamps, the sensation of the murky water upon you gave you insight into the fact that there is such a thing as happiness and peace in this world, and if you could just continue in the happiness and peace you wont have to face the hellish questions of beginning to try to under-

am talking about is in a way, primordial man, in which his conscious mind is confronted with a brand new world coming into being, but the perplexity here which makes this the strangest kind of primordial man that you and I ever discovered is that he knows damnably well that he not only doesn't have an answer as to what this world is all about, but he is never going to have one. Um. This is the man who knows dog gone good and well he has no excuse for his being, but he knows something even deeper than that. That there isn't any excuse for his having showed up. That there is no justification that he can lay hold upon. And not only that, comes the weird awareness that every moment of peace is temporary and passing. That this nostalgia for that one moment, that one moment of, what shall I call it, that one moment of harmony. This will some way or make it another ~~is~~ unnecessary for ~~him~~ me any longer to have to face that we know there isn't such a moment. This is your new man. Now his question is: now that I know this, how in the devil can I live in this world? Now that I see that there isn't any final absolute value that takes away the necessity for living, but in its place I am placed with a horrible multiplicity of values. Here is 20th Centuries coming upon me, and I sense a sense of immobility before the innumerable values that lay a claim upon me, and I no longer can squeeze ~~some~~ them self-consciously or un-self-consciously out of my mind pretending that some heirarchy of values that will tell me which one is the prior one. Here is a man who recognizes before he plunges into life, before he plunges into life, that this new world too will pass away. In the past centuries, this kind of self-awareness was not there, but as we move into this new world we move into it recognizing now that it will pass out of existence and when you and I recognize this fact, it has already passed out of existence so the problem of this man is how can I genuinely, authentically, creatively mix the stuff of my being within a world which I know has no final foundation? Here is your paralysis. This

reaming out, how can I live? I put this one time for you interms of vocation and attempted to analyze the student mind in our day. The problem of vocation with the student, in terms not of vocation in how I can earn my living, by vocation in how I can have a sense of creative participation in the present world that is given to me. How I can have, if you like, a sense of significance, not in the sense of doing something big. I do not think that's the question. Not in the sense of being a huge success in the world's eyes, but having a sense inside that my destiny is a part of the destiny of history. Now comes the problem for the person inside the Church. How are you going to articulate the Christ-event to this one? And any one who says he has an easy answer, I say square in his teeth, he lies. He lies. And yet that New Testament is a strange book. I am more and more fascinated with that strange story about a lake, a great sea, over nothing, the great sea of no absolute, the great sea of no final knowledge, the great seas of no realization of the nostalgia for that moment and how in the New Testament they picture some character name of Josua, Jesus, and they picture him as just walking out on that. I think he had his hands behind his back. That's the way I would have done it. He was just walking there. Up at the Laos House I read them this little story and said, what was the most amazing thing in it? And they talked about the storm, etc, etc, they didn't even see anything amazing about a man walking out over the depths of nothingness. They never even saw it. Then he came out here to a boat. Now any old fool knows, that you've got to have a boat if you are out over the sea of you-don't-know-what, any fool knows that. Just ask anybody in culture, and yet there is this old fellow Joshua walking straight across the sea of he-did't-know-what. One fellow there in the boat said to him, do you think I could walk out on this water? And old Joshua says, come on. come on. Can you just see that fellow touching out there with his toes? Getting a good firm foot on the water. And he walked on it. He

He walked on it. Yes he did. He walked on it. And yet that doesn't quite get at what I am after. You've got to go to another story that's just fascinating me these days, in the New Testament. And it's about this fellow Joshua. They had a guy, you remember him, he was aflat on his back. For 38 years he was just flat on his back beside a pool. And they have old Joshua walk in on this scene here, and Joshua says, you want to get well? And you can almost see this guy look up at Joshua, you fool you, do I want to get up off my back? And then he begins explaining. He sounds like some friends of mine. He says yes I want to get well, but the external circumstances are against me. External circumstances are against me. First of all, the magic in the pool doesn't seem to come often. And then there is no one around to help me get into the magic. And not only that, but some old other people beat me into it. And then at once old Joshua uttered those terrifying words: GET UP. GET UP. GET UP. I was doing this up at Colgate not long ago to an audience, and I'm way up on a platform, way back, and I lean over, I lean over to some young student there in the front row. And yell: GET UP. And do you know, he did? Well, it made my point. Joshua says to this guy who had been onteh flat of his back for 38 years, GET UP, and do you know what this guy did? He got up. And he walked. He walked. And I say to you that whatever form you and I put it in, our word to this outsider who knows damnably well he cannot live as an outsider. Whatever form you work it out in, it's going to be this word, GET UP. GET UP. That what you know is what human existence is all about, therefore be human existence. And that what it means to be a human being is to be in this kind of a world that this kind of fellow sees more clearly, I dare say, than any other age in history, what it says is to receive your self, this self, in the midst of the not-knowing, in the midst of no justification, in the midst of no final escape in that moment. GET UP. Now there is one little

