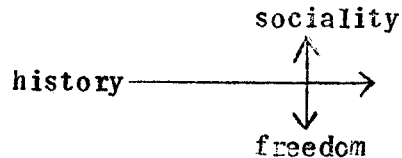


NOTES ON DYNAMICAL SOCIOLOGY

Human life is made up of the dynamic of sociality, our relationships to one another, and the dynamic of freedom, the vibrancy of human life, with a third dynamic moving across both of these--the scandal of history, which articulates and gives its own form to the interaction of these dynamics.



All the church can offer the analyzing process are methodologies to illuminate and deal with these dynamics of human life. Thus, the church has always utilized penetration (intellectual methodologies), formulation (spiritual methodologies), and permeation (sociological methodologies). What we know about the sociological methodology required by the universe in which we live is that it must deal with relations and not substance, event and not entity, mission and not internal order--that is, it must operate within the arena of dynamical sociology.

A great shift has taken place in man's awareness of his social existence. No longer is it believed that social forms come from some flash of insight or develop over the course of time, taking on their particular functions along the way. Rather, it is recognized that the functions are there first, and then structures follow to embody them. In other words, any time we designate a dynamic of human life, such as the dynamic represented by the word "college" or the dynamic represented by the word "parish," we are talking about a function that has always been going on in sociological reality, and it is only after being clear on these functions that human structures can be built, that is--the giving of strategic form to these dynamics that have always been going on.

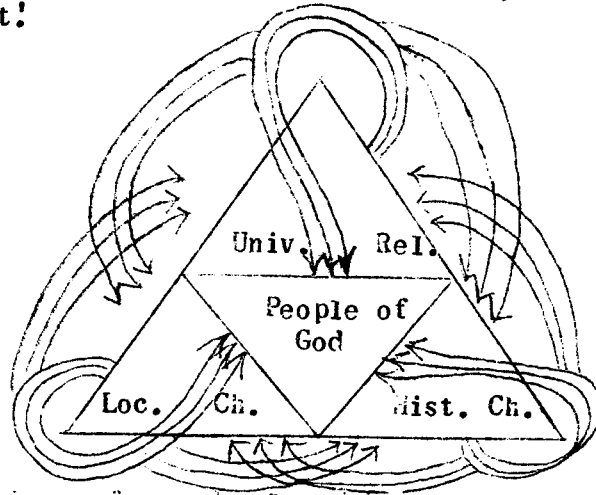
The task, then, is to first of all get clear on the functions involved in whatever goingness one chooses to examine. In writing the document on the local church, Council IV used a 3-step methodology for taking on this task:

- 1) The first step is to get one's eyes focussed on the sociological goingness that one is talking about--a concrete thing and the dynamical poles that comprise it, without any one of which not any of the poles nor the thing itself would exist.

To take the goingness of "family," the sociological dynamic that has always been there consists of: man, woman, and progeny, and the only way a family keeps ongoing is through the tension that must be there when these dynamics find themselves over against each other and the whole ongoingness.

- 2) The second step is to describe the struggle that these poles are having with one another. This means describing the relation of each pole to the others. If you take the ongoingness we call the People of God and talk about the Universal Religious as the ontological dynamic, the Local Church as the existential dynamic, and Historical Christianity as the discontinuous dynamic, you come up with a nine-fold dynamic of that goingness. And if there is within each one of these 9 relations at least the 3 general dynamics of: 1) creating, 2) judging, and 3) redeeming, there are 27 dynamical manifestations to describe--and this still has not exhausted its reality.

Yet even more crucial to see is that this whole thing functions as one whirling dynamic, or to put it in personal terms--if I am not the latent church, historical church and local church all at once, I do not grasp existentially what Church is all about!



- 3) The third step of the methodology, then, is to locate the structures of our time that embody to a greater or lesser extent the functions of these relationships. That is, if X is the dynamical going-onness we mean by woman (or by Historical Continuity), what are the structures of womanhood in our time? (What are the structures that give form to Historical Continuity?), etc. Yet, it is crucial to remember that within the civilizing process, structures are the means for and not the end of activity in the creating of humanness.