

The Venture

The Religious House experiment which began in 1968 is now ended. I am here to announce and to declare to you the victory of the new form that is here to serve all mankind. And lest we think that it was our victory, I would like to declare that it was God's victory and to ask you to repeat after me:

The Lord is king, let the earth be glad,
let coasts and islands all rejoice.
Cloud and mist enfold him,
righteousness and justice
are the foundation of his throne.
Fire goes before him
and burns up his enemies all around.
The world is lit up beneath his lightning-flash;
the earth sees it and writhes in pain.
The mountains melt like wax as the Lord approaches,
the Lord of all the earth.
The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
and all peoples see his glory.
Let all who worship images, who vaunt their idols,
be put to shame;
bow down, all gods, before him.
Zion heard and rejoiced, the cities of Judah were glad
at thy judgements, O Lord.
For thou, Lord, art most high over all the earth,
far exalted above all gods.

The Lord loves those who hate evil;
he keeps his loyal servants safe
and rescues them from the wicked.
A harvest of light is sown for the righteous,
and joy for all good men.
You that are righteous, rejoice in the Lord
and praise his holy name.

The battle was not won without struggle. In 1968, one morning the sun came up. That was not so unusual except for four huge orange and white trucks gleaming in the early morning light of the courtyard. They were about to embark upon an unknown adventure. The world was to be taken.

And the world was in sad shape that day. It was experiencing some of the most horrifying sociological collapse that mankind has ever known. Everywhere people were oppressed by the fact that the war they wanted to end was expanding. They stood in the wake of the horrifying tragedies of the assassinations of great men. The movements in which they had placed their being were collapsing and falling apart all about them.

The Church was in despair. The avenues that it had once thought open now seemed closed. The ministries it had pursued in order to escape from caring for the local congregation turned into nothing, collapsing all about them. The clergy were dropping out and looking for other ways to find their significance in history, still thinking there was finally one thing that one man could do to bring a final

satisfaction.

There was individual hopelessness--despair never known before. There was an avocational flight in all directions as men tried to shorten the vocational demand by finding other diversities to engage themselves in. The sensual plunge was plaguing men on all sides, calling them forth to spend their lives doing nothing. And other men oppressed by the sociological situation lashed out in hopeless rebellion and despair.

Then four trucks rolled out of the courtyard, and the significance of that was global, for those four trucks rolled out of the courtyard around the world. And so after stuffing their belongings (and yes, even a piano) into the backs of those trucks, your colleagues set forth to find out what a Religious House was.

Someone used to keep asking the question, "What is a Religious House?" And the best answer she ever got was that it is a four-year experiment. That seemed to hold things in being. No one expects an answer from an experiment, when it is four years long. That provided the release to set forth in that kind of adventure and unknownness--to move in the coming months and years to thrust ourselves into the total global scene across the world--to begin to learn what it means to be nobodies.

Do you not remember the first accounting? The second accounting was like unto it. And the third was even more horrifying still. That was where those who were priors and those who were priors-to-be learned that what they were about was being nobodies in history, for we had to learn what it meant to be servants in a world where servants were despised--where no one knew how to use servants or what it meant to be servants. We had to thrust ourselves there to find out how one would enliven a Movement that was latent--that was bubbling and wanted to surface, but was crushed under the malaise of our times.

The victory was won. We stand here today as the evidence. Giants grew up that year. Let their names be written in history. May they be known forever for that sacrificial venture. We won the victory of knowing once again what serious engagement looks like. What serious engagement looks like is global engagement in which any man can operate comprehensively in any particular situation. It means that he can find within himself the resources to dare to be a global human being, even standing in the midst of the collapse all about him. And it means he can take upon himself the responsibility of the cities of man across the world and turn them into cities of God.

We discovered the mystery of what it means to be corporate. The Lord stuck his hand out and squeezed lives together and crushed them into commonness. Families could once again be engaged significantly, understanding themselves as families in the midst of community and held in being only for the sake of radical expenditure. The children did not have to dominate the day, but were allowed now to grow up in the context of possibilities of their lives becoming significant participation rather than self-seeking satisfaction.

A sign was raised up to the cities of the world. Vocation was once again exposed as a possibility for man. Time could be used on Week II's for something other than tinkering with a 44. A vision could be forged out of the ashes.

