

## CHAPTER III

### SPRING PRUNING: THE LIFE-SAVING BUREAU-ECTOMIES

#### THE ORGANIZATION NUNS

Most of a person's waking hours in Western societies are lived within complex, formal organizations. Some persons thrive within these rule-regulated structures with their womb-to-tomb ordering. Others are so alienated by the depersonalization impact of hierarchical organizations that the very word **BUREAUCRACY** is uttered as a pejorative term.

The industrial world's organization man has his counterpart in the convent, in the organization nun. As in other efficiency-seeking operations, bureaucratic ordering has become the most pervasive feature of government in most religious congregations. So deeply entrenched is it, in fact, that only a collegial or consensual revolution can eventually extricate the sisters from the strangle-hold of the system. Meanwhile, 20th Century organization nuns are as busy with budgets, boards, personnel decisions, committee meetings, computer printouts and administrative details as fellow bureaucrats in the Pentagon, ITT, and General Motors. Efficiency in internal government and ministry is a laudable goal for sisterhoods, but this choice of means: **BUREAUCRACY**, burdens them with its latent dysfunctional and destructive features which, in the end, compromise both ministry and the consecrated life.

#### DISAFFECTION, DISESTEEM, DEPLETION

When American and European organization nuns fanned out into foreign mission fields, into relatively underdeveloped countries and Gemeinschaft-like folk communities, they inadvertently negated much apostolic effectiveness by imposing the Western cult of organization as part and parcel of Christianity, and even of the consecrated life, itself. Centuries of interpartition of Western culture into Christianity, coupled with the Church's historical alliance with colonialism, slavery, and other power structures, has alienated millions of world peoples from Christianity.

That the Church has been traveling world-wide in the guise of a bureaucratic organization helps to account for the growing disaffection, disesteem, and membership depletion within it. Serious disfigurement is a consequence of the Church's assumption of an organizational pattern which eclipses the essential communal and collegial nature of the Church as reaffirmed by Vatican II. An up-permost question shadowing Christianity follows: Can the Church and the sisterhoods extricate themselves from bureaucracy and oligarchy in sufficient time to stem the exodus and renew world respect?

True, it is not the 20th Century alone that has been singularly blessed and plagued by bureaucracy. This organizational model was well-known in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Byzantium, China, and Rome. It was organizational skill and hierarchical ordering that gave Rome ascendancy over other Mediterranean peoples. Early Christians saw the Roman Empire in operation, evidently admired it, obviously imitated it, and most certainly out-lived it. The Roman curia of the

Catholic Church has the dubious distinction of being the world's oldest and most entrenched living bureaucracy. It attests to the power of the first imperial convert, Constantine, and the cultural impact of ancient Rome on the group whose Founder initiated the collegial or consensual revolution. Christ had also observed the Romanization and bureaucratization of the Mediterranean world and had protested strongly: **BEHOLD HOW THOSE GENTILE RULERS LORD IT OVER OTHERS. BE IT NOT SO AMONG YOU.** But it became so among His followers, nevertheless.

Nearly two thousand years later, the successors of the early Christian leaders saw the Church in need of **AGGIORNAMENTO**. They re-examined the Church's defection from the collegial community structure to Constantianism and their forgetfulness of the *sui generis* nature of Christian Community which called for service rather than domination. When examining the reform proposals of Vatican II, these questions inevitably arise:

- What is the distinction between **COMMUNITY** and **BUREAUCRACY**?
- If the Church began as a collegial or consensual community of the faithful, how did it eventually become a power structure, a hierarchical, bureaucratic, authoritarian, and sexist organization instead?
- If **COMMUNITY IN CHRIST** is the essence of the consecrated life in the Church, can it remain peripheral or a matter of indifference that some sisterhoods have also evolved into bureaucratic structures which negate and destroy community?
- Is it sociologically possible for egalitarianism to become an integral aspect of the transforming Church and its authority patterning on every level, or is the **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY** truly immutable within it?
- After centuries of oligarchical, power-centered, male-dominated rule, is there now any encouraging evidence to show that all members of **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY** are regarded as participants in both the priesthood and ministry by reason of their consecration through baptism?

The major focus of this chapter will be on the distinction between **COMMUNITY** and **BUREAUCRACY** and the nature of participatory management models now heralding an emerging post-bureaucratic era in the industrialized world and the Church.

### **COMMUNITY FROM A CROWD IN CHAOS . . . A Scenario**

A giant coral reef in the South Pacific rips open the under-belly of an ocean liner. World tourists, semi-strangers to one another, are dumped screaming into the water. They thrash and splash, sink and swim until a few hundred survivors are spewed by the waves onto the soft, sandy shores of an unoccupied island. Exhausted from the struggle for life, they lie on the sand, —a drenched aggregate, a heterogeneous mass of heavily breathing and gasping persons.

As heartbeats calm and sunshine warms, the strangers begin to stir and turn with interest and concern toward ones nearest to themselves. Gradually the survivors begin to cluster within ear-reach of one another. They voice and listen to speculations over what actually happened out there on the ship, over who have survived, which persons have been lost, and what the remnants must do to endure on the island until help finally arrives.

Because of an exchange of ideas, because the survivors feel bonded by their common past and impending future, they change from a sociological aggregate, —a crowd on the beach, into a functional group. Each survivor knows that he/she has not only the right but the responsibility to speak and to listen. If collective plans are to evolve, each must share in both their evolution and implementation. Because these semi-strangers are now bonded by a commonality of destiny, because they are determined to pool their know-how and planning power for the common good, they are being molded into a political unity. To determine what species of political unity they are, one needs to look at the locus of power. Who holds it?

The survivors on the beach are all relatively knowledgeable adults. None has experienced shipwreck before nor taken a survivor's course applicable to the South Pacific islands. From the onset of this misadventure they have seemed to regard one another as equals, —as fellow humans compelled by a common need, sharing and caring, cooperating and operating for the common good. With this

type of mutuality and commonality they can be designated a **COMMUNITY**, —a unity of co-equals involved in a common orientation—, persons pooling their energies and expertise with all others. All are for all. None is considered an outsider, unwanted, unnecessary, unskilled, functionless, useless, a drag, a burden, an inferior or a non-entity. The communication is shared all to all. No secrets are held by a superior few. Even in the midst of persons agonizing over personal losses and the grave uncertainties of the situation, a strange peace and joy permeates the newly-born community where sharing and caring unites co-equals. Each feels that his/her personhood is deeply respected by others. The struggle for survival seems blessed and beautified by the growing sense of unity, mutual effort, or shared values and goals. Each feels strangely enriched in this circle of co-equals, this community of persons, this communion of mutual concern.

### **BUREAUCRACY ON THE BEACH: AN ALTERNATE CHOICE**

We have just watched the survivors of a shipwreck evolve into a natural community where all members pool power for the common good. But it could have been distinctly otherwise on the beach. We could have viewed this alternate scenario: the origin of oligarchy, the birthing of bureaucracy . . .

As the remnants of the shipwrecked liner begin to regain their energies and wits, dry out, and become conscious of their common plight, a tiny cluster of strong survivors, —the better swimmers, first arrivers, skilled divers, loud-voiced or articulate speakers stand out on a rock slightly elevated above the aggregate on the beach and yell: "Don't any of you worry. We have it all figured out. This is exactly what happened out there . . . , and this is what we must do now to survive. First, we'd like the names and occupations of all of you so that we can start assigning duties to each person and get things organized. We have already worked out a set of ground rules. They are scratched on that flat rock over there. Just follow those suggestions and you will be a lot better off than if you go exploring alone and do things on your own. Ignore the rules, scatter off into small groups and you may live to regret it. That is, if you live! You know nothing about surviving on an island such as this so stick close to us, do as we say, and you won't regret it. Just do as your leaders say. O.K.?"

