

Exploration,
a
field manual
for a faithful, renewing community,

by
Richard Eugene Shore
growing out of the published and unpublished
works of

Rudolph Bultmann

Martin Bell

Van Bogard Dunn

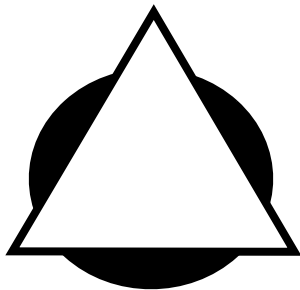
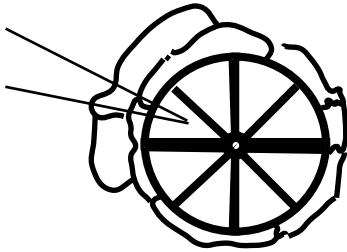
Paul Tillich

Rod Serling

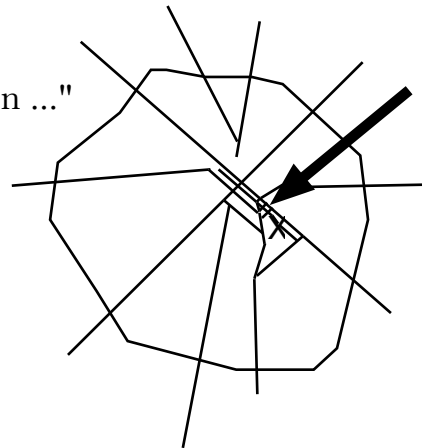
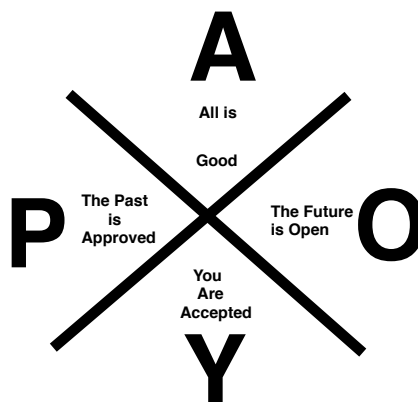
Leonard Cohen

Elinor Ostrom

Walter Wink



"We shall not cease from exploration ..."
T.S.Elliot



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INTRODUCTION

From the arrangement of the lines, you may think I wrote this as poetry.

No, I set up the lines of text to support reading aloud in a group,

each line one breath, each breath one line.

I have used reversed indenting to mark paragraphs.

I strongly urge the reader to follow that suggestion;

read it aloud in a small group.

This work retells ancient stories of human experience

putting the stories into some new words, new metaphors,

and hopefully into current, local vernacular.

HOW I CAME TO CREATE THIS MANUAL.

When I visited Scotland in '04,

my host in Dunbar told me he wore tam and tartan as a reminder of the task,

as he said, “to make this a good place for all of us, now!

“We’ll no’ wait for the crown;

“that was a disaster when we tried it 500 year ago.”

Yes, I thought, community.

What can I do to foster community where I am, and possibly beyond?

The pieces of my life began to come together, to sort out into this book.

Sometimes the way we use a word does not connect to our hearers’ experience.

That stifles community.

So one part of the book is tools for reconnecting our experiences to words,

and both to the deeper meaning of really important words.

Second, I had worked with a welter of information on resilient communities,

So part of the book sifts that information, seeking for patterns.

Finally this book explores a specific model, imagining one detailed example.

If you think of yourself as a secular person,

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you may object to my use of words that you see as unnecessarily religious,
words drawn from doctrinal Christian vocabulary.

You may even be offended by them.

Even some theologians have expressed dismay that I use the “G” word.

So, you are in good company. You are the ones I had in mind writing this work.

I wrote it for you (for me too).

In my defense, I offer the following opinion.

First, the experiences dealt with in this work are what happens;

people do have these experiences;

people both within and outside of the so-called faith community

have these experience;

these experiences are very important;

we need to be able to speak of these experiences.

Once you have used the interpretive tools I offer here,

I think you may find that these words may serve us as well as any,

even though they are ancient, even archaic, words,

and come from the heritage of the Judeo-Christian faith community.

If we are to look at the fostering of community, what better place to look,

than case histories of attempts to create and nurture community.

Nurturing community is one thing faith communities do.

So, please bear with me.

Allow me to illustrate the utility of this approach before you reject it.

You will decide. Whether you ignore, oppose, or embrace this approach.

You will decide.

In addition, sometimes I ask questions:

How do we find or make meaning?

How do we remain faithful as the world changes?

How do we continue to create Church, ever faithful, ever new?

Who are we? What are we doing here?,

to what end?, with what impact?

If those questions interest you,

you may find portions of this book that deal with them.

Tillich's sermon on acceptance forms the heart of this book.

It illustrates his interpretive method,

his way to put ancient stories in contemporary vernacular.

Rudolph Bultmann described a method he called "demythologizing",

Paul Tillich built on that, calling his method "correlation analysis".

I found their work in the 1960's.

Martin Bell's songs and stories in his book "Way of the Wolf"

explore some of the same ideas but in a very different way.

I met these also in the 1960's

At that time I had about had it with church,

about ready to give up on church.

Instead, over the years since then,

I continued to be active in congregations in which I found myself.

I believed that I could do so because of my experience of this material.

I could see, within the pile of words and practices we used,

a Word that sustained me.

I still call the Church my home. You may not. That's ok;

you may still find something of value in this material, this process.

My being active included reading about events and trends

in the Church and in the larger society,

the tension between new understandings and old words.

I sing "Come Gather Children", Martin's song, almost daily.

Over the years I wrote three more verses for it.

I continue to use what I learned from Bultmann, Tillich, and Bell.

I found other authors picking up pieces of this approach to understanding,

Those authors include J.A.T. Robinson, Pike, Borg,

Newell, Ostrom, Wink, McFague, and Spong.

But I never found one author or one work that put it all together.

I think "demythologizing" and "correlation analysis"

are even more important now than in the 1960's.

But we must put those words themselves into the current local vernacular.

I chose the term "re-picturing" to include these two interpretive approaches.

One danger I worried about in putting this manual out as a book.

A book tempts the reader, it offers the temptation, to read it alone.

Reading alone does not foster community.

No matter how carefully crafted,

reading alone provides a different experience

from meeting this material **in community**,

I mean in a work-shop, a conference, or a continuing small group,

people face to face, listening to each other for what this calls to mind.

So I have put this material together for use in such a small group setting.

I believe the time has come to do this.

I have seen this process foster **community**.

WHAT WILL YOU FIND IN THIS WORK?

This work retells stories of ancient experiences in current vernacular.

That is what Story Tellers, Evangelists and Historians have always done.

This book includes a tool, a point of view, a method, examples of the use of those,

and one specific vision of doing community by doing church.

This book gives no final answer.

New examples keep happening.

I see six specific things in this text,

- (1) a clear description of **liturgy as teaching**,
- (2) the supportive use of visual **images**, both charts, and nonverbal symbols,
- (3) the **integration of** these ancient **stories**
into the analysis of **great word-symbols**,
- (4) a focus on our **experiences** rather than on metaphysics,
- (5) the clear description and use of the **interpretive method**
of Bultmann and Tillich, here renamed "re-picturing",
and (6) Bell's two specific contributions to that method,
the use of a three column chart, and his songs and stories.

I have written with care but not as an academic scholar.

Footnotes are few, just to lead you to my most important sources.

This manual divides the material into three parts.

Part 1 outlines the heritage,
the experiences of people recorded in **scripture**.

Part 2 examines **major word-symbols**,
the words naming some major ideas now become doctrines of the church.

Part 3 lifts up **practice**, the care and feeding of **community**.

I made each chapter small enough for one session of one hour:

about 20 minutes to read aloud, about 40 to open, close, and reflect.

Many books speak of what God **IS**.

This one does not.

This book looks rather at our **experiences** of the ultimately important,

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experiences of which the writers of scripture said, “God”.

I hope this makes it easier for agnostics and the “unchurched”
to join the conversation.

How we use words, shapes our thinking, guides and limits our results.

Here you will find ways to look at our use of words that may be helpful.

But there ARE constraints on us as we imagine new ways to use our words
lest we fall into opaque word-salad with no meaning.

Part 1, chapters 1.1 - 1.8, begins with some non-controversial things,
how we use the word “chair” and how that use has changed over the centuries.

We briefly explore liturgy,
because this book uses a liturgical teaching approach.

We look at some specific words in the scriptures
some whose use, whose meaning, changes, right there on the pages of scripture,
“Emanuel/God-With-Us”, “messiah”, and “demon”.

We also include in **Part 1** a review of selected passages of scripture,
sketching out a narrative line from Moses to Caiaphas.

Part 2, chapters 2.1 - 2.6, looks at some major word-symbols,
developed in the church and western culture, how we talk about them,
how we can connect these word-symbols
to the details of the biblical narratives, and to our own experiences.

These important words include “sin”, “grace”, and the Trinity:

God experienced as Creator/Father, God experienced as Son/Christ,
and God experienced as Spirit.

Part 3, in chapters 3.1 - 3.7, looks first directly at this tool we have been using,
its structure, its function, and its roots.

Then we turn to the really important task, fostering community;

I crafted the whole book to this point to prepare for fostering community.

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We look at some of the data we have on community,
the caring, resilient, community; looking for, seeking a pattern.

Finally we examine one model in detail.

This portion is tentatively dogmatic.

Our understanding will always remain in flux,
especially our understanding of what we are to do,
our goals, objectives, mission, vision.

Paul put it well,

“...for now we see as in a glass, darkly.”

(I.Cor.13:12)

Paul points to the heart of the process,
continually finding new ways to say the old truth
in a new and renewing community,
to put the ancient truth in current local vernacular.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY MANUAL

(1) **Read this material aloud, with others.**

I chose the format, the arrangement in lines,

to support reading aloud, one line one breath.

I strongly urge you read it with a **small group**, say 6 to 12 people,
ones with whom you can achieve a reasonable level of comfort.

Read it looking for the **grain of truth that may be there**,
not for what you agree with or disagree with.

Then ask one question, "What does this call to mind?"

Refrain from asking each other how you feel about a point of the content.

Avoid taking a position,

whether you agree **or** disagree with a piece of the content.

Rather, look for the connections to your life.

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Some things we understand only by living them.

(2) **Really use a liturgical approach.**

Let me be very specific.

Open your gathering with a formal greeting, and a prayer.

Use the same greeting and prayer every time.

Close with a formal dismissal, the same one every time.

There are several greetings readily available.

John Philip Newell has two small prayer books;

either could provide a framework for openings and closings

(Celtic Prayers from Iona 1997 and Celtic Treasure 2005).

One possible way to open and close

appears on the page after the table of contents.

(3) **Follow the sequence of chapters.** It builds.

Read only one chapter at a time.

Read the text aloud, “round robin”, giving turns around the group.

Perhaps a paragraph at a time.

Read the whole chapter before you stop to reflect.

Be gentle; allow any who are not comfortable reading aloud to pass.

Allow time to reflect on the reading.

Do not fear the silence of people thinking.

Perhaps one or another will share what the chapter calls to mind;

or perhaps an “aha” moment.

Allow a full hour for each session.

Make the charts together, filling them in, step by step.

Display all the charts on the walls for all the rest of your meetings.

Meet regularly.

Commit to each other to meet for a specific period of weeks or months

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and set a schedule so that you can work through the whole sweep of it,
the whole content, from this introduction,
all the way through the re-visioning of “doing” church.

Give turns with the parts in the opening and closing.

Give turns as scribe filling in three-column wall-charts.

One possible schedule: 12 sessions of 2-hours

Intro and 1.1 at the first meeting, then 2 chapters each 2-hour session,
except a single block of 2 hours for the movie, 3.2,
and a final session just to ask four more questions, in this order.

What worked? What needs to change? How do you **feel**? What do we do now?

(4) **Experience it in many ways.**

Invest the time to listen to the recordings of the songs and stories

in "Way of the Wolf" by Martin Bell, at the points that this manual cites them.

Similarly, I think the group will benefit from watching the film together,

"Requiem for a Heavyweight" (you can buy it on DVD),

and listening to Cohen's song "Suzanne" (available on CD and as a download).

After you have finished part 2, try out this “trinitarian” point of view.

Look for people having experiences of God in other dramas, other songs,
other narratives, in the people around you, in you and yours in your own life.

I hope you do not treat this as only some remote academic exercise.

I write of what I know to be the most important work we can do —

fulfilling all the hopes and expectations of our forbearers,

validating or invalidating all the preparations of others through the ages,

and making possible or impossible all that may happen later.

We include God and talk of God in this discussion,

because we are doing really, ultimately important work,

this fostering community.

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You may find your life grasped, and turned around by this material.

Or you may find it really not that important.

You get to make that decision.

I will do all in my power to persuade you

that you have a very important part to play in this work,

this fostering, this creation and care of community.

I created this book, building of course on what others have created.

Where you find it helpful, let us credit them;

where you do not, let the fault lie with me.

This is good stuff. The folk who worked through it with me all said so.

We did a weekend conference one year,

and the next used the small group method described above.

The participants offered important suggestions which now appear in this manual.

To them, for their caring support, I am exceedingly grateful,

Robert Maynard, Carl & Barbara Boyer, Ron & Bobbie Brown, Suzanne Irwin,

Carl Vogel, Faith Shore, AliceAnn Sanders, Jeanne Becker, Paul Justis,

Dick McCaughey, the late Carroll Tarvin, Peggy Pane and Chuck McGaha,

my brother, Bruce, and my grandson, Ralph.

As Martin Bell would say,

“This material and this approach may not remove the shin-bumping furniture

from the dark warehouse of your life,

but it may turn on the light.”

Richard Eugene, Advent 2013, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 ...

"We shall not cease from exploration,

and the end of all our exploring

will be to arrive where we started

and know the place for the first time."

T.S.Elliot, in *Four Quartets*

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*separately Martin Bell, "Way of the Wolf" Ballentine 1968, & 1983. book & CD.

[An Example of Opening and Closing Words:]

[Opening] [call:]

[response:]

**(1) Grace to you, and Peace,
from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ.
AMEN AMEN**

(2) [lighting a candle]

**(3) We light a light
to call to mind the One**

to call to mind the One

to call to mind the One

who creates life,

who renews life,

who is the fire of life.

[inviting to prayer]

(4) The Lord be with you,

and also with you.

Let us pray.

Most Special One,

that we may give turns,

that we may give ear,

beginning now,

much more than hope,

alone you give us life

that we may give a hand,

that we may give & keep our word,

day by day more and more,

or ken, or dreams make clear.

AMEN

AMEN

[Closing]

(5) [snuffer changing the light]

(6) We do not put out the light,

we change it

so that rather than being in only one place

it fills the whole room,

the whole city,

the whole world.

[dismissal]

**(7) Go now in Grace and in Peace,
in wholeness and in healing.**

AMEN AMEN

Chapter 1.1

Re-Picturing the Word-Symbol Chair

We change the way we use words,
not capriciously nor arbitrarily.

Come with me for a glimpse at one pattern of how we do that change.

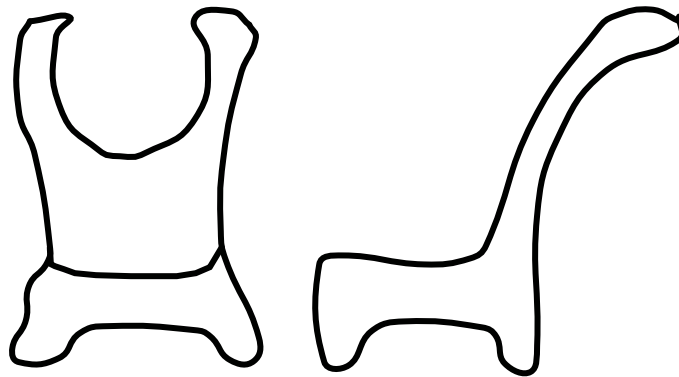
As an example, look at how we have used the word “chair”.

Here are some images, some pictures, of which we say “chair”.

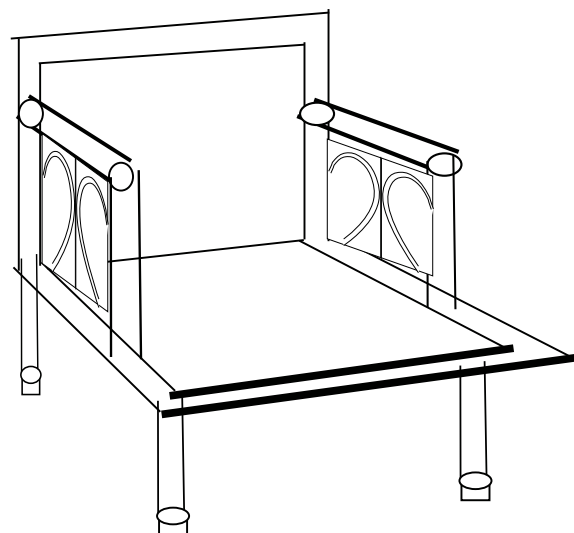
We begin with a cute little figurine from the Neolithic,
maybe 10,000 BCE, maybe 4,000.

In the source image, a human figure rests on this,
shown here in front and side view.

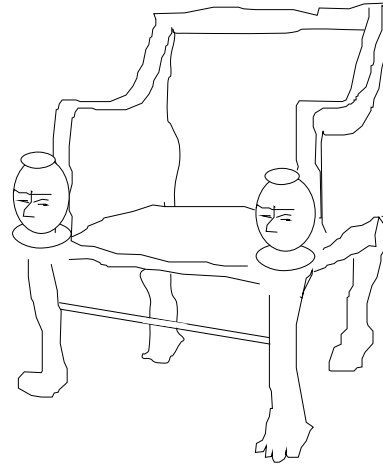
Clearly a chair.



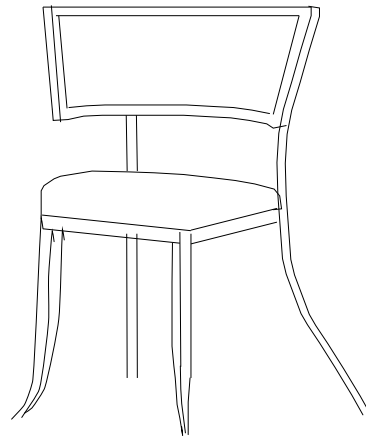
From ancient Egypt about 2613 BCE,
for Hetepheres, Pharaoh,
low, broad, with arms and legs,
his chair.



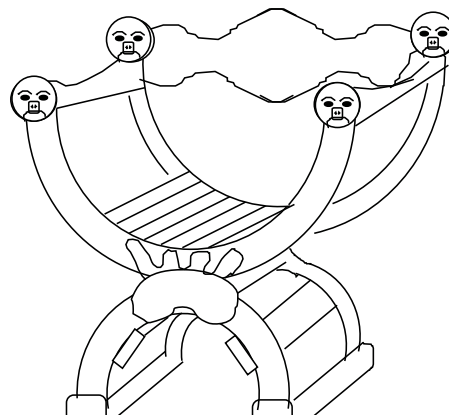
From about 1370 BCE, Egypt during the 18th dynasty,
for Sitamun, with clawed feet and a pair of heads,
a chair.



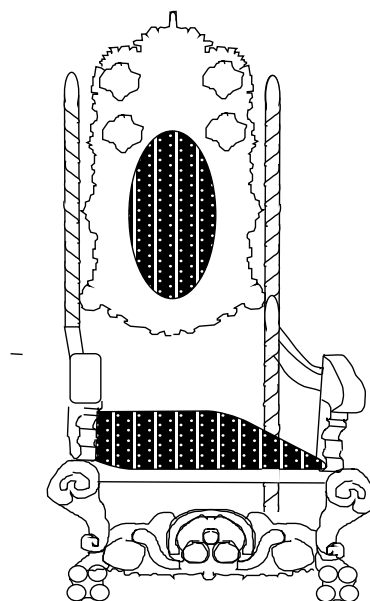
In 500 BCE in Greece, a “klismos”,
saber legs and a swooped back,
a chair.



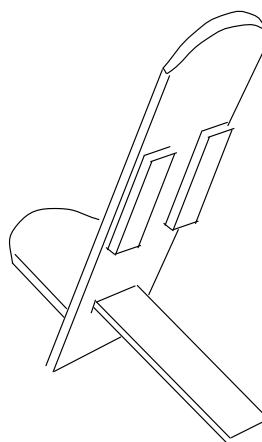
In the middle ages, in Tuscany, one might have found this
with four heads, swooped top and arched base,
a chair.



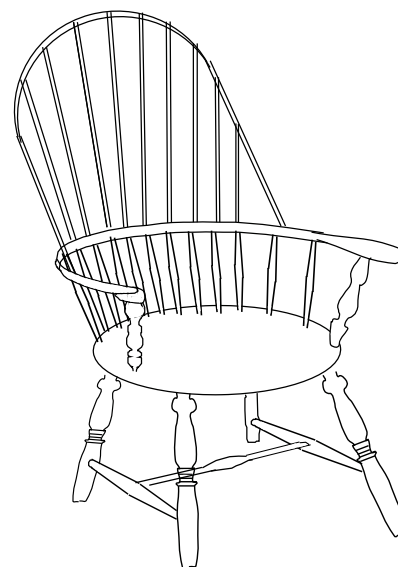
Or in Spain, this,
with ornate spiral carvings
and knobs,
a chair.



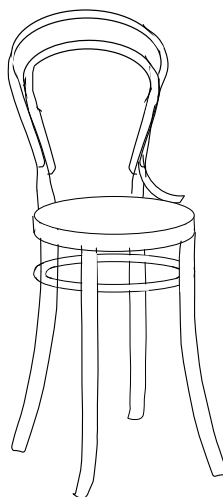
Or in the north of Europe this,
made of slats that can be taken apart
and carried flat on the back,
a two-piece
bog chair.



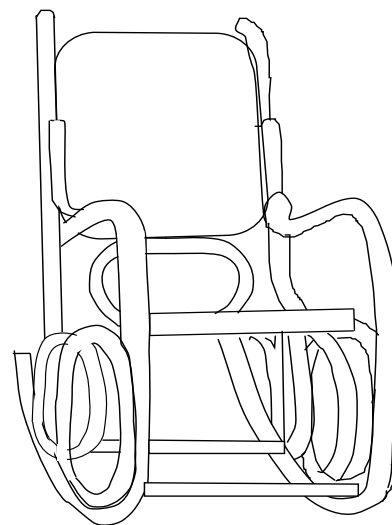
In the 1840's Windsor began turning spindles
and great arching hoops,
creating objects such as this, a chair.



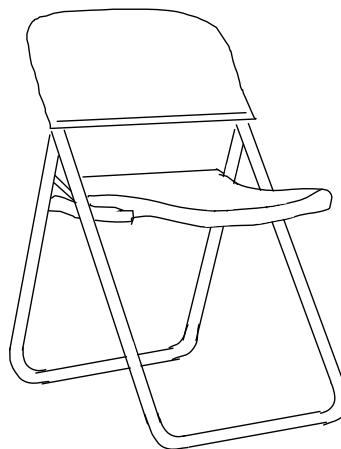
Around 1900 we applied steam
to bending wood
and got this, chair



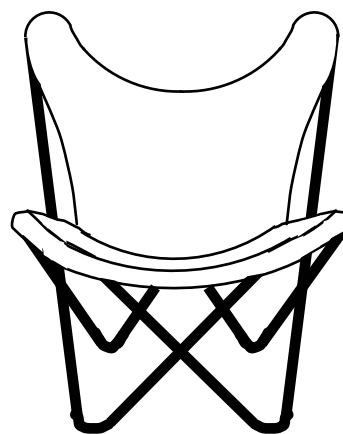
and this wildly curving, rocker,
a chair



With tubular metal we did this folding chair.



with metal rods and a little fabric this butterfly chair.



So one might ask the question,
“How dare we use the one word, ‘chair’
for all these very different objects,
different embodiments, different picturings of ‘chair’ “?

When I got to this point talking to my grandson,
he said, “well of course its a chair; you sit on it and it has a back”.
Very insightful, I thought.
He had abstracted the essentials of chair-ness.
He had stated the criteria for using the word-symbol chair.

We have no difficulty when we do this with something like “chair”
in which we have no great emotional investment.

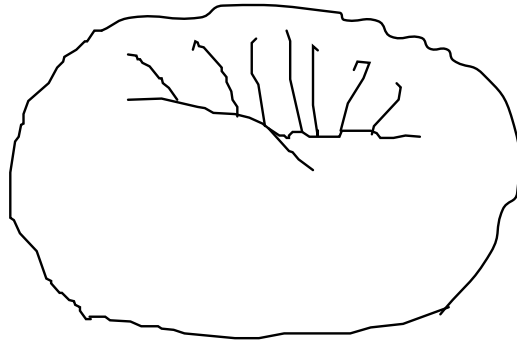
But our mind really works this way.
Each new experience we link with existing word-symbols
being consistent with our conceptual underpinnings.
perhaps unspoken, the “spirit of chair”,
the correlation principle of our experiences,
linked to that word-symbol.

Being able to verbalize the essence of chair has its limits.
I cannot sit on my idea of chair.
So, tomorrow and tomorrow when I want to sit
I will want a particular, specific, show-me-one, chair.

Take a moment to imagine what a chair **might** look like.

I had a start, visiting my son in law.
There, in the corner of his nicely finished basement
rested a large brown lumpy bag perhaps six feet across.
“What do you have there?” I asked.
to answer he simply walked across to it
and sat down.
It formed a back around him.
He had himself ...

one of these



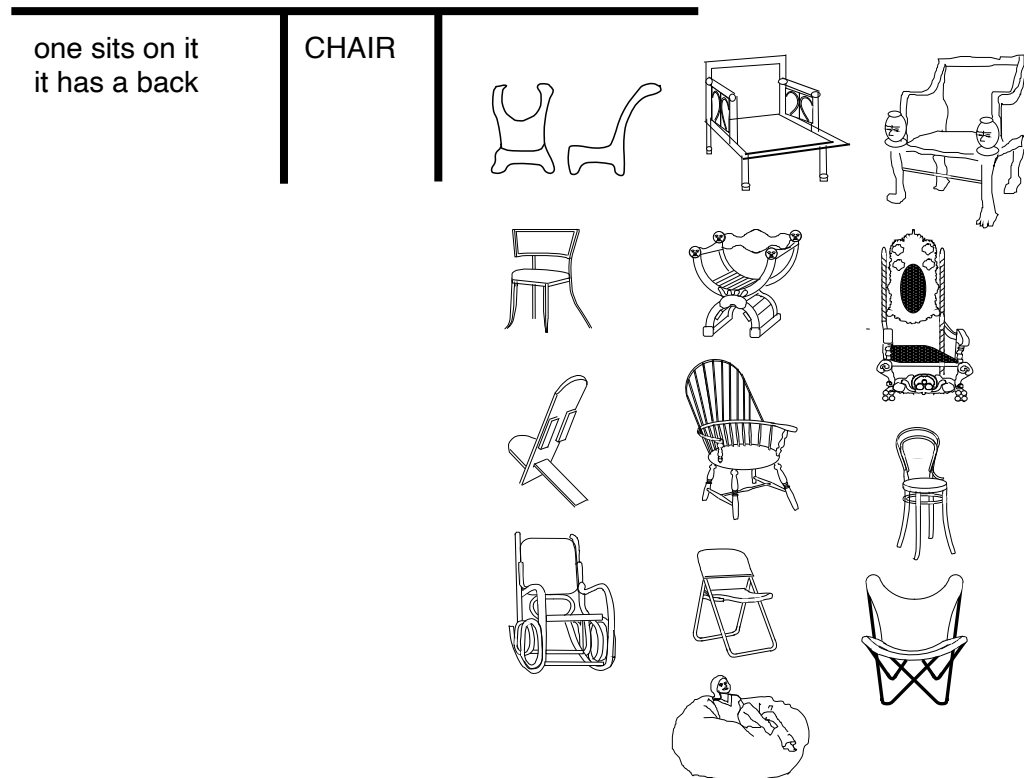
a “bean-bag chair”



We will take advantage of this aspect of the way our mind works
as we look at important word-symbols
in the life of our community.

We will be analyzing our experience,
inferring a correlation principle
imagining a new embodiment,
creating a new way to picture that word-symbol.

To summarize our look at “chair” :

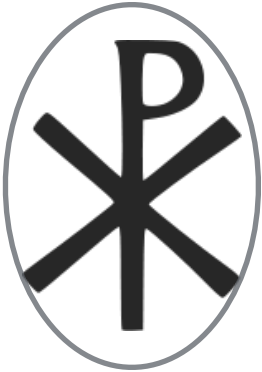


So, what does this call to mind?

Chapter 1.2 An Alternative Learning Method

The following chart gives an overview of the rest of this chapter.

A Learning Method

CONCEPT	MODEL	EXPERIENCE
Ecumenical	Shield of Faith	Other liturgical
Conceptual	THEOLOGICAL	advertising
Early Tradition	Responsive Free	dance
Partial & Provisional	YOU. THERE	military
Basis for Lifestyle		spectator sports
Derivation of the word “liturgy”		...
	Totally Involved Repetitive	Church Founders
	CORPORATE	Powerful Method

An alternative approach to teaching

We will be using a method of learning with which you may not be familiar.

Various communities developed this method.

They used it as a tool for community formation,
for transformation and for memory.

This discussion deals not with details of those examples
but rather with universals.

Together we do this work.

We use words, music, visual objects, body movement, and repetition.

We do it over and over again.

By means of this representational, responsive, activity,

we celebrate this work, repeatedly,

on behalf of all women, all men, all children, all people everywhere.

We will point here only to the broad conceptual outlines,

that the community has distilled from the earliest tradition,

key elements which our forebearers saw as essential.

Today perhaps no one place reflects all these conceptual elements,

all faithfully included, faithfully implemented.

We might even expect to find many instances

that distort, confuse, or ignore one or another of these elements.

Nevertheless in our heritage we can clearly find this pattern.

Partial and Provisional

The elements we focus upon here

are likely not the only elements of this way of learning;

but they do represent a partial and provisional understanding of the essentials,

that which I find faithful to the spirit of the great tradition.

I think you will see that this approach to learning applies

to a lot of what we do well beyond just the Church.

So, even if you are not into “doing church”, bear with me;

I think you will find a useful tool.

In any case, we will be using this tool.

It arose in the church, and we will use Christian examples.

This method plays as important a role in the Christian Life style

as the Old Testament plays in Christian theological background.

It reveals the ongoing reality

from which Christians draw strength and courage.

It dramatically proclaims the mighty acts of God in history,

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and the source of that awesome power
revealed in the intentional practice of this corporate office.

A Model

This model may help us to hold together six conceptual elements of this method.
We have chosen for this model and memory device
a Christian symbol which may be familiar to you.

Shield of Faith

This particular symbol looks like one kind of a shield;
It bears at its center a monogram, a ***Chi Rho***,
made of the first two letters of the Greek word, ***Christos***,
which translates, “Christ”.
These are also the initials of the Latin phrase,
Christus Regnat, which translates “Christ Reigns”.

Covenant

Here we use a spatial metaphor.
The vertical axis on the shield of faith reminds us
of the Judeo-Christian understanding
of the **covenant** between God and humanity.
At the top of the vertical axis, we write the word THEOLOGICAL.
This will help us remember
that Christian ways of understanding
grow out of the radical monotheism of the Jews.
Our work, our learning, therefore,
we must first understand as centered on what is ultimately important,
for which we use the word God.
(more on this later)
Our approach uniquely and profoundly
focuses on what is ultimately important.

Corporate

At the opposite end of the vertical axis we write the word CORPORATE.
This reminds us of the representational quality of this human activity.
We do it as representatives.
Our approach builds not upon matters of individual concern.
Private prayer we may see as an extension of this method,
but private prayer by itself differs from what we are doing.
We act as a group,
in a corporate context,
on behalf of all children, all women, and all men, everywhere.

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You

On the left side let us write the activity this process invites you to do.

Our approach invites **you** to be RESPONSIVE and TOTALLY INVOLVED.

This invitation to be RESPONSIVE comes, but never as a demand.

Always, as an essential part of this method, comes this invitation.

The drama we enact also asks us to be TOTALLY INVOLVED.

First, we bring our **whole** selves: our bodies, our minds, and our spirits.

We take part as fully as people can.

And second,

the design of this work can shape the **whole** of our lives.

The Church Founders and others throughout the centuries

recognized that all of us,

children, women, and men,

are total beings subject to influence in each of our dimensions.

But our limitations in this regard appear just as obvious.

Therefore, this paradox of total involvement,

invited, never demanded, seldom achieved.

There

On the right side let us write what we will find, what is there.

We engage in this work with this field manual in a FREE ATMOSPHERE
and with REPETITION.

As for the free atmosphere,

In the context of our work together no one will tell you how to feel.

You may feel as you need to feel.

Each of us brings our own set of feelings.

Each of us comes freighted with the experiences of our own life.

The method we use here dictates nothing about how any of us must feel.

We should allow the atmosphere to be free enough

to accommodate a multitude of emotions.

Finally, we turn to the last of these six elements we will list,

of the conceptual base for this method of learning,

REPETITION.

Because of the REPETITIVE nature of this work,

it reaches into the depths of our being.

This approach penetrates the barrier

between the conscious and the unconscious mind.

Patient, continuing, and incessant, it finally leaves an indelible mark

upon the deep fabric of our lives.

When we learn this way, we experience this repetitive nature

sometimes in *rite*

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(the written or spoken word),
sometimes in **ceremony**

(the nonverbal involvement of our total person).

This repetitiveness does not mean that rite and ceremony may never change.

It does suggest, however, that once we have effected a change,
we need repetition.

The absence of repetition diminishes the power of the method.
So, we have these six conceptual elements of this approach to learning.

Without any one of them we make the learning less effective.

For learning to be fully effective it must be **theological**, God-centered.
and it must be **corporate**, an act of people, doing it together,
a representational body of children, women, and men,
doing this unusual work of learning and fostering community.

It invites our deepest **response**.

It can reach us deeply only if **repetitive**.

Finally, to permit **total involvement**,
the atmosphere must be **free**.

Derivation of the word

You may find it helpful to examine the context
out of which this learning method comes.

In the first century C.E.,

the leaders of the Christian community developed this method
as a tool for community formation, transformation and memory.

They called it “liturgy”.

The English word **liturgy** comes from two Greek words,

laos, which translates as “people”

and **ergon**, which translates as “work”.

Thus the word **liturgy**, translates as “the work of the people.”

This “work of the people” arose not in a religious context at all.

In the Greek city state the people worked together on many tasks
building the community.

Together they built roads, and walls, and and ships.

All this work called for a corporate effort.

To this historical practice

with which the early Christian communities were familiar

and building on the foundation of their Jewish heritage,

they added their own unique understanding of themselves as Christians.

The result of this combination became the central act of the Church,
what we refer to as “worship”.

I think you will see that the idea of liturgy applies
to a lot of what we do well beyond just the Church.
So, even if you are not into “doing church”, bear with me;
I think you will find a useful tool.
In any case, we will be using this tool.
It arose in the church, and we will use Christian examples.

Ways we Experience The Liturgical

Liturgical in All of Life.

There are many other human activities which resemble liturgy.
In every aspect of life there are powerful forces
that move people and shape their lives,
activities that resemble liturgy.
These liturgical activities are all around us.
Beware. Do not confuse the liturgical,
what resembles liturgy,
with Liturgy itself.
On the other hand, do notice the important similarities.
The chart lists some possible examples.
You may think of others.

Church Founders Used Powerful Methods

Our forebearers understood the power of the liturgical.
They made use of the method
as a way of influencing and changing lives.
Anything liturgical by design, does precisely that,
it influences and changes lives.
You may want to be aware of this fact whenever you offer yourself
to the dynamics of Christian worship.
I designed this book as a liturgical experience.
It makes use of the same powerful methods
that the Church has employed since the first century.
Therefore, a word of caution.
We, those who created the material in this book,
are coming to this encounter with you with a particular point of view,
a bias, a set of theological presuppositions.
What's more, we intend to influence you, if possible.
In fact, we will do everything we can to persuade you

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to adopt this point of view this particular way of thinking,
this life posture, this understanding.

Naturally, if you decide **not** to let it influence you,
then it will **not**

An essential question you should ask
whenever the liturgical in any of its forms confront you.

To what purpose are those engaging you using it?

Do they seek taking my life away from me?
or giving my life back to me?

As you go through this book, you will want to ask these questions about it.

If you find the content to be taking your life away,
by all means decide against it.

If, on the other hand, you find it giving your life back to you,
embrace it and take it for your own.

Either way, you decide.

And what does this call to mind?

[now read or listen to Rag-Tag Army]

This chart is a summary of Chapters 1.3 and 1.4

THE MIGHTY ACTS OF GOD IN HISTORY AND THE RESPONSES OF GOD'S PEOPLE

The Covenants	The Great Escape	The General	The Heroes	Birth of A Nation	Things Fall Apart	The Return	Between The Times
Genesis	Exodus	Joshua	Judges	I, II, Samuel	I, II, Kings	Ezra Nehemiah	Apocrypha
Adam	Moses	Canaan	Border Raids	Anoint A King	Solomon	Persians	
Noah	YHWH	Jericho	Charismatics	Samuel	Rehoboam	Cyrus The Mede	Greeks 333 BCE
Abraham	Pharaoh		Gideon	Saul	Jeroboam		Antiochus
	Plagues		Samson	David	926 BCE		Epiphanes
	Passover		Jael	Joab	Division of		*
	Red Sea				Kingdom		*
	Law				Ten Northern Tribes . . . Israel		* *
							*
							Herod
							John

Chapter 1.3

Re-picturing the Heritage, Moses Through Judges

Overview

Scripture claims to answer two important questions for each successive generation.

“Who am I” and “What am I to do?”

But you won’t find a section or a chapter in the bible with that as a title.

You will find narratives, stories.

For as long as we know

when a community has had something really important to remember
we told stories.

So we will be lifting up these stories that our cultural ancestors told,
stories they told about themselves and about their ancestors.

“Here-and-now Christians” don’t exist.

We connect to a Great Tradition.

