

A PHILOSOPHY OF WILDERNESS CAMPING  
FOR CANADIAN INNER CITY YOUTH

By

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## PREFACE

This thesis has arisen out of the inner necessity of making a statement on Wilderness Camping. The writer who has done considerable small group camping in Central Ontario with boys from the City of Hamilton, has experienced a mood of optimism among Inner City youth especially in the area of Wilderness Camping. The writer feels that a Philosophy for Wilderness Camping with respect to Inner City Youth is in order, and this he has endeavoured to formulate. He expresses his gratitude to Professor Lois A. Tupper of McMaster Divinity College who has tirelessly prodded him to keep writing, for her guidance and suggestions and general helpfulness in the preparation of the thesis. The writer also expresses thanks to Professor Murray J. S. Ford for his help and patience as assistant supervisor and his care in correcting the manuscript. Without the encouragement of these two Faculty members, this thesis would not have been written. My thanks also to my patient wife, Bonnie, who has typed and criticized into the wee small hours of the morning.

N.C.H.

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## INTRODUCTION

In May, 1967, it was my distinct privilege to become the Student Assistant Minister of Eastwood Baptist Church, an Inner City Mission in Hamilton, Ontario. I was to be in charge of youth work and my first opportunity arose in the summer of 1967. I had by that time met some of the boys through the Church School, but wilderness camping was not yet in the picture.

Consequently, during that summer our program consisted of hiking and church-style camping through denominational camps. In the fall of 1967 we commenced the boys clubs which operated quite successfully all winter and spring.

By the summer of 1968 we had some faithful boys club members available for wilderness camping. As an experiment two groups of five boys, the total membership of the senior club, went in two separate ventures for a three-day wilderness camp at Kilbear Provincial Park near Parry Sound, Ontario. All the leaders, including myself, were quite new at this style of camping as our leadership ability and direction must surely have indicated. However, the boys had a great time. The leaders managed to cope with the uncertainties of a new venture and made some notes regarding the many areas where we seemed to be so deficient.

After a very active fall, winter and spring in 1968-69,

which saw a membership increase in boys clubs of about 100%, we swung into the summer of 1969.

Hoping to profit from the previous year's mistakes, we invited one of our church members, a Queen's Scout, to help us plan a suitable program. This planning included all the menus and the program activities. Some very good activities such as survival camping, rope bridge building and compass reading were set out as possibilities for the camps. With these plans in mind, we scheduled five wilderness camps for the older boys (most of the members of the Intermediate, Senior and the Weightlifting and Boxing Clubs). Of the five, one was cancelled, but the other four camps involving twenty-one boys were held. The two incidents set out in Chapter I occurred during these four camps. As a result of the Wood-Cutting Incident which happened at our first camp, we were evicted from Kilbear Provincial Park. None of the remaining eight (four of these being for girls) camps planned for 1969 was allowed to use Kilbear. We were informed that we would not be welcome in 1970 either. Consequently, after some very quick adjustments, we moved the rest of the camps to Six Mile Lake Provincial Park near Port Severn, Ontario. It was during the third camp that the Canoe Trip took place. We have built upon our experiences of the 1968 venture with a variety of new ones from the 1969 camps. It is because of these experiences, the things we have learned, and the insights we have gained,

that we have developed our Philosophy of Wilderness Camping. The observations of our experiments of 1968 were tested in 1969 and proved, in some cases, to be acceptable and valid. We have incorporated the results of all these experiences in the text of this paper. Now that we have tried, sometimes successfully, sometimes failing miserably, to provide an adequate wilderness camping program for Inner City youth, we feel that it is appropriate to look for the theory behind the practice of Wilderness Camping for Canadian Inner City Youth.

# I

## THE SCENE IS SET

### The Chopping Down of the Tree

On that Sunday afternoon, June 29, 1969, low clouds blanketed the bleak sky over the Group Camping area of Kilbear Provincial Park. An unseasonable drizzle diverted the boys from their waterfront activities.

At about 3:00 p.m. two boys, Don and Joe, innocently picked up an axe and wandered out of camp. Sixty paces took them out of the campsite and plunged them into deep undergrowth. Ten minutes of unrestricted searching located a silver birch tree which stood in majesty and simplicity against the gray sky. As the axe was laid against the trunk the funeral dirge began and half an hour later amid the clang of many symbols the stalwart tree was laid to rest. The loggers surveyed their prey and rejoiced in the satisfaction of the kill. Then they trudged back to the empty campsite and returning their borrowed weapon, faded into the underbrush.

