

# **The Socio-Cultural Context of Conversion**

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The purpose of this Workshop is "to help priests communicate the fullness of the Christian message to the people of today." It seems that the social scientist can contribute to this goal in several different ways. For instance, he could stress that all behavior is expressive; every act we perform, or at least every significant act, is not only instrumental but symbolic; every act communicates beliefs and values. One contribution of a social scientist, therefore, would be to emphasize that preachers communicate not only in the sermon but in carrying out every aspect of their priestly role; he would stress that to be a preacher is to adopt a way of life not just to defend certain doctrines, and that an institution must examine not only what it says but what it does, for the latter expresses the religious view of a church just as much as the former.

But having said this we will dwell on other matters. We shall concentrate on putting the discussion of conversion into its contemporary setting. First we shall discuss the relation between socialization and conversion; second, the relation between religious belief and experience; and third, the problems associated with trying to develop a unified, religious life in modern society. In all cases our purpose is to discern the obstacles presented to a preacher by modern society.

## **Socialization and Conversion**

In order to preserve itself a society or a group develops an effective indoctrination program we call socialization. Many, perhaps most, sociologists believe that societal survival requires that fundamental values be passed on to new generations via propaganda not persuasion; the argument is that since a person's ultimate values and beliefs do not have a rational basis, a society cannot trust that a combination of common sense and reasonable arguments will produce cultural uniformity, which these same social scientists believe is a necessity for continuity. But whether it is necessary or not all societies seem to act as if it were true. As a result most of us are given our religion without the possibility of meaningful choice. If true religion must spring from a personal act, then conversion and socialization are antagonistic processes. Let me illustrate this point. The following abbreviated case history is not meant to be a typical case; obviously it is not. But perhaps it does concretize the obstacles that socialization places in the way of conversion.

Judith was the daughter of an orthodox rabbi. Her life was dominated by her father, and through him, by religion. She remained faithful to her father and her religion until in her late twenties; following a marriage that ended in divorce, Judith ceased to practice much of her religion. But she did continue certain practices; for instance, even today she does not eat pork—"It is something to hold onto. I had never had an attitude toward these rules. I just accepted them."

Her loss of interest in religion coincided with the beginning of psychoanalysis. Five years later Judith became interested in the Personal Religion Institute because it stressed both the Jewish tradition and the need for a personal understanding of religion. But Judith realizes she has a long way to go before she will have what she considers a mature religious attitude. Even now after five years a friend told her that every time she said something about religion, she began with "my father." "He asked me if I had any feelings of my own. It was impossible for me to cry in public. I could never express my anger. I was afraid of my emotions. Two weeks ago I went skiing; I stood on one of the slopes for awhile, looking at the scenery; the sun setting behind the mountains was so beautiful. I resented the beauty because it aroused my emotions." Judith is trying to develop a sense of self. Formerly she was always occupied trying to please others, now she thinks about herself; if she is in the company of people she does not like, she leaves. In the Institute she has joined, Judith teaches Hebrew—both because it helps others and because it lets her make use of her childhood training in Hebrew. Judith planned to take a course in Bible study at a Jewish seminary. She now considers herself conservative with

an orthodox flavoring. Judith hopes to become a leader in one of the Institutes discussion groups.

Judith seems to have been absorbed by her father. Supposedly she had no attitude of her own toward religion; she was dominated by her father, and *through him*, by religion. She seems to have been a reflection of her father's ideas, even refusing herself the pleasure of emotional expression, a very personal matter. Judith believed her life had been wasted, which is understandable since she had done nothing of significance that was her own, that expressed the individual—Judith.

In fact even at the time of the interview, some five years after her break with orthodoxy, it seems questionable how much progress Judith has made. Her desire to take training at a seminary and ambition to be a religious leader suggest a latent identification with her father. In a very real sense Judith was, and perhaps still is, her father.

No doubt this case is extreme, especially in the coldness that seemed to pervade her childhood. But socialization perfected resembles this case in that the child becomes the parent (or whoever represents society), only the process is usually carried out in an atmosphere of warmth so that the reflection does not resent or become conscious of his or her defilement. Societal survival is secured when generations become reflections; society feeds on narcissism.

