MEADVILLE/LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

# TRANSCENDENTALISM AND THE NEW AGE: THE INSEPARABILITY OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND SOCIAL ACTION

A DISSERTATION

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Harry Scholefield and Phillip Hewett, my mentors and exemplars for a ministry dedicated to the realization of Wholeness.

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## CHAPTER I

In one of the most used readings found in Hymns for the Celebration of Life, Sophia Lyon Fahs, beloved Unitarian Universalist religious educator, asserts that "It Matters What We Believe":

> Some beliefs are divisive, separating the saved from the unsaved, friends from enemies. Other beliefs are bonds in a universal brotherhood, where sincere differences beautify the pattern.
>
> Some beliefs are like blinders, shutting off the power to choose one's own direction. Other beliefs are like gateways, opening wide vistas for exploration.[1]

The central thesis of this chapter is that it matters very much what we believe. This is true of the realm of a religiously motivated politics as in any other area of human endeavor. I believe that the central problem which we are considering in this thesis, that of a false dichotomy between social and political action on the one hand, and personal and spiritual growth on the other, is due in large measure to inadequate beliefs. More specifically, I am talking about beliefs concerning the nature of reality, i.e., about world views. Behind each side of this false dichotomy lies a world view that is not so much

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[1]Unitarian Universalist Association, Hymns for the Celebration of Life (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), # 374.

false as it is inadequate. One task of this chapter will be to describe these world views and to demonstrate their inadequacy, using sources from the sociology of knowledge, consciousness research, and philosophical theology. A second task of this chapter is suggestive rather than analytical. This task involves using these same sources to hypothesize a more comprehensive world view, one which does not labor under a false dichotomy.

Human history is replete with examples of the effects of an inadequate world view upon areas of social and political endeavor. We will now consider one such example: the effect of a major strand of the Judaeo-Christian world view upon the ability of our planet to sustain life. In "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", Lynn White, Jr. claims that Western humanity's abuse of its environment is the result of a distinctive religious view of nature which includes faith in perpetual progress, in the purpose of creation being to serve man's needs, and in a co-transcendence of nature with God.[1] Our present ecological crisis is the result of such an inadequate conception, one which simply does not do justice to ecological reality. At the deepest level, the solution to the ecological crisis can come only through a more accurate

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[1]Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", The Environmental Handbook (New York: Ballantine Books Paperback, 1970), pp. 19-20.

world view.

> Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution of our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny.[1]

Such implicit beliefs emerge out of deeper epistemological assumptions. It is our way of knowing the world that leads to our world view. We must now begin to discuss the philosophical and empirical basis for such world views and to end by suggesting a more adequate world view.

## A Statement on Sources and Method

In the remainder of this chapter, I will be concerned with hypothesizing a world view which is adequate for functioning as a basis of religiously inspired social reform. My method of arriving at this will be essentially that of Henry Nelson Wieman, which he describes in The Wrestle of Religion with Truth as follows:

> . . . religion at its best is a way of investigating the universe. It differs from all other forms of investigation in the kind of experience which yields the data for its inquiry. Through profound religious experience certain intuitions are attained. The problem of rational religion is to test and correct these visions, amplify and generalize them and integrate them with all other knowledge until there is

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[1]Ibid., p. 26.

demonstrated some truth concerning the all-inclusive universe.[1]

Wieman's thought spans three decades, in which time, using this basic method, his thought has undergone considerable variation. This is clearly seen in the development of his definition of God. Creighton Peden, a recent interpreter of Wieman's thought, has traced this development from Wieman's early definitions of God as "integrating process", "mutuality", "order of greatest values" to his later definitions of God as the "creative event" and "creative interchange".[2] This represents, for Wieman, a clear shift from cosmological definitions of God to a much more contextual definition based on human interaction. This latter focus came about as a result of the Second World War and the need Wieman sensed for an increased investigation of the most productive means to a just social environment. Despite these shifts, there are two important constants in Wieman's thought over this time span which we can identify here. The first is the empirical method of religious inquiry itself. The second is the continued importance of mystical experience within this empirical inquiry. Let us consider mystical experience

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[1]Henry Nelson Wieman, The Wrestle of Religion with Truth (New York: MacMillian Company, 1927), pp. 211-12.

[2]Creighton Peden, Wieman's Empirical Process Philosophy (Washington: University Press, 1977), passim.

first, since Wieman's method begins there.

In considering Wieman's overall view of religion, Peden states, ". . . the function of religion is to help man engage in the true mystical experience. Religion functioning as it should is mysticism."[1] Elsewhere, Peden interprets Wieman as saying, ". . . religious mysticism is an attitude of responsiveness to the undiscovered possibilities of God . . . The other major value of mysticism is that it produces a state of contemplation in which man becomes free from any limiting factors which older forms of faith might impose."[2] Both these elements of mysticism, an attitude of responsiveness to new possibilities and freedom from outworn concepts of faith, are as functional for a contextual as for a cosmological definition of God.

For Wieman, the method of religious inquiry was the same as the method of religious living itself. It is based on interpreting the religious experience by experiential testing to derive religious knowledge and thus gain guidance for a better adjustment to God. One reason for the change in Wieman's thought over the years is that his method allowed him to continually test and change his beliefs. For Wieman, method is more important than beliefs because we can never know all there is to know about God.

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[1] Ibid., p. 82.

[2] Ibid.

As more knowledge is gained by use of the method, so our beliefs about God change.

To the task undertaken in this chapter, Wieman's contribution is mainly in those two constants of his thought; that is, his method and his identification of mystical experience as the basis of that method. In terms of content, the major source is not Wieman but Lawrence LeShan. As will be seen, LeShan's method of arriving at his conclusions is similar in its most important aspects to that of Wieman. I will be using Wieman's earlier work, Religious Experience and Scientific Method, because in this work Wieman deals more specifically, than in any of his other works, with the nature of mystical experience, and this work is therefore most compatible with the explicitly mystical focus of this thesis. Wieman, in this context, provides an enriching element and, in some cases, a corrective to LeShan's model of religious experience.

LeShan follows Wieman's method of using mystical experience as the datum of religious knowledge and testing interpretations of that knowledge empirically. He also asserts, with Wieman, that such an interpretation will yield a maximum adjustment to the source of human good. LeShan's unique contribution, in carrying the results of this method forward, are his discovery of several different types, or modes, or religious experience. The value of these modes in attaining a right relation to God

will be described in Chapter IV. Their existence in the history of liberal religious thought will be demonstrated in Chapter II. This chapter will be concerned with describing those "modes of being", as LeShan terms them, and developing a conceptual world view from them. Let us now turn to LeShan's method of arriving at these several modes of religious experience.

LeShan begins his interpretation of mystical experience by demonstrating that our perception of reality is a combination of what is "in here and what is out there". Thus, the traditional philosophical distinction between objectivity and subjectivity has no actual meaning in human experience. We have, by perpetuating the myth of pure objectivity, since disproved by physics, not taken into account the human contribution to reality. Any idea of a reality for LeShan, as with Wieman, must be experimentally tested. But such successful experimentation depends on another factor.

> A valid reality, a valid mode of being, is not something that can be modified or changed to suit your whim or convenience. It is valid--by this I mean that it works, it is possible to accomplish specific types of goals while using it, and that human beings can survive in it--precisely because it is a clear definite system of construing reality with its own laws.[1]

From his observation of experience, LeShan has

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[1]Lawrence LeShan, Alternate Realities (New York: Ballantine Books Paperback, 1976), p. 47.

identified four such realities, or modes of being, each with its own laws, each with its own goals. In Wieman's terms, each has its own contribution to make to the adjustment of the human being to that Source of Good which is God. One of these modes of being, the spiritual mode, has to do with mystical experience. All of LeShan's modes allow us to interpret that experience usefully. In what follows, I will, at points, use Wieman's interpretation to enrich LeShan's critical tool. In remaining true to Wieman's method, LeShan's conclusions need to be criticized in the following ways:

1) The mystical (or spiritual) mode of being is not a "separate reality", as LeShan suggests, but the raw datum from which to obtain knowledge of the universe including the other modes of being.
2) This implies that the four modes of being are not absolutely discrete, as LeShan maintains, but are unified and implied by the mystical experience.
3) Finally, these modes of being are unified because they are all used for the purpose of achieving a more complete relation to God. Thus, a working definition of God is needed to test the validity of LeShan's conclusion.

I will be using Wieman's definition of God as integrating process for this purpose. By subjecting LeShan's conclusions to the requirements of Wieman's method, I believe they can be clarified and improved. The testing of the usefulness of this modified model of LeShan's is the task of the chapters which follow.

One remaining, if not as central, element of Wieman's method is the use of knowledge gained from the sciences as an aid in interpreting the mystical experience. I have found the work of Charles Tart particularly helpful in this regard. Tart is one of the pioneers of the new science of consciousness research, and his book States of Consciousness represents the conclusions of over a decade of such research. Tart is used in what follows to restate, amplify, and clarify LeShan's statement about the four modes of being and the function of consciousness within them.

## The Material World View

Following the example of Mark Satin, in his book New Age Politics, [1] we will call our ordinary way of knowing the world the material world view. This world view is based on a particular mode of consciousness, which, according to Lawrence LeShan, has its own laws and yields

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[1] Mark Satin, New Age Politics (West Vancouver, British Columbia: Whitecap Books Paperback, 1978), p. 73.

its own types of knowledge. It is best to offer a description of the material world view in LeShan's own precise, if overly simplified, words.

1. All valid information directly or indirectly comes from the senses.
2. All events happen in time and space.
3. All events have a cause.
4. Causes occur before events.
5. Events in the past can be remembered or--at least theoretically--their effects observed, but cannot be changed.
6. Events in the future can be--at least theoretically --changed.
7. Objects separate in time and space are separate objects; events separate in time are separate events.
8. When objects or events have similar parts, they can be placed in classes for a specific purpose and the entire class can be thought of and dealt with as one object or event. This can also be done with classes of objects or events.[1]

LeShan's summary is a simplified view of the Newtonian mechanistic universe, as it is embodied within the modern individual consciousness. It would be a mistake to interpret LeShan's statement as an adequate description of that Newtonian world view as it exists in the mind of the trained scientist. What LeShan is suggesting here is a summary of the most basic elements of our everyday, "common sense" view of the world. While it does not do justice even to the Newtonian view in all its complexity, it does represent the basic elements of that world view which have now become a part of our ordinary consciousness. As Alfred North Whitehead states the matter: "The

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[1]LeShan, p. 72.

[mechanistic] settlement as inherited by the eighteenth century was a triumph of organised common sense."[1] But, as Whitehead points out, science has since moved beyond common sense. The material mode of being represents not the scientific view at its most refined, but that common sense reality, based on an earlier mechanistic world view, which is our everyday consciousness.

This everyday consciousness has been affected, if in a crude fashion, by the Newtonian world view and even more by the technology such a world view has made possible. As Theodore Roszak points out: "All the metaphysical and psychological premises of that claim have become the subliminal boundaries of the contemporary mindscape; we absorb them as if by osmosis from the artificial environment that envelops us and that has become the only environment we know."[2]

LeShan's description of the material world view is a description of our "ordinary state of consciousness", the one, presumably, that we are in as we read these words. It is, without a doubt, the state of consciousness most of us are in most of the time. But it is when this state of consciousness is seen as the only way of knowing, the only

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[1]Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1967), p. 114.

[2]Theodore Roszak, Where the Wasteland Ends (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1972), p. 34.

valid way of perceiving the world, that it becomes the basis for an inadequate world view. We will discuss the reasons that this world view is inadequate later. But it is certainly true that this is the predominant world view in Western civilization at the present time. Any asserted truth which does not fit this perception of the universe is apt to be labelled "illusory","soft-headed", or "unscientific".

Most modern attempts at political and social change are affected by this inadequate world view. This is seen in the ways in which we tend to view our motivations. The two major modern ideologies of social change, Marxism and liberalism, however else they may differ, share the assumption that humanity is materially motivated. Both focus their efforts for change in the direction of more effectively increasing access to material goods. Both assert that we are primarily the results of genetic and social conditioning. This tendency to view the human being as a "thing", in a world of things, has resulted in what many perceive as the brutality and dehumanizing of the modern state, whether the state is a Marxist or capitalist one. As we have seen, the material world view tends toward generalization, abstraction, and classification and it should not be surprising that the unique needs of each individual human being are often denied.

In large measure, the rise of the material world

view is due to the increasing effectiveness of science and technology. Based on Newtonian physics, the physical sciences and their attendant technologies worked, especially in the realm of material manipulation of the environment. Gradually, this Newtonian view of the world came to be accepted, by most in our culture, almost exclusively. The mechanistic view of the world, which we are calling the material world view, came to be applied to other areas of endeavor besides the physical: to society, personality, and even religion. Physics has since moved beyond a view of the world that is purely mechanical, as Whitehead has shown, but the material world view is still the dominant world view in our culture at large. When this way of seeing the world is applied to the ultimate questions that religion deals with, it is not properly scientific but scientistic. Huston Smith expresses the distinction succinctly:

> With science itself there can be no quarrel. Scientism is another matter. Whereas science is positive, contenting itself with reporting what it discovers, scientism is negative. It goes beyond the actual findings of science to deny that other approaches to knowledge are valid and other truths true. In doing so it deserts science in favor of metaphysics--bad metaphysics, as it happens, for as the contention that there are no truths save those of science is not in itself a scientific truth, in affirming it scientism contradicts itself.[1]

So we see that it is not the truth that we can know

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[1]Huston Smith, Forgotten Truth (New York: Harper & Row, Colophon Books, 1976), p. 73.

in our ordinary, material state of consciousness that is here being denied. What is being denied is any tendency to equate these truths with the whole truth, especially in matters concerning religion. "Nothing in what science has discovered controverts the existence of realms other than the one with which it deals."[1] A scientistic religion is an inadequate religion, based on a contradictory and impoverished metaphysics. When such a religion attempts to deal with ultimate questions germane to religion, such as a religious response to an unjust society, it is almost inevitable that such answers as it may reach will fall short of the mark. This point will be dealt with more fully shortly. For now, we must look at the question of scientism within the liberal religious context.

A glance backward will quickly reveal a tendency toward scientism early on in our institutional history. An example of this can be found in the Transcendentalist controversy in the early 1800's. Andrews Norton, chief antagonist of the Transcendentalists in the tract war of the late 1830's, asserted that "there is . . . no mode of establishing religious beliefs, but by the exercise of reason, by investigation."[2] This statement was a denial of the Transcendentalists' claim to a special, intuitive kind

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[1]Ibid., p. 17.

[2]Daniel W. Howe, "At Morning Blest and Golden Browed", A Stream of Light, ed. Conrad Wright (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 50.

of direct knowledge of God. All relgious belief, Norton implied, must be based on reasoning about those truths which are evident to the senses. For Norton, the direct evidence of his religion was the miracles of Jesus.[1] Belief in the miracles of Christ, in the century and a half that has elapsed, could not bear up under the very world view that Norton espoused. But the underlying scientism of his belief is still very much with us: in our negative approach to religion, in the mistrust by many UU's of any religious claim that is not "scientifically proven", and in the belief that the proper realm of religious action is exclusively "the world out there". Such a world view has grave limitations for religious behavior, including religiously motivated reform, which we will now consider.

Its basic limitation is this; our ordinary consciousness is determined, to a very great extent, by external realities. These include material realities and cultural ones, especially the impact of institutions on the individual. Peter Berger et al, using a sociology of knowledge methodology, term this ordinary consciousness the "consciousness of everyday life". In The Homeless Mind, they state:

> Society is perceived from this perspective as a dialectic of meanings . . . that is, as being constituted by the reciprocal interaction of what is experienced as outside reality (specifically of the

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[1] Ibid.

> world of institutions that confronts the individual) and what is experienced as being within the consciousness of the individual. Put differently, all social reality has a component in consciousness. The consciousness of everyday life is the web of meanings that allow the individual to navigate his way through the ordinary events and encounters of his life with others. The totality of these meanings, which he shares with others, make up a particular social life world.[1]

With these insights gained from the sociology of knowledge, we see that our consciousness of everyday life and the impact that our institutions make upon us are inextricably bound together. If we recognize that these institutions are not adequately fulfilling human needs, and if, in turn, our own ordinary consciousness is determined by our interactions with these institutions, how are we to gain insights about effective social change? So we see that by limiting our perception of reality to those truths that can be known by our ordinary consciousness, we have harnessed ourselves to a treadmill, and cut ourselves off from the very original insights that we urgently require for effective socio-politcal action. Henry Nelson Wieman expresses this point in another way:

> The glaring fact that we constantly ignore is that we are all products of the very society that we want to reform. If the social order is evil, then we are evil, for we have been shaped from infancy by its workings.[2]

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[1]Peter Berger et al., The Homeless Mind (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1973), p. 12.

[2]Henry Nelson Wieman, Methods for Private Religious Living (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 63.

Charles Tart, the dean of the emerging science of consciousness research, has come to a very similar conclusion regarding the nature of our ordinary consciousness from another methodological perspective. Tart's area of investigation is the structure of consciousness within the individual. His conclusion is that our ordinary consciousness can best be described as a "consensual view of reality".

> The prejudice that our ordinary state of consciousness is natural or given is a major obstacle to understanding the mind and states of consiousness. Our perceptions of the world, others, and ourselves, as well as our reactions to (consciousness of) them, are semiarbitrary constructions. Although these constructions must have a match to physical reality to allow survival, most of our lives are spent in consensus reality, that specifically tailored and selectively perceived segment of reality constructed from the spectrum of human potential. We are simultaneously the beneficiaries and the victims of our culture.[1]

From all this, it is evident that while our ordinary consciousness is essential for many human purposes, it is a grave mistake to base a world view on it. "Our ordinary state of consciousness is . . . a specialized tool for coping with our environment and the people in it, a tool that is useful for doing some things but not very useful, and even dangerous, for doing other things."[2] Lawrence LeShan puts it another way: "No one world-picture works

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[1]Charles Tart, State of Consciousness (New York: E. P. Dutton, Paperback, 1975), p. 33.

[2]Ibid., p. 3.

completely."[1] "Ideally adapted to answering questions starting with 'how' and 'how to', the [material states of consciousness] are completely irrelevant to questions starting with 'why' or questions of value or moral judgement."[2] "The primacy of the [material modes] lies in their adaptation to biological survival."[3]

In the material modes of consciousness we deal with categories of time, space, objects, and events. Such a view of reality is suitable for answering some of the questions of human life and inadequate for other questions where these categories have no relevance. Many of the latter types of questions are the stuff religion deals with. The questions for which the material modes are limited are listed by Huston Smith. They include:

1) Questions of value in their final and proper sense. In the material mode we can find out what we do value, but not what we should value. "Normative values elude [their] grasp."
2) Questions of purpose. "What are the final purposes of human life?"
3) Questions of meanings. "What do our days mean? Does life make sense?" And finally,

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[1] LeShan, p. 34.

[2] Ibid., p. 73.