We become a New Israel, heirs to the faith of the Hebrew people.

Therefore, we begin with an introduction
to the content of the Old Testament
as absolutely essential to an investigation of our identity.

Our brothers and sisters within Judaism are also

heirs to the faith of the Hebrew people.

We have simply taken different paths since the fall of the second temple.

Many of us already know this material, but a review may refresh our memory.

We will return to these stories as examples of what people do.

Listen for the connections.

Bible

The Bible contains a whole library — 66 different books.

That assertion surprises some.

But Bible scholars knew that already before 1911 ¹.

The 66 books differ radically in style, content, and significance.

One or two books may strike us as out of place.

¹ The New Outlook volume 98. 1911. page 57. within an article entitled “The New Bible”. editors, Alfred Emanuel Smith and Francis Walton

As an example consider the Song of Solomon.

Maybe it provided lyrics for songs at weddings and engagement parties.

The Church, however, facing what to do with this book,
more often than not treated it as an allegory
of the love between Christ and his Church.

But to me, it sure looks like an erotic love poem.

We divide the Bible into two parts:

the “Old” or “First” Testament, also known as the Hebrew Bible,
and the “New” or “Second” Testament.

Why call it a **testament**? What does the word mean?

Some scholars translated the Hebrew word "*herith*" as “testament”;
other scholars translated it as "**covenant**"

A "*herith*" may be an **agreement** between parties,
or a **grant** from one to others.

But we make an important distinction between "covenant" and “contract”
a very important distinction.

Contract: if you and I make a contract and I breach,
then my breach voids the contract and frees you.

The voided contract no longer binds you.

Covenant: If you and I make a covenant and I breach,
the covenant still binds you.

Consider the importance of that distinction,
because of the parties to the covenant under consideration.

God covenants with us humans.

Although mankind continually breaches the covenant,
the writers of scripture understood
that God declared God's self still bound.

Bear in mind a second insight of profound theological significance;
we are here dealing with **one** covenant.

We see an **old understanding** of this one covenant relationship,
and a **new understanding** of this one covenant relationship.

But the relationship itself continues, constant, one.

As we approach the canon of scripture, let us keep in mind three H's:

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Honesty, Humor, and Humility.

If in reading a passage from the Bible
you find it supports your favorite prejudice,
you can be fairly certain that you have misread it.

If, on the other hand, the reading of scripture
calls your point of view into question,
you have probably understood it.

The Bible does not present us with perfect personalities,
or models of morality.

We find instead, mirrors for self-identity².

Let us now take a look at this Bible
as the explanatory narrative of the people of Israel,
the story they told themselves when they asked the questions,
who are we? where are we going? what are we to do?

We will return to these examples
as we look at how we use really important words.

Let us together view this great panorama,
the horizontal sweep that sets forth
the mighty acts of God and the response of God's people.

The Mighty Acts of God and the Response of God's People.

I use this longer title for the Old Testament to help me understand it better.

I have retitled each of the parts as well.

Genesis: The Covenants

We meet in Genesis the record of various covenants.

Adamic Covenant --

Between God and Adam, "the Earthling" in the Garden.

Noachic Covenant--

Between God and Noah, after the flood,
symbolized by the rainbow sign.

Abrahamic Covenant--

² phrases used in "Torah and Canon" by James Sanders published by Fortress Press 1972 page xii

Between God and Abraham
calling into being an elect people,
singled out to be a light to the nations.

Out of all the people on the face of the earth,
the writers of scripture assert that God chose one man, Abraham.

Why? Because of his virtue? Did his exceed all others? No.

In the story, Abraham offered his wife Sarah to Pharaoh,
claiming she was his sister, as if that made it ok.

Perhaps God selected Abraham because of Abraham's deep faithfulness?
Not at all.

When God announced that Sarah would conceive and bear a child,
the story says Abraham fell down on his face laughing.

Well, Sarah had seen a hundred winters. That's old!

How much faith did Abraham have?

Manifestly, no more than you and I do.

Recall the **Mosaic Covenant**--

Between God and Moses, calling Israel out of bondage in Egypt.
and promising them a land flowing with milk and honey.

This covenant actually appears in Exodus.

So let us move on to that book.

Exodus: The Great Escape

In order to help me remember the story in this book,

I have re-titled it: "The Great Escape".

Exodus tells the story of a man called Moses.

The text says the name came from "*masha*" to draw out.

Or maybe it came from "*mes*" the Egyptian word for "son".

We pick up the story one day when we find Moses walking in the desert.

He comes upon a burning bush.

Now, a bush burning in the desert, the writers did not find unusual.

The unusual thing the writers said, not the fact of burning,

but rather the strange fact that the fire did not consume the bush,

Can you just picture Moses?

He stands for a while, watching that bush burn.

Scripture says that a voice spoke to him.

Voice: Get the people out of Egypt.

Moses: O.K., but who am I working for?

Voice: Yahweh.

Literally translated:

I am, in that I am, because I am, supported by the fact that I am,
surrounded by being, under girded by ontology, in a cloak of “is-ness.”

Freely translated:

“None of your business, Moses.”

“I’ll be. You get the people out of Egypt.”

So Moses goes before Pharaoh and proclaims,

“I AM says you have to let the people go.”

There follows a whole series of promises, broken,
and a series of plagues.

These include flies, a river of blood, lice, boils, and frogs,
my favorite plague, frogs!

Picture it! frogs in the kettles, frogs in the soup,
frogs in the beds, frogs in the sandals, frogs everywhere!

Then came the Last Plague,
the death of the first born
of the whole House of Egypt.

The Angel of Death moved over Egypt.

And the children of Israel marked their doorposts and lintels with blood,
blood of a lamb, making this sign, two posts below, the lintel above.



This is the point at which scripture first mentions
“the blood of the lamb”.

The text says the Angel of death “passes over“ the doors so marked,
but kills the first born of the House of Egypt.

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That got Pharaoh's attention.

Pharaoh lets the people go.

The cultural heirs, the Jews, celebrate this deliverance to this day,
in the Feast of the Passover.

Let me make an important theological comment here:

The writers of scripture do not say that Pharaoh,
hardened Pharaoh's heart against Moses.

They do not say that the Devil hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Rather they say "**God**", God hardened the Pharaoh's heart.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart against Moses.

Ultimately, the responsibility for everything lies with God,
including Pharaoh.

Radical monotheism underlies this Hebrew narrative.

The story continues.

Soon Pharaoh realizes what a dumb thing he has done --

He has released his entire slave labor force, his empire faces collapse.

Pharaoh pursues Moses and the Israelites out into the desert,

Pharaoh, his army, his foot soldiers, his chariots,

a scene made for CB deMille.

The people come to a great body of water.

Problem: Moses and the folks seem caught

between the Red Sea before them, and Pharaoh behind.

God parts the waters. The Israelites cross over.

"Pharaoh's army got drowned."

Miriam, Moses' sister, sings a victory song.

Bloodthirsty times, these.

The people now follow a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

They arrive at a mountain where Moses receives the Ten Commandments
amidst great rumblings and roarings.

The description sure sounds like volcanic activity,

fire, cloud, roar.

Moses comes down from the mountain

and finds the people worshiping a golden calf.

Idolatry comes out of fear and need for security.

Yahweh brings judgment upon the people.

They must wander in the wilderness for forty years.

After forty years of wandering, they come to another mountain top.

They look out over the River Jordan into the land of Canaan.

Moses sees into this Promised Land,

but realizes that he will die without entering into it.

In our time Martin Luther King spoke of the same kind of experience.

The story has Moses give a long speech

in which he rehearses the whole story of Israel,

their creation as a special people,

Yahweh freeing them, and Yahweh renewing them by the covenant.

The death of Moses you will find recorded

at the end of the book of Deuteronomy.

Thus, the story of the Great Escape spreads beyond Exodus.

It stretches on through the book of Numbers

and finally concludes in Deuteronomy.

The story of the Great Escape, ends with Moses' death,

so we included it under this section on Exodus.

Joshua: The General

The timeline of narrative continues in the book of Joshua.

We could re-title the book of Joshua: The General.

Joshua succeeded Moses as leader of the Israelite tribes.

This book contains the story of Conquest,

the Conquest of Canaan by the Israelites.

The Battle of Jericho symbolizes in one major event

what probably involved a long, slow process of infiltration.

Many scholars say that the archeological record

has no evidence of a city at Jericho

at the time of the Israelite crossing.

But the story of the fall of Jericho stands

as the sort of thing that should have happened.

The Israelites clearly saw Canaan as their Promised Land.

The only persons who did not understand this were the Canaanites.

They had always thought of it as *their* land.

By the end of the book, of Joshua, Israel has taken the land
except for the hilltop citadel, Jerusalem.

To say that Israel had taken the land, however,
means something different

than saying that Israel's rule has been firmly established.

For the moment Israel has beaten the Canaanites back to the borders.

The book of Joshua really contains nothing else.

Judges: Heroes

In order to learn about the establishing of the land,
we move on to the book of Judges.

We may re-title the book of Judges, Heroes.

In this instance the word "Judge" does not refer to courts of law,
black robes, and "thirty days or thirty dollars".

Judges, as used in this sense, refers to a number of outstanding,
charismatic, awesome individuals,

who provided the political or military strategy appropriate for the moment.

Israel had no central government, no king.

Canaanites continued to raid the borders trying to recapture land,
land the Canaanites thought of as Canaanite land.

Out of the situation rose up individual heroes,
warriors around whom the people could rally.

The writers of scripture called these heroes judges.

Perhaps you can think of examples.

The better known ones, Gideon, Samson, and Deborah,.

But there were others, like Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar and Jael [yah ell]

Jael

Hear the story of one of these judges, Jael,
and her encounter with Sisera at Kishon.

In the days when Deborah Judged Israel.
Sisera, commanding the army of Canaan,
gave trouble on the borders.
So Deborah sent for Barak of Naphtali,
"Barak", she said, "You go up Mount Tabor,
with ten thousand from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun.
I will draw out Sisera to meet you by the Wadi Kishon
with his chariots and his troops;
and I will give him into your hand."
So they did. Barak brought the ten thousand,
and Deborah went out with him.
When Sisera heard that Barak had gone up Mount Tabor,
Sisera gathered all his chariots,
nine hundred chariots of iron, and all his troops,
and moved them to the Wadi Kishon.
Next morning Deborah shares an early cup of coffee with Barak,
"Today," she says, "is the day!"
"The Lord will give Sisera into your hand."
Barak stormed down from Mount Tabor
into the wadi with ten thousand warriors following him.
The writers of scripture say Jahweh gave the victory to Barak.
Victory? a route!
The text says **the Lord** threw Sisera, his charioteers, his whole army,
into a panic in the face of Barak's charge.
The entire army of Sisera fell by the sword;
none survived.
Well almost none. Sisera himself fled on foot.
Off through the foothills he went.
At the top of a hill he came to the tent of Jael
wife of Heber the Kenite.
Can you picture it?
Here comes Sisera, dog tired, and Jael comes out to meet him.
Soft and sweet she says,

can't you just hear her,

‘Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear.’

So Sisera turns aside, goes into the tent, and Jael covers him with a rug.

"Would you like something to drink," she says

"maybe some nice milk, after all that running?"

She opens a skin of milk and gives him a drink

and covers him up.

"There now, you get yourself a little nap and you'll feel better."

Sisera dozes off.

Then, the text says,

“Jael, wife of Heber, took a tent-peg, and a hammer in her hand,

and went softly to Sisera where he lay sleeping,

and drove the peg into his temple,

through his head and into the ground.”

He died.

At the end of the book of Judges the Israelites control all of Canaan;

they have established the land.

But the hill-top citadel, Jerusalem, remains in Canaanite control.

Yes. Now what does this call to mind?

Chapter 1.4:

Re-Picturing the Heritage: Samuel to Herod

We pick up the historical thread at the end of the period of the judges.

We will carry it, through the founding of the nation of Israel,
its decline, its restoration,
and its re-conquest in the inter-testamental period,
into the early years of the current era,
when Herod Antipas, as Tetrarch, ruled Galilee and Perea.

I and II Samuel: Birth of a Nation

Why not just Samuel? How come I (first) and II (second) Samuel?

The short answer? The text was simply too long, too much for one scroll.

So the keepers of the scrolls, the copyists, the scribes,
cut the scroll in half.

That way you could carry one scroll under each arm.

I have re-titled Samuel: "Birth of a Nation".

During this time people began talking
about having a centralized government and a king.

Naturally, there were differing views.

Some preferred a loose federation of tribes under the Heroes.

Some thought a king and a centralized government would be best.

"We need a king.

All the other countries around us have one"

So, it fell to Samuel to find a king.

Well the high priest chose the king,

To be king, someone must anoint you with oil.

Samuel anointed Saul, over Saul's protest.

I imagine Samuel coming up to Saul,
the vial of oil secretly clutched in his hand
hidden under his cloak.

"Hi Saul". "Hi Samuel. what's up?"

and in a flash Samuel whips out the oil,
drizzles it on Saul's head, and announces,

“Tag!, You’re It! You're the king.”

Of course it didn't really happen that way, did it?

See what the text in I Samuel says.

I Sam 9&10

Saul became the first king of Israel.

He tried hard, but suffered emotional illness, depression.

He had enough trouble keeping Saul together,
let alone keeping the kingdom together.

To complicate things a young man in his court
plotted and conspired to take away the throne.

You know this young man, David.

These books provide a lengthy account

of the power struggle between Saul and David,

the armed insurrection, the flights at night,

secret meetings between David and Saul's son, Jonathan.

A song went around the campfires in those days,

"Saul has killed his thousands, ...

and David his ten thousands!"

David did succeed in taking the throne.

He became the second king of Israel.

This happened right about the year 1000 B.C.E.

David became the best king in all the history of Israel.

He had a real knack, a political, military genius.

Under his inspiring lead,

the armies of Israel finally conquered the citadel of Jerusalem,
that fortress on the mountaintop.

Then David made this fortress city his capitol.

(Looking ahead, the community will later select David
as one of the models for Messiah)

Several things contributed to David's success;

notably he employed one particular man,

maybe the world's number one assassin, Joab.

You will find the story of David, Absalom and Joab.
in II Samuel 14-18.

David has this son, Absalom perhaps his favorite son.

Absalom, the handsome, Absalom the vain.

Absalom had this full head of hair, thick, rich, curly hair.

Absalom also wanted to be king.

He could not wait to be king.

A lot of people thought he would be a great king,
now.

So, Absalom, as his father did before him, organized an armed insurrection.

With the armies in the field, David sent Joab to the front
with instructions, to take Absalom, but do him no harm.

But Joab knew better.

He knew that so long as Absalom lived,
the crown would not rest securely on David's brow.

Can you picture the scene?

Joab comes upon Absalom at the edge of the battle, fleeing for his life.

Absalom rides under a tree.

Absalom's hair, Absalom's thick, rich, curly head of hair,
that he cut but once a year,

his hair catches in the branches, and suspends him there.

Absalom pleads with Joab to cut him down.

With one mighty stroke of his sword,
Joab did; he cuts off Absalom's head.

It was necessary for the kingdom.

Although David was capable in the extreme, he was also corrupt.

The writers of scripture portray David

both in his power and in his weakness.

You will find the story of David, Bathsheba, and Uriah
in II Samuel 11.

[II Samuel 11:2-17]

One day David was walking on the roof of his palace.

He saw, on the roof of a nearby building, a woman bathing.

Oh my was she beautiful!

He immediately desired her .

She was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite,

one of David's field commanders.

David's army was in battle; Uriah was not at home.
David did the "I can have what I want" thing.
He arranged for Bathsheba to come to him,
and he made her pregnant.

When David learned she was in fact pregnant,
he tried the "cover up" thing.

David called Uriah home from the front,
"You know, Uriah, you've been fighting hard.
you need a little rest and recreation.

Go home, sleep with your wife."

Perhaps Uriah would then think
that the child Bathsheba was carrying was his own.

But Uriah was a faithful soldier,
unwilling to violate the ancient rule
that bound warriors in times of war.

The text quotes Uriah this way: [2 Samuel 11:11]

"The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths in the open field;
shall I then go to my house, to eat, to drink, and to lie with my wife?

As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing. I cannot!"

After repeated efforts to convince Uriah to have sex with Bathsheba,
the king sent Uriah back to the front with a message to Joab.

"Place Uriah in the front lines of the battle,
and then pull back"

David gave the sealed orders to Uriah himself,
to carry to Joab, orders for his own death.

Next morning Joab said to Uriah ,

"Guess what, Uriah, you get to carry the flag!"

So Uriah carried the flag; his own troops pulled back;
the enemy overran his position; and Uriah died.

David took the widow Bathsheba to be his wife.

Then there came into David's court a man by the name of Nathan.

In Nathan we meet the first of a strange breed of wild-eyed, half-crazy

sideways-walking people with whom we will have more dealings --
the prophets.

You will find the story of Nathan and David
in II Samuel 12:1-7

So Nathan comes to see David and Nathan says,

"David have I got a story for you!

See, there were these two men, one rich, the other poor.

The rich man had many flocks and herds.

The poor man had none, only one little ewe lamb.

He loved it as one of his children.

He fed it from his own table.

It was one of his family,

like a daughter to him.

Now one day a traveler came to the rich man.

Rather than take one of his own flock to dress and cook for his guest,

he took the poor man's lamb,

stole it, killed it, dressed it, cooked it, and served it."

David did not wait to be asked.

He was so filled with anger, he jumped up and fairly shouted,

"As the Lord lives! that man shall surely die!"

And Nathan said to David,

"Gotcha!"

Well, the King James version puts it

"Thou art the man."

That's "Gotcha!"

God's judgment was upon David.

The son born to David by Bathsheba died.

Writers of scripture interpreted this event as the judgment of God.

David had another son by Bathsheba. His name was Solomon.

Solomon's story you will find in I Kings.

I and II Kings: Things Fall Apart

When David lay dying, Bathsheba succeeded in persuading him
to name her son Solomon as the next king.

David did not want Solomon to be king,
but Bathsheba's intrigue won out.
Solomon came to the throne.
He was a very bad king -- not wise at all.
He did sponsor the wisdom literature movement
whose writers then dedicated their writings to him.
Hence we hear of the 'Wisdom of Solomon'.
Solomon lived in splendor while the people starved.
He overtaxed and overworked his subjects.
Scripture says that Solomon "loved strange women"
and brought them in from all over the world to live with him.
True, Solomon built the temple,
but Solomon also built his own palace
three times the size of the temple.
The people were on the verge of revolt.
The situation was intolerable.
It would have been difficult for any heir of Solomon's
to have the support of the people.
Solomon's son Rehoboam was in line for the throne,
but the people had a favorite whose name was Jeroboam.
When Solomon died, Rehoboam succeeded him on the throne.
Rehoboam asked his advisors what to say in his inaugural address.
They told him to distance himself, to disassociate himself totally,
from the practices of his father.
So, what did Rehoboam do?
He went before the people assembled and said,
"My father chastised you with whips.
I will chastise you with scorpions!"
As if with one voice the cry went up
"Israel to your tents!"
Ten of the twelve tribes left, going to the North with Jeroboam.
They retained the name Israel.
Only two tribes stayed with Rehoboam in the South,

Judah and Benjamin. They took the name Judah.

Scholars date this division of the kingdom to 926 B.C.E.

At this point the history of the people of Israel gets all tied up with the rise and fall of several major world powers.

Around the years 721 to 650 B.C.E.

the Assyrians conquered all the "known world",

Mesopotamia, Persia, the headwaters of the Tigris

in the eastern mountains of modern Turkey,

and a tongue down the Mediterranean coast through modern Syria.

They swept down from the North

and completely destroyed the ten tribes of Israel.

(Thus the "Ten Lost Tribes")

They rolled over Galilee and Samaria,

but not quite all the way to Jerusalem.

Perhaps this was because Israel stood on the trade routes.

The Southern Kingdom survived, hurt, but not utterly destroyed.

At this point Judah reclaimed the name Israel.

Next, the Babylonians conquered the Assyrians, and thus Judah.

They now took Judah into exile, twice.

They took those who now called themselves Israel to Babylon,

between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Preceding the second Babylonian captivity,

Babylon totally destroyed Jerusalem (c. 586 B.C.E).

During the second Babylonian exile there grew up a Messianic hope.

A Messiah, a chosen one, an anointed one,

was to come and usher in the Kingdom of God.

It would be a theocracy,

a political, military, here-and-now Kingdom.

Israel's enemies would be overthrown

and peace would reign upon all the earth.

People would say,

"What will the Kingdom of God be like?"

and others would answer, "Like David.

You remember David! Like that."

This tradition said that Messiah
would be a warrior king like David.

This led to the idea that Messiah was to be
"of the house and lineage" of David,
and would also be born in the city of David,
which was Bethlehem,
a full Davidic Monarchical Restoration.

Messiah did not come.

But the Persians did.

Around 539 B.C.E. Cyrus the Mede conquered the Babylonians.

Cyrus allowed the people of Israel
to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the city.

He set conditions for the return:

tribute to Persia and no rebellions,

"Pay the taxes and don't even think of independence!".

Ezra and Nehemiah: The Return.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell of this return in 516 B.C.E,
the rebuilding of Jerusalem

and the consequent rebuilding of the temple.

This was a time of intense nationalistic fervor.

Legalism and exclusivism are the dominant themes of the day.

The Old Testament comes to an end here.

But we have more to tell, nearly 500 years yet to get to Herod.

Apocrypha: Between the Testaments

Inter-testamental history you will find in the books of the Apocrypha,
a body of literature regarded by most Protestant denominations
as spurious, not part of the Bible.

This same collection of writings

Roman Catholics view as fully canonical.

Naturally Episcopalians have one foot in each camp.

They do not accept the Apocrypha
as part of the canon of scripture,

but they hold it to be highly informative,
and read from it regularly in church.

The Apocrypha contains such writings as Judith, Tobit, Daniel, Suzanna,
and the two books of the Maccabees.

In 333 B.C.E. the Greeks conquered the Persians.

Now there were Greek occupation troops
on every street corner in Jerusalem.

One of the occupation dictators
was a man from Antioch
who called himself the manifestation of god.

The Greek words for that are, "Antiochus Epiphanes".
Antiochus came to Jerusalem and offered a sacrifice.

In the temple, on the high altar! he slaughtered a sow!

It looked like a sacrifice to a pagan god using a ritually unclean animal,
the epitome of blasphemy!

This event precipitated a revolt under the strong leadership of the Maccabees.

For about 150 years there was a period of relative autonomy for the Jews.

Then in 64 B.C.E. the Romans overthrew the Greeks.

Roman occupation troops replaced those of the Greeks.
The Jews had never faced anything like the Romans.

We may understand the Romans better
if we compare them with the Nazis of Germany's Third Reich.
The Romans originated "Blitzkrieg."

They used crucifixion as a method of torture and death
for those who opposed The Empire.

There was no king but Caesar.

But various puppet kings ruled in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.

These kings Caesar empowered and they were responsible to him.

Such a puppet king was Herod,

Herod the Great and then his son, Herod Antipas.

It was Herod's job to keep the peace.

Being an Idumean, he might understand the customs
and language of the Jews, and their fierce devotion to their God,

their peculiar idioms, and the special meanings
associated with words like "Messiah" and "Kingdom of God".
It was up to him to put down any possible rebellion before it got started.
So when a wild-eyed, half-crazy, sideways-walking man
came to the banks of the River Jordan shouting,
“Repent (turn around) for the Kingdom of God is at hand,”
Herod knew what was happening.
He knew that "Kingdom of God" was code words.
He recognized it as political talk, sedition, fomenting a coup
to reestablish the Davidic Dynasty and national autonomy.
He recognized it for what it was, Treason.
So Herod had John the Baptist killed.
Immediately, a young man who may have been one of John's disciples
went to the banks of the River Jordan and began to shout,
“Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.”
At first Herod decided to ignore this action.
This may account for the short period of relative quiet
that we know as the Galilean ministry.
But soon Herod knew that he was dealing
with someone even more dangerous than John.
So he decided that the young man must die.
From that moment on,
from the moment that Herod made the decision to kill him,
until the moment that he made his own decision
to commit his death by riding a donkey into Jerusalem,
Jesus of Nazareth lived out the rest of his life
as a fugitive.

Yes. Now what does this call to mind?

[now read or listen to Noel Lone Ranger]

Chapter 1.5

Re-Picturing Messiah

[The group may want to give turns as scribe to fill out the charts as you proceed]

Theological Tradition

Now that we have surveyed the narrative

let us look at some of the symbols from our theological tradition.

First let us look at the Judeo-Christian word-symbol **Messiah**.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	Messiah	

Picturing Messiah as Warrior King

What was the picture that went with **Messiah** in the first Century?

What was **Messiah** going to look like?

How did people put a handle on that?

Someone in the first century might say,

“Don’t just tell me **Messiah** is coming!

What’s he going to be like?

I want to **imagine, to picture,**

what **Messiah** will be like.”

The answer was “**Messiah** will be like David.

He will be a political, military victor; he will be like David.

He won’t be David, but he will be like David.

Remember David? He will be like that.

He will be a warrior King.”

This was the prevailing picture of the time.

So, we add “warrior king” to the pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	Messiah	warrior king (like David)

Most people people associated that kind of picture with the word-symbol **Messiah**.

But then Jesus made a specific claim to be Messiah.

He did this in many different ways.

He said it in words.

And he also employed many non-verbal symbols.

He did things that the writers of scripture said fulfilled messianic prophecy.

Consider this very plausible interpretation of Jesus.

Jesus set out deliberately to fulfill all those things in scripture that pointed to the coming of **Messiah**.

Look how we used these non-verbal symbols.

Do you remember the old western movies, and radio programs?

"Return with me now to the days of yore.

From out of the west come the thundering hoofbeats ... "

Imagine that you are the sheriff in a frontier town.

A man wearing a black mask walks into your office.

He puts a silver bullet on your desk.

Outside there stands a big white horse.

The masked man has an Indian companion.

And he talks in a big, deep voice.

Everybody knows that these are the signs, the non-verbal symbols

associated with the Lone Ranger!

In the same way, there were many non-verbal symbols associated with Messiah.

I think Jesus set out self-consciously

to make use of these non-verbal signs.

Either that, or the writers of scripture,
writing to the early church, did.

For instance, at the time of Passover, no Israelite male,
no Judean male, would ride into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey
unless he was claiming to be king.

By this action he fulfilled scripture.

(Zechariah 9:9).

You can see why people

who had never seen Jesus before in their lives
rushed out of their houses and started shouting,
“Hosannah!. The Messianic Age is here! This is it!”

They were so excited
that they threw clothes and palm branches in his path.

All this happened

because Jesus used a powerful non-verbal symbol.

Then, to make sure everyone understood,
he immediately went to the temple and cleansed it.

Who would dare to cleanse the temple except **Messiah**?

Clearly, this man was claiming to be the Awaited One,
the Anointed One.

There could be no mistake about this.

Everyone was very excited
everyone, except for Caiaphas, the high priest.

I think Caiaphas was an intellectual. I think he was from Missouri.

When people ran into his office shouting that **Messiah** had come,
Caiaphas said, “show me”. He said, “I want to see **Messiah**.

I want to see the fiery sword and the armies.

Show me Messiah and I will join the revolution, now!”

Caiaphas was probably praying harder than anyone else
for the coming of **Messiah**.

But then they said, “Look out the window.

You can see him right out there in the square.”

And Caiaphas looked out, saw Jesus, and about fainted.

Then the high priest said, “Don’t tell me. Let me guess.

“When that man out there rode into the city
on the back of a donkey, as undoubtedly he did,
you fools went out and threw your coats in the road,
and you threw palm branches,
and started shouting, ‘Hosannah.’

I know you did.

You do realize what’s going to happen now!

You have now made a public demonstration
on behalf of a Judean King.

“There will be thousands — yes thousands -- of crucifixions.
Not hundreds. Thousands.

The Romans have done it before and they will do it again --
they will do it to remind you that we have no king but Caesar.

“We have to turn this man over to the Romans, now!

BETTER THAT ONE MAN SHOULD DIE
FOR THE SAKE OF THE PEOPLE.

It is expedient, it is necessary,
that we turn this man over to the Romans
in order that thousands might live.”

Caiaphas didn’t want to turn Jesus over. He had to.

He was put in a position where he had to do it.

Jesus forced Caiaphas to do that.

Jesus forced his own execution.

And so it was.

The gospel writers tell of Jesus brought before Pilate,

Procurator of the Roman Province of Judea.

And Pilate said to the people assembled,

“Whom shall I release to you? Shall it be your king?”

If one person’s voice had said “No.”

Caiaphas would have strangled that one on the spot.

Everyone was standing in stark terror.

Finally the crowd shouted,

“We will have nothing to do with that man.

We don’t want any part of him.

Give us anybody. Give us Barabbas. But not Jesus.

Not that one. We are not traitors.

We are not rebels. We are not engaged in this madness.

No! Let Caesar look upon us with favor.”

So Pilate said, “Send this man out and crucify him.

Write an inscription above him that says

KING OF THE JUDEANS.

This is what happens to would-be kings.”

But the people said,

“Oh, no! Don’t say that he was the king of us Judeans.

Say that he **claimed** to be king of the Judeans.”

Pilate said, “I have written what I have written.

It will say KING OF THE JUDEANS.

This is what happens to traitors.”

So Pilate crucified Jesus for treason against the Roman Empire.

Crucifixion was a Roman method of execution.

It was not an Israelite method.

If the Israelites, the people of Judea, had wanted to kill Jesus
they would have stoned him.

But it wasn’t the Judeans, the Israelites, who killed him.

The Romans did.

Of course, it’s true that Caiaphas and the people of Israel
turned him over to Pilate to save the lives of thousands.

But then, Jesus put Caiaphas in that position.

Ultimately Jesus was responsible for his own execution.

Picture of Suffering Servant

But what do the writers of scripture say

about the **kind** of ***Messiah*** that Jesus was?

Let us be clear.

No one knows for certain what Jesus had in mind.

We can only say what St. Paul and the Gospel writers
and others **tell** us about what Jesus had in mind.

They say that what he had in mind

was a **Suffering Servant**.

Let us add “Suffering Servant” to the pictures

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	Messiah	Warrior King
		Suffering Servant

The writers of the New Testament related Jesus’ messianic claim
to the picture of the Suffering Servant.

There was no such identification

on the part of the great masses of people.

Why everybody knew,

(and take note, the words, “everybody knew”,

you only use when you are talking about a cultural picture,

a picture in everyone’s mind)

everybody just knew that ***Messiah***

was going to be a political, military victor like David.

Everybody knew that.

But now, suddenly, here are the Gospel writers are telling us

that we are to picture Jesus in an entirely new way --

that of Suffering Servant.

To be sure, Suffering Servant was a familiar figure.

But this mysterious image, this picture, from Second Isaiah,

the community had never identified with ***Messiah!***

It’s a curious juxtaposition at best.

Yet the Gospel writers say that this is exactly what Jesus had in mind.

We see that the picturing, the cultural mental image,

was radically altered.

Let us ask what great data change had taken place.
 A political, military victor like David
 might have been an appropriate picturing of **Messiah**
 for a thousand years before --
 but not in the first century C.E.

Concept

Before we look at why this is true,
 let us first infer the abstraction, the concept,
 the correlation principle, behind this symbol.
 I am going to trust theological scholars in this regard.
 Conceptually, **Messiah** is a word-symbol used by the Hebrew writers
 to refer to the FREEDOM EVENT.

But it is the freedom event **personalized**.

They expected a certain HE.

They would have accepted a SHE.

(You know they would have accepted a SHE
 because you know about Jael,

and you know about Deborah, and many others.)

Yes, they would have accepted a SHE.

And they might have accepted an IT.

THE PERSONALIZED EVENT

THAT WILL BRING ABOUT FREEDOM.

He, or She, or It, That which will come and give us our lives back.

That which will restore community. the FREEDOM EVENT.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
The Freedom Event personalized; The one who gives us back our lives and restores community	Messiah	warrior king (like David) Suffering Servant

Certainly a political, military victor (David) did something like that at the time of the unification of the kingdom.

He did take the hilltop city of Jerusalem.

He beat the Canaanites back to the borders.

He instituted one rule for the kingdom.

He established the capital at Jerusalem.

And things went well.

At least that was the picture people had of that time.

Data Change

But by the time of Jesus a period of a thousand years has gone by.

There are new data on the scene

that David never had to contend with.

David never had to face the Romans,

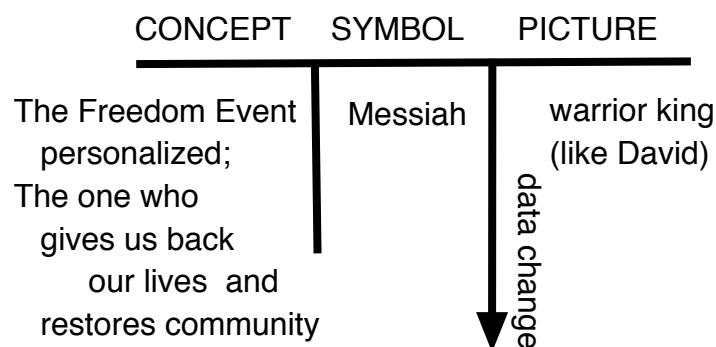
nor an organization as large and complex

with the technology they had.

In the first century a political, military victor

would have had to overthrow the Roman Empire.

This is a brand-new piece of data.



It may be well and good for a warrior king to push the tribes of Canaan to the borders.

But how could any leader, no matter how charismatic, create a military force massive enough to dislodge the Romans?

This is another problem entirely.

The first thing that Jesus could see

about the warrior king image of Messiah was
that it was utterly **impossible** in the first century.

It simply could not be done.

It is awful to maintain a vision, a picture of how it will be,
that cannot possibly be brought about;
to hold a dream that cannot become a reality.

If the symbol is being used to
symbolize the FREEDOM EVENT,
and the picture in our mind

cannot by any means bring freedom,

then that way of picturing is not a very good, is it?

The other thing that I think Jesus would have understood from this
was that the warrior king image was **immoral**.

Let's pretend that the Israelites were able to pull it off.

Let's pretend that the people of Judea
were able to overthrow the Roman army
in one bloody massacre;
push it to the sea, and demolish it.

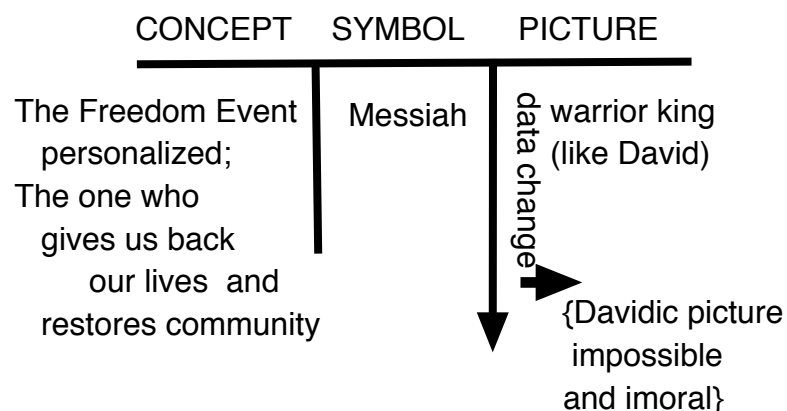
The Judeans would end up being the new bullies on the block.

They would be the world rulers.

AND they would be in that same curious position
that the Romans had been in.

That's not freedom. That's slavery.

So the second insight Jesus came to was that the previous picturing,
the old way of picturing Messiah,
was immoral.



The Davidic picturing, the picture of David leading us to victory,
was both impossible and immoral.

We needed a totally new way of picturing the word-symbol
to remain faithful to the Spirit of Messiah!

The Gospel writers chose to picture Messiah
as SUFFERING SERVANT.

and they portray Jesus as choosing to do that too.

To be more specific,

this picture of **Messiah** is of one who accepts the situation at hand,
and who loves in the midst of it.

The Suffering Servant goes the extra mile,
turns the other cheek, and by love brings about a type of freedom
and restoration of community that is not a conquest,
not a political conquest, not a military conquest,
nor cultural nor economic conquest.

"Love your enemies," Jesus said. "Love your enemies."

This presupposes that you have enemies.

People that you don't like, or don't like you.

Certainly, by "Love" Jesus doesn't mean "be romantic" or "have sex with".

He means rather that **you intend justice for the other,
all the others**, whether you like them or not.

What a mind-wrenching idea!

And Jesus' own complete intentionality brought with it
the radical freedom and restoration of community
to which the symbol, **Messiah**, points.

Picturing Messiah Today

But 2000 years have elapsed since the time of Jesus.

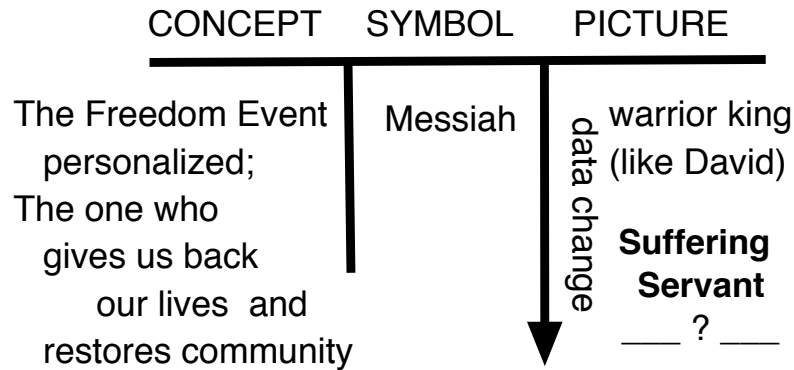
What would Messiah look like today?

What would be a picture that remains faithful to the concept
and at the same time takes into consideration
the vast data change of the last 2000 years?

Where would we go to look for Messiah today?

Where is the FREEDOM EVENT personalized --
 he, she, or it that will come and give us our lives back
 and restore community?

What will be the picture, the concrete manifestation,
 how shall we picture **Messiah**,
 to answers the person who says, "show me one!"?



Now, what does **that** call to mind?

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Chapter 1.6

Re-Picturing the Heritage: Demon

Lets look at another example of a word-symbol from our theology,
one of my favorite word-symbols, **demon**.