In this second scene we see the survivors become part of a power structure that has divisions: —the pyramid in two parts. In the apex are the X's, the empowered. At the base are the Y's, —the powerless. The group on the beach has relinquished the possibility of **COMMUNITY** in favor of the protecting, overarching reality of oligarchy, —the rule of the few. The joy of mutual sharing and caring is sacrificed for the promise of security. Solidarity is splintered. Individual responsibility is shifted off to the shoulders of a few. The sense of personal dignity and maturity which persons feel when cooperatively coping with their own problems is aborted. The formation of a community of co-equals is impossible in a structure that is dividing persons into **SUPERIORS/INFERIORS, DOMINATORS/DOMINATED, ADMINISTRATORS/ADMINISTERED, LEADERS/FOLLOWERS, the KNOW-IT-ALLS** and the **KNOW-IT-BUT-LITTLES**, those who command and those who obey, those who call the shots and those who get shot for insubordination. In this scene we see the germination of autocracy, bureaucracy, and oligarchic rule. We see the birth of a power elite that operates at the power peak of the pyramid. We see a social structure that is the antithesis of community, a structure that negates personhood, that fails to recognize the inherent right of every adult to participate in decision-making for the common good, that prevents personal growth by inhibiting persons from exercising their own initiative and creativity. We see a pyramid structure where persons are unequal: —forever **SUPERORDINATES** and **SUBORDINATES**, but never **COORDINATES** as in community. We are viewing here the structure most familiar in the hierarchically organized Church and canonical sisterhoods. It is definitely not the structure Christ shared with His followers whom He chose to call friends. But it is one that could likely preside over the demise of both the institutional Church and sisterhoods if members remain intransigent to the radical renewal of structures called for by Vatican II. It is useless to continue positing the point that the Church will never die. The Church as the **PEOPLE OF GOD** bears that assurance, but no human-made organizational structure is sacrosanct or deathless.

The fact that roughly twenty years have passed since the Vatican Council without significant structural reforms becoming apparent in most sisterhoods, may indicate fear that egalitarianism, consensual decision-making, and the dele-

tion of authoritarian, bureaucratic patterning are too utopian and idealistic dreams in a pragmatic, utilitarian world. Most sisters are not **LIVING** community; they are simply running big businesses together: medical, educational, or social service institutions. Some seem so convinced of the validity of Michels' **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY** that they give but token attention to the Vatican II documents as idealistic verbalizations never intended to be implemented in the practical order.

### THE IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY

Some people may believe that there is no viable alternative to bureaucracy. To such persons, no other pattern appears suitable or successful for operating a large-scale operation. This was the conclusion of the social historian, Robert Michels. In *Political Parties*, 1911, Michels urged his readers to view with him the total scope of history. He asked if ever there were a political system free from the **RULER/RULED** dichotomy. His contrast of older conservative parties with current people-oriented socialist ones convinced him that even in the latter the disillusioned masses were really being controlled by party elites who paid very little attention to member opinions. In brief, Michels' theory can be summarized as follows:

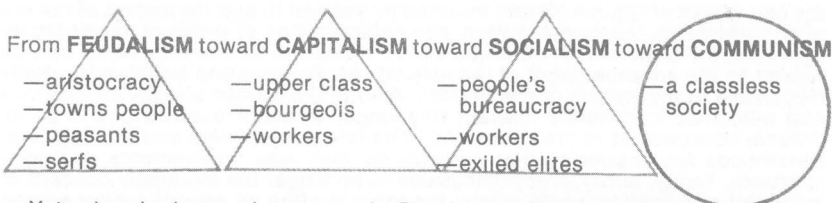
- The **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY** is pervasive throughout history
- The elected will always dominate the electors
- The delegates will always over-ride the delegators
- The administrators will assume a monopoly of power over the workers
- Mass membership will always be ineffectual in influencing power elites
- Leaders will exercise superior skill in speaking, writing, engineering, manipulating, and influencing others
- The masses will always lack competence, time, specialization, and the interest needed to be effective in self-determination
- Therefore, **WHO SAYS ORGANIZATION, SAYS OLIGARCHY**, —the elites will always rule!

Michels' **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY** preceded universal education. Late 20th Century citizens can no longer fully accept his theory. Nevertheless, it continues to make a massive impact on many sisterhoods and the Roman curia where during the twenty years following Vatican II, periodic reminders have been issued to the effect that **COORDINATORS MAY NOT REPLACE SUPERIORS**. Such contenders seem to reflect more the disciples of Michels than the disciples of Christ. The latter learned egalitarian principles from His words: "I shall not call you servants but friends . . . He who is the greatest among you, let him be as the least . . . Behold those Gentile rulers how they lord it over others, be it not so among you . . . I came to free you from the law . . ." from the **IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY**, among others, to invite you to be **ONE** with the Father, Spirit and Me, to be as we are: **COMMUNITY**: —co-equals in unity.

### COLLEGIAL OR CONSENSUAL COMMUNITY CONTRASTED WITH COMMUNISM

Some right wing conservatives have expressed concern about the infiltration of communist ideology into the Church through Pope John's "radical reform council." Some evidently see the Marxian dream of a classless society as the roots of the concept of collegial or consensual community, and the movement away from bureaucracy and oligarchy as an anti-authority trend within the Church. But was Karl Marx, German sociologist of the 19th Century, really dreaming of an end of elitism?

Marx believed that as long as social classes existed, bureaucracy and oligarchy would be inevitable, that the **SUPERIOR/INFERIOR** dichotomy in the workplace would always reflect the contrast between aristocracy and commoners. Were egalitarianism to be realized, therefore, the class system would have to be overthrown by the exercise of brute force on the part of the masses. Marx envisioned the following progressive stages of societal change, —a movement from remnants of European feudalism and capitalism to socialism and communism. The final product would be a classless society.



Yet a hundred years later, even in Russia and China, a classless society remains a dream unachieved.

Subsequent theorists challenged Marx's views and posited opposite conclusions based on considerable empirical evidence. These critics claimed that contrary to Marx's supposition, increasing egalitarianism in the modern industrial states would actually accelerate bureaucratization. This would occur because democratic governments would need to assume privileges and functions of domination in order to control industry and protect both workers and consumers. These theorists hold that a classless society or a consensual community would be empirically impossible because rulers are always needed to guide the masses whether one calls them civil officials, professionals, specialists, technocrats, coordinators or superiors. A rose by any other name is still a rose.

### RUSSIAN REVOLUTION IDEOLOGY

But Lenin, architect of the USSR variety of communism, made an asset of the very oligarchy Michels regarded as a social defect. Oligarchy, claimed Lenin, rather than subordinating the masses, serves them. Because the masses are ignorant and incompetent, a disciplined, informed party cadre making decisions for them, is their salvation. To Lenin government and party bureaucracy served a vital function. It was the means through which an uninformed, bungling group or collective could, nevertheless, achieve its goals by listening to and obeying an elitist group, the political ideologists. Lenin did not worry about an abuse of power in such politician-topped pyramids because he was convinced that if the elitist group defaulted an angry counter-elite would push up from the ranks and take over leadership. Italian sociologist, Vilfredo Pareto's theory of the "circulation of the elite," concurred.