[3] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

4) Questions of quality. "This is basic to the lot, for it is the qualitative ingredient in values, meanings, and purposes that accounts for their power."[1]

## Beyond the Material World View

We must go beyond a world view based exclusively on our material state of consciousness if we are to be able to answer such questions, much less to apply these answers in the cause of social reform. Now the questions become: Is there a way beyond? Are there other ways of viewing reality? Are there valid means of knowing the answers to these qualitative questions? That there are other ways of viewing reality there can be no doubt. The existence of states of consciousness other than our ordinary consciousness has been verified empirically by consciousness research. These include various sleep and dream states, meditation states, states induced by alcohol, drugs, hypnosis, and various modifications of consensus reality. Whether these altered states of consciousness have any value in answering the qualitative question of life is another questions. Let us now consider it.

A long history of testimony by mystics and prophets of various religious traditions supports such a claim. Human beings of other times and places have valued various states

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[1]Smith, pp. 14-18.

of consciousness as being somehow more sacred than the ordinary one. This is the claim upon which mystical religion, regardless of its culture or time, rests its validity. In discussing the relationship of science and religious experience, Wieman expresses this point thus:

> We have no religion at all if we do not have the [mystical] experience. We must have a better theology, philosophy, and ethics. But most important of all we must cultivate religious experience, which is acquaintance with God.[1]

Let us return to our sources in consciousness research to see why such altered states can be of value. Tart suggests that altered states of consciousness can be used to develop human potentials suppressed by consensus reality.

> A culture can be seen as a group which has selected certain human potentials as good and developed them, and rejected others as bad. Internally this means that certain possible experiences are encouraged, and others suppressed to construct a "normal" state of consciousness . . ."[2]

Elsewhere he writes:

> . . . In any [state of consciousness] there is a limited selection from the full range of human potential. While some of these latent human potentials may be developed in the ordinary [state of consciousness], some are more available in [an altered state of

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[1]Henry Nelson Wieman, Religious Experience and Scientific Method (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, Arcturus Books, 1971), p. 41.

[2]Tart, pp. 33-34.

consciousness].[1]

This fact has some important implications. One such is the existence of "state-specific knowledge", that is, that some knowledge is apprehended in one state of consciousness but not available in another. This is an explanation of certain religious truth claims. ". . . the essence of much religion is state-specific knowledge, knowledge that can really be known only in [altered states of consciousness]."[2] In developing his concept of "alternate realities", LeShan has elaborated the concept of state-specific knowledge into a conceptual system that will be of much use to us in our attempt to formulate a comprehensive world view.

In Alternate Realities: The Search for the Full Human Being, LeShan thrusts forward the thesis that human states of consciousness can be classified into at least four "modes of being".

> Each of these classes is a way of structuring what is out there and in here. Each has a clearly defined set of laws and a very great and profound set of implications of these laws. Each is self-consistent, organically organized, and nothing can occur while one is using it contrary to these laws and implications. Each of these can enable us to accomplish certain goals and to answer certain questions. Each is irrelevant to certain other questions and goals, and simply does not connect with them. Each has room within it for a great deal of individual variation in the interpretation of the reality and its implications

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[1] Ibid., p. 174.

[2] Ibid., p. 218n.

> for behavior. Each satisfies certain parts of our needs, and when an individual does not use one of them with a whole heart, fully accepting its validity and reality, that part of him remains undernourished and his whole being is stunted in its development.[1]

The first of these modes, which we have called the material mode, has already been described above. We have seen that when it is held as the only way of knowing reality, as occurs in the material world view, it is inadequate for meeting many human needs. Since LeShan's concept of the other three modes of being is central to the development of our hypothesis for an adequate world view, we will deal with each of them separately and in detail.

## The Spiritual Mode of Being

Let us term LeShan's second class the spiritual mode of being. This mode of being is what is generally understood as the mystical experience. LeShans describes the spiritual mode of being as follows:

1. All objects and events are part of the fabric of the totality of being and cannot be meaningfully separated from it. The most important aspect of any object or event is that it is a part of the total ONE and it is to be primarily considered under this aspect. Considering it under any other aspect is an error.
2. Boundaries, edges, and borders do not exist. All things primarily <u>are</u> each other, since they are <u>primarily</u> one.
3. This lack of boundaries applies to time also. Divisions of time, including divisions into past, present, and future, are errors and illusions. Events do not "happen" or "occur", they "are".
4. Since no object or event can be considered in itself

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[1]LeShan, p. 71.

without considering the all of space-time, the concepts of good and evil do not have meaning. Any application of them would automatically mean the application applies to the total context of being, of everything. The universe cannot be categorized in this way.

5. All forces or situations in space-time, or places where the fields of activity are weak or strong, move with a dynamic harmony with each other. The very fact of the universe as a flow process universe means it moves with harmony.
6. One can only be fully in this mode when one has, if only for the moment, given up all wishes and desires for oneself (since the separate self does not exist) and for others (since they do not exist as separate either) and just allows oneself to be and therefore to be with and be one with, the all of existence. To attain this mode one must--at least momentarily--give up doing and accept being. Any awareness of doing or the wish to do disrupts this mode.
7. Valid information is not gained through the senses but through a knowing of the oneness of observer and observed, spectator and spectacle. Once this complete oneness is fully accepted, there is nothing that can prevent the flow of information between a thing and itself.
8. The senses give a false picture of reality. They show separation of objects and events in space and time. The more completely we understand reality, the less it ressembles the picture given by our senses . . .[1]

Perhaps it would be fair to say, by way of summary, that the spiritual mode of being (as opposed to the material mode, which deals with the categories of time, space, objects, and events), deals with only one category, the ONE totality of being.[2] This leads Wieman, in his description of this mode, to conclude that it is not a thinking state.

"There are times when man, with a partial suspension of

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[1] Ibid., p. 75.

[2] Satin, p. 78.

> thought processes, becomes acquainted with the vast fullness of sensuous experience that rains down upon him. This is the mystic state. It may be brought on by symbols and in many other different ways. But it is not a thinking state; it is merely a form of immediate experience.[1]

It certainly is not a thinking state in the way in which the verb "to think" is usually defined, implying as it does plural categories. But this is not to be interpreted to mean that this mode does not attain necessary goals. It does, in fact, attain very necessary kinds of goals, goals which cannot be arrived at in other modes of being.

The spiritual mode of being yields answers to another class of questions than those relevant to the material mode. "These modes are apparently primarily adapted to dealing with processes that are completely out of our sensory range."[2] These processes involve areas of human potential that are excluded, in large part, from our ordinary consciousness. These potentials include "our need for a sense, a knowledge, that we do not float unconnected in the cosmos but stand firm on the basic rock of the universe."[3] "It is only when we fulfil this part of us that we can serenely experience meaning in our lives and <u>know</u> that we are at home in the universe and that it is a good

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[1] Wieman, <u>Religious Experience</u>, p. 15.

[2] LeShan, p. 76.

[3] Ibid., p. 78.

home for man."[1]

There are limits to the usefulness of the spiritual modes of being. One would not want to cross a highway while in such a state of consciousness. Still, there exists in this mode, as in the material mode, the danger that it will become a basis for an inadequate world view. Since we must spend much of our time in the material mode to survive, it is not easy to see how this could be. But it remains a fact that mystical experiences can be so profound and compelling that it is tempting to conceptualize them as the only "true" or worthwhile reality. One then views one's time in the material mode as a yoke and an illusion. The extreme forms of this world view (let us call it the non-material world view) are more common in non-Western and pre-modern cultures, where religious hermits are an accepted part of society. But preoccupation with mystical states can occur increasingly in our own culture. As John Amodea, a hatha yoga teacher puts it in Yoga Journal:

> Just as Marxists and liberals tend to identify with one aspect of their being while neglecting the self-growth aspect, so does one who seeks psycho-spiritual growth tend to over-identify with the sub-personality which seeks spiritual growth, deeper awareness, and psychological fulfillment. One example of this is the prevailing myth that we are totally responsible for the reality we have created for ourselves, a point of view which perhaps keeps many Blacks and Third World people away from the growth movement.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 79.

[2] Satin, p. 76.

As we have seen, questions of good and evil, of moral action, do not make sense when one is in a mystical state of consciousness. Such categories are too differentiated to make sense where ONE is the only category. To base a world view solely (or even predominantly) on the spiritual modes of being handily eliminates the problem of evil by ignoring the fact of suffering. Thus, the criticism of those in our Unitarian Universalist movement who are motivated by social concerns of those who are too preoccupied with personal spirituality is in some sense justified. If one bases a world view on the spiritual mode of being, it is quite possible to become narcissistic.

Another limitation of the non-material world view is precisely that its undifferentiated view of the world is self-contradictory. Deny it is as much as one will, it is impossible not to be affected by the other modes of being. We will, in those other states, interpret and conceptualize the experience of the mystic states. This is, it can be argued, as it should be. But that interpretation is best done self-consciously and with awareness. Wieman states:

> [The] masses of experience which the mystic brings to light can yield up their meanings only as they are interpreted. As long as they merely flood consciousness with a sense of vast undefined meaning and tone up the organism with their pervasive stimulation, they are a form of luxury. They are forms of dissipation in which the mystic may revel but which are of no value to anyone else and of no value to him after the mystic hour has passed. These masses of experience must be

made to yield up their significance.[1]

On the other hand, if interpreted, these states can yield valuable knowledge which can carry over into other states. In his research, Tart has observed that the transfer of experience from one state of consciousness to another does take place, although imperfectly.[2] Though he is usually extremely cautious in making assumptions not warranted by his data, Tart does allow himself to speculate that: "We should always be open to the possibility that there is some 'higher' [state of consciousness] of which all other [states of consciousness] can be seen as fully comprehensible subsets: perhaps this is what enlightenment means in some ultimate sense."[3] This leaves open the possibility that the spiritual mode of being may be able to perform the function, if correctly interpreted, of initiating certain kinds of valuable experience in other modes. This possibility is certainly claimed by many mystics.

In LeShan's conceptualization of alternate realities, this does not seem to be a possibility. He states clearly that each mode of being has its own laws, its own implications, and is capable of answering only certain questions

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[1]Wieman, Religious Experience, pp. 263-64.

[2]Tart, p. 205.

[3]Ibid., p. 255.

relevant to it. There is a strong implication of discreteness throughout his work; indeed, the very term "alternate realities" strongly implies this. Wieman, however, differs profoundly from this view. He sees the whole purpose of religion as the correct interpretation of the mystic experience. This is expressed quite strongly in a passage already quoted, rendered more fully here.

> All the values of religion per se, as distinguished from theology, religious philosophy and religious ethics, is to be gotten from this experience of God. The values of this religious experience can be immeasurably enhanced by proper ideas about God, hence none can prize more highly than we a good theology, philosophy and ethics. But all these ideas cannot enhance the value of the experience if we do not have the experience. Without the experience we have no religion at all. With the experience we may have a very bad sort of religion because of our false or inadequate ideas about God: namely, our philosophy, ethics and theology. But no matter how excellent these latter may be, we have no religion at all if we do not have the experience. We must develop a better theology, philosophy and ethics. But most important of all we must cultivate religious experience, which is acquaintance with God.[1]

On this matter I must hold with Wieman. The spiritual modes are valuable not only for the fact that they yield assurance of our oneness with the totality of being. They can also initiate informed action in other states of consciousness. This assertion will be pivotal later on when we construct a model for conceptualizing a world view which is more adequate for religiously inspired social reform. Meanwhile, there are other modes of being to consider, as

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[1]Wieman, Religious Experience, p. 75.

suggested by LeShan. Our description of them will proceed with the above distinction in mind.

## The Ethical Mode of Being

The ethical mode of being, now considered, is a crucial one for our later development of a world view adequate for the task of social reform. In identifying it (for it is often confused with the spiritual mode of being), LeShan has enabled us to think much more clearly about the nature of the varieties of religious experience. Its identification enables us to do nothing less than conceptualize an active mysticism. Given that this is a new way of conceptualizing certain religious experiences, it may perhaps be a confusing description which LeShan offers. We will endeavor to clarify his points after offering his description in his own words.

1. Each object, entity, or event is a separate unity, but has no clear demarcation line with the organic integral unity that makes up reality.
2. Space is real and "exists"but is totally unimportant. Parts of the whole are separated by it but since they are also connected through being parts of the same One, this does not matter.
3. Knowledge of other parts can come from two sources.
    a) From observation of, as in the [material] modes, and
    b) Through being a part of the whole and so perceiving other parts through the whole.
4. From the viewpoint of the individual parts, there is free will of each sentient part. From the viewpoint of the whole, all actions that the parts will take are already decided and their results recorded.
5. Since whatever is done to one part affects the whole, an ethical principle is built into the universe. If one part moves another toward greater

harmony with the whole, all of the whole--including the part that took the action--benefits. If one part moves to disrupt the harmony (hurt it, damage it, stunt its becoming) between another part and the whole, the disruption affects the all of being, including the part that took the action. Whatever action you take affects you also.

6. Good and evil exist. Anything that moves a part toward its fullest development and fullest integration with the whole is good. Anything that prevents or moves against fullest development of the part and its fullest integration with the whole is evil. In the long run, the terms fullest development of a part and fullest development of the whole mean the same thing. In the short run, they may not.[1]

What we have, essentially, in the ethical mode of being, are states of consciousness in which one is simultaneously aware of two sets of categories: separate objects, time, space and events on the one hand, and the One unity of all being on the other. The reality of the One is not perceived to the point that it blocks perception of separate entities and beings in the universe. In this mode of being, one is primarily aware of the process or harmony of the separate being with the One. The various separate entities are seen as flowing out of and into the One. An analogy used by LeShan will perhaps make this clearer.[2] If we view the whole as an ocean and the separate beings as waves of that ocean, we see that each wave has a discernable identity in time and space. At no time, however, is the wave not an integral part of the ocean.

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[1] LeShan, pp. 82-3.

[2] Ibid., p. 80.

The truths to be found in the ethical mode can be illustrated by the science of ecology. To a great extent, the science of ecology shares the awareness of the ethical mode of being. The subject matter of ecology is the relationships of the organism to its environment. In ecology, it is recognized that the organism is an essential part of the environment and that the actions of one organism, to a greater or lesser degree, affect the entire ecosystem. If one conceptualizes the all of being as the environment, and each separate entity as the organism, we have the ethical mode of being. The ethical mode of being is the insights of ecology applied in the ultimate sense.

I believe that we find in Wieman's thought a description of a state of consciousness which is very similar to what we have been calling the ethical mode of being. This is termed by Wieman the "contemplative attitude". In Wieman's terms:

> Human life at its best might be described as the search for the total Object or bigger Fact in which all experience might be integrated and made to yield up its maximum significance . . . . Now contemplation is precisely the thinking which is dominated by the motive to integrate experience more widely and completely.[1]

That by contemplation Wieman is talking about something closer akin to the ethical mode of being than to the spiritual mode is made clear in the following passage:

Mysticism in its more extreme forms is not a knowing

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[1]Wieman, Religious Experience, p. 75.

> state at all. It is a form of immediate experience, while contemplation is a form of cognition. Contemplation is midway between mysticism--where wealth of experience excludes cognition--and practice-theory, where cognition excludes wealth of experience. In contemplation we have some well-defined beliefs concerning the objects of experience. In mysticism beliefs and all forms of cognition fade away to the minimum and the mind resolves into a state approximating simple awareness.[1]

The value of the ethical mode of being is summed up by Wieman in another passage: "Worship at its best is that contemplation which is finely balanced between thinking and mysticism, and fulfills itself in action."[2] It is precisely in action, ethically inspired action, in which the value of the ethical mode lies. As we have seen, this mode has an ethical principle built into it. The results of our actions can be discerned by the effects on the whole. In an ecological manner, whatever action we take also affects us. LeShan sums it up nicely:

> The [spiritual] modes give us <u>reason</u> for living, the [material] modes give us the techniques. It is the [ethical] modes that give us the guidelines, the ethics and moral structure that give shape to our lives.[3]

## <u>The Mythic Mode of Being</u>

There is one remaining classification of states which LeShan offers, which he terms the mythic mode of being. LeShan's description is difficult to grasp at first,

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[1] Ibid., p. 76.

[2] Ibid., p. 84.

[3] LeShan, p. 84.

but it will be made clear as we proceed. Like the ethical mode of being, the mythic mode shares some of the characteristics of both the material and the spiritual modes of being, but within its own system of laws and rules. And, as we shall see, the mythic mode of being is useful primarily because it provides us with a means of communicating, through concrete, everyday words and objects, some of the insights gained in the spiritual mode. We will begin our discussion of the mythic mode of being by quoting LeShan's description:

1. There is no difference between perception and symbol, object and image, thing and name. Each is, and can be used as if it is, the other. "Objective" and "subjective" cannot be differentiated. There is no difference between in here and out there.
2. Anything can become identical with anything else or stand for anything else once the two have become connected. Once this connection has been made, time and space cannot break it, but an appropriate act of will, correctly expressed, can.
3. Each part of a thing is the equivalent of the whole. If you break up an object or event, each of the parts equals the whole.
4. To control the part is to control the whole. To know the real name of something is to have power over it. To manipulate the symbol of something is to manipulate the thing it stands for.
5. Space is determined by the connections between things and events. If they are connected (and therefore identical) space between them does not exist. If they are unconnected, space cannot connect them. This is irrelevant to sensory space or to geometric space.
6. Time is determined by the connection between events. If two events are the same event, time cannot separate them. If they are unconnected, time cannot connect them. This is irrelevant to clock or calendar time.
7. All events start with a specific act of will. To explain an event is to show the connection to this act of will which, in itself, needs no explanation

and is inexplicable.

8. There is a substance that all things and people have to varying degrees that determines their effectiveness, their ability to influence events. It can be gathered and redistributed by appropriate behavior.
9. There is no such thing as accidental. Everything has meaning and is charged with meaning. Since part and whole are one, to understand the smallest part is to understand the whole and vice versa.
10. Birth and death are a change from one form of existence to another. They are, as are sleep and wakefulness, similar phases of the same being.[1]

The mythic mode of being can best be understood in the context of dreams. In dreams we have an almost pure example of the mythic mode of being at work. In dreams, any object or event can stand for and be identified with any other object or event. Our dreams are not hindered by the laws of the material mode of being. Another context in which the mythic mode of being can better be understood is in what we know of the world view of primitive peoples (who, significantly, take dreams much more seriously than we do). Magic, myth, and symbolic identity and connectedness permeate the world of the primitive. But while we in the modern world may have lost touch, to a large extent, with the mythic mode of being, it continues to be an important reality in our lives. LeShan asserts that "every group of functioning human beings we know of use it extensively."[2] And this is certainly true when we consider the categories with which the mythic mode deals. These

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[1]Ibid., pp. 85-6.

[2]Ibid., p. 88.

include symbols, whether verbal or material, and archetypes. By symbols I mean entities that include, and yet point beyond, themselves. By archetypes, I mean those symbols within the structure of the human psyche by which we pattern experience. Modern psychology is only beginning to discover the unconscious power of archetypes in our belief and actions. Keeping this in mind, and recognizing that these symbols and archetypes perform an important and profound, albeit not precise, function of communication, we can proceed to recognize the functions of the mythic mode of being in modern life. Let us now consider three areas of human activity in which the mythic mode predominates: in aesthetic enjoyment of art or nature; in the communication of profound meaning through story and myth; and in public worhsip.