I like it in part because I believe in demons.

But when I say I believe in demons

I do not picture them the way we did in the past.

Historical Pictures

In the first Century the word-symbol **demon** called to mind
a little creature that got inside you and messed you up.

When the gospel writers say Jesus cast out demons

the writers thought of the demons as little creatures.

Once he cast the demons out of a man and into some pigs.

When the demons came out of a man

the writers said that the man **came to himself**.

He had his own self given back to him.

But the demons, they were little creatures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	demon	little creatures

By the Middle Ages demons haven't changed much.

People in the Middle Ages still pictured demons as little creatures.

But now they have tails.

In the Middle Ages the demons are little creatures with tails.

Not much change.

Let us add "tails" to the pictures.

Now, I don't believe in little creatures with tails.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	demon	little creatures little creatures with tails

But I still want to use the word **demon**.

It speaks of a reality in my life, and I want to continue to use it.

I just know I'm going to have difficulty

communicating this reality

to the woman or man reading the *Wall Street Journal*.

Especially if I begin to talk

about little creatures with tails.

Let us be clear.

I do not intend to insist that demons

are **not** little creatures with tails.

I am simply indicating

that this picture does not communicate very well now.

Maybe it would help if we looked

at how the demons fit into the other ideas

that people had in the first century.

First Century World View

Customarily, commonly, men and women of the first century pictured demons as little creatures.

This fit well as part of the wider world view of the time.

After all, **everybody knew** that we live in a flat world.

That picture of the world structured their perception.

And they all just knew it.

They could look out toward the edges of the world

and see it, a flat world. One could empirically demonstrate it.

You could see it with your own eyes. The world? flat!

Some people asked,

“Have you ever been over to the edge to check it out?”

The answer came, “Well, no, I haven’t.

Obviously, I might fall off!

Who knows, the winds may be whipping over there.

There may be monsters.

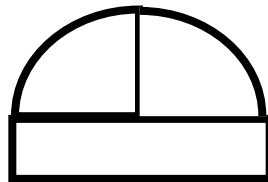
I can see a flat world. I don’t need to check it out.

You check it out. I will accept what I can see.”



Another picture widely accepted in the first century
had to do with the dome of the sky.

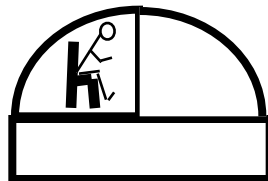
a solid dome covered the top of the earth --
like an upside-down teacup.



They knew it must be firm, solid, so they called it a “firmament”
God lived up above the clouds just below the top of the teacup.

That’s where they pictured him living.

They pictured God, sitting on his chair,
watching to see what went on.



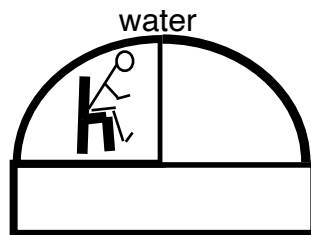
We still use language that talks that way.

“I love thee, Lord Jesus. Look down from the sky . . . “

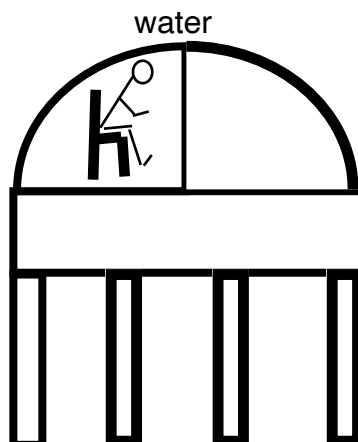
You may recognize this Christmas carol.

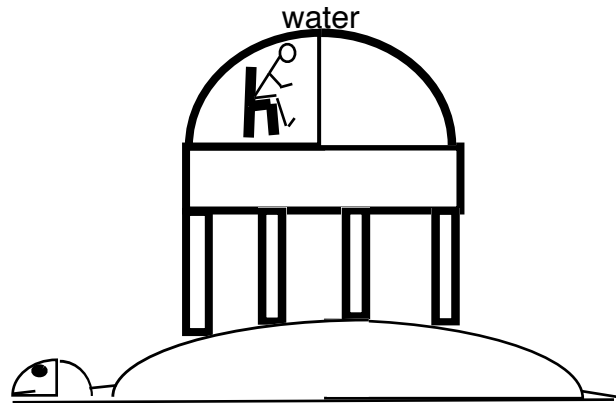
People also commonly look up toward the sky when we pray.

All this simply reflects the world view
that first century people held.
Above the upside-down teacup, above the solid dome,
the dome held back water.
There had to be water up there.
And there had to be some openings in the dome.
Every once in a while God would pull the chain.
When God pulled the chain,
the water would come through and sprinkle on the earth.
Then when God stopped pulling the chain,
the water would stop.
Actually, God did not pull a chain.
Genesis talks about God opening up the “windows” of heaven.
God would open the windows to let the water fall upon the earth
and would shut the windows to make the water stop.



The young people questioned the picture.
Young people always ask awkward questions.
They asked, “what holds this world up?”
The answer came in terms of what holds **anything** up: pillars.

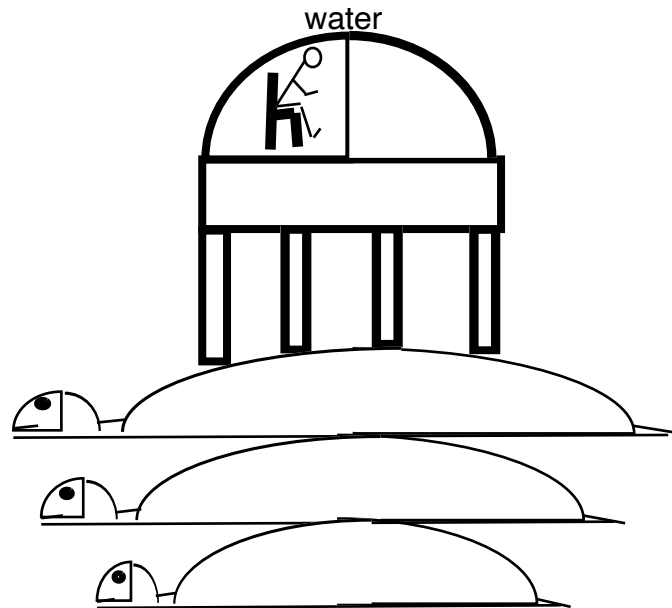




Now, I don't know exactly why,
 I just know that when they asked what holds the pillars up
 the answer came back, a giant turtle.

And what held up the turtle?

Well, that depended upon what part of the world you came from,
 it might be an elephant, or it might be another turtle,



or it might be various other animals.

For our purposes, it will suffice to say,
 "Turtles all the way down."

Data Change

Men and women held this kind of world view in the first century.

But there has been a significant data change in the interim.
 We have sailed well beyond the Pillars of Hercules.
 until our ship disappeared from view.
 We went over the horizon and found that the world isn't flat.
 We have returned from space with pictures.
 The earth appeared to be a sphere, just hanging there,
 no solid dome, no firmament,
 no waters above or below, and no turtles.
 Because of this, we don't picture the world as a cup and saucer,
 we do not use the first century picturing,
 when we describe the world.
 Neither do we picture demons as little creatures.

Conceptual Base

So if we are going to use the word **demon**
 we have to understand what the word points to.
 That means pushing back to the concept, the abstraction,
 the correlation principle,
 metaphorically, the "Spirit" of the Demonic.
 It means asking the functional question:
 what do demons do?

A demon **possesses me;**
 it **takes my life away.**

A demon **destroys community.**

Demons, conceptually and functionally,
 are the opposite of Messiah.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
That which possesses me takes away my life and destroys community.	demon	little creatures little creatures with tails

That which possessed me and took my life away
and destroyed community
shook with fear when the Messiah came around.
Thus the Word could cast out demons.
The Word alone could cast out the demons.
Now if I understand the correlation principle,
the “spirit of” the Demonic,
then I may be able to talk about the demonic in my life.

For example:

About 1967 the people of Detroit were calling Detroit
a model city in terms of race relations.
It could happen anywhere else in the country.
But it couldn't happen in Detroit.
It couldn't happen there because everything was just fine.
We told ourselves this positively DEMONIC story.
White people told it.
Black people told it.
A lot more white folk saying it than black folk.
Regardless of who told it, the the demonic story held us captive.
We walked along telling ourselves
that everything was fine.
Then in the midst of our demonic possession
came a **Shattering Event** in the form of a riot.
It just tore the blinders off most of us.
We didn't particularly **want** to have the blinders torn off.
But they got torn off anyway. Riots have a way of **Shattering us.**
Bishop Emrich, Episcopal Bishop of Detroit, said
that in the Detroit riot,
“God mounted the pulpit and preached his own sermon”.
But there had been a race riot in Detroit in 1943.
And a race riot in Los Angeles in 1963,
and again in 1992, and in other cities more recently.

Demonic stories we tell ourselves that are not true.

Let me point to a more recent example

This may get your attention.

Until September of 2001 a lot of people said
that all the people in the world loved the U.S.
and thought we were wonderful.

A whole lot of people in the U.S. said that.

A lot of people outside the U.S. said that.

But not everyone.

Not even everyone in the U.S. said that.

Some people pointed to exploitation of people in other countries
by U.S. Corporations.

Some people pointed to the cruelty experienced
by countries we occupied,
or the cruelty of the leaders of our client states,
trained by us, in the U.S., at the School of the Americas.

Some people pointed to the consumerism, secularism,
and loose morality which U.S. contact imposed on other cultures,
just by the contact with U.S.

But most of us said "Every body loves us,
and those who don't are just envious of our freedom"

You get the point.

Then 9/11 shattered that illusion.

Illusions are stories that we are telling ourselves,
about ourselves and about our world,
that just aren't so.

Such stories take our lives away.

They possess us.

They destroy community.

I suggest illusions are a useful way of picturing the word-symbol **demon**.

Naturally, I offer it tentatively.

But I can be **sure** of **this**.

In the twenty-first century

we cannot talk about little creatures with tails.
But what will demons be in the next century?

Well, I don't know.

As a matter of fact,
demons may very well be little creatures with tails
that get inside me.

They may be little creatures that get into my brain,
or my DNA,
and mess me up.

In the twenty-first century we may isolate demons, put them in a bottle,
and be able to understand them better.

Incredible? Certainly not.

What is truth? We have no corner on absolute truth.

Human beings speak in words linked to pictures,
we think in words and the pictures linked to them,
pictures that are appropriate under some circumstances and
totally inappropriate under other circumstances.

Now, what does THAT call to mind?

[read or listen to Barrington Bunny]

[PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]

Chapter 1.7

Re-Picturing “Immanuel” in Isaiah and Matthew

*TO FULFILL WHAT THE LORD HAD SPOKEN**

by Van Bogard Dunn

[paragraph 1]

In our study of this passage up to this point
we have ignored verses 22 and 23.

We have left them for consideration here,
because they are used to give a summarizing interpretation
of what has gone before:

"All this took place
to fulfill what the Lord had spoken
by the prophet"(Mtt 1:22).

Obviously, the writer had in mind some Old Testament prophecy
that had been fulfilled in the way the birth of Jesus took place.

Can we identify this prophecy
and see how it was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus?

[paragraph 2]

If your Bible contains cross references or notes,
you will see that the verse quoted in Matthew 1:23
comes from Isaiah 7:14.

Comparison of the two verses in the Revised Standard Version
shows only one difference:

Matthew uses of the word "virgin"
where Isaiah instead uses of the words "young woman".

This difference disappears on examination.

The scholars agree that the Hebrew for "young woman" in Isaiah 7:14
is ambiguous, and could possibly mean "virgin".

Moreover, the quotation in Matthew 1:23
comes not directly from the Hebrew,
but from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible
(our Old Testament), known as the Septuagint.

The Greek for "virgin" in Matthew 1:23

also could possibly translate "young woman".

Thus very little can be discovered
by studying the derivations
of these two different translations.

If we want to find out why the author of Matthew quoted Isaiah 7:14,
we will have to approach the matter in a different way.

[paragraph 3]

Let us begin by examining Isaiah 7:14 in its historical context.

We begin with a fairly clear setting.

Judah during the reign of King Ahaz felt sorely pressed.

The combined armies of Syria and Israel
(the Northern kingdom),
threatened to force her (Judah)
into a military alliance against Assyria.

During the period of national crisis (probably the year 734 B.C.E)

Isaiah of Jerusalem advised King Ahaz
against seeking the security of his country
through any kind of military alliance.

Instead, Isaiah urged the king
to refuse to enter the alliance
and seek the security of his kingdom
by strengthening his faith in God.

He said to the King,

"If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established."

(Is 7:9b).

[paragraph 4]

But King Ahaz was not convinced of the wisdom of Isaiah's counsel.

Isaiah sensed that the king was about to choose a course
which would lead eventually to the destruction of the kingdom.

So in a last desperate attempt to persuade the king,
he asked him to seek a sign from the Lord
that would disclose the wisdom of trusting God
instead of military alliance.

The king refused,
declaring that it was wrong to put God to the test.

[paragraph 5]

Isaiah saw through Ahaz' false piety
and concluded that he [the king] had determined
to seek the security of his kingdom
through political maneuvering,
regardless of what God might do.
Therefore, the prophet stopped trying to advise the king
and proclaimed that the Lord Himself would give a sign
which would reveal the foolishness of the king's policy

(Is 7:10-14a).

[paragraph 6]

The sign that Isaiah predicted was not a supernatural event
but the defeat of the armies of Israel and Syria
by an invading army.

[Isaiah quote]

Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Immanuel.

For before the child knows
how to refuse the evil and choose the good,
the land before whose two kings you are in dread
will be deserted.

The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people
and upon your father's house such days as have not come
since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah - the King of Assyria.

(Is 7:14b-17)

[paragraph 7]

The events that Isaiah foresaw on the international scene
were interpreted by him as acts of God.

Even the all-conquering Assyrians were subject to the Lord God
and instruments of His purpose.

[paragraph 8]

How does the name Immanuel relate
to this sign of God's judgment?

The passage in which the name appears
simply states that the sign will occur in the immediate future
(Is 7:14b-16).

The text predicted, as a sign,
neither the birth of a son nor his being named Immanuel.

The text predicted, as a sign,
destruction by the invaders in Palestine.

The text mentions the birth and naming of the child
to emphasize how soon this would happen.

Before an infant, born in 734 B.C.E.,
had reached the age of moral distinction,
God would be with Ahaz and all his people,
not giving them ease and prosperity
but creating havoc among them because of their unfaithfulness.
The king could deny God;
he could turn away God's messenger;
but one thing he could not do:
he could not escape God's presence.

[paragraph 9]

The name Immanuel is a compound of two Hebrew words,
Immanu, which translates "with us," and *El*, which translates "God."
Hence, Immanuel translates "God with us."

But in this context the name was not a confession
of God's favorable presence.

On the contrary, it was a symbol
that God would be with his unfaithful people
as their righteous judge.

Let me repeat:

Isaiah was affirming that God would be with his people -

- not to bless them (as they expected) but to judge.

[paragraph 10]

The context supports the conclusion

that Isaiah referred to a child born in a perfectly natural way.

The significance of the child was not his miraculous birth;

the significance was

that when he reached the age of accountability

Judah would face

a settling of accounts with God.

The text of Isaiah 7:14 probably did not refer

to the naming of a particular child by an identifiable mother.

Instead, it emphasizes the radical change

that Judah's unfaithfulness had caused

in her relationship to God.

There was nothing unusual about the name Immanuel.

But probably it had always been understood

as a symbol of Judah's favored position

in the presence of God.

[paragraph 11]

Now, however, the prophet had poured new meaning into the name
by associating it with Judah's impending destruction.

Immanuel - "God with us" -

was no longer a sign of God's protection;

instead it had become a symbol of the destruction

unleashed in the land by the sins of Ahaz and his people.

[paragraph 12]

What is there in this passage from the Book of Isaiah

that had not been fulfilled by the time Matthew was writing?

This is the central issue in determining the relationship

between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23.

There can be no doubt that for the author of Matthew

the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment

of "what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (Matthew 1:23).

The core of Isaiah's prediction,
that Assyria would sweep over Israel, Syria, and Judah,
the historic events fulfilled to overflowing.

Assyria totally defeated Syria and Israel,
and although Judah was spared total destruction,
she lost her independence.

Thus, we may conclude that the author of Matthew
did not refer to the prediction of destruction
of Israel, Syria and Judah
when he spoke of Isaiah's unfulfilled word.

[paragraph 13]

In Matthew 1:23 the focus of attention
is not the word of impending judgment
but the prediction of the birth and naming of a child.
There on the edge of Isaiah's message to King Ahaz
the author of Matthew had heard a word of the Lord
which for him had been awaiting fulfillment
until the birth of Jesus.

Thus we see that the meaning of the name Immanuel
was not determined for the author of Matthew
by the word which God spoke through Isaiah to Ahaz.
He has clearly pushed beyond what Isaiah had intended to say
when he used the name.

[paragraph 14]

If we are to grasp the full impact of Matthew 1:23,
we must follow the Gospel writer
as he redefined, re-pictured, the meaning of Immanuel.
The determining factor in this new interpretation of the word
which the Lord spoke through Isaiah
was not what had happened in 734 B.C.E.,
but what had happened in 34 C.E.
God raised Jesus.

From the point of view of his Easter faith

the author looked back upon the whole tragic sweep
of Israel's history and concluded
that here at last God had made good his promise
to be with His people.

In the life, death, and resurrection of this man
the name Immanuel was no longer a hope which had failed,
but it was now a living presence.

The promise "God with us" had been fulfilled to overflowing
by the experience of the risen Lord in the church.

Therefore, the author of Matthew could write:

All this took place to fulfill
what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:
"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and his name shall be called Emmanuel." (Mtt 1:22-23)

[paragraph 15]

the way the author of Matthew
used the name Immanuel
as a vehicle for confessing his faith in the risen Lord
illustrates an important method of Biblical interpretation.

If we can understand how **Matthew** used
an earlier revelation from God in **his** "Bible" (our Old Testament),
but reinterpreted it in light of his faith in the risen Lord,
we shall have discovered a way by which **we** can understand
how God may speak to **us** through the Bible.

[paragraph 16]

First, Matthew revealed that he was aware of his cultural roots.
He knew how God had disclosed God's self to God's people in the past.
The name Immanuel was a part of the rich religious heritage
which had been transmitted to him
by the faithful witnesses of old.

[paragraph 17]

Second, Matthew demonstrated
that what one generation had heard God speak

through a particular symbol was not necessarily the word
which another generation would hear through that same symbol.
The name Immanuel was used by Isaiah and the author of Matthew
to convey messages that were radically different in content.

[paragraph 18]

Finally, the author of Matthew showed
that the most important factor
in determining the content of Scripture
was the presence of the risen Lord.

The test of the writer's faithfulness
was not how closely he conformed to the intent of Isaiah
or how free he was to follow his own creative imagination
but how obedient he was to the Spirit of the risen Lord.

[paragraph 19]

The method is this:

- (1) We must understand how God has revealed God's self in **the past**;
- (2) We must understand that the meaning of a symbol will **change**
from generation to generation, according to the needs of each;
- (3) **The presence** of the risen Lord is the most important factor
in understanding the contents of the Bible.

[paragraph 20]

In our own study of these passages of Scripture
we seek to become aware of the rich resources of our faith;
we seek to use our creative insights
in applying the Scripture to our own situation.

But in the last analysis

the voice which we must hear as we study Scripture
is not that of men of old
nor that of our contemporary situation.

The voice we must hear
is that of one called Immanuel,
"God with us."

What does this call to mind?

Chapter 1.8

Immanuel, Experiences and Concept

Analysis of the paper by Van Bogard Dunn:

“TO FULFILL WHAT THE LORD HAD SPOKEN”

When the Methodist Theological School in Ohio began in April, 1958, they selected Rev. Dr. Van Bogard Dunn as the first academic dean.

He in turn had studied under Rudolph Bultmann.

On Feb. 24, 2010, the Van Bogard Dunn Chair in Biblical Interpretation became a permanent fixture in the life of that school.

This short excerpt of Dr. Dunn’s book, “God With US”³ helps us for several reasons.

First, his ambiguous use of the word “means” provides an example of the type of problem we will deal with further below.

“To fulfill what the Lord Had Spoken”

delightfully and succinctly presents the essentials of the approach to scripture we are using.

It should help us to appreciate the fact that we did not invent this method.

We, and Dunn, discovered it in the pages of scripture.

Now let us consider this essay.

For the paper as a whole I offer my own **title**,

Scriptural Pictures for the Christian Word-Symbol: Immanuel.

I put paragraphs 1 and 2 in **section 1**.

Linguistic analysis of Matthew 1:22 and Isaiah 7:14.

In my **section 2**, I put paragraphs 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Historical Context of Isaiah 7:14.

In **section 3**, I put paragraphs 8, 9, 10, and 11.

Isaiah Re-pictures the Symbol, Immanuel.

³Title: God with us ..., Author:Van Bogard Dunn, Publisher: Nashville, Graded Press [1967], Series: Foundation studies in Christian faith. Vol. 1. God with us: study book.. Vol. 2. God with us: selected readings. I have a hard copy. res

In **section 4** of Dr. Dunn's article includes paragraphs 12, 13, and 14.

Matthew Re-pictures Isaiah.

In **section 5**, I put paragraphs 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19.

The Analytic Method I used, In Outline.

That leaves for **section 6** only paragraph 20.

Summary

Let us now proceed in detail.

Section 1 *Linguistic analysis of Matthew 1:22 and Isaiah 7:14.*

Paragraph 1.

Obviously, we are studying a part of a larger work by Van Bogard Dunn.

The opening remark makes this clear,

“our study of this passage up to this point . . .”

We have no access to that material,
so we must disregard what has gone before.

Dr. Dunn had ignored Matthew 1:22 and 23.

These verses summarize Matthew's birth narrative:

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet."

This suggests that the author of the Gospel account
had in mind some First Testament prophecy
that the author saw fulfilled by the birth of Jesus.

Dunn states two concerns:

1. Can we locate the first testament prophecy to which Matthew refers?
2. Can we discover how the birth of Jesus fulfilled it?

A disarmingly simple beginning.

The author maintains an unvarnished directness
that I find both persuasive and refreshing.

Paragraph 2.

By means of cross references and notes one can find
that Matthew 1:25 comes from Isaiah 7:14.

Using the Revised Standard Version to begin his analysis in English,
Dr. Dunn finds only one significant difference between Matthew and Isaiah,
namely that Matthew uses the word “virgin”

where Isaiah uses the phrase “young woman”.

But this difference diminishes for four reasons:

1. Originally, the author of the Book of Isaiah wrote in Hebrew.
2. Examination of the Hebrew word used for “young woman” in Isaiah 1:14 reveals a debatable translation.

The word could be “virgin,” just as well as “young woman”.

3. The author of Matthew did not quote from the original (Hebrew) Isaiah.

He quoted instead from the Septuagint,
a Greek translation of about 270 BCE
of the Hebrew Bible (First Testament).

4. The Greek word for “young woman”
as used in the Septuagint version of Isaiah 7:14
we may translate “virgin” or “young woman” with equal credibility.

The point? It does us no good to chase word origins, either in Hebrew or in Greek.
Therefore, Dr. Dunn shifts to a different approach.

We have located the prophecy.

We have isolated the differences.

Linguistic analysis has not helped our understanding.

So, we turn to the historical context,
the circumstances which led up to the writing of Isaiah 7:14.

Section 2: Historical Context of Isaiah 7:14.

Paragraph 3.

Time: 734 B.C.E.

Place: Judah

Players:

Ahaz, king in Jerusalem

Isaiah, prophet in Jerusalem

Judah (Southern Kingdom, the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin)

Israel (the Northern Kingdom, the ten tribes)

Syria, a major power just north of Israel,

Assyria, an even bigger power just north of Syria.

Plot: The combined armies of Syria and Israel threaten tiny Judah,

attempting to force her into a military alliance
against Assyria. (Syro-Ephraimite War).

Isaiah, advises King Ahaz against such a military alliance.
Instead, Isaiah recommends strengthening faith in God.

Isaiah recommended not merely a change in pious practice,
nor did this prophet show himself a starry-eyed utopian idealist.

On the contrary, the realism of Isaiah saturated his being.

He based his advice on pragmatic evidence
and astute political/economic observation.

Israel and Syria simply could not escape the coming destruction.
Their military strength combined would be nothing
before the all-conquering Assyrians.

And, further, because of their prime locations on the trade routes,

Syria and Israel could not hope Assyria would spare them.

Judah however was located well away from the trade routes, protecting her.

Any alliance with these two Kingdoms,
would be disastrous for Judah.

Paragraph 4

King Ahaz, however, did not see the wisdom of Isaiah's counsel.

One would suppose, because of his fear of the Assyrians;
and perhaps more because of his fear of Israel and Syria.

Isaiah grasped the King's intent to enter into such alliances.
In Isaiah's judgement either course of action
would lead eventually to Judah's total destruction.

So, the prophet pleaded with the King
to seek a sign from the Lord to show the wisdom of trusting God,
and the utter folly of trusting any military alliance

King Ahaz refused to seek such a sign,"to put God to the test."

Paragraph 5

Ahaz had committed himself to seek Judah's security
by means of political maneuvering.

End of conversation.

False piety. Isaiah responded in fury!

The angry prophet now chose a new approach.

Whether the King wanted to seek a sign or not,

God would give him a sign anyway.

In other words:

The King had refused to listen to God's prophet,

now God would mount the pulpit and preach God's own sermon.

And Ahaz would hear God's sermon, whether he wanted to or not.

Paragraph 6

The sign that Isaiah predicted

(the sermon that God was about to preach)

seems in no way a super natural occurrence.

On the contrary, the sign appears to be a specific, concrete event in history:

the defeat of the armies of Israel and Syria by the Assyrians.

the absolute total destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

Isaiah proclaimed this impending holocaust in a peculiarly oriental fashion.

He used a metaphor and literary elaboration.

Freely translated Isaiah's prediction reads:

"God will utterly destroy both Israel and Syria,

and it will happen fast."

"How fast?" "Thirteen months, thirteen years at the most."

You don't get your prophet's license talking that way.

Isaiah used metaphor:

This very day a woman (any woman)

could conceive and bear a son (any son)

and before that boy reached the age of discretion

thirteen years of age (bar mitzvah)

Israel and Syria will be desolate.

Thus says the Lord by his prophet!

As a matter of historical fact,

Assyria annihilated the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C.E.

(734-721=13 yrs).

("Ephraim" and "Jacob" are other names for the ten northern tribes of Israel)

and the "day that Ephraim departed from Judah"

refers to the time of the division of the Kingdom (c. 926 B.C.E.) .

Paragraph 7.

This paragraph contains only two sentences.

However, we cannot overstate the importance of these two sentences.

The prophets were radical monotheists.

The events that Isaiah foresaw on the international scene
he interpreted as acts of God.

Even the all-conquering (and infidel!) Assyrians

are subject to the Lord God and instruments of His purpose.

Note well: Assyria will not bring about the holocaust --
God will.

section 3. Isaiah De-pictures and Re-pictures the Symbol, Immanuel.

Paragraph 8

Now let us consider the relationship of the name "Immanuel"
to this sign of God's judgment.

We have already discerned, in paragraph 6,
that the primary purpose of the passage in which the name appears
seems to be to state the urgency,
the sign will occur in the immediate future.

Therefore, it should also be clear from Isaiah's point of view,
he predicted neither the birth of a son nor that his name will be Immanuel;
he predicted a sign of destruction.

He predicted a sign of impending destruction.

He uses the birth and naming of the child as a metaphor.

One of the obvious reasons for using this particular metaphor
is to emphasize the immediacy,
that before an infant born in 734 B.C.E.
could reach the age of moral distinction,
the destruction would be complete.

- (1) Isaiah predicted a sign, but **not** the **birth** of a son.
- (2) Isaiah predicted a sign, but **not** the **naming** of the child.
- (3) Isaiah predicted a sign, a **defeat**,

the Assyrians will rout the armies of Israel and Syria.

(4) He uses the birth and naming of a child as **metaphor**.

(5) Using such a metaphor,

he emphasized the **immediacy** of the judgment
(within thirteen years!).

Isaiah makes certain that Ahaz understands his words.

Ahaz can deny God; he can turn away from God's prophet;
but he cannot escape God's presence.

Paragraph 9.

More specifically with regard to the name Immanuel,

Dr. Dunn reminds us that it comes from two Hebrew words.

Immanu translates as "with us", and *El* as "God."

Thus, Immanuel translates as "God with us."

Note that Dunn here uses the word "means"

to indicate only direct translation from Hebrew into English.

One further implication of this paragraph needs to be under scored.

The use that Isaiah made of the name Immanuel here

does not square with the history of its usage and picturing.

Before Isaiah other writers had used this name

as a confession of God's **favorable presence**, God's blessing.

People would greet each other by saying, "May the Lord be with you"

and those greeted would respond, "May the Lord bless you."

One such example appears in Ruth 2:4

Blessing.

Before Isaiah, people understood "God with us" that way.

Now however, Isaiah coupled the word-symbol Immanuel

with pictures of God's presence as a **righteous judge**.

Isaiah affirmed that God would be with his people --

not to bless them as they expected --

but to Judge.

Paragraph 10

Dr Dunn gives us a second reason for using the metaphor
of the birth and naming of a child.

Isaiah apparently took pains to select a familiar word-symbol
that referred to the presence of God.

Immanuel fit that need perfectly,
except that the picturing associated with it up until that time
had more or less consistently called to mind
the favor, the blessing, of God.

Even so, the use of Immanuel would be satisfactory
in that the **jarring picturing** might emphasize the radical change
that Judah's unfaithfulness had caused in her relations ship to God.

The hearers would see nothing unusual about the name Immanuel.
However, people had most frequently understood the name
with pictures that portrayed Judah's favored position
in the presence of God.

Isaiah would prefer to keep the symbol
and at the same time
change the picturing associated with it.

Paragraph 11.

In short, Isaiah "pours new meaning"

into the name Immanuel
when he associates it with Judah's impending destruction.

"Immanuel" has changed, no longer a sign of God's protection,
instead a symbol of judgment and destruction.

When Dr. Dunn refers to Isaiah's "pouring new meaning into the name,"

he suggests that the prophet retained the symbol
and changed the prevailing picturing
in conjunction with an important data change.

Isaiah saw a major data change,
the unfaithful acts of Ahaz and his people.

Let me refresh your memory on the unfaithful acts of Ahah, King of Judah.

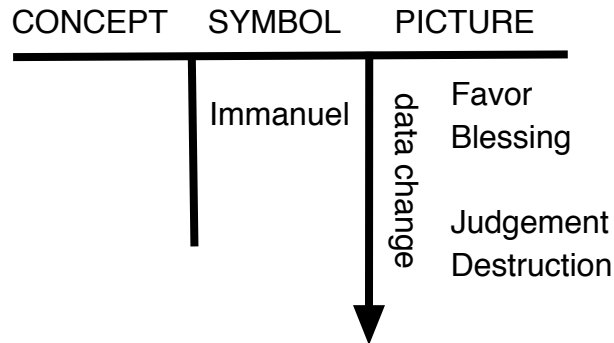
He made cast-metal images of Baal, the local god.

He made sacrifices of incense to Baal in the valley of Ben-Hinnon.

He made burnt offerings,
flaming human sacrifices, of "his sons" to Baal.

2 Chronicles 28:2,3

I find it helpful to make a chart of Isaiah
connecting old and new picturing
of the word-symbol Immanuel in this way:



Whatever the underlying concept may be,
Isaiah saw himself being faithful
to the "spirit of" **Immanuel**
responding to a significant change in data.

section 4 Matthew De-Pictures and Re-pictures Isaiah.

Paragraph 12.

We turn now to see how Matthew comes at this passage from Isaiah.

Dr. Dunn suggests that we begin by asking
what this passage from the book of Isaiah contains
that history had **not** fulfilled by the time Matthew wrote.

The core prediction
that Assyria would sweep over Israel, Syria and Judah
had certainly happened.

Why then had he chosen to quote Isaiah?

What did the writer of Matthew have in mind?

Paragraph 13.

In Matthew 1:23 the author places the focus of attention
upon the birth and naming of a child.

Clearly, the focus of attention for Isaiah lay elsewhere .

The writer of Matthew shifted the emphasis of the prophecy
and thereby utterly changed Isaiah's "meaning."

Dr. Dunn expresses this thought by saying,

that the word which God spoke through Isaiah to Ahaz
did not “determine” the meaning of the name Immanuel
for the author of Matthew.

Here Dr. Dunn uses the word “meaning” to suggest picturing.

We may restate Dunn this way.

“The **pictures in** Isaiah’s mind, associated with the name Immanuel,
did **not fix the pictures in the mind** for the author of Matthew.”

What audacity.

Matthew has pushed beyond what Isaiah had intended.

Matthew has, like Isaiah before him,
re-pictured the great word-symbol.

Paragraph 14.

Dunn suggests that we follow Matthew
as he “redefines the meaning of Immanuel.”

Once again, let us point out what changed.

The symbol did not change; nor the concept; but **the imagery**.

Matthew has re-pictured, “re-imaged”, re-imagined,
“re-imaginalized”, changed how he pictured, “Immanuel”.

A significant change in data called forth new picturing.

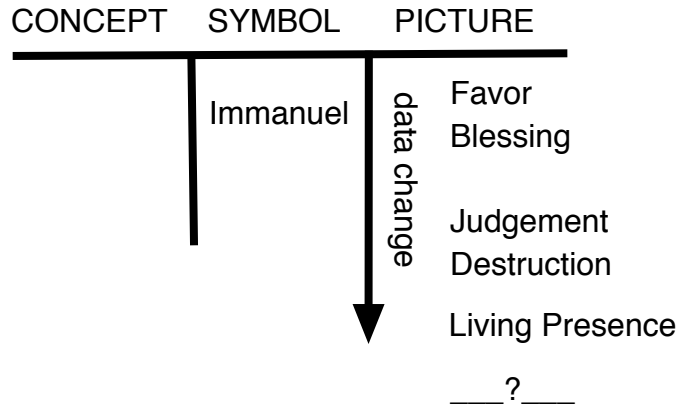
Data changes do that.

What data change affected the writer of Matthew so profoundly?
personal experiences of Jesus.

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus
the name Immanuel could no longer call forth only pictures
of judgment and destruction.

They now experienced Immanuel as a **living presence**.

Let us add that to our pictures.



Before Isaiah, people pictured Immanuel as **favor and blessing**.

Isaiah took into consideration the unfaithful acts of Ahaz and his people
as well as the coming invasion of Assyria

and chose new pictures for Immanuel

pictures of **destruction and judgment**.

Matthew viewed the word-symbol from the standpoint of his Easter faith
and presented Immanuel as **living presence**,

God Incarnate.

To summarize:

the symbol remains constant

while **examples change** in response to changes in data.

Now we should be able to look

at the various pictures for Immanuel in history

and infer a concept, a correlation principle, a deeper meaning,

the "spirit of", the "what" that remains constant and consistent.

I suggest that "the spirit of" Immanuel involves something like:

"The person of Faith's experience of God's presence in history."

The perception, by faith, of how and where

God makes God's presence known

at this particular place in time and space.

If we understand the abstraction in this way,

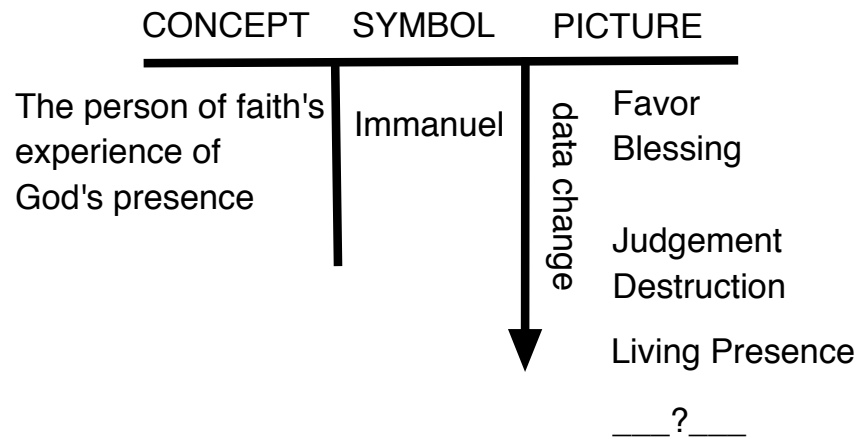
then we can immediately see the consistency

of every specific historical image with the "deeper meaning,"

the "correlation principle", the "spirit of", Immanuel.

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Our chart now looks like this:



This leads us to another question.

What images are appropriate for our time?

By what specific happenings is God making God's presence known
at this particular juncture, this time, this place?

What directly relates us to the fulfillment
of God's promise to be with God's people?

How shall 21st century people say Immanuel?

What do **we** "mean"

what pictures come to mind,

when we say God-with-us?

Section 5. *The Method of De-picturing and Re-picturing In Outline.*

Paragraph 15

Dr. Dunn now turns from the content of the text to Dunn's method.

He points to an important method of Biblical Interpretation
which the author of Matthew illustrates for us
in the use of the name Immanuel

as a vehicle for confessing faith in the risen Lord.

We have been calling it de-picturing and re-picturing.

But note that Dunn does nothing new.

He simply describes a method of scriptural interpretation
that we can see in use in both Isaiah and Matthew.

In the last analysis, however, the importance of the method

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lies in its **usefulness to us**

in our own reading of scripture.

If we can truly understand this method seen in Isaiah and Matthew,
we shall have discovered a way by which we can understand

how God may speak to us through the Bible.

Paragraph 16.

First, Matthew revealed his awareness
of how God disclosed God's self to God's people in the past.

Hence, **know your history!**

You will find no such thing as a “now Christian.”

We have a rich heritage;

people of old first employed

these great word-symbols of the faith.

To understand Isaiah, we absolutely must know the circumstances
surrounding Isaiah's use of the term Immanuel.

What Isaiah “meant” when he used the word

we only comprehend as we examine the historical context

out of which he spoke.