Judith represents, I assume, the antithesis of what preachers seek, although to an extent she is an ideal product from the viewpoint of socialization. The effectiveness of indoctrination derives from the power of human relationships, i.e., in Judith's case she accepted Judaism initially because of her paternal relationship. A belief is the result of socialization when its acceptance flows not from the intrinsic merits of the doctrine but from the nature of a relationship to a person who espouses this belief. Judith was dominated by religion, because she was dominated by her father. Quite different are beliefs held because of the relation between the content of a belief and the situation in which a person exists, as when a person will value trust because of its necessity for everyone's survival. Socialization does not have faith in experience as a teacher; it seeks to indoctrinate, which means implanting beliefs through the manipulation of human relationships, and especially the parent-child relationship.

The importance of our discussion for those who seek to increase the number of religious lives based on some sort of personal encounter is three-fold. First, it perhaps offers a sign by which to evaluate the beliefs

of those you confront. For instance, when a belief is based on a relationship, past or present, to someone who espoused it, it remains beyond the effects of experience or criticism. Why? Because the individual is not really involved in the belief itself, and therefore remains unaffected by events or arguments directed toward it. For such people the first job is to bring them to a realization of why they "believe" something. Before they understand this it is probably doubtful that any form of preaching would be successful.

A second possible benefit of this discussion is that it heightens awareness of the basic conflict between a group seeking perpetuation through socialization and preachers who are striving to make life a personal choice. When religion realizes the importance of conversion, and here is meant especially the conversion of nominal members, it must challenge the acceptance of socialization as a means of continuity. Religion as a personal faith and society secured through socialization are incompatible. This realization is profoundly important. For instance, what should be the attitude of preachers to the manner in which parents handle children? Not long ago a priest in the pulpit warned his parishioners of the necessity of giving religion to their children by the time they were six. Does anyone believe that the results of this can be reconciled with the type of faith sought by preachers? We give religion to children who are not old enough to understand how religion can fit their experience of the world, for they are too young to comprehend the problems intrinsically related to religion. Religion becomes inoculation. Religious development is unnatural in that there is no synchronization of education and experience; we give people solutions before they encounter the problems the beliefs were meant to solve and then wonder why the religion does not seem too meaningful; having been inoculated these individuals often do not deeply experience religious problems, and therefore do not fully appreciate religious solutions. Early inoculation guarantees that whatever religion does take hold will do so for reasons extraneous to religion itself, i.e. it will be related to the nature of our social relationships. The realization of the antagonism between socialization and conversion, then, should make us think long and hard about an educational system based on the principles of inoculation.

The third benefit of our discussion might be to make priests constantly re-examine their success at conversion. Is this person coming forward because of his personal encounter with the relevance of religion for his life, or because of his or her relationship to you? It would seem

prudent for all preachers continually to analyze their own successes to determine whether or not they are simply reenacting the childhood stage and resocializing the reborn souls before them.

Preachers present a challenge not only to individuals but to societies. For they lay bare the inhuman aspect of what still remains the supposed foundation of social living—socialization. They must decide the extent to which they will ruthlessly pursue this insight, and the extent to which they will compromise with it. At least the decision should be fully conscious. But even if they learn to live with education as inoculation, they must strive to purify their own work, and make sure that their successes express not socialization but conversion.

### ***Belief and Experience***

Trying to convert someone to religion is asking this person to accept the existence of another world, or at least another dimension of reality. Do we fully realize the boldness of such a request in an age of science?

If we are to understand the problem we must see our society in perspective. Let us consider for a moment, therefore, what a non-literate society is like, specifically Gregory Bateson's description of an event that occurred while he was living among the Iatmul.