and pick up our bed and walk. And the word that this Community addresses to us is that not only does this seem to be the only way out, but it addresses this unbelievable word, that this ~~is~~ only way out is not new. It is the way life has always been, it's now, and ever will be. It gives, if you like, a cosmic dimension to this word. This is what it meant when they called this strange fellow Joshua who skated on the waves of a life that he did not finally comprehend, they called him The Truth. ~~What~~ What, some abstract concept of the universe? I guess not. I guess not. The Truth in the sense that ~~that~~ he was the only word that had any significance here. The word that precisely this world that scares us so is what life has always been, therefore, live. Therefore, live. Now I gotta hurry, for out of the understanding of this word, comes what the world is in dire need of, and this is the next thing as I think we've learned together here, and that is, that is the New Saint. And I tell you that our world is in need of a New Saint. And mark you, I do not even remotely mean what my 19th Century bourgeois, puritan ancestors meant when they talked about a saint. I mean that man who dares to pick up his bed and walk, and who is he? I say to you that he is the Lucid Man. He is the Sensitive Man. He is the Exposed Man. He is the Disciplined Man. We have been over some of this, and I just want to go over it very, very briefly. When I say that the New Saint is the Lucid Man, he is the man who in the midst of life, any life, all life, knows ~~doggedly~~ dogged good and well he lives over against the up-againstness. To put it in theological language, but I am almost afraid to: he is the man who knows that in every moment, he stands before God. Now to put this in terms of his own existence, he knows he is a creature, and he knows that everything else in this world is a creature, he knows that nothing in this world is capable of freighting the meaning of his life. He is Lucid about this point. He ~~is~~ is clear about this.

And in every situation, he moves into, this Lucidity is present. It's as if he stands in every moment in the midst of things before that Thing which is un-synonomous with any-thing. This is the Lucid Man. This now the Insider who in the very midst of his being ~~the~~ inside, is Lucidly aware of his Outsidehood. This is your new Saint. And secondly, he is the Sensitive Man. And we've gone over this before. You want one word for this man, he is Free. And I've noticed in the Community that those of you who have not got guts enough to pick up your bed and walk, like to fool around with this word. Pretend you do not even understand it. Think of it in terms of abstractions. Or believe that this is some way or another liscense. You little pharasees look upon this as liscense because this hides you from your pharaseeism. You little perverts, you latch on to this for you think this excuses you in your license. But all of you know good and well that when we talk about, with our friend St. Paul, the Freedom to which we have been called in Jesus Christ, that we mean neither pharaseeism that hides from the necessity to make decisions in life, nor do we mean libertineism in which man cannot dare the responsibility of living within the structures of life as life gives to each one of us our structures. ~~BMX~~ What you and I mean is the freedom to be lucid and the freedom to be utterly sensitive to life. I ~~like~~ like as I mentioned to you before Camus's three great figures: first of all, this sensitive man is the lover, he is the lover as you couldn't even conceive of what love is, he is the man who is utterly present to every not me in every situation. And yet never loses his soul to any. He loves, if you want to push the figure, he loves this moment up to the hilt, and then doesn't lose his soul to this eminent moment, but is free for the next moment. That God gives to him. To embrace this. This is the sensitive man. And secondly, is that of the actor. This sensitive man is the actor. He is the man who takes the wash cloth and wrings the last drop of meaning out every situation in which he finds himself. The last ounce of it.