The rustling and snapping of twigs, the moving flashlights as they wove their mysterious pattern throughout the darkened forest informed me that something was wrong. The

next moment the Park Superintendent and four of his men intruded into the clearing and called, "Who is in charge here?" From my miserable vantage point in the sleeping bag on the dirty tent floor came an ominous sickening realization--I am in charge. As I dressed quickly my mind was racing through the events of the day trying to sort them out. Something must have motivated this midnight visit. The Superintendent did not sound happy. It was not going to be a tea party. I emerged from the tent and asked the man in as pleasant a voice as possible what was the occasion for such a visit. The sequence of events which followed was very striking and when I eventually returned to the comfort of my sleeping bag, it was with a heavy heart and a sense of meaninglessness.

The Superintendent asked me if we had an axe and I informed him that we did. He then asked me if we had a saw and I decided, perhaps foolishly, to show him both our axe and our saw. He then asked me to follow him, and feeling rather sheepish and uncomfortable, I fell into step behind him. Our parade led us to the base of five different trees. Each tree was now no more than three feet high and in each case the top of the tree was decorated with axe chips or saw marks. The remainder of the tree, that is, the top sixteen feet of each tree, had mysteriously disappeared. Surely the beavers had been very active in this part of the country!

The smiling Superintendent does not laugh. He saves



the best for the last. Our parade carries us up along a ridge and over a hill. Suddenly our way is obscured by a large silver birch tree lying across the trail. A silver birch! A silver birch! Oh, no. By now the Superintendent is pointing to the base of the tree and we all observe that the trunk matches the stump and there are fresh wood chips scattered all around. The parade reaches its climax as the Superintendent informs me that he suspects that one of our boys chopped down the tree today. His suspicions are confirmed partly because we own an axe (and a saw) and also because the camping group in the next campsite (we were the only two groups in the whole group camping area) had heard and witnessed the activity from afar. Naturally if this other group is not involved, we must be.

While we make our way slowly back to the camp the Superintendent delivers a sermon on Care of the Forest. As the parade is disbanding the Superintendent informs me that he will be back to see us in the morning and at that time we will probably be given about two hours to vacate.

With that the Superintendent and his party took their leave and soon they blended into the darkness of the forest. While we three leaders were trying to decide what had happened, we noticed another group of flashlight-laden people making their way carefully toward our camp. As it was now very late we knew that we were not going to have yet another social call

and we were right. This time the leaders from the adjacent campsite, those who had heard and seen the event, had come to parley with us. We were then to learn from them how they had heard the sound of a tree being hewn; the chatter of the boys as they executed their project; and the name, Joe, mentioned frequently by one of the lads. They had also seen the tree come crashing to its resting place. They had held a council (a typical Mennonite approach) and decided reluctantly to report the incident to the Park Superintendent. This they did in due time. The report seemed to have reached the Park Superintendent just as he and his trusty crew, reputedly investigating another incident in the area, encountered the magnificent fallen specimen. It inevitably followed that after a brief inspection of the sleeping giant they should come to our campsite to make some enquiries.

It was with a strange feeling of helplessness and futility that we thanked our neighbours for coming to see us and explaining their involvement in the whole episode. They had made their actions and responses perfectly clear. They had elected to follow the only course which seemed open to them. Then they left.

We went back to bed. I lay on the cold hostile ground wondering why our friends, in their concern, had not taken a rather obvious course of action: "Stop that chopping!" Instead they had stood by while the deed happened,

letting the incident go unchecked and then reporting the whole event to the Superintendent. I felt bitter. Somehow camping was supposed to be fun, not full of tensions and bitter frustrations. Paradoxically these thoughts lulled me to sleep!

The gray dampness and the patter of rain upon the tent told me that a dull sunless morning was upon us. It was a struggle even to get up. Wet firewood, damp tables and a spasmodic drizzle did nothing to improve the spirit of the campers. But finally we produced a roaring fire and the fire did wonders to quick oats in water, slabs of bacon and round white eggs. Camp life must go on and just as we were finishing our delicious breakfast, our Superintendent friend strolled majestically into camp. We bade him good morning and to my pleasant surprise our six campers invited him to sit down and share some breakfast with us. He refused politely and then he attacked.

"You boys will have to leave the campsite. How long will it take you to pack?"

I glanced at my watch. "We will be out of here by noon," I replied feeling both elated and totally demoralized.

It was at this point that the Superintendent made a startling discovery. He suddenly noticed that there were present to guide, lead and encourage the six campers a total of three leaders. With this knowledge he attacked again.

"It would seem to me that with only six campers you three leaders should be able to keep better control of your camp. That means that each leader has to control only two campers. If you fellows can't control two boys each you shouldn't be up here. You've done a pretty poor job."

With that my anger exploded. "Excuse me, sir, when you are in our campsite you are here as our guest and you will respect our privacy here. If you have something to say about our camp, you say it to me privately. You asked us to leave and we're leaving. But I want to see you in your office on my way out. I don't think we're finished yet."