A subject which is matter for . . . intellectual inquiry (among the Iatmul) is the nature of ripples and waves on the surface of water. It is said secretly that men, pigs, trees, grass—all the objects in the world—are only patterns of waves . . . there is . . . the question of how ripples and waves are caused. The clan which claims the East Wind as a totem is clear enough about this: the Wind with her mosquito fan causes the waves. But other clans . . . again, have other theories. On one occasion I took some Iatmul natives down to the coast and found one of them sitting by himself gazing with rapt attention at the sea. It was a windless day, but a slow swell was breaking on the beach. Among the totemic ancestors of his clan he counted a personified slit gong who had floated down the river to the sea and who was believed to cause the waves. He was gazing at the waves which were heaving and breaking when no wind was blowing, demonstrating the truth of his clan myth.<sup>1</sup>

In preliterate societies religious systems were probably substantiated in similar ways almost daily, for these systems were construed to account for everyday experience and were therefore confirmed continually. In preliterate society the meaning of events were found in reli-

gion; when predictions were correct, therefore, as when rain fell or crops bloomed, the entire religious system was confirmed. Reflect in how different is the life of modern man; who today sees his religion confirmed in his daily life? The prediction and interpretation of the perceivable world has been taken over by science; science has cut the tangible tie between the seen and the unseen, leaving religion only with that which lies beyond immediate experience. For modern man religion is not in his world; rather he must project it onto his world. Religion must come from him, rather than to him from the concrete, rough, hard world of objects. And given the increasing prevalence of the scientific perspective of doubt and scepticism it is cause for wonder that millions of people do affirm the existence of the unseen world.

To what can we attribute this fact? No doubt many will suggest the working of God through the medium of grace. But such an argument must be left to the theologians, or at least must await a time when a dialogue between theologians and behavioral scientists might have clarified for the scientists this theological concept. Accept this limitation, the problem remains and has intrigued social scientists, so let us consider what science has to tell us about why even modern man can believe in the unseen. Such a discussion might suggest how those who seek to preach the faith might also try to arrange their social environment to ensure that it will fortify rather than hamper their efforts.

The great Freud tried to explain the origin of religion in each of us.

I have tried to show that religious ideas have sprung from the same need as all the other achievements of culture; from the necessity for defending itself against the crushing supremacy of nature.<sup>2</sup>

But a need does not explain a belief. It seems a rather frequent occurrence today that writers explain the existence of religion simply by saying that man needs it. But if this were so why are we so aware of the difference between our dreams and reality. Need is not a basis for belief.

Freud did go somewhat further in his thinking:

Now when the child grows up and finds he is destined to remain a child forever, and that he can never do without protection against unknown and mighty powers, he invests these with the traits of the father-figure; he creates for himself the gods, of whom he is afraid, whom he seeks to propitiate and to whom he nevertheless entrusts the task of protecting him.<sup>3</sup>

That at least in some cases people attribute traits of their parents to the deity is no doubt true, but even then is this symbolic connection between authority-figures sufficient to turn a wish into a belief? It does not seem so. It is quite plausible that someone might deny God because he hates his father, but harder to believe that loving one's father can convey reality to a hoped for deity.

Where then in man's social experience is the ground for his belief in the unseen world? Clifford Geertz writes, "It is in ritual—i.e. consecrated behavior—that this conviction that religious conceptions are veridical and that religious directives are sound is somehow generated."<sup>4</sup> He tries to substantiate his argument with a discussion of a Balinese ritual called Rangda-Barong.

This entry into the body of the ritual takes place through the agency of the various supporting roles contained in it—minor witches, demons, various sorts of legendary and mythical figures—which selected villagers enact. But mostly it takes place through the agency of an extraordinarily developed capacity for psychological dissociation on the part of a very large segment of the population. A Rangda-Barong struggle is inevitably marked by anywhere from three or four to several dozen spectators becoming possessed by one or another demon, falling into violent trances "like fire-crackers going off one after another," and snatching up knisses, rushing to join the fray. Mass trance, spreading like a panic, projects the individual Balinese out of the commonplace world in which he usually lives into that most uncommonplace one in which Rangda and Barong live. To become entranced is, for the Balinese, to cross a threshold into another order of existence . . . and even those who, for whatever reasons, do not make this spiritual crossing are caught up in the proceedings, for it is they who must keep the frenzied activities of the entranced from getting out of hand by the application of physical restraint if they are ordinary men, by the sprinkling of holy water and the chanting of spells if they are priests.<sup>5</sup>

As Geertz says, "To ask, as I once did, a man who has *been* Rangda whether he thinks he is real is to leave oneself open to the suspicion of idiocy."<sup>6</sup> We can readily understand that people who experience a quite different form of themselves could believe that they had experienced the unseen world of religion—could, that is, until the development of behavioral sciences cast severe doubt that such transformations had anything to do with the non-natural. Once again we see how well religion fits into the world of preliterate man, and how much it juts out in modern society. True, experiences similar to the Balinese occur in Protestant sects and no doubt help to substantiate the beliefs of their

members; in some Christian groups people still do "become" the deity or at least come into direct contact with "him". But at least for the majority of Americans such personal experiences as pervaded Balinese life seem unlikely, and thus unavailable as a ground for their religious conviction.