This is the man who sees that life is filled with innumerable roles. And is free to emerge himself into these roles and play them up to the hilt without selling his soul to any role. Without finally becoming identified with any part. This is the actor. And the third one that he uses, is the category of the Conqueror. This is the man who plunges himself into whatever task is at hand in naked awareness that the fruit of this task shall never in any wise justify himself or any part of history. This is the man who lives in awareness while he moves into a task that 10,000 years from now some stumble bum is gonna pick up a broken cup handle, take it to an archeologist and say: look what I found, and the archeologist will look at it and he will say: now let me see, I think that came out of that time, roughly between Plato and Einstein. You see what I mean? He is a man that dares to move into a cause and lay down his life before it in sheer awareness that this cause is not the meaning of his life nor the salvation of history. You call this man an oddball. Ah yes. In all of history, the Saint has been called an odd ball. But he is also the Exposed Man. And by the Exposed Man I mean the man who has liberty to do his own thinking in the midst of this situation in which he finds himself. The man who dares to use his own critical intelligence, because he knows that finally no one has any ultimate answers here. No one has any ultimate answers here. And he is liberated to use his own critical intelligence that God has given him. He is willing to risk himself by making his decisions, by setting up his judgements, knowing that they are tentative because there are no absolutes. This is the man who dares to expose himself. Dares to risk himself. This man has to live with the consequences. He doesn't go around blaming these consequences on my poor neurotic father. Or I didn't have as good brains as my brother. Or some way or another ~~of having~~ if I ~~hadn't~~ had been born into a different situation I wouldn't have been this crud that I am. No this is the man who dares to take upon himself

the consequences of his own life. The consequences of his own decision.

And finally, I say to you, that this man is a disciplined man. And I mentioned this figure to you. I want to mention it again. Fundamentally, by discipline, I mean a man that dares to take a stand before the world in such a fashion that he opens the world, opens himself in such a way, that the world can count on him. Regardless of what you ever find me to be, I must necessarily expect you to expect me to be an Iron Man of Freedom. Whether you meet me tomorrow, ten years from now or twenty years from now, in whatever circumstances you meet me, I must expect you to expect to find me to be this Iron Man of Freedom who dares to live in the Word of Jesus Christ that Life Is Good, and life is never its own justification. The man who stands in lucid awareness doesn't try to hide from what he knows about the edge of life, the man who dares to be utterly sensitive to what God has given to him whether it's a belly full of cancer or the role of being president of the United States of America, the man who dares to expose himself, to risk himself, in using his own faulty judgment in creating ~~XXXXX~~ moral acts in every situation. This is the man who is Disciplined. And the second thing I mean by this: is that he is the man who understands that he lives under a categorical imperative. But this is a strange kind of a categorical imperative that the New Saint lives under. It is the categorical imperative to have no categorical imperatives. Which is to say it is the categorical imperative to be found a Free Man in every situation, and I mean by Freedom the content I've poured into it, and not what your desire to live in illusions may pretend that I've poured into it. Now. I am ready for just one little word, on Corporate Men. On Corporate Saints. Upon Corporate Mission. Mission, I say? Mission, I say? Here is a man with a mission? Here is a man with a mission. That underlies every possible mission. I said to you, I think, before, I say it again, and if I've never said it, I bear witness now. I am a great man. I am a great man. I am

I am not great by any standard of value you have, or you have, or you have, or I have myself or what my culture has of greatness. My life is significant. I stand before the Lord. Who chose to bring Me into being and who will choose not to take somebody else, but I say with Job, hell he's got to choose to take Me out of being when he takes me out of being. Do you see this?

I see four ways in which I have to talk about the corporateness of life. Even though I am a bewildered boy here. One thing I am clear about. That what I have been talking about has no meaning outside of commonness. Corporateness. Community. I see corporateness in the terms of always flowing out of a Community, and mark you this. Nobody who ever knew what it meant to be a free man ever existed save out of some Community. Even the ones that I would choose to call falsely in freedom, dive out of some Community. Live out of some - to be an individual I say must flow out of a community. To be this unrepeatable person before you that dares to assume responsibility for being this individual, I acknowledge to you, this is an impossibility save as I flow out of a Community. ~~xxxx~~ For only in a community, if not one then another, do you and I come to a self-understanding in which we dare to live as a Free Individual. This is to say, to use a figure that Allan Brockway used for me, is that I stand wherever I stand, I stand as the point. I like that, but in the army, what a hellish role to be assigned to, that of a scout in the infantry that I was with sometime. Lord, you'd rather be anything than the point. For the point went out and many never came back. But you and I were not promised anything in this world, in this Community, save a cross. Save a cross. At this point I represent total history of the Christian faith. I am Martin Luther. I am Thomas Aquinas. I am Paul. I am my great grandmother. I am the point of this Community wherever God has put me. Whether Lyn is standing over