A commonplace occurrence (one which we can all identify with) when we are in a mythic mode of consciousness, is in the act of aesthetic enjoyment of a painting, a piece of music, an art object, or of nature. In profound aesthetic enjoyment, we are aware only of the thing enjoyed and our enjoyment of it, and we are not aware of ourselves as ego separate from the object enjoyed. In other words, by the act of profound appreciation of something beautiful, we, in a sense, momentarily, merge with the object enjoyed. This experience fits, to some degree, with LeShan's description of the mythic modes of being. In this state

we do not experience a difference between ourselves, our perception, and the thing perceived. Physical space and calendar time are not in our consciousness. Each part reflects the whole and is an integral part of it. The experience requires an act of will to initiate and can be broken by an act of will. And, of course, the object symbolizes many more meanings, in that act of enjoyment, than the individual colors, notes, or shapes possess by themselves.

Another way in which we enter a mythic mode of being is through the sharing of stories. Of course, in sharing stories, aesthetic enjoyment plays a large part. But there is more to a good story than that. Narrative yields a profound and dynamic form of communication. In stories of meanings, symbols, archetypes, our otherwise inexpressible feelings become incarnate in the ordinary objects of our world: trees, stones, and people. In stories, the meanings move about, act, change, and are acted upon. Aspects of ourselves become expressive of a variety of moods and perspectives: comic ones, heroic ones, ignoble ones, inexpressibly evil ones, and tragic ones.

> An . . . article of faith hidden in the act of storytelling is the confidence that the scale of being is such that a human being can grasp the meaning of the whole. Personality is not an epiphenomenom in an alien world of matter ruled by chance and number but is the key to the cosmos. Man is a microcosm, thus he may have confidence that his warm, concrete, dramatic images are not unrelated to the forces that make for

the unity of the macrocosm.[1]

We can, in telling our story, communicate with our warm, concrete images, the truths that we have discovered in the spiritual and the religious modes of being.

Another area of human experience which uses the mythic modes is public worship. Public worship combines the elements of aesthetic enjoyment and storytelling. Using the shared symbols of a religious community, public worship serves the function of telling and retelling the shared story of that community. But, here again, in public worship the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

> The function of beauty in public worship is to make us aware of a reality which is richer and deeper and more marvelous than anything we can dream or conceive. For this is precisely what beauty does when we have the most profound experience of it . . . This reality which we seem to sense in the profound experience of beauty is beyond the reach of our dreams as truly as it eludes our descriptions. It is with us like a ghostly presence; it seems almost to be right there, yet it is nowhere in time and space.[2]

## A Transmaterial World View Emerges

Here, at last, we have a glimpse of what an adequate view of the world might be like. We have identified four classes or modes of consciousness which have different laws, different functions, and different ways of achieving goals.

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[1]Sam Keen, To a Dancing God (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 97.

[2]Wieman, Religious Living, pp. 129-30.

Each fulfils different human potentials. In the material modes we have the knowledge of how to live. In the ethical modes we have the knowledge of how we should live. In the spiritual modes of being we can experience the reasons for living. And, in the mythic modes we have a means of communicating these profound meanings to others, and to build a community based on the sharing of such meanings.

Before we can go on to suggest what such a "trans-material" world view might look like, we must deal with the question: Are these modes separate (though complementary) or not? As we have seen, LeShan strongly implies that they are separate, and I have, following Wieman, disagreed. A better way to phrase the question might be: Is there not some basic reality thich might underlie all these modes of being, some integrating principle? I believe there is and again turn to Wieman's work for its description. It is found in God.

> What is God? God is the integrating process at work in the universe. It is that which makes for increasing interdependence and cooperation in the world.[1]

So we see that God, in this sense, is the reality which underlies all the modes of being that we have considered. In each state of consciousness we experience a different aspect of God. As suggested earlier, this (essentially

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[1]Ibid., pp. 46-7.

religious)world view begins with the spiritual modes of being, the raw, undifferentiated experience of God. This is experienced as complete unity, harmony, intergration. From the datum of this experience we may cultivate the ethical modes of being, in which we perceive God underlying and integrating the separate entities of our universe. The ethical modes of being provide us with the insights to act in harmony with the integrating works of God. By means of the mythic modes, we communicate our experience of God to one another, and tell, within our religious community, our shared experience of God. And thus our comings and goings, buying and selling, in the material modes, are given power, meaning, purpose, and direction.

The subject of this thesis is the nature of religious action for social reform. We can now, in an abstract way, build a model for the process of such action within the transmaterial world view. In a later chapter, we will consider the more practical implications of the transmaterial world view for the church and ministry. As is seen in Figure One (page 41), the initiatory phase takes place in the spiritual modes of being, in the experince of God. This, Wieman insists, is the beginning of all proper systems of ethics. We may then cultivate an ethical, a moral way of being, from our interpretaion of the datum of this experience. On our model, this is viewed as the path toward effective and insightful social action. What the

path is, in this model, is the religious life in its best sense, aware of God and God's creation, and the flow and harmony between the two. On this path, one seeks to live so as to further the work of God; integration and fulfillment of all parts of God. This path is then shared, in community, through the symbols and the arts of the mythic mode, which signify God. With this shared vision we may then proceed cooperatively to the practical work, in the material modes, of social reform. Having to some extent improved our material and institutional context, we can return again to the spiritual modes, the source of our being.

I am suggesting that the transmaterial world view allows us to be in harmony with the integrating work of God. How this practically may be done is the burden of the chapters which follow. Our discussion of the transmaterial world view thus far has been on an abstract level. In Chapter II, we will see how a very similar world view existed historically in the Transcendentalist movement, thus enriching our understanding of it by seeing, as it were, what this skeleton of theory looks like with historical flesh upon it.

MODEL OF TRANSMATERIAL WORLD VIEW

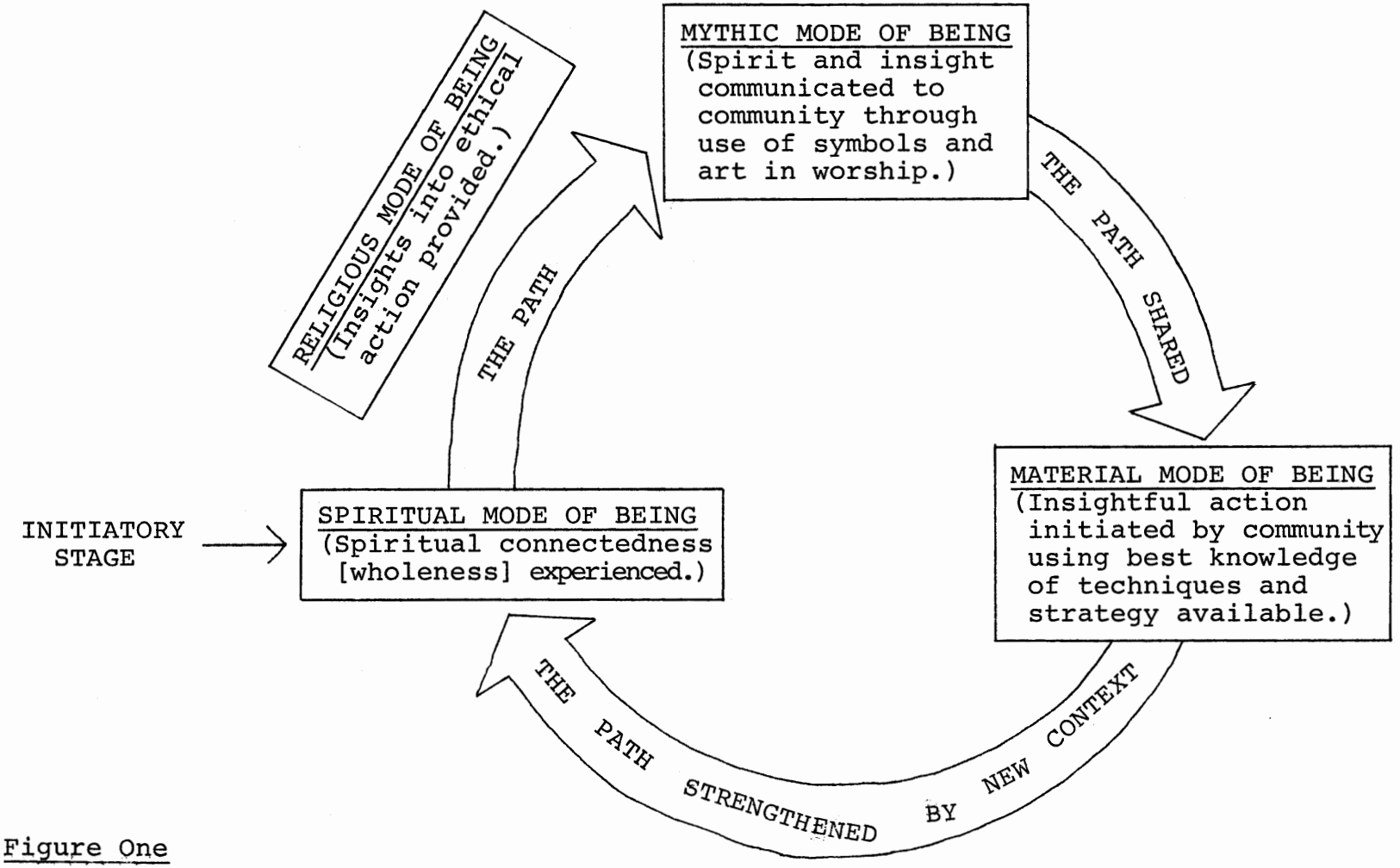


Figure One

## CHAPTER II

In the previous chapter, I have presented an empirically based model for a world view which would adequately bridge the false dichotomy between social and political action on the one hand, and personal and spiritual growth on the other. This model presented four modes of being which are necessary for individual and societal well-being and suggested a way in which they could interact in the life of the religious individual and in the community. But I am aware that, as a liberal minister, I stand in a tradition. At this point, the question arises as to whether such a world view is relevant to the tradition in which I stand. To demonstrate this, I have chosen to identify a very similar world view in an actual historical movement within Unitarianism; the Transcendentalist movement of the mid-nineteenth century. Another question which must be dealt with in this chapter is whether the world view of the Transcendentalists was effective, in historical fact, in bridging that oft perceived dichotomy between personal religious experience and the reform of institutions. Finally, this chapter will suggest some implications of the Transcendentalist world view for the liberal church and for society at large. These implications will be more fully

discussed in later chapters.

It is difficult to precisely identify who the Transcendentalists were. The movement was very broad, very diffuse, and ill-defined. The one date that can be attached to the Transcendentalist movement is September 19, 1836, when a group of men, mostly Unitarian ministers, met at the home of George Ripley for the purpose of organizing a symposium dedicated to philosophical discussion. From this humble beginning the movement grew to include many of the literary, religious, and activist stars of the New England constellation. Despite differences in personality, philosophy, political commitment, and social prominence,

> . . . they were all serious, religious, intent on self-improvement, independent and individualistic. Though some believed in self-reform and others more in social reform, though some remained Unitarians and others revolted against the church, they were substantially alike as intuitive idealists--moral and unworldly. With these similarities of background and temperament they produced a movement which could be identified without mistake.[1]

While the Transcendentalists possessed enough similarities for identification of the movement, their differences on many points precludes a precise definition of Transcendentalism. Like many Unitarian movements, they can be negatively defined, to a large extent, as against

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[1]Alexander Kern, "The Rise of Transcendentalism," in Transitions in American Literary History, ed. Harry H. Clark (New York: Octagon Books, 1967), p. 250.

aspects of the "corpse-cold Unitarianism" of the day.

> They agreed in placing "intuition" above all tradition and conformities, all sacred books and special revelations. They were fundamentally united in condemning formalism in religion and liturgy, Lockean "sensationalism" in philosophy and all that was inhuman or materialistic in the popular social morality.[1]

In a more positive vein, they possessed "a common resolution that society could be changed for the better if reliance were placed upon human intuitions--which provided the center and integrating force for this movement."[2]

Kern provides a helpful analysis of the movement by providing a list of nine negative (to the prevailing philosophy of the day) positions and eleven positive positions that are generally true for the movement as a whole. From these he has discerned several transitions from earlier to Transcendentalist views which gives a good sense of what the Transcendentalist movement represented.[3] The first of these transitions involves an epistemological shift from sensationalism and naturalism to intuitive idealism. A corollary shift also occurred from a reliance on the moral sense to an emphasis on the direct apprehension of reality. Based on this two-fold shift, the

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[1]William Hutchison, The Transcendentalist Ministers (Hamden, Conn.: Yale University Press, Archon Books, 1972), p. 30.

[2]Ibid., P. 50

[3]Kern, pp. 250-52.

Transcendentalists represented a transformed world view, which saw the universe as a symbol of the realm of the spirit, as opposed to the older mechanistic view of the universe. In religious terms, this resulted in a transition from "the conservative Unitarian institutionalism which combined philosophical materialism with belief in the miracles of the New Testament to the clear insistence on the divinity of man."[1] And, in the social sphere, a transition took place, for the Transcendentalists, from "emphasis upon collective natural rights to individual integrity and the freedom of each man for maximum personal development."[2] Beyond this common core of belief the Transcendentalists were individualistic, diverse, and often contradictory in their thought.

This brings us to the problem of how to analyze the Transcendentalists' world view in more detailed terms, given the often contradictory beliefs of the individual representatives of the movement. Such a detailed analysis is necessary in order to accomplish the stated tasks of this chapter. I have judged that the best approach is to deal, in this chapter, with the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson. There are many good reasons for this. The first is that the name Emerson springs readily to mind when

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[1]Ibid., p. 251.

[2]Ibid.

thinking about the Transcendentalists. He was definitely the movements's most influential figure. The second reason is that the Emersonian doctrine of correspondence, suggested first in Nature, was widely accepted and utilized by other Transcendentalists. A third reason is that Emerson was widely acknowledged, not only by the public at large, but by his fellow Transcendentalists as well, as the leader of the movement. There are, however, some problems with the use of Emerson in our analysis, the chief of which is that Emerson was not a systematic writer. He favored the sermon, poem, and essay over the abstract philosophical tome. He showed a marked preference for associative thought; and a poetic turn of phrase over tightly reasoned argument. To be understood systematically, Emerson must be interpreted. Since this interpretive work has been most adequately accomplished by Catherine Albanese in Corresponding Motion and by William Clebsch in American Religious Thought, the discussion which follows will depend heavily on them.

## Correspondence and the Transmaterial World View

In Emerson's writings we find a highly developed transmaterial world view, a world view that is in essential agreement with the one presented in the first chapter of this thesis. It is not, however, described and presented in the same way. The model in Chapter I was developed

from an empirical basis, based on data derived from the rather infant discipline of consciousness research. This data was not available to the Transcendentalists. It is based on a similar epistemology, towit, that knowledge may be obtained from sources other than the five senses. It would be false, given the Transcendentalists' emphasis on individual experience, to state baldly that Emerson's world view is not empirically based. Let us rather say simply that his model looks different from mine. Rather than being constructed from data derived from psychological research, it is based on a unifed philosophical doctrine, that of correspondence. In Emerson's thought we can find all four of the modes of being discussed in Chapter I: the material mode, the spiritual mode, the ethical mode, and the mythic mode. But they are arranged, by logic of the doctrine of correspondence, into a different system, which avoids from the outset the problems LeShan faces in concluding that they are discrete realities. For Emerson, they are differing levels of the same final reality. And, of course, they are found under different names.

The doctrine of correspondence held that, to the purified senses, reality viewed at any level--personal, natural, or social--reflected the final reality of God, Truth, the Oversoul.

> Different levels of the world reflected one another so that truth in one sphere told the tale of truth in another. The universe became a living book in which

> one could read the secrets of the soul; language, a cryptic system which mirrored the natural creation.[1]

As above, so below; as within, so without. Humankind, nature, and the social order were made in the image of God, and that image could be discerned in each.

The task of this section, then, will be to identify the four modes of being of the transmaterial world view in the writings of Emerson. Embedded as they are in the world view of correspondence, they do not simply leap out at one. For Emerson, the unity of the world was ever in the foreground. In the transmaterial model, the distinctions of the modes of being are in the foreground and their unity is implied in the common workings of God, the integrating principle in all of them. Thus, there is a difference in perspective. Another difference of perspective is that Emerson emphasized the perceptions corresponding to what I have called the ethical mode of being. The spiritual mode of being, the classical mystical experience, is less prominent. Emerson focused on the relationship of the individual to nature and fellow human. His religion was centrally ethical and relational. Put differently, in my model the spiritual mode of being implies the other four; for Emerson, it is the ethical mode from which all else is implied.

From Clebsch's analysis, it becomes clear that

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[1]Catherine Albanese, Corresponding Motion (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), p. xiii.

Emerson made a distinction between the spiritual mode of being and the ethical mode of being, termed by him the religious sentiment and the moral sentiment, respectively. Recall that in Chapter I, the distinction between these two experiences was that in the spiritual mode all separate objects are merged into the final One, while in the ethical mode their separateness may still be discerned above the underlying harmony, unity, and relatedness. Thus, a strong ethical imperative is implied in the individual's relationship to the world. I suggested that the ethical mode is the path of religious being for this reason. So also for Emerson:

> . . . the moral sentiment constantly urged righteousness even if we frequently failed to achieve it. In contrast to that steady urging, the religious sentiment came in bursts as inspiration, "bringing that shudder of awe and delight which the individual always mingles with the Universal soul".[1]

It was also pointed out in Chapter I that these modes of being serve different functions within the total fabric of the religious life. The spiritual mode grounds the individual in the totality of Being, thereby providing an ultimate meaning for existence, while the ethical mode gives one the perspective from which to make ethical decisions. The religious and moral sentiments served similarly differing functions for Emerson. "When the will

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[1]William A. Clebsch, American Religious Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press Paperbacks, 1973), p. 96.

was made superfluous by the religious sentiment the result was holiness. When the will was stimulated under the moral sentiment, the product was heroism."[1] We can see here that the spiritual mode/religious sentiment elicits a passive response while the ethical mode/moral sentiment requires an active response. It is the active response that most intrigues Emerson; thus, we find the moral sentiment more fully developed in his writings.

The flowing together of the entities of being, out of and into the Source of All, characteristic of experience in the ethical mode of being, is apparent in Emerson's descriptions of the workings of the moral sentiment.

> In such moments nature glowed with divine meaning even while knowledge of nature was being gained. Then intuition and intellect formed one act. Then, being and knowing were not two actions but one. Then, by incursion from beyond, experiencing subject and experienced object interpenetrated one another as the content of experience.[2]

Notice that in this state subject and object are interpenetrated and not merged. The distinction still holds. Objective knowledge of the other (nature) may be gained while being simultaneously aware of the divine glow which is in all. The simultaneous awareness of separateness and more fundamental connectedness requires an ethical response.

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[1]Ibid., p. 98.

[2]Ibid., p. 77.

". . . God and nature constantly reinforced the sense of moral duty. Morality suffused the universe. The reason could comprehend it and the understanding explain it."[1]

For Emerson, the moral sentiment was understood in terms of three principles: universality, compensation, and self-relaince.[2] Of the three, universality was the broadest and most flexible from which the other two were derived. The essence of universality was that,

> . . . every experience pointed to its origins in a source transcending the human will. Thus the divisions that appeared in actual living--divisions among persons or particles of their experience--were only apparent because all life really flowed from a unity shared among mankind and nature and God.[3]

By sharing this unity, human beings "partook of a common nature that transcended the personal and societal character of humanity. They learned this divinity by sharing this humanity . . ."[4]

The doctrine of compensation derived from this underlying unity of all being. It "meant that rewards and penalties inhered immediately in all actions and also in the relations of man and nature to one another and to God."[5] Every action affects the whole and since we are part of the

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[1]Ibid., p. 96.

