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CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE PLURALISTIC CHURCH

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The origin of my vision of the pluralistic church stems from several sources. Primarily, I have drawn ideas from my experience with my home church and the church in which I served my internship, the "Green Street Church" of Urbana, Illinois.

Other sources are from Henry Nelson Wieman's writing on creative interaction and on the church, from my advisors, Ron Engel and Peter Kaufman, and from the brief description of the pluralistic church in Leas and Kittlaus's book, Church Fights.

Credit should also be given to James Luther Adams for his influence in the areas of pluralism and social concerns, Lewis Coser for his extensive study of social conflict, Lester Mondale for a great many examples of church conflict, again to Leas and Kittlaus for valuable information on conflict resolution and on assumptions about conflict, and finally to Wieman for the inclusiveness of his concept, creative interaction.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the ministry is wedded to a vision of the church. One of my first readings about the Unitarian Universalist ministry stated that only with a vision of purpose are the ministry and church able to struggle beyond what is otherwise an active but directionless existence.

My vision for the church is of a pluralistic community which is committed to improving the quality of experience for its members and, ultimately, for all people. Integral to the vision of the pluralistic church is a ministry which fosters creative interaction as the element so necessary for a purposeful religious center.

Pluralism has a long and honorable history within Unitarian Universalism. The controlling principles espoused by Unitarian Universalist churches would seem to generate a pluralism of 200,000 different beliefs (the approximate number of UU'S). Earl Morse Wilbur, the noted Unitarian historian, summed up these principles as, "complete mental freedom, unrestricted use of reason and generous tolerance of differences."[1] He traced these principles from the birth of Unitarianism in Transylvania, to England and finally to America.

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[1]Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism Vol. II (Beacon Press, 1945) p. 486.

In New England, in the early 1800's, clergy and laity alike fought over whether or not Arianism and Transcendentalism were to be accepted as part of the Christian faith. Diverse beliefs split the churches over the hiring of ministers and over the control of property. Nevertheless, the pluralism inherent in Unitarianism and Universalism continued to grow along with the spread of their respective messages across the country.

Later in the century, these differences matured into a pluralism that included, according to Conrad Wright, "the Evangelicals; the Older Rationalists; the younger conservatives and the Christian transcendentalists who together made up Bellow's 'Broad Church' group; and the 'Radicals', some of whom were transcendentalist and intuitional in their philosophy, while others were empirical and scientific."[2] Mental freedom and reason were certainly at work here, yet tolerance was often forgotten as these people attempted to define their movement according to common belief and covenantal purpose.

In the early 1900's, Unitarians and Universalists struggled over the growing presence of humanism within a nominally Christian and theistic religion. In 1943, Robert Cummins, the General Superintendant of the Universalist Church of America, recognized this pluralism when he stated;

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[2]Conrad Wright, A Stream of Light (Unitarian Universalist Ass. 1975) p. 68.

> Universalism cannot be limited to Protestantism or to Christianity, not without denying its very name. Ours is a world fellowship, not just a Christian sect. For so long as Universalism is universalism and not partialism, the fellowship bearing its name must succeed in making it unmistekenly clear that all are welcome: theist and humanist, unitarian and trinitarian, colored and colorless. A circumscribed Universalism is unthinkable.[3]

Here is a cry for further pluralism in the Universalist church.

Closer to the present, the 1966 survey conducted by Robert Tapp among Unitarian Universalists suggests a continuation of the pluralism first introduced in the 1800's. Those surveyed expressed diverse answers on the following topics: the nature or relevance of the God concept, the function of prayer, the reason for attending church service, the nature of Jesus, abortion, sex, civil disobediance, self-concept as Christian or non-Christian, religious education and adult programming.

Perhaps the best example of the pluralism which has coursed throughout Unitarian and Universalist history is offered by J. Ronald Engel. In a paper entitled, "Nature, the Republic and Myth", Engel points out that:

> The controversy within American Unitarianism and Universalism, between those who would see us chiefly as Protestant dissenters, and those who would see us as the peculiar vehicle for the institutionalization of a "Jeffersonian" religion of the republic,

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[3]Ernest Cassara, Universalism in America (Beacon Press 1971) p. 269.

> is a fundamental theme I would argue, throughout our history----although it has not been necessarily recognized as such.[4]

These two themes are visible in the controversy between Christians and Transcendentalists, Radicals and Evangelicals, Humanists and Theists. What point have we reached currently in this pluralistic theme? Engel states that, "It reached a kind of climax and indecisive stand-off in the 1940's between those who joined with A. Powell Davies in a movement called "Unitarian Advance" which took religious democracy as its banner, and those who sought to appropriate the alleged "realism" of neo-orthodoxy."[5]

It should also be noted that a pluralism of political and social ideals has existed in Unitarian Universalism along with the above evidence of diverse religious beliefs. These ideals have led to stances on slavery, conscientious objection, civil rights, women's rights, human rights, and, currently, positions on the environment and nuclear control. Churches, past and present, have split over many of these issues.

A summation of the evidence of pluralism enables us to construct two generalizations. First, Unitarianism and Universalism have always existed as a home for numerous and varied ethical-religious beliefs.

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[4]Ronald Engel, Nature, the Republic and Myth (unpublished paper) p. 11.

[5]Ibid., p. 11.

Secondly, we gain from Tapp's survey an understanding of the pluralistic expectations of congregants toward their minister, toward worship services, and toward church programming. Broadly speaking, the pluralism of "original human experience" has been and continues to be an important element in Unitarian Universalism. At various times in the history of the movement, this pluralism of experience has been affirmed as the vital source of our community life, and even as the goal of church community.

For example, in 1936, The Commission on Appraisal, advocated that Unitarianism reach out from its center toward the positions on the right and on the left. Strength in leadership was to come from the increase in the pluralism of that center.

The religious center to Unitarianism and Universalism at that time was similar to the center today. The center characteristically contains religious moderates, humanists and christians. The center is made up of tolerant, reasonable people who enjoy a commonality and a respect among each other.

An increase in the plurality of the religious center causes an increase in the clash of original human experiences. These clashes tend to be over church expectations and ethical-religious beliefs. The most recent examples of an increase in the plurality of the liberal religious center takes us to the advent of the civil rights and anti-war movements.

During the 1960's and the early 1970's Unitarian Universalist churches were affected by people from varied economic, political and social experiences. The pluralistically oriented church included individuals and groups seeking to give direction to institutions which were open to change. These groups, representing social and racial elements, and ethical-religious beliefs gave rise to conflict in society and in the church.

There were two types of minorities in the churches. First, the dissenters and renegades, who seriously questioned the values and goals of the church. Their greatest threat to the religious community was in questioning the need for the existence of the church. The heretics were the second type of minority in the church. They upheld the church's central values and goals while splitting the church into factions over how to implement these goals.

The clash between the activist goals and pursuits of the dissenters, renegades, and heretics, and the limited vision and purpose of many churches left the former disillusioned and the latter divided and confused. Different expectations and ethical-religious beliefs clashed with each other for both the right to be heard and for commitment to action. Too often, tragedy and distrust were left in the wake of these clashes.

This was, by and large, the fate of those churches that tried to accept the time-honored challenge of personal,

institutional, and social change. Many other churches, however, never accepted this challenge. They tried instead to maintain a homogeneous and like-minded front against all threats to the traditional, sheltering nature of the church. We were left with either unstable, torn churches or with static, closed churches.

In some cases, however, another type of church emerged which could be called the servant-critic model.* In this model members tend to be politically homogeneous. Race relations and the struggle of the poor and oppressed occupies their focus of attention. The programming in this church model addresses major public issues and the minister usually specializes in community organizing and in the prophetic mode of the ministry. This type of church is made up of members who are similar to the renegade and dissenter types discussed above. In other churches these people may have polarized the congregation over social issues. In the servant-critic model church they constitute the mainstream of the congregation. In my experience, the servant-critic model of the church is rare in the 1970's. It can still be found, however, in all of the major cities where poverty and exploitation abound.

At the present moment, Unitarian Universalist churches are arriving at a feeling of community. This sense

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*A description of a church model offered by Speed Leas and Paul Kittlaus in their book, Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church.

of community carries with it an amount of growth and a great deal of stability. It also carries with it a feeling of compatibility with ourselves, with others, and with the world. This is not the lull before the storm. It is, rather, a plateau of strength holding the potential for growth in new directions. It is the wide area of commonality where new ideas, goals, and visions can be brought forth, discussed, improved, and acted upon. We are now standing on the plateau of opportunity.

Our plateau of commonality, our close and caring community came about at the cost of many church members who wanted the church to be more involved in social issues. They left the church because of peer pressure against their expectations of the church and ministry. They also left because they could find no followers or compatriots. Finally, they left because they were ignored.

In losing these church members we gained peace of mind but we lost part of our communal conscience. We are concerned about increasing the quality and meaning of our own original experiences yet we neglected our religious commitment to increase the quality of experience for all people. The responsibility for this neglect in our churches must be shared by both the dissenters and the church. The dissenters too often wished to force social action on the church as the primary commitment. In the area of their own particular social concern they exhibited an intense

concentration on the issues at stake. In turn, the church was reluctant to see itself as the vanguard in social action. It was reluctant to see social action as even a secondary function of the church. Pressed by the questioning of the dissenter and the heretic, it was unwilling to see the value in the questioning. Finally, the church was reluctant to consider any creative outlets for the dissenters in its organization.

James Luther Adams wrote in the essay, "Freedom and Association", that, especially in this age when our civilization is bureaucratically top-heavy and the forces of economic and industrial power are so well extrenched, the church and other voluntary associations need reform within themselves in order to motivate themselves and others to bring about the emergence of a "community of justice and mercy." The internal reform comes about through what Adams terms the power of the "ecclesiola in ecclesia," or the power of the small, reforming group within the larger group. It is in the interest of the church to value, modify, and incorporate the voice and vision of the reforming individual and the reforming group. It is also in the interest of the reforming individual and group to value the diverse and pluralistic nature of the church community for the care, concern and support which it can bring to the lives of the church members <u>and</u> to the reformers.

Our churches are caring, friendly places but too often at the cost of alienating those who would express their faith in a reforming mode. Before we close our doors completely to these people, we must evaluate the path we have chosen for our churches. We must assess the strengths in our goals and the hidden weaknesses. I see before us two types of churches which we should avoid from our position on the "plateau;" the sheltering church and the unlimited potential church.

The Sheltering Church

The longer the church remains on the plateau spoken of earlier, the closer it comes to achieving the position of what Leas and Kittlaus call the sheltering church. In this church community we will be able to maintain certain traditions, and, in addition, shelter a close group of people who are secure with and reassured by one another. Here, people will be socially homogeneous. The church program focuses on the spiritual or social needs of the church members. The minister's role is pastoral in nature, encompassing counseling, visitation, soothing the troubled, and the like. The church members are respectable citizens, having achieved this status through success in their work.

The liability in this choice is that the homogeneous church may shun new ideas and new members. New people and

new ideas would be a threat to the closed shurch community. This church remains a closed system and by doing so it risks the danger of being unprepared for new ideas and new visions. Most importantly, it risks the danger of being unprepared for the expression of expectations and ethical-religious beliefs that do not fit the mold of the existing religious center.

The Unlimited Potential Church

Flushed with the feelings of security, success and unlimited potential, we might embark upon programs of great expense. On the other hand, we might engage in a potpourri of projects, spreading our energies and resources in order to determine a future path or in order to satisfy the multiple interests of the church. The image conjured up in my mind of this church is of people dashing en masse around the foothills of a mountain. The climb up the mountain is never attempted. This is the syndrome of perpetual motion by church members who never stop to question the purpose of their bustling about.

Members of both the unlimited potential church and the sheltering church easily slip into the personal bankruptcy called the "other-directed person:"

> His ruling concern is to detect the likes and dislikes of his associates and adapt himself to them.[6]

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[6]Henry Nelson Wienan, Man's Ultimate Commitment (Southern Illinois Press 1958), p. 41.

> The easiest way to do this, if not the only way in many cases, is to manipulate oneself and others into a smooth running system of adaptive responses. One tries to be the kind of person who is "warm," "personal," and "sincere." He does not allow himself to feel anything deeply, nor express strong feeling, nor become so involved in any personal relation that he cannot easily break it or change it.[7]

Wieman contended that we are moving into the age of the other-directed person. He understood that we remain influenced by tradition and by our own individualism and personal goals, yet the primary concern of our culture is to maintain the approval of our associates.

The strong feelings Weiman mentions are flammable, enthusiastic, and unflinching. These are the feelings that accompany personal experience and are derived from personal commitment. They need to be expressed, yet the expression of this type of strong feeling does not lend itself to the "smooth running system of adaptive responses" found in the Shelter church and in the Unlimited Potential church. These churches lack the type of community which is based upon the sharing of people's original experience. They lack the vision of the pluralistic community.

Up to this point we have discussed the nature of the history of pluralism in Unitarian Universalism and how it has led to varied ethical-religious beliefs and to pluralistic expectations of the church and ministry. We have also pointed to the evidence that an increase in pluralism leads

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[7]Ibid., p. 40.

to an increase in conflict. Finally, we have tried to show the limitations to chosing the Shelter church model or the Unlimited Potential church model.

The theme up to this point, and throughout this work, is that the pluralistic church is a vision appropriate to the history and ideals of Unitarian Universalism. But, an increase in pluralism also means an increase in the clash of expectations and ethical-religious beliefs. In other words, it means an increase in conflict. The question then becomes; have we espoused a means to guide this conflict toward resolution? The traditional answer to this question can be described as "dialoging in the spirit of the democratic method."

It is difficult to say exactly what is meant by the democratic method. It is mentioned in the By-laws of the Unitarian Universalist Association as one of the purposes of the UUA; "Affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships." The dictionary is of no help here, speaking only of equality of rights and priveleges. The Encyclopedia of Philosophy offers, "...a reasoned response to diverse claims,"[8] and speaks of pressures resolved through countervailing pressures, as the

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[8]Stanley I. Benn, Encyclopedia of Philosophy (MacMillan Co., and The Free Press, 1967) Vol. 2, p. 341, "Democracy."

democratic method. Such vagueness offers little toward the resolution of conflict.

Closer to a concrete solution is James Luther Adams' recommendation. It is a longstanding Unitarian Universalist belief that truth emerges from the struggle of ideas. Adams stated it in this way, "Here we see the gathered church, a pattern promoting the religious pluralism characteristic in modern society. Variety was seen as the law of creation, truth to emerge in the battle of ideas among free persons in free communities."[9] But the "battle of ideas" too often leads to irreconcilable differences rather than to resolution.

Churches use the democratic process and arbitration as resources, but voting on an issue means that the losing group or person may not have their opinions taken into consideration and arbitration means that an outside group has dictated a solution. Both outcomes often leave people angry and frustrated.

Without a common commitment to conflict resolution in our churches, conflict will continue to leave a residue of anger and frustration. We urgently need an understanding of conflict and a vision of the church that includes conflict resolution as an acceptable process. A lack of

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[9]James Luther Adams, On Being Human Religiously (Beacon Press 1976), p. 9.

commitment to a method of resolution means that conflict will be a destructive element in church life.

Conflict must be viewed as a resource in which the goal is to create the conditions whereby our controlling religious principles will be able to function more freely. The solution lies in gaining a more appreciative understanding of other minds, which in turn opens the way for the mutual resolution of conflict. This entails a commitment to creative interaction.

Creative interaction is the focus of the liberal theology of Henry Nelson Wieman. Wieman described creative interaction as, "...that kind of interchange which creates in those who engage in it an appreciative understanding of the original experience of one another."[10]

Briefly, this type of interaction produces a transformation in the participants, the nature of which can be described as: expanded knowledge, appreciative understanding of other minds, living so that others will come to have an appreciative understanding of you, passing from authoritative control to mutual control, and prizing human beings as immeasurably precious.

This introduction can only scratch the surface of the material on creative interaction as an element in the

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[10]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 22.

vision of the pluralistic church. Chapter I takes up this task in full by "fleshing out" the vision of the pluralistic church, primarily as it is informed by Wieman's theories of creative interaction and original experience. Chapter II continues the discussion of the pluralism of expectations and ethical-religious beliefs found in the pluralistic church. The two categories are illustrated by case examples of conflicts. This discussion is carried on as part of a general review of the literature on conflict. One of the conditions necessary for creative interaction is being able to obtain the best knowledge available on conflict.

Chapter III continues the review of the literature on conflict. This chapter details numerous assumptions about conflict as a resource for "improving the quality of original experience and shared experience, for members of the church and for all members of the human community."

Finally, Chapter IV discusses the most important issue of the thesis; specifically, how the pluralistic church, through a commitment to creative interaction and through a knowledge of conflict resolution procedures, is able to respond to the problem of conflict.

CHAPTER I

THE PLURALISTIC CHURCH

Introduction

The discussion in this chapter revolves around the four elements of the pluralistic church. The first element is support for the pluralism of original experience. Another element is shared experience in the church. A commitment to improving the quality of original and shared experience for church members and for all people is the third element of the pluralistic church. The last element is the use of conflict as a resource via creative interaction for the improvement of original and shared experience.

