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Marshall

ACADEMY REPORT

THE EDGE OF THE SPIRIT IN OUR TIMES

Academy Sensor of the spirit		Shock of the Future			The Journey		The Objective Word		The Jesus Election	
1	7	8	19	20	27	28	53	54	55	

1. One key to the role of the Academy in our corporate lives is that it forces us to deal with the edge of the spirit in our movement's journey. You can perhaps sneak through a 44-hour weekend without having to meet the full story of our spirit life. But in an eight-week program in which the total curriculum is taught and where RS-I is taught once a day and all weekend, you have to face and do battle with the concrete satanic power of this historical movement.
2. Perhaps we just finally ought to say self-consciously that one of the roles of the Academy is to be a sensor of the spirit life of the movement. And by the spirit life of the movement, I don't mean a specific group of people some place, but the wind that's blowing through our whole times in which we all participate. The order, the symbolic order, the order of spirit across the globe all feel the same wind.
3. The statistics and plans and history of the Academy don't hold this story. Those can be easily seen. What's hard to see is the living dynamic of our everyday passion. It's just rooms full of very complicated lives.
4. I want to try to paint a picture of the spirit reality of this academy as it has been on its death and life struggle. First, I'll point to the most significant events as the students saw them in their evaluation of the Academy. Pedagogy guild got 85 votes, which is triple anything else. The cadre workshop, where the participants go out to a local church and then come back to the Academy for workshops was the second most significant event on their list. Other events that rated very high were Kazantzakis, the Urban Academy's entry into the Academy, the Ur Image course, the Community paper by Bonhoeffer, the J.W.M. paper on the Christ of History, the Individual and the Family course, the Cambodian Ballet (which was one of the celebrations), and the ecclesiola dynamic. In one way or another the ecclesiola dynamic got mentioned 40 times as a significant event.
5. Would you like to know which courses were crucial in the participants' minds? Individual and the Family was by far the first. Second probably was the World Religions (Ur Images) course. Third was the Old Testament, and fourth, Nation and the World. Then comes a tie between Church History and New Testament. That gives

IMPINGEMENT OF FIERY ISSUES			HOW HEALING TOOK PLACE		
The Reality	Pain Felt	Unfaith Beneath	Where faith began	New feel	New Responses
global shock of future DEMAND concrete life	wide eyed groan fearful agitation	domesticate disconnect Easier but heroic Predict collapse	Pressure to Produce in Actively Risking New Roles	Amazed Grateful	Signs of Responsibility
Journey of the self The Journey	dread of irrational shame of spirit storms	mindless contentment prideful gloat	See pain as door to life= design of spirit world	Shock of authenticity Courageous facing up	Using own pain to serve others Relaxed openness
<del>               The Objective Word                harshness of life                pain of despair             </del>	no excuse ↕ hopeless anger irritation ↘ spirit laziness	sophisticated style passive defiant Gnostic	Obligatedness is Good Faith is Constant Surrender	Tears over own wretchedness over unfaith in history	Irrational Affirmation of life Love of Symbols
The Jesus Election	absurdity Radical Constancy	Subtle Self Justification Refusal of Dependence	realignment of personal past Appropriation of Heritage	Humble Confidence	Missional Courage

you a feel of the values.

6. The chart on page 2 is an attempt to pull together the faculty brainstorm. We found four basic arenas or places where the struggle was most significantly going on. Those four realities that were breaking in upon the participants form the left-hand vertical column of the chart.

7. The left half of the chart we called the impingement of fiery issues. By impingement you mean some particular reality of life having to be tangled with, where there is a pain felt, and underneath is a unfaith being struggled with. On the right half of the chart is how healing took place. This is where faith began. Then the chart points to the new feel and the new responses that emerge.