[2]Ibid., p. 99.

[3]Ibid., p. 101.

[4]Ibid., p. 102.

[5]Ibid., p. 99.

whole, each of our actions inevitably affects us. There are similarities here with the oriental doctrine of karma, at least in its sophisticated understanding. Also, the words of Jesus some to mind, reminding us that we shall reap what we sow and that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. The world, as understood through the moral sentiment, requires that we act ethically in our own best interest. Such an enlightened self-interest is exhibited by Emerson's self-reliant soul.

Self-reliance meant more than self-interested ethics, however. It meant, more fundamentally, that "the universe was already atoned if only a person would attune himself to it as atoned."[1] The self relied upon is not merely the self of the isolated ego. The ego participates in the more universal self.

> Emerson's self-reliant soul found ever new inner directions by virtue of its fidelity to itself and to God, and that was a single fidelity. That is, self-reliant souls relied on the God with and in whom they were and who was with and in them.[2]

While the natural outcome of the moral sentiment was ethical action, the natural response to the religious sentiment was receptive. Indeed, passivity is the necessary precondition of the religious sentiment.

> To him who by God's grace has seen that by being a mere tunnel or pipe through which the divine will

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 108.

> flows, he becomes a Man . . . . I am willing also to be passive to the great forces I acknowledge as the thermometer of the clock and quite part with all will as superfluous.[1]

In this mode, more akin to the classical mystical experience and to what I have termed the spiritual mode of being, the will required for ethical action does not exist, or rather, it is put aside. One becomes a mere "pipe or tunnel". The religious sentiment differs from the moral sentiment also, as we have seen, in that it occurs only in special moments of inspiration and is not the normative way of being for the self-reliant soul. One area where Emerson's system differs from mine is in the stress placed on the mystical experience in its classical form. Emerson stresses and develops the moral sentiment, but the religious sentiment is mentioned and clearly acknowledged as important. Mysticism is more implicit in the logic of correspondence than developed explicitly in Emerson's thought. As Albanese puts it:

> . . . mysticism . . . was in some form the individual analogue to collective correspondence . . . since each piece of the world--in this case each human being--was in secret essence like the power behind the whole, it was possible for each human being to realize that basic identity and to celebrate it.[2]

Moreover, in this mystical experience, made possible by the religious sentiment, the boundaries between the

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[1]Ibid., p. 97.

[2]Albanese, p. 153.

individual and the divine were no longer there. Recall that in the world as seen through the moral sentiment, the individual is aware of the separation as well as the connection.

> In this kind of mysticism, however, a person remained no longer a discrete and separated particle in the world but merged into the ultimate reality. He or she became absorbed in the power of the whole, that there was, for the space of the experience, no more "I" as an ego-based individual but only the "I" of the cosmos.[1]

Clebsch has adequately shown a distinction between the moral and religious sentiments, a distinction which I have argued corresponds to the spiritual mode/ethical mode distinction that I have suggested in Chapter I. But, I must stress again that for Emerson the Unity was always the foreground for the distinctions. I leave it to Clebesh to summarize this point.

> One Spirit gave both impulses. The recipient of the moral sentiment perceived God as other. The religious sentiment discovered and disclosed God within. To make sure that this distinction would not become a systematic separation of morality and religion, Emerson sometimes interchanged terms.[2]

The third mode of being which was presented in Chapter I was the mythic mode of being. This is a realm of experience dominated by the symbolic, the archetypal. The purest examples of the mythic mode are the interpretation of dreams and the cosmic myths of primitive

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Clebsch, p. 99.

societies. In modern society we enter the mythic mode through art, storytelling, aesthetic appreciation and in public worship. The mythic mode is the primary mode of communication of profound individual experience to others, through the above media. For the Transcendentalists, the logic of correspondence suggested a mythic mode of expression and shared experience.

> Correspondence . . . grounded certain forms of myth and ritual which sought to return the human community to continuing harmony with nature. In turn the world view of causality [the material mode] identified an even more pronounced need for the religious expression of myth and ritual because of the gaps created by human history between the sacred and the profane.[1]

Given this correspondential logic and the need to reconcile human life with the transcendent and immanent lessons of nature, it is no accident that the Transcendentalists should be so concerned with literature and poetry. Even those Transcendentalists who were not poets, but clergymen and educators, showed a marked preference for a poetic turn of phrase and would as likely express a thought in an associative rather than in a logical sense. For Emerson and Thoreau, at least, the poet was much more than a wordsmith; he was the example of religious being. By his magical use of words, he translated the subjective religious lessons gained from nature into a communicable form.

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[1]Albanese, p. xv.

For the Transcendentalists the word had a power to point to realities beyond itself. They bridged the gap between external and internal experience. For many of the Transcendentalists, therefore, journal-keeping was viewed as a religious exercise. Indeed, journal-keeping could be considered the characterisitic spiritual discipline of the Transcendentalist movement. As Albanese has characterized it:

> . . . words were internal in that they were formulated in the processes of individual thought. At the time they were external in that they were broadcast by being spoken and had been the gift of the cultural community to the individual who had learned to think and speak with them. Words, therefore, provided a bridge between inner spirit and outer world. Participating in both, they offered the one best hope for initiating the harmony which the Transcendentalists desired in the totality of things.[1]

And finally, "the word has the power--though partial and incomplete--to communicate to other human beings the power of the transcendental experience."[2] Poetic expression, aesthetic appreciation, storytelling and religious ritual were those aspects of the mythic mode which, in Chapter I, were seen as necessary for the communication and sharing of individual religious experience. Such communication is essential for the building of religious community, the deepening and supporting of individual experience, and the translation of that common religious vision into corporate action in the

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[1]Ibid., p. 53.

[2]Ibid., p. 54.

larger world. Through this poetic use of the power of the word, the Transcendentalists were able to affect the world of historical place that they inhabited. The world of time, space and objects, the everyday world which most of us inhabit most of the time, which in Chapter I has been called the material mode of being, was not ignored in the world view of Transcendentalism. The shape and significance of their actions in this mode is the subject of the next section.

## Transcendental Action

The ultimate purpose of the transmaterial world view is to see the world whole, to base individual action on all of perceived reality. It is to recognize and value the full range of experience of which human beings are capable. Indeed, this is essential to living a truly religious life. In the following characterization of transcendental religion, Albanese defines as well the essence of the transmaterial world view.

> Religion should include an orientation not only to the transcendent but also to the immanental world view. Then outward action would be directed and led by the non-action of inner movement and the transparent symbols of the linear mind would admit the equal stature of associative thought.[1]

Religion must translate itself into action and that action must be improved action, made more effective by religious

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[1]Ibid., p. 172.

truth.

Transcendentalism was not merely a transcendent world view. Its immanental quality was of equal importance for the followers of the movement. By force of the logic of correspondence, this was necessarily so. The social world must, in some measure, reflect the Ultimate Truth of God. This could be the basis of a profound conservatism, but this was not the case. The emphasis of Emerson and the other Transcendentalists on the ethical responsibility of the self-reliant soul, who benefits from the moral sentiment, moved the Transcendentalists in the direction of active social reform efforts. It must be recalled that the Transcendentalists were born and reared in the heart of Yankee culture, on the eve of the Industrial Revolution.

> The immanental quality of transcendental religion adumbrates a "real" religion which cannot be confined to church or even mountaintop and wild places in nature. It leads, by force of its correspondential logic, to the railroad depot where goods are exchanged and earthly schedules kept. It points, in short, to a secular and pragmatic dimension to religious experience.[1]

> Emerson believed that persons exercising this new spirituality would bring about radical revolutions in religion, education, and society.[2]

A look at the activities of the Transcendentalists will show that, in some measure, this was the case.

For Emerson, Transcendentalist action in the world

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[1]Ibid., p. xxii.

[2]Clebsch, P. 109.

must have a special quality. Simply acting for social reform was not enough. Actions had to be guided by the moral sentiment to be truly effective. To act wisely, one had to have access to the Over-soul. Thus, "all outward change must be preceded by 'renovation of being' for the change must originate within and work outward."[1] Cultural change must be preceded by self-culture. The reason for this is that the contemplative had a better grasp of reality than did the "practical person." The eternal world behind the phenomenal existence must be taken into account. Both ways required activity.

> Contemplation by way of self-culture did not mean a transfixed existence. The contemplative moved in a real world and the practical person only in a phenomenal one; that was the difference.[2]

This importance of action, the historical record reveals, was taken seriously by the Transcendentalists on many levels of culture and society. Foremeost of these, perhaps, was the attempt to reform that very "corpse-cold Unitarianism" against which the Transcendentalists first rebelled. In The Transcendentalist Ministers, his excellent study of Transcendentalist church reform, William Hutchison asserts:

> The record of Transcendentalist efforts in the field of religion makes it clear that their "spiritual principle" was actively and often constructively applied to the

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[1]Albanese, p. 120.

[2]Ibid., p. 159.

> specific problems of the church. Transcendentalism was not simply a general faith that found its expression in literary work and social reform; nor was the church, for a significant group of Transcendentalists, merely a stopping place on the way to other careers. While the work of several important adherents of the movement can be fully understood without reference to practical religious objectives, it is plain that Transcendentalism as a whole cannot be.[1]

Certainly Emerson and several others found it necessary to leave the ministry to follow their muse. But this was by no means true of others in the movement. "Eleven of the seventeen clergymen in the original Transcendentalist group remained all their lives in the ministerial profession and all but two of the seventeen had ministerial careers lasting ten years or more."[2] Though the influence of the movement has spread to the culture at large, it is quite justifiable to claim that movement as a fundamentally Unitarian one. Even Emerson, though he left the ministry, asserted in the "Divinity School Address" that reform should take place through a new spirit within the church rather than through the rise of new cults and sects.

The best example of Transcendentalist church reform can be found in the ministries of Frederic Henry Hedge and James Freeman Clarke.[3] Both founded new societies which gave practical expression to Transcendentalist ideas and

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[1]Hutchison, p. 207.

[2]Ibid., p. viii.

[3]Ibid., p. 138.

even anticipated current Unitarian-Universalist worship practices, such as the talk-back. Both stressed the importance of lay leadership. Both moved into leadership roles within the denomination. Clarke's society, especially, gives us an example of honoring the fuller being of the transmaterial world view. He "designed . . . various social meetings to stimulate the three faculties of the human mind--discussion groups for the intellectual faculty, prayer meetings for the spiritual and community service to stimulate the will or moral faculty."[1] His concern for liturgy expressed the ritual and aesthetic elements of the mythic mode of being as well.

In addition, the Transcendentalist controversy led directly to the theological freedom the denomination now enjoys. Through the Parkerite controversy, the inconsistency of the older Unitarian position, stressing the New Testament miracles on the one hand, and a strictly materialist philosophy on the other, was finally put to rest. "No longer could Christian confessionalism and free theological inquiry co-exist as absolute principles."[2] The influence of Parker was especially important in the history of Unitarianism in "the Unitarian denomination, since the last years of the nineteenth century has officially defined

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[1]Ibid., p. 47.

[2]Ibid., pp. 98-99.

Christianity, and religion in general, very much as Theodore Parker defined them."[1]

The older Unitarianism's resistance to Transcendentalist ideas gave birth to the Free Religious Association and hence to an historical irony. The credal stipulation of the American Unitarian Association resulted in the "outsiders" banding together in the Free Religious Association. The Free Religious Association included not only Transcendentalists but "scientific theists" as well; two groups which were often in conflict. With the increasing tolerance of Unitarianism in the 1880's, both these groups gradually came to be included in the fold. The irony is that the Transcendentalists' efforts toward theological freedom resulted in the ascendancy in our movement of the scientific theists and their humanist successors. Both these theological positions depended on a materialistic epistemology, they very issue over which the Transcendentalists battled the Unitarian establishment! An intuitive epistemology is only now beginning to again have a wide legitimacy in our movement with the rise of mysticism and the human potential movement. It appears that there is a cyclical nature to these shifts, which probably pre-dates the establishment of Unitarianism on this continent.

Perry Miller, in his essay "From Edwards to

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[1]Ibid., p. 190.

Emerson", traces this tension to our Puritan roots:

> There was in Puritanism a piety, a religious passion, the sense of an inward communication and the divine symbolism of nature. One side of the Puritan nature hungered for these excitements; certain of its appetites desired these satisfactions and therefore found delight and ecstasy in the doctrines of regeneration and providence. But in Puritanism there is also another side, an ideal of social conformity, of law and order, of regulation and control. At the core of the theology there was an indestructible element which was almost pantheistic; but there was also a social code demanding obedience to external law, a code to which good people voluntarily conformed and to which bad people should be made to conform.[1]

The opposites of internal certainty and external law both existed in Puritanism, whence Unitarianism has its roots. At some times in history the external dominated, such as seen in the early Unitarian reliance on miracles. Then the Transcendentalists asserted the value of intuitive knowledge, opening the doors to Humanism, and its reliance on the external, objective truths of science. And now, the pendulum is swinging back. It appears that this epistemological tension upon which my thesis problem rests has a long history in our movement.

Interestingly enough, it appears that the swing from concern with internal truth to external truth has an even more universal reality than in the Puritan tradition. In her history of Western mysticism, Evelyn Underhill has observed that the periods of great mystical revival in

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[1]Perry Miller, Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956; Belnap Press, 1973), p. 192.

Europe were preceded by periods of heightened activity in science, politics, literature, and the arts.[1] It seems, from this, as if humanity must get back to its ultimate spiritual sources before venturing again into the external universe. The transmaterial world view and the Transcendentalist world view hold that both activities have meaning and that the tension can be transcended so that both realities may be lived simultaneously. In the current swing toward mystical religion, can we narrow the gap between the external and the internal to view the world finally all at once? The prospect for this will be discussed in the final chapter.

The social and political reform efforts of the Transcendentalists were varied and many. This outward thrust of the movement has often been overlooked in the popular mind, which has stereotyped the movement as a passive group of poets and mystics, at home only in nature or in the quiet of their studies. In fact, the movement produced an extraordinary amount of reform activity and thought, and that activity took on a staggering variety of forms. I have argued throughout this chapter that this outward, institutional thrust was an inevitable outcome of the logic of correspondence and the Transcendental world view. To a large extent, the Transcendentalists possessed

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[1]Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (New York: E. P. Dutton Paperback, 1961), appendix passim.

a philosophy that did bridge the gap between personal religious experience and the effects of institutions on the human life. "How human communities could mirror a friendly universe became the pre-occupying question for our religious thinkers as well as for our novelists."[1]

But the Transcendentalists' reform efforts were not politics as usual. Their emphasis was not on the older politics of social contract, but on a social order that would nurture individual growth and integrity and which would value the intuitional capabilities of humanity. The differing flavor of Transcendentalist politics is well expressed by Kern in the following passage:

> The Transcendentalists in the economic, political and social sphere tended to transfer their emphasis from the natural social right of the previous age to individual integrity and the freedom of each man for maximum personal development . . . For all their differences--often conscious disagreements as to methods--they were in fairly close agreement in their reason for desiring social change and advancement. They all tended to use as a standard for measuring society their intuitions of what was best, a standard of which the existing institutions always fell short. And in light of such an ideal which showed up the deficiencies of the actual, they also tended to disregard the justifications of history, of tradition, and of the past.[2]

Because of its individualistic philosophy, Transcendentalist social reform efforts stressed democracy, rather than aristocracy. This tendency to emphasize the

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[1]Clebsch, p. 6.

[2]Kern, p. 299.

ability of each person to come to the ultimate truth led Dewey to christen Emerson the "philosopher of democracy." But the Transcendentalists were opposed to the tyranny of the majority. Their emphasis on self-culture envisioned institutions governed by a more enlightened humanity, and demanded of institutions that they bring out the ultimate in the common person. This led the Transcendentalists to champion rather unpopular causes; for example, their almost unanimous support for the abolition of slavery.

Ultimately, the Transcendentalists were for the improvement of individual persons. Kern had identified four separate distinct techniques, which were advocated and employed, as to how this was to be accomplished.[1] The first of these was legislation for improvement, especially in the areas of temperance, abolition of slavery, and women's rights. In these efforts the Transcendentalists were not conspicuously successful, although they identified issues which would occupy legislators in years to come. In their efforts at educational reform they had a greater impact. The educational theories of Bronson Alcott, as developed in his own school, and in that at Brook Farm, were generally adopted in the next half century. Even Harvard College, that bastion of educational conservatism, let go of its recitation method of pedagogy, in favor of a

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[1]Ibid., p. 300.

more elective approach.

It was in the area of voluntary association that the most innovative Transcendentalist reform efforts occurred. Most radical and intriguing were Brook Farm and Fruitlands, the Transcendentalist communitarian efforts. These were efforts to model for society at large a new social order, based on individual growth and social harmony rather than on commercial interest. Though these experiments lacked the commercial intelligence to be successful in the society of the 1840's, they are startling in their anticipation of twentieth century trends in the same direction. Recall the efforts of Hedge and Clarke in their experimental religious societies; much more successful efforts at voluntary association. Several Brook Farm graduates helped to shape the budding labor movement as well. All in all, the idea of voluntary association heralded a new strategy for social reform, the implications of which, as we shall see in the final chapter, are still being developed.

The final strategy for Transcendentalist reform was self-reform, the necessary corollary to all the other efforts. The senses had to be purified to see the world whole, to learn the lessons of God in nature and in the self. As we have seen, this has provided the impulse for action in the external world. In a sense, this was the most radical strategy of all: the conviction that inner,

ultimate truth resided in the individual to guide his actions in the external world. It is the conviction that we must have a vision in ourselves of what we want our institutions to express that is the most important lesson that we can learn from the Transcendentalists.

What of the long-range results of Transcendentalist reform efforts on America and the world? Kern states that:

> . . . in the social realm, Transcendentalism provided for its time not only the most cogent criticism of commercial materialism, but it indirectly affected American education, though it has little immediate effects on other institutions it reinforced Gandhi's program of non-violent resistance which has influenced the lives of hundreds of millions of people.[1]

Since these words were written, the Transcendentalists' criticism of commercial materialism has taken on new meaning for our time as well, especially in terms of commercial exploitation of the natural environment. One major response to this problem has been the simple living movement, which traces its beginnings to Transcendentalist writings. And we have only begun to see the power of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience for social change, as these techniques are even now being refined. These major reform strategies have their roots in the life and writings of Henry David Thoreau, and his story will be told in the next chapter.

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[1]Ibid., p. 248.

# CHAPTER III

> Thoreau, I believe, must be recognized as one of the great American mystics and religious thinkers. He is the theologian of creation, the apostle of wilderness, and the prophet of social action undertaken by the concerned individual.[1]

To this description of Thoreau's significance by William J. Wolf, I must add a hearty "Amen". As I have been pondering the issues raised by this thesis, the life and writings of Henry David Thoreau have sprung to mind repeatedly with a clarifying power unmatched by any other source. He addresses, with uncannily moden relevance, the questions of wholeness and integrity; the mystical vision, and the role of government in the fulfillment of the lives of men and women. His concern with simple living and respect for nature is even more to the point today than when those words were penned. If there is a prophet who insists on the inseparability of spiritual growth and social action, then Thoreau is increasingly that prophet. Given this influence of Thoreau on my own thoughts on these matters, it is appropriate that a chapter of this work be devoted to his religious and political philosophy.

