

Random Notes on Guilds
 October '72
 Research Station

A guild is a group of spirit men bound together in corporate discipline for the sake of effecting a specific and direct tactical action toward the service of the humanizing process on behalf of and as the church in the world. The guild is the church. It is a spiritual concept. It is a parish dynamic in the local church. It is not a congregation dynamic, nor is it a cadre. It is a socio-religious or socio-spiritual phenomena. It is not a training or research form. It is not a nurture or discipling cell. It is not the place for worship or devotionals. Though some or all of these activities may at one time or another go on in this dynamic (indeed such may even be necessary or inevitable) yet these activities are not definitive for the guild. The guild is a religio-social tactic or rather the force for effecting such a tactic or better it is the concrete operating design for carrying out such a tactic.

A guild may deal with a comprehensive tactic and be very long ranged or it may exist for a specific relative minor tactic which would require a very short span of existence. It could deal with a very clearly established arena of society such as education. In such case it could be either comprised of spirit-men educators or it could cut across many different professions. All these matters are secondary qualities of the guild.

The concrete function of the guild is not for the most part to directly do the tactic as a guild - though indeed it may do precisely this - especially as a demonstration that serves as a catalytic agent. Usually it operates as a seeding or leavening agent which brings depth comprehensiveness, rationality, practicality and motivity into a situation by which others are aroused, equipped and directed to action.

The Guilds were local man's effort to get into the decision-making process. They were a revolt against the church which was the secular establishment and the tyrannical social dynamic. And they were occasioned by the religious order which carried the movemental dynamic of religion. They were a disestablishment activity toward changing things for the sake of creating a new future. For us, the guild is the form of the movement in which the leavening force would be the movemental order. It is our answer to the problem of directly engaging the multitudes, of enabling them to live historically, of developing the "force" to budge the snow-ball, of enabling the church to be concrete mission in the world. This has to do with our whole station--church, society, and movement.

The Guild is invisible (a secret society only when it turned in on itself--solidified--pride--prejudice--defensive) even in its visibility. Usually it is not that it tries to be invisible, it just does not seek visibility. This is true for 2 reasons: First, the eschatological. The guild seeketh not its own but others' own and finally the honor of God. It practices humility. It is sacrificial--giving its life for others. Love, humility, sacrifice. Second, the practical reason. It can best accomplish its task by being invisible, relatively unnoticed, indirection, the spiritual job (which is always indirect). Social change from within is like the Holy Spirit - it blows but you can't see it and don't know from whence it came and don't even raise the question of where it is going. The task is reprogramming the mind and hence can't be

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head-on. They do the changing for the most part. Though at times direction is necessary and at times you must literally go underground. But it is never a secret society.

It is essential that the guild dynamic be grounded in humanness. This means that we must be able to point to this dynamic now going on in our own lives however hidden, broken or fragmented. We must be able to point to it in every culture and to point to it in every age including our own. We must be able to locate it in the very dawning of consciousness that defines our race. What then are we to look for? Here lies the question. First of all, you are looking for disestablishment not pro and not trans in both its eschatological and historical meaning. But this pro-est is too fine and subtle that it may be very difficult to discern. First of all, it is always exactly in the establishment and never apart from it. Sometimes of course it is more prominent than at other times but it is very deeply within the pro-est. None the less it is dis-est and if this is not present there is not guild.

The guild is a revolutionary force but a quiet one. (for the most part. So silent that few, and those rarely, discern its revolutionary nature.) The tension with the pro-est principle is constant--always operating. This is why it doesn't stand out as dis-est. It is deep and to an amazing degree even in its push. (Obviously there are exceptions to this.) Now of course the guild dynamic operates in the dis-est but as it does, the dis-est is to the guild dynamic the pro-dynamic. In brief the guild is informed by the eschatological trans-establishment dynamic. It is the invisible eschatological revolutionary principle ever concretely at work directly in the social process. It is even ahead, out in front, walking into the future, tugging on the heavy loaded red wagon of civilization. This indicates, partly at least, what is meant by terming the guild a socio-spiritual dynamic. Now let's try to identify this essentially human going-on-ness in ourselves, our order, our society at times, and in every culture and age and in the rising of consciousness itself.

