

DEVELOPING YOUR OWN SPIRITUALITY

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UNIT THREE **SESSION TWO:** **The person as anticipating**



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First printing 2000, Second printing 2001, Third printing 2002, Fourth printing 2003
Fifth printing 2004, Sixth printing 2005, Seventh printing 2006, Eighth printing 2007
Ninth printing 2008

*Who can penetrate – friend or priest – to the secret place where doubt, that dark form of adoration, approaches the Infinite with trembling.*¹



*We can get along without our souls for a little while in life, but not for long. The time often asked of us today, by so many forces in our culture, is much too long. That is one reason, perhaps the greatest, why so many are so sick. It will always be true therefore that the hope of the sick lies in destroying their idols and restoring their own souls. As for the well, the question is: how can they help? If they have good will and wisdom, too, let them at least stay off the mighty throne of God. Such is the need and such the demand of people for gods and absolutes, that it will often be wise to descend slowly but firmly from the throne. It is a pity that this must be. But the fact that there is one God and no more is for all of us, the well and the ill, the most difficult proposition in this world.*²



Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.” Therefore, prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: Behold I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people.”’³



*For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here, indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up with life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.*⁴



¹ Marie Noël, *Notes for Myself*, Cornell University Press, 1968, 6.

² William Lynch, *Images of Hope*, Notre Dame University, 1974, 125. The late Walker Percy suggest similar thing on a more general scale when he comments: “The consumer of mass culture is lonely, not only lonely, but spiritually impoverished” (Walker Percy, “Culture, the Church and Evangelization” in Patrick Samway, ed, *Signposts in a Strange Land*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, 301.

³ Ezekiel 37:11-14.

⁴ 2Corinthians 5:1-5.

THE UNIVERSAL HUMAN DIMENSION: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**** Anticipating is an openness to the future whereby we appropriate and configure the future in the present.***

**** Anticipating is a critical part of the life formation process, for better or worse.***

**** The future is in some measure shaped both by anticipating and remembering in the present***

**** In changing the way we anticipate the future, we change the way we live in the present – for better or worse.***



The mysterious ambiguity of anticipation⁵

When we were children we probably got excited talking about what we might get for Christmas or what we were going to do during the holidays or how Nan and Pop were coming to visit or how we were going to have a party to celebrate an upcoming birthday and so on. We probably also persecuted our parents when, on long journeys, we would ask with some measure of childish exasperation and frustration, “Are we nearly there?” And we probably suffered unspeakable anxieties and internal torments listening to the high-pitched whining of the drill as we waited for our turn in the dentist’s chair or waited for our parents to decide on a suitable punishment for some “crime” we had committed or when we lined up for a major exam for which we had done precious little study and so on.

The excitement and intensity – positive or negative – associated with anticipation might diminish when we become adults, but the future still exercises some kind of hold on us *because we are anticipating beings*. We cannot help it. We *must* anticipate, even though we develop strategies of one kind or another to counter that necessity or at least cope with it.

In a mysterious way “the future” – or at least *our* particular appropriation and configuring of the future – finds access to our beings and tends to shape us, for better or worse. And we aid and abet this process, again for better or worse. Many of the most delightful moments in life may be found in looking forward to a special event.⁶ And some of the most painful moments might be similarly evoked. We

⁵ The following notes will have the individual in mind. The reader is invited to think of how these same dynamics might apply to a group – say a family or a nation or a business organization or a religious congregation or a parish or a diocese etc.

⁶ Note the passage in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*: “‘It would be better to come back at the same hour,’ said the fox. ‘If for example you come at four o’clock in the afternoon, then at three o’clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour

might even find that an event that elicited delight in the expectation is a let down or even a painful disappointment when it finally arrives. We might also find that an event we awaited with trepidation turns out to be a relief or quite a delightful surprise.⁷ Good drama – in literature, theatre, movies and so on – depends on our capacity to anticipate. A dramatic piece holds us in suspense and generally surprises us in some way.

Some of the most enjoyable – and most distressing – experiences of living are found in the experience of anticipation. In and through anticipating our *present experience* may be happy or sad, enlivened or deadened, at peace or anxious, very realistic or totally unrealistic.

What is happening here? What is it about us that opens us to the future – the not-yet – in such powerful and sometimes life-changing ways? There is a mysterious and unavoidable tension in this experience of the “not-yet” that permeates the here and now.

The word and its Latin roots

Perhaps the etymology of the English word “anticipate” holds some clues. It comes from the Latin words *ante* meaning “before” and *capere* meaning “to take” or “to seize.” The English word thus implies *taking hold of things beforehand*. Clearly there is something about this process that is automatic, instinctive. Whether we like it or not we tend to take hold of the future, or at least we try to. Just as our lives are, typically, a constant openness to and appropriation and configuration of the *past*, they are also a constant openness to and appropriation and configuration of the *future*.

To be human is to be suspended. We live in suspense, we are always “in between.”⁸ Even as we are necessarily grounded in the past, we are also, in some mysterious way grounded in the future. We are, as it were, always and necessarily ahead of ourselves; we are always leaning into the not-yet, lurching towards territory that is as yet uncharted by us. We are “there” already. We are always in uncharted places. To be is to be where we have never been before. In each and every moment this is the case. We are always and everywhere strangers in a strange land. There is an inevitable misfittedness about human existence as such.

advances. At four o'clock I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is ready to greet you ... one must observe the proper rites ...” (Mammoth, 1945/1996, 65-6)

⁷ Oscar Wilde has observed: “There is only one thing worse than not having one’s expectations satisfied and that’s having them satisfied.”

⁸ It is not surprising that, from to time we are all prone to lose the creative tension of this state of suspension and get a little lost in either the past or the future. If this becomes chronic it might present a serious obstacle to maturity. It may even become pathological. Henry James’ character in *The Beast in the Jungle* – John Marcher – is an obvious case of someone for whom anticipation has become pathological. John Marcher’s obsession with the future causes him to constantly and consistently miss the present. In the end, this adds up to John Marcher missing his life.

Thus, the metaphors of journey and pilgrimage are immediately recognisable, as if they name something about us that is fundamental and universal.

