

# STUDIES

## in the Spirituality of Jesuits



A Profile of the Contemporary Jesuit:  
His Challenges and Opportunities

John R. Sheets, S.J.

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## F O R E W O R D

### THE AMERICAN ASSISTANCY SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

The present essay on the opportunities and challenges facing the contemporary Jesuit, by Father John R. Sheets of Marquette University, is the first study published by the recently established American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality. Father Sheets here gives a comprehensive survey of the circumstances amid which Jesuits live in the United States today, that by this background he may set the stage for topics which papers by the other members of the seminar will later treat in more particularized fashion. Father Sheets' study is indeed noteworthy for its constructive tone, its timeliness, and its relevance to the American Jesuits in their present cultural milieu. It is a pleasure to me, as Chairman of the American Provincials' Committee on Spiritual ministries to write this Foreword, and in it to take occasion to explain this Assistancy Seminar.

Vatican Council II, as we all know, has called upon religious institutes in their work of renewal to study and endeavor to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their respective founders, and then to adapt it to modern times. Hence the Jesuit Fathers Provincial of the United States have felt a need, especially since General Congregation XXXI, of gathering a group of qualified men to study in depth our Jesuit tradition of spirituality and to communicate the results, especially to the members of the Assistancy who are endeavoring to work out their aggiornamento according to the Church's desires. Their hope was that the studies of such a group would stimulate discussion and interest, throughout the Assistancy, on these matters so vital to us all. Father General too had expressed his desire and support for such a project.

Consequently, in their meeting of May 14-18, 1968, at Ponce, Puerto Rico, the American Provincials commissioned Father John Edwards and the other three Provincials who comprise the Committee on Spiritual Ministries to establish such a seminar. During the summer a plan was worked out which the Provincials approved in their meeting of October 3-9, 1968, at North Aurora, Illinois. To remove the fathers who would be appointed to this work from their current assignments would generate serious problems of manpower. To avoid this difficulty, the Provincials determined that a core group of well-qualified and interested Jesuits should meet four to six times a year to study topics pertaining to our spirituality and communicate the results to the Assistancy. Compelled by practical necessity to limit the number attending such meetings, generally to be held in the Midwest, the Provincials chose the members of the initial core group, from a longer list of equally capable fathers. The names of the members are given above on page ii. There will also be associate members who will be called upon when topics arise in areas of their special competencies. The Provincials also named Father George E. Ganss as Chairman and Father Hugo J. Gerleman as Secretary of the Seminar.

The members held their organizational meeting at St. Stanislaus Seminary, Florissant, November 30 - December 1, 1968. Determining their working objective in greater detail, they formulated the following statement:

The purpose of this seminar is:

- 1) in the light of actual problems facing the Jesuits of the Assistancy during this time of rapid change,
- 2) to do research in depth in the spirituality of Ignatius and in the historical development of Jesuit spirituality, and also to draw upon all modern sources, in order to throw light on these problems, and
- 3) to communicate the results of this research and of the discussions of the seminar members about their application to the actual problems
- 4) to the members of the Assistancy.

Thereupon they drew up a list of some twenty topics of present importance. Ten of these were selected and assigned, one to each member, as the topic he should treat within the first year of the seminar's functioning. It seemed that the first paper should be a background study, surveying the whole field of opportunities, problems, and challenges now facing us. This would pave the way for the more specific topics to follow. Father John R. Sheets generously consented to tackle this difficult job. We are grateful to him not only for taking it but also for getting it done so soon.

At each subsequent meeting, held in January, March, and June, 1969, one or two members of the seminar presented his paper, had it discussed and constructively criticized by the group, and departed to revise it. The press of the members' ordinary work made it impossible to have any other paper ready for publication before the close of the school year. But several are now almost ready and will appear shortly, though at irregular intervals.

In the meeting of March 22-23, 1969, hosted by Bellarmine College at North Aurora, Illinois, the group discussed the manner of disseminating its studies. They adopted the following norm, which is to be understood not as something rigid but as being flexible in accordance with occurring cases.

The studies sent out will be considered as position papers. That is, they will ordinarily take a stand, hope to stimulate discussion, and be open to change in the light of such discussion. They should be seriously and capably composed, with professional expertise and with documentation when it is desirable. But they need not attain that perfection and polish which some experts strive for in presenting a final or definitive presentation after years of study. If such perfection were demanded, the present attainable and timely good might be defeated by the dreamed of best which can be achieved only too late or perhaps never.

In the present era of rapid change, there are various books, periodicals, and newspapers which provide a voice for those who sponsor opinions and causes, some of which are too radical or unproven. In the effort to maintain a proper and helpful balance, we should try to make sure that an opportunity to be heard is given also to those who are very much concerned about genuine Christian tradition, and about the Jesuit tradition within it.

This American Assistancy Seminar has now made its start. For some time to come it must feel its way, and its procedures will be revised in accordance with what experience may bring.

There are many possible uses for the seminar's publications. They will help us toward a deeper knowledge of our heritage of the Jesuit approach to Christian spiritual doctrine and practice, and toward wise and sound adaptation of that heritage to our rapidly changing circumstances. These studies may well furnish topics for many community discussions. Or they can give rise to less formal discussion in private or group conversations. They can help toward improving our community spirit, common outlook, bond of charity, and esprit de corps. They can inspire others to compose further studies or express reactions.

The members of the seminar will welcome comments and suggestions. These may be sent to the writer of each study, or to any member, or to the Chairman, Father George E. Ganss, or to the Secretary, Fr. Hugo J. Gerleman. All of us will beg God to prosper what has now been begun.

John Edwards, S.J.  
Provincial, Province of New Orleans, and  
Chairman, Committee on Spiritual Ministries  
Conference of Major Superiors of Jesuits

The first part of the report is devoted to a general survey of the situation in the country. It is followed by a detailed account of the work done during the year. The report concludes with a summary of the results and a list of recommendations.

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## A PROFILE OF THE CONTEMPORARY JESUIT:

### HIS CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

By

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Introduction: The scope, method, and limitations of this essay.

The purpose of these introductory remarks is to describe the scope of this essay, its method, and its limitations. The scope is indicated by the title. We want to treat the Jesuit today in the context of the challenges he faces and to comment on the way in which these challenges can become opportunities to become a better Christian and a better Jesuit. Sometimes we may speak more of problems than of challenges. The words point to the same reality but have different overtones. When a problem becomes a challenge, it means that it has issued a summons, an invitation to personal combat. For the Christian a problem becomes a challenge only in the atmosphere of hope under the inspiration of a promise heard in faith. When faith and hope fade, then challenges revert to the stage of problems. Our purpose in commenting on the many problems facing the Jesuit today is to place them in the context of faith and hope, where they become challenges. Further, we want to see them in the light of love which converts a challenge into an opportunity for life in greater abundance.

Perhaps the whole meaning of revelation could be described in this process. From reason man can get some answers but they remain partial and overshadowed by the many limit problems which present a kind of sound barrier his reason cannot cross. Revelation does not mean that all problems are answered. It does mean, however, that there is (as Paul Ricoeur has mentioned) a surplus of sense over nonsense. When problems become challenges, they can become opportunities for deeper love of God and man.

The method we employ is to situate the challenges facing the Jesuit within those confronting the contemporary man. Most of the challenges the Jesuit has are shared with other men, other Christians, and other religious. Yet there are some belonging to him as a Jesuit, arising from the particular character of Jesuit life.

The method, then, takes the nature of a spiral. We proceed from what is more general to what is particular. A member of the Society of Jesus is before anything else a member of the society of man. He will be affected then by the same problems confronting contemporary man.<sup>1</sup> Further, he is a member of another society, the Church. Belonging to the People of God he shares in the problems and challenges confronting the community of faith.

Again, within the Church, he belongs to a particular way of life, the religious life, which gives a special mark to his Christian life. Many Jesuits are priests or are studying for the priesthood. This means that the problems and challenges facing the priest today are theirs also. Finally, as a member of the Society of Jesus he shares with his brothers its glory, humiliations, suffering, and manifold problems.