The modern guild is related to the medieval guild in its broad historical function but different in its particular role. Or better put it is the same in terms of the religio/moral role but then shifts because of our present times from the economic to the political emphasis. The classical guild was concerned with all three social dynamics: Cultural (Religion/Moral)/Economic/Political. Though there were differences among the guilds the stress was E:CP or C::E:P. Now it would be P:C:E: or C::P:E. This is obviously the reflection of the foundational imbalance in our time. The inclusive historical function of the guild would require that it specifically would take this form today and the same is true of its particular role in the rising of the economic dynamic. The guild dynamic is the direct outreach of the religious force into the social. One could term it the latent, the secular manifestation of the church. It could be termed the frame for social action or the social gospel.

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We need to remember that the guild is a dynamic of the frame for a dynamic. This dynamic has its form in relation to the Universal church and in relation to the social process. In the first the inner dynamic is comprised of awakening, care, and the guarding of human justice. In the second the dynamic is that of society itself Cul-Pol-Eco arranged by the imbalance form in the moment in history. These two models are related through our categories of direct and indirect tactics--or the difference between a social actionist and an eschatological spirit. The guild is first a religious and then a social complex and these can't be separated. The religious dynamic is the foundational. Its inner dynamic in specific form is related also to the times. Perhaps the caring dynamic is the prior always and then the times determine whether the emphasis is next on either the awakening or on the justing dynamic. At the moment I believe that the stress has to be on the awakening. This means evangelism is the prior need. But this must be seen in the most broad sense and as rooted in and directed toward secular humanness. It is awakening. And it takes priority over guardianship, though both are second to enablement or care. Another way we talk of these is the love of justice, mercy, and salvation.

Though further work on these abstract dynamics must be done especially on their interrelatedness our chief problem is the interior content and practical forms. This involves the question of the "one and the many;" what kind of guilds; the time design; the meeting format; the mode of operation and the like. Perhaps there should be one master parish guild for each ecumenical parish that would meet once a quarter and one paramount parish guild for each polis that would meet annually. In the world there would be 11,664 paramount guilds. From these on up one would be dealing with the network system. Each region would have 36 paramount guilds. Each area 216, each continent 1,196. Now what should the primal guilds which together comprise the parish guild look like. First should they be called parish guilds or should only the master guild be termed such. The how shall they be conceived on the basis of the several "calling" or relative to the delineation of the social dynamics or rather to particular issues or contradictions or should they be devised geographically something like the stake. Since this is the age of the Political should they not all be formed relative to today's human settlement polity. The network of guilds require--a local research scheme and a local training scheme and a local sustaining scheme. (Local Ch. Experiment) It also requires a 5th City demonstration project and a demonstration of motivity and concern and know-how.

The guild is fundamentally a local social/spiritual construct of human sociality. But it must have a universal dimension and a regional (or areal) dimension in order to effectively operate locally. The local construct I term the guild system. This moves from the parish level up to and through the Metro. From and beyond the metro, that is the regional, areal, continental level of the guild machinery I term the guild network. So our practical concern is with both the local guild system and the global guild network.

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The People of God have been, are, and will be, on mission forever. The mission never changes and never ends. It is just mission, mission, mission. That's their journey. They are the people of the Way. And "way" first means their mission journey. They are on the endless way of service. Second, "way" means the way of life of truth, fulfillment. Here alone is the long march, the great march. (It's as if we have been doing a quick march for 50 years in our time to catch up with the great invisible march that has been going on forever. Ever and again we must remind our selves that this final great march is not simply going somewhere to do something (though in the sense that it is going to complete the formation of history, it is this) it is itself the doing. The march itself is the serving of mankind which is the honor of God. The march itself is the creation of history, the forging of the journey of man. Of course, the march is also more than or other than the service or better put the service is one dynamic in the threefold dynamic. And of course, it is the crowning dynamic and though invisible the most visible in one sense. (From another perspective it is the most invisible of the three). Let us call this dynamic the service of God.