He assured me he would be there and turning, he strode out of the camp.

Nobody spoke. Then a small voice. "Does that mean we're leaving right away, Sir?"

"Yes, but not before we have a little tour of the area."

"What for?"

"You'll find out. Follow me!" We then proceeded to march out single file until we came to the first tree trunk and we formed a little circle around it. "Do you notice anything unusual about this tree?" I asked. No response. We headed out over a hill to the next place of destruction. Again we gathered and I repeated my bold challenge. "Do you notice anything unusual about this one?" Again there was no

answer. Just blank stares. We moved on to a third location.

The question and an answer: "Somebody cut a tree down?"

"Very good," I chided, "very good! Any idea who might have cut it down?" No answer. We moved on to the fourth. My heart began to pound in my chest. We were getting dangerously close to that big old birch. "Here's another one, gentlemen." I cautioned. "Anybody got any ideas about this one?"

"Not me, Sir!"

"Me, either!"

The denials were infectious. Soon all six innocent men were staring at me awaiting that inevitable accusation. But our tour was not yet over.

"Come with me, I want to show you the best one yet." We all walked back down the hill and came to stand beside the fallen trunk of the silver birch tree. "You see this tree," I was becoming angry, "somebody from our camp chopped this tree down. There are witnesses from the other camp up the hill who saw the tree being cut and heard the names of the people cutting it down. In other words we did it and now we are going to have to pay for the utter stupidity of two of you guys. I am asking you again, who did it!". Again the long list of denials. "Gentlemen, thanks to your irresponsible act, we are getting kicked out of this park in two hours and

nobody from Eastwood will be getting in here for the rest of the summer. Doesn't that bother you a little bit?" No reply. "I'm getting a little tired of this fooling around. Which two chopped down these trees?" All six denied again. "Bill, you didn't do it, is that right?"

"No, sir," replied Bill.

"But you do know who did it?"

"Yes, sir," he replied, looking down at the ground.

"Every guy here knows who did. Right?"

"Yes, sir," he replied.

"Well, why don't you tell me who is responsible," I said, looking him straight in the eye.

"Sir, it's none of my business. I didn't do it and that's all that matters."

"Wrong, Bill," I said, "it is your business. It's the business of all of us here because we all have to suffer because of the thoughtless dumb trick of two fellows. Two of us. Two of our group. You see what I mean? We are all responsible!"

"No, sir." He looked puzzled.

"Well, you can't get out of it by just saying, 'It's none of my business,' because it is your business and you have to leave this camp early along with the rest of us because someone here doesn't have enough sense to keep the axe away from the live trees. How many times do we have to tell you that

you don't cut down live trees? So It's game over for all of us. You see what I mean?"

"Yes, sir," he replied, his eyes reflecting the impact of his latest insight.

"I just wish the guys who did it had the guts to speak up and confess. Man, we know who it is anyhow. Right, Joe," I said, looking straight at him.

"It wasn't me, sir."

"Yes it was, Joe. You and Don yesterday afternoon, right here with our axe. The other group saw you and heard you. I sure hope you feel happy now that you've got us kicked out of the park. You know that's quite an accomplishment."

"It wasn't me, sir," replied Joe.

"What about it, Don?" He just shrugged. "I didn't hear you reply, Don," I said. He looked sheepishly at me.

"It wasn't me," he replied.

"Nobody here did it, eh?"

"Well, we cut down the little trees. We needed them for our raft, but we didn't chop down this one," said Joe.

"Very interesting," I said. "You cut all the little ones, but not this birch tree you're sitting on right now," I said.

"No, sir."

"I don't believe you, Joe. As far as I am concerned you and Don did it. I wish you hadn't, but you have. I am surprised that you won't admit it. Boy, we got you cold this time. I am surprised that you are not sorry for what has happened."

"I don't care," he said.

"I am disappointed with the rest of you guys because you don't care what happens around here either. Well, this matter is now closed. When we get back to the city, I will be having a chat with all of your parents to explain why we are coming home early and what happened up here to ruin our camp. Until then, let's get cracking. We got a lot of work to do and don't anybody cross me up any more today. I've taken just about all I can take."

We packed methodically, but quickly and in spite of the usual grumbling and complaining, we had the van loaded and ready for departure within two hours. When I made my final inspection, the camp site appeared pathetic, reluctant to say goodbye.

We drove straight to the park headquarters. The Superintendent was not there. We went straight to his house. We came; we saw; and he conquered. And the tragedy was complete. I could not see the need for the salvation of his precious little trees; so too, he could not see the need for the salvation of my precious little boys. Thus we parted.