It might come as a surprise to us that we have more challenges as religious than we would have if we were not religious, more as priests than if we were not priests, more as Christians than if we were non-believers. There is, however, a hidden law at work here. It is the law of responsible love. Every form of love has its challenges, just as every form of life has its challenges. But the challenges increase as life itself ascends from efforts at mere survival to that delicate harmony of life we call beauty. Similarly with love. As love becomes more beautiful, the more delicate is the balance that has to be kept, the more sensitive it is to everything that can threaten it.

The higher a mountain climber ascends the more challenges he has. If in addition he has roped himself to others, then he has assumed responsibility for them also. The challenges then increase as the values to be striven for become more beautiful and as one assumes more and more responsibility for the lives of others. The mystery of this law of responsible love is found in the most profound way in Christ. His whole life bore witness to the delicate attunement of his own will to the will of the Father, while at the same time (to continue the metaphor) he roped the whole of mankind to himself in the incarnation and redemption.

To the extent, then, that one attempts the same kind of life Christ led, to that extent will he meet with challenges because he is attempting to live out in his own life the same proportion of values Christ had, while at the same time assuming in a limited way the same responsibility Christ had for others.

We have spoken of the scope of this paper and its approach. Now for a word about its limitations. Besides the limitations of the writer, coming from his own limited point of view and experience, there are those dictated by the approach. We intend to present only an apercu, a profile, of the challenges and opportunities facing the Jesuit today. The topic is approached from the viewpoint of theology. It was not possible to include the valuable contributions from the social sciences. This involves the risk of being too general and leaving the impression of something we might find in the "Yellow Pages" under "challenges."

There is also the risk that a negative impression will be created. We will not have the opportunity to develop the ways in which the challenge can actually become opportunities for growth. Such a task would require volumes. However, subsequent papers in this series will contribute to this end.

## I. The Challenge of Change

### A. The Acceleration of Change in the Modern World

Attention has frequently been called to the acceleration of change in the world during the past half-century. We seem to be going through one of those periods described by Teilhard de Chardin as a threshold or critical point where the forces which have been building up for centuries reach a stage of such condensation of power that they erupt into what is virtually a new form of life. He comments in one of his works, "There is now incontrovertible evidence that mankind has just entered upon the greatest period of change the world has ever known."<sup>2</sup> History has known such periods before, periods of transition from one mode of life and thought to a new synthesis. Until such a synthesis is formed (a synthesis which presents at most a relative equilibrium, not one that is absolute) a whole generation, or even generations, can be caught in the dizzying process. It seems that the whole world suddenly goes from a period of relative peace into relative chaos. It is like the motion of a giant river moving placidly onward where it is all pretty much plain sailing into a stretch of rapids where one has to hang on for dear life. We are in those rapids now.

We can comment on this acceleration of change that characterizes our modern world by describing it in terms of the new powers man has. He has new powers to see, to hear, to touch, to control, to know, and to move. All of these powers have "exploded" during the past half-century. Man can see what he never saw before, whether it is into the world above him, the world around him, or the world beneath him. He can hear what he never heard before. There is no human heart so isolated or no village so remote that he cannot hear the cries emerging from there. He can touch or experience what he has never experienced before.

With the horizons of the world continually receding before his power to see, his appetite to know has become whetted. One hears today about the "knowledge explosion." More people today have the opportunities to see, in a world in which there is constantly more to be seen, where there are more media than ever before to diffuse knowledge.

Along with this there is a sense of domination over the processes of nature. Man can control at least to some extent the processes of nature and make them serve him. He can move through space in such a way that the limitations of space are diminished, if not conquered.

All of these new powers have been unleashed by man's creativity working on the world as it constantly unveils itself to his power to see and to control. Our age is above all an age of creativity. This means the tempo of change, far from decreasing, might even increase.

But everyone is aware that this is not the whole of the story. Along with the expansion of man's powers there is a contraction of his inner reality. The world he has elaborated into a wonder world of technology is threatened from within by bankruptcy of the spirit. If contemporary art, literature, and song bear witness to the testimony of man's spirit, then we are straw men, empty in a world of plenty, alone in a world of stepped up communication. While man through his power to know and to control has begun to reach out and cover the surface of the globe, he has not moved closer to the center. He hears more but does not listen as much. He experiences more but does not savor. What he has conquered in nature he cannot conquer in himself. He moves faster and travels more but is not sure of his direction. He belongs to an age where men reach out toward one another to clasp hands in worldwide community. At the same time he feels more and more like a stranger. The past is a springboard he has left behind. The present is movement. The future is unclear.

This then is the condition of modern man. With apologies for using the broad brush and the sweeping statement, it seems true to say that in this time of accelerated change, we have become more and more conscious both of our riches and our poverty.

#### B. The Two Components of Change: Forward Thrust and Consolidating Thrust

The basic challenge of change as it affects man is the integration of the two components belonging to the process of growth and development. Every movement issuing in growth has two components: a thrust forward, and a thrust toward unification. Interestingly enough two contemporary thinkers, Teilhard de Chardin and Bernard Lonergan, have spoken at length about the twofold aspect of change. Teilhard de Chardin calls the forward thrust the radial energy, and the unifying thrust the tangential energy.<sup>3</sup> Both energies are aspects of the one movement of development. They are really two components making up one energy.

Using different terminology Lonergan speaks of an operating and an integrating component. The operating component is the upwardly directed dynamism that is called finality. The integrating is the power of unification.<sup>4</sup>

Such a discussion, however, seems far removed from the more practical considerations having to do with the contemporary Jesuit and the challenge of change. If we consider the case more closely, however, we find that it touches the heart of our problems. After all the most basic challenge of change is to grow, even in an atmosphere antithetical to growth. All growth is ultimately a matter of synthesizing the various forces at work into a higher unity.

These principles of forward movement and consolidation are operative in all of experience, but especially man's development. An illustration will help. Everytime, for example, there is a new insight, there is growth. The newness manifests the thrust forward. The fact that it is a new synthesis manifests the unifying aspect. It is deeper knowledge, forming a particular center within my total experience. The same is true of love. Where there

is growth in love, there is newness, freshness, movement that is ecstatic. At the same time that it moves outside itself toward the other, it is being integrated within the total experience of the individual to create not only a new level of love, but also a new level of wholeness.

These principles of change are operative wherever there is development. They hold both for individuals in their own personal development or for societies formed from many individuals. What is true for the individual holds in an analogous way for societies in their movement toward growth. The problems of harmonizing these two principles to issue in growth are similar whether we consider one individual or a group of individuals united in a society.

Let us try to bring this down to a concrete level. The problem in an individual is largely a problem of discernment of spirits. The problem of growth in a society made of individuals is one of cooperation. Again, speaking of the individual, we can say that it is a problem of fidelity to the laws of his own growth, to the pattern of his life. If he is faithful to these, he will grow. He grows to the extent that he responds to these laws.

Practically speaking we see that many problems come not from the nature of change but from the nature of those who are changing. Everyone has some potential to contribute to the progress of society. According to his own aptitude, gifts, temperament, one may perhaps evince the forward component of the movement. Another manifests more the unifying and consolidating component. The gifts of one stand in a kind of polar relationship to the gifts of the other. Theoretically they should complement one another in their polarity. Practically speaking the movement of growth in a society often becomes a via crucis. Instead of complementing one another the gifts of one clash with the gifts of another. We all know the consequences --- pain, misunderstanding, recrimination, frustration.

At the risk of appearing too schematic let us contrast the emphases and the characteristics that belong to the two dynamic aspects of change. Obviously we never find all of these characteristics in an unalloyed state in any one person. But it will help to see the various polarities belonging to the forward component as contrasted with the integrating.