Emile Durkheim also believed that rituals were important in supporting religious belief.<sup>7</sup> But he pointed to a more general phenomenon, namely the experience of society; every man experiences the existence of certain norms which seem to exist outside of him but nevertheless exert pressure on him to conform to them; these external yet constraining norms are society. Let me illustrate, albeit somewhat crudely, the type of thing to which I think Durkheim was referring.

As a teenager Lillian was very interested in religion, and attended church regularly. The minister constantly preached the need for salvation through repentance for one's sins. Lillian was saved in this Baptist church. Soon after she ceased going to the movies, but not until she had tried to go three times. Each time "The Holy Spirit reproved me," i.e. something inside her told her she was doing wrong. The first time she went, Lillian saw some things on the screen that bothered her; she realized that she should not be there. About a week later, Lillian heard that a certain picture was very good; she went downtown to go see it. But Lillian stayed only about five minutes, then she had to leave. Several months later, she tried again, "just to see what would happen." When she walked into the lobby, the sights and smells of the theater aroused such feelings of impending sin that Lillian turned around and walked right out. She has not gone to the movies for thirty years.

Perhaps nothing expresses this combination of innerness and independence than Lillian's attitude on the third try; she just wanted to see what would happen. Lillian was a spectator observing the struggle between this inner voice and the temptation to sin. This attitude expresses a sense of distance so that Lillian is, and yet is not, this voice.

How widespread such incidences are is unknown. To the extent that they do occur, they would most probably contribute a sense of reality to a deity: the author of this inner voice. But let us hazard an hypothesis about such experiences. First, this "inner voice" seems similar to the development of what Freud called the superego; the significance of this is that I believe the appearance of the superego is associated with authoritarian, repressive childrearing which seems out of place in a democratic, equalitarian society. In short, experiencing an autonomous yet inner voice would seem to be going out of style, which is somewhat

supported by the psychoanalysts' belief that as the twentieth century has progressed ego problems have replaced superego problems as man's major, mental stumbling block. It seems, then, that Durkheim's experience of society is ceasing to be available as a ground for conviction.

But let us pursue this notion that man's sense of society gives substance to his religious dream. Tamney compared the responses of 48 believers with 15 nonbelievers to the question, "Who are you."<sup>8</sup> Granted the numbers are small, yet there seemed to be a significant difference with the believers more frequently using social items as part of their identity; for instance, a believer would more often define himself in terms of his family or work roles or political affiliation and the like. Since then an unpublished study conducted in Bogota, Columbia, found that priests use even more social items than religious laymen. Although only suggestive these findings do support Durkheim's hypothesis that the foundation of religion is man's involvement in society.

But why? We suggest two reasons why being a part of society strengthens religious convictions. First, Durkheim described one result of participation in rituals as a sense "of increased vitality".

The basic idea is that those who are capable of feeling a sense of oneness with others or with society are able to draw on this experience for renewed strength; increased vitality flows into us from the social reservoir if we are able to feel a part of it . . . The lack of social identity prevents modern man from experiencing states of mysterious and dramatic revitalization which could serve as a basis in reality for believing in a nonsensical Deity.<sup>9</sup>

Second, and this might apply especially to Christianity, Western religion requires self-sacrifice in the service of a transcendent God. To believe in the existence of this demanding Deity a person must experience that there is something that is of superior value to himself and worthy of sacrifice. Stress is placed on the word "experience"; it is not sufficient to know about society, it must be experienced, which means we must be a part of it. Only a man who is society can experience society, and thereby encounter a transcendent object. Just as you sense that a good novel is real and a sociological tract is not, so participating in society is real and knowing about it insufficient. Being society allows us, then, to believe in God.