Let us this day say yes to the Lord. Thanks to the Lord for the Lord's victory in our time.

In 1969, we did it again. And I suppose for the first time we saw the consequences of applying this whole proposal of the Religious Houses by deciding to send out yet another wave of yellow trucks. This time we were a little bit impressed that the inner courtyard of Base was really beginning to fill up with all those trucks.

Repeat after me:

Come, all who are thirsty, come, fetch water;
come, you who have no food, buy corn and eat;
come and buy, not for money, not for a price.
Why spend money and get what is not bread,
why give the price of your labour and go unsatisfied?
Only listen to me and you will have good food to eat,
and you will enjoy the fat of the land.
Come to me and listen to my words,
hear me, and you shall have life:
I will make a covenant with you, this time for ever,
to love you faithfully as I loved David.
I made him a witness to all races,
a prince and instructor of peoples;
and you in turn shall summon nations you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall come running to you,
because the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, has glorified you.

The Religious House is nothing. We have nothing, are nothing, and make no claims. The Historical Church is like the sea breaking on the shore. The Movement is only the waves. If you analyze those waves, all you come up with is the water--the Historical Church. The only thing that we are is momentum--the quickening and redefinition of the Church's historic mission, not in the sense of some intellectual reformulation, but in the sense of putting air back into a balloon. That redefines its shape. There is nothing different when a Religious House is present, and yet everything is changed. The Religious House is nothing, and yet it is the only thing that counts in history. That is, that we start the wave by deciding to be the wave and committing ourselves to run on up to the shore.

The Religious Houses have saved the clergy. And they have saved them in a million ways: by going out ahead of them, by going along with them, and by going out and retrieving them after they fall in battle. We have a rule in New York relative to having a four-church Galaxy: the only price of having a four-church Galaxy is blood, sweat, and re-visits.

We have demonstrated staying power in the Church. Not staying power for the Church to look at, but staying power as the Church. And this is constantly at issue in a Religious House when you talk about its image, or its public relations, because while the Religious House is constantly signalling change and new possibility, it is at the same time being the Church. That is why we have to be the establishment at the same time that we are being the revolutionary. We have created the vocation of "being the Church." We have given thousands of people "being the Church" as a vocational choice and with all sorts of edges on what it means to be the Movement and the Church.

The Local Church Experiment has created the Movemental Order; and the Local Church Experiment would not have been possible without the Religious Houses. The Religious Houses are the symbol of the day in and day out; they are the symbol that there are a group of people--the Galactic Auxillary--who have decided to meet every Tuesday night and every weekend forever. There is nothing to belong to that is the Auxillary--no special discipline, no written requirement. The only criteria we ever did have we decided did not matter, and so we never did publish it. The only discipline we have is the occasions on which we meet. If you want to be a part of the Galactic Auxillary you have to come to the meetings. It is the only discipline that we have, and everybody understands it as utterly necessary. If you do not come to the meetings, you soon find yourself not coming to the meetings.

We offer possibility to the clergy, and therefore to the Church. And the clergy are nothing--just a set group of people like a Religious House. But we offered to the clergy a Knowing and a Doing and a Being whose vocation they are everyday, all the time, all year long. And finally, they could see that in being the Movement and in being the Local Church Experiment can be found what it means to be the Church; and they do not have anything else to do with their time. So when the Local Church Experiment or the Movement has them being something else, then we are wrong, and we have invented some kind of frothy little thing that history will skim off. We offer to men the only thing that they ever wanted all the time and that is assignment to work for men on God's side.

When he saw the crowds he went up the hill. There he took his seat, and when his disciples had gathered round him he began to address them. And this is the teaching he gave:

'How blest are those who know their need of God;
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
How blest are the sorrowful;
they shall find consolation.
How blest are those of a gentle spirit;
they shall have the earth for their possession.
How blest are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail;
they shall be satisfied.
How blest are those who show mercy;
mercy shall be shown to them.
How blest are those whose hearts are pure;
they shall see God.
How blest are the peacemakers;
God shall call them his sons.
How blest are those who have suffered persecution for the
cause of right;
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.'

I think that by 1970 it became clear that the Way It Is had already won a miraculous victory which Summer '70 demonstrated and was a foretaste of. You and I can now look back on that victory and see that the Religious House had a very crucial role to play in it.