THE FORWARD COMPONENTTHE INTEGRATING COMPONENTThe emphasis is on:

1. advance
2. action
3. direct consequences
4. effect to be gained
5. exceptions
6. freedom
7. imagination
8. immediate effect
9. new forms
10. relevance of the moment
11. revolution
12. risk
13. style
14. visible, tangible, quick results

It is characterized by:

1. aggressiveness
2. beachheads
3. casualness
4. challenge
5. discontinuity with past
6. every moment a kairos
7. facile mobilis
8. frankness, straightforwardness
9. freedom from convention
10. instinctive movement
11. intolerance with frustration
12. impetuosity
13. spontaneity of movement

The emphasis is on:

1. consolidation of advances
2. coordination of the action
3. wider consequence
4. the motive plus the effect
5. the rule
6. responsibility
7. judgment and memory
8. wider effect
9. substance beneath the forms
10. relevance in wider perspective
11. evolution
12. caution
13. content
14. long rang results

It is characterized by

1. appeasement
2. "maginot lines"
3. propriety
4. defence
5. continuity
6. special kairoi
7. difficile mobilis
8. nuanced and qualified expression
9. respect for convention
10. movement according to law and order
11. more tolerant with frustration
12. reserve
13. measured movement

None of this series of contrasting emphases and characteristics is meant in a pejorative sense. It is simply an attempt to point out the complementarity involved in the two dynamic aspects of change. Nor are any of these characteristics found in any one person in a pure state. Just as every person is androgynous, having both male and female characteristics, with one type more predominant than the other, so every person has to some extent both kinds of characteristics, though one type may predominate.

So far we have spoken of the positive aspect of these two components. These various emphases and characteristics should mesh with one another to provide the complete movement toward maturity. In practice, however, they are often at odds. Each of the characteristics should be open to its counterpart, as thrust forward should be open to unification. In fact they often become inverted, turned back on themselves. In this way they become obstacles to development.

For example, the forward movement when taken out of the polarity of unification and consolidation becomes analogous to cancerous growth. There is a proliferation of life but it is not taken up into the organic unity of the person. Where the consolidating and integrating aspect is taken out of its polarity, there is stagnation. Unless there is always something new and fresh to unify and consolidate, the organism begins to live off itself. This is not progress but destruction.

Further it is possible that the characteristics associated with each of the two aspects of movement become discordant. The one who has the characteristics associated with the forward component can become inconsiderate, disrespectful, omniscient, iconoclastic, unrealistic, anarchistic. In one in whom the characteristics of unifying and consolidating are strong, it is possible for the same to happen. He can become self-righteous, inflexible, petty, pharisaical, immobile, complacent. He can take refuge from present challenges by fleeing to generalities, or give yesterday's answers to today's questions.

How is it possible for the Jesuit to meet the challenge involved in the harmonizing of these two fundamental aspects of movement if it is to issue in growth for himself and the Society? Theoretically the answer is easy. Such a challenge can be met only through open-mindedness. If the problem of open-mindedness could be solved on a practical level, the challenge of change could be met. Much of the frustration and discouragement would disappear. Instead there would be a sense of exhilaration coming from cooperation issuing in newness of life.

This question of open-mindedness leads us to the next stage of our investigation. It has to do with what is often called "the generation gap."

### C. The "Generation Gap"

The expression, "the generation gap," describes a phenomenon we are all familiar with. People who belong to the same period in history, the same family, the same society, can feel as if they belong to entirely different worlds. The problem has a particular intensity today. It is more than the normal problem of mutual understanding between young and old. This has always been, and will always be a problem. That is more of an "experience gap." It comes, for one reason, from the fact that older people make their judgments out of a wider range of experience than is available to the younger.

Today, however, there is more than the normal "experience gap" separating the young and the old. The terms "young" and "old" do not necessarily refer to length of years, but ordinarily one finds the generation gap pretty much corresponds to an age gap also.

Many older people find themselves bewildered. They see all they stood for challenged and called into question. They see the call for open-mindedness and dialogue as an insidious threat to principles they have always held. They feel like strangers in the very house they have built, foreigners in a strange

land they themselves once settled. There is a feeling of confusion. It is as if the very stars and sun by which one charted his course were moved from their fixed position. Where can a person turn?

Their reaction is varied. Sometimes there is almost a call for a new crusade, a holy war, to put things back into order. At other times there is passive aggressiveness, a steady but determined resistance to change. Or again, some find a certain measure of peace in the fact that God will call them soon and spare them further trials. Still others can become bitter over the sad turn of events. They feel either a secret or an overt connivance with the forces opposed to change.

It would be a mistake to say that this is the reaction of all older people. Even where such reaction is found, it is understandable, though regrettable, for it hurts no one more than themselves. Among many, however, one finds a confidence born of faith and hope even though they do not sensibly feel the corresponding buoyancy.

It might be that the intensity of feeling associated with the generation gap has already begun to recede. Perhaps both sides have learned much over the past few years and have come to understand one another better.

Where such a gap does exist, it can be bridged only in two ways: through understanding and charity. While such an observation is rather obvious, it might help, nevertheless, to reflect on it. We have to understand, first of all, the basic law governing the conservation and expression of human experience. Experience gives rise to various outlooks, attitudes, mentalities. Closely associated with the mentality is the way in which the mentality was formed. The mentality in turn expresses itself in certain familiar patterns. All experience has, so to speak, a body and a soul. Similarly the conservation of experience has a body and a soul. The soul is the attitude or mentality formed. Its body is all that is associated with its formation or expression.

Here is where the problems and anguish come in. We can see that the so-called "generation gap" is really a mentality gap. The mentality gap, in turn, is not simply a difference in ideas, or a difference in the "soul" of the experience. There is also a difference in the bodily component of the mentality. It is almost impossible to dissociate the soul of a mentality from its body. They form a unity. If a person, for example, no longer expresses his devotion to the Blessed Mother by saying the rosary, another can easily infer that there simply is no devotion to Mary at all. Others might try to reassure such a person by trying to point out the difference between what is substantial and accidental. But this fails to convince. Because of the close knit unity of the soul and body of a mentality one cannot threaten the sign without appearing to threaten the meaning. In our example, to neglect the rosary appears to be a sign of neglect of Mary.

Generation or mentality gaps form according to the normal process of change. In a time of accelerated change, however, the generation gap can become a chasm. The whole world of images in which a person embodied his



meaning is suddenly threatened, questioned, and is in danger of being swept away. Such a person is very much like poor Job. One after another the messengers come to tell him that his oxen, sheep, shepherds, camels, sons and daughters--everything he possessed was swept away. Finally even his own health is taken away. In fact, many exhibit as little understanding for those suffering from this generation gap as the friends of Job did for him in his misfortune. They had no compassion at all. They felt that he would not really be suffering if he did not deserve it somehow.

The first element then in bridging this gap is understanding. It is not unfair to say that the initiative should be with the young rather than with the older. While it is true to say that this bridge is a two-way street, it is also true that it is mostly uphill for the older and mostly downhill for the younger. It is not easy for either side. The younger, though, have more flexibility. They have not as yet formed that until-death-do-we-part marriage of meaning and sign. For older people sign and what is signified are practically identified.

The difficulty, therefore, that older people have with change does not necessarily come from the fact that they are less charitable, or poor religious, or less obedient. They react in the same way we shall react when faced with a change that threatens the psychic unity formed from a fusion of thought and practice. Hence to describe older people as "set in their way" does not necessarily mean that they are intolerant. It means that their lives obey a law to which we are all subject. The spirit of man assumes a certain shape through his experience. In this way his experience is conserved, and being conserved it shapes future experiences.

We mentioned that the generation gap can be bridged only in two ways: through understanding and charity. Actually the two are closely related. One does not have the patience necessary for understanding unless understanding is sustained, in-spirited, by love. Understanding, however, is not enough. It might unite minds. It does not unite people.

We spoke of the psychic unity formed from the conservation of the body-soul aspect of experience, where there is an intimate union of sign and signified. However, the richer the experience the more inadequate the sign to express it. The deeper the insight the more words we need to describe it. The more intense the love the more do we feel the limitations of all signs to communicate it.

There is ultimately only one sign that communicates Christian experience. It is the sign of charity. "'By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples'" (Jn 13:35). This is ultimately the only way in which the basic Christian experience is translated from an inner life to the world of man.

We may ask what this has to do specifically with the generation gap. Charity, after all, is the way to close gaps, wherever they are found. Since we are speaking largely of a mentality gap when we talk about the generation gap, we are dealing with a conflict of signs that embody and express experience.

From the very nature of things this conflict will never be completely resolved on the level of lesser signs. We have to get to the experience underlying all individual experiences. This is the experience of our unity with Christ through grace. This experience transcends all others and draws the others into the Christ relationship. In the language of St. Thomas, charity is the form of all the other virtues. Similarly the sign corresponding to this fundamental experience transcends all partial signs. It is the sign of charity.