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[1]William J. Wolf, Thoreau: Mystic, Prophet, Ecologist (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974), p. 167.

Thoreau is the example, par excellence, of a person who is representative, in his life and works, of the transmaterial world view. He insisted on seeing the world whole, on probing ever deeper into the realities of existence. Like the other Transcendentalists, Thoreau rejected the materialistic epistemology current in his day. As he wrote in his Journal:

> If there is not something mystical in your explanation, some element of mystery, it is quite insufficient . . . What sort of science is that which enriches the understanding, but robs the imagination? . . . If we really knew all things thus mechanically merely, should we know anything really.[1]

Thoreau's world view was similar to that of Emerson and the other Transcendentalists, as described in Chapter II. Thoreau maintained close contact with Emerson throughout most of his adult life, and his early writing unmistakably shows Emerson's influence. Thoreau himself used the word "transcendentalist" to describe his position. Like the other Transcendentalists, Emerson's Nature served as a starting point for his own thought. He shared, in large part, the Transcendentalist conception of a transmaterial world view. It is not the task of this chapter to identify and describe how the four modes of being, inherent in the transmaterial world view, operate in the thought of Thoreau. The reader will by now have a

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[1]Henry David Thoreau, Journal, Bradford Terry and Francis H. Allen (New York: Dover, 1962), 3:155-56.

sufficient understanding of these modes of being, so that this would be needlessly repetitive. In what follows, the transmaterial world view is obvious enough.[1] What this chapter will attempt, instead, is to use Thoreau's peculiar genius, that of deriving the practical and political consequences from mystical religion, to explore the necessary inter-relationship between personal spirituality and ethical action. Therefore, we will discuss Thoreau's religion in his own terms and point out the political and practical philosophy that he saw as integral to that religion.

## Thoreau's Religion

One would expect someone as self-aware as Thoreau to be able to describe his belief in a sentence, and so it is. In 1853, Thoreau was invited to join the American Association for the Advancement of Science and to fill out a questionnaire concerning the branch of science which interested him most. Thoreau despaired of the appropriateness of such an invitation in his Journal:

> Now though I could state to a select few that department of human inquiry which engages me, and should be rejoiced at an opportunity to do so, I felt that it would be to make myself a laughing-stock of the scientific community to describe or attempt to describe that branch of science which specially interests me, inasmuch as they do not believe in a

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[1]For a fuller discussion of Thoreau's theology, see Wolf, Chapter 9.

science which deals in a higher law.[1]

He doubted that the scientists would be sympathetic, but, "the fact is I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot."[2] Here we have Thoreau's self-understanding in a sentence. From the previous statement we see that he understood himself to be a student of "a higher law", of religion. And he describes the three aspects of his religion as mysticism, Transcendentalism, and natural philosophy. William J. Wolf, in his study of Thoreau's religion, convincingly argues that this self-understanding can best be translated into modern usage by viewing him as a mystic, prophet (transcendentalist), and ecologist (natural philosopher).[3] I will not attempt to summarize that argument here, but will use Wolf to describe Thoreau's religion and its implications.

In present day interpretations of Thoreau, his admirers seem to be divided into opposing camps. One side stresses his emphasis on radical politics while the other camp uses him as a justification for a return to tribal primtivism. Both groups have missed the mark. As Wolf writes:

> Some of his disciples, more heirs to Rousseau than the Thoreau they have canonized, advocate the cult of nature either as a solid good in its own right or as an

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[1]Wolf, p. 13.

[2]Ibid.

[3]See Wolf, Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

> escape from the problems of society and history. Others seem only to have read "Civil Disobedience" and, in defiance of the Journal of a lifetime, picture him as turning his back on nature to engage in radical politics and reform. Both camps have solid grounds for their affirmation but only a quaking bag for their denials. Both aspects are in Thoreau, but they are held by him in a dialectical unity that was seeking a deeper understanding of oneness in a religious dimension of experience and thought.[1]

His commitment to both modes of action derived from his religion, a religion that stressed unity and mystical oneness. To understand either of these aspects of Thoreau we need to understand the religious basis of both. This can be seen from an overview of his writings. In his early work, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, we see a pious Thoreau, concerned with mystical experience and the moral lessons of nature. In "Civil Disobedience" we have a straightforward political tract. And yet,

> . . . there is no conflict in Thoreau's being the author of the Week and of "Civil Disobedience" because God is the author of these related facets of his being.[2]

In Walden, as we shall see, this unity is apparent.

It is impossible to discuss Thoreau's religion out of the context of his life. Thoreau's mysticism required action and was inseparable from it. And yet, it was a complete and full-bodied mysticism.

> A common structural feature of mysticism is the three ascending levels of experience: purgation, contemplation,

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[1]Wolf, p. 14.

[2]Ibid., p. 159.

> (or illumination) and union. It is possible to find illustrations of all these stages in Thoreau's writings, but he seems never to mave made his own catalog for exposition . . . he shows little interest in the analysis of mysticism as a phenomenon; it was enough for him that it "worked".1

This chapter will share Thoreau's emphasis on the active side of the mystical life.

One remarkable thing about the active aspects of Thoreau's mysticism is that he came to develop it on his own. He loved to read the Eastern classics, but disliked the passivity they implied, and sought to bridge the gap himself.

> There is little evidence in his writing that he really understood or knew the Western mystical tradition in its great exponents and how similar it was to the mystical writings of the East, which he knew in part and quoted with enthusiasm. This limitation in his reading is unfortunate because he would have found in the West some mystics who shared the basic attitudes and disciplines he admired in the East, but who developed at the same time a world-affirming mysticism to which he would have responded heartily. There was much in the acosminc, or world-denying, character of Eastern mysticism that displeased him.[2]

For Thoreau, the purpose of mystical experience was to point the way for humankind in everyday life. It became the basis for prophetic utterance and inspired action.

> The purpose behind the nature mysticism is to know God and to communicate his revelation to humankind. The poetry often catches this note of consecration to the task and is a surer guide to Thoreau's religious depths than has yet been pointed out by the critics.

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[1] Ibid., p. 114.

[2] Ibid., p. 113

I've searched my faculties around
To learn why life to me was lent
I will attend his faintest sound
And then declare to man what God hath meant.[1]

Thoreau's descriptions of mystical experience are unmistakable once one has read such descriptions from other sources. And yet, while the sense of unity with the One is unmistakable, for the still-Puritan Thoreau they are intimately connected with works. This is illustrated in the following passage from his Journal:

> Sometimes we are clarified and calmed healthily as we never were before in our lives, not by opiates, but by some unconscious obedience to all-just laws, so that we become a still lake of purest crystal and without an effort our depths are revealed to ourselves. All the world goes by and is reflected in our deeps. Such clarity! obtained by such pure means! by simple living, by honesty of purpose. We live and rejoice. I awoke to a music which no one about me heard.[2]

As with other mystics, such experiences left Thoreau with a profound sense of ultimate meaning in existence. "I have seen how the foundations of the world are laid and I have not the least doubt that it will stand a good while."[3]

To properly describe someone as a mystic is not merely to say that he or she has had a mystical experience. The essence of mysticism is a discipline bent on

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[1]Ibid., p. 112.

[2]Thoreau, Journal, Vol. II, pp. 268-269.

[3]Henry David Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906, 1961), p. 181.

understanding, cultivating, and responding to such experience, Thoreau's spiritual discipline represented the almost universal elements of the mystical repertory. We know that he admired the yoga of the Bhagavad Gita and practiced it. A passage in Walden describes how a visitor interrupted his meditations in order to entice him to go fishing. For Thoreau,

> . . . the disciplining of the senses, the curbing of the instincts in the interest if a higher life ("Chastity is perpetual acquaintance with the all") and the pursuit of a simple ife-style were all stages in preparation for mystical experience . . .[1]

Theologically, Thoreau's mysticism led him to see the world in terms of reciprocal inter-relationships on all levels.

> His ecologcial philosophy had as a base at least two major components: 1) a mystical sense of oneness of all life through reciprocal inter-relationships, and 2) a senstivity toward all nature, organic and inorganic, and a desire for fellowship with all things. Its motivating force was a sense of wonder coupled with love.[2]

Thoreau is often misunderstood as being fixated on nature to the exclusion of other people. A more careful reading of his works, however, reveals that

> Thoreau [insisted] that the appreciation of nature involved more than an isolated relation between it and the solitary individual. That individual had to be drawn out of himself into social intercourse before

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[1]Wolf, p. 116.

[2]Ibid., p. 147.

> nature could be fully appreciated. "If I have no friend, what is Nature to me".[1]

Wolf describes Thoreau's theology as essentially ecological in the profounder sense of coherence.

> The ecological wisdom of Thoreau is the direct result of his insight into the coherence of reality. Walden is really his experiment in and demonstration of human ecology. His philosophy of holism, or of an organic oneness differentiated through interdependent realities, is a rich and dynamic view of existence, but the most remarkable thing about it all is that the complexity grasped does not atrophy the person's responsiblities but rather sharpens them in a heighteneing of individual action.[2]

From mystical experience and fellowship with nature derives fellowship with people and social responsibility and nowhere is this illustrated more dramatically than in the essay on "Civil Disobedience".

## Thoreau as Prophet

Despite Thoreau's being enamored of the Eastern mystics, his pronouncements on society and politics have their roots in the West and in the Bible.

> In "Civil Disobedience" Thoreau speaks through his Transcendentalism as a biblical prophet. To look at Thoreau's role in social protest in any terms other than prophecy is to fall short of the true dimension.[3]

Stanley Clavell, in the first chapter of The Senses of Walden, has shown through parallel passages the affinity

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[1] Ibid., p. 154.

[2] Ibid., p. 177.

[3] Ibid., p. 79.

of Thoreau's self-understanding with that of the Old Testament prophets.[1] But in "Civil Disobedience", and in fact generally, Thoreau acknowledges more explicitly his agreement with the prophet Jesus. The New Testament pronouncements of Jesus provided the corrective to the other-worldliness of the Eastern scriptures. He writes in the Week: "The New Testament is remarkable for its pure morality, the best of the Hindoo Scriptures for its pure intellectuality."[2] In fact, he used the words of Jesus as a foil to attack the complacent Christianity of his day. One can almost hear a Transcendentalist Amos in this quotation:

> There are indeed severe things in [the New Testament] which no man should read aloud more than once. "Seek first the kingdom of heaven." "Lay not up for yourself treasures on earth." "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all thou hast, and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Think of this Yankees! . . . Think of repeating these things to a New England audience! . . . let but one of these sentences be read rightly, from any pulpit in the land, and there would not be left one stone of that meetinghouse upon the other.[3]

Regarding the clergy of his time, his reaction was almost a reflex of invective.

> [His] basic charge was that they were taking their ease in Zion, having lost their revolutionary thrust and

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[1]See Stanley Clavell, Senses of Walden, (New York: Viking Press, 1972; Compass Books, 1974).

[2]Thoreau, A Week, p. 142.

[3]Ibid., pp. 73-4.

> having been paid off by the exploiters of the people and the comfortable advocates of materialism.[1]

Thoreau was above all, in matters of social protest, an individualist. The individual human being, his value, his integrity, were necessarily put first in any social action. For Thoreau, "the key to all was the concerned individual."[2] Social action is for the fulfillment of individuals. Government should protect, as far as possible, the autonomy of individuals, and most important, social improvement could only take place through the action of concerned individuals. At the same time that Thoreau insisted on the individual's right to autonomy and integrity, he required the individual to take responsiblity for the social welfare. Throughout "Civil Disobedience" the hub of his argument is the irreducible, full-bodied, individual life.

As Clavell interprets it,

> . . . effective civil disobedience, according to Thoreau's essay, is an act that accomplishes three things: (1) It forces the state to recognize that you are against it, so that the state, as it were, attempts to withdraw your consent for it, (2) it enters an appeal to the people ". . . first and instantaneously from them to the maker of them, and secondly, from them to themselves", because the state has provided, in a given case, no other way of petition, (3) it identifies and educates those who have "voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government" [i.e. tax collector,

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[1] Wolf, p. 39.

[2] Ibid., p. 179

jailer, policeman].[1]

Thoreau begins his essay with a discussion on the nature of government and the purpose of protest. He agrees with the maxim of Jefferson that, "That government is best which governs least", and goes the third president one further. "That government is best which governs not at all; and when men are prepared for it that will be the kind of government which they will have."[2] Until we are prepared, the government does have some purpose, which it does not perform all that well. He continues, "government is at best an expedient, but most governments are usually and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient."[3] His immediate purpose is not to overthrow government; it is to reform it, to bring it one step closer to the desired direction.

> To speak practically, and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but <u>at once</u> a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step closer toward obtaining it.[4]

Here, the responsibility for better government lies

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[1]Clavell, p. 83.

[2]Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience", <u>Viking Portable Thoreau Library</u>, ed. Carl Bode (New York: Viking Press, 1947, 1975), p. 109.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 111.

directly with the concerned individual. It is the individual that helps determine what the nature of government will be. And this responsibility must be exercised by the individual himself. It cannot be delegated to the state, for it is all based on the individual's own integrity.

> Must the citizen even for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think we should be men first and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right.[1]

Law is another example of the oft inexpedient expediency of government. It cannot replace individual morality and may contradict it. "Law never made men a whit more just, and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made agents of injustice."[2]

When a law conflicts with the individual's morality or integrity, the choice is clear. The individual must respect his or her conscience and withdraw support and consent from that government. The integrity of the individual demands this, for to identify longer with that government is to participate in and consent to the evil. "I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is also the slave's government."[3]

And so, Thoreau refused to pay his poll tax and

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 113.

spent his famous night in jail rather than support the Mexican-American War. His startling perspective on that incident is reflected in this amusing passage:

> "It is true, that I might have resisted forcefully with more or less effect, might have run 'amok' against society; but I preferred that society should run 'amok' against me, it being the desperate party." The writer's strategy [continues Clavell] which enforces his position as neighbor, is to refuse to give society his voice, letting the desperate party run amok not merely eventually, but now, against his works, unable to accept them or leave them alone.[1]

It is up to the individual to withdraw his consent from what he considers evil and there his guilt ends. If the state wishes to take action, it becomes "the desperate party." "What I have to do is to see . . . that I do not lend myself to the evil which I condemn."[2]

Thoreau insisted that the withdrawal of consent was in itself an effective strategy for social change. He stood firm in his faith in the eventual triumph of moral example.

> Improvement is slow because the few are not materially wiser or better than the many. It is not so important that the many should be as good as you, as that there be some absolute goodness somewhere; for that will leaven the whole lump.[3]

Here Thoreau introduces a concept of what might, in modern terms, be called a social critical mass. This involves the conviction that a small minority of concerned and committed

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[1]Clavell, p. 84.

[2]Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience", Viking Thoreau, P.120.

[3]Ibid., p. 115.

individuals can have much more influence on social change than an apathetic majority. "Any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already."[1] The seeming insignificance of the individual act must not deter one; it will have its eventual effect. "It matters not how small the beginning may seem to be; what is once well done is done forever."[2] But, Thoreau warns, he is talking about action not words. The following passage is an indictment of many liberal reform efforts: "We love better to talk about it; that we say is our mission. Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man."[3]

When it becomes necessary, civil disobedience is not only necessary for the sake of society, but for the health of the protesting individual as well. For the individual to develop he needs an environment of autonomy, in which integrity can be nurtured, and where one can learn freely from one's neighbors.

> I was not born to be forced. I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest. What force has a multitide? They only can force me who obey a higher law than I. They force me to be like themselves.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 121.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 127.

The maintenance of individual integrity is, ultimately, essential. "If a plant cannot live according to its own nature, it dies; and so does a man."[1]

Much of the power behind an act of civil disobedience is that such an act is undertaken in a context of neighborliness. Neighborliness, as we shall see when taken up in Walden, is a theme that recurs often in Thoreau's writing. It means a respect and affection for the other, familiar person. It implies a concern for the other's welfare and growth. With the addition of neigborliness, a new dimension is added to an act of civil disobedience. Then, civil disobedience is not only an act designed to protect one's own integrity, but implies a concern for the integrity of the other as well. An act of civil disobedience should not run against the rights of others. Thus, "I have never declined paying the highway tax, because I am as desirous of being a good neighbor as I am of being a bad subject."[2]

The concept of neighborliness also meant that all relationships, even in a protest situation, should be kept on the basis of person to person. Acting in an official capacity does not free a person from the responsibility for his actions. The person is a human being, a neighbor, first

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 130.

and an official second. The act of civil disobedience could serve as an educational confrontation that way, as the official is forced to recognize what he is doing to another human being as a consequence of his (perhaps immoral) official duty. Thoreau emphasizes this point in discussing his confrontation with the local tax collector:

> My civil neighbor, the tax collector, is the very man I have to deal with--it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel--and he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he know well what he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged to consider whether he shall treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and a well disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace.[1]

In order to understand Thoreau's perspective on civil disobedience in proper context, it is necessary to underscore the fact that he considered it only as a last resort, a drastic measure to be well considered. It is not protest for protest's sake, but an action that is an unavoidable and unambiguous statement of a positive moral position. Such action is called for only when compliance is in complete opposition to personal integrity. And it must be duly considered in that light, along with all possible alternatives.

> I do not wish to quarrel with any man or nation. I do not wish to split hairs, to make fine distinctions, or to set myself up to be better than my neighbors. I seek rather, I may say, even an excuse to conform to

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[1]Ibid., p. 141.

the laws of the land.[1]

An adequate knowledge of the situation protested against is only half of the basis on which to act. The indispensable other half is an objective self-knowledge. This includes a very thorough examination of one's motives. The questions Thoreau would have us ask are: Why is it important for us to do this? Is it consistent with who I am and what my true values are? Are my motives pure or tinged by peer pressure or unexamined emotional reactions? Is it consistent with how I feel now?

> This, then, is my position at present. But one cannot be too much on guard in such a case, lest his action be biased by obstinacy or an undue regard for the opinions of men. Let him see that he does only what belongs to himself and to the hour.[2] (Emphasis mine)

The question now springs to mind: Is there not a more effective, less drastic form of social action, one which avoids unnecessary confrontation but still withdraws consent from evil and provides the "leaven" of moral example to society? I believe there was such a way for Thoreau. It too is contained in "Civil Disobedience" and developed further in Walden. That most effective form of social action is "simple living", as he termed it. For Thoreau that implied trimming down the material necessities of life so that more attention can be paid to integrity,

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[1]Ibid., p. 132.

[2]Ibid., p. 131.

coherence, and religious experience. As we shall see shortly, this emphasis is clearly expressed is the political essay. The fact that this vital part of the essay has often been ignored is perhaps due to the fact that it is less dramatic and radical than the other assertions made there. But a look at Thoreau's other writings, especially Walden, will show how central the path of simple living was to his concept of ethical living, in fact, how subversive this quiet form of protest is to a social order based on material greed. A later section of this chapter will make this clear. For now, we must lift up those sections of "Civil Disobedience" which deal with simple living, to have a complete understanding of Thoreau's thought on protest.

There are several clear passages in "Civil Disobedience" which define the place of simple living in Thoreau's philosophy of protest. The first which we will consider identifies the subversive character of such a lifestyle for the values of a corrupt state. In this passage, Thoreau discusses why he is considering imprisonment rather than seizure of property.