Again, just as remembering can evoke a profound sense of the mysterious and wonderful creation that we are, so anticipating can have the same effect. What sort of a being is this that draws past and future into the present? What meanings and implications can such concepts as “past”, “present” and “future” have for this remembering and anticipating creature? Where am I? *Who* am I?⁹

Finally, we can note that there is something about this process that is not merely automatic, more than instinctive. We can choose, we can have some say about how we actually appropriate and configure the future, just as we can choose how we appropriate and configure the past. In other words, it is possible to be more or less realistic and creative about this anticipating, and it is possible to be more or less unrealistic and even destructive about it.

Each of us lives a mysterious tension because of this openness to the not-yet. In a decidedly odd sort of way, the not-yet becomes part of our very beings, thus the future shapes the present even as the present and the past shape the future.¹⁰ Let us begin by considering some of the deformative possibilities in anticipation.

Anticipating and the spiral into unrealism

We are all born geniuses at self-deception. If we do not work deliberately and creatively at being honest and facing the truth, we may depend that a lot of our time, energy and talent will be invested, consciously or unconsciously, in evasions of one kind or another. Our situation as anticipating beings provides us with some special opportunities for flight from reality.

The fact that we are anticipating beings disposes us, potentially at least, to a sort of spiral into unrealism. The process may be set out as follows:

- To be human is to necessarily tend to take hold of the future – ie we are anticipating beings;

⁹ Such questions have prompted some of the most complex – and difficult – philosophical reflections. See, for example, Martin Heidegger’s, *Being and Time*, one of the most significant – and obtuse – philosophical works of the 20th century. However, it is not a philosophical reflection that we seek here but a more experiential or existential one. Such questions as these ought to prompt us to listen more attentively to ourselves in the stuff of daily living. It also ought to prompt us to eschew any merely functionalistic or rationalistic explanation of human life. Clearly we are dealing with a profound mystery when we face our own humanity. Thus we say that life, in the end, is a mystery to be lived rather than a problem to be solved. And by the word “mystery” we mean inexhaustible intelligibility.

¹⁰ The classic work of Miguel de Cervantes – *Don Quixote de la Mancha* – expresses something of this ambivalence. This work was originally intended as a satire on the exaggerated chivalric romances of his time (late 16th century). Don Quixote is constantly attempting to transform the present by anticipating a better future. Cervantes has given us one of the truly great novels of all time, one that is, in fact, considerably more than a straightforward satire.

- But the future does not yet exist, except in potency;
- This can generate an unbearable anxiety and tension for us as anticipating beings, especially if we carry a lot of pain in our remembering;
- We may then attempt to conjure the future into existence – ie we create (explicitly or implicitly) a pre-definition of the way things should or will be;
- We then mistake this illusion – the pre-definition we have created – for reality;¹¹
- We may then, if caught in this spiral, react in any of a number of ways, for reality is seldom exactly as we anticipate. For example, we may react:
 - *Aggressively* – we attempt wilfully to force reality to fit that pre-definition; to the extent that we are “successful” in this effort, we do violence to reality (self, others and world); this reaction might also lead, over time, to “silent rage,” otherwise known as depression;
 - *Naively* – we simply make the unwarranted and uncritical assumption that “this” is the way things are, will be, and perhaps, should be; we will thus be more or less surprised and disappointed that life has “failed” us, though sometimes our naïve assumptions may in fact be met;
 - *Pessimistically* – fearful of disappointment we may constantly brace ourselves for that disappointment and expect it at every turn, talking up the negative possibilities, being “grateful” that things could have been worse; John O’Brien’s Hanrihan might be a good example of such an attitude!
 - *Perfectionistically* – anxious about losing control, we endeavour to allay our anxiety by establishing perfect order or by foreseeing all possible points of failure and closing them off; obsessive-compulsive pathologies are a particularly intractable manifestation of this disordered anticipation. It represents an attempt to as it were magically control the future through rituals; the perfectionist is only different in degree from the obsessive-compulsive.¹²

The likelihood of us slipping into this spiral of unrealism is increased by the modern Western mind-set’s obsession with power and control. The thought of some aspect of our lives – namely, the future – lying outside of our control is

¹¹ The sheer routinization and habitualization of our lives are probably the most benign examples of this, while some of the ideologies that emerged in the 20th centuries (eg Nazism and Communism) represent some of the more malign examples. Religion may also be reduced to an ideology and thus fall into the same trap. All are expressions of the constant attempts we make to reduce life to manageable proportions. This reductionism must be countered by finding a ground for our lives beyond ego and therefore beyond the need to control the present and the future. Thus a healthy life formation process is characterised by a shifting centre of gravity, one of self-transcendence and abandonment to the Great Mystery, a movement from ego-centricity to mystery-centricity.

¹² We might raise the question here as to the underlying dynamics in the problem gambler. Maybe such people, feeling impotent in the face of the future, endeavour to control it by the “magic” of windfalls? The compulsive gambler probably also sees himself or herself as a “victim” of life?

tormenting and threatening. So we expend quite a bit of energy and time and talent and effort in trying to bring the future within our control.¹³

There is an obvious complicating factor in all this. In a healthy life formation process, we must take due care to prepare ourselves, as best we can, for the future. For example, studying in preparation for an exam, pursuing a regimen of exercise and diet to enhance the quality of one's health, and thus minimizing the possibility of debilitating illnesses during the aging process, putting money in the bank to cover credit card expenditure, checking the street guide before we set out for an address in an unknown part of town, cleaning the gutters on our roof before the bush fire season and so on. There are many such things the mature adult does daily.

By the same token, we are all aware of the person who over-prepares for upcoming events, who over-insures, who is obsessive about cleanliness, who is too concerned with diet and exercise. We are also familiar with the so-called "control freaks," wilful people who want to exercise dominance over everything and everyone they are associated with.

We could, however, point to some more common, everyday examples of the spiral of unrealism. How often do we cause distress to ourselves – and perhaps others – because we feel disappointed by our unreal expectations of life? Is not marriage a common place to find pre-definitions and unreal expectations? Does the advertising industry not generate unreal expectations and set people up for a spiral into unrealism? And what about the unreal expectations and pre-definitions we have had in regard to ourselves throughout our lives?¹⁴

¹³ Is it possible that the radical anxiety that prompts us to try and control our lives also prompts us to eradicate those things which cannot be controlled, or at least reduce them to manageable proportions? This is the reductionism referred to in footnote 12 above. Thus we might walk away from a difficult relationship or escape the pain-filled process of living through the experience of dying by committing suicide. Euthanasia may be better understood in this context, as an attempt to control life by ending it. Both suicide and euthanasia are radical death denials, they are a refusal to enter the dying that is central to living. (NOTE: This is *not* a moral judgment on those who might, for whatever reason – and the reasons are often complex and lie outside the realms of free choice – choose either suicide or euthanasia.)