Older people may have their security shaken when they experience threats to the psychic unity of their lives formed by meaning and sign when they are confronted with a world in rapid change. This is inevitable. The only experience acting as a countervailing source is the reassurance coming from the experience of charity. Love does not do away with the conflict of sign on lesser levels. However, it does reach beneath these partial signs to a level of communication which is at the heart of Christian experience. While the differences remain, they are suspended within the unitive medium of Christian charity.

To sum up this section we can say that the challenge evoked by the generation gap is a challenge to build bridges through understanding and through love. One has to understand, first of all, the way in which meaning and sign are wedded into one flesh to create not simply an age gap but a mentality gap. Secondly, realizing that the experience of any individual is time-conditioned, and in this way always to a certain extent particular to himself and closed to another, he must build the bridge on a level where the sign bears witness to an experience that is not peculiar to himself or closed to another. This is the experience of the grace relationship whose sign is charity.

#### D. The Challenges Presented by the Thrusts of Change in the Modern World

There are challenges belonging to every age and challenges peculiar to a particular age. We would like to comment on some of the challenges peculiar to our own age. In doing so the sketchy nature of these remarks is bound to stand out. Yet there is some merit in such a sketch. In spite of its incompleteness and the fact that the individual points are open to discussion it can provide a springboard for further consideration of the challenges facing the Jesuit today.

##### 1. Toward Person

The first is the challenge of personalism. Speaking very broadly it is a twofold challenge: a challenge to become more of a person by openness to all of the factors contributing to this end, and secondly the challenge to resist becoming less a person by guarding against what counterfeits true personalism.

Personalism is not something that can be defined simply. It is a philosophy, an atmosphere, a Weltanschauung, a condition pervading the whole of contemporary thinking and action. It emphasizes the value of man, his openness to other men, his creativity, dignity, uniqueness, and subjectivity. There is a true personalism and also many counterfeits. Very often in practice it is difficult to distinguish one from the other.

As was mentioned, the atmosphere of personalism provides a twofold challenge to modern man. The positive challenge is an invitation to become more of a person and more of a Christian. It is basically a Christian emphasis, rooted in the Gospel. The present emphasis simply highlights the perennial Christian concern. It would take us too long to develop the positive side of this challenge.

There is also the negative side, the challenge to resist becoming less a person by succumbing to spurious forms of personalism. Some of these are subjectivism, romanticism, and the cult of experience.

There is danger, first of all, of confusing subjectivism with personalism. Subjectivism is in reality an inverted personalism. Its social dimension has been reduced or eliminated. True personalism lives in the context of responsibility to a sense of claim that other persons and in fact the whole of reality makes on a person. It is this awareness of claim made on a person that frees personalism from arbitrariness, self-centeredness. It marks personalism with a sense of response to a claim, not simply a response to one's feelings.

The difference between subjectivism and personalism can be seen in the appeal to one's conscience. It can either be an appeal to the claim one makes on reality, or a response to the claim that reality makes on a person. Genuine conscience is always an acknowledgment of the demands of the other, where this other is God, man, the whole of reality.

Closely related to this subjectivism is a reluctance to speak of truth, falsehood, good and evil. While in the abstract one might admit that there are certain absolutes, in actual life a cloud of ambiguity covers everything. The relativizing of truth takes place (often unconsciously) in three possible ways: by converting being into becoming, truth into temperament, certitude into opinion.

The question of truth can be converted from a question of being into a question of being at a particular time. It becomes a question then of relativizing truth by locating it within the whole process of man's historical development. To answer the question of truth, one has to see whether we are speaking of primitive, medieval, or modern man, or of man as he belongs to a nomadic, agricultural, feudal, or technological world.

Again the question of truth can be reduced to a question of temperament. It becomes a question of one's psychological make-up, whether he is literal-minded, conscientious, broad-minded, scrupulous, serious, sensitive, tender, passionate, etc.

Or the question of truth is reduced to the matter of opinion. One asks not whether something is true or false, good or evil. Rather it is a matter of which party or school holds it. Is it conservative? liberal? progressive? reactionary? middle-of-the-road? leftist? rightist?

It is not possible here to make all of the distinctions necessary to correct possible misinterpretation. Truth is neither some objective blueprint that one can see if he simply opens his eyes. Nor is it completely relativistic, though there is a certain relativism in terms of growth and appreciation of what is true. Basically one has to be aware that truth is the response to a claim, the claim the other makes on me. This means that there is an objective element in truth transcending the relativism of time and process, temperament and party.

We mentioned that romanticism can masquerade under the guise of personalism. Romanticism has the same effects on our view of reality that superstition and magic have in religion. They invest reality with powers belonging not to it but to a being above it. Similarly romanticism invests the real world with attributes it does not have or it exaggerates the attributes all out of proportion. In the past man has romanticized many things, for example, the idea of courtly love, the meaning of nature, and the meaning of man.

The tendency to romanticize is always with us. Whether it is because (as T.S. Eliot mentions) man cannot stand too much reality, or because we want to avoid the one thing necessary, we continue to romanticize. What Ionesco said about literature is applicable to our tendency to romanticize: "As long as we live we turn everything into literature."<sup>5</sup> Today there is the tendency to romanticize the person, the community, marriage, sexuality. This is not to deny that there is genuine interest and deeper insight into these realities. However it is often difficult to distinguish the genuine insight from the will-o'-the-wisp glow surrounding it.

Ultimately the test of genuinity is the power to sustain commitment in face of the sacrifices demanded by the claim of others on a person. Romanticism cannot withstand the demands made by the change of the season, where those seasons are not just the seasons of the year, but those changes belonging to the rhythm of life of every person. Where true personalism is found, one finds "The Man of All Seasons."

Another feature we mentioned often associated with a pseudo-personalism is the cult of experience. Its premises are these: one should become a complete person; but to become a complete person one should experience all that a person can. According to these premises the whole of the world becomes grist for one's mill of experience. Various corollaries follow pertaining to knowledge, meaning, and person. "One cannot really know something unless he experiences it." "Nothing is really meaningful unless it is experienced." "The more diversified the experience the more developed the person."

No one can debate the value of experience to make a person more real. By its very nature experience means a vital participation in some aspect of reality that results in a new synthesis. What is general, abstract, impersonal, notional becomes realized and concretized in one's life. On the other hand, no one can debate the fact that all human experience has its limitations

These limitations arise from two factors: first of all, from the obvious fact that as creatures of a particular time, place, circumstances we are all limited; secondly from the fact that we not only are creatures, but creatures with a commitment. The basic commitment we have to love God with our whole heart, our whole mind, and our whole soul, and our neighbor as ourself ultimately monitors the scope of our experience. In other words there is experience which is legitimate and experience which is illegitimate. The norm depends on the extent to which it fosters one's fundamental commitment.

Putting the same idea in scriptural terms one has to judge the legitimacy of experience in terms of one's vocation. Israel, for example, in her fidelity to her vocation to worship God could no longer experience the fertility worship of the Canaanites. In his letter St. Paul tells the Christians that to be faithful to their vocation many experiences are closed to them, for example, immorality, taking part in religious meals connected with idolatry, the religious practices of Judaism where they conflicted with Christianity.

Ultimately then the norm of experiences is the commitment that specifies one's vocation. To say more on this might be belaboring the point. We have not spoken of the asceticism of experience. This goes head-on against the prevalent idea of a pan-experientialism, and it even adds something to the idea of legitimate experience. It involves the sacrifice of lesser experiences in order to foster an experience which is deeper and closer to one's vocation. This kind of experience lies at the heart of the religious life.

Let us sum up our remarks in this section. We mentioned that one of the big challenges facing the Jesuit today was the challenge to open himself to the legitimate contributions of a personalistic world, and at the same time to resist the counterfeits of true personalism. We mentioned three of them: subjectivism, romanticism, and the cult of experience. Once again the challenge basically has to be met by what is comprised in the simple word, fidelity.