To conclude, this portion of the paper has tried to lay bare the connection between belief and experience. The point of the discussion is that those who seek to make believers of Americans must concern

themselves not only with preaching or communicating the Word but must also seek to structure man's experience so that he will become a part of society, and thus able to believe. In our age conversion is intimately linked to alienation, and he who seeks the former must solve the latter.

But there has been a subplot to this section, namely our attempt to compare the situations of nonliterate and literate man in order to make the reader feel more sympathetic, if this is necessary, to the modern man of doubt and hesitancy. Preliterate man lived in a world of fact and ritual that daily confirmed his beliefs. Recalling the impact of the Balinese ritual we can understand the significance of Wach's comment that ceremonial life "characterized, with one great exception—namely, modern Western civilization—all cultures."<sup>10</sup> The very fabric of preliterate man's social life supported his religious life; in fact Bradbury has defined primitive religion as one in which "relations with the objects of worship derive very directly from the typical experiences of individuals in their relation with certain categories of living persons."<sup>11</sup> The religious world was not distinct but a continuation of daily life.

Perhaps equally significant is the fact that preliterate religion is rooted in the physical. In a stimulating essay Turner has analyzed the significance of three basic colors—white, red, and black—which are found in rituals around the world. He suggests that they derived their significance from milk, blood, and faeces, and boldly speculates that:

Among the earliest symbols produced by man are the three colours representing products of the human body, whose emission, spilling, or production is associated with a heightening of emotion—in other words, culture, the super-organic, has an intimate connection with the organic in its early stages, with the awareness of powerful physical experiences. . . . The basic three physical processes are sacred because they have the power "to carry man away," to overthrow his normal powers of resistance. Though immanent in his body they appear to transcend his consciousness.<sup>12</sup>

The physical, and especially our body, is beyond all doubt the really real; preliterate religion through its symbolism linked up with this real but transcendent organism. The reality of religion was grounded for primitive man in the reality not only of society, not only of his experiences during rituals, but in the overwhelming isness of tangible, touchable objects, especially his physical self.

Have pity, then, on modern man who seems to disclaim the physical, who rarely becomes entranced, whose religious and social life has been disconnected. And recall that if you hope to awaken religious conviction in him, consider the possible necessity of ensuring that his personal life must merge at least in part with the life of society.

### **Ideas of Purpose**

Wach has noted:

A devout Moslem will not start on any important or even trivial enterprise without placing it, through an "inshallah," in a deeper context. It is the great vision of all *homines religiosi* everywhere that all life is the expression of worship, that every act and deed witnesses to the continuous communion of man with God.<sup>13</sup>

Preachers seek not simply individuals who believe, who assent to the existence of a Deity, but persons who will allow this conviction to permeate the texture of their lives. Religionists seek a total reorientation; they ask the discipline to transform every deed into a religious act of worship; they seek a fundamental uniformity midst the diversity of life's tasks. This section of the paper will consider the relation between this call and contemporary society.

Perhaps somewhat superficial but certainly relevant is the fact that modern society can be summed up in the word differentiation. Recall that practically all the functions now performed by all the different organizations that now exist were once carried out by the family. Today society is a loose network of interlocking organizations and groups, each of which is somewhat autonomous. When all social activities were centralized in relatively few people, these activities could be integrated through the will of the participants; strong men could coordinate all of life to express one principle. The individual lived in his behavior because his acts expressed his desires. This, of course, is no longer true. Modern man enters a preexisting structure, carries out his assigned tasks, leaves, enters another structure, leaves, enters another structure, etc. Asking our contemporaries to unify their lives, to reduce all their behavior to the expression of one central theme, is tantamount to trying to reduce a city to a cottage. Modern man passes through a series of structures to which in considerable degree he must conform; these structures are not tied together within an individual, as in simple societies, but within the masses. I do not wish to paint a black picture

of our civilization, for this same differentiation has probably increased man's freedom by increasing efficiency thus allowing man free time. But at least for now it has also made it almost impossible for a typical person to unify his life such that all his behavior will express one fundamental conviction.