### The Canoe Trip

As the two canoes glide out from the dock at Port Severn, through the clear warm water, the day of the canoe trip is here. It means packing a lunch of survival food to fight off the slight noontime hunger pangs. It means preparing early, renting canoes and paddling crisply, sometimes against the wind, sometimes the current, for fifteen miles. It means a noon stop and a swim, diving off a jutting rock twelve feet above the water. It means hot sun, windburnt foreheads and sunburnt legs.

This trip took place on July 10, 1969 when three leaders and three campers headed for a one-day canoe trip through Little Lake and Gloucester Pool northbound from Port Severn. The trip lasted for seven hours and in spite of sore muscles from endless paddling, the fifteen miles slipped by and by six o'clock all had returned safely to camp.

It is a glorious morning. The cry of birds tells me so. One eye open. The sun is shining brightly upon the corner of the tent. I listen. There is no sound but the birds. There is no wind. I analyse. Sun but no wind. That's a winning combination for a canoe trip and that's today.

I glanced at my watch--8:00 o'clock a.m. We've got to get us; there are things to be done, breakfast to be made, wood to be chopped, rations to be drawn, dishes to be washed,

campsites to be tidied. My mind went on endlessly as I dressed in the tent. I nudged the leaders.

"It's eight o'clock," I said nonchalantly.

No reply.

I left the tent and surveyed the quiet village. Sure is peaceful. I strode over to the other tent and lifted a flap. "Wake up, you guys. It's time to roll."

"What time is it?" came a sleepy voice.

"It's eight fifteen," I shouted.

There was a scramble in the tent such as one cannot possibly imagine as the campers frantically got up and dressed. Minutes later they emerged one by one looking sleepy but enthusiastic.

"Let's get cracking," I said. "Joe, build that fire up there. Pancakes and bacon for breakfast."

We swung into gear. Two matches were given to Joe and he set busily to his task. Dave began to set the table laying out orange juice and cereal packets. Tony picked up the crosscut while I worried about lazy leaders.

Half an hour later we six sat down to juice, cereal and mounds of delicious, fluffy, dark, heavy, burnt pancakes. (Nobody's perfect!) We finished our breakfast and the boys sprang to the chores. While Bart and Dave did the dishes and Tony and I cleaned up the campsite, Ernie and Joe carefully set out the rations for lunch. What a strange mixture.

There was dried fruit, figs, dates, chocolate, old cheese, raisins and oranges. We divided the assortment into six small piles and placed them in plastic bags. Each man then stuffed the supplies in his pocket. They would be very useful later. Soon the dishes were done and the campsite was clean. Our meagre woodpile had been replenished and covered against the weather. We leapt into the van and headed for Port Severn.

As we first glimpsed the water it was crystal clear and smooth. First there came the appropriate inquiries, then the rental agreements and finally, ours for the day, two canoes, four paddles and six life preservers. We set out the rules for the day. We demonstrated the proper handling of the canoes and then we headed for the open waters. What an exhilarating feeling. What a sense of freedom to feel the canoe shoot ahead with each stroke, to hear the water swirl around the boat; to see the paddles cut deep into the shining surface; to watch the wounds heal quickly. We swung around and headed north at a leisurely pace. The first mile went well, then a problem. Joe would not take his turn at the paddle. We stopped and we had a discussion.

"I'm too tired, sir! It's hard work."

"I know, Joe. What do you want us to do about it?"

"Take my place. You paddle for me."

"Okay, Joe, but when you're ready to paddle again, you take over."

"Okay, sir."

We set out again to catch the other canoe, Ernie and I paddling hard and fast. They stopped and waited for us and we soon caught up.

The miles began to slip by. About noon we spied a good spot for a swim. The canoes were secured on the beach and we changed into bathing suits. From a rock promontory, twelve feet above, we looked down at the inviting water. Then one at a time we jumped while Ernie acted as life guard. After a refreshing swim, we sunned ourselves on the warm rocks and engaged a leisurely lunch. The dried fruit, figs and dates slid down very easily. The hearty flavour of the old cheese bit against our tongues, but the chunks of chocolate soothed our active tastebuds. And to finish this tasty snack, there were fresh oranges. Soon all that was left were a few orange peels.

We placed the canoes against the water again and set our paddles in motion. As we swung around and headed on up stream the going got tougher. The light land breeze of the morning had turned into the normal afternoon squall so that small waves now beat against the canoes. The sun, moving relentlessly across the cloudless sky was reaching its high point and we could feel its heat on our arms and legs. But we paddled on and the miles slipped by. After passing two girls who were swamped in their canoe, we rounded the last bend and made our approach to Big Chute.

