



Primal Community
Quarter IV, 1975

REPORT ON THE PRIMAL COMMUNITY

As I've talked to people, I've become increasingly excited about what is happening with the experiment in North America, as well as around the globe. This report is an attempt to pull together some of the things I have observed over the last quarter and to begin to project what the future might look like.

This comes to me as a difficult report. It is particularly difficult if you measure success by the world's images. This report reflects a number of major and minor transitions. Some are within the movement, but the major transitions are within the fabric of society itself - within the spirit framework of the globe. Within the movement it reflects our turn to the world, going to the masses. In the world it reflects the Dark Night and the Long March, not as religious categories but as a jolt to the self-consciousness of the globe from which we are not immune, if indeed I needed to tell you that; and this report reflects the high cost of care for the world.

But it reflects more than this. It reveals a deepening of passion - that's probably not the right word, maybe the word is compassion, a new identity with the doom of the world and bearing the burden of the local situation. It reflects steadfastness and loyalty to a vision: a vision which became foggy at times, in the last quarter, but at moments, probably fleeting moments, became as clear as crystal.

Since last we met in this room all of this has happened. These grids on the wall reflect the global expansion of the experiment and that is jolting. I don't know how you experienced getting those little postcard from around the earth, each with a grid of another parish, but it came to me as a very rocking event: exciting but rocking! The primal community experiment going on in 122 locations across the globe. And the "rock" in that is that it is no longer a North American Experiment. It is no longer an experiment with a backup system in one place, but in five. It is no longer in the familiar milieu of the Judeo-Christian-Greek-Western world but it's in the unfamiliar terrain of the Baghagavita, the Koran, the Sutras, the Confusian ethics. My experience is that it is not "out there" somewhere but it is here, and that the global expansion is going to affect the thrust of the experiment in North America as well. It would be hard for me to image doing those Tuesday night meetings without being surrounded by all of those grids to remind myself that I am part of one global experiment. It's not just that those little grids have happened, but that everything with which they are related is happening. Primal Community training schools have been held in Tokyo, in Bombay, and in Europe. Field Visits have been held throughout India, throughout Europe, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines. Six-week training programs have been launched throughout the world. In many places guilds and pre-guilds have already come into being. Cadres Exist. The authorization base is probably far more established than it was in the comparable time of beginnings in North America. Indeed there has already been a quarterly round of consults in India with the Centrum dynamic travelling to all four of the experiments. It is exciting - that all this has happened.

I

Maybe to reflect about that vision for a minute. What is this experiment for which we say we have gone for broke? It is the church made visible; it is the reality of the church. It is the church in action. It is the concrete response to innocent suffering. It is calling to self-consciousness and symbolizing what all men



know and thereby disclosing the transparency in it. Or to put it another way, it is catalyzing human vocation in concrete care and social form. It is acting out the style of expenditure, and disclosing it to be the fundamental basis of human happiness, human peace and human fulfillment.

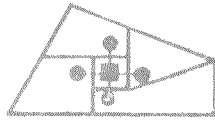
This is one experiment, not because we said it is one experiment, but because it is of one spirit fabric even though it is in 122 locations. It is happening here and there across the globe in many forms. You talk to any three priors sitting in this room and you find the experiment at very different stages in tactical action. Nevertheless, that's a disguise; that is only the accident. That is not the essence of the oneness of this experiment. Perhaps you could say it is giving voice and substance to the new global self-consciousness, freeing it from old traps to forge out the new mythology, the new morality and the new piety which is necessary for shaping the new social forms. The experiment is not these new forms - it is the sign; it is the preparation. It is the breathing space, if you will, between the old and the new. It is obedience to God as he has disclosed his purpose for earth. It is the social announcement of the future. The Primal Community Experiment is the re-establishment of the radical community of humanness acting as the yeast to leaven the whole loaf - the earth.

All this is to say that what we call the local church experiment or the primal community experiment is one thing. And whichever name you choose to call it, it is the rearticulation of the dynamic of the church without which you do not have community. Now if we only went this far, it would be simply poetic rhetoric, but doing the experiment is hard practical work. This is the time of engagement and a time of care. Concrete visible, visitable local places are necessary globally. What is needed today is a sign, a sign, a sign: the marks of engagement. Where men and women can come and look, and in that looking see for themselves and within themselves a new possibility and hope. Perhaps we dare to risk saying that the guild, the PSU, the task force, the parish signs, the cadre, the house church, the ecclesiola are the first blush of the new sociological forms which the church will take. As several have already said, the new form is already in our midst. I want to come back to that in a minute and see how that fact has affected the experiment.