## 2. Toward Process

Another feature of our contemporary mentality is our awareness of process. As in the case of personalism this awareness can lead to a richer appreciation of man and his world. The life and work of Teilhard de Chardin provide us with an excellent example of this. Here again we are faced with a double challenge: to open the sails fully to the wind of process, without, however, losing sight of the absolutes by which we chart our course.

We spoke above about the relativism that can arise from a pseudo-personalism. The same attitude can be fostered by an uncritical attitude toward process.

If one sees everything caught in the vast cyclotron of process, then everything is in flux. Everything takes its meaning from the moment-to-moment situation within the varying manifold. In practice this gives rise to a skepticism which is more pervasive than we consciously admit. This skepticism constantly eats into the three foci of man's existence: God, man, and the world.

God himself becomes part of the process. He is not only God the evolver, but God the envolving. Anything like the idea of God who transcends and sustains the whole movement of process is ruled out. Man, too, is completely caught up in the process. He has no significance that transcends his particular moment in the process. There are no permanent norms of truth or morality. These also are submerged in the shifting sands of process.

At first sight such observations might seem far removed from the challenges facing the Jesuit today. Yet he cannot remain untouched by the skepticism and relativism in the world he lives in. There is the sophisticated skepticism of the academician and the unexamined skepticism of the man-on-the-street. The sophisticated skepticism is probably less dangerous than the other.

This skepticism shows itself not only in a lack of faith in God but also in a lack of faith in man. It is an anomaly that there can be such an emphasis on personalism today and at the same time such a pervasive lack of trust in man. Man strangely enough is deserving of our love but does not merit our trust. A sign of this is the nonchalance with which we view infidelity, no matter where it is found: in the vocation to marriage, religious life, the priesthood, our faith.

The Jesuit today must meet the challenge of awareness of process. At the same time he has to resist the insidious corrosion of skepticism. This can be met only by a deepened faith, in God, first of all, and secondly in man. Further he needs the intellectual vision which allows him to view reality as a whole. It is not possible to develop this point at length. It is faith primarily that gives the vision of reality as a whole, where process is seen as the time of courtship leading to the consummation of procession. Ultimately it is through faith that we know that we are made not for process but for possession by a God who is himself not in process, but is the ground of the process, and its goal. As far as is possible there has to be the intellectual vision reproducing on the level of reason that same unity seen through faith. The faith vision must subtend an intellectual vision. This is the intellectual challenge facing the Jesuit today.

### 3. Toward Community

Another characteristic of our modern mentality is an awareness of the role of the community in the life of man, and man's role in the life of the community. In a wider sense it is an awareness of the social dimension of man. In itself this is not new. It belongs to the Christian view of man. But it often remained a lesson that had to be re-learned like the material from a lecture in class. It was often quickly forgotten. Today, however, more than in previous ages this consciousness is sustained by a universal awareness that gives it real power.

The challenge for the Jesuit is again twofold. First to allow the full momentum of this social awareness to enter his life in order to carry out his vocation as a Jesuit and a priest. After all it was awareness of this social dimension that brought the Society of Jesus into being. At the same time, as we saw in the previous characteristics of our times, the increased

social awareness brings problems. The biggest challenge for the Jesuit in this regard is that with an increased sense of social responsibility his viewpoint becomes more and more two-dimensional. The third dimension of faith, love, grace which gives depth and richness to his social awareness can become reduced more and more until his view becomes flat and naturalistic. The challenge is to put on the social consciousness of Christ. This means having the same goal, the same motivation, the same dedication we find in him whose very name, Jesus, "savior," describes his role in society.

The wider social awareness becomes particularized in the Jesuit's concern for his religious community. The nature of community, the means to bring it about effectively, will undoubtedly continue to be discussed. Fortunately one does not have to wait to have a definition of something before he can live it. Concern for community life should lead in the future to closer ties among Jesuits. Everyone is aware at the same time that true community is not a happening. It is a daily task. Community spirit will never be larger than the spirits of those who make up the community.

#### 4. Toward the World

Another one of the characteristics of our modern mentality is to focus our attention on the world. We hear, for example, that modern man has discovered the world. He has even formed a "worldly" theology. The Gospel itself is described as a gospel of secularism.

We find terms combined in a startling way. We have a "religionless Christianity," a "Christian atheism," "wordly religion," "Christian secularism," "secularization theology." It is a bewildering assortment of terms.

As one can readily surmise many of these terms are ambiguous. What does it mean when we speak of "discovering the world"? Basically it means to discover the world in its relationships. Discovery is in a sense a revelation, an unveiling, where the world appears more and more in the complexity of its relationships. On the other hand, there is a false meaning to discovering the world. If basic relationships are ignored, discovery is always partial.

It has frequently been pointed out that man has only discovered the world as it were obliquely through the discovery of God. The revelation of God was at the same time a revelation of the world in its relationships. Revelation then was an act (using current terminology) of secularization, that is, an act by which the world in its distinctiveness and complexity came into view. The most fundamental relationship, however, in the discovery of the world is its relationship to God, and secondly to man. Revelation uncovered the whole view of the world, and showed at the same time that the whole view was also a holy view. Man would continue to discover through his reason and through science more and more of the intricate relationship that belong to the world. It has been often stated and could probably be substantiated that man could not have begun to make his own discoveries unless God had first disclosed the world in the very act of revealing himself.

Secularization then is progressive discernment of relationships and functions. It is worlds apart from secularism. Secularism has already staked out the path before it begins its journey. Its aim is not to discover the world in all of its relationships but in some of them. It eliminates any relationship of creature to creator, or redeemed to redeemer. Its progress is always through a corridor outside of which it is not allowed to go. The corridor may get longer and wider. It still remains enclosed. Revelation shattered the corridor of the mind to disclose the world in all of its relationships. This might take away the temporary comfort of the corridor. Yet it is one of the facts of life, if not the fact of life. God has exploded man's mind. Yet mysteriously enough man resists this explosion, mainly because it implies a corresponding explosion in his heart.

One of the gravest challenges confronting the Jesuit (and every Christian) today is the secularist mentality. What Pius X said of modernism, that it was the synthesis of all errors, can be said of the secularist mentality. De Lubac describes this mentality and the gravity of the problem: "One word sums up today a whole stream of tendencies, 'secularism': an obliging word, stretchable at will, passing from the accessory and provisional to the essential, and in the end covering the whole field of the ecclesial institution and the whole of faith....The Church is then dissolved into the world, the religious into the profane, the eternal into the temporal, and the mystery into a totally human ideology."<sup>6</sup>

The secularist mentality is basically narrowing, monistic, reductive. At the same time it has a strong appeal to modern man (or to man of any age, for that matter). It would be difficult to analyze this appeal completely. It appeals to the dark side of man's moon. It arouses the Prometheus in every man, the builder of the tower of Babel, the worshipper of the golden calf and the fertility gods, the no-nonsense mentality of the Sadducees with their rejection of a spiritual world, the desire to become the arbiter of what is good and evil, true and false. It attracts man because it appeals to his sense of what is real--the world, man, progress--against the unreal world of God, Christ, grace, eternal life. It appeals to man's sense of loyalty to his confederates, other men and the world, as if loyalty to God meant disloyalty to the world.

In reality the secularist view narrows the meaning of reality. It reduces it to the world of ancient Stoics where the intrinsic Logos in the world gave the world its value. It is really not a new-world view. It is very old and its appeal is to the old man in us, not the new man.

Without doubt the challenge of secularism is one of the greatest challenges facing the Jesuit today. It is a challenge closely associated with that of personalism. We want to allow what is human to manifest its fullest reality. The tragedy is that in the name of the human the secularist eclipses that which gives the human its profoundest reality. He has drawn a circle around the world. The circle may get larger and larger but it always remains a circle, closed and empty.



The challenge the Jesuit faces is to crack the hard confining shell of secularism in which each age tends to enclose itself. He is called not simply to bring life, but to bring it more abundantly.

## 5. Toward History<sup>7</sup>

Our age has a profound consciousness of the historical dimension of human existence. In a sense ancient Platonism has been set on its head. Instead of historical existence being a flickering shadow of the real (the eternal ideas), ideas tend to become flickering shadows attached to what is real, namely, historical existence.