Supporting the impact of structural differentiation is the overwhelming amount of communication that is fleeting, decentralized, unconnected. Specifically, consider the phenomenon of television: on the one hand we have advertising which throws each message at you as if you had never heard any other advertising; it is decentralized with each message unit unrelated to any other—a comment which also applies often to the content of advertising which overwhelms with *non sequiturs*; the world of advertising floods us with unrelated bits of information producing a world in which no decision is linked with any other. Similarly, we have the phenomenon of television itself: an evening of T.V. will make you cry, laugh, sigh, and sleep—and all for totally unconnected reasons. Every half-hour a different story; sometimes no story, just a series of “acts.” The same description could of course be applied to newspapers. Compare this with a person who would spend several days with one novel and then, perhaps, return to it periodically, or a preliterate man who would listen to the same mythical tales over and over again. The mass media reflect that same basic phenomenon, differentiation; culture like structure has become unknotted. This sensual opulence no doubt contributes to freedom, but it also lessens the likelihood that modern man will be able to pull himself together and become the embodiment of a single theme.

But perhaps more fundamental than either structural or cultural decentralization is the division of our lives, and especially men's lives, into the private and public sectors. Gibson Winter believes that rather than transcending this dichotomization of life, that rather than being a bridge between these two worlds, Christianity has rooted in the private realm thus eliminating the possibility of unifying man. He writes:

American Christianity derives its cultural expression from the residential milieu . . .

The residential community is preoccupied with the maintenance of emotional stability and the nurture of children. These are its principal interests; significant aspects of life, indeed, but they do not exhaust the values of personality and society. Moreover, familial and residential community counterbalance tensions generated in other sectors of the society; by the same token, these communities are no longer a dynamic

source of social development. Residential associations are now insulated associations serving to reduce social tension. . . . Residential community and its values are determined by the dynamics of an industrial society. Churches that organize their existence around residential communities likewise become reflectors of economic and technological forces. . . .

The churches today are indeed preoccupied with the private values of emotional balance and the nurture of children . . . This preoccupation is attested most dramatically by the strange coalition which has arisen between the denominational churches and Billy Graham's evangelistic crusades . . .

The coalition is founded upon a shared preoccupation with private or individual values.<sup>14</sup>

Although Winter's allegation does not apply equally to all preachers, it seems true that our bedroom towns are matched by bedroom religion. If a creed refuses to face what are some of the dominant problems of our times, how can it hope to unify the lives of those caught up in these dilemmas?

But the problem goes deeper. Even if we put aside these social problems, is religion really coming to grips with the private problems of contemporary Americans?

Our lives are torn asunder by the twin forces of duty and purpose. In prior civilizations these were one; today they are often antagonistic. A man's first duty is to his family, but he gains his sense of value from his work which requires him to minimize his family. And today women are being faced with this same dilemma. At home a man is responsible for the personal development of several real individuals; his job might make him partially, perhaps almost insignificantly, responsible for the lives of thousands or millions of unknowns. How do we weigh these two obligations? How do we evaluate our relative responsibilities for the very real physical and mental health of our family and the rather nebulous well-being of mankind? Has any sermon on any Sunday in any American church really come to grips with this problem? Yet if religion is to unify us, it must do so through tackling just such an issue.

Another personal problem of Americans centers on the fact that a universal obstacle to self-revelation is power. To the extent that someone has power over us, we hesitate to reveal certain things for fear of punishment. Likewise, if we dominate others secrecy is important, for knowledge can be turned into power; a confidential secretary can become an extremely significant figure because of what she knows. As long as power exists in a relationship, therefore, secrecy has value.

In our era of leisure time there have developed many relationships which have a minimum amount of power. Our bowling buddy does not dominate us, nor we him; his activity is of little value to us, and he himself could probably be easily replaced. One would think that self-revelation would occur under these conditions, and it no doubt does, especially over a bottle of beer. Unfortunately this intimacy rather than satisfying us, deepens the problem. Knowledge is a basis of relationship, which is a movement toward unity or identity. Modern man is in the predicament of relating to one set of individuals via power and another set via knowledge; he experiences, again, a factualization of the self. Man is scattered about his environment.

