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PRIMAL COMMUNITY

The Journey of our civilization on this planet since the beginning of time has been a long, complex journey toward authentic human community. Indeed, we are at a point where we are making a new major leap. You can remember the journey we have been on: bands of wandering families scavenging the wilderness; then moving into settled tribes where one could have sheep or cattle or land for cultivation on and begin to form community-- villages and cities; finally, the mass of urban complexes in which you and I now live. It has been the great journey of raising the question: How do you create a context or a structure in which every human being participates significantly, grasps his life as powerful, and engages in building the future of his community and the future of his civilization?

Every time I reflect on what we discovered in the ruins of Pompeii, I am struck by the incredible clarity they had about the basic dynamics of the city. You recall that in the east was the temple, in the west was the forum for political debate, in the south was the marketplace and in the north was the Lyceum --all facing into one courtyard which contained a large stone upon which people could stand and where community style was forged. When people decided to get up on that stone, that was a public local community convocation because that human being would address the depth issues, and begin to cast a vision for the community. It was there that they grappled with how the future needed to look, standing in the midst of economic, political and cultural dynamics in society. Our civilization, whether in the West, the East, or the south, has been grappling with just that question: what is humanness, or how do we order our life together humanly?

Primal Community is where you hang your hat at night, where most of your time is spent. When you figure it out, you have 70 hours of creative engagement to spend in that home and that community; beyond the ten or fifteen hours of commuting, 50 or 55 hours of secular employment, then 110 or 120 hours left over, with maybe 45 or 50 spent sleeping. We realize that everyone has that kind of time. It is the local community which cares for and gives focus to families and the network of human relationships.

Now we are at the edge of a breakloose in social experimentation. We had to step back in the last several years to ask the question: "What are the necessary dynamics, the necessary processes within any society which create full human community?" Within the social process triangles, on the cultural pole, is community groupings, which directly hits most of the mayor tactics or social demonstrations in which we are engaged. Within community groupings are categories like social aggregations and basic roles. It also has the dynamics of natural, vocational and volitional community. As you begin to explore the dynamic of community, and through experimentation, you begin to discern the spirit significance of the dynamics.

Of the five presuppositions of 5th City reformulation, two have to do primarily with spirit, though all of them are rooted in that. When you deal with all the problems, you deal with the depth human issues and the symbols in order to recover what It means to have a self-identity and a relationship to those around you. I am not an independent entity, nor a machine in society. I am related to my wife, children, extended family and community. I am bound up with all of that and my identity is related to all of that or It is not an authentic identity. One lives and dies in that reality, knowing that, finally, primal community consists in those who show up at one's funeral.

Primal community is also related to geography and history. It is the place where life vocation is expended. Excitement, engagement, powerful expenditure In society are experienced in those 70 hours a week, and on the weekends. Primal community is where life is disclosed in the fullest, where man takes responsibility for the whole family, the job, the associations. It is the turf where one is born and where one will die.

The shift today is shown in the urban lecture of CSI. The individual started out in a localized community where everybody knew everybody else, 95% of the people in this room were raised in a small town setting, whether

on the plains of Kansas or outside Chicago. On the other hand, most of your children have never experienced that kind of community.

I was raised in a community with a population of 100 People. We had a clear identity. Whenever we strayed outside Its boundaries, there would be a fight to defend our identity, our pride and our community honor. Time was ordered around the whistle at the mill in the valley. When the whistle went off at 8 a.m., things began. Either you were there on the job or you didn't have a job. When the whistle blew at noon everyone had lunch, and at 5 p.m., you left for home. I knew almost everyone by first name and they certainly knew me--the son of George Cramer and the girl who married the guy who married the Martini girl. If I was ever found doing wrong in that community I was immediately taken home to my parents.