¹⁴ One of the crucial experiences of life formation that every human being encounters very early is the disappointment that follows unreal expectations. One author writes: "The point of fundamental importance which I am anxious here to emphasize is that what upsets the smooth functioning of the pleasure instinct, and leads to all the psychogenic abnormalities which we are trying to investigate, is *disappointment*. According to what a child does about this, he/she grows up mentally healthy or ill. This fundamental problem of how to deal with disappointment runs right through the history of the child's gradually developing relations to external reality and especially its emotional relations connected with these early sensual pleasures ... These pleasure cravings of childhood are intense: but since it is hardly possible, even under the most favorable conditions, to enjoy nothing but unbroken satisfaction, bitter disappointment is a situation which every baby meets almost from the very beginning of its existence." (Karin Stephen, *The Wish to Fall Ill*, Cambridge, 1960, 75, cited by William Lynch, *Images of Hope*, Notre Dame University Press, 1966, 279.) We could note briefly two other relevant factors in this regard. In the first instance, the child also has to deal with disappointments that arise from *real* expectations. The

Most pathologies of the psyche or spirit are excesses or at least distortions of what is good.¹⁵ Deformative anticipation ought not blind us to formative anticipation.

Freedom and anticipation

As with all the other intra-formative powers, we are forced to recognize a distinction between *formative* and *deformative* anticipating:

- *That* we anticipate is an unavoidable given.
- *How* we anticipate is up to us.

Again, as with all the intra-formative powers, we have a margin of freedom and thus the ability to, at the very least, choose an attitude. The choices we make can be the difference between *formative* anticipating and *deformative* anticipating. Those choices can also be the difference between being real and being unreal here and now. Those choices can thus be the difference between a healthy and happy life and an unhealthy and unhappy life.

A major factor in whether or not we will tend to move in the more formative or the more deformative direction, is our *primordial option*.¹⁶ That *primordial option* will, in turn, be closely dependent on the extent to which we experienced the foundational forming triad of faith, hope and love from those human beings who cared for us.¹⁷ None of which removes our adult responsibility to respond to what life has given us and make our adult decisions accordingly. We can still choose,

example of parents and the general culture of the family is obviously crucial in this regard. In the second instance, some measure of disappointment is actually a healthy thing, as can be seen in the lives of those children whose parents rush to satisfy their every wish so they will never be disappointed. It is not uncommon to hear it said to young people today, “You can have/do anything you want with your life!” For those who are vulnerable or gullible enough to believe this, the day of reckoning is not far away; and the sense of disappointment and even despair might be acute.

¹⁵ A very powerful and poignant example of this is found in the mother in Judith Guest’s novel, *Ordinary People*. Mary Tyler Moore plays this character brilliantly in the Robert Redford film version of the same story.

¹⁶ Cf Unit One, Session Two – “Formation Mystery”. Briefly, *primordial option* refers to that pre-moral orientation we take up early in life in reaction to the formation field in which we find ourselves. Thus, in a formation field which we experience as more or less consistently affirming and hospitable our *primordial option* will tend to be one of trust and *abandonment to* the mystery of formation; in a formation field which we experience as more or less non-affirming and inhospitable our *primordial option* will tend to be one of mistrust and a sense of *abandonment by* the mystery of formation.

¹⁷ You might find Conrad Baars, *Born Only Once* a helpful book. He reflects on the importance of affirmation and the consequences of lack of affirmation, especially in the earlier, more formative years.

indeed, if we are to be adults, we *must* choose the way we anticipate just as we must choose the way we remember..

Also relevant will be dispositions manifest, for example, in the following:

- Do we think that life is, in the end, a mystery to be lived or a problem to be solved?
- Are we able to live life as a conversation which will constantly surprise us or do we confine ourselves to rigid expectations that will constantly pre-empt any surprise?
- Are we in process of moving from ego-centricity towards Mystery-centricity?
- Do we still live under the illusion that we can and should have absolute control over our lives?
- Does the fear of vulnerability prevent us from facing what must be faced within and allowing our emotions to be expressed?
- Is *being* more important than *doing* or *having* in developing a sense of self and others?
- Do we favour cooperation over competition?
- Are relationships *actually* the central focus of our lives?
- Are we present to the *process* of living and working or do we overprize *productivity*?
- Do we regard life, in the end, as gift or conquest?
- Are our moments of success marked more by gratitude than satisfaction?

The person as anticipating – transcendent and functional possibilities

We can think of the faculty of anticipating as an *intra-formative power which enables us to participate in the formation mystery by enabling us to appropriate and configure the future*. The person as anticipating manifests the radical interdependence of the transcendent and functional possibilities of life formation.

The person as anticipating as *transcendent possibility* is a potential to be available for the next possibilities of life in openness to and in the context of the Transcendent. My sense of being grounded in the Great Mystery relativises whatever may emerge – attractive or unattractive, violent or peaceful, pleasant or unpleasant. The person as anticipating in this way is epitomized by a more or less gracious and free acknowledgement of all that might be. That includes, at least implicitly, a radical choice to affirm the genuine possibilities. This is enabled by a conviction that our movement into the future is a movement into the Great Mystery and that Mystery is the source of the Good and the True and the Beautiful. The transcendent possibility, in other words, allows us to situate and contextualize our anticipating in a life-giving way. It is taking a hopeful stand in the world.¹⁸

¹⁸ We should distinguish *hope* from mere *optimism*. The latter is subject to ego and can be brought in to being through willful effort and emotional force. We may also be optimistic

The person as anticipating as *functional possibility* is a potential to use various items of information and employ intelligence, imagination and skill, to prepare for what lies ahead in useful and practical ways. The person is thus grounded in the immediate and the concrete. This functional possibility is epitomized by the ability to foresee the possibilities and make appropriate preparations and generally engage the world in efficient and practical ways by being ready for what emerges. The functional possibility, in other words, allows us to situate ourselves in useful and competent ways in the world.

