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THE HEAVENLY VISION

Is the vision come Or look we for another

I was going to talk about "Love" this morning. But, instead, I think I would like to talk about "The Heavenly Vision." The book I have found very helpful, lately, is *The New Castle* by Malachi Martin, a Jesuit. Even if you should disagree with what he has to say, you need to read it. He talks about the great visions of Wittenberg, of Rome, of Constantinople, of Ankor Wat, and many more great visions. Martin shows how the Heavenly Vision is that which creates the new social structures: those webs that define a time and a people.

Glory be to God! Though we are committed to the fact that god is the living God, isn't it hard not to see him as a dead God -- that perhaps He was living in the past, and that when He set up our structures, they were eternal, because He died, and therefore there is nothing else In dealing with theory, it is easy. But, in your life, it is very, very difficult.

A conversation Lyn and I were having irritated me, but not because of something about Lyn. She was just voicing my own uncertainties -- I have those screaming at me all the time. We were talking about what we were going to say this morning, and, rightly, she spoke her concern: What about the Word " she said. "I live my life out of the Word. What about that What about that in all your statements " Yes, what about that

I never liked Barth. Most of you know that. But in one place he addressed me and I believe in his thinking now more than I ever did. He said that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a religion. He went so far as to say that Jesus came into the world to prove religion was wrong. That happening which we call the Jesus Christ happening could have a billion other names, but it is the happening in humanness, which occasions revolution, both in the structures of This World and the structures of the Other World. The Jesus happening, as Jesus himself saw, was an entrance into the Other World that is in the midst of This World. That is why the revolution in both worlds happens. It is an entrance into it that starts doing away with it, to be sure. Therefore, I intend to forever have my feet firmly planted in the happening; yet I want to spend the rest of my life overcoming my bigotry, in articulating from that perspective. And that perspective in my training, has been "Christ-i-an-i-ty" and "Christ-i-an-i-ty" is as relative as the divine right of kings. It is as relative as ancient Sinoism. It is as relative as the innumerable, long-forgotten religions that came and went in Africa, and with the American Indian, and in every other nation. "Christ-i-an-i-ty" is passing away. It has nothing to do with the Gospel, nor the happening, nor the People of God who were in the beginning, are now and shall be -- for history shall

nor the People of God who were in the beginning, are now and shall be -- for history shall be formed.

I would like to talk about what Martin called the New Castle, and what I would like to call the "Heavenly Vision." First of all, this triangle (See triangle last page) on the left refers to a State of Being. A State of Being is without, and not within. That is the meaning of the circles. If you don't recognize, that you will get into trouble. In terms of serious reflection in the spirit dimension, I remember, in early lectures, we said an entity is comprised of a State of Being, accompanying affections, and an existential question. That is what we are dealing with here. The circles are to hold that understanding. It is clear that we are talking about a State of Being that is one state, not three. In many ways, of course, we are dealing with the Self, the World and the Mystery; though all of this has to do with the Mystery. Yet, in a way, these categories in the circles are not as important as the triangles when you see that this is one State of Being.

For instance, the lower left of each triangle is the refining of each decision of my "selfhood." I am the Believing One. I am the Caring One. I am the Chosen One. Only in Hope do you understand you are the Called One. I tell you this faith is so objective and Hope is so objective that you cannot help yourself, anymore.

The lower right triangles are "the Affections," if you can put it that way. That is Certitude where there is no certitude, Peace where there is no peace, and the Joy. It is the certitude of life, of being alive, of living, the peace of Life, of being alive. If you even remotely stick your nose up against living, you don't ever have to be told there is no peace. Why can't we learn by our own situation Why is it that every time there is a little rumble inside, we want to run, thinking there is peace some place else The upset in life is the only

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There is the trust of Being. Nobody ever trusts God. Being itself enters into my believing being, and trusts being in me. The power of being is when Being enters my caring being and posits the power of Being itself in me. You do not own it. You are not talking about my powers. You smartalecks who have such scintillating personalities and get power

my powers. You smartalecks who have such scintillating personalities and get power mixed up with just normal temporal gift -- the rest of us who do not have those scintillating personalities are onto you. Here at the very top of our diagram is the presence of being. Being enters my presencing being, and posits its own presence in my being. As the ancient Hebrew reminds us: there is no escape from the Presence, since you do not control it.

Remember that Hope is but the intensification of these: trust of being and of the power of being.

The intensification of it all: Hope appeareth, but it is not your Hope -- you do not have anything to do with it. It just appeareth. It comes as a stranger, as an alien--it just appeareth! You do not even know why you hope. How in the world could you hope when there is absolutely nothing to justify any hope? Therefore, when I read a statement yesterday which said that hope produces love, I shouted No! Hope does not produce anything! Hope is not a utilitarian category. It just Is. It does not produce love. That is old liberal theologizing; that is social activism. You just hope. It is born of caring; it does not sire caring. You are not going to get "off the hook" that way. Only when you have, beyond yourself, trusted the Mystery out of firm belief, and the certitude of life itself is matched by the power of Love, (which is never your power), does hope appear.

Do you remember how you thought that Trust existed only in the Dark Night when all turns rosy and bright; that the Dark Night is something you pass through -- like alfalfa through your "canals." You are all mixed up. The Long March is nothing that is ever over. We get that mixed up with Mao's Long March. We have to do analogical thinking; we have no other way to talk. Every march you and I can illustrate this way, began and ended. This Long March does not! You think things are going to be different. You think Majuro is going to get moving and that will solve our problems. (I do, but you shouldn't!) The Long March does not end.