8. Part I, the impingement of fiery issues, might be introduced this way: People are operating out of obviously false images. When those images are revealed to be false and are clobbered, suddenly what people are over against is the shock of the future, having to utterly re-do life. That throws them back into various kinds of weaknesses. Behind the shock of the future is just demand, which has both a global dimension to it, and the particularity of concrete life. People were deeply offended at the global dimension of man, but also deeply offended at the particular concrete dimension of man.

9. When we worked on the Nation and World and the Community and Polis courses, on social methods; when we heard a guest lecture on the global movement and were impacted in terms of the broad vision of our Movement's encounter with history, we approached the broad dimension of demand--a deep and frightening demand. But there was also the very, very particular, concrete end of the demand--going home to your particular family and your particular budget, dealing with your particular cadre--a certain kind of impinging horror related to dealing with the concretion of doing something with your life.

10. When the connection took place between a particular life and the global realities of the times, the full force of shock rang through. Maybe "wide-eyed groan" gets hold of the pain people felt over against the breaking through of the demand. The massive complexity, the depth of irresponsibility, and the pressure of responsible waiting gives you something like a wide-eyed groan. Waiting is an especially exciting symbol to me. You're wanting to go out and do something, but you don't know what to do yet. One way to get out of that tension is to say you can't do anything and don't care; but to stand there in the middle of the complexity and care is a sort of waiting that goes deeper and deeper and deeper.

11. Another word that holds the pain is fearful agitation, as you are engaged in the solitary creation out of nothing. You've got to go home and reorganize your whole budget, your whole family, your whole cadre, whatever. Just staying conscious of the hard work that has to be done calls forth a sort of fearful agitation. Being missionally misunderstood and rejected is a horrifying anticipation. There's the dread of personal collapse as you move back into the structure of history.

12. The unfaith beneath those feelings is first of all an attempt to domesticate the demand upon your life. By domesticating it, we meant working the wild reality of our time down to teaching my Sunday School class, or teaching a new course at my public school. Or, if I teach Rs-1 once a quarter as a fourth teacher, I've dealt with it. Or if you're doing a SEAPAC workshop, if you can water it down to a project in

Hawaii, you've got it.

13. There must be some way to domesticate the global demand into something I can handle. The best way is just to disconnect. To do that is to say that the global reality is too much for us anyway. Let's keep it at arms' length and build no connections between my personal task and all that horror that's going on out there. Don't let the global complexity have any impact on my timeline. I think that's why some of the movement lectures were so powerful. They made it clear that we were a connection between the individual and the entire global situation of our time.

14. Another way to put it is that I want it easier, but heroic. It is not that anyone came right out and said, "Life ought to be easier." There's something ridiculous about that, and yet that was an operating kind of unfaith. It was seen in wanting to run out there in the world and do something quick. The long haul of day after day after day ambiguity and suffering wasn't what I volunteered for. One heroic thing would be enough. Or maybe it comes to you as giving your faith to a structure somewhere, rather than to the God of history who blows up every structure every 13 minutes.

15. Another way to come at it is that you predict collapse. There is another kind of unfaith. You say, that you can't possibly move into all that: you will try--and you use your colleagues' mistakes and collapses as solid proof that that is a course impossible of investigation.

16. Now, when you move to Part II, how healing took place, you look at where faith began over against this unfaith, the spirit over against the block of the radical demand upon lives in this time; I think faith began in the pressure to produce, and in the active risking of new roles. Pedagogy guild is an illustration: You have never been on stage before as a fourth teacher; you have never been on stage before as a witness to God. Or think of a cadre lab. You've never led a workshop before; you've never been in a group where you've got to come up in two days, with a rather incredible model.

17. Thus, being under pressure to produce, and in doing so to risk yourself in new roles, proved to be a locus where a lot of healing took place in people's lives. Pedagogy guild, labs, even certain kinds of conversations were crucial. People played the roles of student priors. When they went to get people out of bed and demanded that they deal with their lives, the student priors' getting up and going was itself a testimony.