It is essential to see the transcendent and functional dimensions as necessarily interdependent. The transcendent is the ground out of which we live. The functional enables us to get on with the business and tasks of living in practical and realistic ways. The functional is the servant of the transcendent and must always emerge within the context of the transcendent.

The person as anticipating is also the person as thinking ... willing ... remembering ... imagining ... feeling ... at different levels of consciousness. We could note, however, the special relationship that obviously exists between remembering and anticipating. In our appropriating and configuring the past and our appropriating and configuring the future, we are suspended in the present. Life is suspension. The suspension ceases when either the remembering or anticipating ceases. Remembering is the basis for anticipating.¹⁹

because we are naïve or simply unaware. Hope, on the other hand, is an expression of being, a gift of life itself. We can only dispose ourselves for that gift through choices made in accord with who we most deeply are. Hope, however, is not subject to willful effort or emotional force and it does not arise from naiveté or unawareness. Today, our choices are not between optimism and pessimism, they are, rather, between hope and despair. Vaclav Havel says of the virtue of hope: “(It is) a state of mind, not a state of the world. Either we have hope within us or we don’t; it is a dimension of the soul, and it is not essentially dependent upon some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation . . . It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere between its horizons. I don’t think you can explain it as a mere derivative of something here, of some movement, or of some favourable signs in the world. I feel that its deepest roots are in the transcendental, just as the roots of human responsibility are It is not the conviction that some thing will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.” (Cited by Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995, 4.)

¹⁹ Failure to give full recognition to the interdependence of remembering and anticipating can adversely affect a therapeutic process. For example, an over-emphasis on past causes may overlook the substantial influence exercised by the lack of meaning in a person’s life. *Aetiology* – from the Greek *aitia* meaning *cause* – must be held in tension with *teleology* – from the Greek *telos* meaning *end* or *goal*.

Anticipating and waiting²⁰

As anticipating beings we are constantly incomplete.²¹ To be human therefore is to be restless. It is also to be radically alone. We are necessarily more or less haunted by the not-yet and made anxious by the lack of control it implies. That is an inevitable part of being an individual human being. This means our lives, each in its own unique way, will always be ambiguous, paradoxical, more or less confused and – sometimes at least – lonely. It will also mean that “feeling on top of it all,” “getting it all together” and so on, can, at best, refer to relative functional bits of life and at worst are sad and tragic illusions.

Our situation as anticipating animals also means that we are, in some measure, always waiting. We wait for telephone calls, we wait for buses, we wait for meals, we wait for people, we wait for doctor’s reports and so on. But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Even when the telephone call has come through and the bus has turned up we are still waiting. *Our very lives are a form of waiting – to live is to wait.*²²

Some distinctions may be helpful here:

- Rigid expectation as distinct from creative anticipation and
- Waiting *for* as distinct from waiting *upon*.

Rigid expectation is ego-centred. It is driven by a wish to control and is almost certainly arising from deep-seated anxiety. It tends to be wilful rather than willing.²³

Creative anticipation, on the other hand, is Mystery-centred. It is an intelligent flowing-with what is. It arises out of attentive listening and a familiar conversation with life. The latter manifests a detachment and surrender that the former lacks. It also implies a greater inner security and awareness of and connection with what really matters. The former is grounded in ego. The latter is grounded in the Mystery.

Waiting *for* is focused on *the moment to come*. It tends to have us gathering our energies towards that end point. Waiting *upon* is focused on *the present moment* with an openness to the moment to come. It tends to have us listening to and entering into intelligent conversation with what is happening now so that we might facilitate the emergence of the next moment rather than engineer it. Anticipation requires that a tension be held between the waiting *for* and the waiting *upon*.²⁴

²⁰ In considering specific human experiences pertinent to the power of anticipation, we have focused on only two here, “waiting” and “possibility”. You might give some thought to the relationship between anticipation and other human experiences like boredom, depression and anxiety.

²¹ See also the discussion of “Transcendence” in Unit One, Session Seven.

²² Perhaps Samuel Beckett was pointing to this when he wrote *Waiting for Godot*?

²³ See “Person as Willing” in Unit Two, Sessions Six and Seven.

²⁴ See Henry James’ “The Beast in the Jungle” for a very insightful portrayal of a person – John Marcher – who is incapable of waiting *upon* the present moment. He is never where he is. As a result life passes him by.

The gift of possibility versus the double bind

One of the most wonderful gifts one human being can give another is the sense of realistic possibility. The foundational forming triad of faith, hope and love does this for people. It awakens in people a realistic sense of their own dignity and worth and allows them to engage the world with some confidence and honesty; it engenders in them a life-giving sense of possibility. A good education process will always engender a realistic sense of possibility.

One of the most dastardly things we can do to another person is to deprive them of a sense of realistic possibility. When the foundational forming triad of faith, hope and love is more or less inadequate to the child's needs or is replaced by hatred, denigration and despair, it is highly likely that the child will grow up with a more or less deformed sense of self. The child's sense of authentic possibilities may be more or less diminished. In this way, the person's ability to formatively anticipate, to be more or less open to the future in grace and freedom and hope, will also be more or less diminished.

William Lynch reminds us of the critical connection between a sense of the possible and hope – and by implication, the connection between a sense of the impossible and despair:

... hope is, in its most general terms, a sense of the possible, that what we really need is possible, though difficult, while hopelessness means to be ruled by a sense of the impossible. Hope therefore involves three basic ideas that could not be simpler: what I hope for I do not yet have or see; it may be difficult; but I can have it – it is possible. Without this way of feeling about ourselves and things we do nothing. We do not act or function. There is no energy.²⁵

Lynch goes on to offer some practical insights:

One of the best safeguards of our hopes ... is to be able to mark off the areas of hopelessness and to acknowledge them, to face them directly, not with despair but with the creative intent of keeping them from polluting all the areas of possibility. There are thousands of things that we cannot do, thousands of things that some can do and others cannot. To keep the two, the possible and the impossible, in place is to stay free of intolerable burdens. Thus with hope and hopelessness. We must have both. We all have areas of hopelessness, areas where we know that we are helpless or incompetent. We all know that there are situations we cannot handle, things we cannot do, tasks which for us would be hopeless. But it contributes enormously to our well-being to keep all of these areas and problems sorted out from the things

²⁵ William Lynch, *Images of Hope*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1974, 32.