### CONSENSUAL REVOLUTION IN CONTRAST

Sisters can see some parallel ideology in religious congregations and communism. In each case, the worker or inferior, was judged incompetent in decision-making on his/her own behalf. But Lenin's theory falls short in the convent in its expectation of a rise of counter-elites to correct defaulting leaders. Traditionally, sisters have been socialized in childhood religious training and later formation programs to "turn the other cheek." This was often interpreted to mean that one should avoid the unpleasantness of direct confrontation even with persons threatening one's right of self-determination. They were taught to regard political activity in the convent as antithetical to the vow of obedience and canon law regarding religious life. Hence, there was little likelihood that counter-elites arise in the convent in opposition to malfunctioning or oppressive ones. Nor were sisters likely to question directives arriving from Rome no matter their non-applicability or mal-adaptability. Lenin anticipated that the high Y members of a group would, under ordinary circumstances, overthrow the X's if the latter defaulted in leadership. Religious congregations, however, are likely to witness a wholly different process. Because of the confrontation avoidance orientation noted above, sisters, for the most part, would rather switch than fight, —conform than question. One outlet today for the more questioning and assertive sister is to find a ministry position outside the corporate works of one's congregation. The fact that a May, 1978, report in the *National Catholic Reporter* states that half of the remaining 131,000 sisters are no longer in education roles, gives some indication of the extensiveness of sisters finding new careers. However, it must be noted that the above statistic also reflects the large proportion of sisters now in their retirement years.

Far from all sisters being alarmed at this realignment in their labor force, the phenomenon is accepted generally as a necessary condition for the realization of

the new phase of Church history initiated by Vatican II, and the ending of the era of concentration, bureaucratization, and centralization of works or ministries. In light of the **PENETRATION PRINCIPLE** of Vatican II, free-lance sisters can be viewed as the advance guard of the new era, as pioneers and trailblazers wholly responsive to the visions of the Council. Among the women already moving into new ministries it is hardly relevant any longer to ask if bureaucracy is an inevitable concomitant of "religious life." The free-lance sisters and the new-form sisterhoods are answering that question by their new involvements and commitments. Today, bureaucracy-discussion is no longer the monopoly concern of industrial and political sociologists; the topic is often an agenda-topper among contemporary sisters when they gather to probe the dimensions of the crises in the consecrated life.

Even the most conservative congregations know that they are faced with a massive decision regarding the retention of collective ministries within congregation-controlled bureaucracies, or the freeing of sisters to penetrate the whole society in works compatible with their training and talents. That such decisions are being resisted or made with glacial slowness may reflect the conviction of the great Max Weber, —that bureaucratic structures are escape-proof iron cages to which only charismatic catalysts hold the mystic key or kiss of life.

### **MAX WEBER ON CHARISMATIC UPHEAVALS**

Max Weber saw bureaucracy's dismal progression through time as inevitable. He concluded that its rationalization would render life gray, drab, precise, mechanical, predictable, disenchanting, and void of both mystery and mistakes. He envisioned within corporations, religious congregations, and legislative halls a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of humanism and charisms, —a world of "specialists without vision, and sensualists without heart."

Weber thought that bureaucracy would grow concurrently with democracy because the latter would always need a vast network of communication and administrative lines for its executive, legislative, and judicial functions. Further, he saw this structure as escape-proof. Bureaucracy, he wrote, ends only if the whole society ends; its collapse would cause the society's collapse. Bureaucracy is the skeleton of the body. It is the iron cage of man's own designing in which he has entrapped himself.

### **WEBER'S ONE SMALL HOPE: A CHARISMATIC UPHEAVAL**

Although Weber saw bureaucracy as a no-escape iron cage which would release its members only in the event of its ultimate collapse, he illumined this sociological gloom with one small hope. A charismatic catalyst, he concluded, could conceivably effect a sooner-than-natural collapse of an organization through a charismatic cataclysm. The development of the secular meaning of **CHARISM**, so widely used today outside the Church, is one of Weber's major contributions to modern sociology. He saw charisms in these dimensions:

- as an irresistible, irrational force: a spark of spontaneous genius
- as a creative initiative, a sudden propulsion to action or change

Charisma attacks established patterns, scrambles traditional norms, and attaches itself to persons, groups, movements, assemblies, or church councils. It is triggered off in reaction to highly rational, formal, inflexible, complex hierarchical, elitist-dominated institutions. Max Weber called this the paradox of the unexpected consequences: —the fact that extreme rationalism ignites its opposite: extremely irrational phenomena. By "irrational" Weber simply meant the opposite of cold intellectualization devoid of human emotional warmth. In *Economic Society*, 1922, Weber documented his contention that every rationalization will eventually produce irrational reactions never anticipated and that procedures originally intended as **MEANS**, such as bureaucracies, tend gradually to become **ENDS** in themselves.

### **REASSERTION OF PERSONHOOD**

The keen insights of Max Weber have become reality. The 1960's became the decade of charismatic upheaval, —an era of reassertion of personhood and resistance to power structures. Bureaucracies' death-grasp was broken. Vatican

It became the kiss of life for somnolent sisterhoods, decaying dioceses and apathetic parishes. The charismatics, Pope John XXIII, John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King ignited hope that our pedestrian pasts could be replaced by more active commitment to Church and country. Antiestablishment upheavals blossomed throughout the world in response to the super-efficiency of rational organizations and the manipulation of the masses by the industrial-military complexes. By-passing the established churches, the Jesus People and the Pentacostalists arose. By-passing established unions, Cesar Chavez led the American farm workers against entrenched farm labor practices. The Berrigan brothers emerged as charismatic response to apathy and vested interests in churches and among clergy unwilling to speak out against the immorality of war. Student rebellion on the campuses constituted a charismatic explosion against the universities' role of *in loco parentis* and their collusion with war industries in university-based research projects. On the sisterhood front, the Sisters For Christian Community arose as a charismatic response to entrenched bureaucracy in religious congregations. The reassertion of personhood was in process, but not everywhere . . .

### **BUFFER UNITS IN BUREAUCRACY**

The spell of apathy and paralysis from bureaucracy was exorcised by Vatican II. The witch's wand was broken, but some thought it possible to simply take her broom, give the bureaucracy a brush-over with it, institute a few democratic principles and go on with business as usual. French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, once proposed a similar course. Durkheim concurred with Weber regarding bureaucracy being a tyrannical structure which tends to get wholly out of touch with the individuals whose goals it was originally designed to promote. Durkheim proposed a remedy: Don't abolish the bureaucracy. Instead, create buffer units, —strong secondary groups to temper the tempest and blunt the blows of unfeeling bureaucrats within the system. In short, create guilds, unions, arbitration boards, personnel panels, ombudsmen, hearing committees, review commissions, provincial councils, and administrative teams more available to the masses. These buffer units would help balance the power and protect both the subordinate persons and the administrative bureaucrats. Durkheimian theory has been embraced, in practice at least, by many sisterhoods' recent renewal chapters. These sisterhoods have retained the bureaucracy and added buffer units. Although this may be a positive step forward, it lacks the Gospel ideal of collegial community. Presumably, however, the charisms of the great Vatican Council are still on the back burner awaiting publication of the revisions of canon law. That the buffer units will stem exodus from religious bureaucracies, however, is highly problematic. Bureaucracy plus buffer units simply add up to **BUFFERED BUREAUCRACY** and not **COMMUNITY**. B plus B equals BB whereas the goal is CC, collegial community.

### **THE MYTH OF EFFICIENCY**

The popularity and pervasiveness of bureaucracy rests on the myth of its being the most efficient and expeditious model of organization available. Max Weber, himself, may have inadvertently created the illusion, the myth, or the stereotype by his use of the research technique: **IDEAL TYPE**, a model for describing a social reality in the abstract as opposed to using concrete, empirical case studies. Speaking of bureaucracy in general, Weber paid the model some high tributes:

The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with non-mechanical models of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs, —these are raised to an optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic organization. (*Economy and Society*, 1922)

### **BUREAUCRACY AND ALIENATION**

In contrast with the above, Columbia University sociologist, Robert Merton, produced actual case histories in *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 1949, showing that those bureaucracies closest to Weber's ideal type reveal cracks and

disfigurements. He spotlighted these dysfunctional elements:

- Bureaucracies are relatively unbending
- Unquestioned rules for efficiency create injustices for persons because allowances for alternative patterns are not built in
- Rules for efficient performance often show poor fit in concrete situations not anticipated by the rule-makers
- Training and experience in limited roles within the bureaucracy produces administrators with blind spots, —persons who cannot see the forest for the trees
- Personnel become steam-rollered by organizational norms, become motivated to obey unquestioningly, and are deprived by prepackaged systems from exercising creative judgement.
- Alienation grows within bureaucracy as the feeling mounts that one is neither responsible for one's self nor for others, —that all are controlled by job descriptions.