Today there is an immense shift from that intimate community. The people of Morton, Washington have their primary Images forged out by the network of communication across the globe. They know more about China than they do about Mandel, Washington and Mandel is only eight miles away. My father is a good example of that thinking. He still fears anything like a city. He cannot sit down with anyone other than a Caucasian of his own age and be at ease. He would rather watch TV at his sister's or talk to her kids. If you want to talk about China or Russia or Africa, he is utterly informed. He is aware of what is going on across this planet, even though his internal space is paralyzed by that knowledge. That affects his decisions and those of everyone else.

The struggle to invest money in something is affected by the fall of 40 or 50 empires or national leaders in the last few months or years. New capital for investment is coming from Japan and the Middle East. The depletion of resources, the enraged and starving peoples are factors impinging on decisions. The complexity of the global village, its time and its space, constantly bombard the individual.

I now live in Washington, D.C. Six students live in the Religious House with us. They are from Tunisia, Madras, Taipei, Nairobi, and one is a Chicano. Think of how many races are on your block. It is that kind of interaction day after day. One woman in our house got a Job at the Catholic University of America, and discovered that there are eight nationalities on the faculty, and none are American. They are constantly traveling across the globe, operating in a structured relationship to the university.

When I visited the UN Director of Rural Development for Latin America for LENS marketing purposes, I had to go through three security checkpoints before seeing him. I had to show my identification, sign my name, verify that it is my name, then I got a badge, and was spotted by a guard when I got on the elevator and when I got off the elevator. That is "simple" security.

You and I identify ourselves by our future vision. I do not talk much about the past, but rather about my own passion for the future. This illustrates the shift from the simple to the complex, from simple space to a global village.

How do you solve the problems of the city? How do you do a 5th City these days knowing that in the beginning there are three or four thousand identifiable problems? To begin to move on a community is staggering as you think about solving all those problems at one time. There is all the bureaucracy and its interrelationships, which give permission, funding or whatever. Solving these problems becomes more complex when I consider my own perversions. I see that I am not past being a racist and I will not be until I die. I am inescapably brainwashed--I am still scared when I see two or three black men come down the street.

The Primal Community Experiment begins Monday in Bombay with a Social Methods School there as well. I have been talking primarily about the Primal Community Experiment in North America. I could also talk about Hong Kong. The Research Assembly there was held in a Roman Catholic seminary that overlooks the end of a peninsula. As we left the peninsula, we came upon a huge, high-rise complex, consisting of four buildings each housing 5000 people-- all in one square block. The bus line ends there. Each morning at 7 a.m., 150 buses pull up and then pour out through the village of Aberdeen and around the peninsula to Hong Kong. As I chatted with a man who lives in that high-rise complex, he pointed out the poles that stand in front of the apartments. His apartment, he carefully explained, was the one right next to the pole with the red pants hanging on it.

How do you care for 16,000 people like that? Anonymity is a given condition. It is possible to be cut off from civilization. it is possible to decide how anonymous to be. It is also possible to create relationships, but it is demonic If you do not understand that you are free to create meaningful relationships.

During the past few years I have been picking the brains of my parents for the stories from which my life was forged and experienced. You may have done some of that yourself -- trying to go back from the present to Europe or Africa or wherever the roots are. There is no community on this planet that is practically homogenous. We all tend to float around and spend six months to a year at any given residence. We bounce about in a flux and flow in search of authentic community for 20th Century man.

As we look at the events of the past 10 or 20 years, the experimentation becomes visible. Certainly the Chinese and the Russians have been experimenting with forms of primal community such as communes. In North America, Europe and elsewhere there are high rise villages, model cities, new cities, village projects and so on. There is a hunger for a way of forming new community that is authentic. For the most part the models that you see as you look around are fairly grisly.-- fifty communes, Jesus freaks, or some Indian swami in a little cult community living together and sharing wives, children and so on. They are utopian, looking for some idyllic situation which provides as many highs as possible and as few lows.