*we can do, or can at least do with help. Thus, I repeat, the hopelessness does not get into the hope, nor do the areas of adequacy get into the areas of inadequacy. I know what I can do. It is good to come to rest in the possible, letting the other people be, leaving them to the secret of their own possibilities. I stay within the human and leave the rest to fools and angels.*²⁶

Blocks to the possible and an overwhelming sense of impossibility can happen through that twisted form of communication that we know as the *double bind*.²⁷ In a double bind situation a person is faced with:

- A significant communication involving a pair of messages, more or less explicit or implicit, of different level or logical type, which are related but incongruent with each other;
- Leaving the field is blocked;
- Establishing one person – the more vulnerable – in a relationship of victim to another person – the stronger person, generally because he/she is the one in authority (eg parent, minister of religion) – by repetition of this deformative communication pattern;
- Once established, the bind tends to be activated every time a similar communication takes place – potentially for the rest of the victim’s life;
- The victim of the double bind finds herself/himself caught in:
 - More or less strong feelings of anger (at both the binder and the self) – the bound person may even come to develop deep-seated feelings of hatred for the binder and perhaps the self;
 - confusion (in behaviour, thought and feeling), guilt, and, depending on how intense the binding is, it will more or less undermine the victim’s ability to enter relationships formatively.

The person must be more or less vulnerable before the bind can take effect. Thus, the most common victims of double binding are children. However, adults can carry the mechanisms of double binding and will find the double bind dynamics re-emerging if they encounter circumstances that remind them of those early days when the double bind was established. They may even become double binders in their own communications with others. The following could be examples of significant communications with the potential to double bind if they became a pattern of communicating:²⁸

²⁶ Op cit, 62.

²⁷ Cf Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Ballantine Books, 1972/1985.

²⁸ It is important to note that we are talking here about a *pattern* of communication, one that manifests a whole context of relating. An occasional mis-communication within the context of a more or less consistently affirming and real environment, is not going to establish the double bind, though it might evoke it if it is already established.

- Parent, who is inconsistent in behaviour patterns and/or ambivalent in expressions of affection, puts arm around little child and looks into the child's face, smiling, "But you *know* that I love you darling" – she is not saying what she is saying, or at least not actually communicating what she is saying, and a little child can hardly be expected to know what is going on in such a communication;
- Priest, renowned for his authoritarianism, intolerance and inapproachability, preaches on the love of God – his words are contradicted by his presence;
- Rigid, control freak says, rushing past, as you are preparing for the parish dinner, "You'll do that for me won't you" or "You'd like to do that wouldn't you" – it is a command presented as a request.
- A neurotic individual looks at you in a silent disbelief and with anger in their eyes when you say, quite realistically, that you must do something else and you do not have time for them.

Double binds can be quite demonic in that they get inside a person and dominate and capture their abilities to respond graciously and freely to certain people in certain situations. We can, however, counter the double bind by:

- Becoming aware of what is happening in us;
- Explicitly naming the incongruity and discussing the original communication with the binder;
- Making a humorous response exposing the incongruence – eg giving a manifestly incongruent message in reply.²⁹



²⁹ This should not be done in an angry attempt to hurt or dominate the other. Humour, at its best, can open us to the healing powers of the truth. In that way both the binder and the bound can move down the path of freedom.

CHRISTIAN ARTICULATION: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

** Through the human ground of anticipation we are enabled, by grace, to open ourselves in Christian hope to a future in which the victory of Christ has already been won.*

** Christian hope is transforms our present experience, always manifesting itself in grace and freedom.*



The Jewish Scriptures

For the People of the First Covenant, all history becomes *salvation history* in the light of Yahweh's presence. For other peoples of this time, history as such had no special significance. Life was rather perceived in terms of cyclical returns in the natural order. One scholar writes:

Yahweh reveals himself chiefly in history. The idea of history as a unified series of events is not found in the ancient Near East. The records preserved from the civilizations of this area are annals and chronicles in which events are listed according to year and summed up for regnal periods. We have no instance of any attempts to establish a pattern in events, to show a development in the life and culture of a people. For these peoples, their own beginnings and the beginnings of institutions are the object of mythology, not of history. The event of myth is the constant event that occurs in a cyclic rhythm; it is the annual return of the seasons, the celestial revolutions, the cycle of day and night, the perpetual conflict between order and chaos. In opposition to the mythical event is the contingent historical event, singular and irreversible. Life is lived against the cycle of myth and ultimately returns to its beginning, whence the process is resumed once more. In this thinking, history was merely an epiphenomena in nature. Ancient Near Eastern peoples sought no issue from the cycle of myth and hoped for no issue. Even the Greeks, who were responsible for the beginnings of modern historical thought, did not rise above the cyclical idea of history.³⁰

Yahweh has entered history and transformed it. Human history henceforth will be the place where the Covenant is forged and lived out; history is an unfolding pattern of events moving towards an end time in which God's way will triumph. Thus, the Jewish Scriptures themselves become a record of history in which Yahweh's actions take centre stage. All else finds its relevance in the light of

³⁰ John L McKenzie, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought", *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1990, 77:111.

Yahweh's intentions. We find a sort of summary of history in the Book of Deuteronomy:

When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes; and he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land which he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive as at this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us'.³¹

John L McKenzie writes:

When Israel wished to profess its belief in Yahweh, its 'knowledge' of him, it recited his deeds in history. From these deeds Israel developed a consciousness of itself as a historical reality with an origin and a destiny. So deep was Israel's awareness of its place in history that, alone of the contemporary peoples in the ancient world, it exhibited a sense of its history as a career with a determined finality.³²

The human experience of anticipation thus takes on a quite specific and unique form for the People of God. Life for them is a life-giving relationship – a Covenant – with the Lord of history. The promise given to Moses remains good in every age.³³ Every person, event or thing in their experience is somehow caught up in the unfolding plan of God. That includes time. It thus necessarily includes the future. The future belongs to Yahweh.

In the presence of the Lord of history, Abraham and Sarah willingly leave their family and homeland and walk off into the future, trusting that there *is* a future, that the future belongs to Yahweh and that He will ever be with them as they make their pilgrim way.³⁴ Moses leads the People into the desert on the basis of Yahweh's command and promise.³⁵ The *anawim* – “the poor of Yahweh” – wait for deliverance with the same confident expectation that the one who set them free from

³¹ 6:20-25. See also Deuteronomy 26:5-10; Joshua 24:2-13; Psalms 77, 78, 105 and 106.