Big Chute is a narrow channel about seventy-five feet wide and because the water level drops about two feet in one hundred yards, the current is swift to say the least. Frequent cross currents make this stretch very tricky. We paddled slowly and gently toward the narrows mustering our already waning strength. Then at exactly the right moment, four paddles dug deep and the race was on.. Muscles strained against paddles and paddles knifed the water with a vengeance but our upstream progress was very slow. At times it was all we could do to stay in one spot and not drift downstream. And then weariness began to set in and muscles began to ache and our distant goal became more distant still. Finally when common sense overruled brute strength and reckless courage gave way to honest defeat, we swung around and rode the current down Big Chute. Now we were tired. We rested in the edying stillness kneading muscles, regaining oxygen.

When we had rested we faced the journey back. Like the Isrealites of long ago, we faced the prospect grimly. Now the wind whipped us, the sun stroked us and our sore muscles dogged us. But the boys plugged on mile after mile and we soon picked up a new spirit--one of fulfilment. Our goal was within our grasp.

About one mile from Port Severn, we met twelve canoes and a group of boys from a nearby camp who waved to us and shouted words of encouragement. The last three hundred

yards saw a vew vigour. Now we were racing again. Two canoes streaking down the lake rounding the final bend, fairly leaping at each stroke and then we were at the dock. The other canoe won.

As we put our canoes, paddles and gear away, beams of triumph shone in the faces of six friends. It was over, but was it? I don't know.

And the inevitable, "I'm hungry!" Somehow reality has a way of charging into the captured moment and our community moved on. But we had been through this experience together and we all shared the pain of too much sun and the pleasure of a job well done.

We found the van and moved slowly back to camp, there to prepare our evening meal which somehow tasted better than yesterday's. The meal was over and the woodpile restored to its bulky best.

We had our evening swim as usual, but it was shorter tonight because minds seemed to be somewhere else. Round the campfire, over little round donuts and mugs of steaming hot chocolate, some of our day came back to us. The boys reminisced about the things that had happened today which were important to them. For a moment ever so fleeting, ever so ephemeral we touched on some of the deeper things of this world--what it means to be needed, wanted, important; what it means to be honestly committed to the meaning of working together, of

community. I smiled as I listened to the boys trying to articulate the effects that a one-day canoe trip had had on them. I fancied God doing just the same thing. Then it was over and soon the lights were out and like voyageurs, tired after a long haul through the northern lakelands, we slept.

### Some Definitions

It seems abundantly clear that there are many factors affecting the growth and development of a child. Some are environmental; some are developmental. It is to these factors that I should like to turn in order to establish some definitions which will be useful as we apply our learning situations in later chapters. We will be focusing on the idea that the groups in question are Canadian inner city youth.

Our study will deal specifically with some of the issues that affect Canadian inner city youth. The word "Canadian" is therefore an important descriptive one in this context. The term "Canadian" is important insofar as we keep in mind that Canadian youth in the inner city do not face certain problems which may be prevalent in the inner city of other countries. It has not been traditional in Canada to have inner city made up of pockets of ethnic or racial groups. There are very few negro, Portuguese, Porto Rican ghettos in the Canadian Inner City and except for minor gang wars between social, ethnic or religious groups, there seems to be a genuine sympathy among all members of a given inner city

community regardless of race, colour or creed. Largely these things are irrelevant against a matrix of social injustice and persecution in the form of poor housing, poor fire and police protection and City Hall chauvinism. Canadian Inner City, then, cannot be broken down beyond the socio-economic into racial and ethnic ghettos. Thus in boys and girls clubs, Italians, Portuguese, Roman Catholic, Protestants, Negroes and Whites play side by side according to a set of rules which largely ignores race and colour. The Canadian scene has as its lowest common denominator social and economic factors but to this date, in spite of the influence from the United States, there has been very little polarization along ethnic and racial lines. Of course there are Roman Catholic parishes, Protestant missions and ethnic national churches around which people can rally for their "religion." But it seems that in the Canadian Inner City, the singular most unsuccessful church of these three is the ethnic national church. It makes its appeal on the basis of prestige, social outlet and language, all three of which make very little impact on the youth in the Canadian Inner City. The Canadian Inner City is remarkably devoid of large or even small ethnic national churches.

The Roman Catholic parish church owes much of its survival to the presence of the Roman Catholic parochial school located nearby the church in the inner city. This makes a link between school and church effective in the



early stages of a child's growth, but the link becomes rather tenuous as the child grows older. Yet just about the time an inner city boy or girl quits school, he quits the church, too. The connection has been too strong. It would appear that as one goes, so also must the other. When I say go, I mean, not necessarily will a child quit attending church. He may go occasionally. But in the same way that the educational process has effectively ceased to shape his learning, so, too, the church has ceased to be able to meet his spiritual needs, and well being. School and church both become irrelevant; one because of its fastidious, obnoxious teachers, the other because of its antiquated, meaningless practices.