### **SYMPTOMS OF BUREAUPATHOLOGY**

Victor Thompson in *Modern Organizations*, 1961, presented a detailed overview of the symptoms of psychological sickness which come to plague persons imprisoned within the play-it-safe world of the bureaucracy:

- Tensions over tenure
- Anxiety over promotions
- Feelings of inadequacy from lack of recognition, esteem, credit
- A sense of meaninglessness from work routine
- A sense of inadequacy from being slotted in the wrong positions or promoted beyond one's level of competency
- Fear of rocking the boat and being rejected
- Growing apathy over simply "keeping the books," doing the minimum job, passing the buck, ducking the decisions
- Despair from recognizing that through time, organizational survival has come to supersede original goals and personal growth of members
- A feeling of helplessness in the recognition of bureaucracy as a person-destroying structure always manipulating persons as **MEANS** for its own **ENDS**

### **MEDIOCRITY AND THE MANAGERS**

As early as 1947, Robert MacIver in *The Web of Government* was pointing out the fact that men on the top of the bureaucracy are not necessarily top-quality men, —that the superiorly talented are actually too threatening to be allowed to climb. They can be knocked off the upward-bound success ladder entirely by the ganging together of incompetents. According to MacIver, the once-thought-indispensible superior may really be the most dispensible person in getting the job done as he/she usually delegates work to middle management: —the pushers, pullers, and draft-horses of bureaucracy. Today the Peter Principle refers to the same phenomenon, —the promotion of some employees beyond their level of competency.

Bureaucratic functioning can be further fractured, bugged, bungled, and sidetracked by in-group politics, by old-timers resistant to change, by skilled "operators" engineering for influence, by crowned princesses ever-marked for sure promotion by reason of beauty, brains, connections, or the right family of origin. If this can happen at all, it can happen all over, —even in religious congregations.

### **COUNTER-REACTION IN THE CONVENT**

A decade ago the average sister might have glanced at a sociological study on bureaucracy and wondered: Well, what does that have to do with us? We are religious communities, not bureaucracies! She might have recognized the accuracy of Weber's contention that organizational principles dominate modern



life, that technology grows daily more pervasive, and that trained experts have a monopoly on decision-making. She might have conceded that personal initiative in bureaucracy is minimized, that equalitarian objectives must fight to keep surfacing, and that many groups are revolting against the mechanization and rationalization of life. But that the pattern fitted the convent she might have been hesitant in conceding. Today all that has changed:

- Sisters are being increasingly sensitized to issues of bureaucracy on every level of organization within the Church and convent
- Research has alerted them to the subtle dysfunctions of the system
- Some are experimenting with alternate forms of government
- Some congregations have introduced the collegial or consensual principle of decision-making and are working for its fuller implementation
- Some sisters are engaged in works outside the corporate enterprises of their congregations
- Some sisters are recognizing the symptoms of organizational aging and dying in their respective groups, and are wondering if surgery, a **BUREAU-TOMY** can save the congregation

Because all but exceptional religious groups use the congregational model of organization, sociological research showing the typical life-cycle for bureaucracies is pregnant with insights for religious life renewal. A body of theory from social research holds that large organizations pass through the following phases in their life-span:

1. A genesis period of rapid growth
2. A life-peak period or plateauing
3. A deceleration period followed by
4. A death phase

The closure of numerous Catholic schools, hospitals, social agencies, and houses of religious formation; the national reduction of Catholic school enrollees, the dramatic drop in vocations, the depletion of sisterhood membership by roughly fifty thousand sisters on one decade, tend to create an atmosphere of interest in these organizational life-stages.

To facilitate or encourage a study of these stages, this chapter will entertain the goal of briefly summarizing social science research finds applicable to congregations of men and women. Such applications may serve sisters by relieving undue concern over their specific congregation's structural status, or by hastening realistic coping procedures where such are warranted. The study may also encourage sisters to look more closely into the impact of social structures on persons.

## **THE GENESIS AND GROWTH PERIOD OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS**

The classical bureaucracy studies of Max Weber list four types of bureau genesis, the first of which characterizes most religious groups:

1. A gradual routinization of charisms; e.g., Franciscanism
2. A deliberate creation to meet a specific need; e.g., the United Nations
3. A split-off from an existing bureau; e.g., U.S. Air Force from the Navy
4. A deliberate creation to spread a policy; e.g., Communism

Although the genesis-motivation of organizations vary as above, all of them have some common elements:

- All are initiated by advocates or charismatic leaders
- All experience initial rapid growth
- All must immediately seek external support sources to survive

Like other bureaucracies, the religious corporation is not internally self-sufficient. It can survive only if capable of prolonged demonstration of its ability to provide services that are worthwhile to some group with influence over sufficient resources to maintain its life. Any organization supported in large measure by voluntary contributions, must consistently impress contributors with the certainty that their sacrifices of resources are well-repaid in some form of tangible or intangible gain. Therefore, a religious congregation's survival, as with bureau sur-

vival in general, is closely related to a group's ability to acquire a monopoly on specific functions, services, ideas or causes. The roles of sisters in hospital work, orphan care, and education of Catholic immigrant children in the United States, appeared to establish their services as relatively autonomous and indispensable for those who shared a similar value system.

### **LIFE-PEAK PERIOD**

In the mid-1960's, however, after years of rapid development and expansion, —at the very hour, as it were, when vocation rates had accelerated to an all-time high and just-constructed Sister Formation facilities awaited occupancy—, a life-peak period became manifest. By-passing the plateau phase, deceleration set in with unprecedented rapidity. What had happened?

For one thing, when public hospitals, schools, and social agencies began to parallel those of the sisterhoods, the needed monopoly, autonomy, and indispensability factors within sisterhoods began to diminish in the service area. The challenge to sisterhood autonomy and indispensability peaked, it seems, when the very zeal of the congregation to spread services ever-more-widely, ushered in the era when the service offerings out-stripped sister service personnel. Lay teachers, lay nurses, lay social workers and administrators were brought into the apostolic service works of sisters by the thousands. As one consequence, it became increasingly apparent to both the sisters and to those who sacrificed resources to support their organizations, that the non-Church bureaucracies and the laity in the Church bureaucracies were as effective in medical, social, and educational services as the sisters.

At this juncture, some sisters began using the expression "identity crisis" in relationship to themselves. In effect they were asking: If others can replace us, then who are we? What is our uniqueness and future role in the Church? Vatican II reminded us that there are only two categories of persons in the Church: clergy and laity, —and that sisters are not and can never be clergy. Then is a sister a lay-woman? Is there indeed a monopoly function in the Church and in society indigenous to sister status, indispensable to Church and society, —a role no others replicate? Replacement of sisters in the educational field alone has advanced from lay teachers representing only 8.25 percent of the teaching staff in Catholic schools in 1944, to their representing 74.5 percent in 1982. From their high point of roughly 186,000 in 1965, the sister population has dropped to roughly 121,000 in 1982. (National Catholic Directory, 1982) This loss of approximately 65,000 sisters in the United States alone, gives some evidence of a possible decelerator stage in sisterhoods.