Moreover, the abstract depends upon the concrete.

We inferred our correlation principle from the details of a base.

We approach the **original “meanings”** of the great word-symbols

through **the pictures** employed by faithful ones of the past.

Understand, we have set forth scripture as our authority.

We seek to remain consistent with the **correlation principle**

we abstracted from pictures that appear **in scripture.**

We do not constrain arbitrarily.

We assume that the community that created scripture

shared the underlying, unstated, conceptual framework.

If we use a different body of literature,

we may well infer different conceptual meanings,

or find no consistent concept at all.

Paragraph 17.

Second, Matthew demonstrated

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that what one generation had heard God speak
through a particular symbol,
another generation would not necessarily hear through that same symbol.

In other words, **our picturing does change** as the data change.

With new experience comes new picturing.

James Russell Lowell pointed to this in his poem,

"Once to every man and nation".

It appeared in the *Boston Courier*, December 11, 1845.

Lowell wrote it to protest America's war with Mexico.

It reads in part:

"New occasions teach new duties /

time makes ancient good uncouth.

They must upward then and onward /

who would keep abreast of Truth."

At one time we included it in the Episcopal hymnal.

Faithfulness to concept demands that we take into consideration
the historical circumstances of this present.

To speak of God-with-us only as judgment and destruction,
in the face of the resurrection, would be strange indeed.

Just as to continue using only images of favor and blessing
in the face of the Assyrian invasion
would have been inappropriate.

The author of Isaiah and the author of Matthew
both used the name Immanuel

but to convey messages radically different in content.

They were radically different from each other in their picturing.

But both pointed to the same deeper meaning.

Paragraph 18.

Finally, Dr. Dunn offers a test of the writer's faithfulness.

Faithfulness does not arise

from how closely one conforms to the intent, the picturing, of Isaiah,
(sometimes seeking "author's intent" leads to irrelevance)

or how freely one follows one's own creative imagination,

(we seek not creativity for its own sake)
but rather how obediently one follows
"the spirit of" the Risen Lord.

This paragraph presents difficulty and high ambiguity.

Let us attempt to clarify Dr. Dunn's implicit assumptions.

I think these five capture the core of Dunn's argument:

1. Dunn invites us to test a given writer's faithfulness
by means of some touchstones.
2. Dunn specifically cautions against rigid conformity
to pictures of the past.
3. Dunn warns us away from random and arbitrary selection of picturing
4. We must select picturing
obedient to the "Spirit of the Risen Lord."
5. Dunn obviously has something quite definite in mind
when he uses the phrase "Spirit of the Risen Lord."
That alone serves as the touchstone we have been seeking.

6. If in this passage Dr. Dunn speaks **metaphysically**,
the paper ends in **linguistic nonsense**.

7. We have another possibility. He may be using the phrase **metaphorically**
to refer to that **concept**, that deeper meaning,
that base which we may derive
from comparative analysis of the historical picturing.

8. If Dunn in this passage speaks metaphorically,
then he employs language in the same way that we do
when we speak of the "Spirit of the Law."

This would be consistent with the whole remainder of the paper.

By arguing from within the re-picturing point of view,

I am confident we have found what he intends.

Paragraph 19.

This paragraph summarizes one method of biblical interpretation.

It should be abundantly clear

that Dr. Dunn here speaks of de-picturing and re-picturing.

Let us review the procedure:

1. First understand what images were employed in the **past**, and how.
2. Next, remember that **images** must **change** as the **data** change.
3. In our efforts to find new images of significance for our time,
**new images must be faithful
to the inferred concept
the criteria for using that word symbol.**

One more time,

this method Rudolf Bultmann originally described.

We will look at the method itself in detail later.

Van Bogard Dunn's paper simply concisely, and readably,
illustrates, and summarizes the process.

Section 6. Summary

Paragraph 20.

I have little doubt concerning the value of this approach to scripture.

It makes possible our participation

in what one might call "mythic time and space."

Each of us stands present to our theological forebearers in fact
by embracing the conceptual core of their witness.

Thus we perceive the mighty acts of God to be both present realities
and remembered events.

Faith and experience are once again united.

And the believers who had understood themselves
as ones living in a world disinherited by God, in which "God" is irrelevant,
can now bear witness to divine activity in their own time.

Dunn invites each of us to lay hold of this method
and make use of it.

What does that call to mind?

[now read or listen to Where Are the Nine?]

Chapter 2.1

Sin & Grace, "YOU ARE ACCEPTED"⁴

by Paul Tillich

[epigraph]

"Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound.

But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Romans 5:20.

[paragraph 1]

These words of Paul summarize his apostolic experience,

his religious message as a whole,

and the Christian understanding of life.

To discuss these words,

or to make them the text of even several sermons,

has always seemed impossible to me.

I have never dared to use them before.

But something has driven me to consider them

during the past few months,

a desire to give witness to the two facts

which appeared to me, in hours of retrospection,

as the all-determining facts of our life:

the abounding of sin and the greater abounding of grace.

[paragraph 2]

There are few words more strange to most of us

⁴ * The editor has changed the masculine forms in the original, pronouns and generic nouns, to neutral or inclusive forms, from "man" and "him" etc., to "person", "people", "human", "one", etc.

This is chapter 19 in *Shaking the Foundations*. Paul Tillich is generally considered one of the century's outstanding and influential thinkers. He was Professor of Philosophical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, then University Professor at Harvard University. His books include *Systematic Theology*; *The Courage to Be*; *Dynamics of Faith*; *Love, Power and Justice*; *Morality and Beyond*; and *Theology of Culture*. This book was published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, in 1955 and is out of print. This material was prepared for Religion Online by John Bushell. [Viewed 279228 times. from aug 2010 to Oct 2011 at <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=378&C=84>

than "sin" and "grace".

They are strange, just because they are so well-known.

During the centuries they have received distorting connotations,
and have lost so much of their genuine power
that we must seriously ask ourselves
whether we should use them at all,
or whether we should discard them as useless tools.

But there is a mysterious fact

about the great words of our religious tradition:
they cannot be replaced.

All attempts to make substitutions,
including those I have tried myself,
have failed to convey the reality that was to be expressed;
they have led to shallow and impotent talk.

There are no substitutes for words like "sin" and "grace".

But there is a way of rediscovering their meaning,
the same way that leads us
down into the depth of our human existence.

In that depth these words were conceived;
and there they gained power for all ages;
there they must be found again by each generation,
and by each of us for ourself.

Let us therefore try to penetrate the deeper levels of our life,
to see whether we can discover in them
the realities of which our text speaks.

[paragraph 3]

Have the people of our time still a feeling of the meaning of sin?

Do they, and do we, still realize
that sin does not mean an immoral act,
that "sin" should never be used in the plural,
and that not our sins, but rather our sin
is the great, all-pervading problem of our life?

Do we still know that it is arrogant and erroneous to divide people
by calling some "sinners" and others "righteous"?

For by way of such a division, we can usually discover
that we ourselves do not quite belong to the "sinners",
since we have avoided heavy sins,
have made some progress
in the control of this or that sin,
and have been even humble enough
not to call ourselves "righteous".

Are we still able to realize
that this kind of thinking and feeling about sin
is far removed from what the great religious tradition,
both within and outside the Bible,
has meant when it speaks of sin?

[paragraph 4]

I should like to suggest another word to you,
not as a substitute for the word "sin", but as a useful clue
in the interpretation of the word "sin", "separation" .
Separation is an aspect of the experience of everyone.
Perhaps the word "sin"
has the same root as the word "asunder".
In any case, sin is separation.

To be in the state of sin is to be in the state of separation.

And separation is threefold:

there is separation among individual lives,
separation of one from one's self, and separation of all of us
from the Ground of Being.

This three-fold separation

constitutes the state of everything that exists;
it is a universal fact; it is the fate of every life.

And it is our human fate in a very special sense.

For we as people know that we are separated.

We not only suffer with all other creatures

because of the self-destructive consequences of our separation,
but also know why we suffer.

We know that we are estranged
from something to which we really belong,
and with which we should be united.

We know that the fate of separation is not merely a natural event
like a flash of sudden lightning,
but that it is an experience in which we actively participate,
in which our whole personality is involved,
and that, as fate, it is also guilt.

Separation which is fate and guilt

constitutes the meaning of the word "sin".

It is this which is the state of our entire existence,
from its very beginning to its very end.

Such separation is prepared in the mother's womb,
and before that time, in every preceding generation.

It is manifest in the special actions of our conscious life.

It reaches beyond our graves
into all the succeeding generations.

It is our existence itself.

Existence is separation!

Before sin is an act, it is a state.

[paragraph 5]

We can say the same things about grace.

For sin and grace are bound to each other.

We do not even have a knowledge of sin
unless we have already experienced the unity of life,
which is grace.

And conversely, we could not grasp the meaning of grace
without having experienced the separation of life,
which is sin.

Grace is just as difficult to describe as sin.

For some people,
grace is the willingness of a divine king and father
to forgive over and over again the foolishness and weakness
of his subjects and children.

We must reject such a concept of grace;
for it is a merely childish destruction of a human dignity.

For others, grace is a magic power in the dark places of the soul,
but a power without any significance for practical life,
a quickly vanishing and useless idea.

For others, grace is the benevolence that we may find
beside the cruelty and destructiveness in life.

But then, it does not matter whether we say "life goes on",
or whether we say "there is grace in life";
if grace means no more than this,
the word should, and will, disappear.

For other people, grace indicates the gifts that one has received
from nature or society,
and the power to do good things with the help of those gifts.

But grace is more than gifts.

In grace something is overcome;
grace occurs in spite of something;
grace occurs in spite of separation and estrangement.
Grace is the reunion of life with life,
the reconciliation of the self with itself.

Grace is the acceptance of that which is rejected.

Grace transforms fate into a meaningful destiny;
it changes guilt into confidence and courage.

There is something triumphant in the word grace;
in spite of the abounding of sin
grace abounds much more.

[paragraph 6]

And now let us look down into ourselves
to discover there the struggle between separation and reunion,
between sin and grace,
in our relation to others, in our relation to ourselves,
and in our relation to the Ground and aim of our being.

If our souls respond to the description that I intend to give,
words like "sin" and "separation", "grace" and "reunion",

may have a new meaning for us.

But the words themselves are not important.

It is the response

of the deepest levels of our being that is important.

If such a response were to occur among us this moment,

we could say that we have known grace.

[paragraph 7]

Who has not, at some time, been lonely in the midst of a social event?

The feeling of our separation from the rest of life

is most acute when we are surrounded by it in noise and talk.

We realize then much more than in moments of solitude

how strange we are to each other,

how estranged life is from life.

Each one of us draws back into ourself.

We cannot penetrate the hidden center of another individual;

nor can that individual pass beyond the shroud

that covers our own being.

Even the greatest love cannot break through the walls of the self.

Who has not experienced that disillusionment of all great love?

If one were to hurl away one's self in complete self-surrender,

one would become a nothing, without form or strength,

a self without self, merely an object of contempt and abuse.

Our generation knows more than the generation of our parents

about the hidden hostility in the ground of our souls.

Today we know much

about the pervasive aggressiveness in every being.

Today we can confirm what Immanuel Kant,

the prophet of human reason and dignity,
was honest enough to say:
“there is something in the misfortune
of our best friends
which does not displease us.”

Who amongst us is dishonest enough to deny
that this is true also of them?

Are we not almost always ready
to abuse everybody and everything,
although often in a very refined way,
for the pleasure of self-elevation,
for an occasion for boasting, for a moment of lust?
To know that we are ready
is to know the meaning of the separation of life from life,
and of "sin abounding".

[paragraph 8]

The most irrevocable expression
of the separation of life from life today
is the attitude of social groups within nations towards each other,
and the attitude of nations themselves towards other nations.

The walls of distance, in time and space,
have been removed by technical progress;
but the walls of estrangement between heart and heart
have been incredibly strengthened.

The madness of the German Nazis
and the cruelty of the lynching mobs in the South
provide too easy an excuse

for us to turn our thoughts
from our own selves.

But let us just consider ourselves and what we feel,
when we read, this morning and tonight,
that in some sections of Europe
all children under the age of three are sick and dying,
or that in some sections of Asia
millions without homes are freezing
and starving to death.

The strangeness of life to life is evident in the strange fact
that we can know all this, and yet can live today,
this morning, tonight,
as though we were completely ignorant.

And I refer to the most sensitive people amongst us.
In both mankind and nature, life is separated from life.
Estrangement prevails among all things that live.
Sin abounds.

[paragraph 9]

It is important to remember
that we are not merely separated from each other.
For we are also separated from ourselves.

“Man Against Himself” is not merely the title of a book,
but rather also indicates the rediscovery
of an age-old insight.

Each of us is split within ourself.

Life moves against itself through aggression, hate, and despair.

We are wont to condemn self-love;

but what we really mean to condemn is contrary to self-love.
It is that mixture of selfishness and self-hate
that permanently pursues us,
that prevents us from loving others, and that prohibits us
from losing ourselves in the love
with which we are loved eternally.

The one who is able to love their self is able to love others also;
the one who has "learned to overcome self-contempt
has overcome their contempt for others."

But the depth of our separation lies in just the fact
that we are not capable
of a great and merciful divine love towards ourselves.

On the contrary,
in each of us there is an instinct of self-destruction,
which is as strong as our instinct of self-preservation.

In our tendency to abuse and destroy others,
there is an open or hidden tendency
to abuse and to destroy ourselves.

Cruelty towards others is always also cruelty towards ourselves.

Nothing is more obvious than the split
in both our unconscious life and conscious personality.

Without the help of modern psychology,
Paul expressed the fact in his famous words,
"For I do not do the good I desire,
but rather the evil that I do not desire."

And then he continued
in words that might well be the motto of all depth psychology:

"Now if I should do what I do not wish to do,
it is not I that do it,
but rather sin which dwells within me."

The apostle sensed a split
between his conscious will and his real will,
between himself and something strange within and alien to him.
He was estranged from himself;
and that estrangement he called "sin".
He also called it a strange "law in his limbs",
an irresistible compulsion.

How often we commit certain acts in perfect consciousness,
yet with the shocking sense
that we are being controlled by an alien power.
That is the experience of the separation
of ourselves from ourselves,
which is to say "sin",
whether or not we like to use that word.

[paragraph 10]

Thus, the state of our whole life
is estrangement from others and ourselves,
because we are estranged from the Ground of our being,
because we are estranged from the origin and aim of our life.
And we do not know where we have come from,
or where we are going.

We are separated from the mystery, the depth,
and the greatness of our existence.

We hear the voice of that depth; but our ears are closed.

We feel that something radical, total, and unconditioned
is demanded of us;
but we rebel against it, try to escape its urgency,
and will not accept its promise.

[paragraph 11]

We cannot escape, however.

If that something is the Ground of our being,
we are bound to it for all eternity,
just as we are bound to ourselves and to all other life.

We always remain in the power of that from which we are estranged.

That fact brings us to the ultimate depth of sin:
separated and yet bound, estranged and yet belonging,
destroyed and yet preserved, the state which is called despair.

Despair means that there is no escape.

Despair is "the sickness unto death."

But the terrible thing about the sickness of despair is
that we cannot be released,
not even through open or hidden suicide.

For we all know that we are bound eternally and inescapably
to the Ground of our being.

The abyss of separation is not always visible.

But it has become more visible to our generation
than to the preceding generations,
because of our feeling of meaninglessness, emptiness,
doubt, and cynicism -- all expressions of despair,
of our separation from the roots and the meaning of our life.

Sin in its most profound sense,

sin, as despair, abounds amongst us.

[paragraph 12]

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound",
says Paul in the same letter in which he describes
the unimaginable power of separation and self-destruction
within society and the individual soul.

He does not say these words
because sentimental interests demand a happy ending
for everything tragic.

He says them because they describe the most overwhelming
and determining experience of his life.

In the picture of Jesus as the Christ,
which appeared to him at the moment of his greatest separation
from other men, from himself and God,
he found himself accepted in spite of his being rejected.

And when he found that he was accepted,
he was able to accept himself and to be reconciled to others.

The moment in which grace struck him and overwhelmed him,
he was reunited with that to which he belonged,
and from which he was estranged in utter strangeness.

[paragraph 13]

Do we know what it means to be struck by grace?

It does not mean that we suddenly believe that God exists,
or that Jesus is the Savior,
or that the Bible contains the truth.

To believe that something is,
is almost contrary to the meaning of grace.

Furthermore, grace does not mean simply
that we are making progress in our moral self-control,
in our fight against special faults,
and in our relationships to men and to society.
Moral progress may be a fruit of grace; but it is not grace itself,
and it can even prevent us from receiving grace.
For there is too often a graceless acceptance
of Christian doctrines
and a graceless battle
against the structures of evil in our personalities.
Such a graceless relation to God may lead us by necessity
either to arrogance or to despair.
It would be better to refuse God and the Christ and the Bible
than to accept them without grace.
For if we accept without grace,
we do so in the state of separation,
and can only succeed in deepening the separation.
We cannot transform our lives,
unless we allow them to be transformed by that stroke of grace.
It happens; or it does not happen.
And certainly it does not happen
if we try to force it upon ourselves,
just as it shall not happen so long as we think,
in our self-complacency, that we have no need of it.
Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness.
It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley
of a meaningless and empty life.

It strikes us when we feel that our separation is deeper than usual,
because we have violated another life,
a life which we loved, or from which we were estranged.

It strikes us when our disgust for our own being,
our indifference, our weakness, our hostility,
and our lack of direction and composure
have become intolerable to us.

It strikes us when, year after year,
the longed-for perfection of life does not appear,
when the old compulsions reign within us, as they have for decades,
when despair destroys all joy and courage.

Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness,
and it is as though a voice were saying:

"You are accepted. You are accepted,
accepted by that which is greater than you,
and the name of which you do not know.

Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later.

Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much.

Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything;
do not intend anything.

Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!"

If that happens to us, we experience grace.

After such an experience we may not be better than before,
and we may not believe more than before.

But everything is transformed.

In that moment, grace conquers sin,
and reconciliation bridges the gulf of estrangement.

And nothing is demanded of this experience,
no religious or moral or intellectual presupposition,
nothing but acceptance.

[paragraph 14]

In the light of this grace we perceive the power of grace
in our relation to others and to ourselves.

We experience the grace of being able
to look frankly into the eyes of another,
the miraculous grace of reunion of life with life.

We experience the grace of understanding each other's words.

We understand not merely the literal meaning of the words,
but also that which lies behind them,
even when they are harsh or angry.

For even then there is a longing
to break through the walls of separation.

We experience the grace of being able to accept the life of another,
even if it be hostile and harmful to us,
for, through grace, we know
that it belongs to the same Ground to which we belong,
and by which we have been accepted.

We experience the grace which is able to overcome
the tragic separation of the sexes, of the generations,
of the nations, of the races,
and even the utter strangeness between man and nature.

Sometimes grace appears in all these separations
to reunite us with those to whom we belong.

For life belong to life.

[paragraph 15]

And in the light of this grace we perceive the power of grace
in our relation to ourselves.

We experience moments in which we accept ourselves,
because we feel that we have been accepted
by that which is greater than we.

If only more such moments were given to us!
For it is such moments that make us love our life,
that make us accept ourselves,
not in our goodness and self- complacency,
but in our certainty of the eternal meaning of our life.

We cannot force ourselves to accept ourselves.

We cannot compel anyone to accept himself.

But sometimes it happens
that we receive the power to say "yes" to ourselves,
that peace enters into us and makes us whole,
that self-hate and self-contempt disappear,
and that our self is reunited with itself.

Then we can say that grace has come upon us.

[paragraph 16]

"Sin" and "grace" are strange words; but they are not strange things.

We find them whenever we look into ourselves
with searching eyes and longing hearts.

They determine our life.

They abound within us and in all of life.

May grace more abound within us!

What does this call to mind?"

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Chapter 2.2:

Sin and Grace, Experiences and Concept

A Commentary on “Your Are Accepted” by Paul Tillich.

This sermon offers a concise statement
of the all-determining facts of human existence ⁵,
or so Rev. Dr. Tillich asserts.

He grounds it in Pauline theology and uses Romans 5:20 as a text.

I believe this particular sermon
not only faithfully speaks out of the great tradition,
but also accurately assesses the human predicament.

I call this sermon,

Re-picturing the Christian Word-Symbols: Sin, and Grace.

First, for an overview.

Tillich divided the sermon into fifteen paragraphs.

I have organized these into five major parts.

In **Part one** I put paragraphs one and two,
and would title this introductory statement,

Importance and Need --

The Importance of Keeping the Great Symbols
and Thus the Need to Re-picture Them.

Part two includes paragraphs three, four, and five.

I find it helpful to call this division of the paper:

Conceptual Sin and Grace: Behind the Pictures of The Great Symbols.

Part three covers the six paragraphs six through eleven.

It deals only with the subject of sin.

⁵ [**The Courage to Be** By: Paul Tillich Yale University Press 1952, 2d ed. 2000 / Paperback]

I have titled it: Images of Sin: The Symbol Re-pictured for Our Time.

Part four ranks unquestionably

as the most important part of Dr. Tillich's sermon.

It includes paragraphs twelve, thirteen, and fourteen.

Paragraph twelve, in particular, holds the meat,
the heart, of the whole presentation.

I suggest we title this fourth division of the paper:

Images of Grace: The Symbol Re-pictured for Our Time.

Part five includes the remaining paragraph fifteen,

in which Dr. Tillich concludes his presentation,
one short but very important paragraph.

For a title let us use: Summary and Prayer.

Now let us examine each of the fifteen paragraphs in some detail.

Part 1. Importance and Need --

The Importance of Keeping the Great Symbols
and Thus the Need to Re-picture Them.

Paragraph 1.

The first paragraph looks like Tillich's apologia for the entire sermon --

his explanation of the subject matter,

the reasoning that led him

to select these words of Paul in the first place,

and the anguish involved in his finally deciding

to preach about sin and grace.

The second of the sentences quoted

contains the words of St. Paul referred to

Ponder those words,

“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

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Tillich makes bold claims for these words.

He says they summarize Paul's apostolic experience,
his religious message as a whole,
and the Christian understanding of life,
a bold claim in deed.

Sin and grace, he asserts, are all-determining facts of existence.

Paragraph 2.

Sin and grace are strange words.

Not strange in the sense of unfamiliar,
but strange in the sense
that we do not recognize their experiential correlations.

We do not connect the word-symbols to our memory of our experience.

Hence the symbol has no meaning, literally meaningless.

Over the centuries, violations of concept
have produced distorting connotations.

These conceptual distortions have been so great
that Tillich has thought of totally discarding these symbols.

But the symbols we cannot (or have not) successfully replace.

All attempts at substitution have failed to convey the reality.

Tillich states that we can rediscover the original concepts.

The process of rediscovery
we have been calling de-picturing and re-picturing.

Part 2. Conceptual Sin and Grace: The Great Symbols De-pictured.

Paragraph 3.

Before we can begin to understand which of our experiences

we should call experiences of sin,
we must be clear about which ones we should not call experiences of sin.

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

Tillich suggests three common misconceptions.

We should not use “Sin” to speak of an immoral act,
nor in the plural,

nor should we use it as a way of dividing the “sinners” from the “righteous”.

He calls upon the great religious traditions,

both within and outside the Bible, to support this claim.

Paragraph 4.

Tillich now proposes a stipulative⁶ definition of sin.

He will list specific criteria as guides for when to use the word.

He suggests the word “separation”,

not as a substitute for the symbol,

but as a useful clue to the concept.

The experiences we have,

to which we may apply the symbol “Sin”, Tillich says,

are those of separation,

separation of life from life, of self from self,

and each of us from the Ground of Being.

All our experiences reflect this state of threefold separation.

Universally our experience reveals this fact, this fate.

We find it inescapable. That’s just the way it is.

Our use of this word Sin to refer to this fate or state

corresponds with what tradition has called “original sin”.

On the other hand, this three-fold separation, this Sin,

refers not merely to a natural event.

⁶ A “stipulative definition” is a type of definition in which a new or currently-existing term is given a specific meaning for the purposes of argument or discussion in a given context. When the term already exists, this definition may, but does not necessarily, contradict the dictionary definition of the term. Because of this, a stipulative definition cannot be “correct” or “incorrect”; it can only differ from other definitions, but it can be useful for its intended purpose. <http://www.definitions.net/definition/stipulative%20definition>. 2016.iii.5

We actively participate in such experiences

So we use the word also to refer to acts we do, a guilt we bear.

Sin as act or guilt corresponds

with what tradition has called personal sin.

Let us add to the chart this deep meaning of the word, sin

which includes this profound separation

which we experience both as fate and as guilt.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Separation of life from life self from self all human kind from Ground of Being An Aspect of human experience which is lived out both as fate and as guilt	Sin	

Paragraph 5.

Sin and grace correspond to each other.

They link, they tie to one another.

Tillich described our experience of sin

as our experience of the separation of Life.

He now describes our experience of grace

as our experience of the unity of life.

We experience Grace not as just one of these:

We experience Grace not JUST as forgiveness,

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magic power, benevolence, or gifts.

Our experience of Grace may include elements of any or all of these,
but the concept of grace includes much more.

In grace we experience something being overcome; in spite of sin.

They have a triumphant quality about them, these experiences,
for which we use this word, Grace.

Grace we experience as reunion
of life with life,
self with self,
and each of us with the Ground of Being.

Grace we experience as transformation of fate into meaningful destiny
and as changing guilt into confidence and courage.

Experiences of triumphant reunion, seen as destiny and courage
call forth the deepest meaning of the word, Grace.

Let us add this to our chart.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Reunion of Life with Life Self with Self all human kind with Ground of Being	Grace	
An aspect of human experience which transforms fate into meaningful destiny and guilt into confidence and courage		

Part 3. Picturing Sin: The Symbol Re-pictured for Our Time.

Paragraph 6.

Tillich has completed the groundwork.

He has supplied us with conceptual definitions for both sin and grace.

Paragraph six transitions from a discussion of concept
to statements about specific experiences.

Dr Tillich asks us to consider some examples,
some concrete experiences that relate directly to our own lives.

Paragraph 7.

Paragraph seven deals with examples of separation among individual lives.

Specifically these are:

loneliness in a crowd,
inability to know myself or another individual fully,
disillusionment of all great love,
and the hidden hostility in the ground of our souls.

Paragraph 8.

In this paragraph Tillich gives examples

of the separation between social groups within nations,
and also of the separation between the nations themselves.

He mentions particularly the cruelty of lynch mobs in the US,
and the behavior of the Nazis in Germany.

We can think of other more contemporary images.

His main point, however, speaks to our apathy
in the face of such estrangement.

Paragraph 9.

But we experience not merely separation from each other.

but also a split within ourselves.

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Each of us harbors an instinct of self destruction.

We manifest this concretely as self-hate and selfishness,
as irresistible compulsion and apparently alien behavior.

Life moves against itself through aggression, hate, and despair.

Paragraph 10.

We experience ourselves as separated from the origin and aim of our life.

Tillich points to each person's experience
of emptiness and meaninglessness.

He delineates our semiconscious awareness of dread.

Separated from the mystery, the depth, and the greatness of our existence,
we seek security in idols.

Yet in the midst of dread,
unconditional demand confronts us,
and we cannot or will not respond.

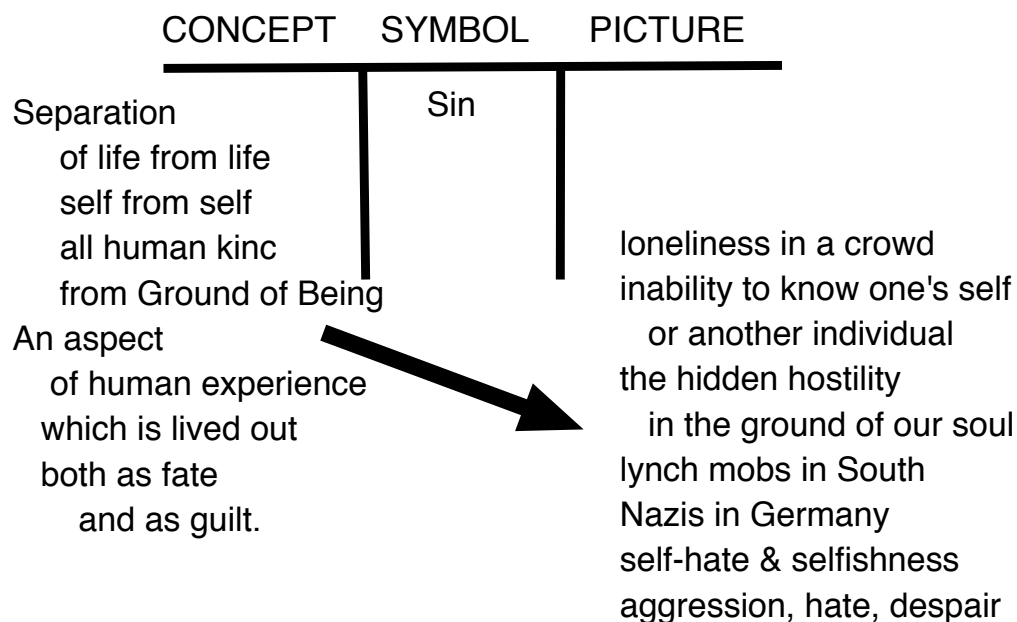
Paragraph 11

No exit from this predicament exists.

We remain in the power of that from which we are estranged.

This fact brings us to the ultimate depth of sin: despair.

Let us add these pictures of despair: doubt, cynicism, feelings of emptiness,
a sense of meaninglessness, and the sense that we have no escape at all.



Part 4. Picturing Grace: The Symbol Re-pictured for Our Time.

Paragraph 12.

In the story of St. Paul's conversion,

Tillich gives one example of reunion with the Ground of Being.

Such a grace experience does not depend upon belief or moral progress.

It happens, or it does not happen.

This experience demands absolutely nothing,
 no religious or moral or intellectual presupposition,
 nothing but acceptance.

After a grace experience
 we may not be any better than before,
 and we may not believe any more than before.

But the experience transforms everything.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Reunion of Life with Life Self with Self all human kind with Ground of Being An aspect of human experience which transforms fate into meaningful destiny and guilt into confidence and courage	Grace	looking frankly into the eyes of another understanding what lies behind the words accepting the life of another even when it is hostile or harmful to us overcoming the tragic separation of sexes, of generations, of nations, of races, of classes and even the estrangement between humanity and the rest of creation when we love our life say yes to ourselves, set aside self-hate & self contempt, grasp after the eternal meaning of our life.

Paragraph 13.

This paragraph speaks to the triumphant reunion of life with life.

Examples of the power of grace in relation to others include:

looking frankly into the eyes of another;
understanding not merely the literal meaning of words
but also that which lies behind them;
accepting the life of another
even when that life appears hostile or harmful to us;
overcoming the tragic separation of sexes, the generations,
the nations, the races,
and even the estrangement between man and nature.

Paragraph 14.

Now Tillich turns to the power of grace in relation to ourselves.

Triumphant reunion of self with self comes about
in moments of self-acceptance.

He cites examples: moments when we love our life,
when we say yes to ourselves,
when we set aside self-hate and self-contempt,
and when we grasp after the eternal meaning of our life.

Part 5. Summary and Prayer.

Paragraph 15.

In this summary paragraph,

Tillich once again comments on the strangeness of the words.

Now however he can say, that these words describe experiences familiar to him
and to each of us.

They describe the all-determining facts of human existence,
the facts that lock in place everything else we experience.

Let us add these to our chart.

This last chart summarizes the whole sermon.

Now, what does this call to mind?"

SUMMARY: Tillich, You Are Accepted. Re-Picturing Sin and Grace

Need to Re- Picture	Concepts of Sin	Concept of Grace	Pictures of Sin	Pictures of Grace	Summary & Prayer
Para 1-2	Par 3-4	Par 5	Par 6-11	Par 12-14	par 15
Summarize experience message understanding all-determining facts	Sin is NOT immoral act plural way of dividing	Grace is NOT: forgiveness magic power benevolence gifts	lonely in a crowd not truly know self or other disillusion -ment	Story: Paul Not as belief moral progress YOU ARE ACCEPTED	strange words not strange experience they abound within us & in all life
strange because well-known distorting connotations no substitute way of discovering meaning	Sin IS separation 3-fold experienced as fate & guilt	Grace IS: Triumphant reunion 3-fold experienced as destiny and courage	of great love hostility Nazi genocide lynch mob split within self self-hate selfishness despair separated yet bound	relationship with others and self power to say “yes” to life	

Chapter 2.3:

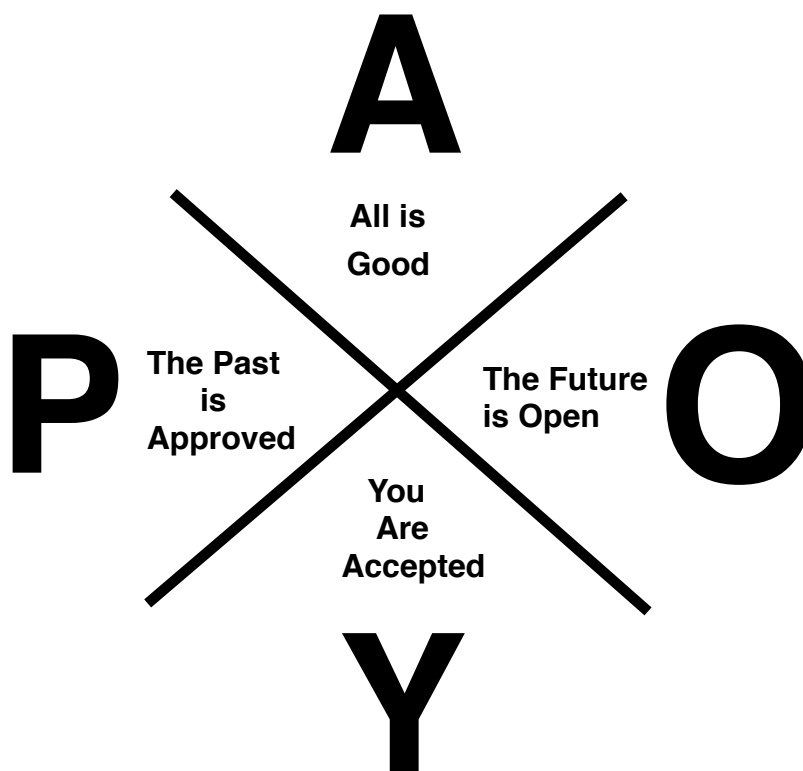
The First Person Filter for the Human Experience

The Word Enables Experience

A Model

The radical word about life in history

we may hold in this way:



God Redeems Everything That Exists

That Radical Word says everything that is, is necessary.

Everything that has gone into the making of this moment
is approved.

All that has gone before this moment

God accounts as if righteous.

God holds the whole of history sacred in God's eyes.

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Let's try that again.

All that we experience **has become necessary as we experience it.**

The very ground of all being has approved all that went into this moment.

God accounts all that has gone before this moment as righteous.

God views the whole of history as sacred.

God finds the present absolutely necessary

to the bringing about of God's purpose.

By means of what we can view as God's revelation of God's self in history,

God enables us to proclaim

that God finally redeems everything that is.

Let us be very clear about one thing.

There is no middle ground.

Either everything that is, is good,

or the whole of creation is a pile of crap.

(Pick your own obscenity for the most foul, obscene, corrupt, mess)

What do I mean, "redeems"?

You may want to revisit that later,

to re-picture that word-symbol.

Let me tell you a story; its about a boy, and Auschwitz.

Elie Wiesel, tells this one, in writing of his experience in Auschwitz,

how on a particular day

the guards executed several of the prisoners

by hanging them, two men and a boy.

Wiesel goes on,

"Then came the march past the victims.

The two men were no longer alive.

Their tongues were hanging out, swollen and bluish.

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But the third rope was still moving:

the child, too light, was still breathing...

And so he remained for more than half an hour,

lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes.

And the guards forced us to look at him at close range.

He was still alive when I passed him.

His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet extinguished.

Behind me, I heard a man asking:

'For God's sake, where is God?'

And from within me, I heard a voice answer:

'Where is God? This is where--hanging here
from this gallows...'

That night, the soup tasted of corpses." ⁷

That, too, is approved!

Either God has redeemed that little boy's sacrifice,
or everything is a pile of crap.

And your own personal past the very ground of being has approved,
accounted as if righteous in the eyes of God.

I am referring to the time you stole that money.

I am referring to that sexual indiscretion,
that moment of cruelty, that habitual compulsion
-- you know the one.

That in your past is approved,
and accepted, and accounted as if righteous.

Therefore you are free to live your life.

And the Future is open.

⁷ Elie Wiesel (Night)source: http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1049.Elle_Wiesel

And the corrupt and corrupting institutions of our society,
of exploitation, and domination
these too are approved, accounted as if righteous.

Faith as Basis for Proclamation

How do I know this is true?

I **don't** know.

I **have committed myself** to acting as if it were true.

I **have faith** that it's true.

I have decided to **risk my life**

and to commit my death

by saying "yes!" to that Word about life in history.

It's a faith statement, pure and simple.

We Christians commit ourselves without certitude or knowledge.

While fully recognizing the condition of the world,
and the depth of human sinfulness, personal and institutional,

Christians continue to proclaim, "All is good."

We speak audacity of the first order.

One time I heard a radio preacher say,

"If I didn't know about the grace of God,
if I didn't know it -- this radical Word --

I'd get myself a fishin' license

and I'd go fishin' 'til gunnin' season.

then I'd go gunnin'"

And that's just as true about me.

That's the way life would be, too, if I hadn't heard this Word.

It's certain that I'd go fishin' until gunnin' season.

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I heard someone say once that without Jesus
the whole world would be nothing but one big O'Hare Airport.

I know what he means. I slept one night in O'Hare.

Are You Living Your Life?

There's another story that goes like this:

Peter saw Jesus walking on the water so Peter said,

"Lord, if that's really you, call to me
so that I can come out on the water, too."

And Jesus said, "Well, come on!"

So Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water.

And the story says that as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus
he was able to walk on the water.

But the minute that he took his eyes off Jesus,
he started to notice the wind and the waves,
and he sank down in the water.

