

SPIRIT EDGE OF BLACK CHURCHMEN

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It's a little hard to know what to talk about after a ten-week trip in which your montage has not yet gotten itself together again. There's some doubt if it ever will. After that kind of an experience one does not know whether to talk about the interior mood of our nation, or whether to talk about just the obviousness of the collapse of symbols across this land that point to a comprehensive, intentional, and futuristic relationship to life. It's almost as if it seems that nothing is going on anywhere, but don't be fooled by that. It doesn't seem like anything is going on in this building if you look at it from the other side of the expressway. (Really! You should go over there and take a look sometime.) And yet all kinds of miracles are taking place within the midst of that collapse of symbols. Whatever it is that is going on in the Black revolution, whatever it is that is going on in female liberation, in the youth culture, in education, and in the crisis of the family, is not going to stop going on. Whatever it is that is at the bottom of the war in Vietnam, and in Cambodia, is not going to stop going on. And the question is not how you stop these happenings. That's never the question for the man of faith. The question is always what form will there be on the other side of the happening. Or the question is something like--Will the self-conscious understanding of what it means to be a human being and the sociological forms that get created in the midst of the upheavals of our time be profoundly human for the next 2000 years? That is the only question that we have on our hands as the Church in the twentieth century.

In this context we were asked three basic questions by Black churchmen. (1) Is it possible for a Black man to decide to be the global movement? Now can you see someone asking me, a Black man, that? (2) Is it possible for a Black man to decide to give up his life? They're going to ask me that. (3) Is it possible for the Church in the Black community to be renewed? They're going to ask me that. I'm crummy, but here I am. It was a kind of shock to them after I stood there for about five minutes and they found they had to answer their own questions relative to the kinds of possibilities. Across this nation and world and still within the context of the movement, there is a question of whether Blacks can really work with whites, whether that is really possible. A colleague and I were talking in San Francisco and he told me about the time a man from the U.S. government anti-poverty agency came out to 5th City to see about the possibility of providing funding, but what he wanted to see was whether Blacks could really work with whites, because he could not believe it. Another way to say it is that our whole society and our whole globe have images of what it means for Blacks and whites to be slobs. But nobody has any images of what it means to be mission. So this government man came out and walked around 5th City, and talked with people. He walked up to Vance Englemann and said, "I don't believe it." And Vance said, "Well, you've seen it." And he said, "I know. But I still don't believe it. Black people can't work with whites. You just can't do that." So it was humorous, and yet it was radical address at the same time.

You begin to push that question and what you end up with is: Is it possible relative to what's going on in the female revolution, for females to work with males? Is it possible in the context of what's going on in the youth culture for youth to work with those who do not image themselves as part of that culture? The kind of question you end up with is: Is it possible to decide to be the Church in the situation in which you find yourself? That is the only question there ever is for the renewal of civilization. I know I'm a pretty young rooster in

terms of the renewal of the Church, and as I said earlier, I'm a crummy young rooster, but if you don't think I know the barnyard, you ought to try to pick on me sometime. And every now and then I get audacious enough to say, "I am the renewed Church. I'm proof. If you have any questions about that--here I stand as proof of the possibility of the Church being renewed in our time. Plenty of times people say you have to renew the Church. Would you believe that? Some people think you have to renew the Church. The Church is already renewed. It's just that some of the churchmen don't know that yet, that's all. When I saw an 87-year-old woman in San Francisco playing the song The King's Business on the organ for a Church service and doing the solitary office at a cadre meeting, I'm very sure that the Church has been renewed. There isn't any question about that. The only question is, how do you let all Churchmen know that is what is taking place so they can participate in that. That is the only question that we have on our hands. The Church is already renewed. It's just a matter of communicating that and giving churchmen permission to participate in being the renewed Church in history.

