

"AS ABRAHAM WAS NAMED, SO ARE WE"

History has raised for us the question of who we are as an Order today. We are driven to four areas to discern an answer.

The first of these areas is our Summers. The last four summers hold what the Order is about. Unless we are able to tell, and retell, and capture the depths of the last four summers, we do not know who we are. These summer represent the first twenty years. Beyond that, they represent, fifty-six years of church renewal, as so forth back through history.

The second area is that of the Turn to the World. We must try to describe what dynamics are occurring and have occurred within the Turn. When did the Turn begin? That is hard to nail down, yet, basically, it is focused through the last year.

Then thirdly, we will not be able to say who we are unless we are able to simplify or rationalize or put some kind of form on everything we have created and on the movement as it now is. We need to articulate the mission.

Finally, we must state plainly what we mean in saying we are an historic reality.

This summer, one character in history kept coming back to my mind--that was Abraham. Probably for the first time in my life, I identified with him. In the first place, I had not really wanted to identify with Abraham before. Secondly, when I did relate to him, I much preferred to do so as a father, as a patriarch, as a bit removed. But Abraham came back to mind, particularly in the way he and some of his descendants got their names changed. So I turned back to the story of how Abraham got his name.

Abraham had a promise that he was going to be something. Abram and Sarai (these names are important) had already made their own attempt at creating the future--in the form of Ishmael, the slave girl's son. Then, the Lord decided to move in:

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty. Live always in my Presence. And be perfect so that I may set my covenant between myself and you and multiply your children.' Abram threw himself down on his face. And God kept speaking to him... 'So I make this covenant and I make it with you. You shall be the father of a host of nations. Your name shall no longer be Abram, your name shall be Abraham.' (Your name shall no longer be 'High Father', but shall be 'Father of a Multitude'.) 'For I shall make you exceedingly fruitful; I will make nations out of you, and kings shall spring from you. I will fulfill My covenant between Myself and you and your descendants after you, generation after generation--an everlasting covenant to be your God; your's and your descendants' after you. As an everlasting possession, I will give you and your descendants after you the land in which you are now in,

"All the land of Canaan. And I will be God to your descendants.

"God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai, your wife, you shall call her not Sarai, but Sarah.' (You shall not call her 'mockery', but 'princess'.) I will bless her and give you a son by her. I will bless her and she shall be the mother of nations. Kings of many people shall spring from her.' Abraham threw himself down on his face and laughed. And then he said, 'Oh, my God, can a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old and can Sarah bear a son when she is ninety?' He said to God, 'If only Ishmael might live under thy special care.' (Choose somebody else, please.) "But God replied, 'No, your wife Sarah shall bear you a son and you shall call him Isaac.' Abraham laughed." (You shall call him: 'It's a joke') "With him I will fulfill my covenant, an everlasting covenant with his descendants after him. I heard your prayer for Ishmael; I blessed him and I will make him fruitful. I will multiply his descendants and he shall be the father of twelve princes. And I will raise a great nation from him. But my covenant I will fulfill with Isaac whom Sarah will bear you at this season next year.' And when he finished talking to Abraham, God ascended and left."

I began to think about that name, Ishmael. Ishmael has a meaning also. Ishmael means "God heard." Well, God has been listening to us up till now. God had been doing what we say in many ways. God has been blessing us.

The only curious factor about these name changes is that "Abram" and "Abraham" really are not very different, either in the words or in the meaning. He went from "High Father" or "the one on top" to "Father of many nations." A modulation in numbers there, perhaps, but not a lot of difference in basic meaning.

The basic difference is with Sarah. From "mockery" to "Princess." I am not clear what it means to be married to "mockery" for a century. I think being this group of people means being in covenant, or married to, this group of people, and other times, I think it also means in covenant with, married to, the Church and so forth. But, in this struggle of naming ourselves, articulating our identity in history, Sarah has become our situation. There is mockery in that. We are living in a moment in history so fantastic with so many gifts that you could never articulate them all. You can only point to them. Yet, finally, we have become more conscious in our time, of the depth human struggle and problems than any other people in history. There are more problems, because we are more conscious of them. There is mockery in that.

But, at this moment in history, we as tired revolutionaries, now have a child. At least, we have been promised a child. I vacillate on whether Isaac was already born at one of these summer programs or is just about to be born. Intellectually, I tend toward the latter; existentially I feel like something is already here. The promise is, basically, that fruitfulness has been given to us. That is the message of the last four summers. It has been given to us despite ourselves. We went into a summer for one

reason and the fruitfulness was something else every summer.

I don't know exactly what it was in Summer '70, but I am quite sure what was born (now called the Local Church Experiment, which I equate with a series of documents written in the fall) was not what we set out to create. I do not mean that we lacked intentionality, but God chose to insert into our plans something else. He inserted skill, prowess and spirit methods.