II

We want to look at that experiment head-on particularly as focused in North America right now. One of the things that has become clear is that the imaginal focus of the experiment is on the guild and the formation of the guild. That strikes me as right, because "gilding" is becoming visible, and I don't mean by that anything we are doing. I mean the human dynamic of gilding is being enlivened. I was struck by the news this morning. Teachers are raising the question of working without pay to keep things going, people are coming in and volunteering; the police force is cutting the pay at the top so that the rookies can stay on the force. It seems to me that's a sign, a portent, of the gilding dynamic and all we're about is forming that, giving it shape, giving it direction in order that it elicit comprehensive engagement toward the human future.

The other thing that strikes me is that in building a guild you begin with engagement. You find a handful of people in the community and engage them and then train them with a vision and then engage them and then train them with globality and then engage them and then train them with tools and then engage them, then train them with tools and then engage them again. It's in that kind of rhythm one sees a



concrete reason why he would take RS-I or take LENS or SMS or the Primal Community Training School. Preparing and equipping for a task is done in the context of re-awakening of vocation. The guild is the key to the turn to the parish and it is also the key to the renewal of the congregation. Across the continent, there are thirty something-or-others called guilds that have fairly regular meetings of some dynamic of guild or guild core, meeting to deal with that parish. Now the indicative in this of course, is the need to forge further with the guild as a visible sign in all locations. It strikes me that after a Town Meeting if people ask, "where could I go, where could I see people engaged this way with community?", it would be crucial to be able to point to the guild in being.

We're in a shift relative to the congregation right now and the chart reveals that very dramatically, especially if you remember that last spring we reported 172 actualizing churches. If you have done your arithmetic you'll discover that on this chart there are presently 110 actualizing churches. Now there are many reasons for this. One is that key Galaxy leadership came into the symbolic order this summer. Another is the normal situation of clergymen being transferred; we're still operating out of the principle that when you do not have the symbolic leadership engaged in the experiment it is best not to actualize tactics. That's a drop of some 60 churches. However it does not represent a loss of those movemental colleagues out of those sixty churches; nor does it mean that nothing is happening in those churches. I want to make that very clear. Those colleagues are engaged in the Parish Cadre and in other dimensions of the movements life. For a series of reasons they have decided not to be engaged in tactics relative to the congregations at this point.

The appearing of the new sociological form of the church is affecting the congregations and jolting them. Both laity and clergy, the whole congregation are rocked by the shift that is happening in the historic forms because of the shifting times. They are unclear about the role of the local religious institution now. That is most markedly seen in the clergy, because of the times we're in, and also because of the shift in the experiment to the Parish. Up to this point, the clergy held in their being the major prowess, so to speak. But when we turned to engagement in the world and community where other kinds of gifts are employed, they do not necessarily the major prowess in that experiment. Three or four years ago if you were to count up the twenty-five key trained and decisional families in the experiment, two-thirds or more of them would have been clergy. If you used the same comparison today, at least two-thirds of them would be laity who are the stalwart well trained spirit men of the experiment.

There is a negative aspect to this trend relative to clergy engagement, but it is also a sign that we have enkindled the engagement of the laity in the parish. These laymen will get the guild in being and will in turn intensify the crucial role of the congregation in society.

Now I want to say one other word about the congregation. Even where congregations are not actualizing tactics overtly, incredible things are happening in engaging congregations today. Some of the most exciting are where whole polity boards have engaged in consults and then used battleplanning methods to lay out the future of their congregation. Now that's getting about ten steps down the toad tactically. For you have not only an auxiliary off here on the side doing battleplanning for the congregation but you move head-on into the heart of that congregation through the polity board and have access to expanding their vision more directly than



you did three or four years ago. Other kinds of consults are going on, for example the ones with church school teachers in the San Francisco Area. The church has been opened to direct training. Four years ago we probably could not have gotten a foot in the door for fear it was a take-over. Now a confidence in the tools, methodologies and spirit insights of the movement has allowed this kind of engagement.

You notice on the chart a whole series of congregations in preparation. This data is from the check list you gave us in the consults. The process for entering the experiment seems much slower when you move into the parish. And that's natural because the methods of nurture have to be different. We were getting a galaxy of churches across a whole metro, we could have a field visit or forty-five churches and ask the first four who are interested to step up. Then forget the rest, so to speak. But in the parish where there are only ten churches, you have to work in such a way that you never get a "no", these are your only resource. Therefore, the finesse, the prowess, the visitations, the year-long timelines for nurturing the clergy and the laity are crucial. The experiment calls for continuing the work with the congregations: this is crucial. But I believe that the way we are working with broad tactics, nurturing tactics, leading Sunday School classes, training boards, doing HRM's is the way to move the congregations to a comprehensive vision beyond itself.