(Matthew 14:13-36)

Now, is that a true story? Is that a **true** story?

Well, I'm here today to tell you that it's the story of my life.

But you know something?

That isn't even the right question.

"Is that a true story?" **That's the wrong question.**

The real question is this:

Are **you** living **your** life?

Whether you are heir to billions or a starving orphan,
whether you even have arms or legs, whether you have an I.Q. of 80 or 180,
the question is, "Are **you** living **your** life?"

Experience Balances the Word

When St. Paul spoke the Word about life in history
he was afraid that people would misunderstand.

In the letter to the Romans he writes something like this,

“I know that you are going to say,
' if where sin abounds grace does the more abound,
maybe we should sin a whole lot
and so get even more grace' . ”

He says that to the church in Rome.

and then goes on to write,

Rom 6:1-3

“God forbid that this is what you should understand
when I proclaim the radical Word of grace.

God forbid that you should interpret God's grace
as a call to licentiousness.”

But Paul did not refrain from proclaiming grace

categorically, radically -- with no strings attached.

The human experience of the triune God

balances all of this.

Although Paul cannot proclaim grace except in categorical terms (nor we),

we understand the cost of discipleship

in direct proportion to our experience and understanding
of God's mighty acts in history.

Experiences of Trinity, Not metaphysics.

I would like to focus on the doctrine of the Trinity at this point,
but I will make no mention of metaphysics.

My efforts I will direct not at what God **IS**,

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but at our **experience** of which we say. "God".

We will not speak of any description of God or God's self.
What does God look like?

Where does God live?

Who **is** God?

These kinds of questions, we will here answer by:

"JHWH", the unspeakable four letter word.

In other words, "It's none of our business.

We don't have to know."

"Yahweh" will be the whole of my metaphysics.

So, I will make no attempt to describe God.

Instead I will attempt a description of the various experiences
that people like you and I have had of God,
experiences recorded in scripture,
of which the writers of scripture said,
"That was an experience of God."

A finger pointing at the moon is not the moon.

So our experiences of God are not God.

Experiential Base

Let us look in turn at the **experiences** of God as Father,
the **experiences** of God as Son,
and the **experiences** of God as Holy Spirit.

We will look at this by listing 3 images used for God,
three metaphors of our relationship with God.
that of father, of son, and of spirit,

and examine the experiences we have of each.

A friend of mine used to go around to various churches
and ask questions, questions like,

“Where have you recently had an experience of God the Holy Spirit?

Where would you go to look for the Holy Spirit?

Is it bigger than a bread box?

When did you run into the living Christ?"

We speak of a relationship not with a dead Jesus, but with a living God.

Well, this living God, where did you meet God last week?"

These are the kinds of questions that Christians must be able to answer,
for themselves and for others.

If we can't answer these questions,

we have no handle whatsoever on the Christian Faith.

And let us be clear. Being “faithful” rests on what action we take.

It is not about what preposterous propositions we assert the veracity of.

A banker, a financial steward, acts in good faith

not by asserting things about what God is, or what money is,

but by what the steward does with my money.

A spouse is faithful, not by what words they spout,

but what they do with their body.

So too for Christians, being faithful is about what we do.

I find it helpful to make use of the re-picturing tool

and of the great tradition that has come to us.

By this means we should be able to identify

how men and women of old, our forebearers,

experienced God as Father, God as Son,

and God as Holy Spirit.

By this means, too, we may be able to translate those experiences
into the kinds of pictures we know in our time
and so identify our own experiences of God.

First Person Filter, Picture of My Life

In order to talk about the experiential base I must first recognize
that all experience is necessarily subjective.

The experience of which I can speak is always **my** experience.

Therefore I must first make every attempt
to understand how my own life comes to me.

Here I am. Top view.



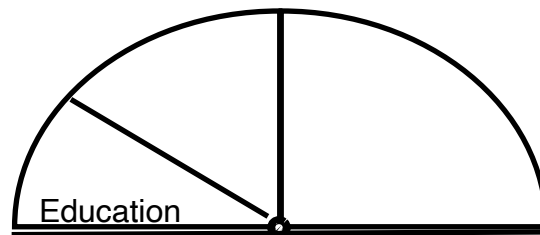
Now, if there is one thing that is true about me, it is
that I am continually changing the things that I put in first place.

For instance, I often think that education
is the most important thing in the world.

There is nothing more important than education.

If I can just get enough education,
if I can just get enough degrees, diplomas, certifications,
then I will have some security.

Education is the most important thing in the world.



Well, except for my family.

Actually, my family is the most important thing.

So long as things are going well for my wife and children,

so long as I can provided for them,

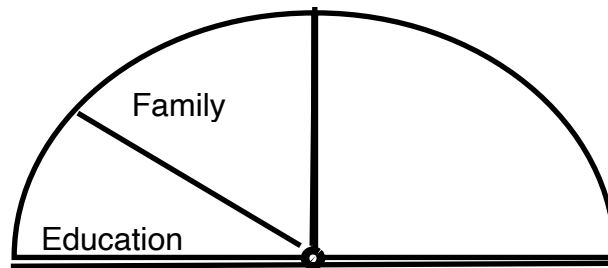
so long as there is life insurance on me,

so long as I have my son or daughter,

or my grandson or granddaughter, in good health,

then I have security.

My security is in my family. I put them in first place.

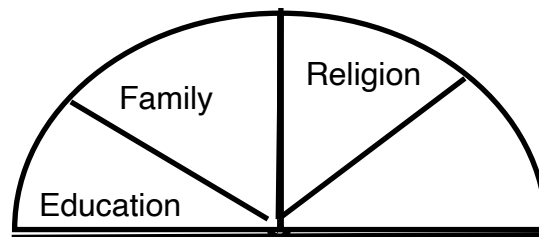


Except when religion goes in first place.

I get to thinking if I can just get enough religion,

if I can just straighten out my prayer life,

then I can have some security.

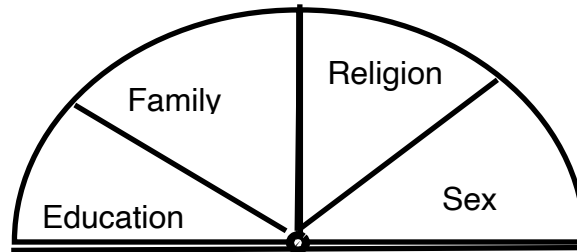


That goes along just fine until suddenly I realize

that sex goes in first place. And I say to myself,

“If I can just have wonderful and exciting sex relations,

that is going to bring me the kind of security
that I have been searching for.”

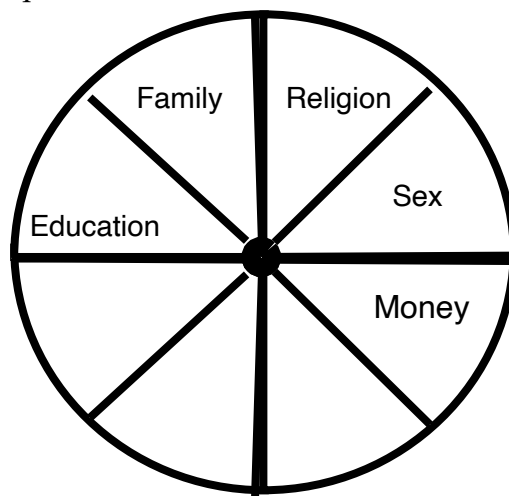


But then I get to worrying and thinking about money.

If only I could only get more money,
then things would be much better.

Then I would have **real** security.

So I put money at the top of the list.



I could go on and think of other things that I put in first place.

You get the point;

I keep changing my priorities.

And these become my gods. These are my idols.

I spend my whole life god-hopping, going from one to another,

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putting first one then another of these various idols into first place.

And it is in the face of this

that the God, Yahweh, says to me,

“Thou shalt have none other gods before me.”

which is to say,

"There isn't any security! "

What's going happen when the brain tumor hits?

What's going to happen when your children grow up and leave home?

What's going to happen when you reach for your religion

and it does not suffice?

There is no security in idols.”

If you want to get to know me, I will offer you one of these idols.

I will tell you about my education or about my money.

I will show you a picture of my family

or tell you about my prayer life.

However, the truth is that I really don't want you to know me very well.

I don't want anybody to know me very well.

Because I don't like what I see,

and I don't think you will either.

So, over the years I've built up a whole series of walls around myself.

They're pretty good too. They work most of the time.

I'm a good wall-builder.

Once in a while, somebody recognizes that all of this is a facade.

He or she touches me at a particularly sensitive spot

and one of my walls begins to crumble.

Of course, as I view it, I see **myself** coming apart.

When someone starts breaking down one of my walls,

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it looks as if my life is coming apart.

(Actually, it's only my idol that is coming apart,
but that's not the way it looks to me.)

My solution for this is to get out a patch kit

and apply a nice thick patch at the point where the wall began to break.

I just build a stronger wall where I'm sensitive.

But, I keep on, and others touch me from time to time.

I find out I can cry, or show anger, or act with tenderness.

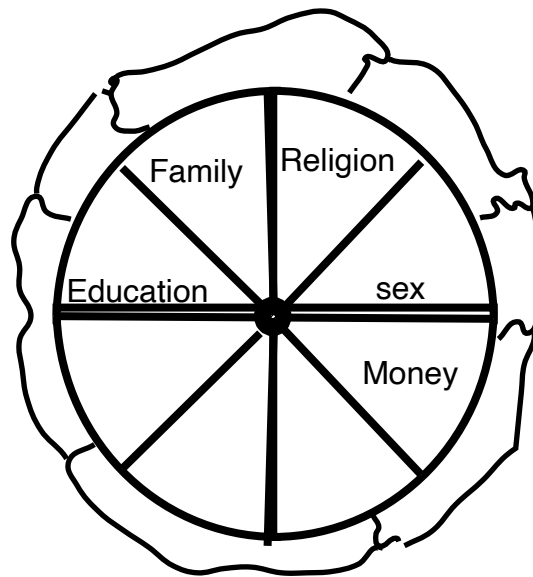
Each time one of my walls crumbles, I apply another patch.

The result is a whole series of partially broken walls

I have patched and repotted.

But I'm in there someplace.

I'm in there someplace ...



Now, this is a true story about me.

And there would be nothing more to say, either,

except that every now and again something --

and I don't know what it is -- but **something**

just smashes right straight through of all my walls.

It breaks my balloons.

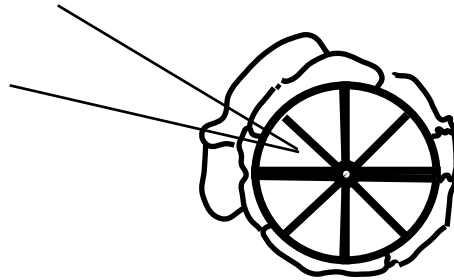
It says **no** to all the illusions that I have built up about myself:

the self-image that is a lie,

the picture of myself that I am presenting,

the stories that I am telling myself about the world,

the stories I am telling myself about me.



And this Event (whatever it is)

shatters right through to the center of me.

It says, "I know who you are; you can't hide any longer, not now."

It's sort of like getting a telegram. The telegram says:

ALL HAS BEEN FOUND OUT.

LEE FOR YOUR LIFE.

signed, A FRIEND.

This Event shatters through the walls

and breaks down the demonic structures

that have kept me penned up, chained, and enslaved.

I spend my life god-hopping

and Yahweh says "**no!**" to that.

I spend my life wall-building

and the Shattering Event breaks through all my illusions.

What does this call to mind?"

Chapter 2.4

Trinity 1, God Experienced as Father, Experience & Concept

Similar work

Others have made similar approaches

to an understanding of Trinity in terms of our experience.

As one example, Suchocki speaks of our experience of God
as power, as presence, and as wisdom⁸,

but then infers that God IS power, IS presence and IS wisdom.

We will here focus on the specific experiences recorded in scripture
that are the basis of such a generalization,

but we will stop short of inferring the nature of God.

The question we will answer is,

“How do we use the word-symbol, ‘God’ ?”

We will not address “What is God?”

We will not even address “Is God?”, nor “Is there a God?”

Images from Tradition

Keeping in mind that we are speaking of

the human experiences for which we use the word Trinity,

we turn our attention first

to experiences that men and women have had

of which the writers of scripture said,

God,

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Lets see how re-picturing can be helpful.

⁸ M.H. Suchocki 1989. *God, Christ, Church, A Practical Guide to Process Theology.* p. 227.

I would like to use this symbol, G/F ,
for the phrase “God experienced as Father”.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/F	

It is not my intention to talk specifically about the word “Father”.

Scholars find “*Pater*”, the Greek for father, used to speak of God

in both Deuteronomy and Isaiah.

(Deut 32:6, Is 63:16, 64:8)

Mark and Matthew both have Jesus say “Father” addressing God.

Paul uses “***abba-pater***” in two letters.

Rather, I would like to let "G/F" point to our experience
of the Godhead, the Mystery, the Ground of Being, the Deep,
the First Person of the Trinity.

Women and men have experienced the first person of the Trinity
and have written about it.

Men and women of First Testament times wrote about it.

They wrote about having the experience of **Covenant**:

The Adamic Covenant, the Noachic Covenant,
the Abramic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant --
all the Covenants, all the Promises.

The Mysteries presented to women and men of old,
these promises just stretched their imaginations
beyond the limits where they could reach.

The experience of promise, the experience of expectation,
the experience of waking up again tomorrow
and finding that they were elect and chosen,

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Why elect? Why chosen?

They didn't know. It came as a mystery.

In the face of the experience of Covenant
our forebearers said, "God".

Let us write "Covenant" as one of the pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/F	Covenant

When Moses went before **Pharaoh**,

the writers of scripture did not say

that *Pharaoh* hardened his heart against Moses.

They said that *God* hardened Pharaoh's heart.

And so the experience of Moses,

going up against Pharaoh time after time

and there finding himself in the squeeze of history

the writers interpreted as an experience of God the Father.

Let us add "Pharaoh" to the list of pictures

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/F	Covenant Pharaoh

At the time of the Passover

a mystery **delivered** the people of Israel from bondage in Egypt

and the deliverance resulted in a day-after-day,

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ongoing reality that lasted for years,
even after they came to the Promised Land.

Let us add “Deliverance” to the list of pictures,.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/F	Covenant Pharoah Deliverance

In the face of mysterious Deliverance the Israelites said, “God”.
And when the judgment fell upon David, and **David’s son** died,
they said : God.

Living with the awful fact of his son’s death, day after day,

David himself described this event as an experience of God the Father.

Let us add “David’s son” to the list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/F	Covenant Pharoah Deliverance David's son

The **Assyrians** wiped out the entire ten tribes in the north.

When Israel woke up again the next day
the ten tribes were still gone.

They lived with it as an ongoing reality,
a there-ness, an up-against-it-ness.

But in the face of that squeeze,
in the face of the grindings and pummelings of history,
Israel pointed to God the Father.

Let us add “Assyrians” to the list of picture.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/F	Covenant Pharoah Deliverance David's son Assyrians

What about the deliverance under the **Maccabees**?

The limitations of humans seemed to leave off and the mystery began.

How did it happen?

No one could account for it,

but the deliverance came about.

The people of Israel interpreted this

as an experience of God the Father.

Let us add “Maccabean Revolt” to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/F	Covenant Pharoah Deliverance David's son Assyrians Maccabean Revolt

Correlation Principle

Now let us seek to infer from these the concept behind this symbol,

the correlation principle,

the criteria for applying this word-symbol,

the conceptual under-pinnings for all these images.

What we are seeking is an abstraction, a “spirit of ..”,

that will act as a correlation principle

to hold together the various images.

In my attempt to do this I would like to use words like:

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‘Limitation’ and ‘Mystery’ .

Where the limitations of human beings leave off

and the Mystery begins

-- in the squeeze of history --

men and women have spoken of God the Father.

An experience of God the Father is an experience of a There-ness,

an Ongoing Reality, an Up-Against-It-ness.

It makes no difference whatsoever how we may feel

when we come up against the Totally Other.

There is nothing that anyone can do about it.

And if anyone asks how it got to be that way

one can only answer, “I don’t know.”

In reality, no one can say anything about it

except, “That’s the way it is.”

Let us add these to our chart under Concept.

.CONCEPT SYMBOL PICTURE		
	G/F	
Limitation		Covenant
Mystery		Pharoah
Squeeze of History		Deliverance
There-ness		David’s son
Ongoing Reality		Assyrians
Up-Against-it-ness		
Just The Way It Is		

Please, let us be very clear

All these abstract words

DO NOT DESCRIBE _God_.

Rather, they describe

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the **experiences that women and men have had**

of which the writers of scripture said, God the Father.

The reality and the experience-of-the-reality are not the same thing.

My experience of God the Father

is not the same as the Reality of God the Father.

How I **experience** God is not God.

This word "pipe" is not a pipe. ⁹

With that in mind I dare to suggest

that human beings experience God the Father in mystery, and limitation,

in there-ness, in ongoing reality,

and in the up-against-it-ness of historical squeeze --

in events about which it is necessary to say,

“That’s just the way it is.”

I dare to suggest this because I have inferred a correlation principle

from images given to me by my forebearers.

Images from Personal Experience

It may be even more helpful

to talk about images familiar to each of us,

images linked to this concept,

the ways **we** picture this concept.

We have all had experiences that are examples of this concept of God the Father,

in the same way that the men and women of the First Testament did.

As a matter of fact, I think I had an experience of God the Father

the day that I showed up into the world.

The phenomenon of my **birth** comes to me as a mystery.

⁹ The painter **René Magritte** (1898 – 1967) on his 1929 painting of a tobacco pipe, placed the words "Ceci n'est pas une pipe", that is "this is not a pipe".

It marks a point where human finitude left off
and sheer mystery began.

And the aftermath of that experience has become a there-ness,
an ongoing reality, an up-against-it-ness.

One day I found myself burped into history. I showed up, just there.

Where did I come from? Where Am I going?

Who am I? What's a "you"?

Where is here? What's it all about? I don't know.

The whole business is very strange indeed.

Let us add "birth" to the list of pictures.

.CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Limitation	G/F	Birth
Mystery		
Squeeze of History		
There-ness		
Ongoing Reality		
Up-Against-it-ness		
Just The Way It Is		

Another such experience is **death**.

I don't want to die,

but God just doesn't seem to care how I feel about that.

I'm going to die; that's part of my finitude, my limitation.

I have a friend whose little boy died, run over by an automobile.

My friend didn't want that to happen.

He didn't want that to happen at all.

He wanted it to be otherwise.

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I wanted it to be otherwise.

But, you know, we just ran right up against our limits
and the mystery enveloped his child.

When my friend wakes up again tomorrow,
his little boy is still going to be dead,
and when he wakes up again the next day, and next year,
nothing will have changed.

The experience of death becomes an ongoing reality,
an up-against-it-ness, an historical squeeze.

There is nothing that we can do about it
and that's just the way it is.

The experience of death is an experience of God the Father.

Let us add "Death" to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Limitation	G/F	Birth
Mystery		Death
Squeeze of History		
There-ness		
Ongoing Reality		
Up-Against-it-ness		
Just The Way It Is		

There are other experiences I have had

-- similar experiences of limitation, mystery,
like the matter of **height**.

You know, I grew and grew until I reached my present height.

Then I stopped. No more. No less.

I may be delighted that I am this tall.

Or it may be the curse of my existence.

It really doesn't make any difference how I feel about it.

Let us add "height" to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Limitation	G/F	Birth
Mystery		Death
Squeeze of History		Height
There-ness		
Ongoing Reality		
Up-Against-it-ness		
Just The Way It Is		

It doesn't make any difference how I feel about being born.

And it doesn't make any difference

how I feel about the death of that little boy.

It doesn't make any difference how I feel about how tall I am.

I am caught in a squeeze.

I can feel happy about it, or sad about it, or confused about it.

It doesn't make any difference.

I have run up against an experience of God the Father.

Ongoing. There.

I had a friend.

He held only goal in life, to be in the FBI. It's true.

That goal he had held forever, the only thing he ever wanted out of life.

His whole education he directed toward that,

ever since grade school, all the way through high school,

all the way into college, everywhere, always.

He never thought of going down to the FBI offices to talk about it

until after being in college for a year.

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He planned to head to law school -- the whole thing.

Then he went down to the FBI offices and checked in.

They told him, "You can't be in the FBI."

After all that. After going through all that,

from grade school on through high school, on into college.

He couldn't be in the FBI.

They wouldn't take him

because he couldn't see well enough without his glasses on.

Without his glasses on, he couldn't see anything.

Without his glasses on, he had 20/400 vision.

In both of his eyes.

They tried to explain:

Something that is 20 feet away appeared to him to be 400 feet away.

What if his glasses got knocked off?

But from his point of view,

he only heard a door slamming shut on all his plans.

Sometimes an experience of God the Father comes to you in 20/400 vision.

And it's only much later, looking back on that experience,

that we are able to say,

Father.

Let us add "20/400 vision" to our list of pictures.

.CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Limitation	G/F	Birth
Mystery		Death
Squeeze of History		Height
There-ness		20/400 vision
Ongoing Reality		
Up-Against-it-ness		
Just The Way It Is		

You probably can think of examples in your own life
where you have come up against the ongoing reality,
the squeeze of history, the mystery of God the Father.

We have completed the cycle one more time.

At each step of this process we have followed carefully the same method

We identified a word/symbol.

We listed the images in our heritage associated with it.

We de-pictured it by inferring the concept, the correlation principle,
the criteria of use for that symbol.

Finally we began to re-picture it

We identified specific experiences out of our life,
experiences which met those inferred criteria,
that is, which were consistent with that concept,

. that correlation principle, that "spirit of ..."

We may be in a place you find unsettling.

Liturgical-work and Picturing-work may do that.

There is an essential question for us to ask.

What is the purpose? To what end is it used?

Is it taking my life away from me?

Or is it giving my life back to me?

As we proceed through this work, you will want to ask this question.

If you find the content to be taking your life away,
by all means decide against it.

If, on the other hand, you find that it is giving your life back to you,
by all means embrace it and take it for your own.

Either way, it's your decision.

Let us pause to respond to the question, "What does this call to mind?"

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Chapter 2.5

Trinity, God Experienced as Son

Experiences and Concept

1. Images from Tradition

To talk about our experience of God the Son is to talk about Jesus of Nazareth.

Was God the Son there before Jesus?

That's a metaphysical question, and we agreed to set those aside.

It means that human beings **experienced** God the Son in Jesus.

Jesus came to us screaming, half-crazy, loving, accepting, angry.

He comes to us in many different ways.

It is almost impossible to derive a concept from a person.

But Jesus, as seen through the eyes of the Gospel writers,
presented himself with a unidirectional intentionality.

He made use of symbols with such precision
and awesome consistency that, in the process,
he became a symbol.

Jesus manifested himself with consistency of intention
and singleness of purpose.

For example, there is the incident of eating **grain on the Sabbath**.

Lk 6:1-10

Israelites did not work on the Sabbath. "We Israelites do not do that!"

And even picking grain we regarded as work.

People said to him, "You can't do that."

And he said: "Why can't we do that?"

"Surely we can do that.

Didn't you ever hear the story about King David

who entered the Holy of Holies
 and took the bread of the Presence to feed his men
 because they were hungry?
 "Is mankind made for the Sabbath,
 or is the Sabbath made for mankind?
 Which is it?"

Talk about a surprise!

It came to people as a happening, an event.

Let's list that in our pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/S	Grain on Sabbath

Or, what about the **woman taken in adultery**?

Jn 8:3-11

Everybody knew what we do to a woman taken in adultery; we stone her.

The law says to.

But Jesus said: "You leave her alone.

Let the person who is without sin cast the first stone."

And nobody moved.

Jesus bent over and wrote something in the sand.

I don't know what he wrote.

Nobody knows what he wrote.

Yet this is the only record that we have of Jesus' writing.

Jesus never wrote anything.

Socrates never wrote anything.

Others wrote about them.

Let us add that to our pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/S	Grain on Sabbath Woman taken in adultery

Let us also include also the story about the **man by the side of the pool**.

Remember that man?

Jn 5:2-15

He had been lying there for thirty-eight years.

He lay on his pallet by the side of the pool,
and Jesus saw him.

Jesus said, "Hello, how are you?"

And the man said: "Oh, I'm not so well.

I have been lying here for thirty-eight years
and every time that I try to get down to the pool
somebody scrambles ahead of me.

I have nobody around to put me into the healing waters.

So I am not so good."

So it is significant that Jesus did not say, "Oh you poor thing."

He did not say, "Just a minute and we will get six guys
and carry you down into the pool."

No.

He said to the man: "Get up! Pick up your bed and walk!"

And Jesus' words so startled him, that he got up, and walked,
and carried his bed off with him.

Jesus surprised him.

Now, I don't know what he did after the Christ Event entered into his life.

He might have done many things.

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He might have walked immediately to another pool,
 put his bed down, and lay there for another thirty-eight years.

I don't know what he did.

But the Christ Event happened in his life.

It called him. It said,

“Turn around. Stop that.

You get up and walk.”

Let us add that to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/S	Grain on Sabbath Woman taken in adultery Man at pool

That same thing happened every time anybody said to Jesus,

“How shall I gain eternal life?”

People asked that question of him time after time.

“How shall I gain eternal life?”

He answered, in essence,

“You can't. “ Short, like that.

It always came to people as a shock.

A person would say to him,

“Good Master...” and then he would say,

“Wait a minute. Why do you call me good?

There is only one who is good, and that is God.”

Then the person would say,

“Well, Master, what can I do to gain eternal life?”

And Jesus would say, “Keep the law.”

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And the person would respond,

“Would you explain the Law more fully for me?”

Jesus would then summarize the Law by saying:

“ ‘Love God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind.

And love your neighbor as yourself.’

You do that and I am sure you will gain eternal Life.”

Most people had the good sense to say:

“I can’t do that. I just can’t do that. It’s too much.

You said with **all** my heart, with **all** my soul. I just can’t.”

One man, a very specific man, a **rich young man**,

Mark 10:17-23

came to Jesus and said,

“Master, what can I do to gain eternal life?

Jesus said to him, “Keep the Law.”

Jesus used many different ways to tell people they couldn’t do it.

Sometimes he would say :

"Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

"You just **be God**.

"Then you will gain eternal life.”

That usually came as a shock. Most people would say:

“I can’t be God.” But this rich young ruler asked,

“What shall I do to gain eternal life?” And Jesus said, “Keep the Law.”

And this rich young man said,

“I did that already.”

Jesus did a double-take.

“You did that already?

Well, there is still one other thing for you to do.

You go home and sell everything that you have.

(The text notes that the young man's many riches possessed him.)

You sell everything that you have
and give all the money to the poor.

And then you dress in rags and you come and follow me.

Do that and you will gain eternal life.”

The rich young man said,

“I can't do that. I just can't do that.”

Then Jesus said,

“Well, thank God we have found something that you can't do.”

And then Jesus went on to say,

“Maybe you can't gain eternal life, either.”

The young man went away to his house sorrowing.

And the disciples were so shocked and so surprised that they said to Jesus,

“Wait a minute! Then who can gain eternal life?

If what you said is true, who can gain eternal life?

And Jesus said, “No one.”

The King James Version reads, “With men it is impossible. “

That translates, “No one.”

We are to understand a long pause.

“With men it is impossible.”

Jesus kicks at a stone before he says anything else.

After the pause he adds,

“But with God all things are possible.

An enigmatic way of saying:

“What arrogance you displayed when you came and asked,

‘What shall I do to gain eternal life?’”

Question: What do you think eternal life is worth?

Answer: The worth is infinite.

Response: fine. Then pay infinite.

If you don't have infinite, then you can't buy it.

It may, however, come to you as a **free gift**.

A surprise.

Let us add that rich young man to our pictures,.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/S	Grain on Sabbath Woman taken in adultery Man at pool Rich young man

The Christ Event always came as a surprise.

Jesus shocked people.

He shocked the man at the pool.

He constantly shocked people.

He just shocked the devil out of people.

And then there came a day when they knew positively that they had killed him.

Dead and sealed in a tomb.

Surprise! RESURRECTION.

Christ came to people shattering their demonic possessions, their illusions.

At the very least, he came as a surprise.

Let us add that to our pictures.

2. Correlation Principle

Let us seek now to de-picture this symbol,

to separate it from the historical cultural specifics used to illustrate it.

We seek the concept behind it, the criteria for using it, the correlation principle.

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CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/S	Grain on Sabbath Woman taken in adultery Man at pool Rich young man RESURRECTION

For the experience of God the Son,
the concept statement seems to speak of **Event**
as opposed to there-ness or ongoing reality.

The Second person of the Trinity confronts us as a **Happening**.
The experience of God the Son is an event, a happening, a taking-placed-ness.

It is a Shattering Event
that breaks in and casts out the demons.

It brings with it the word: REPENT!

("Repent" is not "be sorry".

It is "**Turn around** and **go the other way**.

CHANGE YOUR MIND,
YOUR WHOLE BEING".)

It also brings with it the words:

THINGS ARE NOT THE WAY YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE.

Let us write these phrases in the Concept column.

When the Jesus Event shatters into one's life
there are three possible responses we can make.

We can kill the intruder.

We can ignore the event.

Or, we can embrace the revealed reality.

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CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Event	G/S	Grain on Sabbath
Happening		Woman taken in adultery
Taking-Placedness		Man at pool
Shatter Illusion		Rich young man
Repent!		RESURRECTION
Change your Mind		
Things are NOT the way you thought		

We can turn from illusion, and live our life.

3. Images from Personal Experience

Having selected a word/symbol,

we listed the related images from our heritage;

we de-pictured by inferring a correlation principle, a concept,
a deeper meaning.

Now let us proceed to re-picture,

to identify our experiences linked by this concept.

You know, I have had experiences like that

and I didn't even know them as encounters with the Living Christ.

I didn't even know this experience of the Wrath of God

manifested in my own time as the Christ Event.

May I use, as one example,

the destruction of the twin towers on 9/11?

We touched on this earlier, during the discussion of demons.

'9/11'. An Event. A Happening. A taking-placed-ness.

A shattering of illusions that brought with it the words:

REPENT. THINGS ARE NOT THE WAY YOU THOUGHT.

A manifestation of the Living Christ in our lifetime.

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We may see this Shattering Event of the Twin Towers
 as the action of God in history producing gigantic social upheaval.
 Let us add the Twin Towers to our list of pictures of OUR experience.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Event Happening Taking-Placedness Shatter Illusion Repent! Change your Mind Things are NOT the way you thought	G/S	Twin Towers 9/11

On a smaller scale, a friend of mine said,
 "I had an experience of the Living Christ".
 For a long time he had been going along
 telling himself all sorts of lies about himself.
 I think the lies were unconscious more than conscious.
 In any case, he told himself "I am Superman."
 "The laws of the universe do not apply to me."
 He could do anything he wanted to.

You know how the story goes:
 "Other people need eight hours of sleep a night,
 but I can get along with five.
 "Other people can't smoke and get away with it,
 but I can smoke four packs of cigarettes a day with no problem.
 "Other people have one job, but I can work two."
 He must have thought himself Superman.

He told himself this kind of demonic story --
sheer illusion.

Then into the midst of all this came a Shattering Event
that everyone interpreted as a heart attack.

(I'm here to tell you he knew it as an attack of some kind!)

He turned blue and went unconscious
and ended up in the hospital on a bedpan.

Now you will have to admit that a bedpan is a hell of a place
for Superman to be. But it's a good experience. You learn humility.

You learn a little bit about creatureliness.

He thought at first that he experienced God the Father.

He figured -- this is it, it's all over.

But it turned out not to have been a Father experience at all.

It turned out to be an encounter with God the Son.

He experienced an Event, a taking-place.

A shattering of his illusions about himself.

A judgment upon the stories he had been telling himself
about himself and about his world.

The words that came with this experience were:

REPENT. TURN AROUND. CHANGE YOUR MIND.

THINGS AREN'T THE WAY YOU THOUGHT.

BUT IF YOU WILL REPENT,

AND IF YOU WILL TURN AROUND,

THERE IS A CHANCE

THAT YOUR LIFE WILL COME BACK TO YOU.

He had run headlong into the Wrath of God -- God's judgment
which is the same thing as God's mercy.

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God will not let us go to hell in peace.

This is the mercy of God.

Let us add the Heart Attack to our list of pictures of personal experiences. _

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Event	G/S	Twin Towers 9/11
Happening		Heart Attack
Taking-Placedness		
Shatter Illusion		
Repent!		
Change your Mind		
Things are NOT the		
way you thought		

4. The mercy of God is God's judgment upon us.

The wrath of God is simply our experience of God's righteousness.

Now the question may arise,

“How can I turn off the wrath of God?”

If I pray to God and say, “God, turn off your wrath,”

God is consistent in the answer .

God says to me, “Please do!”

In other words, “You turn it off.”

If we insist on going against the headwind of God,

then we are going to experience it as fury.

And then we pray and say, “Turn off the storm!”

But the word is: REPENT. TURN AROUND.

START GOING THE OTHER WAY.

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Do this and you will find

that the very same storm you experienced as wrath
will be the wind in your sails.

It will make everything possible.

The judgment of God **is** God's mercy.

This is not quite the way I had understood mercy before.

But then, I keep learning new things all the time.

The Wrath of God breaks in on us at the darnedest times.

A friend of mine travels quite a bit, you may too,

and sometimes you are gone as long as ten days at a time.

When you come home you always feel that you deserve a reward.

You understand life that way. You work hard,
and you ought to have a reward.

The reward you expect
is some rest and relaxation.

So you come home and the kids are glad to see you for almost five minutes.

Then they start the usual fighting with one another.

The loud noise. The hanging around.

And you sort of creep off toward your room --
there to hide and lock yourself in, and maybe rest a bit.

But then the Wrath of God comes to you

in the form of your **spouse's voice** saying,

"You come out here!

You're off having fun at these conferences for ten days,
and I'm stuck at home with the children.

They've been running and screaming and yelling.

I haven't been out of the house. I haven't seen a movie.

You come here and **talk to me!**”

Now that just isn't fair.

But what I want to say to you right now is this:

Who in hell ever told you life will be fair?

Where did you ever get that idea?

Check back in your files. Find your guarantee.

And then you write to the manufacturer, the maker, and complain.

Of course it isn't fair. And it doesn't have to be fair.

It just has to be the way it is.

The Wrath of God, the Christ Event,

may come to you in the form of a riot, or an attack,

or your spouse's voice saying,

“Turn right around and come back out here in the living room!

Things are not what you thought they were.”

Let us add this picture also to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Event	G/S	Twin Towers 9/11
Happening		Heart attack
Taking-Placedness		Spouse's voice
Shatter Illusion		
Repent!		
Change your Mind		
Things are NOT the way you thought		

I went to Oklahoma one time,

and a man told me a story about himself. He said,

“Once I was driving along on the road to Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

(It was just a little place, then)

I ran out of gas.

I had caused it, that I ran out of gas,

so naturally, I took it out on the car.

I got outside and started kicking the tires.

Then I swore at the car.

And then, finally, I gave that up and sat down by the side of the road
to wait for the bus.

I waited for about half an hour.

Then in the distance came a cloud of dust.

I thought. 'The bus!'. But, no, not the bus.

A man in an automobile drove up.

The man drove up, slammed on his brakes, and said to me

'What are you doing?'

I said, 'Why, I'm waiting for the bus to Broken Arrow.'

He said, 'There isn't any bus to Broken Arrow!'

And he drove off.

And I thought, 'What a great thing to have happened'.

If that man hadn't come and said what he did,

I could still be sitting there waiting for the bus."

When I heard that story I said to myself,

"This man is telling me something about my life.

Sometimes I think I have spent a lot of my life

just sitting around waiting for the bus!"

At the moments when the Christ Event breaks into my life,

it says, "There isn't any bus to Broken Arrow."

Why, anybody would take the bus if he could.

The bus is a lot nicer than walking.

Walking is slow and it's sweaty and it hurts, too.

I would be glad to wait for the bus.

And sometimes I tell myself the bus is going to come.

Don't you just **know** the bus is going to come?

Let us add the bus to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Event	G/S	Twin Towers 9/11
Happening		Heart attack
Taking-Placedness		Spouse's voice
Shatter Illusion		Bus to Broken Arrow
Repent!		
Change your Mind		
Things are NOT the way you thought		

But the Living Christ comes to me and says, "There isn't any bus."

Jesus Christ came into the midst

of the people who were waiting for the Messiah and said,

"There isn't going to be any Messiah -- and I'm it!"

The Christ Event happens, takes place, shatters illusion.

It brings with it the words:

REPENT. CHANGE YOUR MIND.

THINGS ARE NOT THE WAY YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE.

In an encounter we experience the Wrath of God,

the judgment of God,

which is the same thing as God's mercy.

God will not let us go to hell in peace.

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We have completed the cycle one more time.

Each time we have followed carefully the same method.

We identified a word-symbol;

listed the images in our heritage associated with it;

we de-pictured it by inferring the concept, the correlation principle,

the criteria for use of that symbol;

finally we began to re-picture it by identifying images out of our own life,

experiences which meet those inferred criteria,

which are consistent with that concept

. the correlation principle, the "spirit of ..."

Now we may be in a place you find unsettling.

The Liturgical-work and Picture-work may do that.

There is an essential question for us,

What is the purpose, the end, of this work?

Is it taking my life away from me?

Or is it giving my life back to me?

As we proceed through this work, you will want to ask this question.

If you find the content to be taking your life away,

by all means decide against it.

But if you find that it is giving your life back to you,

by all means embrace it and take it for your own.

Either way, it's your decision.

Let us reflect a few moments on the question,

“What does this call to mind?”

[page intentionally left blank]

Chapter 2.6.

Trinity, God Experienced as Holy Spirit

Experiences and Concept**_Images from Tradition**

Now we turn to our experience of God the Holy Spirit.

Let us set aside for now all the metaphors

describing the Holy Spirit in scripture

(brooding upon the waters, coming in a great rushing wind,
descending like a dove, springing forth in tongues of fire).

Let us focus rather on descriptions of actual encounters with the Spirit
by men and women like you and me.

Let's look at some of the images.