We are left to consider the struggling Protestant Mission Church. This type of approach to religion seems to take its cue from the weaknesses of its two competitors. Thus the Protestant Mission Church ministers in many languages, but shapes its ministry around the socio-economic needs of the people in the immediate area. There is no appeal to prestige and the social nature of the church in no way betrays the basic anti-social patterns of the geographic area. The church is not tied too closely to the school or community centre, but tries always to adjust its ministry, to "plug in" where the people seem to be. The Protestant City Mission in its worship, education and social service bears little resemblance to either of its two inner city competitors or to its suburban counterpart. It remains aloof from the schools so it can minister

where they fail. It stands apart from the community centre so it can minister to those who cannot cope with program-centred activities. It is forced to stand aloof from middle class protestant churches because it is different. But in its aloofness and differentness, it finds its freedom to minister in the inner city offering to the community a viable alternative to a churchless existence. Its preaching and practices reflect the needs of the people, its program and personnel attempt to meet those needs.

The Canadian Protestant Mission, then, stakes its future and attributes its success to the fact that it ministers in terms of the lowest common denominator of the community, those of social and economic factors. It opens its doors to all people, rich and poor, but usually only the poor go in. Canadian Inner City, then, is largely devoid of ethnic pockets and because of this ethnic churches do not function significantly.

At this point in dealing with Canadian distinctives, some definition of the Canadian Inner City should be attempted. Inner City is an aged and decaying district of a city. Long past its usefulness for commerce and industry, it has become a dwelling place of the poor and the alienated. Let us expand this definition for a moment. The Inner City generally only appears in a medium to large sized city, where there has been a significant influx of population with its inevitable

growth of suburbia and suburban living and an increase or a radical shift in commerce and industry out of the downtown area. Those who have "made it" gravitate outwards to the suburbs. Those who have not, gravitate inwards to the old residential sections of the city. There is a "community of necessity" set up in old houses and apartments away from the pulse of business and the glamour of neon lights. It becomes a city within a city which develops its own subculture and ethos. The poor establish the subculture; the alienated are admitted. Because the buildings are occupied for the most part by the poor who can ill afford to maintain their aesthetic qualities, the buildings soon take on a rundown and decaying look which only helps to demoralize the people living in them. It becomes a vicious circle spiralling ever downward seemingly out of the control of those who are most closely involved in it. Hence the buildings age faster and the decay sets in more decisively. Contact with the world of business and industry and life in the world "out there" becomes more remote and fragmented, thus contributing to the establishment of distinctive cultural patterns. The Inner City can sometimes be spotted by its careful observer but to do it justice one must experience it.

What are some of the patterns in inner city subculture which make it distinctive? The most striking one is the lack of a social consciousness in the inner city. There is almost

none. There is no finesse; no sophistication; very little ability to cope with complex social problems in a complex society. The man in the inner city lives by a code of ethics which is not based on accepted social norms. He lives by his wits and according to a "survival of the fittest" code. Hence he is noisy and raucous when he should be quiet and genteel. He is stubborn and defensive when he should be cooperative and courteous. In short he has been cheated and robbed by the world "out there" (or so he thinks), and therefore he is not going to give up anything else. So he is unpretentious, crude and abundantly certain that some things are worth fighting for. To his credit, though, is his earthy straight forward nature. He is not phoney. He may not be able to "swing" at the best tea party, but he is not afraid or ashamed to admit it.

Unfortunately his lack of sophistication makes it difficult for him to cope with a world that is sophisticated. Hence his chances of success are greatly hampered by his lack of social consciousness. He simply cannot move freely out of his world into the world of middle class society. His subculture which frees him to a certain extent also makes him a prisoner and the boundaries, though they may be invisible, are virtually uncrossable. Honesty and unpretentiousness are virtues only in a world that is willing to recognize them as such. In his view the man in the Inner City does recognize them, the rest of the world does not.

So the Inner City is another world, a world devoid of sophistication. Rape, murder, mugging, theft, wanton destruction, common law, prostitution, unemployment; all things which are unacceptable to a civilization which lives by its sophisticated social mores, are common to and accepted by the Inner City subculture. They are accepted because the lack of social consciousness makes the man in the Inner City unable to frown upon and condemn these practises as being immoral. It could be debated that the foregoing social ills are present in all social strata in the city but are better known in the Inner City because no effort is made to hide them. The lack of social consciousness in the Inner City has far-reaching effects upon its members. These will be discussed in later chapters.