The cadre is moving. If you add up those center figures on that chart which represent the forces directly in the PCE, they come to 1,432 troops at various stages of prowess, of engagement, and of commitment. That's a sizable force to which we have access for continued engagement and training. They will be key forces for implementing the Town Meetings. One of the trends with these 1432 forces is intensified local engagement; a focusing-in on a particular locale. Sometimes this seems to be at the expense of a comprehensive vision, or at the expense of the "on behalf of" dynamic. Perhaps that's the negative aspect of the trend we need to stand present to, yet the cadre is moving because they see a concrete focus for the investing of their lives in dealing with the primal community experiment and care in the world.

I want to turn to the struggle with battleplanning. I would want to suggest that we have not articulated the final word on battleplanning although I do believe that we have the broad picture of what battleplanning is about. It is edge in our work with social methodology. My interest here is not in the struggle with the finesse of battleplanning; rather in what happened when battleplanning came into the picture of the experiment. It was a spirit address. I recall one cadre that was doing a battleplan for work in the parish and in the congregation. They were excited while they were doing it, but when they stepped back one step and looked at it, they corporately fell into despair, not because it was a poor battleplan; it was great. But when they discovered that they had articulated in the battleplan their own priorities, they stood back and said "My God, there isn't a tactic here for the congregation." The spirit address was that there wasn't anybody to blame. The cadre had articulated their thrust. Now on the flip side, there are many tactics do-able with the congregations, but my point is that battleplanning is much more than another clever tool. It is the risk of thrusting your own vision and projecting your own engagement in a far more radical way than before. It requires of the cadre disciplined engagement with a corporate total body and not just a particular auxiliary. Such depth corporateness always sounds great, but its terrifying. What is often revealed is protectiveness of one's own turf but when the whole body senses responsibility for every aspect of the Primal Community, that is a powerful development in the life of the experiment.



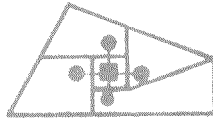
III

In the light of the present state of the experiment, the review of some basic revolutionary principles would be in order. Some of these need emphasis in this coming quarter. One is that we work out of broad strategies and tactics. A funny thing happens when you go to the local; there is danger of confusing it with the immediate. When going local, we unconsciously move away from the comprehensive and inclusive. The presentation on Washington, D.C. yesterday showed a long range strategy which revealed how all the programs were employed to finally move on all of the parishes of that city. This might take two years or ten years - that isn't important here. What we saw was the building of a real practical vision. We saw a rational model of where the experiment was moving. Indicative battleplanning for the quarter or the year is not a substitute for this. This is where we often get trapped. We still need a picture of the whole metro and where we are going in two or ten years. Then when we battleplan we have a real vision over against which to do the planning and it takes nine-tenths of the airy-fairy out of the tactics, because we see what to do in a particular quarter in the light of that vision.

A second revolutionary principle is comprehensive gridding. There is no way in which we can rationally select one or two parishes for the PCE save we have gridded the entire metro to parishes. I think that this has been done, but perhaps needs to be reviewed. The Gridding like that done in Washington is necessary to see all of the parishes that will finally be actualized and more affectively allow the one, two or three that we're going to focus on this year, thus maintaining a revolutionary perspective rather than carrying out a little hunk here and a little hunk there. Building those broad tactics and strategies will allow us to do both town meeting and primal community at one time as one thrust.

Another revolutionary principle is global commonality. It's strange being in the regulation centrum this quarter, for every time we create a manual we have to think of Bombay, India. That's a new experience and we haven't always been successful in thinking of St. Louis, which is probably true, as a matter of fact. But, nevertheless across the globe the marks of the experiment are cadre life, congregational engagement and guild formation. Wherever one went he would know he was part of that common experiment. There is a real question, of course, as we move into this transition: What is the global glue? Not only for the movement, but for this particular experiment? Obviously, one aspect is the system of seventy-two theoretical tactics. Our battleplan will not look like those 72 tactics, but they always become the guide; they become that over against which we raise the question of the comprehensiveness of our particular tactics.