The pluralistic church shares certain characteristics of all churches. Its members gather at worship services and at social occasions. Here people gather in concern and acceptance for one another. Secondly, the congregants are concerned with personal and universal salvation. This concern takes form in the human growth movement and in action related to social concerns. Herein lies a common faith in

the belief that all people can improve their lives. Finally, the people seek a perspective on life, a handle on daily living that will increase meaning and purpose in their lives.

The pluralistic church, however, is different from other churches in four ways. First, it affirms the pluralism of human experience, particularly in matters of religion. Secondly, this religious pluralism is the source of dynamic church community. The pluralistic church affirms the value of shared experience, as it is the source of common ground and community among differing centers of original experience. Thirdly, the pluralistic church has a "commitment to improving the quality of original experience, and shared experience for members of the church and for all members of the human community."[1] Fourth, through creative interaction, the pluralistic church is able to accomplish the goals of this commitment. In particular, the church is able to use conflict as a resource in order to improve the quality of original experience and shared experience.

It was implied in the Introduction that creative interaction was primarily a resource for conflict resolution. Creative interaction in the pluralistic church, however, plays a central role in all of church life. The distinction

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[1]J. Ronald Engel (correspondance with D. Robins 1978).

between "any" church and the pluralistic church becomes clearer as the central concepts of original experience and creative interaction are defined. Specifically, they need to be defined within the context of the four elements of the pluralistic church.

Pluralism of "Original Experience"

One of the basic elements of the pluralistic church is a recognition of the plurality of original experiences brought by the members. Unitarian Universalism is a free-thinking religion which accepts beliefs brought by all of its members. The pluralistic church in Unitarian Universalism contains more than one religious belief, more than one vision of the church, more than one expectation of the ministry, and more than one set of experiences.

The concept of original experience comes from Henry Nelson Wieman. According to Wieman, original experience constitutes the genuine and total self underlying conventional experience. As a personal foundation of identity it can be contrasted with, "...the cliche's, the stale convictions, and the automatic reactions which everyone reproduces in himself in order to adjust to the established order."[2] Thus, original experience defines the individual as he or she truly is.

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[2]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 23.

He further describes original experience as that experience which does not succumb to social uniformity and which does not "facilitate the routine adjustments of everyday life."[3] He stated that original experience exposes, "patterns of living which are trivial and unheroic, without the greatness in living which one craves when original experience breaks through the crust of social convention."[4] In short, original experience is not anti-social, but it is highly personal, poignant and different from the accepted perspective on reality. Most importantly, it imbues people with a sense of enthusiasm for their own approach to meaning and purpose in life.

Wieman believed that every individual and every perspective was unique to the degree that individual integrity was maintained.[5] Individual integrity, in turn, is nurtured by expressing original experience. The expression of original experience is an end for Wieman. He asked the question, "What ultimate commitment will deliver me from the false and superficial level of life and enable me to live

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[3]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 11

[4]Ibid., p. 11.

[5]Wieman, Religious Inquiry (Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 17, 207.

myself out to the full with whatsoever struggle and suffering and courage and ecstasy this may involve?"[6] If I interpret Wieman correctly, living oneself out with struggle, suffering, courage and ecstasy is an apt description of living to express one's original experience.

The words "ultimate commitment" refer to creative interaction, yet the end result sought is living fully the original experience. This sentiment is stated in different ways throughout Man's Ultimate Commitment.* The above quoted question plus the statement that every perspective and every individual is unique leads us to believe that the plurality of original experience is an end for Wieman. Therefore, we can expect the plurality of original experience in the church to be also an end for Wieman.

Wieman addressed, briefly but fully, the meeting of the heroic and the enthusiastic nature of original with the demands made by creative interaction. He stated that creative interaction is the vehicle for the social acceptability of original experience. Without creative interaction the only alternatives are either social ostracism or the suffocation of original experience. Not only is creative interaction the vehicle for the expression of original

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[6]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 11.

*pp. 11, 13, 22, 23, 26, 40-44, 50, 115, 118, 129.

experience, but creative interaction, according to Wieman, brings "forth to full flowering the original experience."[7]

So, these conclusions can be made; the expression of original experience and its plurality in the church is an end for Wieman, though he does not state it specifically, and Wieman addressed briefly but fully the integration of original experience into creative interaction.

The human commitment then, should be to original experience and to creative interaction. Creative interaction would be meaningless without the expression of one's uniqueness. Interaction which exchanges only the dull and trivial of social conformity is not creative. Also, the uniqueness of one's original experience would be neglected, ignored, or repressed without reliance upon creative interaction.

There is a practical application of these concepts to Unitarian Universalism. The history discussed in the Introduction portrays the unique individuality of Unitarian Universalists and the plurality of original experience which they expressed in their churches and in the denomination. The infinite variety of original experiences makes discussion at length impossible without giving the particulars of every Unitarian Universalist. Needless to say, for the sake of coherence and understanding, these original

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[7]Ibid., p. 11.

experiences can be studied in the church as intra-church expectations and as ethical-religious beliefs (discussed in Chapter II).

The pluralistic church, made up of numerous original experiences, encompasses different fellowships, groups, and concerns. The expectations and beliefs of the members of the pluralistic church are satisfied through worship, ministeral and lay led, and through a variety of programs and activities, most of which are self-started. Because of this, there is a great need for creative interaction among members since there are multiple demands made as to the nature and task of the church. For example, there are members who emphasize the caring, sheltering functions of the church, as there are members who stress the reforming nature of religious faith.

A problem exists if these beliefs, visions and expectations conflict perpetually, with little agreement or understanding. The shelter church solves this problem by creating an unwritten law that subordinates all differences to one belief, one vision, one expectation. The enthusiasm of original experience is repressed by lowering the level of tolerance for diverse expectations and beliefs. What is seen as a civilizing move is in reality the practice of

shaming people for expressing their uniqueness.* Similarly, the servant-critic church is criticized for emphasizing only social concerns and for impatience toward those who prefer the qualities of the shelter church.

In a different vein, the unlimited potential church may affirm the importance of the plurality of original experience, yet it lacks the practice of creative interaction. Without this factor people in the church either graze or bounce off one another when they come into contact.

In summation, the substance of the pluralistic church is its acceptance of the plurality of original experience in its members. Original experience finds expression through creative interaction, and creative interaction allows the individual to live out their courage, ecstasy, struggle and suffering. Finally, the various types of churches, other than the pluralistic church, deal with the pluralism of original experience in different ways, all of which are inadequate to the needs of individuals.

Shared Experience

Shared experience is the second major element of the pluralistic church. This entails the sharing of original experience between people through the mode of creative

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*Recent experience, however, displays the need for the appropriate time and place for this expression. Otherwise, it will be disruptive and counterproductive.

interaction. Included in this section is a full discussion of the nature of creative interaction, its philosophical basis, and the results generated by it.

Original experience and creative interaction working together form "shared experience" among people in the pluralistic church. This type of shared experience is different from normal conversation and discussion, although conversation and discussion can be one of the conditions leading to creative interaction. Establishing verbal contact leads potentially to sharing the personalness and the enthusiasm of original experience. If this interchange leads to an appreciative understanding among people, then creative interaction has occurred.

The plurality of original experience processed through creative interaction generates certain results. Wieman described the operation and results of creative interaction in this way:

> First, it generates in each person some sense of what the other person knows, values, and controls.
>
> The second part is an integration of what one gets from another person into what one already had in knowledge, value and control, before he met the other person or the group of people.
>
> The third part of this creative interaction is an expansion in the range of what one can know, control and value.
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> The fourth part is a consequence of these first three parts. It is a wider and deeper community of understanding between the persons and peoples who have engaged in this type of interaction. They have more fellow-feeling for one another, a greater community of interest, more concern for one another, and more ability to cooperate.

> It could also be described in terms of extending the levels of creative evolution that are embodied in human existence.
>
> Finally, and perhaps most important of all, this creative interaction can be described as the way in which conflicts and diversities are made to contribute to further creative evolution, to expanding the system of mutually sustaining activities and increasing knowledge, value and control.[8]

For example, a church coordinator might have strong feelings about the desired long term consequences of a social concerns program. The other coordinator of the program has contrary sentiments, and through dialogue each one arrives at a sense of what the other one "knows, values and controls." As Wieman stated, this understanding can be slight or of great depth.

The information gained is integrated by each person as a widened and deepened understanding of the other person and of the concrete situation. This leads to the third part of creative interaction which is that now each person knows more about the possible effects of the social concerns program, values the social concerns program and the other person in a new way, and has more control over the direction of the program.

Having shared this experience of diverse expectations and beliefs, each person comes to have a better understanding of the other, a greater feeling of common concern and caring, and an increased ability to cooperate.

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[8]Wieman, Religious Inquiry, pp. 209-210.

Finally, had the two coordinators conflicted over the social concerns program, yet remained available to new knowledge and possible appreciation of the other's position, they would have contributed potentially to new solutions and new possibilities. In effect, they would have expanded their range of mutual activities, mutual knowledge and mutual control. Thus, creative interaction holds the potential for added inclusiveness of the plurality of original experience.

Conversely, this process may break down at any point. In fact, it might never get started at all. Each person might decide to exclude the other from decision making activities. Or, each one might dismiss the knowledge and valuing of the other as insignificant. Trickery and deception might lead one to use knowledge about the other in order to subvert the other's intentions. Finally, the conflict engendered by the plurality of original experiences can destroy the community of fellow-feeling, cause misunderstanding, and decrease people's ability to cooperate with one another. The success of shared experience depends upon a commitment of support for the plurality of original experience, and a commitment to creative interaction.

Before continuing the discussion of shared experience as the integration of original experience with creative interaction, it is important to describe fully the nature of

creative interaction and its philosophical basis. This entails a review of: the reasons why creative interaction is ultimate for Wieman, the basis for creative interaction in Wieman's own description of metaphysics, ontology and epistomology, creative interaction as the outcome of empirical and naturalistic disciplines, and Wieman's understanding of the nature of human existence.

Creative interaction is different from dialoguing in the democratic method. The mutual respect for rights and equality, and the recognition of countervailing pressures do little to create the substantial quality of shared experience which is needed in the church. By using the democratic method in interpersonal relations, shared experience tends to be haphazard and accidental.

Wieman asked that his readers make creative interaction less than accidental by being committed to setting the conditions necessary for it to occur. Many religious leaders, past and present, have shown the importance of creative interaction, (Wieman sited the example of Jesus with his disciples), but the exclusiveness and dogmatic nature of the religions grown around these figures prohibits a universal acceptance of their message. This message, Wieman believed, was a call for commitment to appreciative understanding of other minds, through creative interaction.

The results generated by creative interaction, Wieman felt, promoted the basic nature of human existence toward the good. Human nature could lead either toward destructive propensities or toward a greater good. The only way for human nature to arrive at a greater good was through creative interaction. According to Wieman, that is one of the reasons for creative interaction demanding an ultimate commitment.

The most threatening, destructive prospect facing humanity is its current capacity for global destruction. Wieman believed that humanity is at a critical point in history, when it will either continue toward destruction or opt for creative interaction as the means to transform conflict toward greater appreciation between people and increased cooperation. Wieman described the situation repeatedly in Man's Ultimate Commitment and in Religious Inquiry:

> Now, with this giant power in our hands, we confront our fate and our destiny with a finality never before possible. Our ultimate fate may not be annihilation, although that is possible. It may be worse. It may be misery and degradation beyond the possibilities of the past, when the wrong choice could not be implemented with the power we now have. That is our fate if we chose it. Our destiny is creative transformation.[9]*

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*Further discussion of the criticalness of the human situation is found in Religious Inquiry, pp. x, xi, 5, 6, 82, 83, 84, 115, 133, 139, 154, 166, 167, 179, 206, 217.

[9]Wieman, Religious Inquiry, p. 139.

Human survival and human evolution were at stake for Wieman. Therefore, an ultimate commitment to creative interaction is required, not only as the means to survival but as the means to insure that survival leads toward the greater good of all humanity. Creative interaction is required because of its capacity to resolve conflicts and diversities among original experiences. As Wieman stated, this is perhaps the most important aspect of creative interaction.

On another level creativity or creative interaction claimed ultimacy for Wieman because it was a characteristic of ultimate reality. Wieman's postulations on ontology described the relationship of ultimate reality to human existence. Ultimate reality had three characteristics according to Wieman: "(1) the infinite fullness of being out of which human life has arisen, (2) the creativity which progressively creates human existence, and (3) the ultimate meaning of human existence otherwise called human destiny."[10]

The "infinite fullness of being" seems closely akin to the biological underpining of naturalism, and creativity as the process inherent in human life and in the universe.

A concrete grounding for creative interaction led Wieman away from a traditional metaphysical grounding for

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[10]Ibid., p. 20.

religious commitment. He discussed the misuse of metaphysics in Religious Inquiry, defining it as a discipline which gives us, "the ultimate and comprehensive structure of all being, beyond which no further inquiry can reach."[11] This type of metaphysics relies upon two presuppositions. First, that "there is a universal, unchanging set of categories on which all valid knowledge is based throughout all time.[12] Secondly, "these categories comprehended the totality of all being." Wieman believed that this brand of metaphysics was an illusion.

Wieman has been accused by those with an investment in traditional metaphysics of having only a "minimal metaphysics." They are correct. At the risk of oversimplifying, Wieman came to believe that religion was not based upon absolute statements, nor was it based upon, as Whitehead stated, "...what one does with one's solitude."*

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*Although metaphysics is not primarily what one does with one's solitude, the history of its discipline does portray a consistent detachment from the world, i.e.; after things of nature, Aristotle; things transcending nature, Medievalists; speculation on questions that cannot be answered by scientific observation and experiment, Kant; anything obtruse and highly theoretical, Hume; questions about what exists, and its mode of being, Modern. (Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Metaphysics.")

[11]Ibid., p. 188.

[12]Ibid., p. 188.

Instead, religion was for Wieman what an individual does in community. Without community, Wieman believed that human existence rose little beyond that of creature. Religion does not stand in isolation from the concrete world. Religion means individual commitment to a specific way of interacting with people and with the organic and inorganic world. It means a commitment to creative interaction. Even though Wieman bordered perilously close at times to making creativity a metaphysical concept, inevitably he stressed its nature as a concrete reality in human existence.

This assertion is based upon an epistomology which claimed that knowledge was derived from the data of observable events and organized into transitory theories. Consequently, no metaphysical system could ever know the fullness of being.

Wieman did not believe that knowledge was attained from an "unchanging set of categories," nor that the "categories comprehended the totality of all being." Instead, knowledge is "created" in the following manner:

> (1) Data are selected by the inquiring mind from out of the fullness of being which is the unknown and which continues to be unknown except for these selected data. These are infinitesimal compared with the fullness of being from which they are selected.
> (2) The selections are made by a focus of attention which in turn is shaped by the interests arising in the occasion.
> (3) These interests are themselves shaped and narrowed down by what the biological organism must have to survive.

> (4) The data selected and lifted out of the fullness of being are further determined by the categories with which the mind does its thinking, by the culture inherited from the past, by the language, and by the logic.
>
> (5) Theories constructed by the human imagination order the selected data to render them subject to prediction and logical inference. Selected data do not come first in time. Ruling interests and theories come first to select the data from the fullness of existence.[13]

This constitutes what I consider to be a strong empirical basis for Wieman's epistomology. This discussion serves primarily to outline Wieman's refutation of traditional metaphysical systems as they change to adapt to the demands of human existence. If he claims a metaphysics at all, it is that humanly designed categories draw data from an infinite fullness/concrete reality/creativity which is unknowable in its fullness. The data and the categories, and thus the statements derived from them, are always open to error and correction as human understanding grows and changes.

My understanding of Wieman leads me to believe that "being," spoken of above, was for him not something outside the realm of human existence. Specifically, he stated that, "the traditional teaching is correct in saying that there is a mystery which cannot be penetrated by empirical knowledge; but the mystery, as we have said repeatedly here, is the complexity and concrete fullness of being of this

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[13]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

temporal creativity."[14] The "mystery" is not the ineffableness of a god, but, as he posited, "the full reality of this creativity is not an abstraction, it is an actual, concrete, existing creativity."[15]

The explanation of the source of knowledge in Wieman's epistemology, or the concrete reality of creativity, has brought him the label of empirical theologian. His empirical theology does not adhere to a rigid definition of empiricism, if we take empiricism to mean, "experience rather than reason is the source of knowledge..."[16] Unless there is a misunderstanding here, Wieman combined experience of being, as concrete reality, with pre-determined, reasoned categories to be the source of knowledge. Nevertheless, the label, empirical theologian fits Wieman more than it does not fit.

The other label placed on Wieman was "naturalist." If my understanding of naturalism is correct, it implies that whatever exists or happens can be explained by methods which are continuous throughout all domains of study and research. The complexity of the wholeness of life is a mystery for naturalistic philosophy, yet the parts can be

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[14] Ibid., p. 94.

[15] Ibid., p. 94.

[16] D. W. Hamlyn. Encyclopedia of Philosophy (MacMillan & Co. and The Free Press 1967). Vol. 2, p. 499, "Empiricism."

comprehended. This seems to fit Wieman's description of the "fullness of being" found in his epistamological statements.