This consciousness of time and history is congenial to the biblical mode of thought. As we find there, all time lies between two moments in history: God's initial covenant with man in creation and the final covenant in the perfect fulfillment of the Kingdom. The whole movement of history explicates what is contained in the first moment. Further, all reflection on the meaning of God and man has as its point of departure and its return man in his historical existence. For example, Israel's view of man was not based on his essence as man but on his power to enter into and respond to the covenant relationship.

Here again we are challenged to "despoil the Egyptians," to exploit the sense of history belonging to our contemporary mentality. There is also the challenge to see history as the dialogue of God with man, not simply as man's dialogue with himself and the interaction of the forces immanent in the world. With such a great consciousness of the horizontal dimension it is possible to lose sight of the vertical dimension of the dialogue. One can lose sight that God has design, purpose in history. History is not simply another of man's "do-it-yourself" projects.

Perhaps men in the past had the challenge to take time and history seriously. Maybe the inclination was to see everything sub specie aeternitatis to the neglect of the temporal. Whether or not that is true, the danger today comes from seeing everything sub specie temporis. The challenge today in the light of our renewed consciousness of time and history is to take God's providence seriously.

## II. Communities Confronted with the Challenge of Change

In the first part we commented on the challenges of change as it affects individuals. We saw that the problem is acute because of the accelerated rate of change. At the heart of all change that is involved in development, we saw, there are two components, the forward and the consolidating. The "generation gap" we saw is really a mentality gap bridgeable ultimately only by understanding the way in which meaning is embodied in sign, and through charity, the basic sign of Christian experience. We then commented on the various challenges brought about by the aspects of change in our modern world: the movement toward person, community, the world, and history.

We would like in this section to draw some corollaries from what was said with particular application not to individuals but to communities. We have to

limit ourselves to the consideration of three communities: the community of faith, the religious life, and in particular the Jesuit life.

#### A. The Community of Faith

We often hear today of the crisis in faith. Whether the proportions of this crisis are any greater today than at any other time it is impossible to say. This is a judgment it would be hard to verify in one way or another. In any case it is not a question of determining whether there is a greater or lesser problem today. It is only a question of recognizing a fact. Man's faith in God, in Christ, and in the Church is under sharp and constant attack.

The greatest danger comes from secularism. This is not a direct attack as if someone were dropping bombs on the citadel of the faith. It is more like a gas. It pervades the whole atmosphere. In it we live and move and have our being. We spoke of the secularist mentality in one of the earlier sections. Such a mentality views God as an outsider in the world. Faith in God is looked upon as an act of apostasy from the world. Faith in the world and faith in God are mutually exclusive. Loyalty to God means disloyalty to the world. Man has a sense of the reality of the world and the unreality of whatever is not in the world. There are characteristics of the secularist mentality that undermine man's faith in God.

At the same time we find great interest in what is unhappily called the "God-problem." It has many aspects. The basic questions, however, are the perennial ones: is there a God? can we know him? can we speak of him? In other words, there are the epistemological and metaphysical problems and the problem of "God-talk," how to speak about God. Whether the contemporary discussion has advanced the perennial questions (or answers) is debatable.

However in spite of the volumes written about the problem of God the whole of the cultural thrust today is toward man. Theology tends to become anthropology. The reductive effect of secularism shows its effect most strikingly here. Faith in God is reduced to faith in man; service of God to service of man; revelation of God to revelation of man; dialogue with God in prayer becomes dialogue with man in activity; trust in God's providence, trust in man's power to change the world; the vision of faith, a world view; the Spirit of God, the spirit of man; sin against God, sin against man; doing God's will, doing man's will.

There is a certain sense in which these statements are true. They can have a paradoxical meaning, instead of an either-or. As long as the paradox is recognized these statements are true. When the paradox which keeps the balance between the absolute and the relative, the transcendent and the immanent, the center and the circumference is lost, then there is only the relative, the immanent, the circumference.

The same point is made by Cardinal Suenens: "We would list as a general cause (resulting in a loss of a sense of mission) that spirit of exclusive horizontal humanism which, even among Christians, is leading them to minimize the sense of God and of his transcendence, and the sense of sin and redemption."

There is such an enthusiasm for temporal values that the work of evangelization is esteemed but little--it seems a stranger to what is human, to be useless and too spiritual."<sup>8</sup>

The "God-problem" has its counterpart in the "Jesus-problem." The question Jesus asked his disciples, "'Who do you say I am?'" (Mt 16:16), has been changed into another question, "Does such a question have any real meaning for man today?" In fact, there is hardly any opinion about Jesus which is not held by some authority or other. One could line up as many authorities for a particular opinion as against it.

The importance of hermeneutics is stressed today, and rightly so. This has to do with the principles that underlie one's methodology of exegesis. Very often as the methodology becomes sharper the figure of Jesus becomes foggier. It would be a mistake to interpret these remarks as a slur on a scholarly approach to the Scriptures, making use of all the technical apparatus available. However, it does point out a fact. The pluralism in hermeneutics also leads to a pluralism in the responses that come to the question, "'Who do you say I am?'"

This leads to the recognition, first of all, that hermeneutics has the nature of an instrument. It is a means to the end, not the end itself. Like every instrument it depends largely on the one who is using it. This in turn leads to the realization of the importance of the point of the synthesis out of which the hermeneutic works for its interpretation. Here we come to the role of faith, and in particular the role of the Church.

The fundamental question in this regard is this: to what degree is the prophetic mission of Christ embodied in the Church? Is the word of God transmitted to us as surely as it was given to the Apostles, or are we left in the same position as the disciples of other great figures in history? They have only words about the word or teaching of their master. Inevitably various schools of interpretation arise in the wake of the great teachers in the history of mankind. Are we left with schools of interpretation or with the power to teach the word of God with authenticity and authority? The Catholic Church believes that the prophetic role of Christ is transmitted through history until the end of time through the successors of the Apostles, the episcopal college, within which the Bishop of Rome has a special function.

When all is said and done, faith in God, faith in Christ, have to pass through the neck of the hourglass of the Church if it is to share in the sureness of God himself, speaking his word to mankind in a voice that takes its pitch from our own times.

What was said about hermeneutics in the interpretation of Jesus is also true in regard to the dogmas of the Church. Some want to throw the whole of dogma into the mill of hermeneutics to be ground up into new doctrines more relevant to our times. No one could dispute the fact of evolution of dogma, or the need to situate dogmatic pronouncements in their context. Very often, however, more than this is implied. The dogmas through some sleight of hand lose their meaning and become part of the flotsam and jetsam washed up on the shores of Catholic belief throughout the centuries.

Is this all far removed from the world of the Jesuit today? Hardly. To live a life shaped by faith is the basic challenge of man in time. It is no less (and perhaps no more) the challenge of man today. For this reason faith will always be, as St. John says, a victory: "This is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn 5:4).

It is possible that a Jesuit lose his faith. No one can judge whether this has happened in individual cases, since there are as many things that simulate loss of faith as there are that simulate genuine faith. It is possible that, if faith is not lost, it fails to shape his life in any genuine sense. For all practical purpose the vision he has of God, of Christ, of man, through faith plays no role in his life. His decisions are formed by the vision from science, literature, philosophy. When this happens, the mainspring in his whole system of value is broken. A death takes place on every level of his existence, a death of mind, of heart, of memory, of friendship. Where values have become muted, and motivation has died, only something like the miracle of resurrection can bring a person back to life again.

Ultimately then the challenge of the Jesuit is to believe in such a way that his faith shapes his own life and in this way leads to shaping the life of the society in which he lives.

#### B. The Religious Community

The challenges facing the religious today are many. He shares in those confronting individuals in our contemporary world, and also those confronting the believer within the Christian community. Besides these there are those belonging to him as a religious.

Perhaps the method we have been following might give a very one-sided impression. We have been speaking of challenges and have seen that the challenges increase as a person's values increase and as he assumes more and more responsibility for others. Not many of us have the stuff heroes are made of. Not many of us can assume the role of the "Man from La Mancha" either in dream or in fact.

We have to recall the fact that our approach has its own limitations. In emphasizing the challenges we have not been able to speak of the added sources of strength that come with each new commitment. Fortunately as a tree gets higher the roots go deeper.