First, in terms of the Religious House's role in the region, I think we can say now that the last four years (at least since 1970) have seen the Movement come into being. They have seen what formerly was a latent possibility, beginning to show forth here and there, become a vibrant, living reality--the regional formulation of the Movement has taken place. And the key was the Religious House.

In terms of Penetration, systematic geographical expansion was the password. Over the past four years (and this has become clear since 1970) the grassroots was the focus of our penetration network. As we began to move through the phases of secondary, tertiary, and quaternary (and whatever is below that) penetration, and began to deal seriously with geography, we began to sense ourselves engaging the life of grassroots man wherever we encountered him with new authenticity. And the Local Church Experiment became the key focal point of our penetration effort.

In terms of Formulation, a collegial nurture net has come into being that formerly was not there--at least the early stages. Colleagues, over night it seems in Australia, worked a miracle. I think all of us were at a loss to account for that, and yet wherever across the globe the Movement was coming into being, miraculous things were happening. And the Religious Houses were the key to that, in some strange way. In terms of leadership training, the Academy began to understand clearly that the priority of Movement forces were the Religious Houses. The summer program began somehow to be tied very intimately to the role of the Religious Houses in the regions. Then finally, the Local Church Experiment, which is clearly the focal point and the key to the formulation of the Movement, had its possibility in and through the Religious Houses.

And then in Permeation (and I think this became clear over the last four years), our cultivation and impact on the Historic Church at the regional level was a new reality. Regional churchmen, regional hierarchical figures, began to grasp a new possibility for our presence as the Church, and therefore they began to see new possibilities for relationship to us.

And then lastly, we want to suggest that the key to whatever it is that the Lord has wrought over the last four years in and through the Religious Houses has been disciplined style. In the style of Religious Houses, Movement colleagues and churchmen and non-churchmen of the world encountered the possibility for a new kind of significant engagement in the world. They encountered a new primal community. They not only encountered a new vision of a reconstituted community, they encountered a prophetic concretion of that vision. In the Religious House they bumped into the new community. They bumped into a new kind of passion for vocation as engagement. You remember in the movie The Hospital that Dr. Bach suggested that the ontological meaning of impotence had to do with losing one's reason for being. In the Religious House, people encountered new reason for being, and therefore, new passion for vocation and engagement, which showed up in strange ways. It showed up in visiting clergy, making telephone calls to recruit for RS-1, doing mailings, enabling courses, manning children's structures. And I mean people encountered new passion for engagement.

Then the missional family was probably the key to that--in the midst of a time when everything was up for grabs in terms of the family, people became very clear about the cold reality of the family in our times. In the Religious House experiment, people encountered the possibility of new vibrancy and new vitality of the family denying none of the realities.

And then even before we had language by which to articulate what the Other World was, people encountered a different posture in and through the Religious House that suggested a new possibility. When people in the region pulled back and viewed who in the Religious House was embodying that, they became very clear that they were just plain old crummy human beings. And yet in the midst of the crumminess that was like their own, they somehow encountered the possibility of another posture in life--the Other World began to impact them and in and through that the Movement was formulated.

The regions were formulated, and the Religious House was somehow miraculously and strangely a key to that victory.

Next day, while they were still on their way and approaching the city, about noon Peter went up on the roof to pray. He grew hungry and wanted something to eat. While they were getting it ready, he fell into a trance. He saw a rift in the sky, and a thing coming down that looked like a great sheet of sail-cloth. It was slung by the four corners, and was being lowered to the ground. In it he saw creatures of every kind, whatever walks or crawls or flies. Then there was a voice which said to him, 'Up, Peter, kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'No, Lord, no: I have never eaten anything profane or unclean.' The voice came again a second time: 'It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean.' This happened three times; and then the thing was taken up again into the sky.

I think I should say that reading that scripture is part of the structure and what I am about to say was thought up before I had read that. Otherwise, it is going to sound as if I have taken a text for a sermon. I am a little shocked at the connection between that scripture and the glimpse of what the Religious Houses are going to be in the next twenty years, which is the experimental laboratory for determining what the New Social Vehicle is and what it is to look like.