> I have contemplated the imprisonment of the offender, rather than the seizure of his goods--though both will serve the same purpose--because they who assert the purest right, and consequently are most dangerous to a corrupt State, commonly have not spent much time in accumulating property.[1]

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[1]Ibid., p. 123.

Here is the astute recognition that the State controls the means of obtaining property, to a large extent. To obtain a large amount of property is to consent, in some measure, to the values and purposes of that State. Thoreaus' paraphrase of the words of Christ in the following passage brings this truth lucidly home:

> Christ answered the Herodians according to their condition: "Show me the tribute money", said he--and one took a penny out of his pocket--if you use money which has the image of Caesar on it, and which he has made current and valuable, that is, if you are men of the State and gladly enjoy the advantages of Caesar's government, then pay back some of his own when he demands it. "Render therefore to Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God those things which are God's" --leaving them no wiser than before as to which was which for they did not want to know.[1]

The most effective form of protest, then, if one believes the values of the social order false and the state corrupt, is to withdraw, as far as possible, from they system of fiscal rewards and punishments sanctioned by the state. This is no easy matter; integrity has its price. Te really withdraw consent, one must take up a lifestyle which is itself a protest.

> . . . if I deny the authority of the State when it presents its tax bill, it will soon take and waste all my property and so harass me and my children without end. This is hard. This makes it impossible for a man to live honestly, and at the same time comfortably, in outward respects. It will not be worth the while to accumulate property; that would be sure to go again. You must hire out or squat somewhere, and raise but a small crop, and eat that soon. You must live within yourself, and depend upon yourself always, tucked up

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[1]Ibid., p. 124.

and ready for a start, and not have many affairs.[1] To live with integrity, according to "higher laws", is not to "live comfortably in outward respects", but there are higher rewards. Walden is a representation of these possibilities, to which we will return after a brief discussion of the influence of "Civil Disobedience" on subsequent events.

The full and powerful impact of "Civil Disobedience" was not felt by history until this century. Mahatma Gandhi read "Civil Disobedience" while studying in England. He was deeply impressed. Through the mind, life, and tongue of Gandhi, the basic principles in that essay became a sharp-edged political weapon, which was responsible, in large part, for the independence of India from the British. Gandhi's American disciple, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also acknowledged his debt to Thoreau. Through reading him, King says,

> I became convinced that non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. No other person has been more eloquent and passionate in getting this idea across than Henry David Thoreau. As a result of his writings and personal witness we are the heirs of a legacy of creative protest. It goes without saying that the teachings of Thoreau are alive today, indeed, they are more alive today than ever before.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] King, Martin Luther Jr., Thoreau in Our Season, John Hicks, ed. (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Pressm 1962), cited in Wolf, pp. 78-79.

## Walden - Simple Living as the Path

The teachings of "Civil Disobedience" are not the only legacy Thoreau has left us. In a world of growing population pressure, dwindling resources, and a widespread emptiness of soul due to a gluttonous materialism, the simple living movement provides a quiet, growing strategy for change. This emerging style of protest, to be discussed in the final chapter, also is the heir of Thoreaus' life and thought. Walden, Thoreau's most famous work, is the Bible of the simple living movement. The next section of this chapter will examine that scripture.

Why call it a scripture? In one dictionary definition of scripture (small "s"), it is any statement regarded as authoritative and definitive, especially if it contains a code of behavior. For the advocates of simple living, no better scripture than Walden may be found. It also seems quite likely that Thoreau saw himself as writing a scripture in this sense. His admiration of the Bhagavad Gita is well known and it appears to one critic that he consciously modeled the form of Walden in the image of that ancient Scripture.

> Like Walden, the Bhagavad Gita is a scripture in eighteen parts; it begins with its hero in despair at the action before him; and it ends with his understanding and achieving resolution, in particular his understanding of the doctrine . . . that the way of knowledge and the way of work are one and the same, which permits him to take up the action it is his

to perform.[1]

Walden is a scripture; the knowledge and work are inseparable. It is a scripture for living whole.

The Walden experiment was not undertaken from the perspective of a hermit, of a withdrawal from society, as many believe. Thoreau had many visitors and devoted a chapter to them. He often walked the few miles into Concord to visit Emerson's and his own family. The experiment by the pond was not a turning away completely from civilization, but an attempt to live whole within it.

> Part of the purpose of Walden was to "live a primitive and frontier life", though in the midst of an outward civilization. It was, therefore, not an exercise in romantic primtivism such as might have led him to build a wigwam on the slopes of Katahdin. Instead he built a frame house, plastering the walls and shingling the exterior . . . All of this is a symbol of Thoreau's acceptance of a certain amount of the "benefits and conveniences" of civilization . . . He simply wanted to be sure that the so-called "conveniences" remained tools for leading the good life and did not become masters of people.[2]

And what is that good life?

> Thoreau's prescription is to wake up, to find renewal both in recognition and contemplation of [a] mystical harmony, but even more in a life of ethical action responsive to it. This will be possible because we are not alone; God will be with us in the struggle. God is envisioning reality as well as Cosmic Builder.[3]

Another way of saying this is that the good life is being

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[1]Clavell, p. 166.

[2]Wolf, P. 101.

[3]Ibid., p. 107.

aware of wholeness and seeking to embody it. Simple living is both a means (voluntary poverty is an almost universal mystical discipline) and an end. The good life through simple living is both spiritual and ethical; in fact, it is to live in the space where the two merge.

One of the major ways that Thoreau makes the point is by his discussion of the concept of economy. According to Clavell, one purpose of Walden is

> . . . to show that our facts and ideas about economy are uneconomical, that they do not meet but avoid true need, that they are as unjust and impoverishing within each soul as they are throughout the whole society. Walden cuts into the structure of economic terms at two major points, or in two major ways: (1) it attacks its show of practicality by dramatizing the mysteriousness of the concept of ownersip, and (2) it slips its control of several key terms.[1]

This clever play with the words of economic parlance is designed to expose their shortcomings; it aims at going beyond economy to "value". Finding where the true, ultimate values lie is the purpose of Walden. As Thoreau himself expresses it:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and to see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, to publish its meanness to the

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[1]Clavell, p. 88.

> world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it . . .[1]

Thoreau does indeed shave close at times. His insistence on the simple and basic values of life, and his description of living them, ring so true. They make us question our own life, living what we have been taught to think of as practical. Clavell says that reading Thoreau makes him feel "nervous and wretched", and I agree. Since what Thoreau writes rings true so often for me, I often come off the hyprocrite, challenged to dare really living.

> The wretchedness and nervousness this writing creates comes from an . . . undeniable, if intermittent, sense that the writer is being practical, and therefore that we are not. It is the sense that the mystery [of his writing] is of our making; that it would require no more expenditure of spirit and body to let ourselves be free than it is costing us to keep ourselves pinioned and imprisoned within "opinion", and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance.[2]

In order to truly change society, says Thoreau, we must all reduce life to its basic values. Without changed individuals, there can be no true social change. Unless we ourselves are transforemd, civil disobedience is likely to be ineffective because "an appeal to the people will go unheard as long as they do not know who they are and labor under a mistake and cannot locate where they live and what they live for.[3]

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[1]Thoreau, Walden in Viking Thoreau, pp. 343-44.

[2]Clavell, p. 76.

[3]Ibid., p. 84

Walden would point out to us our true responsibilities for citizenship. This responsibility is not only to ourselves by to others as well. We can serve as the "leaven", the example to others of the power of moral good. Here again, the concept of neighborliness enters Thoreau's writing.

> Walden is, among other things, a tract in political education, education for membership in the polis. It locates authority in citizens and it identifies citizens--those with whom one is in membership--as nieghbors.[1]

To be a neighbor means to relate to the other as they are, free, in oneself, of opinion, prejudice, delusion, and reliance on appearance. But neighborliness extends not only to persons but to nature as well. "Our relations to nature, at its best, would be that of neighboring it--knowing the grandest laws it is executing while nevertheless 'not wholly involved' in them."[2] This is a lesson our civilization needs desperately to learn.

Besides true value over economy, there is another lesson that Thoreau would have us learn in Walden. And this is the admonition that all mystics make. "Be aware of the present moment", repeats Thoreau in a hundred different ways. "Now is the time to live." "Now is the time to be aware of God and nature." "Accept where you are; choose

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 103.

your destiny from where you are now."

> To realize where we are and what we are living for, the conditions of our present the writer calls "improving the time", using a preacher's phrase and giving his kind of turn to it. No one's occasions are exactly those of another, but our conditions of improvement are the same . . . And our conditions are to be realized within each calling, whatever that happens to be.[1]

To improve the time is to be aware of the present moment, and to live it fully and completely.

> The abode of the gods is not merely at the outermost point of the earth or at the top of the highest mountain, and maybe not at all; but anywhere, only at the point of the present.[2]

Clavell continues his discussion of Walden on the present to add a new dimension of what that entails. "It would be a fair summary of the book's motive to say that it invites us to take an interest in our lives and teaches us how."[3] Since our lives are lived only in the present moment, taking an interest means being aware of present living, present opportunties. It begins at our present station, whether that includes the cry of the loons on Walden Pond, or the sounds of the city through the window. It is stopping your profound meditations to go fishing with a friend. It is arising to the joy of each new day and the work you have before you. It is taking advantage

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[1]Ibid., p. 60.

[2]Ibid., p. 54.

[3]Ibid., p. 66.

of a chance to talk to your neighbor. It is moving within God.

## Thoreau's Relevance for Today

The influence of Thoreau's work and life has "cut a broad swath" in our culture that endures to the present day and will likely increase in the future. We have already seen the legacy of creative protest left by Thoreau and passed down to us through Gandhi and King, his disciples. But there are many other movements which owe significant debts to Thoreau's writing. I have mentioned the simple living movement. We would also have to include the ecology and conservation movements, the appropriate technology movement, and indeed, the whole range of movements which have emerged out of the American counter-culture.

Thoreau's increasing relevance to the modern situation stems from his insistence on seeing the world whole; whole enough to see all the complexities of existence which is, paradoxically, the result of seeking always to "simplify, simplify, simplify."

> It is just the full-orbed complexity of his position that we today find so attractive as an antidote for the exclusively myopic concentration, narrow specialization and loss of meaning for the whole. Modern holism as a movement in philosophy owes much to his inspiration.[1]

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[1]Wolf, p. 147.

Thoreau's message provides a balance to the perspective of those in our churches who stress social action as well as those who stress personal and spiritual growth. The time has come to see the world whole. And the doctrine of simple living is a message we all need to hear. The polarization of groups who advocate social action from those who stress individual concern is a problem which most other denominations share with Unitarian Universalism. To all people in all churches, Thoreau has the same message.

> Thoreau's relevance goes well beyond the divisions between those who stress personal conversion and those who stress social action. It extends to the very understanding of the teaching of Christ himself. Thoreau's gospel of poverty--or simplicity, as he called it--is far closer to the New Testament than anything in the life of conservative or liberal church people suggests today. American materialism, or affluence, to use its more socially acceptable synonym, is never seriously challenged in church activity today, in plain contradiction to the teaching of Christ.[1]

Even if one doesn't share a Christian perspective, it is important that we challenge our materialistic lifestyle. If our primary interest is personal and spiritual growth, we need to trim down the material encumbrances of our lives, in order to have the required energy for serious spiritual discipline. If we are seriously interested in social reform, how can we justify using the gluttonous amount of the world's resources "normal" for a North

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[1]Ibid., p. 180.

American?

But, in my opinion, Thoreau's greatest contribution of all is that he has described for us a mature, native mysticism which is balanced and suited to our own culture. William Wolf agrees:

> The mysticism of Thoreau, so appealing to many of the younger generation, is something that needs to be fostered and nourished within the churches. The sanity of his this-worldly mysticism with its disciplines will prove a strong defence against much of the bizarre occultism and tawdry relgious fakers who crowd the scene. His mysticism is a healthy bulwark against the bogus or instant mysticism of the drug culture . . . Thoreau's mysticism is not an esoteric hobby that withdraws from communication with other people, but the very opposite, a sense of oneness of the whole of reality over all its ranges that concentrate meaning for the individual, liberates him from the seemingly endless dissipation and dispersion of modern life, and inspires him to struggle forward and upward.[1]

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[1]Ibid., P. 168.

# CHAPTER IV

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Transcendentalists challenged the Unitarianism of the day, calling into question its materialistic epistemology, and suggesting instead that we see the world whole. They proposed a mystical philosophy which valued knowledge obtained by human intuition, insisting, through the doctrine of correspondence, that a purely mechanistic view of the universe could not explian the All. In Chapter I, I suggested that in a mystical view of the world we can distinguish four modes of being through which different kinds of knowledge can be obtained. In Chapter II, I showed how each of these modes of being was contained in the Transcendentalist world view, and how the logic of that world view led to heightened social and political action. Chapter III used the life and work of Thoreau to detail the way in which a full-blooded mysticism, typical of the Transcendentalists, led to specific kinds of social and political action. In this final chapter, we must look at today. Today we find that within our culture another version of materialistic epistemology is current, inadequate to our individual and social needs. This

materialistic world view, scientism, was discussed in Chapter I. We will now turn our attention to the state of the liberal church in a scientistic culture. Many in our churches are groping for a way to see the world whole and realize wholeness in their own lives. Many are looking for a way in which to effectively address the profound problems of our planet. In this chapter, we will bring to bear our Transcendentalist heritage and the transmaterial world view in addressing these needs.

Let us review, at this time, the basic outline of the transmaterial world view. The transmaterial world view posits four modes of being. Underlying all four modes of being is God, the force which moves for integration and wholeness in the universe. God is experienced differently in each of the four modes of bieng. 1) In the spiritual mode of being, the classical mystical experience, we experience God as complete unity, harmony and integration. In this mode we gain knowledge of the ultimate meaningfulness of existence. 2) From this experience of mystical oneness, we may cultivate the ethical mode of being, which experiences God as underlying and integrating the separate entities of the universe. This mode yields knowledge of the interconnectedness of the entities of the universe and allows us to act ethically, that is, in a way harmonious with the integrating purpose of God. 3) By means of the mythic mode of being, we communicate

our experience of God to one another, and tell, within our religious community, our shared experience of God. 4) The material mode of being is our everyday world of time and space, cause and effect, and events. The other modes allow us to give our experience in the material mode meaning, purpose, and communion.

In this chapter, we will discuss each of these modes of being in turn, suggesting ways in which the church may foster the kinds of knowledge that each mode yields. We will pay particular attention to the spiritual mode, which serves a function in the transmaterial world view as the mode which initiates us into seeing the world whole, and to the material mode. The emphasis in our discussion of the material mode will be in the area of social and political action, bringing the knowledge gained from the other three modes to bear on the problems of our planet. In our discussion, the ethical and mythic modes will serve as bridges between the spiritual and material modes. The ethical mode is the path of action, which sees the objects and events of the material modes as undergirded by the unity of the spiritual mode. This awareness of underlying unity leads us to enlightened action which respects the connectedness and harmony of the universe. The mythic mode is the means of communication, which, through story, myth, poetry, and ritual, acts to symbolize the spiritual mode in the material. I must

emphasize, at the outset, that the purpose of this typology is to enable us to see the world whole. Each mode is an aspect of that wholeness and implies the other modes and the underlying unity of them all. The interconnectedness of these modes will become clear as we proceed.

## Fostering the Spiritual Mode of Being

The spiritual mode of being refers to the classical mystical experience, the sense of being absorbed in the unity and oneness of God and being aware of nothing else than the One. In our typology, the spiritual mode serves as the initiating mode which makes the transmaterial world view possible. To borrow Wieman's terminology, it is the raw datum on which religion is based. This is because the spiritual mode of being yields the conviction of the ultimate meaning of existence. Existence is ultimately menaingful because, in mystical states of consciousness, we know that we are irreducibly united with the One. In speaking of the spiritual mode of being, Thoreau said: "I have seen how the foundations of the world are laid, and I have not the least doubt that it will stand a good while."[1] Giordano Bruno's phrase, "out of the world we

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[1]Thoreau, A Week, pp. 181-82.

cannot fall,"[1] expresses the same reality.

In his article on "Integrating Contemplation and Action" in Theological Education, Tilden Edwards asserts that, "a rhythm between contemplation and action is basic to a full human life as defined by all the world's major relgions."[2] By contemplation, Edwards means the use of special techiniques of spiritual discipline which train the mind to be receptive to the spiritual modes of being. Such spiritual discipline is basic to the mystical traditions of any religion. It has traditionally been viewed as an essential part of a religious life.

> The time of contemplation, as Thomas Merton once said, is the spring that feeds our action, and our action will be as deep as the spring. We need time to allow the spirit to clear the obstacles--the clinging debris and mud-- that keeps that spring from flowing freely from its clear, deep source. And we need time for that spring to overflow into insightful and compassionate action.[3]

That time for renewing of the spirit, for contemplation, has in the West traditionally been represented by the institution of the Sabbath. But in this century, Western culture as a whole has become almost completely involved in the material mode of being. The Sabbath has been put aside by the culture, inched out by material

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[1]Cited in Lawrence Leshan, How to Meditate (New York: Little Brown & Co., 1974; Bantam Books, 1975), p. 23.

[2]Tilden Edwards, "Integrating Contemplation and Action", Theological Education, XV:1, p. 74.

[3]Ibid.

interests and an overemphasis on action. And the churches have evolved with the general culture in this direction until the contemplative aspects of the Judaeo-Christian tradition have been all but lost. Says Edwards:

> It is primarily in this century, perhaps most dominantly in certain American urban, Protestant, and secular circles, that real appreciation for such a rhythm was lost. The result then was the whole week becoming caught up in a tacit works righteousness, an achievement orientation that lost the prayerful, recreative, appreciative, and especially the transforming dimensions of Sabbath time. At best a rhythm between work and escape time has substituted with such groups, an increasingly dominant rhythm in our jointly achievement and escape-driven culture.[1]

Since the churches have lost contact with their own traditions of contemplation, a wide variety of Eastern based religions have appeared in the West to fill the hunger for renewal of the spirit. While all of these religions by no means are shallow, authoritarian, irrelevant, or absurd, enough of them do show these characteristics to pose a danger. We have much to learn from the contemplative traditions of the East, but to swallow whole an exotic and foreign religion cuts the individual off from his own cultural and religious roots, especially if done uncritically. Eastern masters often do not understand the reality of life in the West and impose superfluous restrictions on their followers such as special garb, diets, celibacy, and ritual. They often demand

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[1]Ibid.

obedience to an extent that is antithetical to Western concepts of democracy. Eastern spiritual leaders are also quite often unprepared for life in the materially-affluent West and fall prey to the temptations of fame and wealth.[1] The churches have the responsiblity of fostering the spiritual mode in this culture, being the bearers of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It is the churches who must nurture a healthy mysticism, relevant to our own cultural context and history. If done critically, we can learn much from the East. But, the West has a mystical tradition which must not be lost; a full-blooded mysticism which does not deny action but seeks to transform it. Our churches are in danger of becoming irrelevant if they do not cultivate the spiritual mode of being.

How can the churches work to renew an appreciation of the contemplative needs of the spirit? The professional clergy can begin this process by setting an example.