If religion is to unify man it must face the problems that divide him. Bedroom religion must be abandoned and the dilemmas of duty and purpose, of a world of relationships based on knowledge separated from his power sphere must be confronted and if not solved, at least assaulted.

But perhaps the problem goes still deeper. McLuhan, who puts so much stress on the significance of the new mass media, recently wrote:

I had a friend visiting from Harvard the other day who said, "You see, my generation does not have goals." (He is a young architect.) "We are not goal-orientated. We just want to know what is going on . . ." The point this person was making was that it is absurd to ask us to pursue fragmentary goals in an electric world that is organized integrally and totally. The young today reject goals; they want . . . involvement. They want total involvement. They don't want fragmented, specialized goals, or jobs.<sup>15</sup>

I am not sure I understand what either the friend or McLuhan is getting at, but both intrigue me. Perhaps modern man is striving to create unity on the psychological level rather than the social level; perhaps he is tying himself together on the level of attitude rather than act, in the pursuit of a style rather than values. There seems to be at least three such attempts: the religious road of love, the Zen preference for concerned detachment, and scientific worship of the active and communal search for truth. Each offers a unity of style that can infuse the most diverse social situations; no matter what the occasion, no matter what behavior is demanded of us, we can try to maintain an attitude of love, concerned detachment, or inquiry. But can man live by style alone? Is it possible for man to become concerned not with the specifics of his environment, but only with involvement in what-

ever environment he finds himself? These are questions I cannot now answer; perhaps they are not even the right questions.

A preacher seeks to make "every act and deed (witness) the continuous communion of man with God." What does this mean in our time? We have suggested that structural differentiation and cultural decentralization lessen the likelihood that modern man will be able to pull himself together completely, that religion has failed to assault the social and even personal problems it must confront if it is to have hope of becoming the basis for individual integration, and that possibly the new generation no longer organizes itself in terms of goals but personalizes the world not by changing it but by penetrating it. What must religion do to overcome these obstacles? Again, I am not even sure I am asking the right question.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has obviously failed to bring some practical solutions to the problems discussed, and for that my apology. My excuse is the typical academic ploy of suggesting that questions are more important than answers. But I must add that the nature of the solutions to the problems presented in this paper escape me.

What should be the attitude of preachers to socialization and intellectual inoculation? Certainly they stand in the way of meaningful, personal commitment, but they are also supposed to be necessary for social survival.

Given the dramatic difference between the extent to which religion is the preliterate's way of life and the extent to which modern man must in a sense continually rediscover his religion, and the possibility that this requires the experience of a transcendent object, how do we go about ensuring that individuals will at least partially become society? Although as a sociologist there are more things I could say about this, it would require another paper just to lay the groundwork, so we must be satisfied with merely raising the question, keeping in mind that no one has the answer for alienation.

Finally, how can preachers overcome the obstacles erected by modern times against their efforts to unify men's lives? How can structural differentiation and cultural decentralization be surmounted? What must be done to spur religious leaders to tackle the real issues that must be faced by any ideology that hopes to reunite modern man? And are

our contemporaries really looking for values that will integrate their lives, or is maintaining a constant style sufficient to overcome their sense of disintegration?

If I could be sure that these are the key questions, that they point to the fundamental problems, I would be content. Unfortunately, I have no such certitude.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Naven*, 2nd. Edition, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958, pp. 130-131.

<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, New York: Liverwright, 1953, pp. 36-37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Michael Banton, Editor, *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Glencoe: Free Press, no date, pp. 209-210.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Tamney, et. al., "A Social-Psychological Study of Religious Non-believers," *Social Compass*, December 3, 1965, pp. 177-186.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>10</sup> Joachim Wach, "Universals in Religion," in Louis Schneider, Editor, *Religion, Culture and Society*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> R. E. Bradbury, "Fathers, Elders, and Ghosts in Edo Religion," Banton, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> Victor W. Turner, "Colour Classification in Ndembu Ritual," in Banton, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-82.

<sup>13</sup> Joachim Wach, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Gibson Winter, *The New Creation as Metropolis*, New York: Macmillan, 1963, pp. 12-14.

<sup>15</sup> Herbert Marshall McLuhan, "Address at Vision 65," *American Scholar*, 35, 2 (Spring 1966), p. 205.