Now I'm going to read something that has become extremely offensive to me in the context of teaching RS-1. During the worship in the course on Sunday morning I sense in my imagination that I know these crummy people will never decide to be the Church. They just won't do it. Look at them. They don't turn to the right when they should, nobody will pray out loud--there's just no possibility of making that kind of decision. When I reach the peak of telling myself that kind of story about them, this is what breaks in:

"The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he carried me out by his spirit and put me down in a plain full of bones. He made me go to and fro across them until I had been round them all; they covered the plain, countless numbers of them, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Man, can these bones live again?' I answered, 'Only thou knowest that, Lord God.' He said to me, 'Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. This is the word of the Lord God to these bones: I will put breath into you, and you shall live. I will fasten sinews on you, bring flesh upon you, overlay you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.' I began to prophecy as he had bidden me, and as I prophesied there was a rustling sound and the bones fitted themselves together. As I looked, sinews appeared upon them, flesh covered them, and they were overlaid with skin, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the wind, prophecy, man, and say to it, These are the words of the Lord God: Come, O wind, come from every quarter and breathe into these slain, that they may come to life.' I began to prophecy as he had bidden me: breath came into them; they came to life and rose to their feet, a mighty host."

That's the report on my trip--it's all in those ten verses of Ezekiel, the thirty-seventh chapter. Really, that's my entire report. I may put a little flesh on that, but don't think I'm not talking about what's in the chapter.

I'm from Cleveland, Ohio, and in Cleveland there is a boulevard called Liberty Boulevard, which is surrounded by the Cultural Gardens, which Rockefeller donated some time ago. Now it's right in the Black community and we used to go down there and paint all the statues black. Behind the Cultural Gardens there is a creek into which flows all of the sewage from the Black community, from the Puerto Rican Community, and from the poor white community in Cleveland. You never have to wonder when you're near it, you can tell by the smell. We used to get on top of the hill that led down to the creek and see who could go down

on their bicycle as fast as they could to the edge and not go in. It was really fantastic. We were fooling around there one day and one of our colleagues didn't quite get his brakes on in time. And it was two weeks before he was socially acceptable. They wouldn't let him back in school. He finally had to take a bath in tomato juice to get rid of the odor. Everybody else's parents in our community used to worry about their kids getting hit by cars, or getting beat up by police, but my mother always used to worry about me coming home having been dipped in the creek.

While we were down there one day we heard a human scream, like a mad scream, and several of us ran up to the top of the hill to see what was going on. We got there just in time to see a man jump from off the bridge that goes over the expressway in Cleveland, into the expressway. I suppose that, at that moment, the absurdity of life, and my own lucidity relative to that reality, came home to me. I don't know if you've been keeping up with what's been going on, but the suicide rate in this nation has been going in several different kinds of ways. In New York City, women are taking their children and jumping out in front of subways. That's open suicide. Most of us are fairly familiar with that. And then there's what Tillich talks about as hidden suicide--you could take another hour talking about all the manifestations of that across our society, not to mention China or Africa, or India or Australia or anywhere else. There is just the demand for people to receive the permission to live their lives. This has not yet been given.

The mood of this nation, and I'm not leaving anyone out, is that people are clear life is absurd. It's like the same time we came back from landing on the moon was the same day that everybody in Los Angeles experienced in that earthquake the God section of RS-1 as very very real. Those two kinds of things going on at the same time just point to the absurdity of life. "Life is just one big pile," is the kind of response you get when you talk to people around this nation. And it's the everyday things that get you, "The book I need wasn't where I left it when I went back for it." or "I don't lend cigarettes," or, "My alarm clock didn't work right." It's every where you turn, nothing is going right. Churchmen are clear that their congregations are a pile. If you try to tell them anything else you have a fight on your hands. People are just lucid about the absurdity of life.