It has not been working, to be sure. The suburban ghettos and the rural enclaves have not participated in that. Dallas, Texas has the most humorous collection of suburban names in any city: Heavenly Hills, Sunshine Meadows, Peaceful Hollow. The number of suicides is staggering. Alcohol and drug use is more intense than in most any inner city. The models we have been given so far, are inadequate, and, therefore, you and I have launched this experiment.

We set out ten years ago to create a model out of our particular understanding of life in the Word of Jesus Christ; a model that must be profoundly human, rooted in the depth of consciousness, anchored in the past and open to the future, and which stands before Being Itself. We want a model that allows anyone to participate in history, no matter how racked or frightened his interior psyche is.

We have worked in Mowanjum, Oombulgurri, Uptown 5, Hong Kong, Shum oi parish, and with some 50 galaxies across North America. Last January we symbolically launched the guild to enable awakened secular and religious men to work together in the local community. We are clear that we do not know what to do. We do have some hunches, values, and methods, and the Word allows us to move on. We address the victim image of a community, and our work is local and geographically delimited.

One image that comes to mind is Byculla parish in Bombay. You may have heard of the cages they have there, each with a maiden inside on a chair. The sailors come and choose a cage in which to spend whatever time and money is required. The model is for Byculla or Clarksburg, South Sydney, Glasgow or Frankfurt, Paris, Nairobi, Kinshasa --It must demonstrate that primal community can happen anywhere.

And there will be a network of demonstrations. The Global Language School in Korea and the work with secondary schools in Japan are examples. Yet all these demonstrations are one thrust in history. The symbol of that for me is our experiment with intercessory prayer, using intercessory prayer to focus our consciousness on this globe and this experiment. Our accountability will be held in events like visits from men like A.M. Joseph or Jim Campbell, and as we gather for councils to redo our models. There will be training schools and consultations around every religious house.

We are going to recover, or perhaps discover, how local man can be global man. Until you and I are clear that we live in a global village and work together, local man will not come off. Unless it is done on behalf of the future of the planet, you and I have no reason to get out of bed. Likewise, no experiment is going to succeed unless It is utterly local, rooted in the turf, dug deeply into the soil, whether of Indian, Chinese, African or American society.

We will have a network of sociological relationships across this globe wiring us together. The corporate wisdom can be plugged into every local situation with a common context available from each of us to the rest of the globe. I have to keep reminding myself that not everyone has made a self-conscious move, acting as the church, as you and I have in gathering here. And yet, there are colleagues everywhere who are grappling with the future of this planet and seeing possibility. Hyderabad has given amazing reports on the training school preparation for this next week. The reality of the experiment is breaking loose in ways that you and I cannot anticipate, and it is hard to imagine all the implications.

Already we at the Washington house have received numerous phone calls out of the "clear blue" asking about this project. It will re-engage people as local men and global men. It may take a long time to allow that to happen, but we are men and women of incredible patience. We have seen a thousand years and in that context, know that it may take 1, 2, or 5 years, give or take a few years or even decades, but we are nonchalant about this demonstration.

We know that It is a radical sign and that leadership is being called forth across the planet. We are tooled up with equipment like no one else on this planet: sensitivity, skills, methods, images, passion, interior resolve, a capacity to handle failure, and all of that. We are prepared to be patient and yet move a thousand miles an hour.

Do you remember the account of Sydney's response when the astronauts passed over the city? They turned on all the lights in the city. Something like that is going to happen, I would guess. What do you see in these 150 communities, 300 or 500 parishes across this planet; lights turning on, singing, emptying garbage, communicating across the hall. Perhaps It will just be a mood--an intensity of passion, of involvement. You will see people on the streets doing meaningful things. You will be able to tell, that much I know.

People will coming from everywhere to see the model of 5th City, in Chicago, Pittsburgh, or in Nairobi. They will participate in the festival of life as we focus on the symbolic, see the future, and are consumed by the next months, the next years, on behalf of the movement of the spirit.

--Don Cramer