First of all, there are the prophets,

those wild-eyed, half-crazy, sideways-walking people.

Scripture describes them as Spirit People,

That is to say, people filled with the Holy Spirit.

the Greek language uses the word “pneumatic”.

Let us place the prophets on our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/HS	Prophets

And the prophets were not the only people described that way.

The early writers described Jesus as a Spirit Person.

Let us add Jesus to this list of pictures.

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/HS	Prophets Jesus

And they described the disciples that way too,
the twelve, and the women, -- especially after Pentecost.

They included Ananias, the man sent to Paul.

Let us add these to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
	G/HS	Prophets Jesus Disciples the twelve the women Ananias

Correlation Principle

Having listed the images we find in scripture,

we turn to inferring the concept, the correlation principle.

There is a kind of ecstasy involved in any experience of the Spirit.

When we run into people who are Spirit-filled,

we have an experience that is kind of wild-eyed and half-crazy.

About the disciples on the Day of Pentecost the people said,

“Why, they are drunk! They have been drinking.

They are as drunk as skunks!” and Peter had to explain,

“no, they are not drunk. They are simply filled with the Spirit.”

Half-crazy, sideways-walking, wild-eyed -- all of them:

prophets, Jesus, the disciples, Ananias, and many others.

What Correlation Principle can we infer?

One abstraction that is consistent for all Spirit experiences is that

it involves an encounter with **persons**.

One never encounters the Holy Spirit

except as one encounters **people**.

You don't run into the Holy Spirit in a bread box.

You don't run into the Holy Spirit in your closet.

Not scripturally anyway.

If you look at it in a solely scriptural context,

basing any inference of concept on scriptural authority,

an experience of the Holy Spirit involves an encounter with people.

Let us write "people" on the chart under Concept.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
People	G/HS	Prophets Jesus Disciples the twelve the women Ananias

But Spirit Persons are very special.

They are people who have had experiences of God the Father.

And they are people who have had experiences of God the Son.

Now this doesn't make them any different from anybody else.

I don't know **anybody**

who hasn't had an experience of God the Father

or an experience of God the Son.

Then, is everybody a Spirit Person?

No.

Well then, how are Spirit People distinguished from anybody else?

How are they recognized?

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The difference is this.

In the face of the experience of God the Father,

or the experience of God the Son,

Spirit People have said “**yes**” to reality.

They have said “**yes**” to reality and have embraced reality.

They have recognized that the only gift they can give history
is the gift of their death.

They have recognized that they are going to die.

And they have already died to illusion.

They have already died to themselves.

They have already died to all sorts of lies

that they were once telling themselves.

Let us add these phrases to our concept.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
People who have Experienced G/F & G/S have said YES to reality	G/HS	Prophets Jesus Disciples the twelve the women Ananias

Spirit Persons are decisional.

They have decided to die their deaths on behalf of all people everywhere.

This decisionality, this ability to make decisions, has given them a freedom,
freedom from the **power** of the demons.

Not from the demons themselves,

No Spirit Person is free from the demons.

But Spirit People are free from the **power** of the demons,

because the Christ Event has broken that power,

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
People who have Experienced G/F & G/S have said YES to reality Free from Power of the demons	G/HS	Prophets Jesus Disciples the twelve the women Ananias

and because they know that their consequent decision to accept reality
 is nothing other than a free response
 to the action of God in history. Free for *agape*

Spirit Persons are not only free **from** the power of the demons.

They are also free **for** something. They are free for *agape* --
 radical, selfless, neighbor love.

These are the people who recognize that they **are** everybody who ever was
 and everybody who will ever be.

They are people who recognize that the decisions they make
 in what we call the “here and now”

**validate or invalidate everything that has gone before,
 and make possible or impossible
 everything that is to come.**

Spirit People are people who recognize that they are,
 in this instant, the instruments of God.

They are the Saviors of God. It is their life and their death
 that is going to make all the difference.

They recognize that they are in a privileged position in time and space.

By throwing their bodies face down on the barbed wire of history
 they insure that others may go forward into the future.

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

These are people who are making possible
the whole of God's future.

They are validating everything that has gone before.

They stand in the company of the saints.

Spirit People are lucid, broken, extremely human.

Let us add these phrases to the concept.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	IMAGE
People who have Experienced G/F & G/S Said YES to Reality Free from Power of the Demons Free for <i>agape</i>	G / HS	Prophets Jesus Disciples The twelve The Women Ananias

Images from Personal Experience

Who are the Spirit People of today?

I don't know who you would point to.

Maybe you would want to mention Dag Hammerskjold,

... Martin Luther King, or Helen Keller,

Minister Malcolm, Cezar Chavez, Nelson Mandela.

Who would you point to?

Let us add other names as well.

Where have you encountered someone

who has experienced God the Father, and God the Son

and then said **yes** to reality?

What person that you know has recognized

that the only gift they have to give is the gift of their death,

recognized that it is in dying that we live,

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

recognized that it is in losing her life that she gains it?
 Who would you point to that has died to illusion,
 died to the demonic to make life possible?
 Who do you know like that?
 Who is free from the power of the demons?
 Who is free for ***agape*** -- radical neighbor love
 that calls us to die on behalf of **all**, everywhere.
 Do you know whose name we ought to write in here?
 Do you know whose name we ought to write in here **today**?
 We ought to write **your** name in here today.
 That's who. That's what it is all about.
 I'm going to write your name in here, right alongside of mine.
 Let us add this to our list of pictures.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
People who have Experienced G/F & G/S have said YES to reality Free from Power of the demons Free for <i>agape</i>	G/HS	Dag Hammerskjold Martin Luther King Hellen Keller Minister Malcolm Cezar Chavez Nelson Mandela You & me

Spirit People are those who have experienced God the Father,
 and God the Son, and have said **Yes** to reality.
 They are persons who, in that turning about,
 have found themselves suddenly and unaccountably FREE.
 Neither the guests nor the victims of God,

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

they are, rather God's faithful colleagues, co-workers.

Now we may be in a place you find unsettling.

The Liturgical-work and Picture-work may do that.

There is an essential question we must ask,

What is the aim, the purpose, the intent of this work?

Is it taking my life away from me?

Or is it giving my life back to me?

You will want to ask this question.

If you find the content to be taking your life away,

by all means decide against it.

If, on the other hand, you find that it is giving your life back to you,

by all means embrace it and take it for your own.

Either way, it's your decision.

Summary Model for Trinity

There-ness

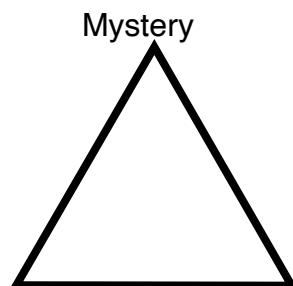
It may be helpful to hold the experiential Trinity in a triangular model.

At the top of this triangle let us write the word MYSTERY.

This is to remind me that God the Father

we experience in mystery, limitation, there-ness, the given,

ongoing reality, up-against-it-ness, just the way it is.



Awareness

God also comes to me in the shattering events of my history, the interruptions.

It is the Jesus Event

that calls all my answers into question.

Let us write the word EVENT

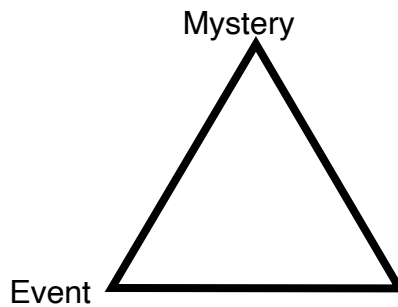
on this side of the triangle.

The word should call to mind the taking-placed-ness,
the happenings, the shattering of illusions.

Those experiences which bring with them the words:

REPENT, TURN AROUND

THINGS ARE NOT THE WAY YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE.



Naturally, these two encounters are enough

to drive me right straight into the ground -- to break my back.

But I have heard the Word about life in history.

I heard someone say to me once, "You are **free to live!**"

All is good, the past is approved,

you are accepted,

and the future is open.

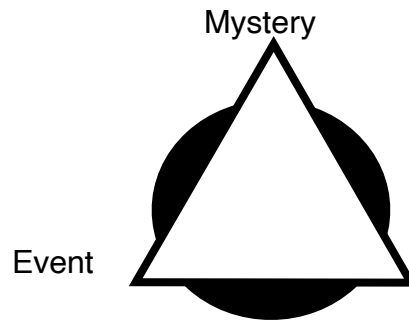
I heard someone say this to me **in church**.

And that Word is what has made it possible for me to go on.

I am going to show the centrality of the Word

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

by drawing a backdrop of grace.



I heard the Word spoken in Church, and because of that,

I am here today. That is why I am here.

I made a decision to **believe** what I heard.

I made a decision to accept the fact that I am accepted.

The experiences of God the Father and God the Son
are held together by the Word of Grace.

And all this makes possible a movement forward
toward the Life Style of Freedom,
a movement forward toward Life in the Spirit.

Issuance

Finally, let us write the word **FREEDOM** on the last side of our triangle.

With this one word we would hope to recall what happens,
that Spirit Persons are those lucid ones who,
upon experiencing God the Father and God the Son,
have said **Yes** to reality.

They are those decisional ones who, in their recognition of the plain fact
that it is in dying that we live,

have committed their deaths toward the creation of a Servant Nation,
a Messianic Community whose sole purpose for existence
is the **proclamation** of the Word of Freedom and the

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

creation of **structures of justice** for the future.

They are the intentional ones who have found themselves,

by the power of God alone,

to be **free** from the power of the demons,

and free for ***agape***, radical neighbor love.

Now we may be in a place you find unsettling.

The Liturgical-work and Picture-work may do that.

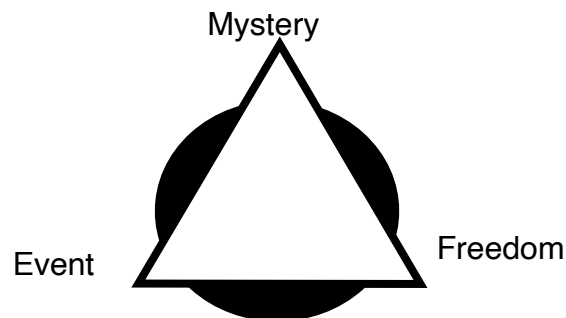
If you find the content to be taking your life away,

by all means decide against it.

If, on the other hand, you find that it is giving your life back to you,

by all means embrace it and take it for your own.

Either way, it's your decision.



Now, what does *this* call to mind?

this page left blank for your personal notes :)

Chapter 3.1:

The Re-Picturing Method

Linking Experience and Concept

Introduction

Let us look more closely at this three column chart we have been using, where it came from and how it works.

It grows out of a specific method of biblical interpretation.

Bultmann's Discovery

Rudolph Bultmann¹⁰, the German theologian who discovered this method of biblical interpretation,

called it “**entmythologian**.” [ENT - mi- tho- lo- GEE- an]

But that word is difficult to say and difficult to translate.

The German word suggests a moving behind the pictures of a text to examine their conceptual underpinnings.

Bultmann himself used the English word “Demythologizing”.

But that doesn't quite capture what is being done.

Finally, it may be an unfortunate translation

because of popular connotations of the English word **myth**.

Literary analysts use the word **myth**

to refer to an explanatory narrative.

But for many of the rest of us,

the word **myth** calls to mind

a fabricated story, an untruth, or a fairy tale.

Thus “Demythologizing” scripture

sounds like “debunking” scripture.

And that is **not** what we are doing here.

Let us be blunt, “debunking” is the farthest thing

from what Dr. Bultmann had in mind.

So, I have decided to call this process,

¹⁰ **Rudolph Karl Bultmann** (1884 – 1976), a German theologian of Lutheran background, for three decades professor of New Testament studies at the University of Marburg, in 1941 gave a lecture in German whose English title, was “**New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Message**”. This set off a vigorous debate among scholars interpreting the New Testament. It appeared first in English in 1953. It is still available in the book **Kerygma and Myth** (H.W. Bartsch, ed.) with the key essays in that debate. res

“de-picturing and re-picturing”

Importance of Method

The method Bultmann presents is one of the most important developments in the twentieth century theological revolution.

I do not think it is possible to deal with theology
in the twenty first century
without an introduction to Bultmann’s method.

We can admire him, or dislike him, or ignore him.

But we must somehow come to terms with him.

The theological revolution of the twentieth Century
stands upon Bultmann’s method.

It is **not** built upon his conclusions, his theology,
but its foundation **is** his method of interpretation.

Much of the discussion in the church,
continuing into the twenty first century,
rests on this method,
even for those unaware of Bultmann.

Relation of Picture and Image

As used here, ***“picture”*** is roughly equal to ***“image”***,
as used by Marshall McLuhan or Kenneth Boulding.

These words point to a set of specific representations,
pictures that come to mind

when verbal or non-verbal symbols confront us.

The pictures are very specific, very concrete,
and arise from our experience.

PICTURE \cong IMAGE

Relation of Picture and Metaphor

When we use a metaphor to help us grasp at the meaning of a word,
it is a picture of something we know of,
an image of something familiar,
which we use seeking a meaning of the unfamiliar.

Systematic Description

A Model

I find it helpful to use a graphic model as an aid in this discussion.

This one comes from Martin Bell's unpublished work.

The model is the chart with three columns we have been using.

Some say it looks something like the mathematical π symbol;
others that it looks like the marking with blood
on posts and lintel at the first Passover.

People ask, does it have any esoteric significance?

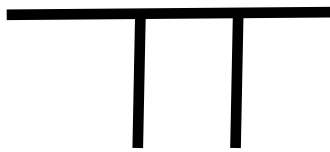
Does it have mathematical implications?

Does it refer to the blood of the Lamb?

No. It has three columns.

Martin needed three columns,
so he drew something that had three columns.

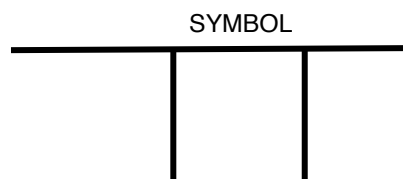
It looked like this:



Symbols: Non-Verbal and Verbal

I would like to label the center column: SYMBOL

So, this is the symbol column.



You are familiar with any number of **non-verbal** symbols.

One example is the handshake.

I am not always sure what someone **means** by a handshake.

But I know it means **something**.

The symbol has a wealth of pictures associated with it
of pictures that come to mind --

even if I am not always sure **exactly** what it means.

In the same way, I might wink at you.

Well now, what does **that** mean?

All we are sure of is that it means **something**.

There is an intentionality to communicate here.

There is a drive to convey information non-verbally.

Or I might make a “V” with my fingers.

The specific meaning of this symbol

has certainly changed from its first use 1944 to the present.

Yet in each instance we use the symbol to communicate something.

Verbal Example: Medicine

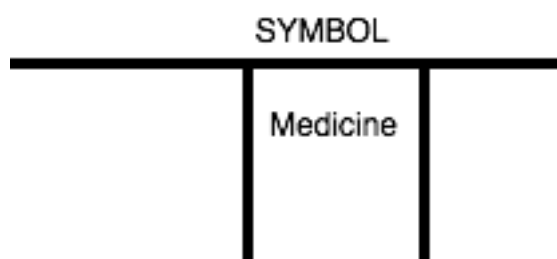
There are also verbal symbols, word-symbols.

Most of the words that we use, we use as symbols.

They are pointers, pointing to something beyond themselves.

One example of a word-symbol is “medicine”,

used here in reference to the practice of medicine.



A host of images or pictures come to mind when we use this word.

I think of doctors in white coats, stethoscopes, hypodermic needles, surgical operations. You may think of many other things.

These images, these pictures,

that I associate with the practice of medicine

are pretty much confined to my own culture

and my own specific time in history.

These pictures do not correlate well

with the practice of medicine say in Italy around 1600 C.E.

Pictures, the Concrete

I need a place to list these images, to organize these pictures in my head.

I will use the right hand column for that.

So I label the right hand column of the chart

SYMBOL	PICTURE
Medicine	

the PICTURE column.

It will include all the pictures that come to mind
when we hear the given word-symbol.

The concrete examples of the practice of medicine listed above
are images appropriate to our culture and historical setting.

But if I were to go to a source of the history of medical practice,
it might remind me
that people knew witch-doctoring as an early form
of the practice of medicine.

SYMBOL	PICTURE
Medicine	witchdoctoring

Now **there** is a different concrete example,
witch-doctoring.

Later on, as the data changed, as the experience changed,
there developed a totally new form and shape, bloodletting.

SYMBOL	PICTURE
Medicine	witchdoctoring blood-letting

When we think of Medicine of the Middle Ages
we call to mind pictures of bloodletting.

In our time the practice of medicine calls to mind other pictures.

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The practice of Medicine is now transplants and cobalt needles,
nuclear magnetic imaging, DNA sequencing.

These represent concrete examples of medicine for us.

There has been a profound altering
of the picturing associated with medical science.

SYMBOL	PICTURE
Medicine	witchdoctoring blood-letting transplanting

What of the practice of medicine half a century hence? I don't know.

By then doctors may consider heart transplants and cobalt treatment
to have been only one step removed from barbarism.

No doubt medicine will assume a different form and shape,
one we haven't even dreamed of.

I don't know what the concrete form is going to look like.

It may very well resemble witch-doctoring!

With our advances in psychosomatics,
we are beginning to see a great deal of value
in some of the earlier picturing —
masks, chanting, dance.

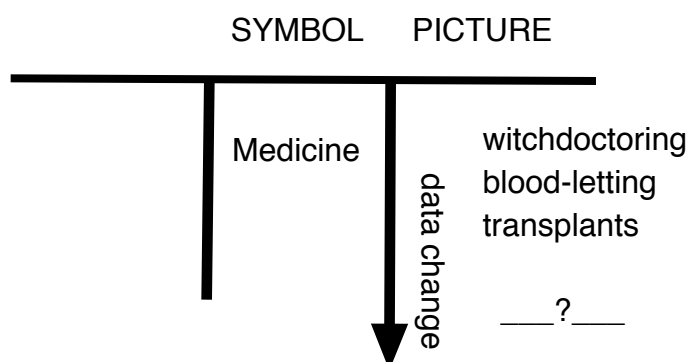
SYMBOL	PICTURE
Medicine	witchdoctoring blood-letting transplanting ___ ? ___

Data Change

What has happened, of course,
is that there has been a significant data change.

As the data change, so do the specific concrete pictures change.

Mental pictures are concretizations. They are specifics. They are examples. They are efforts to satisfy the person who insists, “Show me one.”



If we talk about the practice of medicine in general,
we are being very abstract.

Show me one! Show me medicine as practiced.

Well, o.k. , right there.

There is a person witch-doctoring.
that's early medicine-being-practiced.

There is a person letting blood.

That is medicine-being-practiced in the Middle Ages.

Here is a person doing heart transplants.

That's medicine-being-practiced in our time.

How dare we use one word, medicine,
to refer to all these very different pictures?

Why is this not capricious and arbitrary babble?

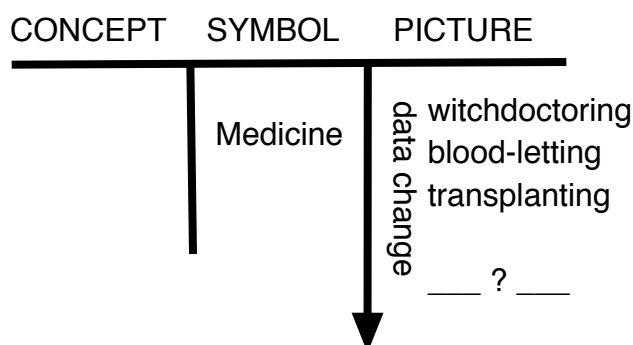
Concept/Abstract

What should be clear from this analysis is
that a word-symbol, such as “medicine”
does not consistently refer to any one picture, any one image.

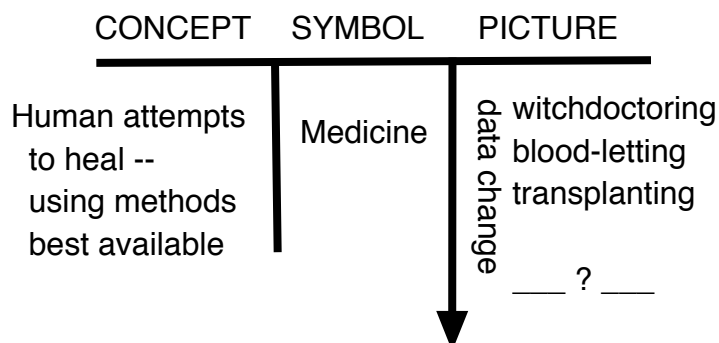
That is, it does not **symbolize** its picturing,
what we picture as “medicine”.

The word-symbol cannot consistently refer
to any one of our pictures, images, examples, of medicine,
because the pictures in our mind are constantly changing
as our experiences change.

Yet these pictures enrich our understanding of “medicine”.
 If a word-symbol has any kind of consistency about it,
 it is because it points to, it symbolizes, something that **is** constant.
 Symbols are never symbols of our mental pictures, our images.
 We use symbols to stand for something else.
 But that “something else” is an abstraction.
 It is not a specific instance, a concretion.
 I would like to call this abstraction the CONCEPT.



So what is the concept related to the word symbol "Medicine"
 The concept of medicine has something to do
 with human attempts to heal.
 That is to say, our attempts to heal as opposed to say build a house
 or do something else:
 Human attempts to heal,
 using the best techniques that one can find at the time.



This concept is **abstract**. It is "dictionary language".
 It is a list of **criteria**,

the criteria for attaching our pictures,
our images, our metaphors,
to this particular symbol.

It is a **correlation principle**,
the one that unites all of the various pictures,
various images, various metaphors,
that we link with a certain word-symbol.

We derive the concept by inference.

We look at the various historical ways of picturing
that we find associated with a symbol.

Then, by an act of imagination,
we seek what they have in common.

That is, we ask what idea, what function,
what criterion links them.

This inference is always tentative, always provisional.

We infer the abstract concept from the specific cultural pictures.

With regard to “medicine”

we have suggested a tentative abstraction.

Speaking in metaphor,
we say the abstraction points to,
describes, identifies, characterizes
the "SPIRIT of medicine".

Discovering the “**Spirit of**” a word-symbol
is an extremely important process.

This is the **de-picturing** step, the inferring.

Interpretation and Conclusion

If we were to talk about the “letter” of the law,
we would have in mind the pictures of the law,
the specific instance of the law.
one, given, specific, concrete case of the law.
It is an example, a SHOW ME ONE.
It is a cultural picture.

But we are constantly changing the specific pictures,
the examples of the law.

We are constantly changing the letter of the law.

We do this to try to comply with the SPIRIT of the law.

The spirit of the law is abstract.

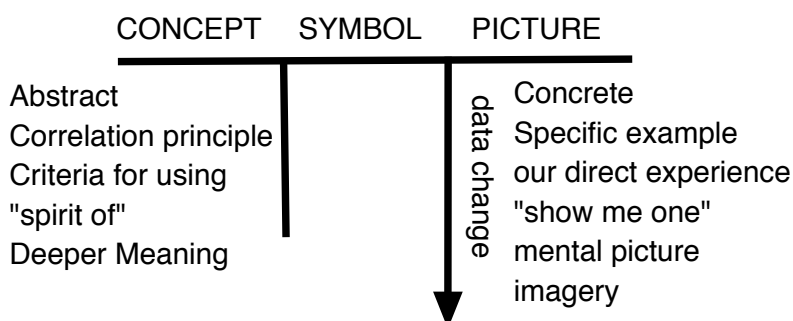
It is the conceptual underpinning.

It is the correlation principle.

It is the **deeper meaning**.

And it is **that** which “the law” **symbolizes**.

Here is a summary of these relationships of Symbol, Picture and Concept.



Cultural Images, the pictures in our mind, are very important.

For example,

we could have talked during the Middle Ages with folk
about how they pictured “medicine”.

I’d say, “What’s medicine?, and you’d say, “It’s bloodletting”.

For the concrete, the specific example, the SHOW ME ONE,

people knew bloodletting,

as the current metaphor of medicine,

from the middle ages all the way into the 1800’s.

But, as we have seen,

the picturing, the cultural images,

surrounding the word-symbol medicine

is changing constantly.

The picturing surrounding ANY word-symbol

is changing constantly.

Meaning:

“What does that Mean?”

Before we proceed we will take a small detour,
to look at how we have been using the word “**meaning**”.

Ambiguity of “Meaning”

We have been using the words "mean" and "meaning"
in several different ways.

I suspect that the English word *means*
is frequently used ambiguously.

Let us turn now to look more carefully at those different ways,
these different senses in which we use the word *means*.

Means we use in many ways.

In about 1908 one semantic analyst
listed 59,049 different kinds of meaning situations.
He noted he could reduce these to a mere sixty six.¹¹
We will focus on three.

Direct Translation

We may make a statement like “*la puerta* means **the door**.”

Here we have simply translated a Spanish phrase into the English.

We have made no special use of the word-symbol
in either language.

We have simply taken the Spanish word-symbol
and said it corresponds to “the door” in English.

Similarly, we might say “Immanuel means God with us.”

This is a direct translation from Hebrew into English.

So, we may use the word *means* to show
a **direct translation**, symbol to symbol.

Picture

On the other hand, if we say that medicine *means* transplants,

¹¹ found in S.K. Langer “Philosophy in a new key” 3rd ed, 1957 on p 54. citing Charles Pierce

means cobalt treatments, etc,
in this instance we are using the word **means**
to speak of mental pictures, of examples,
of medicine at a specific time in history.
So we may also use **means** to refer to pictures,
to examples, to metaphors, of a word-symbol.

Concept

Finally, we may use the word **means**
when we intend to point to a concept.
We may say that medicine **means** “human attempts to heal,
using the best methods available at the time”.
So we use the word **means**
in at least three very different ways,
to refer to symbol, to image, or to concept.
When you ask someone, "What do you **mean**?"
be aware in which way you, and they, are using the word.

Method Generalized Essential to Theology

I presented all this description
to be able to talk about
the method of scriptural interpretation I am calling re-picturing.
This method is one of the essential ingredients
of the twentieth century theological revolution.
Men and women of our time simply cannot talk about theology
without being able to use the re-picturing method.

Historical Precedent

Rudolph Bultmann did not invent this method.
He said he discovered it on the pages of scripture.
He said, “Look at this!”
“Look at what our ancestors have been doing!”

“If we want to be faithful to the spirit of our forebearers,
“we certainly must employ the same method that they did.
“The writers of Isaiah did it. Jesus did it.
“The writer(s) of the Gospel of Matthew did it.
“The writer(s) of the Gospel of John did it.
“St. Paul did it.
“The writers of all the rest of the New Testament all did it.
“All of these people seized upon certain word-symbols
“and radically altered the way we picture them.
“And they did this in faithfulness to a given correlation principle,
“but with an eye to communicating the abstraction
“under totally new circumstances.”
Bultmann said that.

Restatement of the Method

This, then, is Bultmann’s method, as extended by Tillich.
The APPENDIX has a single chart summary of all this.

Picture Making

The process of moving from pictures to a concept, the inferring,
I called De-picturing.
The process of moving from such a concept
back to specific pictures consistent with that concept,
the imagining, I have called the Re-picturing process.
These may be conscious. They may be unconscious.
People may not be aware
that they are taking an abstraction
and giving it a concrete form.
Regardless, if we give the concept of a symbol a concrete form,
presenting a specific, visualizable, form in history,
we are PICTURE MAKERS.
So are we symbol makers, symbol users,
Homo symbolificiens.
and what does THIS call to mind?

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

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Chapter 3.2

Seeing Through The Trinity in Art Forms

[the group may want give a turn to one as a facilitator of this discussion]

[and another as a recorder who can print legibly to write out the chart entries]

Let us now put on our trifocal, “trinitarian glasses”.

Let us use the point of view we have explored
and look for people having experiences of God as Father,
of God as Christ Event, and of God as Holy spirit.

Recall, we are not speaking of metaphysics here.

We are using the label “Experiences of God as Father”
for those experiences people have had of Limitation, Ongoing Reality,
the Up-Against-It-ness, the Squeeze of History,
to which they come in Mystery,
and of which they can only say, “thats Just The Way It Is”.

We are using the label “Experiences of God the Son”,

or “... of God as the Christ Event”
for those experiences people have had of an Event, a Happening,
a Taking-Placed-ness, a Shattering of Illusion,
that brings with it a call to Turn Around, Change Your Mind;
that says, “Things Are Not the Way You Thought.”

We are using the label “Experiences of God as Holy Spirit”

for those encounters people have had with other people
who have had experiences of God as Father and God as Christ Event,
who have said “Yes” to Reality,
who are thus free from the Power of the Demons,
free for radically transforming *agape* .

After we watch the film, we will make a chart as a group.

When we have finished that,
we may want to compare it to the chart that follows below.

It is one possible such chart, an example, not the "book answer".

The important questions are:

What did **you** experience?

What do **you** recall?

What do **you** make of it?

How does this Trinitarian point of view work for **you**?

Now we will watch the film

[after the film]

Film: Requiem for a Heavyweight ¹²

Discussion of the film

As we work with this material as a group,

we will want to stay with one question for a while.

We will make a wall chart for all to see of what we are finding.

When we feel we have finished one question,

we will go on to the next.

Let us begin our chart.

Cast

We begin with the Cast of Characters

Let us make a list.

Who are the main characters, their name, their role?

[invest time to make that list]

Let us take a moment to talk it over to be sure we got all of them.

[invest time to do this]

Now that we have made our list, here is a check list.

The Cast:

Mountain Rivera The fighter

Maisch The manager

Ami The “cut man”

Ma Greeny The booky

Grace The employment counsellor

Pirelli The wrestling promoter

¹² ***Produced** 1962. **Directed by** Ralph Nelson **Starring** Anthony Quinn, Jackie Gleason, Mickey Rooney, Julie Harris, Stanley Adams. *Requiem for a Heavyweight* was a teleplay written by Rod Serling and produced for the live television show Playhouse 90 on 11 October 1956.

Plot

Let us lay out the Plot Line.

First, what were the major portions of the drama? ...

[invest the time to list these]

Now recall the important scenes within each of those. ...

[invest the time to add these]

When we have enough detail,

we will go on to the next questions,

one at a time, investing time on each.

What scene do you remember particularly? ...

What lines of dialogue caught your ear? ...

What non-verbal symbols struck you? ...

With whom did you identify? ...

What was Mountain's Problem? ...

Who helped him with his problem? ...

Who really helped? ...

Divine Activity

Where did you see examples of experiences of the divine?

(1) Experiences of God the Father? ...

(2) Experiences of God the Son? ...

(3) The Power of demons? ...

(4) Experiences of God the Holy Spirit? ...

Here are Other Possible Questions for Discussion

What will Mountain need tomorrow? ...

Where have you encountered this story before? ...

Here is a chart others have made for comparison

The Mighty	Acts of	God	and the	Response	of God's	People
<-	Father	->	<-	Son	->	Spirit
Mountain comes up against it	Maisch in the squeeze	Mountain hits his limits	Grace Miller tries to help	series of shattering events	TURNING POINT	in dying we live
damage to eye	no exit for Maisch	Look for a job	Finds Mountain in a bar	Mountain at interview drunk	Mountain decides to leave	Mountain enters Arena
no more fights	Ma Greeny demands payment	Theater - too big	Suggest job counselor boys' camp	Grace to see Mountain	Ma Greeny threatens Maisch	Ami Stands present
	Maisch tries to raise money	Mover -no union card		Maisch & Grace on stairs	Mountain decides to wrestle	Crowd jeers and mocks
		Sparring -loser Employment office -no experience			Maisch left alone in dressing room	Mountain embraces reality: dancing around the ring

Chapter 3.2 continued

Here is a another art form for you.

the song by Leonard Cohen, "Suzanne"

[listen to the song together]

“Suzanne” by Leonard Cohen

verse 1

Suzanne takes you down to her place near the river

You can hear the boats go by

You can spend the night beside her

And you know that she's half crazy

But that's why you want to be there

And she feeds you tea and oranges

That come all the way from China

And just when you mean to tell her

That you have no love to give her

Then she gets you on her wavelength

And she lets the river answer

That you've always been her lover

And you want to travel with her

And you want to travel blind

And you know that she will trust you

For you've touched her perfect body with your mind.

verse 2

And Jesus was a sailor

When he walked upon the water

And he spent a long time watching

From his lonely wooden tower

And when he knew for certain

Only drowning men could see him

He said "All men will be sailors then

Until the sea shall free them"

But he himself was broken
Long before the sky would open
Forsaken, almost human
He sank beneath your wisdom like a stone
And you want to travel with him
And you want to travel blind
And you think maybe you'll trust him
For he's touched your perfect body with his mind.

verse 3

Now Suzanne takes your hand
And she leads you to the river
She is wearing rags and feathers
From Salvation Army counters
And the sun pours down like honey
On our lady of the harbor
And she shows you where to look
Among the garbage and the flowers
There are heroes in the seaweed
There are children in the morning
They are leaning out for love
And they will lean that way forever
While Suzanne holds the mirror
And you want to travel with her
And you want to travel blind
And you know that you can trust her
For she's touched your perfect body with her mind.

Sources

Songwriters: COHEN, LEONARD

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http://www.lyricsfreak.com/l/leonard+cohen/suzanne_20082890.html

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzanne_\(Leonard_Cohen_song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzanne_(Leonard_Cohen_song))

its lyrics first appeared as the poem "**Suzanne Takes You Down**" in Cohen's 1966 book of poetry *Parasites of Heaven*,

Judy Collins, first recorded the song "Suzanne", and it appeared on her 1966 album

Cohen himself first released *In My Life*. and later released it on his debut album *Songs of Leonard Cohen*

The song forms the theme for the final scene of Cohen's short movie *I Am a Hotel* released in 1983.

Art Form: Suzanne

Expressionistic Approach

We don't know what the author's intention is.

We bring our own experiences,
and our own point of view to the conversation.

“How you hear each thing I say depends on where you are,
And where you are depends on what you've taken in so far.” unknown

Discussion and Charting of Lyric

In our group we will use these statements and questions to jog our minds.

We will go slowly and chew things over as we go.
We leave pauses for thinking and responses.

To me the first part of the lyric, the first verse,
sets a mood, calls to mind mystery.

Mystery

This Suzanne,
What kind of a person is she? ...

river

What are some common literary interpretations of this symbol? ...

night

What does this call to mind? ...

Half-Crazy

What does this suggest to you? ...

China

Recall a few of your encounters in story with “China” ...
What is the mood? ...

“you have no love to give her”

How would you interpret Cohen's statement ? ...

“wave length”

What does this suggest ? ...

river

Why does the river answer? ...

“always been her lover”

What comes to mind for this phrase ? ...

The second verse seems to me more about an event than setting the scene.

Event

Jesus.

Cohen begins his second verse with a comment explicitly about Jesus

sailor ...walked upon the water

What does this call to mind ?

how a sailor ?

boats ...getting out of the boat

Comment on boats and Jesus' "getting out of the boat" ?

“lonely wooden tower“

How do you interpret this phrase ?

What does it call to mind?

How does one get to be a drowning man ?

Why can only drowning men see Jesus ?

All men will be sailors.

What does this suggest?

What is a common literary interpretation of the sea ?

Why would Cohen say of Jesus,

“broken long before the sky would open ?”

What does the phrase “forsaken, almost human” call to mind?

What are your thoughts on the statement:

“he sank beneath your wisdom like a stone ?”

Freedom

I think the third verse calls to mind images related to freedom.

Suzanne take your hand.

What is different now?

What associations do you have with rag and feathers ?

Salvation Army counters ?

What comes to mind when he says the sun pours down like honey ?

Lady of the Harbor ?

What are your thoughts about this image?

What do you suppose Cohen is speaking to when he states that

she shows you where to look among the garbage and the flowers ?

Who are these **heroes in the seaweed**

and **children in the morning** ?

What does it mean to say **they are leaning out for love** ?

Why **forever** ?

What does **the mirror** suggested to you ?

How is Suzanne holding it?

Why?

Here is a chart others have made, for comparison.



CALL TO MISSION		
MYSTERY	EVENT	FREEDOM
Suzanne	Jesus	Suzanne
River	Sailor	Takes Your Hand
(boats)	Walked Upon Water	Leads
Night	Lonely Wooden Tower	Rags and Feathers
Half-crazy	Only Drowning Men	Salvation Army
China	All men	Sun Like Honey
No Love	Sea	Lady of Harbor
wavelength	Broken	Garbage and Flowers
River	Sky would Open	Heroes in Seaweed
Always Been Her Lover	Forsaken	Children in Morning
	Almost Human	Leaning for Love
	Sank Beneath Wisdom	Forever
	Stone	Mirror

Chapter 3.3

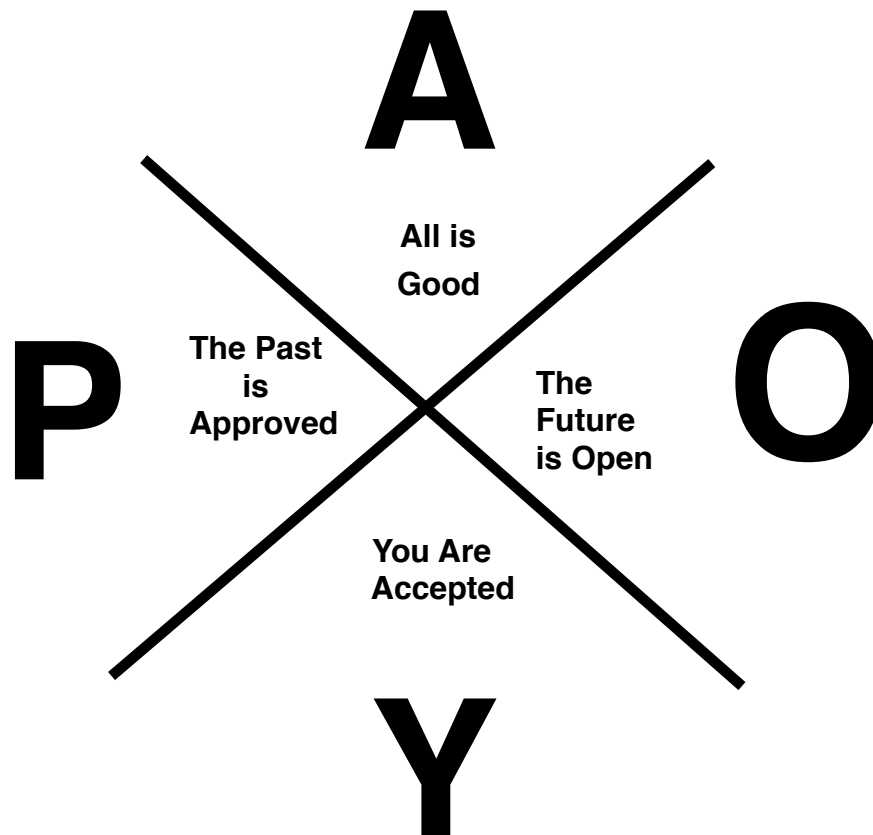
Mission of the Church, Necessity

The Radical Word about Life in History

Let us begin now the task of talking about
the mission of the Church in this Century --
the mission of the Church theoretically,
and the mission of the Church specifically,
as concretely formulated for a local congregation,
re-invented for a local place, right here, where we are.