I've begun to tell myself that the two-story universe has been inverted. It's like the first floor of life is a real pile and then you got the basement. Most of us find ourselves somewhere between the basement and the first floor, all the time. It's that kind of mood across this land--in every single nook and cranny in New York City and in Kingfish, Oklahoma. You find people just sick of life. No possibility of saying 'yes' to the possibility that they have on their hands. Or a man in Seattle when I was talking to him said, "What do you do when you know that anything you do will not finally accomplish anything? 'What do you do then?' Meaning can no longer be gotten out of knowing, and doing no longer gives any meaning. Neither freights the meaning that people have been screaming for in their guts. So very obviously it is a question of what it means to be. That is what people are grappling with all across this nation.

In the midst of that kind of despair Black churchmen are beginning to rise up out of their coffins and sensing a demand that was never sensed before. it's something like this: after so many college degrees and living in suburbia for a while, everybody is clear that that is not worth your life--so now what do

you do as the Church? What do you do when people in the local community are starting to picket our Church during the worship service on Sunday morning and raising the question of us being mission to that local situation? What do we do in the life of the Church when Black Churchmen for Church Renewal within the Methodist Church rise up and want to know exactly what it means to renew the Church? The image of the church renewing itself or the church's possibility to renew itself is now breaking loose in Black churches in this country. The situation is that people have tried projects, and they are sick of them. They are sick of Model Cities Programs, OEO, OIC, and all the other O's. They are sick, sick, sick.

In the midst of these struggles, the society is going back to the religious for an answer against the lucidity of the absurdity of life. This is the ideal situation for the church in the Black community to move. And it is moving. And there's no stopping it, it's moving. Every single major denomination has a group of Black churchmen who have decided that their denomination has to be renewed. Every single one! And the question is not how do you stop it, the question is what form is it going to take? Most people think now that what it means to renew the church is to get the bureaucratic structures to give you \$20,000 a year for programs. That's the image that's out. You keep the church open seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day for basketball and cards. But now the question is, what else do you do, once you open the Church seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day? What else do you do is the kind of question that's going on. It is something like, "How do we be the Church and be mission in the world?" This is the question that is now just beginning to be raised. We won't see the full effect of that in this nation, I suspect, for another year, but this is the tension that is going on. Some people have forgotten about the local congregation, they pretend it doesn't exist. You know clergymen who think the local congregation is in their back pocket. But when they reach around for it, it will be gone. People are piddling around in the parish and have not yet seen that the congregation is the key to the grassroots revolution that has to take place in the times in which we live. But that idea is now on the edge of Black churchmen's consciousness.

We had a fantastic time in just showing up in places on the trip. You don't know what it does to people when Black churchmen show up from the Ecumenical Institute. There were six hundred people at a conference in Dallas, and when we two walked in it was like Zorro and Zorro just walked in the door--two at one time. And we had a Black family from Dallas there with us. Everybody started wondering, "What are you doing here? Around the corners they started asking us when there would be an RS-1 in their area, and what was going on with the Local Church Experiment. Some of them said they would be coming to the Academy this spring. Those were the responses we got. One of the great gifts of the movement, that we have not totally sensed yet, is the fact that we are still here. They ask, "Are you still doing what you are doing?" and you say, "Yes." Almost everybody else who has been out to renew the Church has written their book and is living off the royalties.

We found in the Black community where we visited people, that movement colleagues have already talked to them. The Blacks are already set up for recruiting. We went in and said, "Why haven't you been to an RS-1?" And they would say, "Well, the person I talked to was white, and I know Black people know about the Church. If there aren't any Blacks involved, we aren't going to get involved." But it's something different from saying there have to be Black people in it. A district superintendent who is a Black man who signed up for a PLC on the

spot and paid his money, said it this way, "My mother was clear that the Church has something to do with humanness. She wasn't clear about anything else." That's the great gift of the Black Church--clarity that to be the church, or for man to be related to God, is crucial to being a human being. Once this clarity gets the kind of form it needs and a vision that is world-wide and history-long, no one will be able to stand in front of the possibilities that will break loose on the other side of that happening.