Another revolutionary principle to remember is the power of the imaginal. When we turn to the local and to the parish, there seems to be a strange blocking of the imaginal. You remember when we did 5th City back in '66 or '67? When I first ran into the movement we said 5th City was done - well, almost done. You had images of 5th City because you had an imaginal picture of where you were headed. I think of the first time that I was in a regional cadre and it confused people because they knew that we all lived ten minutes from each other in one little hunk of the micro, but we were the regional cadre. In a couple of consults this year, I called the group the parish cadre and they said "We're not the parish cadre." I asked, "How come?" They replied, "Well, none of us live in the parish." Well, they were the parish cadre and taking responsibility - the on-behalf-of. That's part of what I



mean by using the power of the imaginal. I'm excited about what one region is doing, with the power of images. Wherever they have formulated a new metro, they have built their cadre as the "primal community experiment cadre." Now mind you, they are not doing the primal community experiment as such, in most of those places. What they are doing is recruiting RS-I, recruiting LENS, doing HRM's and Town Meetings. But the image grounds them in the future and in concrete care which allows for the kind of recruiting to go on. It has a powerful imaginal effect in a time when people are looking for concrete engagement.

IV

Let me turn to things about the future. These are for our brooding. One of the things that has happened in moving to the global PCE is discovering what centrum is. It is the global over-against the geographical. I was interested in the prior's spins in term of the emphasis on the local. They pointed to particularities of a local situation and how it is different from some other location. And you want to say in one sense that that's exactly right, when you are dealing with geography. The centrum dynamic come as guardian of global commonality in the midst of all that going-on-ness and says a radical "No" to particular differences. This generates a creative tension which is crucial. If I were in the Area House in Tokyo I might have a contradiction about the Sino Culture and the struggle with language in the culture, but if I were the Centrum there, that would never be my contradiction. That is, I would be about the task of guarding the common strategies and tactics for the globe. I'd be very appreciative of the Area House's contradiction though I would come right back and say a "No" in order to keep the tension of the commonality in the midst of the particularity of the situation.

I said all this to come to the question of the back-up system. We're struggling with what the back-up system is which is appropriate to the centruming task, and what is the nurturing and sustaining dynamic which is appropriately a geographical and areal responsibility. Maybe it means primal community training schools need to be local or areal rather than a centrum task. Perhaps the training manuals need to be from the centruming dynamic. Someday we need to think about more signal demonstrations of the Primal Community Experiment, like Uptown and 5th City. I wouldn't push that right now, but I want us to brood on it. Maybe there needs to be one in each area around the globe. Washington, D.C. is such a sign: a place where people in the other primal community experiments could go and spend some time and experience in practical training. It is a place where local man can gain fresh hope as he works in the experiment.

Another thing I've been brooding about is that probably the time has come when Field Visits can be done locally. Where they have been done that way they have come off well. Sometimes field visits are not even needed. I suspect in Hartford, for example, after working with that Roman Catholic Church so extensively and doing battleplanning with them, they've had a "field visit". They don't need anything else.

I think that the consult is still crucial in order to maintain our globality and to sustain the common vision. I also think that those leadership exchanges across experiments are important and need to be continued, in order that another flesh and blood iron man stands before his colleagues from some other locale. Further I believe we are at the point where it would be very possible to move more directly with historic church denominations in several arenas. Remembering that when you move that way



it is the turn to the world. That is turning to the secular structures of society. I think this move would include reporting to the hierarchy. It would have to do with a kind of absolution. It would have to do with authorization. It would have to do with preparing their readiness for the shifts in the church that are happening and will continue to take place whatever they do or don't do. This move has to do, perhaps most importantly, with the opportunity of broadly marketing aspects of the program such as HRM'S, consults for whole denominations, PIC's and LENS. From what I hear, I do not believe we are far away from that possibility. The church is open - ITI authorization in San Francisco made that clear. What we're about is creating a network of authorization. We are not out for one to one relationships. Maybe we can begin that job when we are in the area for a consult. Maybe we ought to begin to share authorization letters that build the frame-work for enabling some local priest or clergyman or church to move when they see that their whole denomination has made a positive response to this experiment.

Well those seem to me to be the directions that the future is beckoning. I am not in a rush on those things, but we have to be in tune with where the next possible - where the next right step is to be taken. I suspect that what we are training people for now is a new capacity for flexibility. For four years we went on with almost the same tactical system year after year. In the last four quarters, we have made four significant shifts and I don't anticipate it is the end because of the momentum and the speed with which we're moving today. Those kinds of shifts are going to take place over and over again, and I have no doubt that we are ready for it.

I'm excited about what I see going on. There are perplexing shifts in the congregational aspect of the experiment but I think that if you take a longer view than just the quarter you'll discover that a radically new understanding of the depth of what it means to be congregation in primal community is going to come clear to us and to the historic church. The only thing we need to do is to be ready to move in those directions.

--Justin Morrill

North American Priors Council
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