Furthermore, religionists who have been labeled naturalists typically constructed their religion in this way: (a) rejected traditional religion based on the supernatural, (b) proposed a natural substitute based on claims made about the natural world, and (c) made the object of worship, "things and processes in nonhuman nature on which man depends for the possibility of his successes and indeed his very life."[17] Although Wieman would not have necessarily have described creativity as nonhuman, his religious constructs were otherwise extremely close to the naturalistic constructs.

Wieman's naturalism has been determined by some analysts to be similar to Julien Huxley's in that both men held fast to the concept of religion based on the idea of evolutionary naturalism. Evolutionary naturalism is described as "...a view of the spatio-temporal universe, inspired by modern biology and cosmology, in which the universe is conceived of as an indefinitely extended creative process, always tending to higher levels of development, with all

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[17]William P. Alston. Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (MacMillan and Co. and the Free Press, 1967), p. 145, Vol. 7, "Naturalism."

the sources and principles of this creativity unmarred in the process."[18]

In Religious Inquiry, the reader finds Wieman advancing the notion of evolutionary biology as evidence of creativity. For example, he stated that "creative interaction in human existence is the work of the entire course of creative evolution culminating in human existence."[19] The final outcome, however, is not always higher levels of development. The outcome, according to Wieman, can be human annihilation or human degradation. Yet, Wieman believed that if people allow creativity to break through into consciousness and into reality, that human progress would be immeasurably increased.

Still, Wieman presented himself more as an eclectic theologian than as a pure empiricist or as a pure naturalist. He drew categories from many fields. He was an empirical theologian because he believed knowledge was obtained from a concrete reality and not from an unchanging set of categories comprehending the totality of being. He was also a naturalist because of his revisionist treatment of traditional religion and because of his commitment to explaining

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[18]Ibid., p. 147.

[19]Wieman, Religious Inquiry, p. 210.

processes according to their responsible causes, and testing these explanations with regard to their consequences.

The difference is that at least half of the focus of revolutionary naturalism was on the universe, whereas ultimate reality, for Wieman, "must be found in human existence and cannot be found in any other way."[20] Wieman described this as the existential answer to the religious question. In this situation he posited the religious question as, "What is the reality by which and for which we must live if we are to be saved from the self-destructive propensities of human life and transformed toward the greatest good that human life can ever attain?"[21]

But, before answering this question, Wieman felt compelled to describe the basic nature of human existence. This is appropriate since the answer to the religious question must always be found in human existence. The nature of human existence contains four distinct elements according to Wieman. These elements distinguish human existence from every other form of life. They allow human existence to do the following:

(1) Indefinitely expand the range of knowledge, control and value.

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[20]Ibid., p. 203.

[21]Ibid., p. 201.

> (2) Indefinitely expand the range and depth of mutually sustaining activities, not only among human beings, but also bringing ever more of the organic and inorganic world into this system centered in human existence.
> (3) Carry on evolution to embody in human existence continuously more of all the levels of evolution that can possibly be brought into one form of existence, thereby making available to man all the powers and resources of creative evolution.
> (4) Deal with conflict and diversity so that these serve to promote the creative transformation of human existence in the three ways just mentioned.[22]

Wieman pointed out that humans could use these attributes in either destructive ways, such as murder, pollution and war, or in creatively transforming ways. Even if our choice is the latter, we are still subject to self-destruction, anxiety, and degradation. The nature of the gamble is such that in order to undergo creative transformation, we must live dangerously. Dangerously, in the sense that we are subject to destruction and anxiety because of the sensitivity of the human organism and because of the instability inherent in transformation.

I find the four elements of human existence to be humanistically oriented. They are humanistic because they presuppose that humanity is a part of nature and therefore a part of evolution. This brings humanity in concert with the entire organic and inorganic world. Most importantly, the elements are universal in that they are based upon the

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[22]Ibid., p. 208.

history of human progress and achievement, with due consideration to, but not overemphasizing degradation and failure of human life.

I am sympathetic to Wieman's use of the empirical and naturalistic disciplines. This would make me a minister who is both empirical and naturalistic in his theology. Since my domain is the church community, it is appropriate that I have chosen to study a theologian concerned with interpersonal interaction.

Perhaps a helpful image of Wieman is that of a stone, shot from the hand of creativity, skipping away across the waters of religious and philosophical categories, ultimately on its way to rest in its own part of the pond. Above it, a buoy with a sign that reads....."Creativity."

Wieman placed ultimate importance on creative interaction as the means to guide these elements of human existence toward a greater good and away from evil. I have modified this importance somewhat, by drawing from his work the concept of original experience and placing it with equal importance alongside creative interaction. I feel that this is most appropriate for a minister who is concerned with the concrete experiences of his congregation and of all people. This brings us back, circuitously, to the discussion of original experience and creative interaction giving rise to a community of shared experience.

Drawing out the concept of original experience and placing it alongside creative interaction as equally important is not necessarily a drastic alteration in Wieman's message. Wieman, himself, described creative interaction as the means to an appreciative understanding of other's original experience. Creative interaction itself creates new original experience between people.

Wieman stated that the word appreciative means that "...one prizes the original experience of the other as being very precious."[23] Original experience is highly prized because it enriches human life and because it helps create the individuality of a person. Sharing original experience through creative interaction means sharing "appreciations, sentiments, hopes, fears, memories, regrets, aspirations, joys, sorrows, hates, loves, pieties...."[24] In short, creative interaction includes a sharing of all the original experience that constitutes our unique individuality.

Shared experience that is manipulated falls flat. Manipulated interchange implies a preconceived outcome. The word creative, however, describes in Wieman's words "the emergence in the mind of what was not there before."[25] Even so, Wieman believed that manipulative communication and

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[23]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 23.

[24]Ibid., p. 23.

[25]Ibid., p. 25.

creative interaction could be occurring at the same time. A person may be trying to manipulate another, yet at the same time insights and appreciations never possessed before are being integrated into the individual.

Appreciative understanding between people is a reality which is needed in the church in order to guide the nature of human existence toward the greater good. It is this type of interchange which creates a church community based on the shared experience of congregants. As stated earlier, creative interaction generates, "a wider and deeper community of understanding..." Consequently, there is more "fellow-feeling" and more concern for one another. There is also an enlarged shared interest, plus a greater ability to cooperate.

In the Introduction, the pluralism of original experience is described as endemic to UU's. The statement can also be made that that creative interaction, and shared experience are also peculiar to Unitarian Universalism. This type of interaction and experience have existed in UU churches since their beginnings. Forms of democratic interaction, personal sharing, prayer, counselling and dialoguing have brought about the creative transformation of Unitarian Universalists.

Some may wonder that this transformation is possible when they listen to the often meandering, trivial conversation

that takes place during church coffee hours, in discussion groups, at luncheons and dinners, in committee meetings, in sermons and prior to worship. This type of interaction can be either a way to fill time or an act of establishing or re-establishing contact, sensing, circling and testing to see if and when conditions might be "right" to share original experience on a depth level. It is the creative interaction of original experience that has kept the pluralistic church from becoming either a battleground of conflicting expectations and beliefs, or a suffocating house of repose.

It is the quality of the "shared experience" that makes the pluralistic church meaningful and worthwhile. Consequently, church members should aim to improve the quality of experience for themselves and for all people. They can accomplish this task through a commitment to accepting the pluralism (and unusualness!) of original experience, and through a commitment to creative interaction.

Next, we need to look at how the quality of original and shared experience can be improved through the commitment of the pluralistic church.

Commitment to Improving the Quality of Original and Shared Experience

The third element of the pluralistic church relies upon the support of the first two elements. First, there

is the valuing of the plurality of original experience. Secondly, there is the value of church community based upon shared experience.

Reaching out from these two elements, the pluralistic church is committed to improving the quality of original experience and shared experience for its members and for all people.

In order to accomplish this goal, the pluralistic church must be committed to four tasks, loosely based on Wieman's four tasks of the church:[26]

The first task is to increase the shared experience or the fellowship of the church. This occurs through people gathering to share original experience through the mode of creative interaction. Secondly, the task of the pluralistic church is to expand the valuing consciousness of people. The goal is to develop beyond a narrow awareness toward a more comprehensive perspective. Third, the pluralistic church must show people that the plurality of original experience is valuable. The church must also convince people that diversity and conflict stemming from pluralism must be mediated by creative interaction in order to save society and civilization from self-destruction. Fourthly, the pluralistic church must be the vanguard of

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[26]Wieman, Religious Inquiry, p. 181.

social concerns. The church must point out where people and their institutions should be changed in order to increase the valuing of original experience and the practice of creative interaction.

In addition, the minister has the important charge of ministering to the members of the pluralistic church. This entails: acting out of the principles and beliefs of Unitarian Universalist religion, drawing out the original experience of members, interacting so as to generate appreciative understanding of one another, and articulating the four tasks of the church to the congregation.

Engage in Fellowship

Fellowship, as a means to improve the quality of original and shared experience, is primarily for the benefit of church members. The obvious ways to improve these experiences in the church are first, by removing the obstacles to self-expression, and secondly, by committing oneself to creative interaction.

These means of improving the quality of experience take place whenever congregants gather in fellowship. It entails a richness and personalness in worship services, plus a speaking to the specific concerns of the congregation. It entails support for lay-led worship services.

The quality of experience is improved particularly by building a tradition of support for self-initiated programs and activities. A tradition of this type of participation creates a consciousness that ideas and beliefs can be brought to fruition in the pluralistic church. In particular, this type of participation is encouraged in social gatherings, groups gathered for any variety of purposes, church committee suppers, worship, planning discussions, Board Meetings, church sales, workships, choir, work parties, R. E. classes, and Junior and Senior L.R.Y. groups.

Original experience is improved by a richness and personalness in programming. The quality is also increased by valuing individual ideas and suggestions in committees. Often, quality experience depends upon flexibility in church routine, so that spontaneous initiative can be incorporated into plans and activities. Primarily, the enrichment of experience means utilizing people who are interested in particular activities. If they are enthusiastic they will often draw more people into their activities. An example would be a dynamic building chairperson who tailors church projects to the skills and interests of members.

One aspect of discussion groups which increases the quality of experience is the inquiry and instruction taking place in these small groups and fellowships in the church.

Religion needs the discipline and rigor of commitment and this quality of experience is an important task of church groups.

As stated, engaging in fellowship primarily improves the "quality" of experience for church members. The increase in the quality of shared experience and the expression of original experience, however, will have an effect upon the people who come into contact with church members.

Advance a Comprehensive Perspective

The second task of the pluralistic church which increases the quality of original experience and of shared experience is, "...to enable people to recover and expand a comprehensive perspective on the problems and possibilities of human existence."[27] Wieman declared that for the most part, it is secular activities that occupy people's time. He protested that this secularity forms much too narrow a perspective. What we need, he asserted, is an expanded perspective in order to use constructively, creatively and non-exploitatively the immense powers at our command.

This expanded perspective comes about in two ways. The first way is through inquiry and instruction.[28]

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[27]Ibid., p. 181.

[28]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 174.

Instruction is accomplished through preaching and through groups gathered for study, discussion and action.

The second way of deriving an expanded perspective is through self-examination in order to see where one has failed or succeeded in improving human existence. This leads to a poignant humbleness and sensitivity toward other people's perspectives and other possibilities for human existence. Our liberal religious communities are well-educated, middle to high income, and middle class in values. Consequently, we need to liberate ourselves from, and be liberated by others from the provincialism of this mold. Breaking out of this mold sets the conditions for the appreciative understanding of other perspectives, and the integration of new knowledge and values.

A comprehensive perspective improves the quality of experience by drawing people out of the narrow perspective of routine living. Experience is improved when people share their particular perspectives on the "problems and possibilities of human existence."

Promote Commitment and Responsibility

The third task of the pluralistic church is to promote a commitment to pluralism and to creative interchange in order to avert the destruction of civilization. This task is specifically designed to improve the quality of

experience for people outside the church, to bring into creative interaction those with immense power who determine the economy and public policy.

Wieman's basic premise is that those who have immense power are misusing it on a gigantic scale. The church is isolated from the cooperative workings of the bases of power; i.e. the government, industry, and education. A commitment to creative interaction with "bases of power" increases the quality of experience of these institutions and shared experience with these bases of power. To remain separated is the road to suicide, for one institution must take responsibility for proclaiming, spreading and deepening commitment to pluralism and to creative interaction.

Wieman believed that the institution most fitted for this task is the church. The church and the religious bodies with which it is affiliated must take responsibility for human survival as an expansion of their responsibility for the salvation of their own people.

If Unitarian Universalism stands for pluralism and dialoguing as a means for appreciative understanding of other minds, i.e. creative interaction, then wouldn't the world be improved if we converted people to Unitarian Universalism? It would seem that the six articles of faith

stand as a covenant which exhorts us to spread the UU ethical-religious beliefs.

Traditionally, Unitarian Universalists believe that many people hold UU principles and beliefs without belonging to the church. In addition, Unitarian Universalists value the freedom from ecstatic conversion. UU's also value tolerance of all beliefs more than the self-righteous pressures of converting faiths. Also, converting others means that they have to be taken care of until their faith becomes "right."

So, Unitarian Universalists seem to be against converting others and against being converted by others. UU's believe that others must come to the church with religion in hand, pre-thought and pre-digested. We lose many potential converts this way. There must be a way to let people know about the Unitarian Universalist religion without appearing officious.

One approach that could be used is that of more media exposure: through radio, television, circulars, newspaper advertisements, pamphlets, public relations gimmicks, debates, and public notice of sermons, R.E. programs and adult programs. The church can embrace more pluralism through outreach, or what is currently known as "extension."

Less than humbly stated, our church school programs, educational programs, and speakers are impressive. For

example, people have used the About Your Sexuality Kit in public schools and in churches of other denominations. The Haunted House Kit and the Values Kit have been used in churches of other religions. As for speakers, UU churches frequently draw upon well-known and articulate laity for Sunday morning programs.

We serve truth and creative inquiry in a most remarkable manner. We serve perhaps as well as or better than other institutions. It is time that people learn of our existence. We grow in confidence when we explain Unitarian Universalism to people who have never heard the "good word."

This is to live in such a way that others will come to have an appreciative understanding of Unitarian Universalists and the UU message. The UU message of support for the plurality of original experience and of commitment to creative interaction is worthy of wider expression.

Live with Social Concern

The fourth task of the pluralistic church is to live with social concern for society and the world. A commitment to improve the quality of original experience and shared experience for all people is the basis for progressive social ethics. It entails removing constraints from people expressing their expectations and their beliefs. It also means a commitment to initiating the values of

pluralism and creative interaction in other institutions and between other countries.

For Wieman, the most serious liability to social concern in the church is its potential for disruption in the church and in society. Social concern which seeks to righteously overcome its opponents can become more evil than any of the injustices against which it is struggling.

This does not mean that the church should remain silent in the face of oppression and injustice. Wieman pointed out that the church, with its comprehensive perspective, can see areas in society where changes need to occur. Even though the church must retain its commitment to creative interaction and pluralism, it can act as a pioneer in areas where change is needed. After the church has pioneered in pointing out injustice and exploitation, other agencies can step in who are more powerful and better suited to serve the needs of those involved.

Wieman has adamantly maintained over the years that other institutions are better suited to engage in social action. He offered examples such as the government, industry, the ACLU, and universities. He foresaw the church fading into insignificance if it tried to compete with these other institutions in the area of social action.

The merit in church initiated social action, however, is that in Unitarian Universalism, programs and solutions

arise from creative interaction between the socially concerned and the community. In this way, creative interaction dictates the ethical standard. The standard is of appreciative understanding of values, knowledge, and area of control, leading to an integration of this new information. This results in mutual control, resolution, and an enlarged sense of sharing, concern and community.

Society and the world are guaged according to how well creative interaction functions there. This gives rise to programs and involvements such as conscienziation a (Paulo Freire term) used by the UUSC. Its use imposes no solutions, but entails listening to people and their concerns.

A similar program was the North Side Community Project (Shadle and Engel - Meadville/Lombard). This program emphasized the importance of listening to the needs and aspirations of the indigent people. The organizers were then able to use their skills and expertise to accomplish solutions.

If my earlier depiction of Unitarian Universalist churches is accurate, then the church on the plateau can become more of a pluralistic church by taking an interest in people and groups outside of itself. Through contact with other people and groups, and discussion of their concerns and viewpoints, this goal becomes a reality.

In a very serious sense, without this outreach or extension, a lack of contact with other areas of society and culture indicates the creation of a polarized society. This leads to insulation from the personal nature of the problems found on all levels of society, be they economic, racial, political, educational or industrial. Our insulation from other people will eventually lead to sharp conflicts when the less powerful organize for action, and when the powerful seek to take more control over the community.

It is a form of outreach to have contact with all areas of our larger community in order to appreciate the concerns of others and in order to make our concerns known to them. Charles M. Styron interpreted this sentiment in a Unitarian Universalist pamphlet on the church:

> The church's task is to bridge the gulfs that separate the human world into friend and enemy, our people and their people, the fortunate, and the unfortunate, the ignorant and the educated, the free and the enslaved, the abusers and the abused, the dark-skinned and the light, the Christian and the "heathen," and the haves and the have-nots.[29]

I believe, as do the other authors mentioned later in this thesis, that social concern must be as important in the life of the church as the other tasks of the church.

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[29]Charles M. Styron, Unitarian Universalist Views of the Church, (UUA), p. 5.