We talk about the destinal role of the Black man. To say it simply, it's something like this: Once you decided to say, "Black is beautiful," you either produced or you were a joke. That is the way it is. If you stand up in a classroom and say, "Teacher, I know all that," and then you fail a test, . . . It's not the matter of being a joke to the teacher or to the rest of the class that is important. The problem is when you are so much of a joke that you can't go back into the classroom. That's the struggle. And there's a horrifying despair that comes in the midst of that struggle. All over this nation people are sensing themselves as a joke. It's like some people have gone back to straightening their hair. People are now clear that the Afro doesn't hold it, or rather that it's more than that. That dashiki is fantastic, but it's more than that. Afros and beards are fantastic, unbelievable, but it's more than that. Having African drums in my apartment is fantastic, but it's more than that. Or, it's that now the question of humanness has been raised in the midst of that situation and people are grappling with how do we respond to that question that has been raised by history itself.

It's like the whole third world is standing up on its toes with binoculars and looking to see what we're doing over here--and the third world is going to follow our model. The minority races across this continent want to follow the Black man's model for what's going to happen. I talked with Chicanos, American Indians, and Mexican Americans on this trip and I found I could just move in and work with them and do whatever I want. This is precisely the way it is. The question, once again, is not how do you stop this, but how do you give it form so that it becomes profoundly human in the times in which we live. George West and I had a fantastic time teaching a PLC together recently. When a black and white teaching team shows up together, one of society's deepest spirit disrelationships to life is addressed the minute you walk in the door. It's like if in a Ur image course you have all six Urs teaching, all you need to do is sit up front for 44 hours, and the course is taught. That kind of power is what is demanded across this movement.

Another insight that came to me is that when I run into our old movement colleagues, guys who were in the movement four or five years ago during the summer experiences, I can do something to them that you whites can't. When he says the Ecumenical Institute is no help then I can grab him by his collar, and make his re-decide. We did that in the midst of the trip, and found we had a phenomenal kind of power to give permission to re-decide to be the movement. And I'm talking about local pastors with congregations. That kind of power of permission has been delivered in the midst of their situation. Another thing is the demand to affirm the West. Sometimes I think my white colleagues have a harder time affirming the West than I do. And I won't be afraid to call you on that because the Western gift is demanded for humanness in our time. We could sit around and talk for the next 30 years about the perversions and the contradictions of the Western

world. So what? The question is, what does the West have to offer to humanity? and how is it going to get out? That is the only question we have on our hands. We also experienced in talking to men who have integrated congregations on their hands just the instant permission that's given for them to struggle seriously with them and not to reduce the context in which they struggle with the issue. This is the kind of thing that went on in the midst of the trip.

Everyone of our trip goals was exceeded except one, and that was to have courses in the ten major cities that we had picked out. The contradiction that we began to sense was that wherever there was no Black leadership participating in the metro structures, in pedagogy guilds, who had been to the Urban Academy, there weren't any courses recruited. The local situation of the movement needs the symbol as well as that actuality of Black leadership in order to break loose in the area of moving self-consciously on the Black churchmen. We had a goal of contacting 400 people, or breaking loose 400 spirit men, and we contacted 757, including 183 clergymen and four Bishops. I'll report just as an illustration of what all the Bishop's responses were, our conversation with one bishop who we found, much to our surprise, was at the 1954 Evanston meeting that started the Ecumenical Institute. He said, "Why sure I'll help the Institute. Whatever you all want, let me know." He has reign over North Carolina, Canada, and the east coast of Africa. (When that kind of possibility is presented, you feel like you want to crawl out of the room and say, "No, he really didn't say that.") We talked to a bishop in the Methodist Church. He has some white workers with him who dislike the Institute. But he just sort of holds them down as he makes his way to a PLC course along with his wife. When he moves, that whole area moves along with him. There was an AME bishop on the East Coast who recruited a PLC on the spot. He said to his clergy, "Do you have anything to do those three days?" "No, Sir." "Sign right here." That was the kind of response we found.