Another distinctive which is strikingly different from the first may be called "unfamiliarity with the soil". Inner City people, especially second or third generation, are almost totally unaware and afraid of the country. They have no sense of appreciation of the woods and streams, no joy of the great out-of-doors. They are unfamiliar with the dark of a moonless night, the hoot of an owl, the multitude of kinds of trees, plants, birds, and grasses. They react with an emotion which borders on fear. For the person whose world is concrete, asphalt, rotting wood, crumbling brick and smoke which filters the sun, the sights, sounds, and smells of the country present

a phenomenon with which he can hardly cope. When he is guided by streetlights and the wail of sirens and familiar pavement beneath his feet, he is right at home, but give him a road map and a distance to cover greater than ten blocks and he is lost. Overwhelmed by the magnitude of the distance, confused by the verdure, hostile to the open road, he will recoil and long for the familiar path of the Inner City. The Inner City man is alienated from nature and seems hardly able to discover and appreciate the best which the country can offer.

The third distinctive is not as widely applicable as the first and second, but nevertheless bears mentioning. This distinctive is poverty. This seems to grow out of the first two and suggests a wide range of implications. There is the poverty of economic resources which arises from too little income, too large a family or too expensive habits such as drinking or gambling. There is the poverty of educational qualifications which arises from too little schooling and inadequate study facilities. There is the poverty of job opportunity which arises from this lack of social consciousness and inadequate educational qualifications. There is the poverty of abundant living which arises from this unfamiliarity of the country and lack of social awareness. It must by now seem clear that the term "Inner City" brings forth many responses--some emotive, some academic. It is impossible to

define all the characteristics which are contained in the term "Inner City".

The writer has endeavoured to give adequate clarity to the term "Inner City" sufficient at least to suggest that the man from the Inner City comes from a different world which must in part remain unknown to those of us who inhabit another world.

There remains only the term "youth" to which we must attach some working definition. For the purpose of this paper, youth is taken to mean boys in an age group ranging from eight to seventeen years old. It must also be said that these youth are affected considerably and obviously by the aforementioned Canadian and Inner City conditions under which they exist. In the Inner City, boys become school drop-outs much sooner. This is due partly to their attitude of revolt and partly because of the sheer lack of incentive on the part of the family. Social maturity, if it comes at all, arrives later to an Inner City boy and so the age group eight to sixteen could effectively be about the same as six to thirteen years old in a comparable suburban community. This means that age is not a good yardstick for maturity and must largely be ignored in programming and counselling. This becomes particularly noticable when boys are grouped by ages in youth groups or church school classes. Age groupings which are purely arbitrary and play no favourites are seldom workable as a

means of producing viable groups. A notable example was a church school class of "intermediate boys" whose age spanned three years, but whose grades in school spanned seven years. The maturity disparity was at least seven years. For wilderness camping purposes, the ages of the boys are completely ignored and the groupings are selected on the basis of mutual interests and relative maturity.

Because of what is termed the age disparity, two other factors must be briefly discussed, with respect to the definition of Canadian youth.

The first factor is the relationship of youth to adults. Although this facet will receive more detailed attention later, it is sufficient to say that the relationship with adults is one in which the parents play a dominant role. The parents are quite authoritarian both physically and vocally until their children reach an age which would be considered rather high in other settings. For this reason the relationship lacks warmth and is sometimes openly hostile. The young boys seem unable to relate to their parents who seem equally unable to relate to them. They have difficulty relating to other adults also and accordingly find it extremely hard to cope with the adult world in general.

This is an extremely important aspect which is instrumental in the approach to the second factor--the type of leadership. Leadership must be firm. It must be quite



authoritarian, almost cruel at times. It must be able to break into the mores of peer groups at any age level and bring about change both to the individual and to the group. The leader will never be part of the "in group" and if he feels that he is, he will probably be an ineffective leader. Leadership must resemble parental authority but must be involved in the relational world of the boys in a way in which very few parents are able to be. Leadership cannot be laissez faire or low key. Leadership which is generated from within the gangs of boys must be located and utilized for the good of all. The leader must be perceptive, sensitive and very firm with the Inner City boys, if he is to exercise any meaningful leadership within his group.

In summary it should be noted that Inner City Youth means boys whose ages span from eight to seventeen years old whose primary relational world is horizontal within their peer groups. Their relational world makes it extremely difficult for a youth leader to become a pal. The leadership role must be very firm and capable of breaking into the horizontal relational world if it is to make any significant impact upon it.

In this first chapter, two specific incidents set within the social matrix and spacious firmament of a wilderness camp setting have been cited. In this paper these two incidents will serve as "form copies".

Brief definitions of "Canadian", "Inner City", and

"Youth", featuring the distinctives of these terms which will be germane to the ensuing discussions have been set forth. We have endeavoured to lay the groundwork for the Theology, the teaching-learning and the integration of all these functions which will produce a philosophy of wilderness camping for the Canadian Inner City youth.

