

STATE OF THE MOVEMENT: THE SPIRIT LIFE IS AWAKENING.

1. What we have gotten clear about in the last six months is that the state of the movement has never changed all through history; it is just one long march. But there is a sense of excitement for all of us.
2. Now I am going to talk a little bit about what it means to be a clergyman in the church today. I had a friend call me the other day, and he was really mad. He was mad because he was part of a corporate pastorate, and somebody had not called on him when they called on the senior pastor. He said, "This is a corporate pastorate; when you come out here to see a minister, you come to see us all." And all of a sudden it hit me: a corporate pastorate does not mean a group of clergymen getting together; it means the church getting together because that is the only kind of corporateness that we have. So I stand here this morning to tell you that the state of the movement is that the future is ours. It is ours as the church, not as clergymen or laymen alone, but as the corporate body of Jesus Christ, standing present to all of life.
3. A few years ago, when we used to sing the song, "We can order chaos, Four by four, four by four," that was an abstraction to me. It was as though we would come into a chaotic situation and get out our clubs and just beat, beat, beat, and get everything into 4 X 4's and then we would move on. I think what has happened since we have recovered the other world is that we have discovered that life is ordered, and the orderedness is disclosed when we become conscious of our presence in the midst of chaos, and that we can decide to relate to it. The visits have been exciting to me. The question that keeps coming up is, "What has occasioned my life?" or "What has occasioned my state of being?" My life is just spread out on that chart. This summer when I looked at that and learned that I had to do visits to the other world, I said, "Now, that is impossible. What is that all about?" Then, finally, I discovered that that was my life. And that our fathers have talked about this with the word "God," or "the mysterious power," and with the words "Son" and "the Holy Spirit", and the "peace that passes all understanding."
4. I want to read to you a Psalm that kept speaking to me this last quarter, Psalm 69.

Save me, O God;
for the waters have risen up to my neck.
I sink in muddy depths and have no foothold;
I am swept into deep water, and the flood carries me away.
I am wearied with crying out, my throat is sore,
my eyes grow dim as I wait for God to help me.
Those who hate me without reason
are more than the hairs of my head;
they outnumber my hairs, those who accuse me falsely.
How can I give back what I have not stolen?
O God, thou knowest how foolish I am,
and my guilty deeds are not hidden from thee.
Let none of those who look to thee be shamed on my account,
O Lord God of Hosts;
let none who seek thee be humbled through my fault,
O God of Israel.

For in thy service I have suffered reproach;
I dare not show my face for shame.
I have become a stranger to my brothers,
 an alien to my own mother's sons;
bitter enemies of thy temple tear me in pieces;
those who reproach thee reproach me.
I have broken my spirit with fasting,
only to lay myself open to many reproaches.
I have made sackcloth my clothing
and have become a byword among them.
Those who sit by the town gate talk about me;
drunkards sing songs about me in their cups.
But I lift up this prayer to thee, O Lord:
accept me now in thy great love,
answer me with thy sure deliverance, O God.
Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink
let me be rescued from the muddy depths,
 so that no flood may carry me away,
 no abyss swallow me up,
 no deep close over me.

Answer me, O Lord, in the goodness of thy unfailing love,
turn towards me in thy great affection.
I am thy servant, do not hide thy face from me.
Make haste to answer me, for I am in distress.
Come near to me and redeem me;
 ransom me, for I have many enemies.

But by thy saving power, O God, lift me high
above my pain and my distress,
then I will praise God's name in song
 and glorify him with thanksgiving;
that will please the Lord more than the offering of a bull,
a young bull with horn and cloven hoof.

See and rejoice, you humble folk,
take heart, you seekers after God;
for the Lord listens to the poor
and does not despise those bound to his service.
Let sky and earth praise him,
the seas and all that move in them,
for God will deliver Zion
 and rebuild the cities of Judah.
His servants' children shall inherit them;
they shall dwell there in their own possession
 and all who love his name shall live in them.

5. A visit to the Other World is not a trip; it is a happening, and the conversation that follows that happening is the kind of event which enables us to become more conscious of what we already know, of the fact that we stand present to be in the world and not of the world. The other evening I was sitting with a group

of people, and all of a sudden this man who had never had a former visit said, "You know we live in two worlds." He had that kind of clarity. The way I experience it today with any group is that you begin a conversation by asking a question, and someone speaks up and gives an answer that drives everybody four levels deeper. And then the mistake always is that I want to say, "Would you ground that for me?" Everyone in the room is shaking his head, and you need to go on to the next question, because everyone is clear about what is going on today. The man of faith, in reflecting about his life, no longer can see any hope in the kind of cynicism that all of us can participate in so easily. Finally, he sees that not even his giddiness allows him to escape from the real deeps of his despair. And he comes to a kind of soberness. I would call it a sober resolve and a happy decision. It is that kind of soberness that I experience in my life, and yet on the other side of that, happiness.