### **THE DECELERATOR STAGE**

The decelerator effect is likely to begin when organizational membership drops because of the reduction in the significance of its social function. Decline, or growth slow-down, frequently produces stagnation in an organization since it reduces the opportunity for natural leaders and innovators to perform. Ordinarily, in the decelerator stage, natural leaders and innovators either:

1. Depart the organization, or
2. Transfer their role from **PROMOTER** to **CONSERVER**

As a result, the organization shifts from innovation and expansion to conservation. Once an organization starts to shrink or experience unusual deceleration of growth over an extensive period of time, it sets in motion forces which tend to make its functions shrink even faster than the membership. Qualitative growth becomes more unlikely where there is an absence of elbow-room for creative innovators and natural leaders. Declining groups, nevertheless, tend to console themselves for losses on the likely-erroneous assumption that qualitative gain is balancing quantitative loss. Goal displacement tendencies are strong, too, in this period of organizational aging.

### **GOAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE DECELERATOR STAGE**

Although time exposes a religious organization to enriched experiences which deepen group-wisdom and improve the "organizational memory," on-going efforts toward greater efficiency have generally involved elaboration of rules or

structural complexity. Such efficiency-seeking efforts tend to divert officials from original social functions not compatible with efficiency. During the aging process of an organization, it is generally found that simple self-perpetuation efforts begin to eclipse original group goals. This goal displacement seems apparent in those sisterhoods whose initial charisms of foundresses focused on service to the poor. Increasingly, sisters have watched the goal displacement progress to the point where in both schools and hospitals the poor have been outpriced for the sake of maintenance-efficiency and survival.

In the early 1960's sisters could only surmise that goal displacement was being effected on the basis of their limited personal experiences. After the mid-sixties, however, two national studies confirmed their hypotheses: the Greeley-Rossie report entitled *The Education of Catholic America*, and the Notre Dame, Carnegie-funded research: *Catholic Schools in Action*. The evidence rang clear: only 20 percent of children in families of \$2000-a-year income, but 70 percent of those from \$15,000 and above, could afford the religious education services of sisters. Such enrollment patterns not only negated the educational charisms of foundresses and many sisters, but also the urging of Vatican II's document on education "to show special concern for those who are poor in the goods of the world." (Article 9) Where financial imperatives were conformed to, inner-city areas of poverty and transition experienced the first Catholic school closures. The sisters were accused in the Sixties of fleeing to the suburbs with the affluent society. This form of survival posture, adopted because of financial dependency, necessarily generated personnel conflicts within the sisterhoods. As some sisters became aware that one major goal for which they had entered religious life was no longer operative, or but decreasingly so, they left their congregations in order to align themselves with groups that were actively serving the poorest. In consequence, there was a plethora of former sisters in local, state, and national poverty programs in the Sixties. Many are still working in medical projects for the indigent, drop-in centers for addicts, care services for the aging, and schools serving ghetto children, reservation Indians, Blacks, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Haitians, and Southeast Asians.

Another economically-based deceleration problem relates to current retirement cost increases in sisterhoods. In May, 1982, the following national data became available from a survey conducted under the joint auspices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men:

- The median age of active religious is rising rapidly
- Already 27 percent of operating revenue of women religious is being used to cover 68 percent of care for elderly sisters
- 29 percent of all salaried religious are presently over 60 and new recruits for their replacement are unavailable

### CONSERVATION EFFECTS IN THE DECELERATION STAGE

A congregation's increased structural complexity augments its inertia because complexity represents greater sunk investments in specific procedures. Sunk costs create vested interests which further reduce a congregation's ability to adjust to new needs or new demands. Consequently, an old congregation may give the appearance of high stability, which may be, in fact, simply high inflexibility. Conservers in such organizations tend to become more important to membership because of their orientation toward preservation of the group functions.

Innovators, as would be expected, become not only less important, but actually undesirable in a decelerating group. Some sister-innovators perceive this and leave voluntarily. Other innovators attempt to remain with the hope of altering the group's structure from within. Some have found this to be possible; others have been removed from effective roles because their change-orientation was interpreted as a form of disloyalty and their presence consequently, a destructive force.

So, as a bureau or congregation grows older, the number and proportion of administrators tends to increase even as membership decreases. This is likely because the older the bureau, the more likely that goal-displacement over time has proliferated both functions and their directions. If a congregation is relatively long-lived, it has usually survived a number of cultural fluctuations in the importance of its various functions. The number of administrators rises because each

additional function assumed through the years of apostolic accretion is held onto by conserver-type administrators. Throughout this stage, the proportion of conservers tends to rise. The youngest and most talented officials and members are the most likely to leave a decelerating group for two reasons:

1. They are less inclined to the conserver roles
2. They naturally have more opportunities to find alternatives

Until recently, however, religious congregation administrators and members found alternative channels within canonical forms of religious life almost wholly missing. Some sisters were forced thereby to remain in decelerating groups which had rejected them, or seek dispensation from their vows. The latter route, the so-called reduction to the "lay state" became seemingly less stigmatic, however, after Vatican II's reminder that sisters had been lay women all along.

In response to a growing need for more suitable alternatives than the ones above, two new routes opened to sisters in the late 1960's and 1970's. A few progressive congregations wove welcoming policies into their renewal decisions for certain categories of sisters wishing to transfer from one canonical life-style to another. In 1970, the Sisters For Christian Community, a free-form unity of Christ-committed women, was initiated specifically, though not exclusively, as an immediate realization of collegial or consensual community for sisters who found it unconscionable to continue to seek community within religious bureaucracy. The sisters who joined this new expression of the consecrated life shared the conviction that vocation is not an apostolate, a way of working together, but a way of life, —of living and sharing together. They saw religious life as a witness to the community nature of the Trinity and the community nature of the Church, the body of Christ. (See I Cor. 12:27, 28) Thus, to witness bureaucracy instead, —a community-negating structure by its very sociological nature and design, was viewed by them as a negation of vocation.

### **BUREAU-EXITING OR BUREAU-ECTOMY**

Although many sisters express relief to see their congregation's bureaucratic structure in the deceleration stage, if they simultaneously see conserver-type administrators and members employing every conceivable means to reverse the decline or postpone the death phase of the bureau structure, or the corporate apostolates which necessitates its employment, they conclude that to remain within the group, to struggle for more years in the bureau-versus-community-dilemma, would be wasteful of vocational energy. For them, either the vocation-negating bureau must go, or they must go. Continued compromise becomes untenable, —especially for "sixth stage" sisters.

Some sisters who have left old structures, and others who plan never to leave their original group-commitment, express a similar awareness: —that the congregational aspect of religious life is ossified and dying; —that a bureau-ectomy is imperative for religious life survival. They want their living framed within a living structure: community. Although the term "community" has been employed consistently as the label on their organizational structure, the reality was, and continues to be in most groups, sociologically otherwise. For these sisters, the death of the bureau is definitely not to be equated with the death of the consecrated life within the Church, but rather, the condition for the survival of the latter. They can view with equanimity, then, if not with joy, the phase-out of certain corporate works which bound the bureaucracy so intimately to their daily lives. They expect the disestablishment of the super-complex congregational model, with its managerial obedience and corporation poverty, with its apartmenthouse-like motherhouses located in well-appointed suburban comfort, to free sisters to escape to community and simplicity.

### **THE ILLUSION IN DEMOCRATIZED BUREAUCRACY**

The illusion of being a community, therefore, is not inconsequential for a sisterhood. If a bureau-ectomy is as imperative for religious life survival as a radical cancer removal, then not to recognize the deceptiveness of the "community" label is to invite death by default of operational therapy. It is true that sociologists have esteemed the orderliness, utility, and efficiency of the bureaucratic model of organization for achieving some work goals. But if religious life is really a **LIFE** and not a work, its patterns must be living patterns

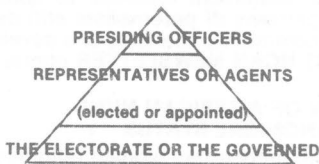
and not institutional work patterns.