³² *Op cit*, 77:115. Note the essential link between remembering well and anticipating well, between memory and hope.

³³ Cf Exodus 3:1-15.

³⁴ Cf Genesis 12:1ff.

³⁵ Cf Exodus 3:1-15.

Pharaoh long ago will act again.³⁶ For the People of the Covenant, life is promise, not threat. It is into this context that Jesus of Nazareth comes. Through Jesus, the Lord of history definitively claims the future for love against hate, for truth against the lie, for peace against violence, for life against death.

The Christian Scriptures

Perhaps one of the most poignant and rich sentences in the Gospels is found in Luke:

*“When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem”.*³⁷

“He set his face.” He too is a pilgrim, a human being with a past and a future. Both shape his journey through life and demand a response from him. Jesus is in the tradition of the great pilgrims of old, people like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah and Rachel, Moses and Elijah the Prophet. In Him salvation history is unfolding in a definitive and radical way. Human existence will never be the same again.

Mark’s Gospel believes that the promises of the Jewish Scriptures are being fulfilled in their time. He opens with the proclamation that ancient prophecy has been fulfilled in John the Baptizer.³⁸ Jesus gives an eschatological³⁹ proclamation: “The kingdom of God is at hand.”⁴⁰ In Mark, the whole mission of Jesus is presented in cosmic terms, an eschatological struggle with the powers of evil.⁴¹ In the end, Jesus triumphs through his death on the Cross, thus ensuring the triumph of God’s will in and through history.⁴²

³⁶ Cf Isaiah 41:17-20. See also Isaiah 51:13; Ezekiel 31:8-9; Zechariah 1:8; Nehemiah 8:15.

³⁷ Luke 9:51. The journey to Jerusalem is central to all the Gospels. Only Luke uses the particular turn of phrase we find here.

³⁸ Cf Mark 1:1-8.

³⁹ The English word eschatological refers to destiny and the end time. It comes from the Greek word *eskaton* meaning “end time.” Eschatology is that branch of theology that discusses the end time and its significance to the present. In Christian eschatology it is important to recognise this unbreakable link between the end time and the present moment – an authentic eschatology plunges us into the present with a particularly hopeful disposition; it makes the present moment all the more relevant.

⁴⁰ 1:14-15. The English word *eschatological* comes from the Greek word *eschaton* meaning *end time*. Thus, *eschatological* refers to *the end time*, or the final consummation of all things in Christ. It goes hand in hand with our understanding of the Parousia. This is a Greek word used at the time to describe the special event of a significant person’s arrival or coming. Thus, for the Christian tradition, the Parousia refers to the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time.

⁴¹ Cf “Early Church” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, *op cit*, 81:51.

⁴² Cf *Ibid*. The authors also note: “The death of Christ in Mark is an eschatological event because it makes possible the liberation of humanity from the power of Satan (10:45). The resurrection itself is not a major focal point; it demonstrates the effectiveness of Jesus’ death, his vindication,

Matthew's Gospel has similarly strong eschatological themes. Matthew seems to have preserved all the eschatological references of Mark and added others.⁴³ While Mark places the emphasis on awaiting the coming of the Son of Man, Matthew emphasizes the presence of the risen Lord within the community now.⁴⁴ The community is urged to pray for the coming of the kingdom.⁴⁵

St Paul gives no systematic outline of salvation history, but much can be inferred from his letters. There is clearly a major transition from the age of the Law to the age of the Messiah. The turning point in human history is the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁶

Like the People of old, the New People of the New Covenant – the people baptized into his victorious death – walk into the future with a confident hope. The future has already been claimed, it is the place of the reign of God. The Christian's eschatological vision of history evokes a radical understanding of the present moment; it also thrusts us into that moment in a particular kind of way – with particular dispositions and intentions, with particular expectations and desires.

The cosmos is God's creation. That Transcendent God of the cosmos has entered human history definitively and radically altering the very structure of existence. St Paul's hymn to God's love sums up the appropriate disposition for all Christians in every age – if we dare to surrender to the reality of God's liberating love revealed in the teaching and person of Jesus and constantly being revealed in and through life and world and history:

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things

and is a sign of salvation of believers to come (8:34-35)."

⁴³ For example 10:23; 13:24-30 and 37-40; 25:1-13. Cf "Early Church", *op cit*.

⁴⁴ Cf 18:20 and 28:20.

⁴⁵ Cf Matthew 6:10; also Luke 11:2.

⁴⁶ Cf 2Corinthians 3:6-11 and 17-18; Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-7; 5:1; Romans 3:21-26. It is worth noting that St Paul never speaks of the life or ministry of Jesus as such – every reference to Jesus is in the context of His death and resurrection.

*we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*⁴⁷

Again, as in the Jewish Scriptures, the theme of the One who graciously enters a life-giving relationship with us underpins everything in the Christian Scriptures. The relationship is enfleshed and is with us until the end of time.⁴⁸ The Gospels portray Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures. His name is Emmanuel, which means “God is with us”. The name “Jesus” has its roots in the Hebrew word *to save*.

How do the Gospels see Jesus fulfilling his mission? The whole drama of Jesus’ life moves towards Jerusalem. He is constantly reaching out to people along the way. For example, he cures the sick,⁴⁹ he holds Peter walking on the water and encourages the disciples caught in the storm.⁵⁰ The people he touches are asked to have faith in him.⁵¹

Yet, like the paradigmatic story of the Exodus Event, the life-giving that is to be wrought here, runs much deeper than we might think if we were to stay with these stories and go no further. And there is evidence that Jesus had some difficulties getting the disciples and the people to understand the essential focus of his saving mission. Mark’s Gospel, for example, repeatedly has Jesus ordering people not to speak of the miracles.⁵² John’s Gospel refers to the miracles as “signs.”⁵³ As “signs” they point beyond themselves the essential Messianic mission.

The Gospel of Matthew has a telling moment in Chapter Sixteen.⁵⁴ Jesus asks the disciples who the people say he is.⁵⁵ Then he asks the disciples “who do *you* say I am?”. After Peter has declared, on behalf of them all, that “You are the Christ,” Jesus affirms Peter as the one who is to assume a special leadership within the community. What follows immediately, is both stark and revealing. Matthew has Jesus speak of the desert of Calvary he is about to enter. Peter argues and is told by Jesus, “Get behind me Satan”. In other words, in the Gospel of Matthew, there is no doubt about

⁴⁷ Romans 8:28-39.