First, let us be very clear.

The Word about life in history doesn't do anything at all.
It just is.



All is good.

The past is approved.

You are accepted.

And the future is totally possible. It is open to you.

You are free to live your life.

That Word doesn't do anything. It just is.

The Word **is** because we decide to value it.

The reason why it is the final Word for me, is precisely because
when I heard it proclaimed I decided, "True!"

I didn't **know** it was true. I **believed** it.

I had confidence in it. I decided I could trust it, rely on it.

I still have faith that it's true.

I'm willing to live my life and die my death on its behalf,
and this Word, this good news,

this gospel is the **only** thing I can think of
that I would be willing to give my life over to.

The radical Word of Grace proclaims
that in everything that is,

God is bringing about God's purpose,

which is nothing less than the redemption of history.

And this will either come about or it won't.

But if Grace isn't the final Word about life in history,
the only other possibility is

that the whole of creation is a pile of crap.

Marilyn Monroe Story

Whose tragic story should we recall?

Michael Jackson? Marilyn Monroe?

You do remember Marilyn.

You can find more details on Wikipedia, the basis of this summary.

Marilyn arrived June 1, 1926, as Norma Jeane Mortenson,

the third child born to Gladys Pearl Baker (maiden name Monroe).

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

Mental instability plagued Gladys.

She was financially unable to care for her young child,
so Norma Jeane grew up
in a whole series of foster homes,
suffering physical and sexual abuse
repeatedly.

At one point she saw her mother taken away by force
to the State Mental Hospital.

In early 1938, she went to live with yet another one of her aunts, Ana Lower,
Years later, Monroe said she experienced this time in her life
as one of the few times when she felt truly stable.

WWII. Re-invention time.

Norma Jean worked in a munitions factory.

An Army photographer and writer spotted her,
encouraging her to apply to The Blue Book Modeling Agency.
(You would know his name, Ronald Reagan.)

So Norma Jeane became a model.

She became one of Blue Book's most successful models.

1946, re-invention time again.

She got a contract with Twentieth Century-Fox.

minor roles, minor films,
but her performances in *The Asphalt Jungle* and *All About Eve*
drew attention.

In the '50's she had leading roles.

She played the "dumb blonde".

Re-invention time again.

She studied at the Actors Studio
with **Stanislavski**.

1966. *Bus Stop*. Critics hailed her dramatic performance.

It got her a Golden Globe nomination.

Re-invention time.

She launched her own production company,
more major awards.

For her performance in *Some Like It Hot* (1959)
she won a Golden Globe.

She counted a president and his brother among her friends.
But things in Marilyn's life unraveled again,
illness, personal problems, and a reputation for being unreliable,
difficult to work with.

4:25 a.m., August 5, 1962,

Los Angeles Police got a call from Marilyn's psychiatrist.

He had found Marilyn dead at her home,
at age 36.

Was it suicide? accident? homicide?

We may never know.

But somehow, in all this,

God is bringing about nothing less
than the redemption of history.

Surprised?

Didn't think we were going there?

We did say that.

The past is accepted.

The future is open.

The Redeemed

The Church has always understood itself in this peculiar fashion
as the community of those redeemed -- the redeemed of God.

Experience of the Triune God

We have understood also that each of us must stand
under the experience of the Triune God --
not simply and only

as those sustained and enabled by the Grace of God --
but also as those crushed, and judged,
and prodded by the Person of God.

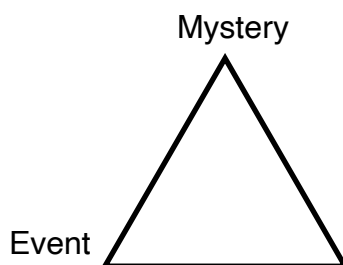
Recall our discussion of the experience of God as Father:
as Ongoing Reality, as Mystery, as Up-Against-It-ness,

as There-ness, and the Squeeze of History,
the sort of experience that those of little faith
would call "the Shaft".

Recall as well our discussion of the the experience of God as the Son:
the Shattering Event, the Jesus Event

that comes into my life and calls me to repentance,
the Happening, the Taking-Placed-ness, the shattering of my illusions,
of my idolatries, of the demonic possession
that has kept me from living my life,
the Judgment that says
“Things Aren’t the Way You Thought They Were --
Why don’t you get up and get moving?!”

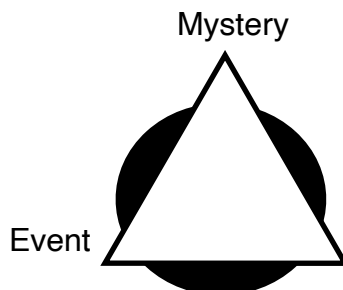
I find it helpful to think of these two kinds of experience with this model



These two experiences would be enough
to drive any one of us into the ground,
without our first having heard the Word of Grace.

Without my conscious decision to accept the fact
that I am accepted,

the experience of the Triune God would utterly destroy me.
So I place them on a backdrop of grace,
called to mind here by the dark circle.



It is solely by the Grace of God that I am enabled to experience the Spirit,
to move forward into a Life Style of Freedom.

Freedom from the power of the demons. Freedom for radical *agape*.

It is by Grace alone that even I may become lucid enough to recognize
that the only gift I have to give to history is the gift of my death,

that **every decisions I make in this now, this here,**

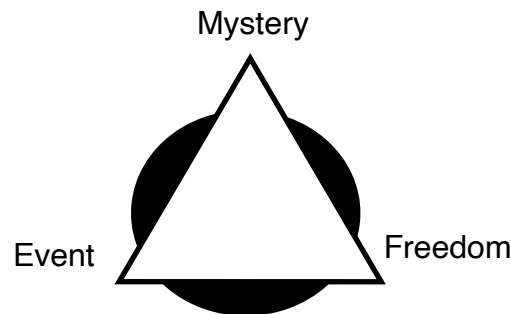
will validate or invalidate everything that has gone before

and make possible or impossible everything that is yet to come.

I myself could be the one who will throw my body

on the barbed wire of history

in order that others might make it into the future.



The Church in its wisdom has celebrated this peculiar self-understanding
that comes out of our faith in the radical Word of Grace,
and our experience of the Triune God.

The Church has called this

"the cost of discipleship",

"the way of the Cross".

Drama of Worship

Christian worship dramatizes all of this in three major acts,
confession, proclamation, and offering in mission.

The first act is that of **confession**.

Not logically the first.

Not even chronologically the first.

It just is the first that I want to mention.

Confession is held in tension

between the experience of the Father and the Son.

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As I am caught in the squeeze and my illusions are shattered,
I am driven to confess.

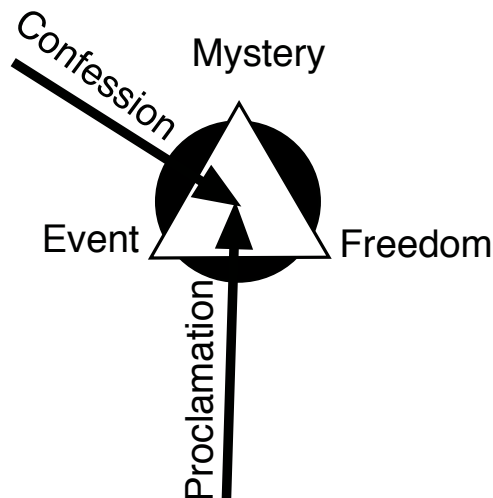
Ordinarily we confess and then hear "absolution".
We hear words that tell us of our forgiveness.

But I think that we ought to hear absolution first.

Absolution is not the moment when God forgives us;
it's the moment when **we realize** and acknowledge
that God has **forgiven** us.

Certainly, it is only by Grace
that we find ourselves able to confess at all.

The second of the great acts of worship is **proclamation** of the Word.



This is the proclamation of our self-understanding,
who we understand ourselves to be.

We are the redeemed.

We are neither the guests nor the victims of God.

We are God's colleagues,
those who this century calls upon to be the Messiah,
to be the Freedom Event for all of the World, now.

Proclamation is held between our experience of the Shattering Event
and the possibility of a Life Style of Freedom.

But this isn't enough.

Offering is the third great act.

It may also be described as the act of Mission.

It moves out from the gathered body (ecclesia) and into the world.

Mission is held in tension between the Life Style of Freedom
and the Mystery.

It is the free and total offering of my life and death
back to the Ground of Being.

Mission involves my realizing that it is in losing a one's life
that one gains it;

it is in dying that we live--and not only in dying, finally,
but in our daily dying to illusions, idolatry, and pride.

So, what does this call to mind?

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Chapter 3.4

the Gift of Mission

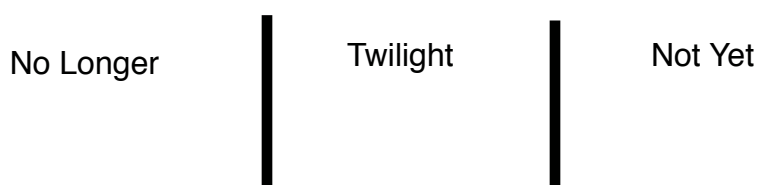
To **Bend and Shape History**

There is another way of describing the mission of the Church.

The task is bending and shaping history, that simple.

If I were to draw a picture of the task,

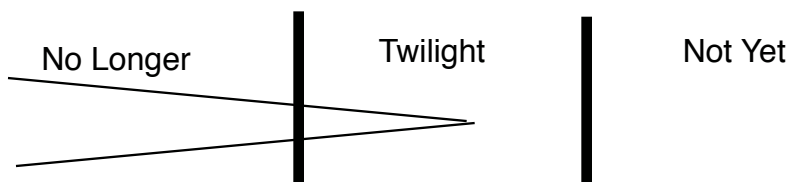
I would prefer to use a model developed by the Ecumenical Institute.



This model represents the whole of history -- past, present, and future.

And this is a picture of the wedge of intentionality moving through history

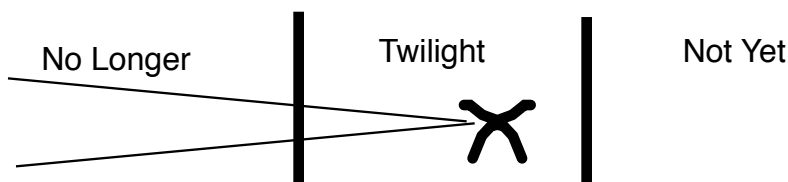
by means of decisions made by Self-Conscious Church-ones,



Historical Churchwomen and Churchmen, and Spirit Colleagues.

Out here on the edge of this wedge of intentionality

I'm going to draw a picture of a person in the shape of a cross.



I will call that one a **Revolutionary Cruciform**.

This is a person who decides on behalf of all people everywhere

to bend and shape history,

and to use powerful methods in the process.

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

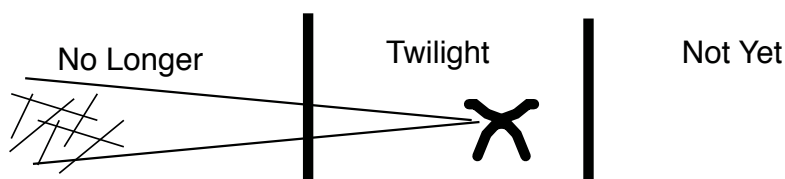
Women and men in our century are very clear about one thing.

Today, as in no other time in history,

we are aware that we do create the world in which we are going to live.

We are aware that those decisional women and men who will seize it
are the ones who will shape and bend history.

We are also painfully aware that “not to decide, is to decide.”
Those who will not or cannot seize their history forfeit to those who will.
This body of Revolutionary Cruciforms are the ones committed to the task
of bringing about what I call the revolution of love,
that revolution which brings with it
the **end of privilege and license** in the world.



Many people today live most of their lives in structures of the past.

Others live most of their lives on the edge of the wedge.

Now who do you suppose God likes better?

If we are to take seriously the Word about Life in History,
we must realize that God likes both of them equally.

These people in the structures of the past are God's people;
and these people on the edge of the wedge are God's people.

What reward, then, is there for being a Cruciform?

None. Absolutely None, not one.

Why would anyone want to do that?

What kind of a person would respond to historical existence
by becoming a Revolutionary Cruciform?

Here are some of the qualities of Self-Conscious Church members,
the Cadre, the persons on the edge of the wedge.

Solitary:

This is a solitary decision. Only you can make it.

Any decision to die your death on behalf of all people everywhere
has to be your decision.

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

No one else can make it for you.

No one has the right to volunteer your death.

This does not mean that you have no friends.

It means, rather, that as a Cruciform

you must recognize that every decision about your life
is your own.

No status:

Cruciforms are real nobodies.

They don't look any different that they did before.

They are invaders, undercover operatives.

If they do their job well, no one will ever know who they were.

This doesn't mean people with worldly status can't be Cruciforms.

It means, instead, that to the degree that you are doing your job
as a Cruciform in the world,

there's no status that goes with it.

You may end up face down on the barbed wire of history.

Cruciforms are in the G2 division of God's rag tag army.

Think for a moment how many people's lives it has cost
in order that you and I might be here today.

Corporate Presence:

Cruciforms are part of a corporate presence

that extends throughout all time and space.

After you have made the decision to die daily to illusion,
to be a part of the Servant Nation, to be the Church,
you find colleagues.

Colleagues are not the same as friends.

(Too often the church is a place where we come
just to have our comfort buttons rubbed.)

One of the freeing things about the Spirit Movement

is that it enable you to work side by side with persons you don't like.

As colleagues you may work together

for the coming of the Messianic Kingdom.

As colleagues you are both committed to the gospel,

both committed to the Word about Life in History,
and God acts through your corporate effort to redeem it.
If you fall, your colleague is the one who will get you back on your feet
and tell you to get moving.
Colleagues are not the same as friends.

Phony:

One of the most important qualities of such persons
is that they are phonies.

Sooner or later you must come to this realization.

This is the mental health clause.

The job is of course impossible.

Cruciforms know that they **do not know**,
and that they are not at all what they claim.

But you cannot use even this knowledge as a cop-out.

Being phony doesn't get you off the hook.

The whole of God's future depends upon the decisions,
the actions, and the discipline of persons
who are phonies.

Vulnerable:

Cruciforms never know whether their decisions are right or good.

All you have is your death.

This is your own decision and you must take full responsibility for it.

In the nature of things, there will be opposition.

In the nature of things others will hurt your feelings.
will ridicule you, and will leave you broken.

You may even find yourself called upon to play the clown.

Did you imagine that it could be otherwise?

Anthropology

You know, there are only three kinds of women in this world.

Three, no more.

There are shrikes. (These are the bitchy ones.)

And there are sirens.

And there are Daddy's little girls.

Now if you don't think that you fit any of those categories,
you're probably a shrike.
There are three kinds of men in this world.
Three, no more.
There are bullies. and there are Don Juans.
And there are Mommy's little boys.
If you don't think you fit any of those categories,
you're probably a bully.
Well, Jesus played a bully.
And Jesus played a Don Juan.
And Jesus played a Mommy's little boy.
But he decided to play a different role.
He decided to play the role of Messiah.
When he started doing that people told him to stop.
They said, "That's only a role."
Everybody knew that he was really a bully
and a Don Juan, and a Mommy's boy.
Everybody knew that he wasn't really Messiah.
But Jesus kept on playing that role.
He would not stop.
Then people started warning him.
They said, "You're going to get yourself in a lot of trouble."
But he kept on playing the role anyway.
It didn't even stop him when people said
"You'll get yourself killed."
Jesus kept right on playing the role of Messiah.
And they killed him.
Jesus and the Gospel writers made use of symbols with such consistency,
such focus, such intensity,
that Jesus **became** a symbol.
God, by means of God's Christ Event, may just be calling you to play a role.
God knows who you are.
But God may be calling you to play a role anyway.

And you can do it. You can do it.
Christ, through the Church, is calling you to play a role today.
And that role is the role of Messiah in this century.
God may be calling you **You** to be Messiah today. And you can do it.
You are are being called upon by God-in-Christ
and Christ-through-the-Church
to be Messiah,
to be a Revolutionary Cruciform,
engaged in bending and shaping history
to the end of creating structures of justice
for all women and men and children everywhere.
If not now, when?

Task of Witnessing and Justicing Love

Another way of characterizing the Church's task
is to call it the task of witnessing and justicing love.
Witnessing love involves our recognizing that human beings
are the kind of creature who dig holes.
We dig holes for ourselves because we are afraid.
Sometimes we even pull the dirt in over us
to hide from the dread of reality.
Witnessing love is the task
of digging people out of their holes
(sometimes kicking and screaming)
and shoving them up against the Word about Life in History.
Witnessing love involves holding people up against the Word,
telling them that they're the greatest,
they're what its all about,
their lives have eternal significance.

Story of Ed Flanagan

Let me remind you of the Reverend Edward J. Flanagan (1886-1948).
Born in Ireland, he arrived in Nebraska in 1912, freshly ordained,
and assigned to the Diocese of Omaha,
St. Patrick's church in the town of O'Neill.

In 1917 he borrowed \$90 to rent a house in Omaha.

He opened a home for boys assigned him by the court.

In 1921 he purchased a farm west of Omaha.

That became the home of Boys Town.

For many years he carried on a public dialogue

dealing with his revolutionary views on child-care issues.

He had some ideas about children that some found alarming.

He said things like:

“There are no bad boys.

There are only bad environment, bad training,
bad example, bad thinking.”

“When parents fail to do their job,

when they allow their children to run the streets and keep bad company,

when they fail to provide them with good examples in the home,

then the parents and not the children are delinquent.”

“The poor, innocent, unfortunate little children belong to us,

and it is our problem to give them every chance

to develop into good men and good women.”

“Without God at the beginning, there can be only confusion at the end.”

“A true religious training for children is most essential

if we are to expect to develop them into good men and good women –

worthy citizens of our great country.”

“No race that does not take care of its young can hope to survive

– or deserves to survive.”

“There is nothing the matter with our growing boys

that love, proper training, and guidance will not remedy.”

“I do not believe that lock and key and bars can reform a child,

or that fear can ever develop a child’s character.”

“It costs so little to teach a child to love,

and so much to teach him to hate.”

“I have yet to find a single boy who wants to be bad.”

“A boy or girl given the proper guidance and direction –

kept busy and constructively occupied during their leisure or free time –

will prove my statement that there is no such thing as a bad boy or girl.”
“School buildings throughout the nation
which stand idle after school hours
are a waste of available space and the taxpayer’s money,
when we could offer constructive programs
through their intelligent utilization.”
“Rehabilitation needs greater emphasis, punishment less.”
“I know when the idea of a boys’ home grew in my mind,
I never thought it anything remarkable,
taking in all of the races and all of the creeds.
To me, they are all God’s children.
They are my brothers. They are children of God.
I must protect them to the best of my ability.”

In 1937 Pope Pius XI named him a Domestic Prelate
with the title Right Reverend Monsignor.

In 2015 the church completed the first of three major steps
toward canonization as “saint”.

Justicing Love

So, Witnessing Love involves hugging people,
not only physical hugs, but metaphorical hugs too.
It is the business of caring for people,
giving of yourself in order that others might live.
Some say that logically, witnessing love precedes justicing love.
But chronologically witnessing love cannot precede justicing love.
How can a person hear the Word About Life in History,
hear that he or she is the greatest,
if they don’t have enough to eat?
How is it possible for such a one to hear
that their life has eternal significance
if they haven’t some measure of human justice?
So, clearly, chronologically, justicing love must come first.
Justicing love is the task of building structures of justice for the future.
It is the task of creating a future
that will afford cultural, political, and economic justice

to every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth.
It is the task of building those structures
which will finally **put an end to privilege and license**,
and bring about the humanitarian world community of love.
The ground of Justicing love is the understanding that all people are valuable
simply because they are people, people of God.
Perhaps they must first come together,
feeding each other, building on each other.
Dorothy Day put it this way¹³,
"We have to work on many fronts in our attempts to build here and now
a decentralized society in which [people] will have a voice.
There is much preparation necessary
in the fields of education, unionism, cooperatives."
Dorothy Day said that. And she said more,
"We must keep in mind the fact that we are active pacifists, and anarchists.
We are peacemaker personalists,
Or libertarians, pluralists, decentralists.
Whatever you want to call it,
We must present it in many lights,
this teaching of revolution, nonviolent social change.
We begin now
within the shell of the old
to rebuild society."

And, what does **this** call to mind?

¹³Dorothy Day. Sanctuary. *The Catholic Worker*, February 1969, pp. 1,2,8 *The Catholic Worker Movement*. <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/Reprint2.cfm?TextID=895>.

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Chapter 3.5:

Mission of the Church, Discipline

Prayer and the Powers¹⁴

Every dynamic new force for change

is undergirded by rigorous disciplines.

The slack decadence of culture-Christianity
cannot produce athletes of the spirit.

Those who are the bearers of tomorrow's transformation
discipline themselves.

This does not mean they punish themselves,
nor do they try to ingratiate themselves with God.

They simply do what is necessary to stay in good spiritual shape.

Just as one eats food and drinks water and exercises
to stay in good physical shape.

I am convinced that **the most important discipline of all, is prayer,**
especially **intercessory prayer.**

We are not easily reduced to prayer.

Many of us who grope toward praying today are like a city gutted by fire.

Exhausted, overcommitted, burned out,
we have little time or energy to pray.

The struggle against injustice has exacted from us an awful cost.

We have in our own experience discovered

the **mystery of the beast** of the abyss; (Rev. 17:8)

He **allows the righteous to destroy him**

because he knows

that as they do so **they are remade in his likeness .**

What Prayer is Not

¹⁴ ¹⁴The text of this section is a condensation, res, of Chapter 10 in Walter Wink 1998, *The Powers That Be, Theology for a New Millennium*, a Galilee book, 1998. The figures are redrawn after *op.cit.* chap 1. bolding added by res

Prayer is not a matter of intellectual propositions about prayer's value.

**The struggle to be human
in the face of supra-human Powers
requires prayer.**

The act of praying is itself one of the indispensable means
by which we engage these Powers.

It is, in fact, that engagement at its most fundamental level.

Prayer reestablishes us a bit more of the freedom
that is both our birthright and our potential.

Prayer is not a private exercise,

an inner act **cut off** from the day-do-day realities.

Rather, prayer is the interior battlefield where the decisive victory happens
before any engagement in the outer world is even possible.

It is where the individual strands of the nets which hold us,
we sever, one by one.

If we have not undergone that inner liberation
then we risk trivializing our activism to a mere counter-ideology,
the influence of some counter-Power.

We will then fail to discover the possibilities
that God is pressing for here and now.

**Unprotected by prayer, our social activism runs the danger
of becoming self-justifying good works.**

As our inner resources atrophy, and the wells of love run dry,

we are change into the likeness of the beast.

We become the evil we would oppose.

Prayer may or may not involve regular regimens;

it may or may not be **sacramental;**

it may or may not be **contemplative;**

it may or may not take traditional **religious forms.**

What Prayer is

Prayer is an existential struggle.

It is a battle against the "impossible,"

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

against an antihuman collective atmosphere,
against a way of picturing what is of worth and value
against all these that stunt and wither full human life.

Prayer is the field hospital

in which the spiritual diseases
that we have contracted from the Powers,
God can diagnose and treat.

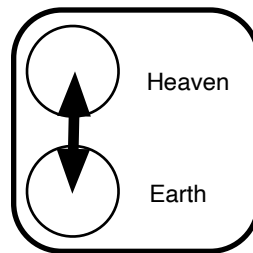
Prayer and worldview

Problems with prayer are usually **not a result of bad theology**
but of a wrong worldview.

Unbelief is not so much a consequence of mistaken ideas,
as it is of false presuppositions.

Let us look at some of these ideas,
these sets of presuppositions,
these world views.

Here is a model of the **ancient or traditional worldview**.



In the **ancient or traditional worldview**,

everything on earth has its counterpart in heaven.

Thus prayer on earth matches prayer by the angels in heaven.

When, the saints on earth pray,
the angels gather the prayers in heaven,
mingle them with incense, and present them before God.

Then the angels hurl the incense mixed with fiery coals down on the earth,
convulsed with thunder, lightning, and an earthquake,
and the seven angels prepare to trumpet the next events into being (Rev. 8:1-6; 5:8).

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There is a profound truth in this worldview:

everything visible has an invisible or heavenly dimension.

Prayer in this worldview is a matter

of **reversing the flow** of fated events,

stopping "from heaven to earth",

and initiating a **new flow from earth to heaven**

that causes God's will to be done

"on earth as it is in heaven."

Prayer tethers Fate. By prayer, new alternatives become conceivable.

By prayer the unexpected becomes possible.

By prayer people on earth have invoked heaven,

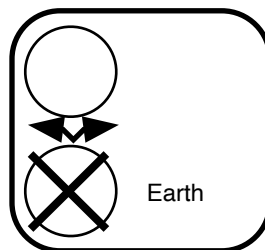
the home of the "possibles,"

and heaven hears.

What happens next,

happens because people prayed.

Here is a model of the **spiritualistic, or Gnostic, worldview.**



In the **spiritualistic, or Gnostic, worldview,**

the physical world is a cosmic error.

Only the spiritual is real.

One does not pray, for healing, for social change,

nor for the realization of life in its fullest sense here.

One prays for escape from the flesh;

one prays for restoration to the spiritual world of the Beyond.

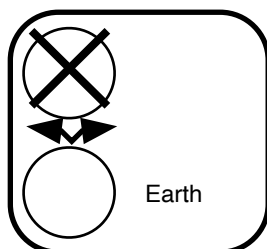
The emphasis of some Christians on life after death

as a substitute for genuine life on earth

is typical of this worldview,

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as is the rejection of sexuality, pleasure,
and the goodness of matter, the material world, and the creation.



Here is a model of the **materialistic worldview**.

In the **Materialist world view**

there is absolutely **no place whatever for prayer**.

What is real is only what we can taste, see, hear, and smell,
plus what we can reason about logically from premises.

I am convinced that most of our problems with prayer
are a consequence of our internalizing this materialistic belief.

Modern science asserts the materialist point of view.

Specifically, there can be no "action at a distance,"

that is, if there is no physical contact, then there can be no interaction.

In this worldview **Prayer is superstition**,

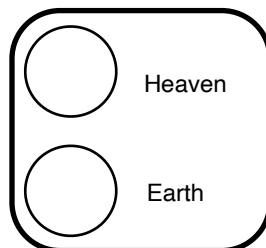
since there is no way prayer can affect others "at a distance"
or interfere with strictly physical processes,

and there are only physical processes in this world-view.

To the degree that one uses this worldview,

prayer becomes impossible.

Here is a model of the **theological worldview**

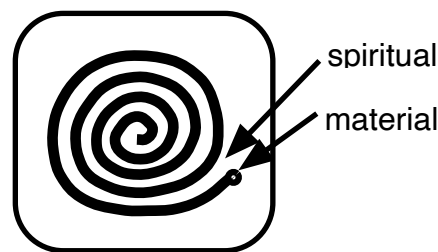


The **theological worldview** brings God back in,
but confines God to a privileged realm,
one that material processes never reach.

Science deals with physical reality,
and **religion** deals with **a spiritual world**
that has no interaction
with the everyday world of matter.

Prayer in this world view is a form of self-hypnosis,
self-examination, or self-centering,
but it can have no direct effect on material existence.

Here is a model of what we will call an **"integral" worldview**



In the **"integral" worldview**,
the **spiritual is at the core of everything** ,
and thus everything is accessible and permeable to prayer.

Prayer becomes absolutely central.

In this view, the whole universe is a spirit-matter event,
and the self is coextensive with the universe.

We are not like solitary billiard balls, as materialism sees us.

From the very beginning we relate and connect to everything.

Every drop of water in me has been in every spring,
stream, river, lake, and ocean in the world
during our earth's billions of years of existence.

We are kin to every other self in the universe.

In such a world, **we no longer know the limits of the possible.**

Therefore we pray for whatever we feel is right

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and leave the outcome to God.

We live in expectation of transformation
in a world filled with wonder.

In **such a universe,**

Intercessory Prayer is a perfectly rational response

History belongs to the intercessors.

Intercessory prayer is **spiritual defiance of what is,**
in the name of what God has promised.

Intercession **visualizes an alternative future**
to the one apparently fated by the momentum of current forces.

Prayer **infuses,**
into the suffocating atmosphere of the present,
the air of a time yet to be.

History belongs to intercessors

because they **believe the future into being.**

This is not simply a statement about religious entities.

It is also true of communists, or capitalists, or anarchists,
or any “-ists” and their “-ism”.

The future belongs

to whoever can envision a new and desirable possibility,
which faith then fixes upon as inevitable.

The future belongs

to whoever can picture the future specifics of the great truths
as the way we want it to be.

This is the politics of hope.

Hope envisages its future

and then acts as if that future is now irresistible,
thus helping to create the reality for which it longs.

The future is not closed.

Even **a small number of people,**

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**firmly committed to the new inevitability
on which they have fixed their imaginations,
can decisively affect the shape the future takes.**

These shapers of the future are the intercessors,
who call,
out of the future,
the longed-for new present.

In the **New Testament**,
the name, the texture, the aura of that future,
is **God's domination-free order**,
the reign of God, the realm of God.

No doubt our intercessions sometimes change us
as we open ourselves to new possibilities we had not guessed.

No doubt our prayers to God reflect back upon us as a divine command
to become the answer to our prayer.

But if we are to take the biblical understanding seriously,
intercession is more than that.

**Intercession changes the world
and changes what is possible** to God .

It creates an island of relative freedom
in a world gripped by an unholy necessity.

The entire configuration changes as the result of the change of a single part.

A space opens in the praying community,
permitting God to act without violating human freedom.

The change in even one person
thus changes what God can thereby do in the world.

Jesus' teachings on prayer

All Jesus' teachings on prayer feature imperatives.

For example, "Ask... search ... knock."

Luke 11:9

In prayer we are **ordering** God to bring near
the kingdom, the reign, the realm of God.

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It will not do to **implore**.

God commands us to **command**.

God requires us to **haggle** with God

for the sake of the sick, the obsessed, the weak,

and to **conform our lives** to our intercessions.

This is a God who invents history

in interaction with those

"who hunger and thirst to see right prevail" .

Matt. 5:6

How different this is from the static God,

the eternally unmoved and unmoving God of Greek philosophy

that all these years has lulled so many into adoration without intercession,

at least since the Greek/Latin/Christian synthesis

Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274.

Praying is rattling God's cage,

rattling the cage of our experience of God.

It is waking up God, our experience of God,

setting that experience of God Free,

giving this famished experience water, this starved God-experience food,

cutting the ropes off God's hands and the manacles off God's feet,

washing the caked sweat from God's eyes,

watching God swell with life and vitality and energy,

and then following God wherever God goes.

When we pray, we are **not sending a letter to a celestial White House**,

where it is sorted among piles of others.

Rather we engage with God **in an act of co-creation**,

in which one little sector of the universe rises up

and becomes translucent, incandescent,

a vibratory center of power

that radiates the power of the universe.

History belongs to the intercessors.

History belongs to the intercessors,

because they believe the future into being.

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If this is so,
then intercession is a key means
of **focusing for action** and **of creating action**.
By means of our intercessions
we in truth "cast fire upon the earth
and trumpet the future into being".

Praying and the Powers:

What of unanswered prayer?

Most of us learned that **unanswered prayer**
is a result either of our failure or God's refusal.

Maybe we **lacked faith**;
maybe we were too sinful and impure;
maybe we asked for the wrong thing, ya da, ya da, ya da...,
or maybe God **said "no"**
out of some inscrutable higher purpose.

There are times when our faith is weak.

But Jesus is very explicit when he states
that it is **not how much faith we have** that counts,
but whether we simply do our duty
and **exercise whatever faith we do have**;
and an infinitesimal amount, he says, is enough.

(Luke 17:5-6).

The issue, after all, is not whether we are spiritual giants,
but whether God really is able to do something.

Faith is not a feeling or a capacity we conjure up,
Faith is trusting that God can act to make a difference in the
world.

So if we have faith like a grain of mustard seed --
that is, if we have any faith at all --
we should not blame ourselves
when our prayers seem to go unanswered.

Many of us were taught at an early age
that God hears our prayers

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in direct proportion to **our** degree of **purity of heart**,
the degree of sinlessness we bring to our prayers.

But no one is " good enough" to pray.

The God revealed by a gracious Jesus listens to all who pray,
perhaps even **especially** to those regarded as sinners by others.

The corrupt publican, after all,
went home justified.

(Luke 18:9-14).

There may even be a **towering conceit**
in our belief that our inadequacies and sins are so important
that they can stand in the way
of God answering our prayers.

Nor is it adequate in certain cases
to blame God's lack of response to our prayers
on **a higher will for us** that, for now, requires a "no".

No doubt what sometimes appears to us as evil
is the very explosion necessary to blast us awake
to the destructiveness of our ways.

Sickness and tragedy are, unfortunately, at times
the indispensable messengers that recall us,
our whole community,
to the destructiveness of our ways,
and to our life's purpose.

Sometime we do pray for the wrong thing,
or fail to recognize God's answer,
because we are looking for something else.

But there are situations where God's will
seems so transparently evident
that to assert that God says "no"
is to portray God as a cosmic thug.

I still cannot see, even after all these years,
how the death by leukemia of even one child
is in any sense an act of God.

Does anyone wish to argue

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that our current worldwide rate of death by starvation -
approximately 22,000 children a day, or around eight million a year --
is the will of God?

Principalities and Powers.

What **we have left out** of this analysis is the Principalities and Powers.

These words appear in the letters attributed to Paul.

e.g. Romans 8:38, Colossians 1:16, Ephesians 6:12

Prayer is not only a two-way transaction between us and God.

It also involves these Principalities and Powers,

these great socio-spiritual forces that preside over much of reality.

When I use the words **principalities and powers**

I picture the massive **institutions,**

social structures, and systems,

that dominate our world today,

and the spirituality at their very center.

If we wish to recover a sense of the importance of these Powers in prayer,
we can not do better than to consult the Book of Daniel.

Book of Daniel.

The Daniel text marks the moment

when **the role of the Powers in blocking answers to prayer**

was, for the first time, **revealed to humanity.**

The passage we will focus on you will find in Daniel 10.

One interpretation of this passage is

that the figure of Daniel represents **Israel**

in its struggle against all attempts

to destroy its fidelity to JHWH.

Here is the set up for where we pick up the story.

Daniel, an exiled Jew, has risen to high position
in the Persian bureaucracy in Babylon.

Three years before, the Persian king **Cyrus**

had **freed** the Jews from captivity
and **offered to rebuild their temple** at royal expense.
Yet **few Jews had responded** by returning home.

When we pick up the story,

Daniel is in such deep mourning for his people
that he cannot eat.

Twenty-one days into his fast an angel comes to him.

"Daniel, don't be afraid," the angel says.

In the Bible that is the way you know it is an angel,
It says, "don't be afraid."

The messenger of God, the angel, goes on,
"God has heard your prayers

ever since the first day you decided to humble yourself
to gain understanding.

I have come in answer to your prayers"

(Dan 10:12).

Within the way of picturing reality of the ancient world view,
the Angel of Persia, and the angel of Israel have been contending.

A war in heaven between angels over the fate of Israel.

Michael intervenes. The messenger can get through.

This is a description in their terms of the complex events
within which Daniel launched his hunger strike.

It reflects our experience as well.

Before the fall of the Soviet Union,

the "angel of the US and the angel of the USSR"

locked themselves in a struggle that neither seemed prepared to relax.

Then Reagan, a vociferous anticommunist, in the irony of God,
negotiated a Nuclear weapons reduction treaty,

an event not predicted by a single American Sovietologist.

Many factors led to this event, economic, political,
and the demonstrations and prayers over the decades
of the "peace movement".

God found an opening, and God brought about
a miraculous change of direction.

The Bible makes no attempt to justify the delay in God's response.

It is a simple fact of experience.

We do not appeal to mystery to paper over an intellectual problem;
the Sovietologists faced a mystery as well.

We do not know why some things happen and others do not.

What then of the **omnipotence of God?**

The principalities and powers are able to assert their will
against the will of God and prevail for a time.

The wonder is not that there is a delay, but that God prevails at all.

God limits God's action by our freedom.

Now we can see, illustrated by the Daniel story,
that God limits God by the freedom of institutions,
a self-limited God.

Prayer involves more than God and people,
it involves God, and people, and the Powers.

What God is able to do in the world

God limits by the rebelliousness resistance, and self-interest
of the Powers exercising their freedom under God.

These Powers,
are the massive institutions, social structures, and systems,
that dominate our world today,
and the spirituality at their very center.

God is powerful to heal,

but if corporations flush PCBs and dioxin into the water we drink,
or release radioactive gas into the atmosphere,
or insist on spraying our fruit with known carcinogens,
or lace our waters with endocrine disruptors,
the disturbance exceeds the limits God sets on God's power to heal.
Children die of leukemia.

A clean cut will heal wondrously,

but if we rub infectious germs into it, God's capacity to heal is hindered.