In order to talk about that, I have to make a confession. And I ought to express gratitude to George McBurney at this point, for when we first started the Religious Houses, every time I saw George (which was in those days frequently) he said, "Isn't there something that we can call them besides religious houses?" being the secular man that he is. And it irritated me so that I just wanted to say, "George, they have got to be religious houses!" because, you see, my picture was that what these were going to do was to renew the Church. What renewing the Church meant was that we were going to somehow structure the congregations and the denominations and the whole thing so that we take the whole world into the Church and do not have any world any more but just have the Church. And when you have been brought up a Methodist in east Texas, that is probably your picture.

But now I see it very very differently. I said in revelation to our people in the Religious House at one of our high moments of fellowhood, "are the New Social Vehicle." I was still thinking, you know, that we are a pious congregation. But what I think now is that to say that we are the New Social Vehicle--not in terms of abstract vision, but in the concretions of the structures and the activities of the Religious Houses--is to have already demonstrated that all the goods of nature, all the decisions of history, and all the gifts of humanness are already present in the world, and the function of the Religious House is to release that process and not to be something superimposed on top of it. As you think about what we have discovered there, you can see how the New Social Vehicle is a treasury of corporate selfhood that is going to be released more and more into society.

The amount of money and time that is already released is incredible. Just imagine when we are going to have fifty adults in 1944 houses. The impact of that on society is incalculable. We have created and released on the world the new rich men, rich because the money that they have and the time that they have is no longer being wasted on this and that, but is being focused on the rebuilding of society.

And all the decisions of history, you see, are already there, only they are being wasted on this and that and the other trifle and are not focused on the mission of building the new society. But it is very clear that the new crusade, that the new army, the new secular force has come into being. And by the Religious Houses being the centrum of the Extended and the Movemental Order plus being the Symbolic Order, there is going to be a mighty army ready to do whatever is needed in society.

And then all the gifts of humanness are already there. Stifled, choked, and buried, they are already there. And I suggest that the Religious Houses have made it clear that in every man's heart there is the dream of the perfect society. As one of the old songs has it, that hope may lie buried beneath I do not know what, but that hope is in every man and the Houses are releasing that hope into concrete reality. And so, the Religious Houses--and I wish that I could see this more clearly, but that is what we are going to be testing--are going to be the centers of the new Renaissance. They are going to be the places that society looks to more and more for the treasures of human creativity, for the Religious House is the point at which those treasures are set loose and at the same time conserved. You see, the Houses work as we have always talked about the cadre working. It is the purpose of the Religious House to renew the Church. But the way it works is not only to renew the Church but to go around and raise up a sign of social reconstruction that enables people in the Church to say, "Aha, I see that is what it is all about, and I see that it can be done." And so, after four years, because of the Religious Houses, I think that we can say with all our being that all the goods belong to all the people; all the decisions belong to all the people; and all the gifts of humanness belong to all the people. And the secret (the world never quite figured this out) is that what I just said in code is "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Global Order Council
Order Base, Chicago

Summer Quarter
1972-August

THE RELIGIOUS HOUSE REPORT
THE END OF THE EXPERIMENT 1968-1972

<p>THE WORLD</p>	<p>THE CHURCH</p>	<p>THE REGION</p>	<p>THE NSV</p>
<p>1968 - 1969</p>	<p>1969 - 1970</p>	<p>1970 - 1971</p>	<p>1971 - 1972</p>
<p>THE VENTURE</p>	<p>THE NOTHING</p>	<p>THE ENLIVENING</p>	<p>THE NEXT 20 YEARS</p>
<p>QUARTET - POP - IN THE WORLD OF SPIRIT</p>	<p>QUARTET - FOLK - AT THE CENTER TRANQUIL</p>	<p>QUARTET - MARCH - DREADFUL AWARENESS</p>	<p>QUARTET - WALTZ - SUDDENLY LIFE</p>
<p>George Walters</p>	<p>Fred Buss</p>	<p>Jim Addington</p>	<p>Charles Moore</p>
<p>Scripture Psalm 97</p>	<p>Scripture Isaiah 55:1-5</p>	<p>Scripture Matthew 5:1-10</p>	<p>Scripture Acts 10:9-16</p>
<p>THE H O M I L L Y</p>	<p>THE H O M I L L Y</p>	<p>THE H O M I L L Y</p>	<p>THE H O M I L L Y</p>