6. I think of Samuel, of Nicodemus, of myself. I do not know about you, but I am a preacher's son and very religious as all preacher's kids are, but finally the issue of being a man of faith has nothing to do with your background. Samuel was a religious man; Nicodemus was a leader in the church; and we could go all through history noting examples, but when the Lord calls a man, that man makes a new decision about what it means to be a human being and what it means to be the church.

7. I have experienced that after the Great Turn those kinds of decisions have to be made. I took a look at the charts the other day, trying to figure out how you talk about this last quarter and about the future. The bottom areas of each arena of the Other World seemed to leap out of that chart. The first one was something like "seduced by the mystery." And there is a phrase on there that I can use if anyone asks me what was the last quarter like. It was an utterly incredible quarter, and there are 79 more to go. If this is a 20-year march, there are 79 utterly incredible quarters left to go for the Church of Jesus Christ and the Spirit Movement across the globe. One day when I was in New York City I got on the subway and instead of going to Long Island, I ended up way on the other side of town. It was utterly incredible; here I was all alone under the city of New York; and yet there was something like a real joy about the ride all the way back downtown to the Village. That is the way you experience life as man of faith in our time. It comes as an utterly incredible, utterly possible kind of future. There is a new kind of spirit, and yet an unsettledness is present.

8. Before I came here this week, I kept trying to think through what it meant to be the incarnate man. I remembered two years ago we talked about being the resurrected man; the sanctified man is the same man with a deeper kind of consciousness. Every reformation begins with justification and then moves into sanctification, because we all know what can happen when you just grab onto the spirit and run. I mean you burn up. Finally you hear the Word and be the Incarnation. It is no longer "Call to Walk in the Way." It is "Called to Be the Way." Have you noticed lately that people are looking at you? Oh, the Psalmist is clear about how some of them are looking at you. That is because we are a sign, and I want to run from being a sign, because the whole world then becomes your parish.

9. I used to hear Charles Moore talk about people being healed in RS-I and I didn't believe it. I mean it is silly; the only way to get healed is to take medicine. And all these healers on TV; I think that is all set up, just like

wrestling. I just could not understand that until Sylvia Robinson, who is 74 years old, went to RS-I. I said to the first teacher, "Now you have to keep an eye on her." But he turned to me and said, "Has she ever been to church?" And I said, "Of course, she has." Then he said, "Don't worry about it." That is a shift for me. In RS-I we are not out to teach a course; we are out to tell everybody that this is what it means to be the church in our time. Sylvia told me before the course, "Pastor Bob, I'm never going to make it." But Sunday noon she came out dressed to the hilt, deciding to start right away to recruit the sewing ladies. She had been healed. She went home and laid out the whole course to her daughter. She had been healed. I told my wife, who went to teach a PLC and came back more beautiful, that I was convinced. One of our colleagues taught a course where a man raised his hand in the middle of the Church Lecture and kept raising his hand, and finally he just asked out loud: he was an airline pilot and wanted to know whether he had to change jobs if he joined the movement, or could he still fly. It is this kind of story that enables us to understand what it means to be a part of the Great Turn.

10. It has been five years this January since I took a PLC, yet it is as though I have only been in the Movement for six months. It came to me that way in the Patron's Dance at the Base this last summer. That was where I had to decide to be the movement. I do not remember what context was set by the master of ceremonies; all I remember is that I did not get right out on the dance floor. It was as though I knew that if I took that waltz, I was no longer going to be able to play games. The only alternative that I had was to leave. That kind of shift from single-mindedness, with burdens, to single-mindedness without burdens was probably the most significant bunch of wisdom that I have heard since I was born.

11. Signs of this shift appeared before the Great Turn. About 35 colleagues from Milwaukee were on a bus going to Peoria for a Regional Council. About 90 miles out of town, about 11 o'clock, all of a sudden there was the great big knock in the motor and one of the vice-presidents of my congregation got out of the bus to check. I said, "What is happening?" He said, "I don't know." Then, all of a sudden, "Bang!" We pulled off to the side of the road, and there was a big rod down in the oil pan. I just went in the bus and said, "Well, we just threw a rod." And everybody looked up and said, "Oh?" and went back to sleep. And then the thing that sort of scared me is that when I went off to get a tow-truck, I came back and could not find the bus. I drove all the way back to where we ate supper and back again and no bus. I knew there had been a shift somewhere, especially when I hardly got upset.