18. We feel that we broke something loose here that left us amazed, amazed with the power to deal with life's reality. People were grateful, grateful in an uneasy sort of way because you had power to deal with the reality, and that meant they could deal with it, too.

19. There were many kinds of new responses, seen in signs of responsibility. People were changing their clothes, occasionally cutting off a beard, participating in the risk of giving a witness or doing something they wouldn't do before, raising serious questions about their own vocational future, working harder, and being more dependable in attendance. You could tell something had taken place in their image of what they could do with their lives as the signs of responsibility increased.

20. The second area or reality I would call the journey of the self. It has to do with a particular journey and with the fact that all of humanity is on a journey. The journey is areal thing that has a center and a return. It has an order to it, and you can talk about it. There's a human model for it. The new religious mode charts would be a focus for this encounter; and also the Kazantzakis study, the Hesse book, the sharing of all kinds but especially in the context of giving organization to the spiritual world.

21. The pain that was felt in the encounter in the area of the journey was first of all just a dread of the irrational, a deep dread of the unknown stuff. It was like you had been thrown out into the world without a map, and you don't know how to find your way around in it. Then there was also a shame of spirit storms, a shame having to do with the angers and the despair that you feel, and with the bitternesses you have and the inauthentic shallownesses that keep popping up in your consciousness.

22. Beneath this pain was the unfaith of mindless contentment, the stance that what it means to live is to strategically fend off anything that breaks loose in your interior being, because that destroys contentment. To think about your interior being blows up your mindless contentment. Maybe this comes as a prideful gloat. "I'm a spirit giant. I have developed over several years of pain, a remarkable stature." And a sort of pride about the pain is there, developed from within. Here again is a kind of unfaith, for the awesome overwhelming gift that this journey is, is a humility.

23. Where does faith begin to bubble loose in this area? It is where people see spirit pain as a door to life, it is when they see despair as a passageway. They see the design of the spirit world. They see that there is order to it, that you can have confidence in assuming responsibility for your own fight with the interior dragons and goblins and things that go bump in the night.

24. In the Academy, that sort of break loose occurred in the Kazantzakis study, in reading Hesse, in the Odyssey, often in the guilds, and in the ecclesiolas where you took seriously the interior journey of another person. That occurred in just piddling around. People who had been down suddenly were mysteriously up. There were deep encounters in terms of an opportunity to work through the deep pain. Witnesses of participants in Academy worship services were one way in which this happened.

25. Maybe an image or two out of Kazantzakis will illuminate the necessity of making a choice of whether to be spirit or not. The first image is that of the worm on the dark meadow. The worm has a glow of phosphorescence and talks about wings for an hour or two, until its mouth is blocked with earth. The worm talks about wings and then hits the dirt. The other image is that of being a bridge, a bridge through which the spiritual reality surges like an electric current, then the bridge crumbles away behind. Are you going to be a worm on a dark meadow that disintegrates into the soil, or, as you disintegrate into whatever you disintegrate into, will you be the channel through which the reality of humanness happens?

26. Now, what happens to people when suddenly the positive possibility of being what they are begins to be embraced? There is a shock of authenticity. "My Lord, that's life." You see life differently. You go to the art museum and see a picture--Zing. You walk down a street and see people talking together--Zing. Everywhere you look, the shock of authentic life breaks through to you. There is a courageous facing up to the dreadful despairs, an ability to stand before your

interior suffering as real life.

27. One of the new responses that emerges is that people use their own pain on behalf of others. Instead of being ashamed of your own experience, ducking and running from it, you take it and bleed meaning out of it in a way that is helpful to another person. Relaxed openness is another objective new kind of response that might emerge. In your physical work, in your intellectual work there is a little less tension and a little more openness to pouring yourself in and having your life addressed again in one way or another--instead of having a deep interior hope that once you have had your life addressed, you can sit down. But the feeling that I'm on a long trip and being addressed is something that will not go away, and one should be open to it.