> The professional staff of parishes can "model" a rhythm of contemplation and action in their own lives through daily prayer times and weekly "sabbath" days for study and contemplation. This would accomplish far more, both symbolically and actually, than any other action they otherwise would undertake in that time, and it would feed the quality of their actions the rest of the time. Lay people can be encouraged to follow such a rhythm wherever possible, and in individual and group counseling they can be shown ways of rightly understanding and allowing for it in their particular situations. Habitual prayer can be taught

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[1]For a fuller discussion of these phenomena, see Robert Greenfield, The Spiritual Supermarket (New York: Saturday Review Press, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1975).

> as an integrating bridge between action and prayer time, such as the Jesus Prayer or centering prayer. Liturgies can be given a better rhythm of guided silence and speaking. Sermons can cultivate the importance of such a rhythm.[1]

A good maxim for the practice of ministry is "to know thyself and know thy stuff." Such a modelling of a sabbath day could be invaluable because it would allow both of these activities their proper place, through study and contemplation. To be an effective model, such a special day would have to be made known and explained to the congregation. It should be made clear that it is a vital part of the work of the ministry and not a day off. In our Unitarian-Universalist churches, every member of the congregation may not understand the importance of contemplation, but the value of study to a learned ministry should be readily understood by all. The minister should then make clear in personal conversations, sermons, and other communications the vital role that contemplation plays in his ministry and its potential benefits to all in the church.

Edwards goes on to list what these benefits are:

1. A greater sense of grace in life, which contemplation cultivates in its non-manipulative simple being-space, where life is seen and appreciated for what it is . . .
2. An easier capacity to discern and take action together that the parish really is called to undertake, including ones that call for real sacrifice and risk.

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[1]Edwards, p. 78.

3. More individual wisdom and openness brought to parish, family, and community life, through the personal integration and perspective such a rhythm allows . . .[1]

Contemplation allows us time to appreciate the ultimate meaning that exists for us in simply being, rather than doing, having, or consuming. In offering this opportunity, contemplation fulfills a function that society deperately needs.

> The last decade has seen a significant resurgence of hunger for contemplation in the West. William Irwin Thompson, the cultural historian, sees this as instinctual preparation by the culture of an emerging time when we must live more simply, so as Mother Mary Elizabeth Seaton once said, others might simply live. It is a time when we need to learn how to simply "be" more fully, and become less driven to endless over-production--the personally and socially destructive edges of which have become increasingly apparent.[2]

Edwards also maintains that contemplation contributes to the effective analysis of social problems and leads to affirmative action.

> If contemplation is approached rightly . . . it will foster a radical, self-critical spirituality, which in turn will overflow into greater capacity for radical social analysis and action. By radical here I mean seeing more clearly the roots and not merely the surface symtoms of suffering; I also mean a willingness to engage in bold and risk-taking action where appropriate, and to be self-effacingly patient where no action is appropriate.[3]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., pp. 74-75.

[3]Ibid., p. 76.

Besides the modelling by the minister of a place for contemplation in his life, the church must offer access to contemplation to the members who wish to explore that dimension of religion for themselves. If the minister cannot teach courses in meditation or structural prayer himself, he should find someone else who can. One approach that may work is a Sunday evening meditation class on a continuing basis. While an intern minister at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, B.C., I offered such a class in mindfulness meditation, the technique with which I am most familiar. Since the Vancouver church has been taking spiritual discipline seriously for some years, it had a meditation room on the church property with comfortable benches and cushions. The room was decorated in such a way that one could almost touch the serenity it exuded. During the first few weeks, the interest was so great that the room was uncomfortably crowded with thirty people. Twelve people stuck with the course and the attendant daily practice for the full ten weeks and communicated to me that it had made a positive difference in their lives. Another contemplative activity of the Vancouver church was the early morning meditation group, led by the Reverend John Quirk. This group met once a week at an early enough time for the working participants to get to work on time. They would meditate together and follow with breakfast and quiet conversation, which included topics of particular

concern to participants. Contemplation also had a place in the worship life of the congregation by means of three minutes of silence on Sunday morning as a regular part of the service, and occasional Thursday evening quaker-style worship led by Dr. Phillip Hewett.

It is important that a variety of spiritual discipline techniques be part of any church's contemplative education program, as there is no one right or best method for everyone. Lawrence LeShan, in his excellent book, How to Meditate,[1] lists four major "paths" of meditation with a variety of disciplines in each path. The paths are: the path through the intellect, the path through the emotions, the route of the body, and the path of action. He maintains that all paths lead to the same goals: the increased integration of the whole personality, increased efficiency in the tasks of everyday life, and an eventual awareness of the unity of the cosmos. Therefore, each person should begin with a program of techniques within the path he or she feels strongest in. In order to integrate this concept into the Sunday evening meditation course, the minister should find others to teach the paths in which he has little or no knowledge. Another variation of this idea has, again, been tried in the Vancouver church. For some years, the church has been offering a workshop in "Spiritual Explorations", led by Dr. Hewett

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[1]LeShan, How to Meditate, passim.

and a member of the congregation. In this workshop, which lasts for several weeks, a variety of techniques are taught and tried by the participants, as well as a bibliography of printed resources being offered. The workshop ends with a weekend long retreat undertaken, largely, in silence.

The minister who is advanced in his own contemplative life and knowledgeable on the subject may serve members of his congregation in another capacity, that of spiritual director. In this way he can be of assistance to those who take their contemplative lives very seriously and who seek guidance as they progress on the path. Spiritual direction has a long tradition in the West, which, like much of the contemplative tradition, has been eclipsed of late. The spiritual director serves the same role the guru does in Eastern religion, but without the authoritarianism and veneration elements so common in Eastern religion. This is especially true of the state of spiritual direction at the present time. In the Catholic Church, where spiritual direction is most developed, there has been a marked change since Vatican II in the image of what spiritual direction represents. The predominant image of the relationship of spiritual director to directee has, in the past, most often been than of father or mother of the spirit to daughter or son. Since Vatican II, the most common image had been that of a journey, with the director

and directee as fellow travellers. Using such an image, I believe, can make the concept of spiritual direction attractive to Unitarian-Universalists who seek guidance, sharing, and encouragement in the process of taking the contemplative life seriously.

> The analogy of the journey connotes continuing conversation about prayer and life, and the integration of prayer and action. The director as brother or sister traveller helps the directee read his or her own religious experience in life. Above all, the director does not try to supply the experience, which sometimes as teachers, as fathers and mothers, we try to do.[1]

In "The Catholic Tradition of Spiritual Direction", Buechlein offers a typology of spiritual direction reflecting various levels of interst and committment.[2] The first of these is general direction, which the church should offer all its congregants through the agencies of worship and liturgy. I will have much more to say about this in the next section of this chapter. Group direction occurs when a small group of people voluntarily get together for the purpose of furthering their progress in the life of contemplation. A good example of group direction is the Sunday evening meditation class mentioned earlier. Hidden direction refers to the manner in which significant other people in our lives have influenced our

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[1]Daniel Buechlein, "The Catholic Tradition of Spiritual Discipline", Theological Education, XV:1, p. 68.

[2]Ibid.

spiritual formation. In a self-conscious contemplative life we need to examine the influence of these others in our lives to better understand that influence and its implication for our further progress. The minister as spiritual director enters into his or her role in the last level of spiritual direction, that of one-to-one direction.

Buechlein defines this relationship in the following terms:

> Spiritual direction is an interpersonal relationship to assist in growth of the spirit. There are two elements in the general definition: (a) interpersonal relationship, (b) assistance to growth in spirit.[1]

To use the analogy of the journey, the director and the directee are both fellow travellers. The director has had more experience on the path and can give asked for advice, point out the pitfalls and dangers of travel, and learn from the directee's experience himself. It may be helpful to understand this relationship as a special kind of counseling relationship, one that emphasizes growth of the spiritual modes rather than dealing with specific personality or adjustment problems. This relationship can occur as part of a planned and regular program, or, more informally, as an enriching aspect of an established friendship, such as I experienced with a friend in Vancouver. The spiritual director does not need to be "perfect" or omniscient in this relationship. After all, he or she is

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[1]Ibid., p. 69.

still a fellow traveller. The final responsibility of growth in the spirit rests with the individual. But, ". . . the director must have a lived, credible spirituality. His or her lifestyle as a spiritual leader must, in the end, be believable."[1] Each minister must judge his or her qualifications and limitations for the role of spiritual director and find other qualified persons within the community to fill in the gaps.

## The Mythic Mode of Being in Worship and Community

While the church can do much to foster experience in the spiritual mode of being, as we have seen, such experience is still profoundly personal. It cannot be communicated to others in precise, linear language, especially if the others have not had similar experiences. Such communication requires another order of language, a language rich in symbols. Symbols partake of everyday life, of our common experience in the material mode of being. Yet, they point beyond the material mode, hinting at the realities experienced in the spiritual mode. The mythic mode of being is an experience found in myths, stories, and works of art. Through these media, humankind has everywhere and at every time attempted to communicate its most profound and valued experience. The mythic mode then

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[1]Ibid., p. 72.

becomes shared realities which represent the collective experience of culture and race. The collective experience of the mythic mode is the basis of religious community.

There is another aspect to the mythic mode that especially concerns us here. This is the existence of a symbolic time, a ritual time. In modern religion we still seek such a mythic time in our experience of collective worship. This special time appears to be a universal human need.

> [Anthropologist Victor Turner] believes that human social life is divided between two dimensions. The first he calls social structure role and status functioning time--i.e., what it takes to keep a society and ourselves going in terms of daily social involvement. The second dimension he calls anti-structure time--that radically different quality of individual and communal time that transcends and cuts through the requirements of social structure functioning. This anti-structure time allows for greater freedom and perspective within social structure time when we return to it. A liturgy that provides opportunity for a very different sense of reality is a prime example of anti-structure time.[1]

The symbolic reality of the mythic mode, which presents relatively universal meanings within its structure of communication, helps us to transcend our social selves into a more universal reality.

Within the ritual tradition of Unitarian-Universalism the sermon has played a vital, even central, role. It is fair to say, at least for many in our tradition, that the

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[1]Edwards, p. 75.

sermon is the primary vehicle of communication in our worship. It is important, therefore, that sermons contain and transmit the shared mythic reality of that religious community. At the present time, however, many preachers in our tradition have ignored these powerful mythic elements, focusing instead on discursive, linear language and pseudo-academic argument. Such sermons become indistinguishable from lectures, providing food for the mind only. Thus, the whole religious being of the hearers is not addressed. There is nothing to nourish the heart, or the spirit, or the sense of connectedness with and compassion for all life on which ethical standards are based. In our preaching, we could tap more fully the resources of the mythic mode of being, seeking to touch more profoundly the whole being of the worshiper. In the sermon, we should make much more use of poetry, storytelling, and myth. I have found that the traditional teaching tales of such religious groups as the Hasidim, the Sufis, the Taoists, and the Zen Buddhists enable me to communicate several layers of meaning at once. The concrete imagery of these stories invites the involvement of the listener. Another much neglected resource is our own Judaeo-Christian mythology. We have all breathed in the Judaeo-Christian understanding of reality from childhood. If it is interpreted mythically rather than literally, biblical imagery can readily communicate religious truth in an

easily shared way. I have come to believe that our Judaeo-Christian mythology should be especially stressed, as it impels us most directly back to our mythic roots.

While recognizing the importance of the sermon in our ritual tradition, we must not ignore other media through which the mythic reality is communicated. We could, for example, make much more use than we do of the various visual and performing arts. Singable hymns involve the worshiper in the act of worship in a much more participative way than does the sermon. Religious dance and drama can add whole new dimensions to our worship life. Painting and the other visual arts invite yet another class of participation. Since worhsip is aimed at the whole being of the worshiper, an ideal worship service would engage all five senses.

In order for a group of people to communicate in the mythic mode, there must exist, at some level, a community. The story that is told on Sunday morning, through the various media mentioned, must be a shared story. All the members of the congregation must be existentially involved in this shared myth; they must appropriate it in a manner meaningful to themselves and add their own experience to the collective lore. For this reason, fellowship, social contact outside the worship context, is vital. It provides the history of shared experience that makes this group of people a community.

It provides the basis of individual concern and compassion for the member who is experiencing trouble and crisis. It provides for the indispensable human need for conviviality, in a context of values widely shared and with significance beyond the individual life.

There should also be opportunities within the overall context of fellowship for people to share and learn from each other about specifically religious questions. This can and will happen in informal fellowship, of course. But there are ways in which the church can program such opportunities for those who have a special interest in them. One good example of this is the "Build Your Own Theology" curriculum developed by the Rev. Richard Gilbert. This curriculum provides a structure for participants to clarify and state their religious understanding and to learn from others undergoing a similar process. Another, more explicitly mythical program, along similar lines, is the "Odyssey" series, developed by Dr. Phillip Hewett. This program was initiated among the ministers of the Pacific Northwest District of the Unitarian-Universalist Ministers Association. It was later successfully tried in a congregational setting. In this program, a small group of people meet weekly to share with each other their "religious odysseys." Each participant shares with the others the story of his or her life in terms of the great

themes, images, or meanings that have emerged for them in their life experience. Such a program results in a deeper knowledge of self and others, a profound appreciation of the wisdom and struggles of human life.

The above suggestions are working toward an ideal religious community, which, like all ideals, will not be perfectly realized. The ideal is a community in which the individuals are free to be whole and unique, within a context of higher values and mutual caring and appreciation. It is a community based on the transmaterial world view, which combines the elements of human life into an integrated and communal whole. In Person/Planet, Theodore Roszak suggests that there is an historical model for such a community, which could be adapted to modern needs. He is referring to the monastic communities of the early Middle Ages. The social context in which these communities emerged is in many ways similar to our own. Says Roszak:

> Let me make it clear . . . that my interest is in monasticism as a model, a tested, historical paradigm of creative social disintegration. I turn to it because it illuminates the way in which the top-heavy and toxic institutions of an exhausted empire were sifted down into civilized, durable communities where a vital, new sense of human identity and community could take root.[1]

In a later passage, Roszak makes it clear in what respects monasticism can serve as a model for us:

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[1]Theodore Roszak, Person/Planet (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1978), pp. 288-89.

> The achievement which I hope the monastic tradition might especially model for us is its remarkable capacity to synthesize qualities of life that have become fiercely polarized in our world. I have in mind the tragic way in which industrial society has pitted the personal against the convivial, the practical against the spiritual. As we live today these values make war upon one another like deadly enemies. Yet the task of saving the person and the planet demands that we make peace among them. And here we have a tradition reaching back more than a thousand and a half years in Western history which gives us reason to hope that such a harmony does exist, can be made to exist.[1]

Of course, the parish church, with its members living in a geographically seaparated situation, cannot become a monastic community in the strict sense of the term. But the monastic model can yield some relevant insights. The church should encourage an integrated lifestyle, informed by a contemplative and religious orientation, and lived within the bounds of a caring and present community. Often the church as a whole may be too large to serve as that intimate community. It could then encourage the development of small groups which could serve that function within the overall framework of the larger church community. Some examples of such small groups are the extended family model and the concept of neighborhood groups. Perhaps the house church idea is the prime example of what I have in mind, combining, as it does, the functions of intimate community and religious concerns.

The idea of actual monastic communities within the

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[1]Ibid.

Unitarian-Universalist denomination is not as far-fetched as it may appear at first glance. A recent article in The Christian Century[1] has suggested the monastic model as one possible solution to the problem of surplus clergy in many Protestant denominations. Such monastic communities would be family oriented and self-sufficient, providing an alternative ministry for contemplatively inclined clergy. Besides serving as examples of spiritually integrated life styles, such institutions could engage in social action projects and education, serve as retreat centers for parish clergy, be loci of contemplative expertise, and also serve as a source of interim and other temporary ministers. Plans are even now underway for a Unitarian-Universalist "feminist monastary" in California. Since a self-sufficient economic base is one important aspect of a monastic community, the resources of the community would be made available to the continental association and to local churches at little cost.

## The Ethical Mode of Being--Imaging a New Religious Being

The ethical mode of being is that mode of being in which the insights gained in the mystical experience and the demands of everyday life come together in integrated action by the individual. Ideally, in the transmaterial

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[1]Peter R. Monkus, "An Innovative Ministry for Surplus Clergy", Christian Century, Vol. XCVI, No. 5 (February 7-14, 1979)

world view, the ethical mode of being functions as the path of religious action. It is the ideal "way" of being religious. When functioning in the ethical mode of being, one is aware of the separate entities of the material modes: of events, causes, time, and space. But one is aware at the same time of the underlying unity behind the separation, the interconnecting One behind the many. This awareness carries an ethical imperative, for one realizes that all of one's actions will affect the whole.

In order for the church to foster living in the ethical mode of being, we must have a different image of what being religious is than is now current in our churches. For many in the liberal church, there is really no thought of being religious at all. A good, successful secular life will do. What I mean by imaging a new religious being is, basically, living with an awareness of and appreciation for the transmaterial world view. This is not actually a "new" image of religious being, but an ancient one. It is, however, new to most people in the modern world and in the liberal church. One way in which the church can foster the new image of religious being is from the pulpit. The preacher can depict the dimensions of what a full, profound religious life in the liberal tradition can mean. The fact that the liberal religion is a <u>religion</u> can be stressed. That religion must be self-conscious and examined: it requires a personal committment,

because the liberal religious perspective carries implications for everyday life and action. A religious life requires that we develop our own spiritual life, in a manner which fosters growth of the individual's meaning and values. It requires that these meanings and values be tested in dialogue within a beloved community. It requires that these meanings and values be translated into integrated action, that their power to transform lives and relationships be recognized and acted upon. The new image of religious being suggests living in the ethical mode as much as possible, making our time to be permeated by compassion and clear vision of the connectedness of nature, self, and others. And finally, the new image of religious being sees a social and political dimension to being religious. The new religious being requires that our meanings and values be acted out in the larger community, the nation, and the planet. The image of the new religious being can be painted through the words of the sermon.

One means through which the awareness of the interconnectedness of the universe can be cultivated is through being in and understanding nature. Through an awareness of nature, the ethical mode of being becomes, slowly, an abiding part of everyday life. Like our Transcendentalist ancestors, we too can learn the highest

laws of God through the lessons nature has to teach. In discussing the implication of Thoreau for the moderm church, William J. Wolf points out that:

> There are many possibilities for enriching peoples' religious experience of nature through family camping, conservation workshops, slide shows, corporate meditation out of doors, lectures and courses.[1]

One good example of such a program for the church is the Northwest Wilderness Society of the Unitarian Church. The society, open to any Unitarian-Universalist, has purchased several hundred acres of wilderness on Kootenay Lake in eastern British Columbia. This area is open for primitive camping during the months of July and August. The area is kept in its wilderness state; it has no "improvements" other than temporary driftwood privies. I well remember the week I spent there. After a scenic, rugged drive from Vancouver, I arrived at the tiny Quaker community of Argenta, where the pavement stopped, and I drove twenty miles of the worst dirt road I had ever seen, to a small docking area called Johnson's Landing. Instructions on the boat shed advised me to hoist the flag signal for the camp boat. "Sit down and enjoy the wait", they advised. "The Wilderness pace starts now." The camp boat arrived after a time and ferried me and my gear and provisions across the lake to my campsite. I was advised that it takes several days to get the tension of modern

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[1]Wolf, p. 176.

civilization out of one's system enough to <u>really</u> begin to enjoy the Wilderness, and I found this to be true. My last few days there were paradisical. Endless days and nights passed in swimming in the cold lake, lying in the sun, reading, fishing, socializing around campfires, hiking in the magnificent mountain trails along Fry Creek, and going to sleep on cool nights with the sound of owls. My week at Wilderness was a religious experience. It put me in touch with the rhythms of nature and the magnificence of being alive. The church could do more to make such experience available to its members.