When some people tell themselves they are a race and enslaves others,
when abusers stunt children's lives by sexual abuse or physical brutality,

or when national governments by force of arms exploit other nation states,
then what is God to do?

We pray for justice and liberation, and "God hears us on the very first day".

But God's ability to intervene
against the freedom of these rebellious creatures
is sometimes tragically restricted
in ways we cannot pretend to understand.

It takes considerable spiritual maturity to live in the tension
between these two facts:

God *has* heard our prayer,
and the **Powers are blocking** God's response.

If the Powers can thwart God so effectively,
can we then speak of divine providence?

Can we rely on God?

Our capacity to pray
depends on some kind of working idea of God's providential care for us.
Genocide in Somalia, Nazi death camps,
God is in the constant possibility of transformation
pressing on every occasion,
even those lost for lack of human response.

God is not mocked.

The wheels of justice may turn slowly, but they are inexorable.
After fifty years of captivity,

God had at last raised up Cyrus to deliver the Jews,
and God's people chose to remain in exile!.

Daniel, fasting and praying, creates a fresh opening for God.
Into that breach God pours the vision of a new life
in a Renewed, Holy, Land.

We cannot stop praying for what is right
just because our prayers are seemingly unanswered.

In the first century, contrary to the expectations of many,
Jesus did not return.

But this did not prove fatal for Christianity.

The delay provided the opportunity for the church
to see the Domination System for what it was.
The church, or at least remnants within it,
would never wholly capitulate again.
Once it had caught glimpses of God's domination-free order,
the church could never give up the longing for the arrival of that order.
Gandhi struggled with the angel of the British Empire for twenty-six years;
the Aquino revolution in the Philippines unseated Marcos in only days,
but after how many years of preparation?
The very brutality and desperation of brutal powers
is evidence that their legitimacy is eroding,
that they can no longer command voluntary consent.

**Whenever sufficient numbers of people
withdraw their consent,
the Powers fall.**

Living in Expectation of Miracles

Recognizing the role of the Powers in blocking prayer
can revolutionize the way we pray:
it enables us to renew our strength, to soar with wings as eagles,
to vent the whole range of our feelings, outrage to joy.
Prayer in the face of the Powers is a spiritual war of attrition,
patient, yet urgent.

Prayer that ignores the Powers ends by blaming God
for evils committed by the Powers.

Prayer that acknowledges the Powers fosters social action.
It discerns both the outer political and inner spiritual aspects
and thus makes it possible to transform the Powers.

If we change only the shell and leave the spirit intact,
the Powers will subvert our best efforts.

Is prayer "spiritual warfare"?

The evangelicals and charismatics say "yes".

I say, Yes, as well.

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It is imperative, and aggressive.

We pray to alter the spirituality of families, congregations,
communities, corporations, and nations.

But let us take great care in the use of the word "demonic".

In my view, the demonic arises within the institution itself,
as it **abandons its divine vocation of service to the community.**

So let us not cast out the spirit of the city.

Let us call on God to **transform** the spirit of the city.

Finally, cling to no small hopes.

We have a commission to pray for miracles,
that is for **the transformation of our institutions.**

Nothing less is sufficient.

We pray to God, not because we understand these mysteries,
but because we have learned from our tradition and from experience
that God, indeed, **is** sufficient for us, whatever the Powers may do.

Yes, and what does this call to mind?

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Chapter 3.6.

The Redeeming Community

This is about "economics",
the patterns, the rules, the law, the "*nomos*",
for the flourishing of the household, the community, the "*ecos*".

As we imagine the future shape and direction of church,
and its role in the creation of the new, the renewed,
redeemed, and redeeming community,
let us look at descriptions of several communities,
several sets of guidelines for doing community.

We look at several specific examples of community.

I focus on just a few,
ones that embody the qualities of resilience, equality, inclusiveness, and caring,
because that is what I think the gospel is calling us to be.

These are descriptions of rules, patterns of behavior, of real communities
that really existed, or exist now, and not yet.

10 Best Ways-Exodus

I begin with the guidance attributed to Moses for Israel wandering in the desert,
the Ten Commandments. (Ex.20:2-17, Deut.5:1-23)

I like to call these "The Ten Best Ways",
as Jerome Berryman does in his books on "Godly Play". <http://www.godlyplay.org>

I paraphrase:

Rely on "how it is" for all you need.

Build your life around JHWH only.

Treat things as things, and persons as persons.

Renew your relationship with JHWH in the community.

Care for your parents.

Avoid violence; kill no one.

Let others have their things.

Tell the truth.

Keep your word.

Deuteronomy

In Deuteronomy, one can find, between the prescriptions for ritual purity, a detailed description of the welcoming, renewing community.

It may be that this text describes a community under the Judges, maybe under the Kings, maybe after the return from exile, or maybe even now.

Again, I have paraphrased:

Welcome and care for the stranger. (Deut 10:19)

Care for those whom others neglect, especially widows and orphans. (10:28, 26:12)

Pay good wages to those who do work for you, and promptly. (24:14-15)

Lend generously with little or no collateral, and no interest. (15:8, 23:19)

Provide rest for yourself, for those who work for you, (15:12)
for your animals, and for the land.

Gather in community regularly

to remember your stories, and whose you are.

Leave edges and corners of your field for the poor. (25:19)

You may gather grapes from your neighbors vineyard
but only to eat while in it. (23:14)

Devote your whole being to hoping, intending, and working
for others' well-being. (10:12)

Great Commandments

Then there are the broad guidelines provided

by the "Two Greatest Commandments"
cited in the Gospels. (Mk 12:29, Mtt 22:37 Lk 10:27)

But I here cite their earlier sources.

"You shall **love the Lord your God** with your whole heart,
with your whole soul, and with your whole mind" Deut. 6:5

'You shall **love your neighbor** as yourself.' Lev. 19:18

Micah

Micah provides yet another summary. (Mic 6:8)

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"He has shown you, O mortal one, what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To **act justly** and to **love mercy** and to **walk humbly** with your God."

Matthew

Matthew has yet another summary:

(Mtt 23:23)

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!

You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin.

But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—

justice, mercy and faithfulness.

You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."

Ishmael

Daniel Quinn, in his novel *Ishmael*,

offers guidance for creating a community.

He has developed a contrast between "leavers" and "takers".

The "leavers" form resilient, enduring, communities
by following these guidelines.

1. **Take** what you need, and **leave** the rest for others
2. You are not here to rule the world
3. There is no **one best way**,
4. Good ways are **local and contingent.**
5. Do not seek to impose your ways on others,
6. Nor coerce them to support you.
7. Form **small groups** that **work together**
and support each other.
8. Form egalitarian, inclusive, caring groups
and communities.

Ostrom

Finally, I lift up the work of Elinor Ostrom.

In 2009 she received the Nobel Prize in Economics.

She had studied communities that were stable for a thousand years,

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had governed themselves, and the natural resource base
 that supports them, their “commons”. (Elinor Ostrom 1992. “*Governing the Commons*”)
 One such community created an irrigation ditch cooperative in eastern Spain.
 They held in common a system of ditches
 that distributed the water from the mountains
 out across the farmlands below.
 This irrigation made possible growing orchards, vineyards,
 and vegetable gardens.

Together they had devised **rules of access:**
 to govern which grower could get water, when, and how much.
 They had rules for “**provisioning**”,
 who did the repair work on weirs, dikes and gates.
 They had a system of **enforcement** and resolving conflict,
 fines for those who took too much or shirked their work.
 The records are extant of who paid what fines for which infractions,
 in the 700’s CE, when the Moors were still in town.

They had processes to **track their effectiveness,**
 records of the amount of water flowing and the amount used,
 year after year, century after century.

They had a commitment to **autonomy;**
 they succeeded in defending their little ditches from all outsiders, even Franco.
 Finally, they had a strong **commitment to the future.**
 They still speak of their hopes and plans
 for their descendant’s descendants use of those ditches.

Ostrom saw these patterns looking at a specific class of economic entities,
 those with a deplorable common resource pool.

I assert Ostrom's insights also apply to the broader issue
 of creating just, flourishing and economically stable communities.
 Here, paraphrased, are her design principles,

- eight strong community consensus commitments,**
- (1) to terms of **access,**
 "Who gets the stuff?"
- (2) to terms of **provisioning,**

"Who does the work; who pays?"

(3) to terms of **resolution**,

"What is a fair fight , how enforce the rules; who judges?"

(4) to a process for **monitoring**,

"How do we know how well our ways are working?"

(5) to a process for **adaptation**, changing the rules,

"How do we decide to change; who changes the rules?"

(6) to **graduated sanctions**,

"Let the penalty fit the failure."

(7) to enough **autonomy** to be able to do it this way,

"Stop outside meddlers and tyrants."

(8) to **valuing the future as much as the present**,

"Our great-grandchildren's great grandchildren

must enjoy this resource as we are!"

So, Ostrom says,

\$1 expected a century from now

is still worth a full \$1 today.

In economic speak,

"The discount rate is zero."

Ostrom found these design principles

while studying "depletable common resource pools".

She inferred them from the wealth of data,

the specific rules in several very different communities.

But I assert that these principles apply to ANY community;

the life of a community **IS** a depletable common resource pool,

that community's "commons".

The community holds its life in its hands,

and all in the community take part, one way or another, in that life.

Communities that forge strong agreement on how to share,

how to care, how to listen, and how to keep one's word,

can flourish for a thousand years.

Those that don't, won't.

The chart below compares these Guidelines for Community.

Guidelines for Community

	RES (poems & songs)	Elinor Ostrom terms of: access provisioning a means to change the rules to resolve disputes autonomy local rule & responsibility value future equal to present	Ten best ways Ex.20:2-17 Rely on how it is for all you need Build your life around JHWH only Avoid treating things like persons Renew your relationship with JHWH in the community Care for the parents Avoid violence; kill no one Let others have their things Tell the truth Keep your word Seek not what other have.	Deuteronomy Care for the stranger, those others neglect, widows, orphans. Pay good wages. Lend generously. Provide rest for you, your workers, your animals, the land. Gather regularly to remember your stories, who you are. Leave edges and corners for poor. Eat other's grapes only in his vineyard Devote your whole being to hoping, intending, and working for well-being or others.	Ishmael take for need, leave for others rule not the world no one best way , many good local ways impose not your ways on others, nor coerce them. form small groups work together support each other form egalitarian, inclusive, caring groups
Micah 6:8 What does the lord require...					
Justice	Who gets the stuff?				
Mercy	giving turns				
Humility	Who pays?				
	giving a hand				
Mtt 23:23	Who daJudge?				
Weighty matters of the law...	giving an ear				
Justice					
Mercy	giving & keeping our word				
Fidelity					

There does appear to be a pattern here.

Certain ideas recur in slightly different explicit form.

The question then becomes,

"How shall we embody these guidelines,
the concepts named, and those implied in the specific details stated,
in the details of a redeeming community?"

In the next chapter we will look at one specific example in some detail.

It is very important to remember as we re-imagine this community,
that it is **not** necessary to set aside what others have tried.

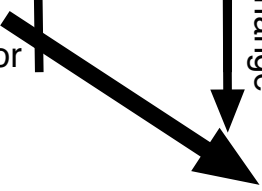
What is necessary is that, as we sift through the historical evidence,
we grasp both the outward mechanical details
and the inner spiritual reality.

Furthermore we must ask "does this give us back our lives?"

We have an opportunity to find specific approaches, specific processes,
specific structures that carry forward the concept
of the redeeming community into the future.

Here is a summary of the argument using our re-picturing chart.

CONCEPT	SYMBOL	PICTURE
Love	redeeming community	data change
God		
Love		
Neighbor		
		Genesis..
		Exodus..
		Micah..
		Matthew..
		Ishmael
		Ostrum
		___?___



What does this call to mind?

this page left blank for your personal notes :)

Chapter 3.7

Re-Picturing Doing Church

The “faithful, renewing, community,” so what is that?

For my first professional degree I did animal development, embryology,
the study of the coming into being of animal form and function,
and of metamorphosis, the total replacement of form and function.

I studied frogs.

At first, by the time it was a wiggling tadpole it no longer interested me.

Except that the tadpole in turn undergoes metamorphosis.

The tadpole becomes totally transformed, a new creation,
gains a totally new style of life,

like the bushel of flour in which the woman hid the leaven,

totally transformed; [Mtt 13:33, Lk 13:21]

raised.

So let us be blunt and honest.

We are speaking of the total transformation of the community,
of the individuals, of the congregation, of the entire community.

We are speaking of living as a new creation.

What metaphor can we use to carry this radical meaning?

metamorphosed?, raised?, re-invented?, resurrected?

Justicing Love

Witnessing love is dealing, now, with the distress, now, that people are in, now.

Justicing love is changing the structures of our communities, now,
so as to avoid creating this distress, now and in the future.

Some say, that chronologically, witnessing love must come first.

But I think that that too often is a way of avoiding the justice work now.

They both must come first.

We must do both, continuously, and at the same time.

We must do the witnessing, the acts of mercy,
while we are redeeming the structures to do justice.

We must do it all, and do it now.

Justicing love is the task of sharing,
building structures of justice for the future.

It is the task of creating a future
that will afford cultural, political, and economic justice
to every child, woman, and man on the face of the earth,
beginning now, where we are, daily more and more,
much more than we can hope, or dream, or understand.

It is the task of building those structures
which will finally **put an end to privilege and license**,
and bring about the humanitarian world community of love,
of people who care about the well being even of those they dislike.

Justicing love arises from the understanding that all people are valuable
simply because they are people -- people of God.

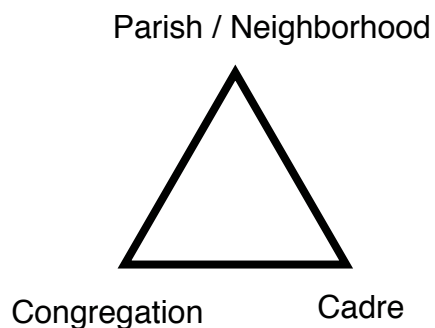
Concrete Formulation

But, just as we cannot sit on our concept of “chair,”
so also, our concept of “church”, we need to imagine into being.
Let us look at one very concrete specific model of doing church,
to imagine it, to picture what it would be like,
and to bring it right down to the level of a specific local church
whatever local church, where we plug in.

An abstract statement of the Church's mission may be interesting,
but what does it have to do with me, my spouse, and my canary?

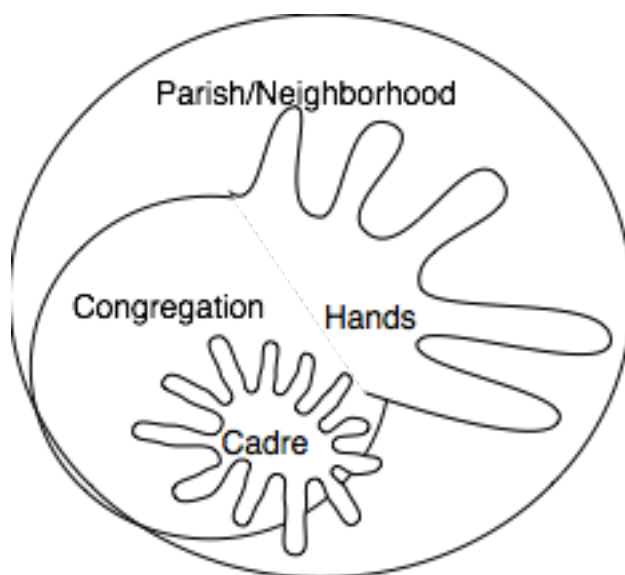
One picture of this model of the local church looks like this.

It calls to mind the triangular images we have used before.



Here is another picture of this model of the local church.

This one is sort of a squishy Venn diagram, sort of vine-y, tentacular.



In both representations,
the cadre renews the congregation
and the congregation renews the parish/neighborhood.

Parish / Neighborhood:

I would like to use this term to describe
all the people in a given geo-social unit.
That is to say, every child, woman, and man
(regardless of church affiliation or lack of it)
who lives in a particular hunk of geography,
a place that we can picture, grid, and map.

The Church historically used the word “parish” this way;
Louisiana still does,
the people and places within a geographic boundary.
Sometimes we understand "neighborhood" in this way.

Congregation:

The congregation is all the people
who come inside a particular church building, for whatever reason.
Some people come to church because they like the music,
some because of the pageantry, or the potlucks.
Some people come to church to get their comfort buttons rubbed.
Some people come to a church because their parents did.
A few come because they are knowledgeable theologians.
Some persons just stop in to get out of the cold
or to use the bathroom, the necessary room.
Each of these reasons is a good one.

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In this model, the congregation is all these people
who come inside a particular church building, whatever the reason.

Cadre:

The online Merriam Webster offers this definition of “cadre”:

- “1. a nucleus or core group especially of trained personnel
able to assume control and to train others;
broadly : a group of people having some unifying relationship
as a cadre of lawyers or a cadre of technicians
- 2 : a cell of indoctrinated leaders
active in promoting the interests of a revolutionary party”

We will be using “cadre” as the intentional core of the local church.

Its job is to minister to the congregation.

For some the word cadre is a military term.

Some like military terms; some don't.

You may prefer to call this intentional core the "warm fuzzies".

What you call them is not important. What they do is.

These are the persons who commit to a ministry

that takes the form of **revitalizing, transforming, the congregation**

so that some part of the congregation

can minister to and transform the Parish/Neighborhood.

Hands:

Recognizing that not all the persons in the congregation

will be actively and directly involved

in renewing the parish/neighborhood,

I offer the term "hands" for this role.

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It is a word once used on the farm
for all the people involved in the work of the farm,
whether hired or family, and it is a role, not a person.
Galvanized out of the congregation by the renewing work of the cadre,
the hands reach out into the parish/neighborhood
hearing, seeing, touching, healing, today,
and creating the structures for a more just tomorrow.

Geo-Social Map

I am going to offer some blunt words. Bear with me.
If there is no map of the parish/neighborhood
hanging somewhere in your church building,
I assert you are not doing the work of Christ's ministry in that place.
If you don't know where the nodes of activity are in your neighborhood --
the bowling alleys, the bars, the supermarkets, the country clubs,
and the adult book stores --
you probably aren't doing the work of Christ's ministry
in your parish/neighborhood.
If you don't know **all** the people who live in that geo-social unit,
their hopes, their fears, their special problems,
then you simply aren't ministering.

The cadre, gets to decide how big this geo-social unit is,
the parish/neighborhood, and what it looks like.
There is a rule of thumb for the scope of this work.
One person may be able to cope with a ministry to ten, maybe even twelve.
One in the cadre for ten to twelve in the Hands
One in the Hands for ten to twelve in the parish/neighborhood.

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If you can identify five for the cadre,
they can serve fifty to sixty hands,
and, in turn, serve a parish/neighborhood of about 500 to 600 persons.

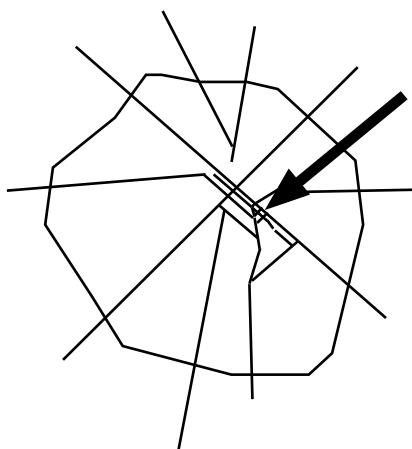
If you have ten for the cadre,
thus one hundred to one-twenty for ministry, as hands,
they will be able to minister effectively to a neighborhood
of about one thousand to twelve hundred.

Cadre and Hands are both roles to play, not persons,
and persons may play several roles in the congregation.

Whatever the size of your parish/neighborhood,
you may picture it as a portion of geography
an area surrounding your church building.

If St. Anselm's, or St. Swithen's in the Swamp,
or First, or Second, sits on a street corner,
then the parish / neighborhood includes all the persons
living in a geo-social unit around that street corner
whose boundaries the cadre select.

Here is an example of a map that shows the location of a church building.



Persons who are serious about effecting a revolution of love

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understand how valuable the structure of the established church really is.

After all, here is a body of men and women

already conceptually committed to such a revolution,

who, at the same time,

control virtually every key street corner in the country.

Story Shane Claiborne

Shane Claiborne, while a student in downtown Philly,

over 20 years ago,

with some other students heard about some homeless folk

that faced eviction from the old house they were squatting in.

They asked themselves, "What would Jesus do?"

So they moved in with the squatters, fixed up the house,

and created a community. It continues.

One day one of the community had some medical expenses,

so Shane said to the group,

"Here is what has happened, here are the costs,

what can you do to share this cost?"

At last count, over 20 years later,

there are over 20,000 people in this virtual community

sharing medical costs.

No insurance company, no actuaries, no forms, no exclusions,

just sharing and caring.

Urgency

What it finally gets down to is that people must be able to say about us,

“You’re **in** this world, but you’re not **of** it.”

We must dare to use symbols with such consistency,

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such focus, such intensity, that we become symbols.
I assert that God-in-Christ may be calling you to witness in this community;
calling you as a congregation to grid your parish/neighborhood
and to get on with the job of ministering
by means of witnessing and justicing love.

The Corporate Office

I assert that the corporate office, the cadre,
is an appropriate twenty-first century image for the word-symbol **clergy**.
Bear with me.

In nineteenth century America, both urban and rural,
for the word-symbol, “clergy,” people held the image “ordained man”,
singular and male.

But there has been a significant data change.

In concept the clergy are the ones who minister to a specific congregation,
enabling that congregation to carry on Christ’s ministry
in their parish/neighborhood.

In nineteenth century rural America, the ordained man,
always a man,
may well have been equal to that task.

He may also have been the only person in the community
with the requisite educational background.

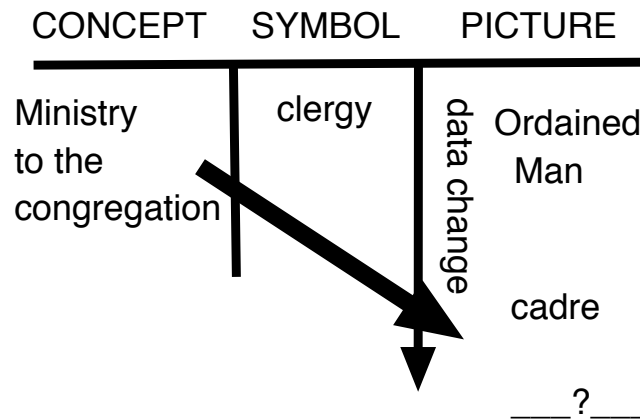
Neither of these descriptions still applies.

One man, one woman, is not equal to the task of our current urban setting.

And the parson is no longer the best-educated person in the parish.

Today, if the congregation is to do this task,
and if we are to remain faithful

to the deeper meaning of the term clergy,
a new corporate office must come into being.



In the twentieth and twenty-first century,
clergy and congregations have been trying to maintain
a nineteenth century image.

You remember that old vaudeville act
with the juggler that spins plates on a stick.

He, always a he, begins with a single plate on a single stick.
Spin the plate, balanced on the end of the upright stick.
He starts a second, and a third, and keeps coming back
to the ones already spinning
to make a swipe at them and keep them spinning.

Finally he fills the stage with this long line of sticks
each supporting a spinning plate.

He is dashing here and there along the line,
keeping all the plates spinning.

Sometimes our ordained people are like that,
each organization another spinning plate.

There is the altar guild, and the ushers; there is the men's group,
the women's circles, the young couples, the youth;
there is the sewing circle, the choir, the bible study groups;
there is the Sunday school, the staff, and the facilities;
and there is the ordained man, mostly a man,
though now it is a woman more and more,
frantically dashing from group to group,
giving a lick here and a spinning touch there.

And **we** are out there in the audience applauding.

In many instances, capable lay people have stepped forward
offering help to the ordained man.

When that one has refused such offers,
or channeled only into such activities
as just ushering, canvassing, baking, or sewing,
God's judgment is upon the ordained one.

On the other hand, if capable lay people have not stepped forward
to be a part of the corporate office, the cadre,
then God's judgment is upon them.

And if you're just standing back applauding,
the judgment is upon you.

Finally, it is a question of decision.

Will you offer yourself and your abilities to the corporate office?

Will you become a part of the cadre, the warm fuzzies,
whose job it is to provide ministry to a specific congregation,

**enabling that congregation to carry on Christ's ministry
in the parish, the neighborhood?**

This corporate office, where it comes into being,
will be made up of a group of totally committed, intentional persons,
one of whom is the ordained person.

None of this can happen abstractly.

People must build it in history.

There must be a time and a place, a locus and a set of limits.

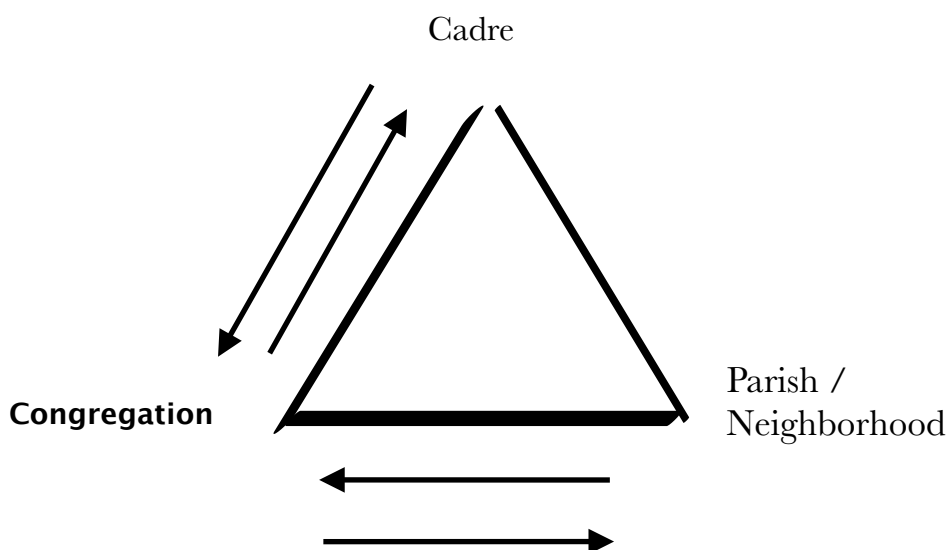
Christ's ministry happens somewhere, some time.

It happens in the here and now.

The cadre ministers to the congregation.

The congregation ministers to the parish/neighborhood.

Conversely the parish/neighborhood judges the congregation,
and the congregation judges the cadre.



The role of the Cadre, then, is to know the people within the congregation,
and to meet their needs for renewal within ministry.

This means first **listening** to them, **deeply, intently, repeatedly**.

It means identifying the kinds of work they are currently able to do,
the kind of growing they are ready for,

the constraints on their ability to work,
their current interests, their deep concerns.

One Cadre member may be able to deal effectively
with ten or twelve folk in the congregation.

If one tries to reach out to more,
one risks being so superficial as to be totally ineffective,
proving, one more time,
"this can't work here."

How is the Cadre identified and recruited?

by this same **listening**.

This is community organizing at its most basic.

The Cadre identify and recruit Hands by **listening**.

This really is community organizing at its most basic.

The result of the work of the Cadre

is the creation of a visible workforce, "the Hands".

Cadre and Hands then create and implement a
plan for deploying the Hands
in service of the Neighborhood/Parish.

The role of the Hands begins with **listening**,

getting to know the people,
all the people within the Parish/Neighborhood.

The work continues,

listening, and meeting their needs for justice and mercy.

One part of this work is direct, personal mercy services,
giving a hand.

This may mean food now, clothing now, shelter now,
health services now, and a friendly voice and hand, now.

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A second part of that work is system redemption, system transformation.

This means first identifying the structural causes of the needs;
the need for food, the need for clothing, the need for shelter,
the need for health services, the need for friendship.

Then begins the work of altering the ailing system,
redeeming it one piece at a time.

A friend of mine says it is “frog” work,
transforming tadpoles into frogs,
metamorphosis.

This involves action in a variety of frames of reference,
economic, social, cultural, political.

This work may look to some like “just” community organizing
and continuous quality improvement.

Of course. It is.

But to the extent it is church, it is **transformation**,
all held together by **prayer and grace**.

It requires analysis, planning, action, and follow-through;
the “plan, do, check, correct” cycle of W. Edwards Demming¹⁵,
and the movement for continuous quality improvement,
good business management.

To what extent and in what ways are there no **groceries** here,
within the parish/neighborhood?

To what extent and in what ways are **jobs** that are here
not matched to the needs and capabilities here?

To what extent and in what ways are **wages**

¹⁵ The Deming Institute website at <https://www.deming.org/theman/theories/pdsacycle>

not sufficient for living here?

To what extent and in what ways are there **lonely people**?

some without family, or close friends?

To what extent and in what ways are the institutions in the area
supportive or destructive of **family**?

What are the **community systems** that should be meeting these needs?

Whose **charter**, whose **mandate**, is it to provide these goods, these services?

What **specific change** could we make now
to move in the direction of greater justice?

Who can make that happen? Who opposes?

How do we move those ones, that one?

BUT it all begins with **listening**

listening very intently, very carefully, and very respectfully,
within the congregation to potential Cadre and potential Hands,
and it continues with **listening** within the the parish/neighborhood.

It requires skills in research, planning, and group-effectiveness.

So it requires people with many different gifts,
people with different points of view, different personalities.

Paul said as much, some are toes, some hands, some eyes....

This work could engage the whole range of skill sets
and whole range of personalities within a congregation.

It is all about giving,

giving turns,

giving an ear,

giving a hand,

and giving and keeping one's word.

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A 'Forth' Meaning

The pun I intend.

We have spoken of three uses of the word “mean”.

First, sometimes a word points to its counterpart in a different language.

So the English word “door” points to “*puerta*” in Spanish.

Second, sometimes a word calls to mind our emotionally laden memories of specific experiences we have had, especially the emotional content.

So the word “door” calls to mind an experience in my childhood when I had accompanied my father to his workplace, the high-school across the street.

We went on a weekend to a building, empty, silent, and dark.

At the far end of a very long hallway,

I saw the closed doors to the study-hall,

a row of plain flat doors

each with a large, single round window near the top,

giving the appearance of a row of ominous eyes, staring.

Sometimes “door”, for me, carries with it fear.

Third, sometimes a word links us to the correlation principle,

the deeper meaning, the conceptual underpinnings.

The word “door” links us to ideas of a passage,

a blocked or opened way, a moving forward,

that which, or the one who, enables our moving forward,

of the unknown, of opportunity, of destiny.

But there is yet another way in which we use the word “mean”.

Here is an example.

“What does it ‘mean’ that George Washington chose

not to seek a third term as president?”

Well, of course, the choice ‘meant’ that he did not launch a campaign,
that his name did not appear on the ballot,
that he did not negotiate support from electors,
and that he did not make stump speeches.

But it also ‘meant’ that for nearly a century and a half
subsequent presidents also did not seek a third term.

Others similarly learned to share power, to give turns.

Let me suggest that the concept behind this use of the word “mean”
has to do with ‘pointing beyond the moment’,
‘making possible’, with ‘allowing to happen’,
and even of ‘calling us to take specific action’.

So we have come this long journey together,
we in this group, reading together, working together,
we with the authors and editor of this material,
and we with those whose lives we have brought to mind
in these readings.

Now it comes down to “What does this mean?”

What translation do we make into the language of our lives,
what emotional links do we reveal to our memories,
the specific details of our lives both past and future,
what underlying unifying concepts do we uncover,
AND, what does this experience call ME to be doing.

What does it mean that we have come all this way together?

we will give meaning to this work, to these word-symbols,
each and together, by what, each and together, we do with each life.

making possible, allowing to happen pointing beyond the moment calling to specific action	mean	Geo W. chose no 3rd term this work together ... ___ ? ___
---	------	--

Ah, yes.

I warned you at the beginning of this reading.

It finally comes to this,

What will each of us do

that validates, or invalidates all that has gone before,
and makes possible or impossible
all that may happen in the future.

We have had this experience together, in community,
and we make these decisions in community.

We are being made aware in community,
aware of the word about life by community,
aware of the possibility of action by our community;
and we get challenge and support from our community.

Albert Schweitzer put it well at the end of his landmark book

***The Quest for the Historical Jesus:*¹⁶**

“He comes to us as One unknown,
without a name, as of old, by the lakeside ...

¹⁶ ***The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede.*** by Albert Schweitzer, translated by W. Montgomery, 2d English ed. 1911. Adam and Charles Black, London. republished 2005, Dover Publications Mineola NY. USA, page 401, [emphasis added/res]

He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings
through which they shall pass **in His fellowship**,
and, as an ineffable mystery,
they shall learn in their own **experience**
Who He is”
Yes, it is together, in fellowship, in community, that all this happens;
and we will each live our life, and each die our death,
making all the meaning we are able of that encounter,
connecting to the past, connecting to the deeps,
imagining the future,
and pointing beyond ourselves,
making the future happen.

We have an invitation,

that this effort not end with this study group.
We have the opportunity to give it legs and hands where we are.
We could make a plan, identify first steps, and begin.
And the really good news?
we do not need to wait till Rome falls;
we can begin now, where we are.
I assert that God-in-Christ is calling you, me, us, to play a role,
Christ-through-the-Church calling you, me, us, to get moving.
Naturally, it is only a question
of what you are going to do with your death.
Each of us can be certain of one thing -- each of us is going to die.
We don't have any choice at all about this.
Everyone is going to die. That's just the way it is.
That's part of the given-ness.

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

The only choice left to us is to decide what our deaths will be about.

Everyone dies for something.

And that decision -- the why of your death -- is yours.

You can decide to let death die you.

That's a form of **suicide**.

Or you can decide to commit your death.

And that's crucifixion.

So what closing words shall we use?

What words for all of our tomorrows?

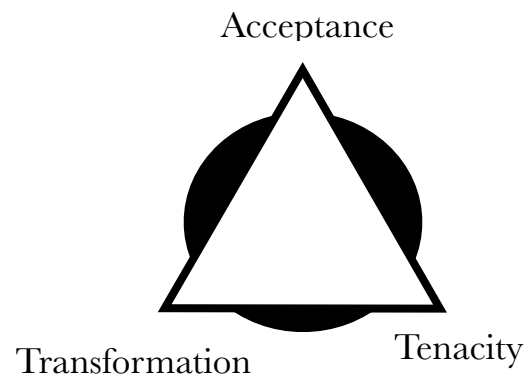
Paul says it comes down to Faith, Hope, and Love.

He is right, of course,

but let me suggest three other words

which also may be helpful to hold the heart of this calling we have,

Acceptance, Transformation, and Tenacity;



Acceptance of our selves, of the past, of our others,
and of the social, economic, and bio-chemo-physical systems
within which we function,
the recognition that this is how it is,
which makes possible their transformation;

NOT FOR SALE property of W.H.Y.

Transformation of these,

of our selves, of our others, and of these systems;

and **Tenacity**, keeping on keeping on, day after day,

graciously and gracefully, living the details,

creating ever new examples,

the specifics, the pictures, of Acceptance and Transformation,

and always, always, in Faith, Hope, and Love;

Oh, may this be so!

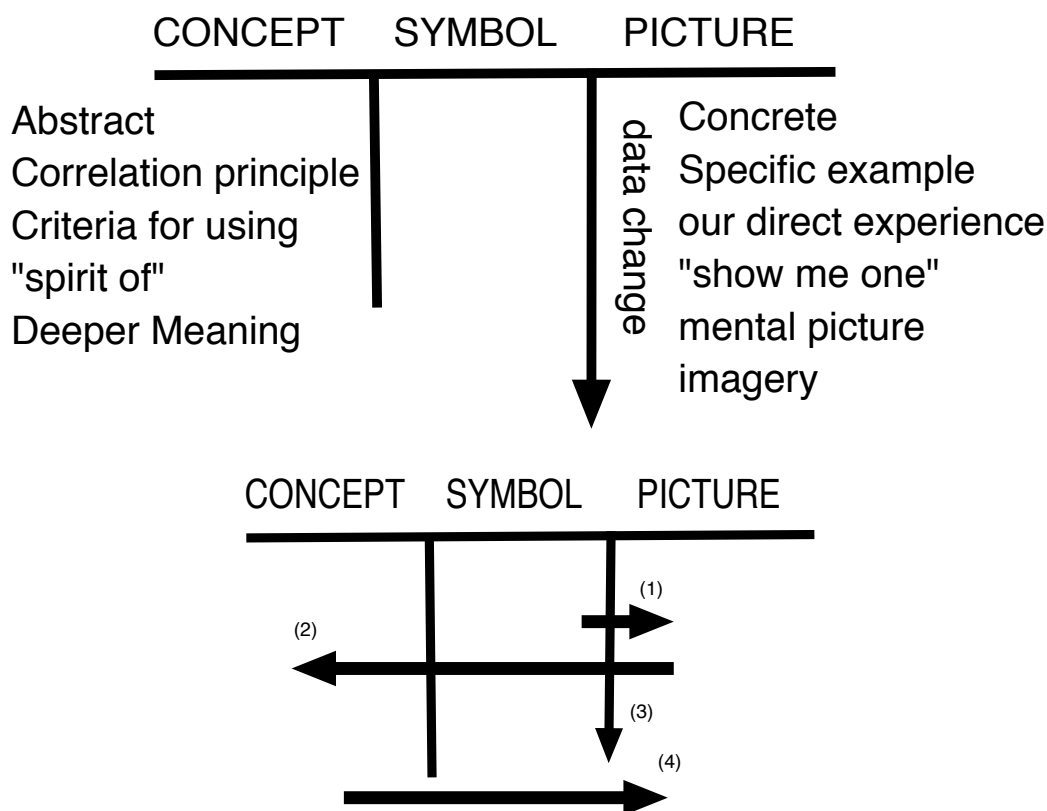
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What does this call to mind?

[now read or listen to “Wood and Nails”]

APPENDIX

Here is a summary chart of de-picturing and re-picturing,
of the processes we have been using
to relate symbol, picture, and concept.



The Steps are:

- (1) select a symbol,
- (2) collect the pictures,
- (3) infer the concept,
- (4) recognize the data change,
- (5) imagine a new way of picturing.

The Constraints are:

- (1) we must know our past,
- (2) the specifics must change,