For example, Lee and Galloway, (The Schizophrenic Church), would disagree with Wieman. For them, social concern must be one of the primary functions of the church. They view social concern or "worldly" concerns standing on equal footing with "churchly" concerns. Without this balance the church will either stagnate or be torn apart by conflict.

Leas and Kittlaus would concur. Using their model of the pluralistic church, they would support the presence of people who are involved in social concerns along with those members who do not need social action in the church. Without the balance obtainable in the pluralistic church, congregations risk narrowly defining themselves as either a shelter community or as a servant-critic community.

I agree with Wieman that the church should be part of the vanguard in raising social issues. I also agree with his claim that other institutions are in a better position to make long-lasting changes. I disagree, however, with Wieman's belief that social concern should be a secondary function of the church. Social concerns can stand under the directive of pluralism and creative interaction as well as the other three tasks of the church. The church, with consent of the membership, or speaking through a responsible social concerns committee, must witness vocally and actively for pluralism and for creative interaction. The

church needs to support the "transformed individual" who attempts to make changes in his or her workplace that will enhance creativity. This individual is likely to meet with resistance in the workplace and perhaps even a loss of employment. The totalitarian nature of our industrial, educational and political institutions is extensive. If the pluralistic church stands committed to creative interaction then it must also support the creative effort of its members.

Task of the Minister

The minister must ask himself or herself the question: What are the conditions necessary for an improvement in the quality of original experience and of shared experience? The answer provides the tasks of the minister.

He or she needs to help people overcome the restraints to the expression of original experience. This can be accomplished by speaking from the pulpit to the needs, fears, contradictions, habits, joys, and uniqueness of the congregants. The task of the minister entails risking substantial involvement with people through personal interchange. It means risking time, energy, thoughts and emotions with others. The minister celebrates the unique joys, success and happiness of the congregants, and helps them to use sorrow, despair, tragedy and anxiety as a

resource to move forward. In a unique institution, the minister supports church members in their work, their families, and in their relationships.

The minister infuses the traditional roles of preacher, priest, pastor, prophet, teacher, and administrator, with the conscious intent to further the acceptance of pluralism and creative interaction as ultimate values. In this way, the minister is an example of joining theory and practice, as he or she lives and fosters the attributes of creative interaction.

The minister creates groups and programs which will further the values of pluralism and creative interaction. Often, the minister helps set the tone in these groups and in the general church atmosphere. There is something to be said for all types of environments, but probably the less threatening, less uncomfortable, and less ugly the church is, the better the conditions will be that are needed to support creative interaction. The minister also supports and encourages the spread of pluralism and creative interaction in the form of social concerns.

Finally, the minister is responsible for adding knowledge and value of Unitarian Universalist history to the valuing consciousness of the congregation. The minister is responsible for transferring knowledge to others, of a 2000 year history of Christianity, a 400 year history of

Unitarianism in Eastern Europe, and in particular, the 200 year history of Unitarianism and Universalism in America. The minister promotes a common awareness and knowledge of UU history and theological dialogue. He or she advances the sharing of original experiences among congregants as a means to further the community of "shared experience." Also, the minister supports lay-led worship, a trust in critical, non-dogmatic learning for children, and the need for play and social gatherings among youth and adults alike. In addition, the minister evidences concern for the ethical and social dilemma of not only adults but also high school and college youth.

The efforts of the minister, if successful, lead to the improvement of original and shared experience in the church and in the world. This occurs by way of trust, thoughtfulness, concern, sometimes altered or discarded presuppositions, and, most of all, by way of an enthusiasm that expresses Unitarian Universalist religion as an ultimately worthwhile endeavor.

Conflict as a Resource

The remaining element found in the pluralistic church, is the ability to utilize conflicts and diversities as a resource to increase the quality of original and shared experiences. This goal is accomplished by utilizing creative

interaction as a means to resolve conflict. A general outline is offered here on the relation of conflict with creative interaction. The indepth study of the nature of conflict is taken up in Chapters II and III. The specific ways in which creative interaction resolves conflict toward a greater good is discussed in Chapter IV.

Conflict acts as a resource to increase the quality of original experience by shattering the conformity of liberal harmony that hides original experience. Conflict acts as a resource to increase the quality of shared experience by overcoming the liberal harmony that hinders creative interaction and the appreciation of pluralism. The concept of liberal harmony is drawn from Wieman in Man's Ultimate Commitment. Cooperative and harmonious relations need to be put aside when they hide disagreement and conflict over vital current issues, clashes of personal experience, and questions of purpose and meaning. As stated earlier, the church's commitment should be to original human experience and to creative interaction.

Creative interaction would be meaningless without ideas, principles, joys, sorrows, beliefs, customs, traditions, and individual needs and expectations. These things are just as important and just as necessary as creative interaction. What should claim our commitment is a give and take between creative interaction and these conflicting

diverse attributes derived from people's original experience. This give and take often takes the form of conflict.

Conflict can be tolerated if it is understood as a resource, via the transformation of creative interaction, to increase the quality of original experience and shared experience in the church and for humanity. In this way, the vision of the pluralistic church will not be impeded by the problem of conflict.

Weiman addressed the issue of conflict in relation to creative interaction in several of his later works. Wieman declared that through creative interaction, individuals progress past the barriers of "bitterness...arrogance and assumed self-sufficiency" toward "channels of free and open communication with others."[30] In creative interaction, the "bitterness" and "arrogance" that accompanies conflict can be transformed toward a common understanding and appreciation for the values of those involved in the conflict.

Creative interaction is the means of deliverance for Wieman. The concept of deliverance means to develop toward a greater good. Deliverance does not refer to the sudden attainment of perfection. Sometimes deliverance is possible only through what Wieman termed a "chain of consequences." The "chain of consequences" originates in an

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[30]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 133.

event which disrupts the crust of conformity caused by uncreative harmony. Commitment to harmony, at all costs, hinders the expression and development of original experience.

There are many myths and habits in the liberal church which undermine its functioning as a caring, creative community. These habits and myths, acted out by congregations and ministers, foster forms of uncreative cooperation, and liberal harmony. The result is that work to set the conditions necessary for creative interaction is impeded and conflict is repressed. By hindering the conditions necessary for creative interaction and by prohibiting conflict the church also frustrates attempts for more pluralism.

Wieman described liberal harmony as agreement between persons, agreement in which the authentic self has been sacrificed and the partial self placed in the forefront. Any attempt to challenge the will of the liberal harmony is met with great resistance. Wieman protested that, "This collective judgement makes it exceedingly difficult for any individual or small minority to break through the crust of conformity thus imposed."[31] Value judgements should generate conflict between people. Otherwise, decisions will be based upon what may be the erroneous values of the powerful or of the majority.

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[31]Ibid., p. 130.

This situation is as common in the church as it is in other institutions. The "crust of conformity" acts to suppress conflict. This suppression causes an accumulation of feeling in some persons, building toward a potentially dangerous conflict. For others, adaptation to the "crust of conformity" robs them of their ability to detect the evil in the value judgements made by the majority.

This impediment to creative interaction strengthens the narrowness of the sheltering church and of the servant-critic church. They draw us away from the purposeful focus needed to transcend the drift toward the unlimited potential church. We need to be aware of these impediments. Otherwise, we will weaken the pluralistic church by losing sight of the conditions necessary for creative interaction.

Wieman is specifically interested in how continual cooperation hinders the growth of appreciative understanding:

> Whenever there is a group whose members are always cooperative and never in conflict, the appreciable order of meaningfully connected happenings is not growing.[32]

Weiman felt that the order of one's mind must be broken by some form of conflict so that one could come to an appreciable understanding of other minds. This process gives meaning and quality to events. Ideally, the process would be continuous and ongoing in order to achieve this

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[32]Ibid., p. 142.

meaning. Wieman observed the positive nature to the continual process of conflict...appreciative understanding of other minds...conflict...appreciative understanding.... The church which attains agreement and cooperation through repressed conflict is particularly pernicious because it exhibits a lack of creative interaction among its people.

The pluralistic church can repress the conflict of original experience or accept it as a part of church life, as a sometimes necessary element for progress, and as a resource to improved original and shared experience. A problem arises when conflict or the public expression of pluralism is taboo. The situation is constructive when the assumptions in a church are such that conflict is viewed as an opportunity or as a resource toward the enrichment of experience.

Wieman stated that conflict is the event which can become an opportunity. Conflict forces individuals and leaders to re-examine their accepted goals and ways of interacting with others. Then, individuals can begin to engage in the type of interchange which leads to a more appreciative understanding and valuing of others. Individuals are then able to influence others to develop in the direction of this greater good.

To say that conflict is necessary for creative interaction to occur may sound strange. Of course, creative

interaction occurs also between people who are not in conflict with one another. Their interaction may include only the sharing and appreciative understanding of suffering, joy, love, pain, anxiety, or loneliness. In this situation creative interaction is not dependent upon conflict as a stimulus.

Yet, the experience is common to most, when not "heard" or listened to, or when arguments are not appreciated, that the flow of discussion or of events needs to be altered or even shattered in order to gain appreciation. In the church, this occurs when members' needs are not attended to by the minister, or when church members detect the board trying to railroad policy. It also happens when church members come to resent the use of their church by outside groups. Some concrete examples of such conflicts, and their effects, are discussed in Chapter II, The Review of the Literature on Conflict.

Needless to say, it is important that conflict be accepted as a precedent to creative interaction. True, some individuals don't seek creative interaction as the solution to their demands. More often, they ask for all or nothing decisions based upon win-lose voting in situations such as the removal of the minister, change in the by-laws, hiring personnel, or taking political stands. When unsuccessful, these people typically either leave the church

or they increase pressure on the church to accept their demands. Because of these oft-repeated outcomes, methods for conflict resolution that offer an alternative to win-lose voting are needed in the church. More will be said about these methods in Chapter IV, Conflict Resolution.

Summarized briefly, the ideals, ideas, needs, and expectations of original human experience help to shatter the crust of conformity which hinders the valuing of pluralism and of creative interaction. If the purpose of the church is to foster the diverse values of pluralism and creative interaction, then logically, the church should expect conflict occasionally to be a precedent to this interaction.

The pluralism of original human experience is the source of church community. Original experience guided by creative interaction leads to a community of shared experience. The concept of creative interaction is of utmost importance in this thesis since it is the means by which human existence progresses toward increased understanding, valuing and control. This is progress made by individuals and by people in an increasingly concerned, caring community.

The church which values the pluralism of original experience and the community creating power of creative interaction will be committed to improving the quality of original experience and of shared experience. This goal is

accomplished through four tasks adopted by the pluralistic church and by the conscious commitment of the minister.

Finally, the church which values the expression of original experience must expect conflict to be an occasional visitor. This is no problem if conflict is viewed as a resource, via creative interaction, for increasing the quality of original and shared experience.

Conclusion

Wieman stated at one point that if the church is unable to lead in awakening people to commitment to creative interaction then it should stand aside for another institution to awaken commitment in people. The church had to stand aside in the 50's, 60's, and 70's during the formation of new institutions of social change brought about by the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, the women's movement and the ecology movement. The church, if it has learned from these newly formed institutions and other grass roots organizations must now remind us of a commitment to a socially responsible role for creative interaction. Otherwise, churches risk adulating the recently won victories of these new institutions and organizations rather than participating in the ongoing struggle for creative interaction among society's institutions. The pluralistic church is the type of church which is a participator.

The pluralistic church model is the only model which can make room for the tasks of the church as they've been outlined here. The other church models, the servant-critic, the sheltering, and the unlimited potential do not easily adapt themselves to all four tasks of the church. Even so, we find that sometimes the pluralistic church has become a disjointed amalgamation of special interest groups, social clubs and forums. This is the case in many liberal churches which do not have a purposeful ministerial vision of the church. With a creative attitude, the pluralistic church experiences a vision of wholeness for the church. Through creative interaction, the pluralistic church adopts a conscious appreciation for and understanding of the diverse nature of its people and its programs.

The pluralistic church is committed to improving the quality of original experience and of shared experience through creative interaction. This interaction occurs in the forms of outreach, social action, fellowship and the search for a more comprehensive perspective. The interacting of different expectations and beliefs is not always harmonious, and in fact is often the cause of conflict. If this is the case, then there is a vital need to understand conflict and how we can grow more accepting of its potentially positive functions.

If the pluralistic church of different people, ideas and backgrounds is chosen, then the choice will include an

increase in competition for the best ideas and goals for the church. It will also be a potential choice for controversy. Both competition and controversy are forms of conflict. It is important then that we look at conflict, its sources, types, and functions. In addition, the functioning of creative interaction is dependent upon having knowledge about conflict theory. This is the task of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON CONFLICT

Chapter II moves into a discussion of the major works on church conflict and of the sociological studies of conflict. Definitions of conflict from the sociological studies (Lewis Coser and Ross Stagner), display the seriousness of conflict. An explanation of the levels of intensity in conflict provides a guideline for determining the effects of conflict in the church. The two categories describing the sources of conflict explain the personally sensitive areas in conflict. An explanation of the different types of conflict supports the notion that different conflicts require different approaches for solutions. Setting the conditions necessary for creative interaction is difficult without the increased knowledge of conflict obtained through the study of this literature.

While we are on the plateau we need to expand our present understanding of conflict, and take another look, painful though it may be, at how we have failed to resolve past church conflicts. I have found the literature on social-interpersonal conflict and on church conflict to be an aid in accomplishing this task. In this chapter I've drawn information from several sources including:

sociological materials, interpersonal communication literature, case examples and personal experience.

The two primary sources of conflict identified in this chapter are intra-church expectations and ethical-religious beliefs. Both of these conflict sources contain the potential to either strengthen the church and bring people closer to creative interaction or else divide the church into warring, combative factions. Whichever outcome prevails, conflict is almost always viewed as dangerous. To the powerful, conflict threatens to diminish their power. To the less powerful, conflict threatens them with ostracism and further diminishment of power. Conflict is dangerous because it also unleashes powerful emotions which either can be brought under mutual control among congregants or can split the church irreparably.

I am concerned with how conflict can bring persons into creative interaction with one another so that a community of original and shared experience can be strengthened. In order to further this goal it is necessary to understand a number of problems associated with a particular conflict such as: its sources, its level of intensity and the type of conflict.

Knowing the sources of conflict can help us point out to each other the sources of our disagreement. It may also aid a conflict referee in planning strategy, proposing

solutions, and facilitating discussion. To know the sources of conflict is to be more aware of sensitive areas of the personality, hidden agendas, and intrapersonal conflicts that influence interpersonal conflict. If we know the level of intensity of the conflict we can determine if the conflict will seriously hurt the church, (combat), or if it is a healthy sign of competitiveness and controversy over ideas or programs. If we have this information we will be able to guide the conflict through the levels of competition and controversy rather than escalate it to the win-lose situation of combativeness. Finally, if we know the type of conflict, we can look for specific information in order to resolve it. A review of the literature on conflict ably serves these goals.

Definitions of Conflict

Lewis A. Coser, in his book, The Functions of Social Conflict, proposed that conflict is, "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals."[1] This description is brutal and rightly so. The root of the word "conflict" is Latin, fligere, meaning to strike.

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[1]Lewis A. Coser. The Functions of Social Conflict, (Free Press, 1956), p. 8.

Ross Stagner, in his book, The Dimensions of Human Conflict, stated that conflict is "a situation in which two or more persons desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both."[2] Witnessing conflict in the church or reviewing the case studies of church conflict confirms the often malicious nature of this struggle over power and resources.

Levels of Intensity in Conflict

The struggle engendered by conflict is best characterized according to its levels of intensity. The more intense the conflict the more likely it is to end in destructive polarization. Stagner describes intensity as "... the depth of emotional involvement of the participants; their feelings about their own group and about the opposing group; their persistence in attacking the opposition; and the methods of attack utilized."[3] Intensity may be influenced by a number of factors such as; size (or number of persons involved), duration of the conflict, the laws, rules and traditions regulating conflict, the discrepency of power in the participants, and personal expectations of the participants.

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[2]Ross Stagner. The Dimensions of Human Conflict, (Wayne State University Press, 1967), p. 136.

[3]Ibid., pp. 143-144.

There are three levels of intensity in conflict. In ascending order they are, competition, controversy, and combat. Coser's definition of conflict is an apt description of combat, to "...neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals." Nowhere in the literature is combat ever justified as a constructive form of church conflict. Combat has been used in the church and in the world to perpetuate autocrats and exploitation.*

Stagner's definition of conflict closely follows the intensity levels of competition and controversy. Competition, whether for elected office or in debate is constructive when it is used to press for the best conditions possible for creative interaction. Similarly, controversy is constructive when it breaks a crust of conformity which may be hindering creative interaction or when it shatters cooperation which stymies individual expression.

Contrary to belief, competition and controversy are not necessarily destructive elements in the church. They are necessary elements for a growing, changing church. Competition and controversy indicate personal involvement in the communal vision of the church. Competition and controversy, however, can lead to combat if the church members

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*Combat has been used to defeat evil, (Hitler, for example), yet it must not be used to perpetuate power for the sake of power. Combative conflict is justified only if the victor reestablishes the conditions necessary for creative interchange.

or the minister stubbornly maintain the inviolability of their positions.