The most consistent way, however, of spending more of one's time and life in the ethical mode of being is through spiritual discipline. A daily contemplative practice fosters experience of connectedness both in the spiritual and the ethical modes of being. As personal contemplation becomes stronger, it gradually transforms the remainder of one's life. One becomes constantly aware, after a time, of both the spiritual and the material modes of being; when one is in the foreground, the other is in the background. Life takes on a richer, more meaningful dimension. There are several meditation techniques which strengthen particularly the ethical dimension of the ethical mode of being. One is the Buddhist meditation on Loving-kindness, which consists of getting in touch with one's compassion for oneself and expanding the range of

compassion to include visual images of friends and acquaintances. I have found that five minutes of such practice at the end of my meditation period allows me to be much freer and more responsive to those around me for several hours afterwards. Another technique, which deals with specific ethical questions, is the Christian practice of unstructured prayer. In this practice, after a few minutes of centering exercise, one poses a question to oneself, and silently, activley, patiently, one explores every angle and aspect of the question. If one is patient enough, an answer or answers will emerge and one will simply recognize that thought as an answer.

## Enlightened Action in the Material Mode of Being

One result of a full-bodied mysticism, that is, a religious outlook which takes the transmaterial world view seriously, is a dissatisfaction with the current state of society and civilization and a feeling of responsibility for effecting some meaningful change. As we have seen from the example of the life and writings of Thoreau, the motivation for such action comes from a concern for integrity, for the integrity of the self and for the integrity of others. We feel called upon to act when we know, first of all, what our integrity demands. This we become aware of through the understanding of the self, and of the ground of the self, through contemplation. When we feel

that integrity is being outraged by the institutions of society, we are called upon to act to change those institutions. Recall that in the ethical mode of being, that sense of self is larger than the isolated individual life. It includes an awareness of one's interconnectedness with all of existence, so that if one is truly acting from one's integrity, one is not acting for oneself alone. If God is the force acting for integration in the world, one is doing God's works by acting thus. Gradually, through such action, the material mode is transformed to provide a more nurturing context for spiritual development, and thus the cycle begins again at a deeper level.

The question then becomes: "How is such action to take place within the context of the church?" From the perspective of the minister, it seems that the judicious use of the free pulpit is a good place to begin. The minister who functions from the transmaterial world view must take his prophetic role seriously. If he knows what his integrity means, then he will often be called upon to speak out on those issues and realities of the day that seem to violate it. He should eloquently speak his mind on these issues, bringing to bear all his clarity of thought, his awareness of implications both material and spiritual, and his best sense of what solutions could be attempted. Such solutions should be radical. Not

radical, necessarily, in the sense of being in line with the vague political ideology which bears that name, but radical in seeking solutions that strike at the root rather than at the branches of the problem. If the minister's prophetic utterances from the pulpit are indeed clear and true, the seeds sown thus will not fall on fallow ground.

The example of the minister's own life can provide another impetus for others to engage in enlightened social and political action. The minister should model full religious being by himself being involved in social action projects. He should choose such projects carefully, making sure that, to the best of his understanding, the projects are radical, moral, and not a waste of his effort. He should choose the projects he is involved in from a sense of his own integrity and not from a "liberal" image or for lesser motivations, such as self-aggrandizement. The fruits of such actions will make themselves known and will encourage others in the congregation to join in these efforts, especially if he has carefully communicated the reasoning and spiritual implications of his actions.

The church also has an educational function to perform in regard to social problems and social action. Forums, lectures, and discussions on social issues should be a part of the life of every congregation. Such events will provide an opportunity for the sharing of

wisdom, perspective and experience. They will help clarify perspectives. It is important that these groups do not confine themselves to the material and political facts of the issues discussed. There is other data to consider, such as the spiritual and ethical implications of the matter, the human experience of those suffering from the problem (if we look deeply enough we will find that we all do), and the most effective, i.e. radical, solution.

What about the question of direct involvement by the church is programs of social change? There is widespread disagreement on this issue and it is certainly a difficult problem to address. Is social action a matter for the individual alone, with the church acting only to clarify his values and educate him on the moral and religious dimensions of the problem? Or does the church as a corporate body have the right, even the obligation, to act directly in matters of social concern? There has been much heated controversy over these questions in the past, which is, in my view, as it should be. I hesitate to make a general statement as to which position I would take. Such a decision should be based on the merits of the individual case, the concrete action proposed, and the specific church community. I will say that I can conceive of situations in which the church as a corporate body could effectively, and even should, act for social or

political change. The church has a special mandate to lift up the moral and religious issues of a social problem. I disagree, however, with the position that states that the primary purpose of the church is to be an agent of social change. The church's role as an agent of social change should emerge out of its special religious concerns and its commitment to the furthering of wholeness and integration in the world. It should view each social issue afresh from this perspective, rather than identifying with secular ideologies or political philosophies.

In any corporate social action, the church must act as a community. In Earthwalk, Phillip Slater makes what I feel is a vital distinction between a true community and a network.[1] A network is like an address book--it is common to oneself alone. Usually in networks people choose only those who are like themselves to interact with, thereby isolating themselves from differences and possible conflict. But a community is a stable entity in itself. It contains people of many styles and points of view. In a community, everyone must take everyone else seriously. "Everyone is obliged to have a balanced interpersonal diet as it were."[2] This has

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[1]Phillip Slater, Earthwalk (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974), pp. 15-16.

[2]Ibid.

implications for the way in which a church, as a community, decides on a course of social action. In the true community every opinion must be heard and taken into account, even those of the dissenting minority. The integrity of every individual must be respected. Thus, in deciding a course of corporate action, the process is as important as the result. Everyone must have a chance to be heard and their opinions respected. If the opponents of corporate social action are constantly shouted down and finally driven out, the church community is in danger of degenerating into a mere network. Valuable points of view, wisdom, and balance will then be lost. At this point, conflict management skills could be very valuable. The decision-making process could then move forward in such a manner as to be a valuable learning experience for all, and everyone would at least feel heard. From the point of view of wholeness, we cannot separate ends from means.

There is another perspective I would like to impose upon corporate social or political action. That is the question of the scope of the issue. It seems to me that social and political action within the scope of the local community would generally be much more effective and less conflict-ridden than actions on a national and international scale. This is for the simple reason that the problem can be more easily grasped and agreed upon, because it is more concrete. Everyone in the congregation

will, in some sense, have some personal experience with the problem. There will be a common, concrete, base for discussion. Those who suffer from the problem will be known to many. They may be members of the congregation. A church usually has more effective power on the local level than anywhere else, so that the action undertaken will result in success and a feeling of confidence, rather than a sense of futility and impotence. I make this as a general statement, not a definitive one. There will, of course, be national and international issues which the church must address. But as the aspects of the problem become more removed and abstract, the less the likelihood of clear understanding and consensus.

The ideal role of the church in relation to society would be as a community of witness and stewardship. By being a community of witness, I mean that the church should witness to the world at large, through words and through actions, the validity and importance of the trans-material world view. The church should present to the world a community that lives, to a large degree, in a whole and integrated way. It should seek to be an exemplar of how the spiritual, ethical, mythic, and material modes of being contribute to a well-lived life and a beloved community.

The dictionary defines stewardship as managing the property or affairs of another. In acting as a community of stewardship, the church recognizes that its resources,

particularly its moral and spiritual resources, do not belong to the church community alone, but must be shared with everyone. A message and life style of wholeness is rare in today's world. In this sense, the church as the steward of the transmaterial world view is preserving and conserving a vital resource, a rich tradition and a powerful, potential, social force.

As we have seen in the chapter on Thoreau, a vital, mystical, social action requires a life style where spiritual concerns and material concerns merge, in an ethical mode of being. We see from Thoreau's thought that simple living, as expressed in Walden, is such a path. Simple living here refers to the subordination of the material goods that surround us to the higher purposes and meanings of our life. The following is a description of the modern simple living movement's attempts to explicate what that means. As we have noted in the previous chapter, this movement has received much of its inspiration from Thoreau, seeking to adapt his insights to the modern situation. But simple living as an ideal does not begin with Thoreau. It is a traditionally religious, particularly a mystical, solution to the problem of living. Thoreau made use of the sayings of Jesus to justify his position and the idea of voluntary poverty has been part of the Judaeo-Christian tapestry ever since, at least as an ideal. It is also found in the traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism,

Sufism, and Taoism. Indeed, it is a nearly universal element of the mystical path.

In the United States, one of the religious groups which has done most to keep the tradition of voluntary simplicity alive is The Society of Friends. It is the American Friends Service Committee Simple Living Collective which has most clearly outlined the position of the present day Simple Living Movement in their book Taking Charge. There, the Collective defines simple living in terms of returning material things to their proper place.

> Living simply is one way of consciously returning material things to their proper role, as means and tools by which human needs may be achieved and human activity fostered. This is a crucial task in the United States and in other societies that have emulated it, where tremendous efforts are made to turn consumption into an end in itself. In the process, we believe, people tend to become objects of their objects--thinglike beings whose main purpose is to consume whatever is offered them. The human endeavor is thereby cheapened.[1]

One of the major aspects of simple living is that it involves the maximizing of all human potential. The book goes on to define what it means to do this in rather specific terms.

> We understand simple living to be an active involvement in maximizing human well-being, autonomy and creative involvement with the world while minimizing waste of natural resources and human capabilities. For us simple living includes:
> -- An emphasis on replacing wasteful consumption with creativity and usefulness wherever possible.

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[1]American Friends Service Committee Simple Living Committee, Taking Charge (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), p. 2.

> -- The use of energy, natural resources, and technology as a means of facilitating human growth, self-reliance, mastery of skills, and sharing, rather than as ends in themselves.
> -- Recognition that material goods are the basis for human existence, not the source of abundance. Real abundance is found in human creativity, individual and shared self-reliance, and richness in personal relationships, culture, and the human spirit.[1]

Simple living is, to a large extent, a personal matter. It is up to each individual to examine his own life to find out the purposes he wants to live for and the meanings he would like to live out. It is a complex process at this level alone, becoming even more complex when such a process is shared. There is no <u>one</u> definition of simple living.

> The simple living process is one of change and growth on many levels. It is not something which, like arithmetic or how to bake a cake, can be learned in ten easy lessons. Instead, it develops out of a constantly unfolding interaction and integration of many activities, including:
> -- Personal change and growth
> -- Empowerment and re-invention of a politics of participation and action
> -- Building economic alternatives.[2]

The second and third points of the above citation emphasize another aim of simple living, in addition to taking charge of the material aspects of one's life.

> American consumers have become unwilling and often unwitting coconspirators in the economic oppression of other human beings and the political oppression that usually accompanies it. Therefore, for us simple

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[1]Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[2]Ibid., p. 16.

> living includes, but goes well beyond, regaining control of the materially connected aspects of our personal, family, creative, work, spiritual and emotional lives. It also includes active engagement in work designed to bring about a fundamental redistribution of political and economic power in this nation and the world. Meeting the basic material and political needs of the hungry and powerless is as much a task of the simple living movement as reclaiming control over our own lives.[1]

Thus we see that the simple living movement has an important political component, requiring a commitment to work for change in the distribution of wealth.

There is another important reason that there be a political consciousness involved in the simple living movement. In a consumer society, every popular movement is subject to the danger of cooptation for profit.

> Just as rock music and Peter Max cartoons are used to sell 7-Up to the Pepsi generation, so "simple living" can be used to sell granola--along with reductions in social services, public education, and other such resources. The "domestication" of simple living, in this fashion--so that it serves the long range interests of private enterprise and profit making at the expense of poor working people--is not what we had in mind.[2]

Simple living must be done self-critically, and with an awareness of our responsibility to others, if such cooptation is to be avoided.

Where is this process of redistributing power to begin? For the modern simple living movement, as for Thoreau and the Transcendentalists, it begins with the

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[1] Ibid., p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

individual respecting his own power to effect change and by the individual acting from his own integrity.

> One starting point is to stop treating the irritations and oppressions we feel as members of a consumer-oriented society as either private matters or issues over which we have no control. Job insecurity and unemployment, unrepairable appliances, poisonous food additives, and such things as oppression by class, sex, race, or age are not basically individual problems. They are public social issues in which we assert the power to define problems and initiate programs of our own rather than accept solutions carefully tailored to advance political careers or private interests.[1]

Another part of the process of reinventing a politics of simple living is that of re-educating ourselves. One example of this is the social action forums in the church mentioned earlier. Other examples include publicly owned radio stations, alternative newspapers and neighborhood groups that work to make political issues out of local problems.[2]

The Collective suggests three criteria by which to judge the relevance of simple living objectives to any particular reform effort. They are:

1. Does it redistribute the power of dominant political institutions, especially by creating or expanding the opportunity for popular participation in decision making?
2. Does it help make visible the links between the immediate situation and the larger causes and consequences?
3. Does it promote participatory politics by raising the public's level of awareness and involvement

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[1] Ibid., p. 20.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

with the issues it concerns?[1]

What the simple living movement is concerned with, finally, is the individual human being, in his or her wholeness. It sees the individual as an irreducible oneness who possesses value simply by living. Institutions, culture, and civilizations, goods, politics, exist for the benefit of the individual and not the reverse. The success of the simple living movement, indeed, of all the values of the transmaterial world view, depends on the pooled commitment of individuals. But what shape should that commitment take? This chapter has all along been concerned with suggestions for the shape of that commitment. And that search can be enriched by a recent statement of concerned church people in an ecumenical setting which neatly summarizes the nature of a personal commitment to simple living. This statement is especially relevant to our discussion because all the elements of the transmaterial world view are included in it. I am referring to the Shakertown Pledge, and am quoting it in full.

THE SHAKERTWON PLEDGE

> Recognizing that the earth and the fullness thereof is a gift from our gracious God, and that we are called to cherish, nurture and provide loving stewardship for the earth's resources,
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> And recognizing that life itself is a gift, and a call to responsibility, joy, and celebration,
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> I make the following declarations.

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[1]Ibid., p. 22.

1. I declare myself to be a world citizen.
2. I commit myself to lead an ecologically sound life.
3. I commit myself to lead a life of creative simplicity and to share my personal wealth with the world's poor.
4. I commit myself to join with others in reshaping institutions in order to bring about a more just global society in which each person has full access to the needed resources for their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual growth.
5. I commit myself to occupational accountability, and in so doing will seek to avoid the creation of products which cause harm to others.
6. I affirm the gift of my body, and commit myself to its proper nourishment and physical well-being.
7. I commit myself to examine continually my relations with others, and to attempt to relate honestly, morally, and lovingly to those around me.
8. I commit myself to personal renewal through prayer, meditation, and study.
9. I commit myself to responsible participation in a community of faith.[1]

There is an interesting fact about the Shakertown Pledge which serves as an example of the inseparability of spiritual growth and social action. The original group who drafted the Pledge were religious retreat center directors. Their occupations are centered around the contemplative life and the Pledge is a statement of the concerns which had arisen for them out of their experience. I feel that, at present, the Shakertown Pledge is the best statement of the implications for action of the transmaterial world view in existence. The Shakertown Pledge Group offers many resources to aid in realizing the commitments expressed in the Pledge, including Creative Simplicity, a monthly newsletter and Toward a Just World Economy: A Critical

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[1]Ibid., pp. 334-35.

Introduction to Voluntary International Aid Agencies in the United States. The latter is extremely helpful in taking seriously one's commitment to share one's wealth with the world's poor by entrusting it to an agency which is not furthering the interests of power politics or corportate interests and which aims toward increased self-sufficiency of the poor and powerless.

I believe that the simple living movement, as expressed in the Shakertown Pledge, is a radical solution to many world problems, radical in the sense of going to the root. The root, in this case, is the individual and his or her own development as a whole human being. It is recognized that this wholeness will include a concern for others, for society, and for the world. The Shakertown Pledge addresses directly the problems of poverty, hunger, ecological waste and pollution, consumerism, overconsumption and world scarcity. Since it is a radical solution, it is the best way for the individual to express his concern for a better world.

One recommendation of the Shakertown Pledge group is that the language of the Pledge be modified to suit the specific needs of each individual community of faith. This can certainly be accomplished for Unitarian-Universalist congregations, but the question remains: Is the Shakertown Pledge consistent with the liberal religious tradition of social action? In The Free Church in a Changing World, the

Commission on Ethics and Social Action expresses many of the elements of the Shakertown Pledge and the transmaterial world view. For example, the Commission stresses the importance of the personal growth of individuals in any social action activity.

> In social action groups there is often a tension between the importance of getting an objective accomplished and the importance of the feelings and ideas of the persons who are working toward the accomplishment of that given end. If there has to be an error here is should be on the side of overstressing the growth of persons rather than the achievement of immediate social action objectives. The most effective kinds of personal growth and social action happen together.[1]

This is true because personal growth and social action are, ultimately, inseparable.

> Group social action may satisfy the need to be whole persons insofar as it brings together private convictions and public commitments. When wholeness of character results, then concerns as citizens are the natural consequence of religious convictions.[2]

The concern for personal integrity which the Shakertown Pledge articulates is also shared by the members of the Commission. Indeed, many of the specific recommendations for such personal integrity are common in the two documents, as this passage from the Commission Report illustrates:

> The Commission would point out that Unitarian-Universalists must cultivate deeply such private,

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[1] Commission on Ethics and Social Action, The Free Church in a Changing World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 112-13.

[2] Ibid.

> ethical standards as the following: respect for oneself in body, mind and spirit, with the inevitable corollaries of moderation in eating, drinking, play and work; a commitment to the enduring significance of marriage and the family, and a full recognition of the creative and destructive potentials of the sexual instinct. If man is to work creatively and serve effectively, it is essential for him to reserve time for worship, wonder, contemplation, for self-discovery and self-fulfillment, time to relate himself to the most creative forces in the totality of his human existence.[1]

But how effective will such commitment be in actually solving the problems of the world? If the simple living movement is effective at all, it will be effective because of the power of moral example. It will demonstrate to others the increased purpose, meaning, and fulfillment which result from living within the transmaterial world view. This is the "leaven" Thoreau refers to which will transform the whole loaf. This is not to deny the complexity and immensity of the world's problems. But we must begin somewhere. We have, perhaps, in the simple living movement, the makings of a critical mass, a sufficient minority to bring about true change. The concept of a critical mass is simply that a commited and energetic minority has a great deal more power than an apathetic majority. But will it be enough? I honestly don't know. In response to this question, I can only echo the advice of E. F. Schumacher:

Can we rely on it that a "turning around" will be

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[1]Ibid.

> accomplished by enough people quickly enough to save the modern world? This question is often asked, but no matter what the answer, it will mislead. The answer "Yes" will lead to complacency, the answer "No" to despair. It is desirable to leave these perplexities behind and get down to work.[1]

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[1]E. F. Schumacher, A Guide for the Perplexed (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 140.

Now I a fourfold vision see,
And a fourfold vision is given to me;
'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
And threefold in soft Beulah's night
And twofold Always. May God us keep
From single vision and Newton's sleep!

William Blake

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