This trip was the first time we ever decided to move self-consciously on clergy, and the response was phenomenal. The Local Church Experiment really had better look out as Black churchmen, particularly clergymen, catch the vision of what it means to be a global, movemental churchman in our time. The attitude now is, "Why have a riot? It won't do any good." The whole society has that kind of lucidity. "Why march? To buy a new pair of shoes? It won't do any good." "Why protest? It's not going to do anything." In one sense, it seems as if the only thing that's going to do anything is an atom bomb. But nothing finally will do anything. There is a crisis in the spirit dimension of not being able to be broken loose to the internal struggle that is going on.

One of the key insights that we learned in the South was that in every single major city in the South, in the Black community as well as the white community, there is a millionaire--at least one or more, who have the kind of houses that symbolize the fact that you can attain the good life, and that's what life is all about. This basic image in the minds of the people is one of the contradictions the movement struggles with in the South as a whole. It's as if the people in the South have just decided that they are going to have the bourgeois life no matter what. That was a crucial insight for us that was true for churchmen in the Black community as well as in the white community.

The West is similar to the South in terms of the search for the good life. The free style is another way of talking about the edge that is present there. Yet in the midst of that search people are getting clear that it is

collapsing. It's just falling apart. The question is "What do we do in the midst of it falling apart? How do we respond to it as the Church?"

The North and the East used to be a mirror to tell the South and the West what was going to happen. But now the North and the East are in the mud. Their faces are flat in the mud in terms of pointing to what kind of possibilities exist in the context of the Black revolution. In one sense, as people experience their situation, they see no possibility.

The kind of operating image we found as a whole was this: The question for Black churchmen is "What's an ark?" It's like the situation of a plumber who is fooling around in his tool box trying to find the right wrench to stop a leak. He knows he had better pull the right one out the first time or he's done for, in the context of his mission. That is the kind of image. The kind of emotional tone is like dread, just pure dread. After you have talked to a man for five minutes, he says, "Man, this will take my whole life." You say, "Right." There's instant lucidity about the radical demand. Or, "I'm already too tired, and I haven't done anything. How can you demand more of me?" That was the kind of emotional tone we experienced. The kind of existential question was, "Will I ever live to see the effect of my existence?" In the Black revolution there are groups you see nationally, that everybody experiences, but in every local community there are 40 groups who are out to enable the revolution to come off. Some are through the Church, some are secular. But all of them have collapsed. Every last one of them has collapsed. So now the question is: "What do we do when we've seen three million things tried? Where do we plug in, and why should we?" It's that kind of struggle.

Another dimension of the struggle is, "How can we be mission to the localis, to the parish, and still be the self-conscious Church? How do we not turn into a center for community organizations? How do we be the religious in the midst of that?" That is the kind of question. How to renew the Church on the grassroots level is the struggle that is going on there. "How do we break our laymen loose?" We were surprised at the number of Black clergymen who were ready to move but their congregations weren't. "How do we break loose our congregations?" And on the other side of that, "How do you break a clergyman loose from his traditional image and role?" In the midst of that, and it's not that I haven't alluded to it already, is the death urge, from just the sheer possibility that exists for churchmen in the Black community. One of the struggles you have when you're clear that the Church isn't a presupposition any more but a concrete reality, is that you know it won't go anywhere. The Church is going to be around forever. If you're going to have to serve it, you are going to have to serve it forever. There are no two ways about it. That is the type of struggle going on.

Another thing is the radical collapse of bourgeois images and life styles. There is the bourgeois life style that is across the culture as a whole, and then there is how the Black community relates to that, which is a bourgeois life style. But that life style has collapsed. Everybody has been clear about the fact that in the society as a whole its images and styles have collapsed. But now the Black community's relation to that has also collapsed in the midst of that situation. It's a question of what it means to be a human being. Or it is the vocational crisis. One of the things I really dread is the vocations conversation in a course where there are a majority of black participants. You want to commit

suicide when you're in the midst of that conversation---literally. That question is planted deep in the guts of those human beings.