Too often, the tendency of church members in the event of a disagreement is: one, to stew about it, two, to blow its significance out of proportion with the aid of one's emotions and hurt feelings, three, to gossip or plot with other church members, and four, to present an ultimatum to the appropriate committee or to the offender. With this final act, the offender is left with little alternative but to defend himself or herself against the opponents. Conflict which may have been resolved earlier now requires a referee.

There are complex reasons why disagreements and controversies escalate into combat. Adversaries habitually fall into a win-lose frame of mind instead of taking the more difficult step of striving to attain mutual goals. Adversaries become combatants when they place total emphasis on winning. They lock out of the relationship compromises and shared goals, thereby causing a breakdown in trusting, appreciative communication. Any communication that occurs is under the pressure, (and the word pressure must be emphasized), of the desire to win and the fear of losing. Nonstressful communication ceases and the ability to achieve a creative, shared solution to a controversy is negated by the personal investment in winning. Each party perceives that one side will win and the other will lose.

Anyone who remembers a conflict situation will also remember the hostility, defensiveness and hurt that accompanied it. These feelings may have taken command in the conflict situation and urged us toward goals we would not have sought normally. The expectations and principles which give rise to these feelings need to be studied next.

Sources of Conflict

I've drawn from my experience and from my readings two primary sources of church conflict: intra-church expectations, and ethical-religious beliefs. It is conceivable that either one of the two categories could be used as the sole explanation of conflict. I feel at this time, however, that to place one source as primary would be to stretch its credibility. Let it be said then that for this writer, the sources of church conflict are not mysterious, nor can they be fully explained by drawing upon the information in only one of these categories. Rather, the way to penetrate to the sources of conflict demands a broadly based approach to the problem of understanding interpersonal conflict.

Intra-Church Expectations

In my experience and from the readings on church conflict, I will say with certainty that the church is an

institution characterized by expectations.* These expectations are found within the minister, within individual laypersons, within groups in the church, and within the church as a whole. Interpersonal conflict occurs whenever these expectations are unmet.

Personal expectations stem from the following sources: past experiences, favorable or unfavorable which are expected to continue into the future, what one has heard or read, and moral or ethical standards. Problems begin when the church is expected to conform to personal expectations. Combined with an assertive personality, expectations become a drive for power and control within the church, i.e., "What I want is good for the church." Unmet expectations create problems when a person finds an object to blame and to combat.

There are positive aspects to unmet expectations if the experience impels us to improve the conditions necessary for creative interaction. Unmet expectations cause an unrest, an uneasiness that draws one away from complacency and propels one toward thought and action. The individual must chose then, between two options: destructive conflict or setting the conditions necessary for creative interaction.

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*For a review of the specific expectations concerning the church and minister, see Robert Tapp, Religion among the Unitarian Universalists, pp. 222-245, p. 6, S-1, L-2, L-8, L-9, D-1, D-5, D-6, D-7, D-8.

The latter is the only solution worth considering since the only means to fully resolve unmet expectations is through creative interaction.

I am presenting several examples of expectations which were unmet and which eventually led to controversy and a mild form of combat. These case examples all took place within one church during a period of several months. Together they display the regularity of conflict in church life, and the need for creative interaction as the mode of conflict resolution.

The first example concerns a Unitarian Universalist church preparing for a student intern.* Paying the intern depended upon whether or not a search committee recommended hiring a full-time or a part-time director of religious education. Hiring a part-time D.R.E. would mean that there would be money available to pay the intern. The minister supported the proposal to have an intern and the Board approved this proposal. Problems stemmed from the financing of the intern:

> The question of the intern was reported in the newsletter both before and after the decision but no mention was made of the cost, $800 total spread over two church budget years, $450 in 1976 and $350 in 1977.

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*A confidential case example obtained specifically for use in this thesis.

Conflict resulted when a member of the finance committee learned of the stipend to be made to the intern:

> In about three weeks a member of the finance committee (D.T.), said she was withdrawing her pledge because she had learned we were paying the intern. She felt that this was irresponsible and against the Finance Committee's recommendation on the budget and that it added a line item not approved by the congregation. She got a copy of the by-laws and found out that the congregation had no control over finances and that the Board could sell the church property. She and her mate, (D.Q.), began to collect church by-laws and demanded that a by-law committee be set up to change the financial control.

I read this situation as an initial controversy, paying the intern, which caused an escalation in competition for power in the church. The withdrawal of D.T.'s pledge was an initial sign of anger and protest stemming from a lack of communication between the Board and the congregation. D.T. did not expect the Board and the minister to change the budget without notifying her, the finance committee, and the congregation. D.T. was surprised and probably felt that the Board and the minister, working in collusion, had purposefully kept the news of the intern's stipend from the congregation. D.T. and her mate, D.Q., expected to mobilize support within the congregation by instituting a change in by-laws. They undoubtedly hoped for a victory in the annual meeting which would place their faction as a power equal to the power of the Board and the minister.

The minister described this situation as a conflict over power in the church and from the information available,

I concur. In order to understand conflict in the church, it is necessary to recognize the drive for personal power and control within the church. In his article, Hits Win Ball Games, James Luther Adams, a truly wizened expert on the dynamics of power within voluntary associations, stated that, "Power, then, as we understand it here, is the a-bility to make oneself heard, the capacity to cause others to take one's concerns seriously. It is the capacity to make one's concerns felt as 'an impact in the communal decision-making process.' It is also the capacity to listen. It is the capacity to respond creatively to others, to the needs of others."[4] D.T. wanted the power to be heard and to have her concerns taken seriously. Unfortunately, she aborted any chance of creative interaction by transferring her concerns to a win-lose vote over changes in the by-laws. From the information available, it appears that all parties involved, D.T., D.Q., the minister, and the Board lacked the desire to listen and to respond creatively to one another. There seemed to be no recourse but to escalate the conflict to a win-lose situation, or to withdraw.

There is something about the nature of the church that allows the escalation of conflict intensity. It may be because people are permitted little power in their

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[4]James Luther Adams. Hits Win Ball Games: The Creative Thrust of Conflict. (The Register Leader, 1966), 148, No. 7, pp. 3-5.

workplace and in their daily lives. I stated in Chapter I that the totalitarian nature of our institutions prohibits our congregants from introducing needed changes. They must be wary of a possible loss of job, promotion, prestige, and hence, personal and family security. They lack the power to make themselves heard and to be taken seriously without retribution being taken against them. The liberal church, being a democratic and voluntary association, provides the opportunity for people to exercise more power than they have normally in their daily lives. If conflict is prohibited in our work and family lives, then conflict resolution, as the creative power to be heard and appreciated by others, would be unknown. Consequently, the opportunity to exercise power in the voluntary church is carried out in the only way we know .....the drive for dominance.

Seeing no other alternative but to escalate the conflict, D.T. and D.Q. brought a by-law change before the annual meeting. It was defeated overwhelmingly, yet a slightly different version, proposed by the Board, was passed instead. They accomplished part of their goal by making the Board accountable to the congregation regarding significant changes in the budget, yet because they were not able to dominate with their own by-law change, they formally withdrew their membership from the church. The conflict ended because the relationship between the church and them no longer existed.

The second conflict which occurred at the same time was over the nomination of a Catholic for the position of director of religious education. What could have been even a more explosive issue than the previous example was resolved by the minister and the Finance Committee chairperson working together:

> The Finance Chairman (R.C.) spoke against his employment in the Board meeting and resigned as chairperson of the Finance Committee because she felt that employment of a Catholic would cause people to withdraw their pledges. When I returned I took her to lunch and listened to her views. She said she did not want to be a leader of opposition, she was not angry at me nor did she plan to withdraw money or membership. (Earlier she had proposed a part-time job in the church, to organize caring groups to listen to criticism, etc.--a paid job she would like to have.)

R.C. created a controversy over the hiring of the Catholic D.R.E., yet she withdrew in order to avoid an escalation of the conflict. By speaking out and then by withdrawing she made her point and gained attention for her concerns. She expected members to withdraw their pledges from the church and also that they might possibly withdraw their children from the church school. The minister felt that R.C.'s primary expectation was that the D.R.E. would be hired at a part-time salary. R.C. expected the church to use money (now going to an expanded D.R.E. salary), to support her desire to be a paid coordinator for support groups in the church. These unmet expectations caused a minor stir in the church, but this stir was resolved

creatively through the power to listen and to respond to the needs of others.*

The third conflict in the church was still developing during the writing of these experiences. It concerned the Music Committee's desire to sell a piano and an organ in order to finance a new organ for the choir. The Board approved of the sale but left the final decision for the congregation to make. It was the last item of business at the annual meeting and it was approved by a narrow margin. Briefly, the scenario was this:

> The organ issue was reached about 11:15. Many people had left. After much discussion a vote of opinion was taken. 26 for, 21 against using the funds for an organ and raising money in a special drive (in order to complete the funds for a new organ). Mostly choir and Music Committee people were still left.

Even though they received a narrow approval from the congregation, future conflict may erupt because a majority of the church members had left before the vote was taken. If this majority is against the sale, the expectations of the choir and the Music Committee will meet with resistance. This resistance will be in the form of controversy unless the choir, Music Committee and the congregation devise a way

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*The Roman Catholic DRE was hired and functioned on the job adequately, although some resentment and hostility continued. The intern was paid the stipend and performed a valuable service to the church according to the minister and the congregation.

to resolve the conflict other than voting down the proposal.

These three examples of church conflict are helpful in illustrating many of the concepts associated with church conflict. There are a number of other intra-church expectations drawn from the literature on church conflict. Most of the following examples explain congregational expectations of the minister. These examples do not exhaust the possibilities but they do cover many of them.

A common expectation which may stimulate conflict is to expect that the minister will act or think according to a congregant's personal standards. When reality falls short of these expectations, disappointment ensues and controversy may be close behind. An example of this is the church member who looks to the minister to be an action-oriented combination of Paul Tillich, Ralph Nader and Albert Schweitzer. In an opposite vein, the type of church member who looks to the minister as one who is attuned to the spirituality of his/her inner self may be as disappointed as the member who looks for the "action" minister.

A new minister often raises a church's expectations. Fresh out of school or fresh from a successful ministry in his/or her last church, the minister, through sheer momentum, is able to create the idyllic community of love. The minister's abundant love, vibrant aliveness and vision

creating imagination transforms the congregation into the transfigured community. "For a moment the church is an earthly extension of the Kingdom of Heaven. Its minister is a man of God. His service and sermons bespeak the call divine."[5]

Disillusionment sets in when the immaturity of the new graduate shows through or when the romantic expectations wear away, or when the initial momentum comes grinding to a halt. Lester Mondale points out that the laity are very sensitive to the moods of the minister and this disillusionment is felt immediately and poignantly by them. Any uncertainty in the minister leads the layperson to feel deprived of strength and vision, which in turn, "...gives rise to discontent, with whisperings and head shaking in its train."[6]

At times there is a nostalgic reverence in the congregation for a past minister. Members who thought they were hiring a minister who would be like a previous one are always disappointed when the new minister turns out to be his/her own person.

Much criticism falls upon the minister's preaching. Critical comments range from the minister not being religious, being too critical or too scholarly, to being too long-winded,

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[5]Lester Mondale. Preachers in Purgatory (Beacon Press, 1966), p. 6.

[6]Ibid., p. 33.

and too mystical. These unmet expectations point to the importance that the laity place on inspiration every Sunday morning. It also speaks of the reality that not everyone can be inspired by the same preacher.

Another emphasis is on interpersonal relations. Expectations are rudely jolted if the minister seems to demonstrate sexual overtones toward congregants or if he/she seems cold toward church members or children. Ministers are expected to have leadership abilities, yet they are often criticized for being too domineering. Their personal habits may also come under fire if these habits do not meet the expectations of the laity.

I stated that these examples were congregational expectations of the minister. There are also many ministerial expectations of the church. A common characteristic of the ministry is the need to be loved and accepted by one's congregation and to have approval for one's actions. This expectation is very difficult to meet, for disapproval and unacceptance by some congregants is to be expected in any church.

Most of my expectations of the church are outlined in Chapter I. My vision of the pluralistic church needs the support and involvement of a congregation. Conflict may occur if congregants do not share this vision or if they disaprove of my means to create the pluralistic church

through outreach and through social concerns. That is why creative interaction is so important to me as a means to mediate between my expectations and the expectations of the church.

Ethical-Religious Beliefs

The second source of conflict stems from ethical-religious beliefs. Differing beliefs have come directly into conflict with each other at times in Unitarian Universalist history. At other times, when people found themselves in basic agreement over beliefs, there has been disagreement over the means to achieve a concrete expression of these beliefs. Included in this disagreement has been conflict over the church's role in taking public stands based upon ethical-religious positions.

Sometimes, these beliefs represent a religious approach to new trends in philosophy, psychology, theology or the physical sciences. Also, ethical positions represent tensions and conflicts occurring in society at large. Theological conflicts in Unitarianism and Universalism stretch back to the earliest controversies over Restorationism and Transcendentalism in the early 1800's. Between 1865 and 1895 the Radicals fought with the Evangelical Unitarians and with the Broad Church Group. In Universalism, evolution was hotly debated. In the 1900's, the theological

controversy centered on the differences between the "lyrical theists" and the religious humanists.

In the area of social concern, Unitarians and Universalists have clashed within their movements over slavery. More recently, within the past twenty years, the clash of ethical-religious beliefs has been most severe in the areas of civil rights, the Viet Nam War, women's liberation, and human sexuality (homosexuality, abortion, extra-marital intercourse, and pre-marital intercourse).

A case example from a Unitarian Universalist Church illustrates a clash over ethical religious beliefs in the church:*

> After the Kent State shootings and during the War era, the church was looking for ways to express its outrage and opposition to the war. One of the members suggested that the church withhold its telephone tax (which was described as a "war tax") as a symbolic gesture. The minister liked the idea and supported it in a newsletter column. Many others thought it was a bad idea -----they didn't believe in that kind of civil disobediance for an institution (even if they might be willing to do it as individuals). The matter was brought to a vote of the congregation and passed very narrowly (perhaps three votes). For about a year the tax was withheld but many people continued to be unhappy about it and shortly after the new minister arrived the congregation (with the new minister's ardent support) voted overwhelmingly to start paying the tax again, feeling that the congregation had been divided long enough over what was admittedly only a symbolic protest.

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*A confidential case example obtained specifically for use in this thesis.

Anti-war proponents expected the church to use its power to take a stand on a controversial issue. Church members, who mirrored the anti-war movement, caused the church to pass a motion to withhold the telephone tax. This action created controversy and divided the church over the appropriateness of the church taking a moral and political stand. We can assume that almost all of the congregation was against the war and appalled over the Kent State shootings. The conflict then was not over anti-war principles, but over the means to implement these principles. Withholding the telephone tax was not an appropriate means for a substantial minority of the church.

As in the conflict over the by-laws in the last section, the main controversy here stems from the use of power. Church dissenters, angry at the federal government, needed a visible institution from which to voice their dissent. As isolated individuals they possessed far less power than as a protesting church body. They believed that the church should use its power to promote the moral principles of an anti-war stance. By using the church as a focus for dissent they hoped to have more of an impact on the decision-making process.

The struggle for power in this church contained the potential to corrupt individuals by making them insensitive to the needs of others. Yet, had they chosen <u>not</u> to raise

the issue of a public stand on the war, they would have opted for a stance of powerlessness. The impotency of their powerlessness would have corrupted the conditions necessary for creative interaction in the church. Powerlessness corrupts by shakling people to a nonparticipatory role in public decision-making.

I would expect that a poll taken among those who favored withholding the telephone tax, would have shown that a majority were unable to promote this act of protest in their workplaces. I'm sure that many would have been reprimanded, ostracized, and even fired for asking other institutions to take a moral and political stand on the war. Fortunately, the church is a place where people can push for moral accountability. It is unfortunate for society when the church is the only place which allows the creative use of power.

This case example is typical of the conflict which churches experienced during the 60's and 70's. Congregations fought for and against public stands on civil rights and on the Viet Nam War. Years later, with distance on the conflict, the speaker in this case example reflected on the experience:

> Though very few people left the church over it, it surely didn't help institutionally what was already a marginal operation. In retrospect, I'm not sure it was worth all the conflict. Perhaps if it had been a more important, more substantive

> protest. And yet, having said this, I do believe that many people (including some who opposed it), had their consciousnesses raised about the war and institutions' potential complicity. It was not all a negative thing by any means. Though the tone of the church changed after the tax issue was resolved and though the tax withholding did create furor, the church in fact gained enough strength from the minister to move from a part-time minister to a full-time ministry. It indicates that the tax withholding didn't "ruin" the church in any way.

The people who originated the telephone tax proposal were labeled the dissenters and heretics in our churches. Congregations may have cursed them for their dissent and the conflict they helped to create, but these people were perhaps the most valuable in our society. Adams stated in his article on conflict: "But for all these outsiders, where would we be today? Probably we would live in a more monolithic society where creative controversy would be severely limited. These outsiders have helped to extend the uses of human powers, and especially of the power to form and to transform."[7] During an historical time of great power in the hands of a few institutions, (financial, industrial and governmental), the dissenters tried to develop a corresponding power in order to implement moral accountability.