⁴⁸ Cf Matthew 28:20.

⁴⁹ Cf Matthew 9:21; Mark 3:4, 5:23 and 6:56.

⁵⁰ Matthew 8:25 and 14:30.

⁵¹ For example, it is their faith which saves the sick (cf Luke 8:48, 17:19 and 18:42); the disciples are reproached for having doubted (cf Matthew 8:26 and 14:31).

⁵² For example, Jesus forbids the news that he is the Messiah to be spread by the devils (1:25 and 34; 3:12), by those he cures (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), even by the apostles (8:30 and 9:9). Scholars have referred this theme in Mark’s Gospel as the “Messianic Secret”.

⁵³ Cf For example, 2:11. With regard to the reflection on Matthew 16 below, we could also note that for John’s Gospel, Jesus’ death is his “exaltation”, his triumph.

⁵⁴ Matthew 16:13-20. Cf also Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-21.

⁵⁵ Is it possible that Jesus was actually struggling with this question himself?

the essential vocation and mission of Jesus – he must go up to Jerusalem and die. All else points to that.

We could say that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and his mission in the way the Jewish Scriptures told the story of Moses and his mission. Jesus is the New Moses who leads the new People into a New Covenant through a new wilderness to a new freedom. That wilderness – that place of dying – is Calvary; the new freedom is found in the Kingdom. The movement towards final victory gathers momentum.

St Paul is certainly imbued with this understanding. St Paul never mentions the life of Jesus – his focus is the saving death and resurrection. We are baptized into his death.⁵⁶ Evil in all its manifestations is defeated in Jesus' death.⁵⁷ St Paul preaches a crucified Christ.⁵⁸

On the basis of both the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Scriptures, there seems to be ground for suggesting that the real oppressor the life-giving God is dealing with is *within* and it has everything to do with the issue of *death*. There is something in the very structure of the human condition that calls for liberation in this regard. All other forms of oppression may be seen as manifestations of this deeper one. All other forms of liberation may be seen as echoes of the deeper one.

The obvious implication is that, in order to receive the liberation on offer, we must be prepared to acknowledge and face our radical and inescapable need. Our future depends on that. The fundamental issue therefore is more one of *being* than *doing*. And this matter of neediness in our very beings manifests itself primarily in our attitudes and dispositions and secondarily in our actions. Or, to put it another way, the central issue, under grace, is truth versus lie, self-knowledge versus self-deceit, facing versus evading, life as genuine pilgrimage versus life as superficial engagement, entering the incarnating journey with Jesus rather than withdrawing into excarnation. In the “dying” that comes with this radical choosing, we are met by the saving God, in the “desert” of it all. Precisely there, according to the pattern of the Exodus, the Covenant of love is forged. Precisely in and through that Covenant does life come from the Lord, a life that could never be gained by any merely human power.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Cf Romans 6:1-11.

⁵⁷ Cf Romans 8:3.

⁵⁸ Cf 1Corinthians 1:22.

⁵⁹ A Modern author offers a powerful little meditation that might help to make the point of the biblical stories more clear: “In Jesus on the cross, I see the human being I dare not be, dying the death I dare not die. Rather than be him I kill him. But my attempt to eliminate him confronts me with the perfect symbol of the death I fear to die. Jesus enfleshes for me the identity, the personhood, that I fear. Acting out this fear, and killing him, I confront myself for the very reason for my fear: the death that I dare not die. The awful secret is that ‘the human being I dare not be’ and ‘the death I dare not die’ are one and the same thing. My violent reaction to the first only confronts me with the second. There is an indissoluble connection at the heart of our being, between death and the real person. But so hugely resistant are we to this connection, so wholly built is our culture, layer on layer, on its denial, that our only way into it is through destroying, in the name of all our culture, and of our whole human habit, the real person. We thus create the

One final word needs to be said about a particular danger of interpretation. The Gospel is always vulnerable to various “ego agendas” and therefore misinterpretation. A common one is to reduce the Gospel to a moral program and thus reduce Jesus to a moral teacher. Clearly, there is a moral vision in the Gospel and a moral dimension to the Christian vocation. But this moral vision is not the Good News. The Good News is that God has acted definitively in and through Jesus Christ, entering human history and, through his death, has radically transformed the structure of existence and has irrevocably liberated all of existence from the power of sin and death.⁶⁰ The Christian moral vision flows out of that, is grounded in that and without that becomes an enemy unto itself, more likely to be moralism than genuine morality. Because of what God has done in and through Jesus of Nazareth, the future is assured. Because the future is assured, the present is transformed along with the past.



symbol of the very thing we attempt to deny, the symbol of the human being consummated in death. The cross is not the negation of culture. The cross is culture’s negation of God, of total truth, of total reality, this negation seen in a healing symbol. The only redemption of consciousness lies in the discovery that at the limit of its claim to constitute the absolute world it creates the symbol of what that claim denies: the human being perfected in death. The cross is the one totally realistic dialogue between the human being God made us and the human being we make ourselves. (Sebastian Moore, *The Crucified is No Stranger*, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1978, 71.

⁶⁰ One modern author represents the Gospel tradition well when he writes: “The cross is not only example and model, but ground, power and norm of the Christian faith.” (Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian*, Doubleday, 1976, 410.) Another modern author writes similarly: “The death of Jesus on the cross is the centre of all Christian theology ... All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and death have their focal point in the crucified Christ. All Christian statements about history, about the church, about faith and sanctification, about the future and about hope stem from the crucified Christ”. (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, Harper and Row, 1974, 204.) The novelist, Graham Greene was someone who showed a good grasp of the essential Gospel story. This is nowhere better portrayed than in his novel, *The Power and the Glory*. Listen to the reflection of “the whisky priest” who has been arrested and finds himself in a cell with some people he found offputting: “When you visualized a man or a woman carefully, you could always begin to feel pity -- that was a quality God’s image carried with it. When you saw the lines at the corners of the eyes, the shape of the mouth, how the hair grew, it was impossible to hate. Hate was just a failure of imagination.” (Graham Greene, *The Power and the Glory*, Penguin, 1971, 131.) When we “judge” others, is it perhaps because we are fleeing our own brokenness – a brokenness we have not been willing to acknowledge and face?