28. The most important thing that goes on in the Academy is just getting clear on RS-I. That encounter with the objective Word is just something that is there in life, a reality that you have to bump into and make a very clear decision about. I'll put it this way: where people ran into the word most powerfully, in this academy has to do with the "all is Good" pole.

29. The way that came is that there's a harshness of life out there, and I mean the harshness of life was lucidly grasped. How do you get it said to yourself that your problem is not the harshness of life that's out there, but somewhere else. Your problem has to do with not being able to accept the fact that this harsh life is the glorious gift of God.

30. The Old Testament poetry was intensified in the area of the harshness of life. We talked about Assyria, "the rock of my anger, the stamp of my fury." Or there was Job, and the Lord was throwing painful arrows into Job's gizzard, using Job as target practice. "Life is good"--My lord, how is it even possible to conceive of that when you see the deep and overwhelming trouble that is going on, or when you read in the Old Testament myths and stories of the unfairness and unbelievable violence in the structure of existence itself? It just rocks you with the impossibility of standing before life as it is. But that's not the problem. The problem is related to the gifts that are given to me as creativity.

31. The other side of that is the pain of despair. I mean you ought not be in despair, there is something awfully unwholesome in that.

32. Where the pain was felt is held in the phrase "no excuse." Surely despair out and out is an excuse. Surely the harshness of my family is an excuse. Surely the harshness of my congregation is an excuse. Down underneath that is spiritual laziness. But underneath that "no excuse" is the demand to pick up the complexity and forge a healing. So what you feel as the current of electricity goes between my spiritual laziness and that objective word which says NO EXCUSE, no excuse, no excuse, is just anger, a sort of helpless anger, a sort of irrational. "I don't want to hear about this again."

33. The unfaith that is underneath is typified by what I would call the sophisticated stoic. The stoics we have now are clever. They build up resources for ten days anticipating the address, and when it finally comes they are ready for it. The other way of unfaith is held in the passive defiant gnostic, who's always looking for a clever little word that always ends up being an excuse for laying down in your spiritual soup and doing nothing.

34. Let's take a look at the sophisticated stoic for a moment. He's the guy who manages, through great efforts and long experience in the spirit movement, a cool smile in the face of the harshness of life. He's bargaining for a word, but for a word that gets him out of the pain, that at least gets him out of the pain as a significant part of his creative living.

35. He's the one who would say we need to give bread to the world, because people need something to eat. You can't address the word to someone unless he has bread. When he experiences the fact that the bread they need is permission to deal with their life, no matter how deep the suffering and tragedy is, that is a deep sort of offense. He seeks a way to find emotional and intellectual security. He seeks a way to find lucid imperturbability. He may come to you very worried about cracking up. He's seeking for resources, he says. First you think that that is a very wholesome sort of search. But it really means resources to enable him to meet life with his smile, because he realizes that his smile is being threatened by the harshness of life, and what he really needs is more interior resources to meet life with a cool grin.

36. Now he can anticipate the word of God coming ten days ahead, as I suggested, and start building up resources to resist it. If a hard blow really hits him in the mid-section, then you may shake loose a sort of mild uneasiness. (This is the journey of a stoic into the center of being and mild uneasiness is the first step.) He may come up to you and say worldly hard things, like "I think you ought to push people harder." When we have been throwing 12 inch guns in every direction we know how. What is that guy saying "push people harder." What he really is, "Ha, ha, ha, you missed me."

37. When the possibility dimension gets to the sophisticated stoic, then he gets some cynical cutenesses out. That's the second stage in his journey. Mild uneasiness is followed by cynical cuteness. When you effectively undercut cynicism comes the third step of gritting your teeth. There is pouting and anger that surprises you sometimes. You bawl somebody out for something that they need to be bawled out for, but you listen and you see that this guy has been looking for an excuse for a day to grit his teeth in public.