Even those sisterhoods that made significant government modifications at their recent renewal chapters, too often altered the vocabulary but not the genus of their structures. They democratized the bureaucracy in accordance with mid-century management research finds and with the assistance at chapters of highly-paid professional business and industrial personnel specialists. But a democratized bureaucracy with its new administrative teams, committees and commissions, is still not collegial or consensual community, though some are unwittingly calling their up-dated government precisely that. Democratization does represent a step forward beyond the more autocratic mother general-dominated models of the pre-Vatican II era, but it is still a giant stride away from collegial community, —a wholly different genus of structure operating on wholly different principles and Gospel charisms.

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## DEMOCRACY

- The rule of the **PEOPLE** (in polis)
- Assumes:
  - liberal political values
  - equality of opportunity
  - right of dissent
  - freedom of speech and assembly
  - freedom of press and religion
  - due process of law
  - a right to trial by jury
  - an informed population
  - interest of all in decision-making
  - bureaucratic, hierarchical ordering



- Becomes:
  - a system in which the elected few constitute a power elite with leadership influence over the behavior and decisions of those they represent
  - a system in which the elected representatives become a powerful **INGROUP** more or less isolated from their constituents
  - a system established to streamline government by the people by limiting their participation to periodic elections, initiative and recall
  - a system based on **MAJORITY RULE** that divides the polis into winners and losers whether right or wrong

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## COLLEGIALITY

- The rule of the **SPIRIT** (in community)
- Assumes:
  - understanding of the Pauline theology on the role of the Holy Spirit in community
  - ideals of love and justice
  - “freedom of the children of God”
  - opportunity for the development of full personhood
  - an informed community
  - interest of all in decision-sharing
  - a community of coordinates



- Collegial community becomes:
  - a unity where pooled power makes each person effective in influencing toward **COMMUNITY CONSENSUS**
  - a unity where members volunteer to serve the community through local, regional, and international communication coordination roles
  - a unity established for all-inclusive participation, with an **ALL-TO-ALL** newsletter where everyone's views may be openly shared and issues discussed, a unit with **ASSEMBLIES** which all members are urged to attend
  - a spiritual unity without majorities and minorities, —where all search for the Spirit's directioning together

A democratized religious congregation, we have just observed, operates on the principles of elected representation and majority rule. Collegial community, in contrast, is based on New Testament theology regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in directioning Christian community. It employs faith-based consensus rather than majority-rule decisions. Thus, in the collegial or consensual group there is no dichotomization of members into winners and losers, superiors and inferiors, the administrators and the administered. Nor does the term *communication coordinator* simply serve as an in-fashion version of *superior* or *ultimate decision-maker*. The communication coordinator in the collegial community context is simply that, —one who facilitates order in communication channels so that all co-equal, co-responsible community members share persistently in all information and decision-making in areas pertaining to the common good of the community. Consensus is the simple pooling of charisms and each member's best judgment. This pooling process is possible in a living community of co-equals. It would be highly maladaptive in a bureaucracy, —a work organization of specialists, where the very demands of efficiency require a division of decision-making according to fields of expertise. Bureaucratic efficiency also requires impersonality, reliance on general rules and procedural manuals, distance between top management and workers, and the necessary limitation of personal initiative in routinized tasks and goal-oriented operations in which the average bureau member has neither interest nor skills. Currently, both the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and the Vatican II Document on Religious Life seem to presume the continuation of the bureaucratic model of organization for religious congregations, as does the new canon law mentioned earlier. The enormity of the consequences of such positions is beginning to emerge.

In October, 1982, the National Coalition of American Nuns, representing a wide spectrum of sisterhoods, met for its annual Open Forum. Persons present agreed that the above problem be given priority consideration. The NCAN board members and Forum participants pooled information from their respective congregations relative to both the purported canonical ruling reinstating **SUPERIORS**, and the Sacred Congregation's arbitrary rejection of many post-Vatican Council constitutions. The latter represent roughly twenty years of committee and chapter work by the involved sisterhoods. Together the Forum participants formulated the following protest statement intended to unite world Sisters in determined confrontation with patterns of paternalism still depriving Sisters of the right to respond to their own community charisms and develop their own religious life styles. The January 1983 **NCAN NEWSLETTER** contained the statement of the Forum:

#### **THE NATIONAL COALITION OF AMERICAN NUNS DECLARATION ON CANONICAL STATUS**

The revision of canon law will profoundly affect women religious. Versions to date imply, in relation to women religious, that law prescribes practice. Women religious expect law to reflect practice which has developed from their struggle and experience of twenty years of renewal since Vatican II.

At the Second Vatican Council bishops themselves called for a new ecclesiology and corresponding new church structures. Church as hierarchical chain-of-command was to give way to church as a community. Pyramidal models were to give way to participative ones in which every voice could be heard. Women religious applied these principles to their lives in community. Notions of "superiors" and "inferiors" disappeared and affirmation of equal membership and shared responsibility emerged. The principles were subsequently incorporated in their revised constitutions.

Women religious have reason to fear that these steps toward church as community are threatened. We are suspicious of moves toward imposing religious garb, which reintroduces elitist distinctions, and of requiring "superiors" in every community as the ultimate decision-makers, which destroys collegiality. We feel impelled to resist these moves and by so doing call the church to the realization of its own ideals.

We oppose every form of authoritarianism which prevents the achievement of maturation to full personhood. We specifically oppose the present requirement of submitting our constitutions to Rome for approval. We, as adult Christian women, do not need and

do not seek permission to intensify our baptismal commitments. We are committed to gospel ideals and to theological principles which recognize that the Holy Spirit speaks in and to persons of both sexes and of every rank. We oppose the mandate from the Sacred Congregation for Religious to end experimentation and to seek approval for definitive constitutions. We consider this mandate and the proposed process for approval as a violation of the principles of subsidiarity and collegiality enunciated by the Second Vatican Council.

NCAN, a forum for those who share these moral concerns, calls on all religious congregations and individual women religious to:

**ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REGULATIONS AND PRINCIPLES GOVERNING OUR LIVES IN COMMUNITY. AT PRESENT, THIS INVOLVES THE ACCEPTANCE OF NON-CANONICAL STATUS.**

The church, based on the gospel call to oneness and equality in Christ, can be a model for society. Women in the Church, who have already successfully shaped collegial structures in their own communities, can play a crucial role in the move from bureaucracy and control to participation and consensus.

Canonists know that **LAW MUST FOLLOW PRACTICE** and not precede and direct it. Law must arise from existential facts, not create them. Reworded old canons cannot cover contemporary categories of renewal. New insights need new laws or no laws at all. The 1917 canon number 516, and article 14 of the Vatican II Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life, predate the sociological research on structures dealt with in these chapters and will be recognized as obsolete even if they reappear in the new canon law texts. Law formation must evolve from the involved experience of world sisters and not be superimposed by male persons unfamiliar with the lived experiences and the **CHARISMS** of the Holy Spirit promised to those committed to Christian community witness, — a commitment exceeding the understanding, perhaps, of bureaucrats no matter their effectiveness in their own fields of experience and expertise. Were the new canons to eschew collegiality as a possible pattern for Christian Community in sisterhoods, brotherhoods, dioceses or parishes, the impact, inevitably, would alienate untold thousands of world Christians who see the bureaucratic aspect of Church organization in its death phase.

## **OLD BUREAUS' RESISTANCE TO THE DEATH PHASE**

No amount of repair work, renovation and renewal of the traditional religious life structure, the congregational model, will transform it into community because the metamorphosis of social structures from one genus to another is no natural course of events. The emergence of community out of bureaucracy has no precedent, — has never been documented as a social happening. True, small cells of community may form among peers inside the bureaucratic structure, but their presence is in the form of co-existence and not replacement. Researchers find that bureaucracies are not only resistant to change but resistant to death even when their usefulness no longer justifies their costs.