Now, I call this hope the Living Endlessness. One of these days we are going to be able to adequately analyze that. When Jesus came out of the tomb, he lived those forty days--which were forty years, which are forty eons--as the resurrected man whose crucifixion had not gone away. In recent months I, myself, grasped, by faith, that I am a resurrected man. What does that mean? Does it mean that I do not have the Dark Night now! NO! Does it mean I do not have the Long March? No! What, then, is this Living Endlessness about? I like John's category of Eternal Life. Now, what is this Eternal Life that knows nothing about getting born or getting died, but is the Dark Night and the Long March?

Now I want to push on the sociological a bit. You know how fuzzy we have been in the past about what we are doing? You can get down on your knees and thank God that all of us have had the patience to live in that age and not go hurrying to get things systematized. What is your job? Our job is to build community-- call it Primal Community, although ~~every time someone says "PCE," I haven't the "foggiest" idea about what they are saying. I~~

every time someone says "PCE," I haven't the "foggiest" idea about what they are saying. I think I push it down out of consciousness, but I know the reason why: Some years ago I "Went for broke" with my life on the local church experiment; but I did not "go for broke" on something called PCE. I want to get that down on the record, because when I get to heaven the first thing I am going to be asked is, "What did you claim the promises on?" The second thing I am going to be asked is, "What was it you went for broke for?" Well, I am not about to come up with PCE! First of all, I have never been clear that we know what Primal Community is. I have still got "fuzz" about the overlay. I have to use Primal Community, but I am not so sure anybody but God could "go for broke" on that. Anyway, I am for the Local Church. I do not have to have that poetry, but I am for the local manifestation of the People of God. If that is what is meant by Primal Community, then put a footnote there for me, because that is what I have "gone for broke" on. We are out to build the community, Godly community, the People of God at the local level.

Then, we are out to awaken mankind. That's evangelism, though that word, once glorious, now has become cheap. We are out to awaken, awaken, awaken! It is at this point that I suspect we will find out that the Town Meeting is the most powerful evangelistic tool we have ever come up with. Now, you abstract theologians can go off in the corner and think through (and you've got to) the relationship of Town Meeting to RS-I. In the meantime, our lives are changed, and new creations pop up all around. That will give us plenty of time to resolve abstractly how it is that God works through Town Meetings to happen the great happening that brings forth new creations. He is nowhere near as interested in the happening as he is in the new creations that come out of the happening.

Now we are about Education: education for life, training for life, equipping for life. God's People have always been concerned with that, however pervertedly. We have a training job to do. I want to come back to where that ought to be focused.

I decided to put Social Demonstration up at the top, for it goes through that pyramid. That is, service of the world. What I am saying is, that in the midst of all the ambiguities we have about what we are about, foundationally, down in the very rock, we are clear that we are the People of God. We have become clear about the sociological form of the Church, or God's People, in the abstract. This, however, does not solve the concretion of our time.

The last is spiritual nurture. We need to go aside to not only nurture ourselves but to delineate the highways and byways of the Other World that we might nurture people. All of us know that, after we break the back of Social Demonstration for ourselves, the Lord willing, what we are going to turn to next is this nurture. We have "played around" with Odysseys. We have worked hard to get ourselves prepared for that day. The day after tomorrow our wayside stations are going to be nurturing human beings, primarily. The form of that nurture I do not even know -- but it will be complex.

I look at the coming day as a time of great wonder. The Community, the Awakening, and perhaps the Social Demonstration, the Equipping or the Training, and the Nurture really

perhaps the Social Demonstration, the Equipping or the Training, and the Nurture really are a dynamic. We need to have lines to show the crossing and interrelatedness of these in many different ways, in order to get at it. In December I felt that never was there a time when we were fuzzier about what we are doing; but at the same time I had never been clearer in my whole life. That didn't just happen. That has come to us, like Faith, Hope, and Love has come to us.

Out of visions, images of heaven, pictures of the Other World, come complexes of civilizations that enable people, however brokenly, however fragmentedly, to live their lives as human beings and to get, however modestly, their creativity into history. These civilizations come and go as the visions come and go. Civilizations arise and crumble before the eyes of history.

The question I would pose, if I were to talk on this, would be the question of John the Baptist. Is the Vision, not for 500 years ago or 1000 years ago or however long ago, but for this moment in history, come? Has the vision come? Or look we for another? I told a group yesterday that if I went to heaven, or if an archangel came to visit me, and I was asked that question, I would say, "You mean, personally, or as a representative of history?" Mark you, this is wicked, what I am going to do, but I am so anxious to get to heaven that I want to be honest. How could I say otherwise, personally, that "yea, verily, the vision has come!" But I boast that I do not exist save as a part of and, indeed, as a representative of history; and at that point, I am reluctant to answer. Now, what I am confessing to you is that I am either a very confused old man or I am a mouse. Is the vision come, or look we for another? If I said to the archangel that the vision is come, answering just personally, he would very properly, reply, "Say a few words." And, because I want to go to heaven, I'd say a few words. And I would go to the blackboard, I'd take a swing like that, and a swing like that, and I'd put up a triangle, and I'd do my best to draw a pyramid. and, I am sure he would say, "Thank you, but that's not very good."

Now what? I do not know, but I have always liked that phrase, "standing on tiptoe." These days I am on tiptoe, for this question, for me, is not an abstraction. Is the vision come, or is the Mystery come--or look we for another? It's a glorious thing to carry the Ark into the next generation; but, if the vision's come and we are carrying that into the next generation, then...?

In doing the Town Meeting, in doing Social Demonstration, in doing RS-I work, in doing Training work, in doing Spiritual Nurture, there seems to be no end. I would suggest to you that probably at this moment in our history that's our crucial question: Is the vision come, or look we for another?

Joseph W. Mathews, March, 1975