Now that we seem to be in a period of calm, can we predict that ethical-religious beliefs will be a source of

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[7]Adams, Hits Win Ball Games: The Creative Thrust of Conflict, p. 7.

conflict in the future? On the basis of past performance I think that most churches want to avoid conflict, period! There are two reasons for this. First, most congregants believe that the church should not take corporate action on political issues, nor should the church make a public commitment to particular ethical-religious beliefs.

Yet, there is an abundance of pressing problems such as; racism, world hunger and poverty, unemployment, the nuclear threat, pollution, energy, lower grain prices, ruined neighborhoods, the need for a national health program, corruption, crime, and equal rights for women and minorities. There are usually as many solutions to these problems as there are members of the congregations. The criticalness of this point in history indicates that the future will bring difficult decisions and conflict over the path to the future. Therefore, it is logical to surmise that conflict over ethical-religious beliefs will take place in our churches in the future. It is imperative that interpersonal, cooperative skills be developed in order to face the crucial years ahead.

Conflict will be viewed either as a disease or as an opportunity in the future, just as it has been viewed in the past. The authors in the two case examples relate feeling badly that the conflict had occurred in the first place. Yet, each one in the final analysis was able to see

conflict as an opportunity to not make the same mistakes again. Each one was able to view conflict as a resource for better communication in the first case, and raised consciousness in the second case. This attitude is important for church life now and in the future.

The remaining information needed in order to understand the dynamics of conflict comes from Leas and Kittlaus. They have designated the three types of conflict as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and substantive. Knowing more about these types of conflict serves to widen the possibilities for the creative resolution of conflict in the church.

Types of Conflict

Leas and Kittlaus have made the most detailed analysis of the different types of conflicts. In their book, Church Fights, they indicate that they are concerned primarily with substantive conflict since this type of conflict is best resolved through interpersonal communication between opposing factions. The other two types of conflict need to be resolved through outside assistance. Quite often, these two types of conflict, intrapersonal and interpersonal will play a role in substantive conflict. For this reason the different types of conflict need to be differentiated from one another in order to prescribe the best means to resolve what may be a complex situation.

Intrapersonal. The first type of conflict which Leas and Kittlaus outline is intrapersonal. This conflict is experienced as a struggle between the different parts of the self. For example, intrapersonal conflict might take place between the controlled part of the personality and the playful side. Intrapersonal conflict may also stem from unmet expectations as outlined earlier in the chapter. Intrapersonal conflict affects the church when the individual communicates conflicting messages about what s/he wants the church to be. For example, in the case example in Intra-Church expectations, R.C. wanted a part-time position in the church, yet in order to obtain it she would have to fight the nomination of the D.R.E., which she didn't want to do. Had this internal conflict been strong and unresolved, (if she had continued to oppose the new D.R.E. in spite of her intention not to lead the opposition), it would create confusion in her relations with the D.R.E., with the minister, and with the Board. The authors feel that this type of conflict can be resolved through therapy or through methods of self-help.

Interpersonal. The second type of conflict is experienced as interpersonal. This conflict takes place between persons who feel themselves to be incompatible with one another. Interpersonal conflict does not take place over issues but rather over personality differences. These differences abound in the liberal churches.

In, Preachers in Purgatory, Lester Mondale describes the people who need therapy and who cause conflict in the church because of their personality problems. Mondale describes the minister with personality problems as being a "problem minister." He asserts that the problem minister does not command respect and lacks, "emotional maturity, intellectual balance, social orientation and down to earth practicality."[8] The problem minister runs into the same problems in every church s/he administers. While the healthy minister and church will come through the problems stronger and more understanding of one another, the problem minister will emerge a lesser person, unable to evoke the trust and confidence needed by a leader. The problem minister also displays an inadequate, defensive response to criticism from the laity. The creative interchange necessary for change and growth in the church depends upon the minister and upon the laity being able to express criticism of one another. Creative interaction will not occur when the minister is cold, caught up with social protocal, or hates relating to people.

Mondale writes about two other types of personalities in the church that tend to become involved in conflict. The first is the proprietor member. This personality tends to

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[8]Mondale, Preachers in Purgatory, p. 118.

be a new member of a few years standing who nevertheless is a substantial pledger. S/he shoulders a great deal of responsibility yet has not been invited to be a part of the nucleus of the church, a position to which s/he desperately aspires. The reason why s/he remains an outsider is that s/he "...has as yet to demonstrate his love of the church, over a span of years, by his stability and staying power."[9] The proprietor member prizes his/or her membership like a stockholding. It is a symbol of arrival, of self-esteem. The proprietor member competes with others for status and power. When these are denied to him/or her or when s/he feels that the minister has slighted him/or her in some significant manner, then the proprietor member becomes the driving force behind an insurgent movement in the church. Characteristically, the proprietor member fits the specification of one who turns church conflicts into "holy wars." Mondale describes this person in case after case as adept in escalating controversy to the level of combat. This situation always finds the minister pitted against a strong faction led by the proprietor member. This member would never admit, however, that his/or her dissatisfaction with the minister is due to a deep, personal, unforgivable hurt or injury sustained from a previous clash.

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[9]Ibid., p. 83.

The second description of a personality type in the church is the neurotic member. This is a distressingly condescending way in which to describe a church member, yet there are people who seem to be in a constant state of emotional rawness. The neurotic carries little weight unless the church is small, run-down, or newly organized. S/he throws himself/or herself into the activity of the church seeking to reign over the church, unchallenged. The minister must pay an inordinate amount of attention to the neurotic since a negative attitude from the minister will all but destroy the fragile ego. The neurotic responds to negativity with a "primitive fury of survival," which enables him/or her to inflict a great deal of damage on the church in a short time. The egos of the neurotic and proprietor members are highly susceptible to injury caused by a real or imagined offense.

Substantive. The third conflict experience is substantive. It occurs between individuals, or between two or more groups. Leas and Kittlaus define substantive conflict as conflict over facts, values, goals, or methods of solution.

First, there is conflict over facts. This conflict can be resolved usually through research. For example, although it was only partly her concern, R.C. might have resolved the conflict over the Catholic D.R.E. by conducting

a straw poll among church members, Board members, or Religious Education Committee members. Had the results shown opposition to hiring a Catholic D.R.E., then her opposition would have been justified.

Secondly, there is conflict over values. A description of Unitarian Universalist values can be found in three places. The first is in Tapp's book, Religion Among the Unitarian Universalists. The second place is in the Unitarian Universalist Association statement of purpose. Finally, UU values can be found in the resolutions brought before the annual meeting of the General Assembly.

Tapp outlines five areas of values for Unitarian Universalists. The first is "personal beliefs, styles, and values." He shows that UU's maintain a consistent privatism on sexual matters. Also, UU's display a coherence in the area of posttraditionality, as "a clear disaffiliation with Christianity." Secondly, UU's demonstrate the strongest valuing in the area of "social - ethical values." The overwhelming sentiment of survey respondents was that the church should take responsibility for social change. Third, respondents valued highly the fellowship quality in the church. Fourth, UU's stressed the importance of maturity and personal development as part of "psychological development values." Finally, survey respondents indicated a low valuing of public worship as an element of "aesthetic-reflective-worship values."

The second source of Unitarian Universalist values is the UUA statement of purpose. Values are found in the first three articles which follow.

1.) Support the free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of our religious fellowship;

2.) Cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to humankind;

3.) Affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships.

There is a fairly close agreement between these values and those found in the Tapp survey, although the emphasis on post-traditional religion in the Tapp report is decidedly off center in relation to the second article above. Less emphasis is placed on traditional religious values in the Tapp survey than on personal beliefs, social responsibility, church fellowship, and psychological development.

An interesting observation could be made here on article #3, "affirm, defend, and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality." This statement would seem to support the value of conflict, if and when conflict is needed to defend the supreme worth of the human personality. In situations where individuals consider initiating a conflict in defense of the human personality, there might be controversy (conflict) over the value of conflict

in that particular situation. For example, Unitarian Universalists conflicting over the goal of trying to bring South Africa to its knees, would be in conflict over the value of conflict. This should not be viewed as unusual, but rather as an opportunity to establish common values (opposition to apartheid), and to arrive at a mutual understanding of the best method to accomplish the goal of a free and equal society in South Africa.

The third area to look for UU values is in the resolutions brought before the annual meeting of the General Assembly. Tapp stated in his book that "...the passage of such resolutions furnishes historians with a good estimate of the general tenor of values within a representative group."[10] The Unitarian Universalist values in the form of concerns are as follows.

1) Celebrate Brown vs. Board of Education decision
2) Support Esperanto
3) Support center city churches and fellowships
4) Boycott non-ERA ratified states
5) Fight organized crime
6) Solve world hunger problems
7) Support abortion rights
8) Develop hospices
9) Sanctions against South Africa
10) Concentrate on the employment of Blacks
11) Rights of Palestinian Arab
12) Promote peace in the Middle East
13) End the tobacco subsidy

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[10]Robert Tapp, Religion Among the Unitarian Universalists (UUA, 1973), p. 149.

14) Decriminalization and regulation of marijuana
15) Preservation of whales
16) Community based correctional programs
17) Establish hiking and biking trails, hostels
18) Boycott Nestles, Britol-Meyers, American Home Products, Abbott Laboratories, Borden, Carnation, and all subsideraries
19) Include persons with special needs in community
20) Equal opportunity in medical school admission
21) Fund child development
22) Legality of living wills
23) Redress for Lakota people.[11]

With this massive list of resolutions we begin to have some concrete basis for understanding the values of Unitarian Universalists and the problems involved in espousing such values. J. Ronald Engel described the problem in this manner. "We espouse ideals which identify us with mankind as a universal entity, but shrink from the fact that economically and socially we are often the enemies of those values..."[12] Let us investigate some of these contradictions.

For example, the resolution on world hunger asks governments of developing nations to concentrate on their poor while the rest of the industrially and militarily advanced world passes them by. Did anyone intervene when the U. S. government ignored the Indians, the industrial workers, and the environment when they were exploited so that America could develop and can still develop as a world power, economically and militarily?

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[11]Taken from the UUA General Assembly Resolutions, 1978.

[12]Engel, (Correspondance with D. Robins, 1978).

As for avoiding non-ERA states, the tenor of the resolution is isolationist and escapist. Emphasis should be placed on meeting in the non-ERA states so that conventioneers could devote 25% to 50% of their time to lobbying, protesting, debating, and door-to-door campaigning. The object should be to heat up the issue.

The same should be true for the South African issue. The situation of Blacks would not be better with the absence of U. S. corporations and the presence of economic collapse. U. S. corporations should be made accountable to equal opportunity, hiring and equal pay in South Africa, as they are liable in the U. S. Corporations should be a force for social change, not a football to be taken home in a huff.

Can those who support the preservation of whales boycott Sony, Toyota, Datsun, Mitsubushi, Japanese steel, calculators and stereos? Likewise, the boycott of American companies of Nestle's, et al., might be difficult for UU investors who own stock, UU professors who accept grants for research, and UU viewers who watch public television funded by these companies.

Finally, was it the suburbs of Shaker Heights, Alexandria, Plandome, Worcester, and Oak Park which supported the resolution on Community Based Correctional Programs for convicts? Possibly, the supporters of the resolution envisioned the community centers in the city centers or in the ghettos. But, there are no jobs in these areas for parolees.

There are similar problems with each resolution. I am sympathetic to the values and intent to reform. Something must be said and done concerning pressing social and global problems. My intention is only to illustrate the complex disparity between resolution statements and personal practice. As Engel stated, "we are often the enemies of these values..."

Unitarian Universalists are by and large an economically and socially privileged group. Many of these resolutions seem to have been made from a distance. A knowing sense of vulnerability occurs when UU's lack dialogue with the subjects of their resolutions.

We espouse conservation, ecology, recycling, justice, and population control, but this is often manifested as buying a Volvo instead of a Chevy, or using money and time to support an expansive personal lifestyle instead of doing with less.

Unitarian Universalists live a contradiction in values when they espouse the above values, but continue to spend more money on material goods and energy. Joining theory and practice becomes more and more difficult as professional and social standards become important. Those who live close to the ideals, the purists, are often rejected by mainstream Unitarian Universalism. Mainstream UU's prefer to build a four bedroom vacation home with solar panels and

a garbage compacter, rather than live on three thousand dollars per year in a rural or inner-city homestead.

These contradictions should lead to more conflict than they do. The problem presented by conflict is avoided by ostracizing the purists. Of course, the purists suffer from unbearable righteousness and an isolationist attitude. We need more creative interaction to make all parties aware of their contradictions in values and practice. This is the best way to progress further toward the goal of a better world for all.

Substantive conflict over values is intimately linked to the two other forms of substantive conflict: conflict over ends or goals, and conflict over methods or means to achieve solutions to problems. The resolutions cited as values were also connected to concrete suggestions for goals and methods to solve social problems.

Aside from being related to social concerns, conflict over ends or goals may entail controversy over the purpose of the church committees or of the church itself. For example, my goal to improve the quality of original experience for all people through support of pluralism and through creative interaction may be viewed as an inappropriate goal by some congregants. Nevertheless, goals of some type are needed by ministers and congregations, for without goals, a sense of commitment and purpose is severely limited.

Four of the UUA articles of purpose state our religious goals.

4) Implement the vision of one world by striving for a world community founded on ideals of brotherhood, justice and peace;

5) Serve the needs of member societies;

6) Organize new churches and fellowships and otherwise extend and strengthen liberal religion;

7) Encourage cooperation among people of good will in every land.

Unitarian Universalist societies would find no argument with these goals, unless specific means for achieving them were attached. For example, encouraging cooperation among people of goodwill in every land as mentioned in the above article, finds a snag in South Africa because the apartheid government does not operate on goodwill. The UUA resolution suggests that the means for achieving a solution to this problem is to place sanctions on South Africa. Any number of solutions could be added to this resolution, and thus begins the conflict over the means to an end.

In order to deal effectively with conflict between people in the pluralistic church, it is important to know several things. First, if we are sensitive to our expectations of the church and ministry, and sensitive to our personal-ethical-religious beliefs, we will be able to express more adequately the sensitive, motivating factors behind our conflict. Secondly, we will be able to utilize

conflict as a resource if we approach conflict at the less intense stages of competition and controversy, rather than at the level of combative conflict. Thirdly, knowing the different types of conflict will help us to center on one issue at a time. For instance, establishing common values in the midst of a conflict will provide a common base for an appreciative understanding of each other's differing goals, and methods of solution.

This knowledge will aid the church in supporting its pluralism of original experience and its commitment to creative interaction. Both of these elements can then serve to improve the quality of original experience and shared experience for church members and for all people.

The second stage of the review of the literature on conflict is concerned with the assumptions which people hold about conflict. These assumptions determine whether people will view conflict as a resource and as an opportunity for human progress, or if they will view conflict as a dangerous threat.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CONFLICT

If the church has come to value and commit itself to the plurality of original human experience and to the community of shared experience, by using conflict guided by creative interaction as a resource, then the church will have adopted many of the assumptions presented in this chapter. Adopting these assumptions means the difference between using conflict as a resource, and reacting to conflict as a threat.

The authors of Church Fights, and The Schizophrenic Church, offer slightly different yet mutually supportive assumptions about church conflict.

Leas and Kittlaus first assert that church conflict serves to empower the church and the church members. The healthy church is one in which ideas are challenged and discussed so that the best ideas and programs can be implemented. Through the presentation of plans, goals, ideas and programs and the ensuing discussion, a church member is asured that his/her vision of the church will have a place in the history and the future of the church. One of the functions of continual discussion, competition of ideas, disagreement, and

controversy is that when a major conflict arises, the church will have the resources and the experience necessary to resolve it.

Lee and Galloway point out that conflict creates new groups, which in turn creates new channels of communication. Each group or faction tends to operate quite well as a team. By playing down the differences between people in the group they are able to define themselves according to attitude, position and goals. A negative effect occurs, however, when the "ingroup" sees itself as the sole arbiter of what is right and what is wrong.

All four authors agree that conflict between the church and an outgroup helps to give the church a solid identity and a sense of corporate purpose. Social issues such as the Viet Nam War, civil rights, women's issues and Watergate were able to unite most of the church members as an outraged body. Problems arose, (demonstrated by the second case example, the withholding of the telephone tax as a protest against the war), when the churches sought to find a commonly acceptable means of protest or civil action.

Leas and Kittlaus mention an assumption concerning protesting groups which are allowed to protest as a sanctioned body within the church. This protest enables the dissenters to remain within the church when otherwise they may have left the church had their public protest been

repressed. In this situation the church has helped the protesters to bear what is a grievous or urgent weight of social conscience. It is important that the protesting group is willing to act as a body within the church rather than attempting to force the church as an institution to take sides.

Lee and Galloway offer three assumptions about the positive results of conflict. The first is that conflict allows members to vent their tension and frustration in ongoing circumstances. Otherwise, the repression of these feelings would lead to either personal withdrawal or a gradual accumulation of hostility resulting in an emotional explosion. The second positive result is that through conflict, opponents test one another, to get to know one another and often, to discover good points about each other. To engage in conflict presupposes a relationship, even an antagonistic one. Finally, Lee and Galloway emphasize the possibility for individual growth during conflict. They assert that persons who do not express their negative feelings are out of touch with their positive feelings also. A bland kindness is substituted for genuine love and an impatient tolerance is substituted for authentic anger.

The most important question to ask is, do these assumptions about the different roles conflict plays help to enrich the quality of original and shared experience in the church?