Case histories of declining bureaus show that they are ready to undergo continuous goal-displacement or shift of function rather than to die. Such being the usual pattern, it can be anticipated, for example, that some Catholic parents will continue to funnel financial Geritol into some private schools for their own affluent progeny. Some sisters will continue teaching all the subjects of the curricula to a small but supportive elite rather than close the corporate apostolate and innovate in the direction of Vatican II's urging for religious education to be extended to all members of Christian Community, — from four-year-olds to ninety-year-olds, even if this extension of service demands the curtailment of the traditional all-subject approach for a limited number (See Document on Education, Articles 2-7), the demise of some schools, and the dispersal of sisters into a multitude of penetration roles, preeminent among them, the sharing of the **WORD** in every village, hamlet, and parish of the country.

## **ESCAPE TO COMMUNITY: THE ULTIMTE GOAL DISPLACEMENT**

Where community-negating bureaus once reigned unchallenged, a bureau-

negating process in sisterhoods is now increasingly observable. Instead of simply shifting functions **INSIDE** the structure to survive, sisters are gradually shifting functions to **OUTSIDE** the structure of their own corporate works. While their schools and hospitals are slowly decelerating, sisters are already taking new positions in other systems. By penetrating non-congregational works in accord with Vatican II documents on education and the missions, sisters may be effecting the ultimate and finalizing goal displacement: —displacement of the bureaucracy itself. As sisters increasingly decide to retire the congregational model with its corporate apostolates and insitutional living in favor of the community model of organization, religious life patterns will have gone full circle: from small, primary-type communities in time of origin, through the dark valley of bureaucracy and near-death, to a possible new florescence.

### **THE BREAK WITH BUREAUCRACY IS BEGINNING**

Peter Blau, Columbia University sociologist and author of *Inequality and Heterogeneity*, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*, plus *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, is a specialist in the study of formal organizations. After years of research on conglomerates, the industrial-military complex, and democratic systems, he concludes that one out of four major problems is to make clear the distinction between **PERSONNEL** in bureaucracy, and the patterns which have hamstrung them into fixed ways. The administrators need to be recognized as victims of the system as well as the functionaries. Popes, bishops, curia, vicars, pastors, mother generals, provincials and government teams often bear the brunt of blame for the presence of person-negating oligarchic patterns in the official Church and related institutions. They are held accountable for the slowness of renewal. They are thought to be the retarders of transition from authoritarian to egalitarian models. They are thought to oppose a metamorphosis of Church and Church-related structures from bureaucracy into Christian Community. Nevertheless, it is the charismatic leadership of some of these administrators which makes it possible for the post-Vatican II Church to move into a new era of ecclesiastical organization. Some administrators are helping their groups make a radical break with bureaucracy, —the Constantian heritage of the Church.

### **THE SHAPE OF ORGANIZATIONS TO COME**

Although some future bureaucracies may increase in bigness, impersonality, complexity, computerization, automation, and technology, speculation grows in sisterhoods that the new ecclesiology of Vatican II will propel them in the exact opposite direction, —toward smallness, personalization, simplicity, consensual decision-making and collegial community. Bureaucracy has had its day in the Church and must be phased out as a model of organization for every structure within it, —for parishes as well as for the consecrated life in sisterhoods. Until November 1983 canonical sisterhoods will continue to be constrained by old canon law to retain aspects of the oligarchic rule patterns of the past. If, after twenty years of revisional work on the canons, the new principles do not release sisters for more creative change through the implementation of collegiality, it seems inevitable that many sisterhoods will be forced in conscience to opt for non-canonical status in order to maintain the integrity, authenticity and continuance of the consecrated life in specially bonded community.

The new non-canonical sisterhoods which have emerged since Vatican II have been free from their inception to explore wholly new models of organization, and in the case of SFCC, to pioneer a fully collegial community. But before examining this group's model in detail, it seems important to first review the encouraging research finds on alternate organizational models being carried out in some industries in Europe and America. These new patterns illustrate that even the most pragmatic and utilitarian business experts in the world's economic systems recognize the dysfunctions of bureaucracy and have discovered better operational patterns more in accord with the development of persons and world humanism. Albeit for centuries dormant, the Church nevertheless retains as its heritage from the Primitive Church the ideal of collegial community. The Church, then, can either lead world peoples in the rediscovery of a genuine community model of organization, or be a johnny-come-lately on the scene. The Church can be a great collective of Christians tagging behind the pragmatic pioneering of industry, or be, itself, a catalyst in implementing the organizational principles in-



herent in Christianity.

## THE YUGOSLAV EXPERIMENT AND RELATED PARALLEL MODELS

Robert Townsend, executive of American Express International, and chief executive of Avis Corporation, is an associate of world mega-corporation heads and researcher in non-bureaucratic forms of organization. In an interview with the Duskin Publisher editors he concluded: (See *The Study of Society*, 1976, p. 380-1)

It's pretty clear to me what works and doesn't work. Pyramids don't work. Hierarchy doesn't work. And it's a world-wide phenomena, one that applies to the whole range of organizations. What does work is small partnership. That's the shape of organizations to come.

Townsend does not believe that bigness is the major problem of formal organizations, although smallness is best. His essential quarrel with bureaucracy is on its dehumanization level. He is concerned that **SECURITY** becomes its method of control. Typically within bureaucracies and oligarchies, there are elites who know what is really going on in the total operation while the majority of the personnel know only their small area of work and are thereby deprived of the satisfaction of understanding the whole situation in which they are involved and committed.

During the 20th Century a considerable gain was made in the democratization of bureaucracies: sharing of department reports, unionization, and collective bargaining. But rather than continue a piece-meal reform of pyramids, Townsend and others are excited about patterns of organization that might be described as circular in shape. One of these is the Yugoslav experiment and related projects in Germany, France, the Scandinavian countries, and more recently, the United States. Townsend told the Duskin editors confidently that "it can be concluded so far that the worst experiments are better than the conventional pyramid because they tend to get people to use more of their own intellectual and creative capacities than the pyramid does."

Swedish law requires two workers on decision boards for every one hundred workers. It is law in West Germany that employees elect half of the board members in firms of over two thousand employees. Chancellor Helmut Schmid credited such worker participation with his country's social and economic upsurge.

## THE GAMBLE THAT PAID OFF FOR PROCTOR AND GAMBLE

An illustration of the success Townsend speaks of is the Proctor and Gamble Corporation. The typical pyramidal bureaucracy operates at the mother plant, but the circle pattern is being explored in a subsidiary plant in Lima, Ohio. There the workers have taken charge and are responsible in every phase of operation. Work incentives have accelerated to such an extent that the experiment had long since proven itself successful in these areas:

- Overall costs are substantially lower than at the mother plant
- Profit margins are much higher
- Because workers are paid on a group production basis, there is an absence of interpersonal competition and conflict
- Workers have the total power to organize their own tasks and do so with greater efficiency than remote administrators were able to do
- Productivity has gone up and take-home pay reflects this in a fifty percent increase
- Product quality has improved as workers take more pride now in their personal investment of ideas and decision-making

Persons involved in these experiments are ready to admit that all aspects are not yet satisfactory. For example, there is an inevitable problem in the fact that in egalitarian structures members are expected to take charge of decision-making. However, if they have experienced years of decision-making deprivation in pyramidal structures, they are quite understandably unused to the decision-making process and need much experience to improve performance there. Sisterhoods experimenting with shared decision-making need to keep this earlier decision-sharing deprivation in focal awareness to avoid premature judgments regarding the collegial process itself. It may operate poorly until the creative im-

petus of members is unfrozen and lubricated by on-going use.

Asked by the Duskin editors if the United Auto Workers were likely to convert to such a model of organization as the Volks plant in Germany, Townsend answered that although the United Auto Worker's union was progressive in some directions, it was tied to General Motors, the world's most backward corporation from the humanistic perspective. To illustrate this conclusion, Townsend cited the example of General Motor's Vega plant in Lordstown, Ohio, that contains every mechanical and technological breakthrough possible but which almost completely ignored the human element. According to Townsend's philosophy, such a course is sheer "disaster" in human wastefulness because the average worker is challenged to use a mere twenty percent of his/her brains where bureaucracy dominates workers and makes decisions for them. Among big industries likely to convert to non-bureaucratic models, Townsend speculates that General Motors will be the last and the United Auto Workers next to last. True to this expectation, in the recession crisis of 1982, union leaders negotiated new contracts making concessions for industry survival but by-passed the bargaining opportunity for co-ownership and co-management.