38. Finally, when the "no excuse" word blows through to the deeps, and the weakness of his life breaks through from the bottom, then the last stage is something like "bitter tears." You remember the story of Peter when the cock crew? Well, once in a while that is the way it happens for the stoic. The cock crows and his cool collected smile just disintegrates into a puddle. And the story goes, Peter wept. This weeping may take on many forms, for there is something very powerful about that business of weeping.

39. Now, let's look at this passively defiant gnostic, who is also a crucial character these days. He lives out of self-depreciation, out of his weakness, out of his prediction of collapse. You run into a lucid moroseness. It shocks you because it is so lucid and still so overwhelmingly morose. There is a very subtle tricky search for a word going on in the midst of this lucid moroseness, a word that would be some kind of a stable excuse from the most authoritative person you can get it from.

40. You must always be on your guard for the kind of trick the passively defiant gnostic is playing on you. He makes a constant bid for attention. He runs up to you and says, "I am not going to do so and so." You think, "What are you telling me for? Why didn't you just not do it?" He says, "I am going to leave at the end of this week," and tells you a long story as to why, and you don't dare say, "that is

really tragic," or, "I don't see any way out." It's like he needs some one to hold his hand. He says he can't hold on much longer, or insists directly that you come sit down and hold his hand, and tells you some long dismal story back behind this.

41. If you give them any kind of affection, any kind of sympathy, any kind of participation in the horror of their story, it is like you hear clicks going off inside. "Aha, it is true I can lay down and not live my life forever." They are looking all over the place for somebody to lay out a neat little word for them that says life is impossible or other gnostic information like that.

42. Somehow you have to show them that their story is just ludicrous and at the same time maintain a hard stand of possibility. You have to say that there really is possibility for this life, that there really is no excuse, and at the same time enable them to laugh at themselves.

43. I remember one woman who was great fun for us all. She anticipated that the next pedagogy guild was going to be disastrous for her in some way and went to bed. We knew that it was utterly essential that she go down there to that pedagogy guild, so as a staff we strategized for a while to figure out how we could get this woman to see that she could pick up her life and go up to that pedagogy guild. So we sent one of the faculty down with this message for her: "If you don't get out of bed, we are going to call the police!" She peered out of the covers, and with a shocked look on her face, said "For what?" "For not coming to your pedagogy guild," the faculty member said. The woman just broke up with laughter and that gave rise to the kind of conversation that made it possible for her to see that she could go. She went to the pedagogy guild, and sure enough, what she had anticipated happened. It blew her into a whole new context for dealing with her despair.

44. A little later she got equally concerned about the Gospel of John, and decided to miss Thanksgiving dinner because John was going to be read again. Having already read the Lazarus story, one of the priors went to the women's dorm, called her by name, and said, "Come out." That led finally to him coming in and talking to her there about the fact that he wasn't going to go to dinner until she was. Finally, she got trapped again in the possibility and agreed that she could go ahead maybe for one more day.

45. At any rate, this kind of human being the passively defiant gnostic is something new and wild. They come up with wild excuses and what you have to do is to create some kind of humor, to blow loose the ridiculousness of this very sober and morose story.

46. Now, the places where healing took place, were RSI, RSI over again, just carved to the bottom. Also, it was New Testament course and informal conversations, as I have mentioned here, where the Word of God got put particularly for somebody. If you look at RSI, the structure of how this Word comes is that the obligatedness of life is good. You can hear Bonhoeffer there--the obligatedness of life is good. Another way is to see faith as constant surrender of your life from all security. You read the Tillich paper and it shoves you to give up your security and move into a new kind of future. Faith is just a gift, a constant gift, constantly received.

47. There is a learning to trust being underneath your affirming harsh obligations as a gift. It is like faith is a conversion to being converted over and over. Being converted over and over and over means totally dying to the old self and picking up a new attitude toward the future. It means a constant passage through despair into living out of the power of being that transcends despair. That is a very important



thing. Settling down into despair is not the word of God but it is living your despair that is the word of God. It is taking that despair as the doorway to life. You live your despair to the deeps and anytime that kind of a word gets broken through where despair is wholesome and meaningful and utterly crucial to my journey, I dare to participate and to work through the deeps of it into the transcending on the other side. That is where lives break loose.