Whenever the Christian vocation is particularized a person is confronted with the challenges that come with the new way of life. Marriage and a family bring challenges the single person did not have. The religious life with its special way of following Christ has its own challenges. Some of these belong to the very nature of the religious life and are not peculiar to our own time. There are others that can come from the historical context in which the religious life is lived.

Let us comment on some of the problems. Many are simply variations on the themes treated above.

## 1. Maturity

Is it true that religious life fosters immaturity? This is an accusation brought against the religious life even by many religious. One psychologist asked and answered the same question. "Is it really -- as we often hear -- the hierarchical structure of religious communities that keeps religious immature? More immature than their lay counterparts? We did not find religious more immature or more frequently immature. But, obviously, those who did not wish to assume responsibility, for whatever reason, had a better excuse, a ready-made rationalization."

This whole subject could probably be debated and one could come to different conclusions. However there does seem to be one characteristic that is found quite frequently among religious and priests. It is the tendency to exempt themselves from what belongs to the human condition.

The term "human condition" sounds vague and general. Without trying to pin it down in too much detail we can at least describe some of the factors. First of all, by way of contrast, the human condition is not the world of myth but the world of reality; secondly, it is not the world of eternity but of time; thirdly, it is not the world of comprehension but of partial vision, through a mirror darkly.

For some reason the religious tends to take himself out of the context of reality, of time, and of partial vision. If he feels the burden of the human condition, he easily sees this as the religious condition rather than the lot he has with all men in the human condition.

Let us take but one example: the low threshold of frustration many religious (and priests) have. Most mature people living in a complex society realize that no single person, not to speak of a large community, can reach a goal by taking the shortest distance between two points. They realize that all progress is more of a zigzag movement, like that of a ship which has to tack to make progress against the wind. In real life the wind is not always at one's back. Often it is blowing against or across the line of progress.

In the whole movement of renewal many religious have left the religious life because they were frustrated with some or other obstacle, whether of community life, work, or the rate of renewal in their community. How many of these same religious return to a life of teaching, nursing, social work, where they find frustration and take it for granted, whereas they could not tolerate it in the religious life!

Perhaps we need some help from depth psychology here. The tendency of religious to exempt themselves from the human condition is a common one.. Maybe there is the implicit assumption that a life of special dedication somehow annuls differences of temperament, does away with the need of patience, straightens out the zigzag path into a straight line, cancels time, clears up the partial vision, and removes all suffering.

Often there is a great sense of injury if those things happen to a religious which occur as part of the pattern of anybody's life in the world. With this sense of injury there is often a bitterness not often indulged in by people who live in the real world.

Perhaps at the root of the problem is a confusion lying deep within the psyche. It is the unexamined or instinctive association of those things inevitably belonging to the human condition as part of life, and those things which happen because of bad will. Unconsciously one feels that if he enters into an association with people who presumably have not only good will but a high degree of dedication that he will be exempted from many things belonging to the human condition. As a matter of fact, he finds that no one is exempt. Some things happen in spite of the best will. It might come as a surprise. But it is a lesson to be learned.

## 2. Discernment and Identity

Another problem the religious faces today is that of discernment, not only in the usual sense of discernment of spirits (something that is always necessary), but in the sense of discerning what belongs to the religious life substantially and that which belongs to it only as a particular style that can change with the times. The statements of Vatican II on the religious life have done much to distinguish substance from style.

The same problem can be described in terms of the search for identity. What is meant by this? We find many similar expressions: "identity crisis," "problems of identity," "establishing identity," "identifying with another," and the like. Or it is put in other words, for example, "finding out who we are." What is behind all of these questions? Is it the search for knowledge about oneself? Or is it the desire to accept oneself with all that he is? Or the desire to find out something about oneself so that one can become a better person? The questions are posed usually about individuals; the same questions, however, could be posed about a community.

It seems that the search for identity is not merely a searching for a definition, or self-knowledge. To search for one's identity is to search for a goal that gives unity and meaning to one's life. An identity crisis is not simply an emotional crisis. It is a crisis in meaning, orientation, finality.

There are two ways to approach an answer to the question of identity. One is something like what Teilhard de Chardin does with the phenomenon of man. Looking backward he sees the direction the various energies take in the evolution of man. Looking forward he sees how these energies are converging to a point. He sees energy like the longitudinal lines on the globe, diverging from one pole, and then converging to the other. This is one way to approach the question of identity.

There is another way. It is much simpler. One's identity is discovered when one is addressed and called. In other words, identity is established through vocation. By vocation here we do not mean simply a career but the fundamental, gratuitous, covenantal act of the Father calling men to be sons with his Son. This constitutes man's identity.

But the establishment of identity either through reason or the revelation of vocation is not enough. It is not enough to know this. One has to direct all of his activities to fulfill this identity. This is the way another aspect of the identity crisis can arise. One can resist this call. Basically, however, the only two ways in which the identity crisis can arise is through lack of knowledge of man's meaning, or refusal to accept that meaning. For the Christian, the search for identity is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is a search for the fulfillment of the mystery of human existence, where existence has been graced with the life of the Trinity. It is a search rooted in faith, moving securely through hope, and issuing in love.

The genuine search for identity does not begin either with a methodical doubt or with moral resistance. It is a process of progressive disclosure of Christ in the Christian. The process is antecedent to the conceptualization which describes it and outruns all efforts to encompass it in judgements.

The above remarks might seem to be a digression from the topic raised concerning religious communities and their search for identity. They are apropos, however, though they spoke more about individuals and their identity than communities.

A community can have its identity crisis either because it does not see its goal, or because it refuses to follow it. The goals of the religious life in general have been described by Vatican II. The discernment of the goals of particular communities within these larger goals, of course, could not be specified by the Council. For many religious communities part of the work of renewal is clarification of goals.

With this striving for clarification of goals, there can be the danger of bracketing off the whole experience of the religious life, until the goals become clarified. We have to remember that we do not first of all have to define life in order to live, or define love in order to love, or define knowledge in order to know. Such conceptualization of goals will have the same relationship to the religious life as dogma has to the whole Christian experience of the Church. It arises from such experience, lives in it, and gives it conscious orientation.

We come back again to something we have stressed throughout. It is the importance of fidelity. One of the prerequisites for discernment and the finding of one's identity is fidelity to God's calling.

### 3. The Distinctiveness of the Religious Life

Intimately connected with the question of identity is that of the distinctiveness of the religious life. Many are afraid to point out the distinctive character of the religious life. They fear that distinctiveness leads either to privileges associated with class consciousness or to separation. This has probably happened in the past. This leads many to move in the opposite direction. They want to remove anything distinctive from the religious life.

If the religious has nothing distinctive to give to the world, he has no reason to exist. Unless his life manifests a distinctive gift of the Spirit, something of the many-splendored beauty of the Holy Spirit is lost. The same is true with any gift. If a father, for example, does not have a distinctive gift to give to his family that is different from that of the mother, there is no reason for his presence.

This failure of nerve to assert that the religious life is truly a distinctive way of witnessing to the gift of the Spirit shows itself among other ways in the loss of a sense of protest. The religious life has always exhibited a certain prophetic protest against compromise in the service of Christ. Poverty, for example, was a protest against compromise in the service of things. Celibacy was not only a witness to the singleminded nature of the Christian vocation but also a protest against the domination of sensuality. Obedience was not only an offering of one's whole being to God but also a protest against pride, the tendency all men have to prefer their own will to the will of God.

It is a strange phenomenon that many religious enlist themselves in forms of protest against social evils while at the same time they forget that their life of the vows is a basic protest against the subordination of man to materialism, pleasure, and self-will.

#### 4. Motivation

The basic challenge that a religious has is this: to do out of love what many people do out of self-interest. It is a fact of experience that one of the strongest motives in the conducting of human affairs is self-interest. This does not mean the same as selfishness. It means simply that one feels strongly inclined to do whatever helps him get ahead and will avoid whatever can impede his progress. Generally speaking, then, we see that most employees cooperate with their employers and co-workers, that people in a neighborhood work together for the betterment of the neighborhood, that they share community responsibilities. They know that cooperation is the only way to lead a constructive life. The motive is rooted in the survival instinct. In the case of individuals the motivation can be higher or even lower than this. The point is, though, that self-interest is a very strong motive in the ordinary conduct of one's life.