12. The Great Turn is knowing that you march to die, not die to march. It is like feeling that your kite string has just broken, or it's that kind of consciousness; it is having butterflies in your stomach all the time. The only change is that every once in a while you feel that they get turned up for a second and then back down again and you know something has happened. This is when you decide to march to die. We began to talk here again about what it means to be an order. We can get awfully romantic about that and I refuse to think about it in order that I do not get romantic, because often I would love to go off and join some group. But the religious orders have changed history by doing nothing more than bringing to the consciousness of the people who have decided to be a part of them that they have always been part of an order. St. Francis is my order, just as the order of the movement today is mine and yours, and we are out to be those spirit men.

13. It is easy when a course fails to point your finger at a religious house and say, "it is the order's fault." Or, it is probably just as easy for the religious house to point its finger at the metro or the region and say it is the movement's fault. You notice how easy it is for us to get dividing everybody up when something falls through. But the most helpful remark of all is in the last summer lecture, when Joseph Mathews said, "We're all the order." That has been ringing in my head ever since. We have become conscious of our responsibility to the church. But yesterday all of a sudden it hit me that what we are out to do is to build bishops. I mean what we are out to do is to care for the church. What we are out to do is to be that sign, that presence of the Holy Spirit. That kind of priorship is not priorship of a little team. It is priorship of life, of the world. We are responsible for everything that goes on in this earth.

14. Incarnation that I talked about earlier is like somebody has just taken the wraps off. Can you feature that? And I do not mean a beautiful morning--it could be a crummy cloudy morning like today. But that all of a sudden someone takes the wraps off of all of creation and you find yourself responsible for it. It occurred to me this morning that the first man was responsible for the whole thing, naming the animals and everything else. Finally, we are out to name the future. WE can decide. The spirit methods are what give us permission to deal with peoples' lives.

15. I have to tell you a story. Last Sunday night, we decided that Jeannie and I would invite some neighbors over for supper. Sunday came, and the cadre division was helping us fix the meal. Then somebody walked up and said, "What are you going to do tonight, Bob?" And I said, "I don't know." The hour came, and these people all showed up--you know, it was like having an RS-I-- six people were supposed to come and four of them came a half hour early. They all showed up, and the punch wasn't even ready. We sat there, and I was watching these people. I said, to myself, "Now, I'm supposed to do something here." Something's supposed to happen. We can't have a workshop, that isn't quite informal enough, and a Scripture conversation isn't quite secular enough. We were sitting in a room with all the Movement symbols on the walls and people kept asking me about them. Then I realized that all but two of them had had RS-I. None of them liked it very much.

16. And then all of a sudden, I asked my question. "Now, what were you doing twenty years ago?" The Spirit broke loose. They had permission to talk about everything under the sun, things I am sure they do not even talk about at home. And then they began to shove at what the future will look like in our community. As I said to the cadre afterwards, "If you ever need proof that spirit methods work, there it is." That experience did not have anything to do with personalities, or the fact that we were friends. It is the fact that you and I have methods that enable us to talk to any person about what it means to be a human being.

17. It is that kind of event that gives us permission to begin to talk about what it means to be sanctified--what it means to be a man just filled to the brim and overflowing with the spirit of the Lord. The historical church has become the tool for the Word of Jesus Christ to get into history. I do not know how many of you have tried guitar services, or how many of you tried to throw out your church hymnal, like I did. We even tried to write our own, in fact we had an edition every year. We would throw together all kinds of neat songs, which nobody liked to sing very much. Except after we sang them we felt good about

getting back to our old hymnal. But the worship life of the church has just come alive. When people look for the renewed church they look to see where worship is coming alive. Last Thanksgiving Day four churches were gathered together--350 people--for choirs. And it was just an explosion. Two of the churches were galaxy churches. Three of the pastors have been to PLC. It was a sign of what it means to be the church in our time. All of a sudden the old symbols are coming back. They've really always been there, it's just that we are beginning to re-appropriate what it means to be the Church and the clergy and the religious. It is a strange kind of power, a new kind of authority.

18. The only way I can talk about what is happening in the movement is the kind of unsettled clarity that I have about my own style and my own life. I am an extrovert and I have discovered that I do not need to be that anymore. I can decide to be nonchalant, I can decide to be the prior, I can decide to be the one who has the authority of a Patton and the humility of a Thomas or a Peter. I can begin to see roles that we need to play as we begin to enable people to come alive with the spirit.