One kind of response we got to the movement was like, "What took you so long? I've been dying here. What have you been doing? Why haven't you gotten in touch with me before?" That was the majority of the responses. Another kind of response we got, which I mentioned earlier, was "Are you still doing what you were doing? Let me have the phone number of the Religious House in this area, would you please? When is the next time you are going to have a course, and would it be all right for some of my churchmen to come, if I recruit them?" Then there was the response, "Do you really mean that I have to give up everything that I have? Everything? I just got it yesterday." Or, "I just found out that I could get it tomorrow. And you're asking me to give it up already?" That is the primary struggle in a Black man deciding to be the movement. The difference between my struggle and yours is like the difference between a man who just found out he could move into the suburbs and a man who's been there for forty years and his house is falling apart. The key to that struggle in the context of black churchmen is just the clarity on the necessity of the fact that the Church is crucial to what it means to be a human being. My wife and I found interesting tactics in the midst of visiting congregations. We visited a clergyman on the West Coast who had been in contact with the movement a long time ago. He came along with several RS-I grads to a consultation. We worked all day on models and timelines, moving on the Church in that region. The next day he invited us to his congregation, he had me do a 15 minute sermonette, had us sing movement songs--on and on and on. By the time the service was over, 20 people wanted to know how they could get involved. That was the response. And he's not the only one there who's interested. That's what has been going on.

The Black church does not exist. I don't exist. The only thing that exists is the People of God. Now here I am. Would you believe that some people think that what we were doing was recruiting for the Urban Academy? That was the last thing that was on my list. I never thought about the Academy except for about 15 or 20 minutes a day. I didn't have time to think about anything else except the local Church. That was the way we experienced that trip. Our first priority when we talked to people was to recruit them to RS-I or a PLC. The second thing we wanted to get done was to get people who had been to RS-I or a PLC to plug into the metro structures to be leadership in the context of the movement, to become trained in that. Third was what it would mean for people to develop a cadre in their local congregation. Then if we had time as we walked out the door we gave them a brochure about the Urban Academy. That is to say, we were out to create the movement, and the Urban Academy is just one of the strategies to do that across this nation in the context of the globe.

There are Black churches in the inner city, suburbia, and exurbia, who are all ready for the Local Church Experiment. That's very frightening because I don't see many Black auxiliaries in this room. So there's a very obvious demand. I don't mean to intend that all auxiliaries for Black congregations have to be Black, because that's not the way it is now. Over ten of the congregations in the Local Church Experiment are Black congregations. I don't know how many more possibilities we added as we went around in this trip, but I know there were some.

Why have the Urban Academy? is still a question that I think has to be constantly rehearsed, just as all of our stories have to be constantly rehearsed.

One reason is that the Black man in our society has learned to be on the defensive 24 hours a day, in one way or another, in order to maintain his self-hood. The question is how can we get him in a situation where he can let his defenses down so his life can be addressed by the Word in Jesus Christ? So we hold the Urban Academy in DeKalb, Illinois, where while you are doing a spirit conversation during lunch, there are cows walking by the window. After a week everybody is rather relaxed and not worried about a thing. All of a sudden, everyone is sleeping RS-I, showering RS-I, eating RS-I. It's coming from everywhere. We have great skill in doing this job, and as a result the Black man is broken loose to be spirit in the context of the global movement.

We have a four-year timeline for the Urban Academy to be phased out, the Lord willing, and the Lord may be willing before that, we don't know. But we must continue to read the signs of the times, I suspect, in order to have the kind of clarity we need to move in that area. The Urban Academy is a movement academy. If it was not a movement academy, I would not be in it. You can take my word for that. So it's a question of how to enable the movement to appropriate the Urban Academy as a movement academy, and not something being done off on the side. Yes, it's the only sign and symbol across the nation that points to the local church in the Black community being renewed. There isn't any other sign across this nation. I know, because I've looked as I've gone around.