These assumptions make use of many of the aspects of the pluralistic church. The assumption that conflict empowers the church is based upon the shared experience of expectations and ethical-religious beliefs. This leads to dialogue that could lead to greater appreciative understanding in the church.

Conflict that creates new groups does so on the basis of an intra-church community of shared experience. The shared experience of the group may be a common expectation of the minister or a commonly held ethical-religious belief related to social concerns. The functioning of a new group, however, is destructive when it choses to be isolated in its opposition to the rest of the church. This denies shared experience between it and the rest of the church.

Community identity gathered through conflict with an outgroup is rare these days, but it does heighten the sense of community, primarily through renewed commitment and responsibility to assert its rights into the surrounding society. An excellent example is the drawing together of First Unitarian Church in Chicago over the violation of their civil rights by Chicago police's "red squads." This is an example of coalescing around a combined commitment to social concerns and to the ethical-religious beliefs developed in this church.

The other assumption centering on social concerns is that the protest made by a group with the sanction of a church allows a significant type of member to remain in the church. This entails the expression of an ethical-religious stance derived from original human experience. The church body which sanctions this type of protest could not help but gain in numerous ways, such as a more comprehensive perspective, a deepened fellowship of shared experience, and support for increased plurality in the church. This outcome stems from the commitment of the pluralistic church to improve the quality of original and shared experience for all people.

The last three assumptions entail the strengthening of fellowship by sharing both the positive and negative feelings of original experience. It means sharing tension and frustration, and testing one another on commitment to the relationship. The full expression of feelings deepens fellowship and broadens the perspective of church members, thus aiding the improvement of original experience and shared experience.

Five Primary Assumptions

Leas and Kittlaus provided several assumptions, (drawn from Lewis Coser's work, The Functions of Social Conflict), which provide a framework with which to understand and accept conflict in the church.

When the word "conflict" is used, one tends to think of hostile, destructive combat. This is the kind of conflict which has reached the highest level of intensity. No one in the church looks forward to enemies facing off against one another as each one attempts to eliminate the other one from the church community. But, conflict also includes the less intense forms of competition and controversy. This is the type of conflict referred to here. If we can keep this in mind when we use the word conflict, then its connetations may not be so negative.

One of the most common and debilitating assumptions in our churches today is that <u>the church is one place where conflict should not occur</u>. It is important to consider this statement before beginning the longer discussion of the five assumptions.

It is commonly assumed that the church is one place where conflict should not occur. The church should stand apart from the rest of the world because it is not like society where conflict and power struggles are a daily occurrence. The community of love is the one place in the vast expanse of conflict-ridden society where one can go to find peace. Unfortunately, the only place where one can find a truly lasting peace----is in the graveyard!

The belief that the church is no place for conflict creates alarming problems which Leas and Kittlaus describe as:

> ...a big assumption inscribed in the folklore of the church that anger, hostile feelings, conflict and differences of opinion are signs of sickness, selfishness and failure in a church. This assumption dictates hiding, suppressing, avoiding and/or denying even the slightest twinge of dissatisfaction that anyone may have, because if he reveals it, he will disclose the fact that the church is not the strong, superchurch it has been trying to make itself believe it is.[1]

An attitude which believes that the church is one place where conflict should not occur, creates numerous problems for the church. First of all it leads to the denial of problems and differences. Secondly, it may lead to withdrawal from the relationship with the church. Third, to avoid conflict, people project blame onto someone else. Fourth, this attitude leads to coercion through; the denial of differences, the insistence upon similarities, and by making a virtue out of submission to established authority. Finally, a win-lose situation is created when those supporting this attitude either demand the voluntary surrender of the opposition or seek to eliminate the opposition. In all cases this attitude leads to a waste of human resources.

To expect the church to be different than society is unfair and unrealistic. To expect the laity and the minister to form the "loving" community of the church without "unloving" human interaction such as anger and differences of opinion is to expect the impossible. Anger and

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[1]Leas and Kittlaus, Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church, (Westminster Press, 1973), p. 48.

disagreement are signs of sickness, selfishness and failure in the church only if one's vision of the church is incomplete. This is a vision of the church where harmony must be achieved at any cost. It is a vision of the church which excludes disagreements and competition over ideas and programs. In short, this vision includes everything needed for the survival of a static church which is not growing and which is disturbingly homogeneous.

This is disturbing, because as the authors state, the static church must hide, surpress, avoid and deny dissatisfaction, new ideas and new perspectives. The static church denies its members the right to express themselves as independent persons. This attitude is poison to the healthy church. The healthy church is composed of members who have joined the church in order to express their visions, needs and interests through self-styled programs and activities.

The absence of conflict is viewed, oddly enough, as having a civilizing effect upon people. Conflict, however, is known by many students of human nature as being the ingredient necessary for human progress. Thus liberal religion finds itself in a dilemma. We value progress in religion and in society yet we hope to accomplish this forward movement without disagreement, controversy or combat.

"Civilized" congregations which have no room for conflict become the church models spoken of in the Introduction:

the shelter church and the unlimited-potential church. Even the servant-critic church may repress conflict which calls into question its progressive goals. The pluralistic church, too, is prey to the notion that "civilized" means the absence of conflict. The only way to overcome this attitude is through individuals who work for more inclusiveness of original experience in programming, discussions, and committees.

It is true, however, that conflict also leads to human misery, degradation and death. Is it possible then to have progress without conflict? It seems that minimal progress can be made through compromise. But, this solution achieves only an appreciative understanding of each one's threat to the other. Compromise does not lead to greater fellow-feeling, common concern and interest, nor to the ability to cooperate. In compromise, no barriers have been broken that would gain appreciative understanding of each other's original experience. Compromise is the shared experience of a contract agreement, not the shared experience of appreciative understanding between human beings.

Anger, competition and controversy are not necessarily signs of sickness or failure. They are signs that the church is breaking lose from a previous harmony. If this stretching out is met with suppression, avoidance and denial then the result will be failure and sickness. If anger, competition and controversy are met openly with a

framework to creatively resolve the unleashed energies and feelings, the church will be stretching toward a new and better harmony.

Based on the above arguments it can be said, then, that where groups tend to suppress conflict, there will be an accumulation of feeling, leading toward a potentially dangerous conflict. This is the first primary assumption. The suppression of disagreements and dissension leads to explosions of feeling and polarization in the church. It is a mistake to assume that the church is the last place where conflict might occur. When conflict is viewed as an abnormality or as a perversion of the religious spirit, the church will suppress it at all costs. The personality of such a church is rigid. Rigid in the sense of a non-adaptability to new ideas and an abhorrance toward the display of emotions.

The suppression of conflict, viewed in light of the pluralistic church model, means the suppression of the enthusiasm and uniqueness of original experience. More specifically, this means the suppression of personal expectations, beliefs, values, goals, and means to solutions. The rigid church denies outright the legitimacy of the plurality of original experience. The shelter and unlimited-potential church models tend to foster this attitude.

With the suppression of original experience, interaction will be superficial since any depth sharing might be inflamatory. The accumulation of feelings means a lack of interchange and a lack of appreciative understanding of one another's feelings. Finally, the accumulation of feelings means that future conflict will by-pass competition and controversy, and head straight into combative conflict.

When conflict does occur in the rigid church it is channelled along a cleavage, clearly splitting the church into two opposing camps. On the surface, conflict in the rigid church appears to disturb a pre-existing equilibrium. In fact, the pre-existing situation was of disequilibrium, already weighted toward the pseudo-stability of uniformity.

After the experience of the upheavals of the 60's and 70's, it would be unusual to find a liberal church which is rigid toward all new ideas. More likely, the church is particularly sensitive toward one or more issues such as congregational resolutions on political issues, financial support for caucuses, and use of the church by political groups. It is in these areas that members of longstanding will tread lightly while newer members will act boldly and sometimes insensitively.

The authors quoted in this section agree that conflict is an unavoidable part of church life. They support continual, routine, releases of tension, frustration and disagreement. The appropriate way to handle these

"mini-conflicts," as Leas and Kuttlaus describe them, is to continually resolve them.

Advocating continual, routine "mini-conflicts" seems to go against common sense. Leas and Kittlaus state it as an assumption, that the larger the number of conflicts, the greater the stability of the organization. The authors must be referring to conflict in the form of competition and controversy rather than combat. A high number of combative situations in the church would lead to either a destroyed church or the eventual stability of totalitarian rule.

One of the presuppositions here is that there must be an overlapping of people in various groups and committees. Overlapping leads to a better handling of conflict since members in one group will be in agreement on some issues and in another group they'll disagree on other issues. It would be rare to always have the same persons in opposition. For example, in the music committee, Tom and Mary may oppose John on the issue of paid professional singers in the choir, but as board members, John and Mary may be in agreement against Tom on the issue of letting the LRY host a conference at the church.

If there is to be a large number of conflicts in the church then there must also be, in Coser's words, "... toleration and institutionalization of conflict." The

institutionalization of conflict implies a commonly accepted means for resolving conflict. A church with an overlapping of members on different sides of issues allows competition and controversy to flourish without threat to the church. No one conflict will coalesce the members into two opposing camps. A cleavage into two camps threatens the consensual basis of the church and ultimately, its very existence.

A large number of conflicts in the pluralistic church does create some instability, but if the conflicts are used consistently as a resource to enrich the quality of original and shared experience, then the instability can be tolerated. In this way, a history of the positive function of conflict will be built in the church.

A large number of conflicts is evidence of much individual input into church programs and planning. It is evidence that the goals, values, and activities of the church are important in the lives of the congregants.

Achieving a tolerance for conflict and a commonly accepted means of resolving conflict is dependent upon church members who do not withdraw from one another at the least hint of disagreement. The third assumption, then, is that <u>conflict is possible where relationships are not tenuous</u>. The implications to this statement are that conflict, in the form of competition and controversy, is possible:

Where relationships are firm,
Where trust has developed,
Where people know how each other operate,
Where people are attentive to what other people
are doing and saying,
Where relationships are significant.

The development of untenuous relationships is difficult in our society.

We in the United States have been labeled the "mobile" society and a nation of transients. Wieman stated that we live with "ever changing relations and ever-changing associates."[2] We are continually interacting with new people in new situations. Because of such rapid changes, Wieman felt that people try to attain consistency and stability quickly in new relationships by being "warm," "personal," and "sincere." In this way, people limit irritations and boredom in relationships.

People interact with each other in the knowledge that their relationships are tenuous. Because relationships are tenuous, people are cut off from interpersonal conflict, and more importantly they are less inclined to resolve their conflicts as significant elements of ongoing relationships. A transient attitude has left people less involved with others in ways such as interpersonal conflict, conflict resolution in order to continue relationships, and a commitment to gaining an appreciative understanding of others.

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[2]Wieman, Man's Ultimate Commitment, p. 40.

Conflict is impossible where one party refuses to engage the other. Coser stated that the reasons for this are:

> If the participants in a close relationship view this relationship as tenuous, if they feel that the bonds between them cannot withstand the expression of their sentiments of hostility and if they fear the severence of the relationship, they will attempt to avoid acting out their hostile feelings.[3]

The latter part of this statement points to an insecurity in one or both partners in the relationship. Yet, sometimes it is a matter of timing. Particularly in the church, if one person is not in a position to handle the conflict due to temporary stress or time commitments, the other person may be justified in hesitating to initiate conflict. To start conflict at that time may be counterproductive.

If a person can't express disagreement or anger one may choose to withdraw rather than stay in a frustrating relationship. Conflict would be impossible in this tenuous relationship. Granted, at times withdrawal from conflict is important in order to gain perspective on the problem. Recurrent withdrawal with little or no input into the relationship causes a lack of communication which ultimately weakens the relationship.

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[3]Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict, p. 82.

In the first case example in the last chapter the woman on the finance committee who, along with her husband resigned from the church, is a good example of recurrent withdrawal from their relationship with the church. First came a withdrawal from committees, then a withdrawal of their pledge, then a withdrawal of their membership. Their tenuous relationship with the church excluded open conflict and any substantial attempt at conflict resolution.

Coser's attitude is that conflict is possible when the participants want their relationship to survive a conflict. This type of conflict is what he terms "communal conflict." Coser is speaking of conflict as a mutually enhancing process which begins on a communal basis and which, through continual expression of both love and anger, serves to maintain a close, stable and deeply committed relationship. Communal conflict occurs among church members who have a commitment to the church and who desire an appreciative understanding of other members.

This appreciative understanding is present in the pluralistic church. If people desire significant relationships in the church, then they will seek the shared experience of creative interaction. In this way, conflict begins on a communal, cooperative basis and can be used as a resource to deepen the shared experience between people.

Only in the pluralistic church is this possible. The shelter church may contain untenuous relationships, but it has no conflict. The unlimited-potential church has an air of tenuousness about it since it lacks the covenantal purpose of a commitment to improving original and shared experience through support for the pluralism of original experience and through the practice of creative interaction. In the servant-critic church, relationships may not be tenuous but again, it is questionable how much tolerance there will be for a plurality of expectations, beliefs, goals, and values. Only the pluralistic church contains this diversity and the untenuousness in relationships necessary for communal conflict.

The one problem with close, untenuous relationships in the church leads us to the next assumption, that the closer the group personally, the greater the threat the conflict poses. This statement builds upon two hypotheses. First, that conflict is an aspect of significant relationships but that it also threatens us. Secondly, close relationships entail a fulfillment of important aspects of our personalities, and conflict threatens this fulfillment and satisfaction. In a close group, we worry about the effect controversy will have on stable, meaningful relationships. We fear losing the relationship and of causing and receiving much pain.

The existence of close relationships in the church is evidence that the minister and the leaders of the church have successfully cared about the lives of the people in the church. They have been with their members in joy, tragedy, sorrow, birth, death, marriage, divorce, and the search for values, meaning and commitment. They have been attentive to each other's needs and they have considered each other to be important.

They have achieved what George Bach describes in The Intimate Enemy:

> To be of central significance to a partner means to be close..., to be included and brought into the private world of feelings, wants, and fears of the other; to care and fuss about the other's growth... People are hungry for evidence that they are of central significance to an intimate partner. They don't just desire this role. They need it.[4]

Conflict threatens the closeness and the communal consensus of the church. It threatens the unity of the group. Even the fear of conflict may be as threatening as conflict itself. The fear of conflict will drive people to suppress, avoid, and deny differences, feelings, needs and fears. Conflict or the fear of conflict threatens the bonds of significant relationships. The more people need these relationships, the greater the threat conflict poses.

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[4]George Bach, The Intimate Enemy (Avon, 1968), p. 207.

If the previous statements about the pluralistic church are true, then conflict, or the fear of conflict will pose a definite threat to the people involved. Conflict threatens the deeply meaningful experiences of sharing hopes, joys, sorrow, expectations, and tragedy. Conflict seems to threaten the commitment to enrich original experience and shared experience among church members and for all people.

At this point, the threat that conflict poses must be transcended by an attitude which seeks to utilize conflict to re-establish a bond of appreciative understanding, care and concern. This attitude can hope that conflict will be used as a resource, but the outcome is never a certainty.

If the fear of conflict is overcome and the relationship is deemed untenuous enough to withstand conflict, then it becomes all the more important that people share the private world of their feelings, wants, and fears. If they don't, they'll find the final assumption to be true, that the elimination of the personal motives from conflict tends to lead toward sharper conflict. The elimination of an explicit explanation of one's personal motivations, (fears, expectations, needs, beliefs, etc.), will lead toward more intense conflict.

This assumption also points to the fact that personal beliefs, principles and convictions which are transformed

into larger, impersonal, social issues, lead toward sharper conflict. Acting as a representative of a group imbues one with a sense of power. One embodies the group's purposes. The group becomes an extension of one's personality. People become, in Coser's words, "...imbued with a sense of respectability and self-righteousness since they are not acting for 'selfish reasons."[5]

The individual is buoyed by personal convictions plus group verification of his/or her position. With this support, the conscience is clear and purposeful----and behavior tends to be radical and merciless. Being out of touch with personal motivations (as intensely private as they usually are), dehumanizes the conflict, intensifies it, and allows the individual to carry on as if he/or she were battling for the most righteous cause possible.

A dissenting group in the church tends to think of themselves as the rightful church. When they are in conflict say for example, with the minister, they no longer see themselves as individuals with personal motivating factors. They become a combative group with a list of common complaints. In reality they are a collection of individuals who are unable to communicate with the minister as individuals. As individuals, each one feels that his/or her needs

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[5]Coser, Functions of Social Conflict, p. 112.

and expectations have not been met. Conflict may be their last resort in trying to establish a relationship. Coser stated, "...the very act of entering into conflict with an antagonist establishes relations where none may have existed before."[6]

Conflict is the last resort of an alienated person or group of people, trying to establish contact with the minister or with the rest of the church. They feel disenfranchised from attention or from consideration,.... and conflict for them is the only way to remedy the situation.

In the other direction, being in touch with the emotions and the personal motivations gives people something concrete to discuss. The discussion of concrete issues in turn, leads to a shaking of the foundation of personal infallibility and the humbling experience that a cause may contain error. The discussion of concrete issues leads to situations where solutions are possible, whereas the discussion of vague issues make solutions more difficult.