I am giving a lecture, whether I am going downtown purchasing things, whether I am voting, I represent this Community. Without which I do not even have the foggiest of what it means to be a free man in the sense I described it. You know if being a free man were synonymous with having some intellectual understanding this would be one thing. I don't know about you, but I must again and again, and again, and again and again gather with this Community where they remind this stupid character up here that he can dare to be free. In order to continue to be, a free man in the midst of the world. Even to dare to be the man who places himself under the categorical imperative that there are no final categorical imperatives, I need to be nurtured by a Community that day after day after day after day reminds me that you can walk on the water. That I can be the impossible. That I can dare to be the ~~chaxxxtex~~ caricature that I am standing before you. God bless the Community. Secondly, I am aware that the Corporate dimension of mission points to the fact that I am a social creature. I haven't the slightest idea who I am except in the midst of culture. I do, I could not, I could not even say a word about who Joseph Mathews is if I did not say something about the United States of America, about my own paternal-maternal family, about my job in a particular economic order, about a past history that goes back in direction and not in another direction. We are social beings, and about this we have no choice. And on Monday I want to spell this out even more. But this is the second way I recognize that I as a free individual exist in community - that there is a corporateness about my life. And the third way in which I look at the corporateness of my mission of being this free man in the midst of the world is to recognize that finally to embrace this world, to love this world, to love my neighbor is to authentically participate in the genuinely human activity of culture. One might say that the final concern of man is the molding and shaping of this

and forms it, is the one who is aware that the final upagainstness is never synonomous with this little island that we Greeks build in the midst of it. And yet to be a human being is to be engaged to the hilt in developing these structures in which people live. In other words, if I have any genuine concern for this woman, if I genuinely love this woman, ~~X~~ my concern must be manifest in maintaining the structures of society without which she couldn't breathe even though I fixed all of the flat tires that ever developed on her car, though I patted her on the back as much as she needs it which I cannot do, she needs so much of this, that this individual relationship without maintaining the structures by which she gets food, by which she gets learning, by which she gets security, if I am not working on these structures, this person to person business, she becomes utterly ridiculous and sentimentalized. This is to put it in abstract terms, the moment that I am no longer concerned with justice with what we used to call personal love becomes the ridiculous thing that most everybody in our world knows today and accuses the Church of engaging in. What I am saying is that if our thrust is not toward the social structures, anything else we mean by love finally has no meaning. I would remind you that every night I am out in front of your mother and father's home pacing back and forth, pacing back and forth, protecting them from murderers, protecting ~~themselves~~ their property from theives in that I choose to embody myself in every policeman across this nation and symbolize this by paying taxes. I would like to talk about that out here on the growing edge, but I think you know about that. And then finally I see Corporateness in terms of uniting what my personal center of power and I have a center of power as you do, uniting it here and here aand here for the sake of actually getting something done in the structures of justice. I must say that one of the ~~en~~ ^{en} encouraging things ~~xx~~ to me in the College House is to see you rise and to take some stand against injustice in our society relative to the

race issue. But let me suggest to you afresh what you already know but need to know again and again and again. No one ever did anything about the injustices of the world except by power. And therefore, and therefore, if my concern is to be a free man, acknowledge my social being and enter into the enterprize of human culture, if I am to do this as an ~~active~~ effective person, then by golly I am going to have a corporate existence in the sense of intentionally ~~uniting my center of power with other~~ uniting my center of power with other centers of power not asking them whether they love the Lord Jesus Christ but asking whether or not they have power that can be ~~driven~~ driven toward the injustices as God gives me to see the injustices in our time. And then my final word to you: and it embodies all of this. I do not see how this is a possibility in our time, I do not see how this is a possibility except I put myself, self-consciously under a moral rule. God knows my belly turns over at this, at the thought of this. A moral rule in relationship to other people where I dare to expose that part of me that God help me I don't want to expose to other beings. And you have before you the prologomenaa, preface, of the rule that in our Community for two years we have been forging. We hope before June we can have the rest of the rule that we live under put out before you. Well, this is my word which for me draws together, I am sure without adequacy, where our grappling has been at the point of mission, at the point of vocation throughout this year. Now I meant to stop fifteen minutes ago. We have ten or twelve minutes if you would like to bring out the insights that you have gathered this year which I have missed and for which I would be grateful, and if you feel I brought out insights that are not insights or false insights, then to point them out.