As one looks around the American sisterhood scene and listens at the crossroads of national leadership, vocation, and formation conferences, it becomes apparent that many sisters have ranked their congregations in the same manner Townsend has industries. Some sisterhoods are recognized as notably *avant-garde* for their humanistic policies and subscription to Vatican II ecclesiology. Sisters also know which congregations are of the GM vintage. The anti-establishment youth of this era are as cognizant as the convent dwellers that the life-span of cross-capped bureaucracies is near its end. Only those groups that can be transformed into truly collegial communities can satisfy the egalitarian aspirations and concern for personhood characterizing the new searchers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

20th Century sisters in Western Society were highly successful in operating large, efficient, tightly-controlled, bureaucratic organizations, —the congregations with their works in education, health care, or social services. However, major problems arose: the work and living patterns of organization for sisterhoods eventually became inseparable. The principal at school was often the superior of the convent after school hours. The president of the college was still in that role whether at the faculty house Christmas party or Fourth of July picnic. In no other section of the society's work world were employees taking their bosses and supervisors home with them for the night or weekends. Some psychiatrists and psychologists treating the casualties of the bureaucratic system agree that most workers avoid personality deformity from the bureaucracies' ranking and rating, compressing and conformity-demanding pressures by day, only because they can escape from them around five in the evening to relax with family and friends. At home, in a bar, on the golf course, beach, or bowling alley most employees can unbend therapeutically. 20th Century sisters, however, lived around the clock within secondary groups under formal rules and supervision. Contact with both family and friends were severely limited and scrutinized. With the ideal of seeking perfection for themselves and efficiency in their ministries, sisters inadvertently placed too great a burden on human nature by freezing themselves into patterns of bureaucratic conformity and role specialization which eventually discouraged new vocations and created an exodus of highly-trained and dedicated members who felt called from bureaucracy to community.

Vatican II supplied the impetus for the release of all sisters from person-confining, initiative-suppressing structures. It urged the whole Church to recognize that Christ had come to set humankind free from frozen forms, that Christ had called his apostles and disciples to be community, and that the Church was to define herself no longer as a "hierarchical organization instituted by Christ to give grace" but as a community of the faithful, —the **PEOPLE OF GOD** in loving unity.

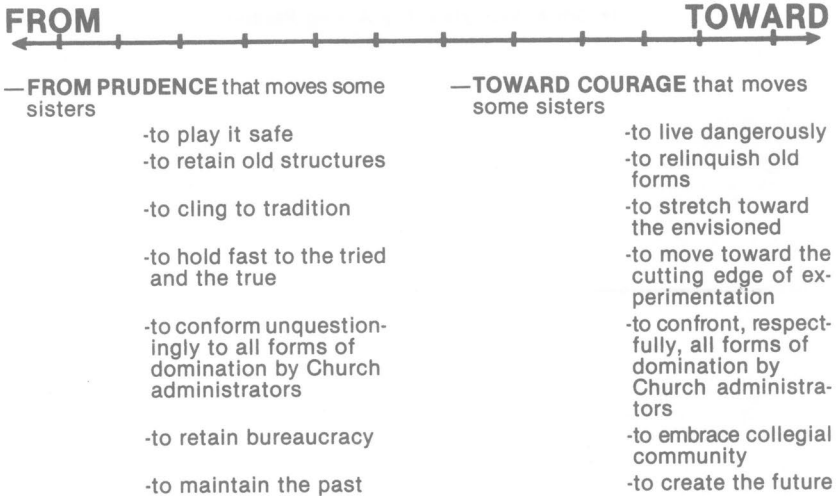
Christ, the one Mediator, established and ceaselessly sustains here on earth His Holy Church, the **COMMUNITY** of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible structure. Through her He communicates truth and grace to all . . . Just as the assumed nature inseparably united to the divine Word serves Him as a living instrument of salvation, so, in a

similar way, does the communal structure of the Church serve Christ's spirit, who vivifies it by way of building up His body. (Cf. Eph. 4:16) *Lumen Gentium* 1, 8

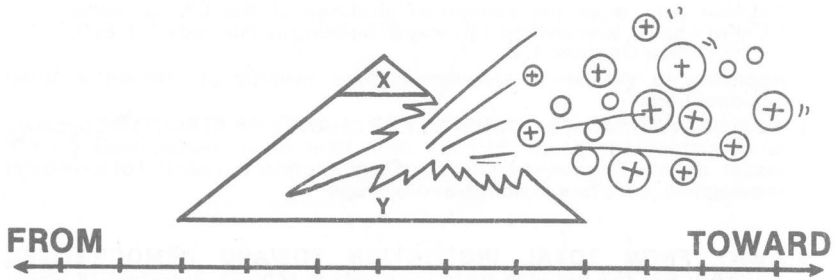
Responding to Vatican II, sisterhoods have nevertheless moved in three discrete directions:

1. **AGAINST VATICAN II'S COUNSELS FOR CHANGE OF STRUCTURE** because some sisterhoods perceived Pope John XXIII as an irresponsible Church leader, and the Council as a Church assembly under the control of too liberal theologians, scripture scholars and bishops
2. **AWAY FROM TOTAL INSTITUTION TOWARD DEMOCRATIZED BUREAUCRACIES** because vested interests in schools, hospitals, or social agencies precluded the possibility or advisability, they thought, of moving toward collegial community, and because industrial relations specialists, whom they had hired as Chapter of Renewal consultants, had advised the modernization and democratization of their existing bureaucracies.
3. **TOWARD FULL COLLEGIAL COMMUNITY** in both their living arrangements and Christian ministries because Vatican II's insights moved them to perceive their ministry as a witnessing to the nature of Christian community, —a unity of persons ministering to one another in mutual love and concern.

These divergent responses seem to represent the human tendency to perceive the same reality differently because of differing contexts. No value judgment need be made. Undoubtedly all three responses require their own unique variety or quality of virtue: —some more prudence, some more courage. Even so, sisters are moving . . .



An up-surge of creative courage is extricating many sisters and sisterhoods from the community-negating, person-diminishing impact of bureaucracy. Like bursts of colorful balloons released into a spring breeze, tiny new communities of Christ-committed women are proliferating throughout the world. They are often dynamic unities of **SIXTH STAGE SISTERS** vocationed to confront the moral evil of X-Y domination and elitism under any of its multiple masks: paternalism, maternalism, monarchialism, communism, capitolism, classism, casteism, clericalism, racism, sexism, or bureaucratic formalism. Sisters of the world are on the move, journeying . . .



- **FROM** formal, pyramidal organizations
- **FROM** X-Y domination, a moral evil whether benevolently or despotically exercised
- **FROM** we-they or I-you dissociative work and living patterns
- **FROM** alienation and estrangement under the rule of superiors
- **FROM** fixation or infantilization in bureaucratic stability
- **FROM** identification with the Western World's womb-to-tomb bureaucratic ordering
- **TOWARD** multiplying free-form communities
- **TOWARD** vocations to confrontation with all forms of domination in Church or society
- **TOWARD** WE-ness in communal living
- **TOWARD** mutual concern and loving consensual alliance
- **TOWARD** sixth stage maturation in risk-filled process community
- **TOWARD** freedom on the hill of the wild olive, a fruit of the **COLLEGIAL REVOLUTION**

**THE REAL FACT OF ALIENATION  
IS THE NEGATION OF COMMUNITY . . .**

(From K. Wojtyla's *The Acting Person*,  
*op. cit.* p. 115)