The Local Church Experiment has been effective in spite of us. God chose to give us fruitfulness. If you try to wander through the tactical systems, from scratch, you will find out the spirit methods are the genius of it, not those tactical systems, although they are important.

In summer '71, we set out to create the vision of the New Social Vehicle, we were given the Other World. That was the most dramatic of the fruits born to us without our asking. For we did not anticipate the Other World in the least. The whole spirit milieu came in, not through the Psalms and Spirit Conversations as such, but through the social analysis itself.

Or, in Summer '72, we set out to articulate that social vision and implement its practices. We did not implement the practices in that summer at all; but we did envision the New Social Vehicle. Something has captured our imagination and vision that was born to us.

This last summer, we set out to devise the practices of the vision, but what we discovered was that the forces are now formulated. The New Social Vehicle will be done. It will be done by the Church, the Guild, the Order, and so forth. And there is another peculiar quirk in this summer for me. Although we happened upon the birth of a formulated movement, we also, in this summer fell to pieces. And every one of those pieces is a fantastic tactic. We shall try to piece together these tactics into a gestalt. So another kind of fruitfulness is ours.

The second thing has to do with the Turn. The Turn itself has given us a new focus. I have not been able to describe this focus adequately to myself as yet, but it is there. It is something like the difference between Abraham and Abram. We began the Turn as one group of people and came out of that Turn another. That is our focus. What you and I know and sense we are is the only thing that will ever bring focus to us. It is not going to be a master gestalt that intricately relates all our complexities, though that might help. Finally, the focus is going to come out of something interior; something that has to do with our decision, our intentionality. It will be embodied in a particular way.

In examining the dynamics of the Turn, we should note that the Turn itself began, I think, the moment we knew we were winning. The Local Church Experiment made it into history as an entity that is affecting the whole Church. The Religious Houses, in spite of all of us, came off. Penetration in spite of everything else we had begun continues.

That is a curious record when you look at it. We started the Local Church Experiment which consumes any man's total power, but we kept teaching RS-I weekends successfully, according to the statistics. How penetration has continued I am not sure. We have been bemoaning the quality of recent teaching. I would date it basically from the beginning of the Local Church Experiment, when the complexity started setting in, we began to lessen our agility, skill, prowess and depth, and yet, it came off. Continually, the Lord takes whatever you do and turns it into a miracle. The Academy is just one more example of our undeserved success. When we knew we were winning the Turn began.

In the midst of the Turn is the Dark Night. That Dark Night comes because you are engaged. You stick your fist into the reality of engagement and blindness sets in. But, I don't think that is accurate. Or sometimes, I think the Dark Night is there because of our insecurities and fears. Of course, those elements are there as St. John spells them out, but this is not a cause and effect relation.

The Dark Night is simply the Journey. And since the Turn has taken place, we have known and embraced that fact. The Dark Night, the sheer apostasy in the midst of battle, is the Journey. That Spirit Man, Abraham, comes back to mind. He went to a land that he did not know. All his life, he seemed to be full of that darkness. He certainly met death down there in Egypt when he gave his life over to the Pharaoh. The Dark Night is the Journey.

But, in the midst of that Journey, St. John (among many other Church Fathers) is telling us that we can no longer trust our intuitions. If you are like me, you experience that daily. I can no longer trust my intuitions; I can only trust God. (And I had to go through a long struggle deciding to trust my intuitions,) I am aware that whatever little bit of my life I get into history, God will make it into a miracle.

One illustration of that statement is recruitment. Everyone in the Movement says one-to-one recruitment is passé. That statement is not quite accurate; one-to-one recruitment is more like the Model-T. God took the Model-T motor and transformed it into the miracle of the V-8. The basic dynamics of the Model-T motor are present today in the V-8, even though the former is no longer in being. In the same way, you are never going to stop the dynamic through which a prospect's life is changed in recruiting him to RS-1. Anyone you recruit is bound to change, even if he leaves in the middle of the course. Although the Winter Quarter was probably our best quarter for recruitment, we were still operating out of the Model-T methods of the past twenty years. The transmutation of the Turn, however, told last quarter that we have to do far more. Our old methods of recruitment must be miraculously transformed into tertiary penetration of every parish across the globe. This kind of transformation is what I mean when I say we are in a new mode of our existence.

The last thing about the Turn is that when I became aware, as Abraham did, of being the "father of many nations." Instead of many nations, however, it was many tactics. Every tactic is crucial. You could spend your whole life doing nothing but teaching the scripture-scanning method we used this summer. That would be a great life.

But today's breakthrough is getting the image before the Movement of the Cabaret dynamic. It is creating wonders in the midst of our actual social situation. That is a tactical breakthrough. The Movement now knows that this is the image of its task. The realization completed the Turn. That does not mean every cadre and every individual in the Movement is "Cabaretting" every day. When we get that job done, the twenty years will be done. If we get that done this year, we will have done the twenty years. Our job is to have a wonderful, "miracle happening" appear in every community.