Snippets for meditation

(1) *"We have a sure hope and the promise of an inheritance that can never be spoilt or soiled and never fade away, because it is being kept for you in the heavens".*⁶¹



(2) *"... as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our saviour Jesus Christ."*⁶²



(3) *"Reality is a better producer of dreams and visions than nonreality. Satisfactory fantasy has to feed on reality and must keep returning to it. The further it would soar the deeper it must plunge into facts."*⁶³



(4) *"Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose, and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost. The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was, 'I have nothing to expect from life any more'. What sort of answer can one give to that? What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, furthermore, we had to teach the despairing men, that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life - daily and hourly."*⁶⁴



(5) *"It seemed to me, however, that one might begin with this belief of the modern world – either you burn or you rot. ... Suppose, then, you began with the proposition that boredom was a kind of pain caused by unused powers, the pain of wasted possibilities or talents, and was accompanied by expectations of the optimum utilization of capacities. ... Nothing actual ever suits pure expectation and such purity of expectation is a great source of tedium. People rich in abilities, in sexual feeling, rich in mind and in invention – all the highly gifted see themselves shunted for decades onto dull sidings, banished exiled nailed up in chicken coops. Imagination has even tried to surmount the problems by forcing boredom itself to*

⁶¹ 1Peter 1:4.

⁶² Eucharistic Liturgy.

⁶³ William F Lynch, op cit, 200.

⁶⁴ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Touchstone, 1962, 75f.

yield interest. ... Boredom has more to do with modern political revolution than justice has. In 1917, that boring Lenin who wrote so many boring pamphlets and letters on organizational questions was, briefly, all passion, all radiant interest. The Russian revolution promised mankind a permanently interesting life. When Trotsky spoke of permanent revolution he really meant permanent interest. In the early days the revolution was a work of inspiration. Workers peasants soldiers were in a state of excitement and poetry. When this short brilliant phase ended, what came next? The most boring society in history. Dowdiness shabbiness dullness dull goods boring buildings boring discomfort boring supervision a dull press dull education boring bureaucracy forced labor perpetual police presence penal presence, boring party congresses, et cetera. What was permanent was the defeat of interest. ... Boredom is an instrument of social control."⁶⁵



(6) "A new tone has come to suffuse Augustine's life. He is a man who has realized that he was doomed to remain incomplete in his present existence, that what he wished for most ardently would never be more than a hope, postponed to a final resolution of all tensions, far beyond this life. Anyone who thought otherwise, he felt, was either morally obtuse or a doctrinaire. All a person could do was 'yearn' for this absent perfection, to feel its loss intensely, to pine for it. 'Desiderium sinus cordis': 'It is yearning that makes the heart deep'. This marks the end of a long-established classical idea of perfection: Augustine would never achieve the concentrated tranquility of the supermen that still gaze out at us from some mosaics in Christian churches and from the statues of pagan sages."⁶⁶



(7) "The fundamental polarity of human life between what is and what ought to be, between lack and fulfillment, between determination and freedom, is not abnormal; it is the norm. Every person is exposed to it because of the inescapable structure of human formation."⁶⁷



⁶⁵ Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift*, Penguin Books, 1975, 199-201..

⁶⁶ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, University of California Press, 1969, 156.

⁶⁷ Adrian van Kaam, *The Transcendent Self*, Dimension 1979, 172.

(8) *"Nothing is ever completed ... Incompleteness is a part of nature and it takes great art or great wisdom to know when to lay down the brush ... we should always avoid perfectionism."*⁶⁸



(9) *"It helps now and then to step back and take the long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts it is even beyond our vision.*

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something and do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,

An opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are the workers, not master builders, ministers not messiahs.

*We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen."*⁶⁹



(10) *"We are never satisfied with the present. We anticipate the future as too slow in coming, as if in order to hasten it on its way; or we recall the past as though to arrest its too rapid flight. So foolhardy we are that we go wandering about in periods of time which do not belong to us, and give no thought to the only one that*

⁶⁸ Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, trans. Richard Mayne, Doubleday, 1978, 521.

⁶⁹ Attributed to Archbishop Oscar Romero. The author is actually Ken Untener, when he worked for Cardinal Dearden in Detroit, Michigan. Ken Untener later served as bishop of Saginaw Michigan for twenty five years until his death in 27 March 2004.

does. So frivolous we are that we dream of those times, which are no more, and thoughtlessly overlook the only one that exists. The reason is that the present generally hurts us.”⁷⁰



(11) “Formative anticipation is the power of foreseeing or imagining what lies in the future. All formation powers, dispositions and actions are somehow dependent on the foundational formation triad of faith, hope and consonance (or love). While it is necessarily linked to all three, formative anticipation is especially connected with hope, though not identical with it. Lacking hope for the future, I could not develop the anticipations that give form to my life. However, anticipation does add something different to hope. It mobilizes other capacities in me, namely, those of remembering and imagining what may concretely happen and how I can most effectively deal with that anticipated situation. ... Forming anticipation tends to organize itself in anticipatory configurations. These are formed largely under the influence of dispositions that are modulated in turn by formative memories.”⁷¹



(12) “(This age) is a privileged moment of the Holy Spirit.”⁷²



(13) “People are lured more by their hopes and the opportunities afforded them than by threats and punitive policies.”⁷³



⁷⁰ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, J M Dent & Sons, 1973, §84.

⁷¹ Adrian van Kaam, *Formative Spirituality, Volume II: Human Formation*, Crossroad, 1985, 158.

⁷² Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975), n 75.

⁷³ Tony Vinson, “Punishing the Hopeless is the True Crime”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Friday April 15, 2005.

Suggestions for further study

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- , *Without God All Things Are Lawful*, St Pauls, 1995 – especially "Longing for Home", 15-22; "Expectations", 71-80.



Suggested exercises

1. Pay attention to how you experience waiting. What is happening? What do you think? How do you think? What feelings emerge? What can you learn from this?
2. Take some time this week to meditate on the text from St Paul's Letter to the Romans – 8:28-39.
3. How does your remembering affect your anticipating in your life at this time? Do you think there might be some “forgotten memories” – sediments of the past you are not aware of – influencing the choices you make and the way you generally anticipate? Do not dig, just pay gentle attention. You might learn something for example and listening particularly to those experiences of boredom or dissatisfaction.