48. We were talking about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and the issue came up that Jesus was in a situation of unchastity because he was disturbed, desperately disturbed, and that was a problem in Jesus' life. We had to see that being desperately disturbed was no problem. We saw that chastity there in the garden had to do with taking upon yourself that desperately disturbedness and drinking of it.

49. I want to point at the interior feeling underneath the category of fear. It seems to me that the stoic can't weep. He is just fixed in a cruel smile, The gnostic can't weep either. He is fixed in a morose sly smile. The man of faith just breaks down and cries. The man of faith has two kinds of tears, the tears of the damned and the tears of Jesus over Jerusalem. The tears of the damned are sort of like Peter's tears when the cock crowed--tears of remorse and self-shame.

50. Other tears that are also very real are expressions of faith on the positive pole. That's the picture of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, and what he is weeping over is the unfaith of Jerusalem. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, stoning the prophets, and knocking down those that are sent to you. How I could have gathered you to my arms as a hen gathers her brood, but you would not." Or the story of John, when Jesus is at Lazarus' tomb. Everybody else is weeping over Lazarus' and their own death, but Jesus is weeping over their unfaith, over their disbelief that life can be dealt with even at the utter extremities of life.

51. I will read from an Academy evaluation to help here. This is sort of an irrational affirmation of life. This is utterly spontaneous and shows a love of symbols. Whenever a love of symbols is the kind of response that is going on, you know something is happening in the depth dimension.

52. Here is a part out of an evaluation paper written by a very able and extremely lucid high school girl. She mentions that the third pedagogy weekend, the arrival of the Urban Academy, the seminar building weekend, the Bultman paper on Faith, and a particular conversation were crucial events for her. The Family course, the Old Testament, Natural science and Philosophy were her crucial courses. "The labs were invaluable because they gave form to the possibility of the demand to be the Church. The five o'clock lectures often helped to keep all the rest of the work and study in perspective. Corporate life, I will miss it extremely much when I go home. It was great when I discovered I could be corporate, with people I disliked or even hated. Symbolic life became more and more important, worship as a reminder of decisions and uniqueness of self and the body, housechurch as care for the journey of the whole body. Songs were the glue throughout. In ecclesiola, especially helpful were the games and conversations about the new religious mode charts, the New Testament, and the Psalms. Having these wretched facilities was helpful (This is going all the way in irrational affirmation.) After the novelty wore off you didn't have to think about your surroundings except what was your obedience assignment. The internal operations in terms of one-day wonder and team assignments and obediences was a powerful image. Concluding comment: You push through to the bottom and come screaming out the other end. You experience the rebirth of wonder, only to discover that you have only begun to penetrate the fathomless depth of the fantastic creation you are. Without the poet you never see there is anything there to discover. The Academy is ever inadequate

but a painfully powerful push, the only one that I have found in the journey of being humanness."

53. There is something rather awesome in certain kinds of responses, especially to worship as just the fabric of common ordinary, everyday existence and when that kind of response is there you know something is happening.

54. Now, in this last row is the category, the Jesus election. In a way this is where the bottom of the deep struggle is. What does it mean to be little Christs? What does it mean to be the light of the world? The absoluteness of that story! The picture of the eschatological hero as my story, as the story of humanness, this is the business of picking up the eschatological hero as the model of what it means to be human. It is the deepest of all struggles and an extremely significant one in this particular Academy. It had to do a lot with appropriating your own particular past and with appropriating the past of mankind. This is really, something significant.

55. The other categories on this row are the absurdity and radical constancy which shows up as subtle self justification and refusal of dependence. Healing takes place in the realignment of personal past and the appropriation of heritage. There's a new feel of humble confidence and a response of missional courage.

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