It has been stated that conflict is used as a resource in the pluralistic church. If the personal motives are eliminated then conflict will become sharper and it will be impossible to use it as a resource. This type of situation points to the need to bring creative interaction

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[6]Ibid., p. 121.

to bear on conflict in order to transform it toward a greater good in the church. Through creative interaction, an atmosphere can be created whereby the personal motivations can surface. Once these motivations are brought into the daylight of interpersonal dialogue, they provide the basis for concrete problem solving.

The pluralistic church is better equipped than the other church models to draw out the personal motivations of conflicting parties. The servant-critic church model tends sharply to invest in causes and less in personal motivation, and the shelter and unlimited-potential church models often hide personal motivations behind a screen of "civilized" conflict.

This completes the review of the literature on conflict. It began in Chapter II with; the definition of conflict, a review of the levels of intensity of conflict (competition, controversy and combat), and the sources of conflict (intrachurch expectations and political/ideological principles). Chapter II ended with a brief discussion of the three types of church conflict (intrapersonal, interpersonal and substantive).

The second phase of the review of the literature about conflict dealt with the assumptions about conflict. These assumptions by and large are used to point out some of the positive results of church conflict carried through to a creative, non-destructive resolution. They are:

Church conflict serves to empower the church and the church members.
Conflict creates new groups.
Conflict between the church and an outgroup helps to give the church a solid identity and a sense of corporate purpose.
Protest as a sanctioned body within the church.
Conflict allows members to vent their tension and frustration in ongoing circumstances.
Lets opponents test one another.
Leads to individual growth.

The one assumption discussed which proved to be debilitating to the church was that:

The church is one place where conflict should not occur.

Finally, a set of five assumptions answered the general questions which are often raised about conflict?

Can't the church get along without conflict? Where groups tend to suppress conflict, there will be accumulation of feeling, leading toward a potentially dangerous conflict. The larger the number of conflicts, the greater the stability of the organization.

Isn't conflict only caused by people who have a tenuous relation with the church? Conflict is possible where relationships are not tenous.

Why is conflict so intense in significant relationships? The closer the group personally, the greater the threat the conflict poses.

Why is conflict, driven by people with a righteous attitude, so destructive? The elimination of the personal motives from conflict tends to lead toward charper conflict.

I have attempted to isolate and discuss the materials which support the notion that conflict can be used as a resource to enrich the quality of experience. The mode of

interpersonal exchange which can accomplish this goal is creative interaction.

The literature on conflict outlines specific resolution procedures which are useful to the pluralistic church. Only the pluralistic model of the church supports fully the plurality of original experience plus a commitment to creative interaction. Therefore, it alone of the four church models will be prepared to utilize conflict as a potential resource. The creative use of conflict is discussed next in the fourth chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE CREATIVE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT

Introduction

Chapter IV examines how the pluralistic church should respond to the problem of conflict in the twentieth century. This chapter discusses the specific approach to conflict resolution in the pluralistic church. The three elements to this approach are; pre-resolution conditions, resolution procedures, and resolution consequences.

Admittedly, Unitarian Universalist churches have survived without a commitment to methods of conflict resolution. Some laity would say that we should not tamper with the antagonism caused by the emotional fervor of conflict. Instead, they propose that churches should let conflict create its own solutions. In addition, most people are leery of psychological and sociological engineering of human events. The modification of our group behavior by people with pre-set solutions causes shudders in the liberal church.

But, we should ask the supporters of freewheeling conflict if this stance supports the UU values of freedom, unrestricted use of reason and the tolerance of differences.

They would undoubtedly say yes, but they are wrong. As conflict becomes more intense, individuals retreat further and further into the sanctity of their own particular stance. This retreat does not exhibit an unfettered use of mental freedom and reason.

Pre-Resolution Conditions

The conditions which facilitate the creative resolution of conflict are basically the same as the conditions which create the pluralistic church. The enthusiasm and uniqueness of original experience prepares people by adjusting them to interchange that violates the rules of mundane conversation, just as conflict does. A common history of shared experience establishes the untenuousness of relationships. Not only does this make conflict possible, it also means that people will work at resolution in order to re-establish common concern and fellowship.

The assumptions about conflict, prevelant in the church, have an effect upon ultimate resolution. Conflict can be weathered if it is assumed that relationships can be strengthened through disagreement. The past history of successful conflict resolution leads to the assumption that the church can incorporate controversy as a means of growth. The history of the shelter model and unlimited-potential model creates the assumption that conflict should be

repressed in order to maintain the church. Likewise, the history of the servant-critic model creates the assumption that intra-church conflict detracts from common effort in service to a social cause.

Another important condition to conflict resolution is the values that the minister and the church leaders have tried to establish over the years. Under the category of church leaders I would place the church moderator, the Board president, past Board presidents, committee chairs, and others. Their values set the tone for church life. The most important values to establish in the life of the church are the value of original experience, the value of shared experience, and the value of improving these experiences in the church and for all people. Such a valuing by the minister and other church leaders can establish a creative attitude in the church.

It is difficult for most people to respond to controversy and disagreement with a creative attitude. Yet, someone has to take responsibility to maintain such an attitude in the face of angry resistance. True, relationships do dissolve sometimes, but when the minister and congregants want to stay in relationship, then maintaining a creative attitude is most important. Conflicting parties do not have to love each other, but they ought to look for ways to arrive at a more appreciative understanding of one another.

The burden/opportunity of maintaining a creative attitude usually falls upon the minister. Mondale explains why this is both a burden and an opportunity:

> What the layman needs also, for his moments of weakness, is the sustaining image of a man who is slow to anger and who can do the incredible and all but senseless thing of caring for people, speaking well and understandingly of them, working for their best interests, even when they never miss a chance to speak ill of him and would love nothing better than to see him disqualified professionally and for all time to come.[1]

This does not preclude the minister from anger and disagreement. It does mean that in a conflict, the integrity of the minister, as a professional, is on the line.

Finally, a condition of great importance is an awareness of the material on conflict and conflict resolution. This includes: knowledge of the sources of conflict; the nature of the escalation of conflict; the types of conflict, particularly of substantive conflict over facts, values, goals, and methods; and the assumptions behind people's attitudes on conflict. To have this framework of knowledge, i.e. to know from where conflict originated, where it is now, and where it might constructively end, leads to a power, of sorts. Not especially the power to control, but instead, the power to retain a creative attitude in the midst of controversy and strong feelings.

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[1]Mondale, Preachers in Purgatory, p. 238.

It also means the power to see how a conflict could be used as a resource rather than as a club to be used against the opposition.

Resolution Procedures

The object of conflict resolution is to bring about a transformation in the conflicting parties. The issues in conflict need to be transformed from divisiveness into a resource to be used toward a greater good for all.

This means first of all, trying to arrest the sequence of events in conflict before they escalate into a combative situation. James Coleman, in Community Conflict, describes the sequence of events in this way:

1) An issue is presented.

2) The issue disrupts the equilibrium of community relations.

3) Previously suppressed issues come to the surface.

4) More and more of the opponent's beliefs enter the disagreement.

5) The opponents appear totally bad.

6) Charges are made against the opponents as persons.

7) The dispute becomes independent of the original disagreement.[2]

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[2]James Coleman, Community Conflict, (The Free Press, 1957), p. 11.

The negative effects of this sequence upon the church are immeasurable. Original issues move from specific to general, thus creating antagonism, polarization, propaganda, and demagoguery. The most exasperating aspect in this sequence of events is that conflict ends up being waged over unreliable information.

When conflict escalates from an original disagreement into an independent dispute, it means that controversy has given way to combat. No longer can disagreement be mediated by committee rules, dialogue, or a special meeting, to "hash things out." It is even doubtful that the minister or the church leaders can resolve this conflict.

True, the minister and the church leaders play an important role in setting the conditions necessary for a creative attitude in the church. However, as for direct involvement of the minister as a conflict referee, this is not advisable because the minister usually either begins as the object of the conflict, or turns into the object as the conflict escalates. The best the minister can do is to be able to read the impending signs of conflict, try to keep communication open and accurate, and speak to church leaders as potential interveners.

Conflict, in the form of controversy and competition can be resolved usually by the participants. The conditions necessary for resolution are crushed, however, when

people make the transition between number four in the conflict sequence, personal beliefs entering the disagreement, to number five, when the opponents appear totally bad. It is at this point that conflicting parties lose a willingness to appreciate, understand, and prize each other's original experience. They forget shared experience. At this juncture, they lose sight of their opponent's value as a person, in spite of their disagreement. This problem worsens when the entire membership of the church begins to line up on one side or the other, thus making it time to call in a referee.

When looking for a referee, UU churches should expect him or her to embody the creative attitude referred to earlier. This means that the referee is eager for new knowledge about the conflicting parties. He or she is committed to gaining an understanding of the expectations, needs, values, and beliefs of the participants. Next, he or she acts and talks in ways that express his or her reactions to the conflict in a very honest and human manner. He or she does not seek to authoritatively dominate the outcome, but to draw the conflicting parties into mutual control of the outcome. Finally, he or she builds trust and confidence in the relationships with participants by valuing them as human beings above and beyond their role in the conflict.

The church in conflict can turn to a number of sources in order to find a referee. First of all, they can turn to an outside consultant. There may be a local university professor knowledgable in conflict resolution. Arbitrators are sometimes available from city governments or unions such as the Teamsters or the AFL-CIO. Primarily, the outside referees can be obtained from organizations listed in Church Fights by Leas and Kittlaus:

> The Association for Religion and Applied Behavioral Science, Bill Yon, Director, 521 North 20th Street, Birmingham, Alabama 35203
>
> The Action Training Coalition, Bill Ramsden, 1211 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19107
>
> International Association of Applied Social Scientists, Steve Ruma, President, 1755 Massachusetts Ave., Washington, D.C., 20036
>
> Association for Clinical Pastoral Educators, Rev. Charles Hall, Interchurch Center, Suite 450, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10027

The problem with this approach is that it is expensive to hire a consultant to referee a church conflict. Many, if not most UU churches run on a very tight budget and so spending one to two thousand dollars on a consultant may be out of the question. In addition, most churches are not aware that conflict referees are available, because the above organizations are found only on a limited basis, in select areas.

Secondly, Unitarian Universalist churches can ask their inter-district representative to intercede in a

conflict. These representatives, as far as I know, have no formal training in conflict resolution, but that should not hinder churches from drawing upon their experience and skills. Each representative has years of experience in the parish ministry, plus each one has come into personal contact with most churches and fellowships. Using the interdistrict representative may not be viewed as a possibility if congregations expect the representative to favor the minister in conflict resolution.

This same bias is present when churches call in the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association as an arbiter. The UUMA has a reputation for favoring the minister and punishing the congregation by placing sanctions upon it. Unfortunately, the two primary consultants, the interdistrict representative and the UUMA, although they are viewed as favoring their colleagues, are the only sources of expertise available for most church conflicts.

Lastly, the UUA's Council on Education for Professional Religious Leadership supports a program sponsored by the Alban Institute of Washington, D.C. They are currently offering seminars for ministers in new service to a congregation. The object of these seminars is to help minimize the problems of a new ministry which ultimately surface and cause destructive conflict in that church in

later years.* This program could prove to be extremely beneficial as a prevention to destructive church conflict.

Referees and third party consultants are required when the ongoing disagreements and controversies in the church are transcended by divisive, destructive conflict. The resolution procedures used by these referees requires delicate implementation in the church. They are of a more formal and structured nature than are needed to resolve disagreement and controversy.

We will go under the assumption here that most church conflict is in the form of competition, disagreement, and controversy. We will also assume that these types of conflict do not require an outside consultant or referee. Thirdly, we will assume that less intense conflict can be resolved either between the conflicting parties themselves, or through the intervention of the minister or of church leaders. This intervention may be verbal intervention, or it may entail consultation with the minister or church leaders.

Conditions

The conditions necessary for an atmosphere hospitable to conflict resolution were discussed in the last

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*This is a limited view of the program, but accurate for this study of conflict.

section. There are some practical considerations which assist the group process in conflict resolution. The first consideration is to try to locate a neutral setting for the meeting. Secondly, participants need to decide who should attend the gathering. The third consideration is to set an agenda and a time limit for the length of the meeting. Fourth, the participants should agree on a method for decision-making. As maintained throughout this thesis, the consensual agreement of creative interaction is preferable to the democratic method of voting.

A Sense of What the Other One Knows, Values, and Controls

The transformation sought in the first part of conflict resolution is to gain a "sense of what the other knows, values, and controls." This is the first result generated by creative interaction, according to Wieman. The interaction between conflictants* should be directed toward expressing and defining problems. This entails expressing emotions and the thoughts behind them. The expression of strong emotions occurs usually as a catharsis in the group.

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*Those engaged in conflict.

Expressing the source of the problem means relating hurt, disappointment and dismay. These feelings are attached to rebuttal or to rumors. They tend to be masked due to a fear of revealing the personal vulnerability of one's life. Expressing personal feelings, motivations and expectations draws the personal motives back into conflict. It sensitizes people and lessens the intensity. It is important in this situation to act and talk so that others will have an understanding of you. It means sharing the range of emotions and thoughts of original experience. One important technique for insuring that people are listening with attention and appreciation is to have someone restate the words of the last speaker. This is a Rogerian technique that insures the attentiveness of group members. The other technique is to stop the discussion and analyze the group process. Both techniques are designed to break through miscommunication, bitterness, and the unwillingness to listen.

The willingness to adopt new knowledge is one of the keys to the transformation of individuals. This is difficult to do in conflict, but sometimes someone must appeal to common values (higher values), to conscience, to bonds of fellowship or to the effects that new knowledge will have on individuals and on the future of the church community. Participants need to change in whatever ways are

necessary to bring about a prizing of each other as individuals. Conflictants need to recognize the inherent value in their opponents in spite of conflict and differences.

Without a willingness to adopt new knowledge, one cannot bridge the separation between persons that hinders building a common understanding and a common trust. It helps to have a commitment to widening and deepening one's appreciative understanding of other minds. In this way, one leaves the protective shelter of one's own biases and ventures into the alien territory of another person's experience. Wieman would say that this is giving ourselves "over to creativity." I interpret it to mean that people must be willing to forego their own positions, biases and presuppositions, and accept the original experience of another person.

This activity leads to the next result generated by creative interaction among conflictants. Wieman described this result as the subconscious process of integrating this new knowledge into what one originally knew, valued and controlled. The added dimension to knowledge, control and values among conflictants leads to the next major procedure in conflict resolution.

An Expansion of What One Can Know,
Value and Control

In the case of church conflict this means an expansion of and deepening of the range of mutually sustaining activities. Mutually sustaining activities refers to possible solutions to conflict.

The transformation brought about by the above mentioned procedure leads to a willingness to pass from authoritative control to mutual control over decision making. This is indeed a difficult transformation when conflict is intense or when people stubbornly refuse to relinquish their plan of resolution in favor of a mutual plan. Reiterating an earlier statement, sometimes it is helpful to make an appeal to common values or to common responsibility. Even more effective, however, is an appeal to a mutual evaluation of the solution after it has been in effect for an agreed upon period of time. This leaves people open to renegotiation and to other possible solutions.

The practical aspect of this transformation is first of all, the establishing of common values and of common objectives. If this state of mutual concern can be established then conflictants can begin to brainstorm different means to achieve these objectives. Out of the brainstorming, a solution is chosen, including the means to implement the solution. Chosing a solution may mean that people will

have to sit down and write all of the positive and negative aspects to each proposed solution. That way, conflicting parties will not coalesce as two groups around each proposed solution. The people involved will have, instead, an understanding of the positive and negative factors to all of the proposed solutions.

This process leads to consensus and cooperation rather than to a compulsion to overcome or annihilate one's opposition. Through creative interaction people will come to view the process and the goals as a cooperative endeavor.

Resolution Consequences

Without conflict resolution, the church suffers in numerous ways, such as a split or divided church, broken relationships, vindictive actions, distrust of the minister and of the church leaders, and withdrawal of factions.

With resolution, the pluralistic church builds a history and tradition of conflicts used as resources to greater growth and more community of shared experience. The benefits of conflict resolution to the church are numerous. They are factors which have been discussed at length earlier in the thesis. They are, a better appreciative understanding of other minds, mutual decision making, increased ability to cooperate, more concern for others, more shared experience, greater fellowship and a more inclusive

perspective. These are the ingredients which constitute my vision of progress for the pluralistic church.

Conclusion

In spite of the good intentions of creative interaction and of original experience, and after all attempts at resolution, conflict may lead the church toward destruction.

Conflict always plays its dual role in the pluralistic church. On the one hand it is an opportunity to shatter the crust of conformity which hinders the expression of original experience. Conflict can be the opportunity to bring people to a new appreciative understanding of each other.

On the other hand, conflict is a serious impediment to creative interaction when conflicting parties refuse to set the conditions necessary for a creative and transforming attitude. In this situation, the conflict itself becomes more important than appeals for resolution.

I would like to be able to say with certainty that disagreement and controversy continually mediated by creative interaction will eliminate the need for a lengthy resolution process. Intensely escalated conflict occurs, however, in spite of all efforts to the contrary. Even so, this fact should not keep Unitarian Universalists from

doing all that they can to promote the notion of pluralism and the belief in the improvement of original and shared experience for church members and for all people.

By following this path, the pluralistic church will be able to use conflict as a resource to improve the human condition.

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