The third point in the search for our identity is that the mission has been clarified. We have clarified it by operating on a common battleplan across the globe. Behind that battleplan, keeping it unified, are just three things. We are still about three things in terms of our goals and aims. They are: We are out to re-educate the whole Church, to reformulate the whole World, and to remotivate the whole revolution.

Now, I am aware that you re-educate, reformulate, and remotivate the Church and you re-educate, reformulate, and remotivate the World and so forth; all three basic dynamics are present in each. But I think the emphasis is here: We are basically out to re-image the Church, to give it a whole new grasp of itself and its direction. Basically, that job is done. Our job there, now, is to radicalize the renewal forces themselves. I find myself doing that over and over, whether I want to or not. I am dealing with the renewed Churchman. His images of renewal and his theology about it are all fogged up, but he is being the Church in a whole new sense. However, he does not even know he is aware of this new sense. Our job is to radicalize that awareness and deepen it. So the education and renewal of the Church is an on-going task.

The reformulation of the whole world is not done, but it is begun. I am convinced that we are the New Social Vehicle and have been for a long time. We have been embodying the new decision-making process, the new Economics, and the new Culture. Yet, our task is overwhelming. To reformulate the whole world is to catalyze the New Sociology. It is to enable people to discover the sociology that they are in the world.

I think about remotivating the revolution as the third part of the triangle. That gives me objectivity. This is not just the remotivation of ourselves, but the remotivation of the Spirit Movement in history. We have said for a long time that we are about the job of forming the Spirit Movement which already exists and is more than ourselves. That is the objectivity here. We intend to motivate that whole revolution that is already there, give it form. Our task is to spiritize the Movement, wherever we find it, giving

nourishment, and depth. The Spirit Movement is just as objective as the Church, and the World. The Spirit Movement of awe causes a revolution in history.

You could go on to more specific goals which are simply the Logistical Systems. Our specific goals are to spread the Secular Mythology through an Impact System, through Depth Training, through Signal Demonstrations, through instant Interchange. These goals are done by the Order, the Cell, the Guild and with miracle Action. If you put those Logistical Systems into a sentence, you have the focus of our goal.

My last point on the question of our identity, is simply that our new story is all of the above. We are an "isness" in history. Our uneasiness about giving that thing a name is the uneasiness we have about any particularity: We know that if it goes into history, it will not last. Actually, we have names. We are called: "The Ecumenical Institute." We are called, in some places in the world, "The I.T.I." So, we are a names entity. Our insecurity, or our task, is, "What is the adequate name?" We shall probably create it out of the moment. I like the story of Abraham. He did not create his name. He was given it. We shall discover our name as time goes on.

We are a sign of the secular-religious of our time. This is the unknown land for me. What is "secular-religious?" What is that religion that is going to maintain humanness in being throughout the entire future? We are a sign of that secular religion. And for me that is where I stand with Abraham. If you want to bring the New Testament in, it was faith, trust in God, which was counted to him as righteousness. That is all that I know we can do in that area.

The Church is beyond denominations in our time. And, more recently, we are beyond the religious orders as they have been understood in the past. We are even beyond The Order as a religious order. Yet that is the name I use. We are The Order, plus something. We are a secular-religious order.

The main way I grasp this entity is through the image of the "end run" to the World. We saw ourselves out to renew the Church in order to impact the World, and now we are doing an end run to the World to signal the Church directly what renewal of the World is. I go back to that image, but it is now transposed for me to that point that I now stand between the Church and the World as with two huge tasks, one on each shoulder. I have to deal with and stand before both. Yet, when I go into one, I hit the other. I go into the Church and I hit the World. Cultural Christianity is so strong and deep, that it will never be eradicated. It is only going to be transformed. I go into the World and all I meet is consciousness of consciousness of consciousness, or I meet the Religious in the World. We are in a religious revolution. (We used to say "cultural revolution" because the term "religion" was fogged up.)

The best image I have is that magic ball trick in which the magician

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has one ball; then he has two balls and then he has three balls. That is the way the Church, the World, and the Movement are. You are always finding them: one, two, three and somehow that begins to hold the focus of where we are. We are, as the Order, out to re-educate the Church, to reformulate the World, and to remotivate the Movement.

We have found the new Church because we always deal with the consciousness of reality. That is to say, the Church is always the consciousness upon the given of the world. The Church is always being present to or caring for the world. We set out to renew that Church first and now it is dealing with the World.

In our situation, any of our Fathers of the Old Testament would have said: "Lord, if you don't take this action about this problem before this date, I quit." We may have to say this. We do not have a name now and yet we have to say; "If we do not have a name by 1976 we will not be ourselves, (or 'we quit')." Certainly 1976 can be the year we make the decision about our name. (Not that it will be us making the decision; we will be bound to make this decision--after we have made the decision.) Therefore, I would call us to be patient with the Lord while we are being impatient with the Lord. I would have us be the entity we are at this moment in history.

David McCleskey

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