19. The other night I went to a community meeting where a city engineer stood up and tried to explain to us what a traffic engineer was. He said there are three things that a traffic engineer does. He turned the board around and here was a triangle. He filled in the three poles with the three dynamics of his job and said that if any one of those legs breaks, the whole thing collapses. And then he said the Christian Church uses the triangle also, it is a very powerful symbol. And then he went on with the rest of his speech. I remember hearing that somewhere before.

20. Finally, we are the ones who, by our popular preaching, and by our style, are beginning to speak with a new authority. Remember when Jesus in the temple read the scripture and then sat down and said, "I'm it." I do not know if Joe Slicker came to your first consult two years ago, but he came to ours. It was down in the basement of this great big house on the North Shore. He did not even say "The Lord be with you," at the end of the meal. All I remember is that he read a scripture passage and nobody wanted to deal with it. Finally, he said, "You know what, I'm it." The room was silent. Then at the end of the meeting he just put his glasses down and said "Good night. It's been nice having you here." And we knew that we had been had.

21. We have one lady in our church who has decided to leave the galaxy, she says she can't decide to say "I'm it." She's still shaking from that kind of witness. Now I have discovered that is who we are, that we are the ones who hesitate, and yet on the other side begin to sing "My Consummation." You want to sing that song every hour of the day, just to get grounded in your life the kind of possibility and the kind of humility that's necessary for the future. And finally, life goes on forever. In the sea of tranquility, it talks about Endless Life.

22. I do not know how many of you changed your approach to penetration this last year by saying "invitation" instead of "recruitment." We were spoofed by that song. You know, we figured we would be nice to them, "Let's invite them to RS=I." We recruit and I think this afternoon we are going to get back to that kind of fundamental. We're not out to invite people to some nice happening, I mean we're out to recruit people to the army of the Lord. And we have to clearly understand that kind of thing. We see ourselves as being those who are taking

responsibility for the historical church. Recruitment and pedagogy are going to go on forever. One way that our region is going to experiment with that is to talk about P.O.'s as pedagogical observers and not participant observers. Every person in our metros and our regions need to go to RS-I once a quarter. How else can they be the movement? It is the style of being the recruiter and the pedagogue--of utter care. Who else chases people to the bathroom? I mean it's taking care of every person that comes to that course. Actually, recruitment is the beginning of RS-I. When you hear a knock on your door, that's the beginning of what it means to take RS-I and to hear the word.

23. Most importantly, it's going to be our style. There are three ways we could talk about that. We need to push, but not hurry. We need to be sober and yet happy. We need to be those who care, but who are utterly nonchalant. Something that has amazed me is that people could go to sleep on the subway and yet wake up at their stop. I sense that that has to be our style. It is like you can walk into a room and you go to sleep--I have a colleague like that--she is a selective sleeper. She will sleep through church council meetings, but she wakes up when she has to say something. She might just be thinking, but it looks like sleep to me. We are the ones who sleep until our time comes and then we just engage. We meditate, and then we engage. We are the ones who are wise as serpents and innocent as doves. We are the cobras that just wait.

24. That was the significance of the watch exercise this summer. You need to be conscious of how we wait for the right time, and then we assume a radical role. We might spend five years preparing a church for the local church experiment, because we understand what it means to bring off a sign in that community, and in that denomination and in the church across the earth. It is by understanding the dynamic of waltzing, of liltng, of singing, of marching, that we are out to create spirit. We are the ones who set the style in the future.

25. Peter is one of my meditative colleagues. I do not know if you remember the story about Peter. There was a time in Jesus' ministry when he was talking to a great group of his disciples. He was talking about what it meant to eat his flesh and blood and what it meant for him to die and to be resurrected again. Immediately following his short course on what it meant to be a disciple, one of his disciples said, "This is more than we can stomach. Why listen to such talk?" He left and a whole bunch of them left. Jesus turned to his twelve disciples and said, "Do you also want to leave me?" And Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Your words are words of eternal life."

26. That story speaks to me as I look into the future. Finally everyone of us is going to say, "I cannot stomach the possibility that I see for my life and for the church and for the globe." Then we will make a new decision about what it means to stand present to God, what it means to stand present to our lives, what it means to be the sanctified ones. The only question you ask a colleague who is running, the only question we ask ourselves when we begin to run is, "Where are you going to go?" The Lord has the Word of eternal life. Amen.

Robert Hanson