One of the major problems of religious life comes from the fact that the motive to which it appeals is not self-interest but a special manifestation of love. Religious are asked to do out of love of Christ what most people do out of self-interest. If the motivation of love fails, then we have something like what is described in the gospel story. Seven devils worse than the first enter into the house that was cleansed.

If the motive of love fails and if there is no motive of self-interest, it is possible for a religious to lead a sub-Christian and sub-human life. He can be uncooperative, uncivil, lazy, irresponsible and still have the security that comes from the structure of the religious life. He is something like the man described in one of the parables. He discovered one fine pearl and sold all that he had to buy that one pearl. If he loses that, he is worse off than he was before because now he has nothing. If the religious loses his motive



of love, there is the danger that he has no motive at all, not even that of self-interest.

But this is the risk of the religious life. Hammarskjöld remarks, "At high altitudes, a moment's self-indulgence may mean death."<sup>10</sup> To live one's life professing to bear witness to love is to take a risk. The higher the motive the greater the risk. At the same time, and even more fundamentally, it is a witness to the power of the Holy Spirit who alone can enable one to strive for the higher altitudes of love.

The challenge of the religious life, then, is to give testimony to love in a special and eminent way. It is to bear witness in a special way to the kenosis, as St. Paul calls it, the emptying aspect of Christ's love, by which we are filled (Phil.2:7). The kenosis of poverty, celibacy, and obedience in the religious life is public testimony that the same Spirit who was operative in Christ is operative in his members, drawing them to manifest their love for the Father and the Church in the same way as he moved Christ to manifest his love. Such a life cannot be sustained merely by self-interest. Love is the only sustaining motive.

### C. The Society of Jesus

In a way what should be the main emphasis in our paper seems to have turned out to be just a postscript. The challenges of the Jesuit are, as we have seen, those he shares with other men, other Christians, and other religious. We have commented on these above.

Are there any particular challenges belonging to a Jesuit qua Jesuit, or belonging to the Society of Jesus as a religious order with its own identity? It seems that there are. For sake of simplicity they can be described as those affecting the Society as organization or as organism, or (saying the same in different words) those pertaining to the body of the Society, and those to its spirit. Obviously such a distinction cannot be interpreted as if these factors were in fact separate entities. They make one living unit.

There are problems, first of all, related to organization, or the body of the Society. The Society of Jesus with its 35,000 members from virtually every country in the world and its highly diversified apostolate understandably enough has problems with organization. This is mainly in the areas of administration, choice of ministries, deployment of personnel, and formation of the men in training. These are problems which can be approached through research, planning, prudence, imagination, where the search for solutions is carried on in an atmosphere of mutual trust. It is not within the scope of this paper or the ability of the author to suggest solutions to the problems of organization. Subsequent papers will treat many of these topics.

We are concerned more with the problems touching the Society as organism, or with the spirit of the Society. In speaking above of the challenges facing religious today, we spoke of the problem of identity. We saw that it is basically a problem of finality. We saw that it was not mainly a matter of

conceptualizing this finality but of living it. The conceptualizing and the vital experience are as closely wedded as mind and heart. But there is a priority of experience over conceptualization.

It is not difficult to describe the spirit of the Society of Jesus. This may seem like a rash claim at a time when people wear identity crises as if they were merit badges.

In the creative thinking of St. Ignatius and with the cooperation of the founding fathers a form of religious life with a distinctive spirit came into being. Some of the distinctiveness had to do with its organization, as contrasted with that of the monastic orders. Since that time so many other religious orders have come into existence modeled after or influenced by the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, that it is harder to capture the distinctiveness of the Society as an organization today than when it appeared on the scene in the sixteenth century.

Besides the distinctiveness in organization there was also a distinctive spirit. It inculcated a certain mentality. Some of the characteristics of this mentality were the following: the service of Christ the King through service to the Holy Father in the hierarchical Church; a tantum-quantum mentality in the choices of ministries; mobility and flexibility; an emphasis on obedience; a spirit of noblesse oblige embodied in the meditation on the Kingdom in the Spiritual Exercises--a desire, like that of St. Paul, to spread the Kingdom by following in the footsteps of the humiliated and suffering Christ.

The challenge facing the Jesuit today, as Jesuit, is to re-incarnate this distinctive spirit for our own day. If the Society of Jesus has nothing distinctive about it (outside of its organization), nothing distinctive to give to the Church and mankind, then its raison d'être is gone.

This is not a challenge to retreat to past positions or antiquated methods. Father General's oft-quoted statement is particularly apropos: "We do not want yesterday's answers to today's problems." The challenge is to re-discover the spirit that has to animate all the answers, whether those given in the sixteenth century or in the twentieth.

The Society was born in an atmosphere of great challenges, very much like our own day. The sixteenth century was a period of great change, like our own. It was a period of transition, where one epoch of history came to an end and another began. Religious controversy was deep and widespread. The Church was under attack from all sides. Religious orders, the priesthood, were in a state of decadence. Humanism had infected the world of the intelligensia, even the Roman curia itself. The seeds of antipathy between science and religion were being sown.

It was in this world that the Society of Jesus came into being. Its spirit was basically apostolic. Its distinctive mentality no doubt was fostered by the challenges of the times. It was a mentality of service in imitation of Christ. It was a mentality not simply of adjusting to change, or repairing the harm done by unfavorable change. Basically the mentality

was to initiate change. The Society of Jesus was not supposed to float in the wake of changes taking place in the world. Its drive was to create the changes that would bring the world closer to God.

Today it is important for us to recapture the vision of St. Ignatius and his companions. There are many challenges confronting the Jesuit today as an individual and the Society of Jesus as a world-wide community. The strength to meet the challenges comes from the Holy Spirit. "I know the plans I have in mind for you--it is Yahweh who speaks--plans for peace, not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you" (Jer.29:11). From him also we derive our hope.

On the part of the individual Jesuit the challenges can be met only through fidelity. This word does not describe merely one aspect of man's life. It ultimately describes his identity as response. Fidelity is based on God's promise, his deeds, and his own fidelity. Fidelity describes man's stance, posture, his face-to-face relationship with the God who addressed him in the past in his Word-made-flesh, and who continues to address him daily. In man's response to this Word he resumes all of the past, brings it to bear on the present, and shapes the future. Fidelity is the source of all newness and freshness. Through it the past erupts like a spring into the present, and the present itself comes alive. It is fidelity (to adapt a poem of Cummings) which "sings each morning out of each night, that with april touch drives sleeping selves to swarm their fates, wakes dreamers to their ghostly roots, sings each new leaf out of each tree."

FOOTNOTES

1. "In the past seven years the climate of opinion in our clinic has changed, not as a result of apologetic dialoguing but through everyday, pragmatic experience. Today, if one were to ask our staff for an opinion, they would probably say that the problems of religious were rather similar to those of lay people but that on the whole the religious seemed to be more insightful, more intelligent, and more motivated toward resolving their problems." Andrée Emery, "Experiment in Counseling Religious," Review for Religious, XXVIII (1969), 35.
2. Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, S.J., Building the Earth (Dimension Books, Wilkes-Barre, 1965, p. 19.
3. Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, S.J., The Phenomenon of Man, Harper Torchbooks, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965). See the index, s.v. "Energy."
4. Lonergan, Bernard, S.J., Insight (New York: Longmans, 1957). See pp. 465 ff., 469 ff., 471, 473, 477, 531 ff.
5. Ionesco, E., Exit the King (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 53.
6. De Lubac, H., "Teilhard de Chardin in the Context of Renewal," Theology of Renewal, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1968, vol. 1, 225, 226.
7. Cf. M. D. Chenu, O.P., "The History of Salvation and the Historicity of Man in the Renewal of Theology," also in Theology of Renewal, vol. I.
8. Suenens, Léon-Joseph Cardinal, Coresponsibility in the Church, Herder and Herder, Church (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 50.
9. Andrée Emery, art. cit., p. 39.
10. Hammarskjöld, Dag. Markings (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 103.