The other thing that the Urban Academy points to, which is maybe the most crucial in one sense, is that it is a concrete symbol of the global movement's decision to enable Black churchmen to be the global movement. Do you hear that? That has never been a possibility on this earth. I think about Robert Shropshire, whom we've seen to work with the Australian aborigines. If you think about that very seriously, that's never happened before--anywhere that I know of in the history of the earth. It's very obvious that he needs to be there. And there are other places in the world that also demand Black churchmen.

I said that we won't see the fruits of our labor until this coming Spring or the Fall. One of the things demanded in that global council in 1972 is there have to be fifty to one hundred Black spirit men there, standing as the movement in the midst of history. So we sense the kind of demand that came out of the trip as something like this: the global movement demands Black pedagogues and Black priors for the sake of the global movement and for the sake of humanness in our time, and nothing less than that. The ITI's demand Black faculty. And do you understand that Fifth City will not come off in the inner city unless the Black church is renewed in the inner city? Do you understand that? And that goes for any other inner city situation. Or, the third world is going to take Black spirit men to finally break the door down in the midst of that situation. If not, it won't be broken down in the times in which we live. That is the kind of demand. There is the yin/yang struggle of the American Black man being both a Western man and a Black man. What does it mean for him to take a Yes relationship to that situation that will give a vision to every nation that now is beginning to realize that it also has that struggle on its hands. They are looking for a vision of possibilities. Whatever vision shows up, whoever has the best model, wins in history.

The first thing the continental movement demands is to be the global movement. It's the struggle of how regional colleagues are able to have a context outside the impingements of their own local situation. The regional

dynamic is just crucial in giving people a context out of which they can stand before the fact that they are participating in creating the future of the earth. Nothing less than that is what's demanded.

How do you break Black churchmen loose so that they can decide to expend their lives in the context of renewing the Church across the face of the globe? I visited one of the American Indian families we had in the last Academy. I almost never want to go to an American Indian village again as long as I live, just because of the address that that was. An American Indian would make my self-depreciating image and your self-depreciating image (which is almost as good as mine) to seem like pride. You really would not believe the situation. It's as if everybody in that whole community is like pancakes, or eight 747's just rolled through the whole community and everybody is just flat, with no possibility of getting up and creating the future. And they are disappearing out of history fast. So the problem I have on my hands is that I know I can do something about it. So that's the demand on the movement in the North American continent in particular. Somehow to move on the American Indian is crucial for the sake of humanness in our time, not to mention the other minorities--Latin Americans, etc., etc., It's just crucial that those people are broken loose. Would you believe they go to Church? I ran into a Mexican American AME Church. That really blew my mind. I haven't been able to deal with that yet. On the West Coast there are Chinese Methodist churches. It's this that places the imperatives on our lives to see that the Church is renewed across the face of this land.

If you would think I would do all this, like getting up at 6:30 in the morning on weekends and 4:30 a.m. on weekdays for the sake of my family, you're psychotic. Or if you think I would do it for the sake of the Ecumenical Institute, you're psychotic. If you think I would get up at 4:30 a.m. and ride around for six weeks with my wife and another man, trying to have a three-people consensus, all for the sake of the Black revolution, you are out of your mind. The only thing that I have decided is going to consume my life is the creation of the earth, nothing less than that. It is only out of that kind of a context that we can appropriate and make the kind of decisions we have to make, to be whatever it is that we have to be in the midst of history. So I suspect that the demands in our times are always overwhelming. But, you know, God always wins, always. It's something like, deep within the primordial foundations of every human being's life he knows that life is utterly significant, and he knows that what it means to live is to expend your life. The task of the global movement is to simply announce the Word that gives men permission to operate self-consciously out of that understanding. I suspect that that is what our task has always been and will always be about.

Larry Ward