One of the other two is the honor of God. It, the congregation, stands on its own ground as this. Relative to the service dynamic it disciplines and equips for the march. The third dynamic we will call the defense of God. It, the cadre, also stands on its own ground as this. Relative to the service of God dynamic it is the motivating force of the march. On the journey some go and come and some get lost and some give up and some lose their sight and minds. The dynamic of the historical order keeps it every moving. So there is the motivation and the visioning glories in themselves but the greatest of these is the service of God which is the guild. In a word, there are three things that will last forever; faith, hope and love, but the greatest of them all is love." The endless journey is the journey of love and that is why it is endless. Next episode: The content of love.

Eighthly, the Guild is made up of the self-conscious religious, the congregation member, and the unchurched. The core consists of anyone who participates in it, regardless of their formal church relationship. In the middle ages, everyone belonged to the Church. It was saying they were beloved of God. With this everyone was included.

DEFINITION OF THE GUILD

Whenever two or more dedicated human beings gather together at a specific time and place to consider and act upon social issues, the dynamic of the Guild occurs. The profound function of this concrete entity or gathering in the midst of any particular local community or social group is to awaken and enlighten people to all the glory of being a human being, to forge out ways to care for and do something about concrete human tragedy and suffering, and to permit and enable humanizing structures for the furthering of the civilizing adventure.

The Guild is in fact another way of talking about benevolence, integrity, and fulfillment. The guildsman has embraced the indicative of his sanctification. What he does is a secondary question to the question of being. However, research on action must be life or death.

When the Guild meets, it meets as one of the three dynamics of the local church. Internally, it embodies the dynamics of doing, the Task Force; of knowing, the Problem-Solving Unit; and of being, the Core. These gathered two or three may be self-conscious religious, or historical churchmen, or simply those who care for human beings. The Guild meets toward embodying self-consciously and profoundly the function of awakening, care, and justice.

The primal Guild is comprised of three dynamics, the core, the problem-solving unit, and the task force.

The local Core group is most visibly present in the structure of the Guild meeting assuming symbolic and leadership roles and are the ongoing caring, motivating leadership of the Guild that call the meetings weekly, insure recruitment of the community for PSU's and Task Forces and care for the motivity life of the total guild dynamic whenever it meets as a larger body to plan or do concrete actions in the community. They hold before the local Guild, the comprehensive global stance, as that which enables grassroots man to be transformed.

The PSU fundamentally awakens the Guild and the community. It takes the form of gatherings for practical research and planning through workshop and battleplanning methods enabling large numbers of people from the Guild and the community to brainstorm the relevant data on a particular community issue, discern the contradictions, and in finally writing the viable realistic proposals in an effort to overcome the sociological contradiciton and thereby creating community consensus.

The Task Force takes on the burden of acting out and doing the deed. The Guild is therefore most actively (practically) seen engaged in being the dynamic of the Task Force. The Task Force is the group of people from the Core

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and Guild meeting and concerned community citizens, who act out the Guild plans and strategies. They implement the Guild battleplan for the community. The Task Force comes together, does the task, and then disbands. It disbands when the task is complete. It is the concrete demonstration sign of justing love, and draws concerned participants into the corporateness of the Guild meeting by the miracles and transformations of individuals, groups, and the human environment. It can never be tied down to any community or Guild structure as such.

The Core is the hard core, while the PSU is the sensitive elite, and the Task Force is the open community. The Core is marked by its dedication, it is the being dynamic; the PSU is marked by its intellectual impact--the knowing dynamic; and the Task Force is marked by its activities--it is the doing dynamic. Core is regular, while PSU is intermittent, and Task Force is multifarious. Core emphasizes motivity, PSU stresses reflection, and Task Force pushes accomplishment. In its relations to the forms of the Church, the Core most relates to the historical Church, the PSU to the latent Church, and the Task Force to the Church as creation itself. The Core is visioning, discipline, and weekly planning; while the PSU is model-building, concern, and monthly checklisting; and the Task Force is actualization, engagement and quarterly action review. The Core is similar to the Cadre, the PSU to Presidium, and the Task Force to the Congress. If Core is the Hall, then PSU is Hall Sponsors, and Task Force is Hall Users. There is finally a rockbottom correlation between the Guild dynamic and the Church lecture: presencing love, witnessing love, and justing love.