## II

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CAMPING

#### The God Question

It seems inevitable that in any treatise which describes the nurturing of lives through the process of Christian Education, the God question must eventually be asked. Not to ask the question either begs the question or implies that this kind of question is not relevant to the process of Christian Education. But it is relevant. In fact it is so important that the entire value of Wilderness Camping for Inner City Youth as a viable process of Christian Education rests upon the kind of answer which emerges from asking the God question.

The question can be best stated as follows: How does the God of history break into and become involved in the lives of young boys camping in the wilderness? It becomes evident when the question is asked that the answer is crucial not only to the kind of camping situation which ensues but also to the fundamental nature of the Christian community.

The early church felt the presence of God in its daily life. The people were close to and deeply influenced by the glory of the risen Christ. They responded in ministry according to the power of the Spirit in their midst. We have travelled

a long road since those days, sometimes treacherous, sometimes safe, but we find ourselves involved now in the daily life of the world of the twentieth century. The structures have changed demanding change in the institutions. Now we are locating out-of-doors in a provincial park. Here we experience our daily life. Here is a segment of the church in the twentieth century in a setting vastly different from that of the early church. Again the question confronts us. Do we feel the presence of God in our daily life? At camp are we deeply influenced by the glory of the risen Christ? Is our ministry in this wilderness setting in response to the Spirit in our midst? If the answer to any of these questions is "no", then we are failing to grasp the meaning of being Christian. There is an alternate answer--"I don't know." This kind of answer arises when the type of criteria for judgment which we apply is not capable of producing a definite answer. There is a vagueness about this answer which suggests a vagueness about the nature of God and the understanding of his presence with man in our century.

But there are assertions which can be made, assertions which may help with the problem of vagueness. God is present and active with his people in all walks of life. He is not confined to the church building, to Inner City missions, to music, liturgy, prayers, to things churchy. Let it be made

abundantly clear that the God whom the Old Testament and New Testament writers proclaimed is present and active at a wilderness camp. God hovers over his people keeping his watchful eye upon them and his guiding hand is in the midst. More will be said about this later.

God is concerned about all men. Again we refer to the New Testament and its theological statement in John's Gospel, Chapter 3, verse 16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." This concern cannot be posited in pockets of time and space but is found to be ever present even in a wilderness camp. So God is concerned about the amount of sleep each boy gets, the kind of food, exercise and the kind of relationships which develop. In fact there is no area in life at camp about which God is not concerned and accordingly uses his power of love, creativity and judgment to demonstrate his concern for the person. This concern can be demonstrated by referring to the very nature of God himself. When men fight against each other or blaspheme against God, then he is hurt and feels a sense of sorrow, a sense of broken relationship. So God always strives after restoration and healing that in a healed relationship with him a man will always find a healed relationship with his fellow man. God is concerned for all men that they may live together. Therefore, by definition, he is present and active with his

people. More often than not the initiative for healing is taken by God because he wants the very best for his people.

God wants men to be righteous, moral, creative, thinking persons. He is optimistic about their possibilities (cf. Genesis 1 where all things are created by God for His glory and behold they are very good). But man has the potential for evil. He can go wrong. He can break faith and smash relationships. But God is ceaselessly hopeful. He yearns constantly for man to put forward his best foot that through understanding of God, man may learn to receive and live within the goodness of God, to accept and appreciate the best which God can provide and live in a kingdom of neighbourliness and loving concern.

#### The Importance of Persons

In our camp setting where God is present and active in loving concern, people are very important. The whole history of the Christian Church seems to bear witness to the belief that Christianity is a personal religion. It is God's concern for persons; it is the relationship of God to each man that really counts. When the church's concern has moved away from persons and has centred on doctrine, ecclesiastical structures or preservation of tradition, then it has experienced periods of extreme hardship and poverty. To be true to the spirit of its founder, the Christian Church must centre its evangelistic outreach on the person and his moral, spiritual, physical and

community needs. So let it be at the campsite. Each boy ceases to be only part of a large group and becomes a person who brings his own particular contributions to camp, as well as his own needs. Each boy ceases to be a pawn in the group process and becomes the direct concern of the saving grace of the God who loves and judges his people. It is as if God is concerned solely for each one person during this camping experience. But God's love which knows no bounds can and does encompass all campers. So we are faced with a "ninety and nine" situation, but God saves the one who is lost.

It is most natural to say then that the wilderness camp setting is person centred rather than programme centred. The overriding purpose of the camp experience is not to take a group of campers through a specific predesigned programme with a view to producing the product which the programme is supposed to produce. It is rather to shape the programme around the contributions and needs of the persons in order to help them to more clearly understand their relationship to God and one another. Salvation is confrontation of and response to God's saving act in Christ. It can happen only to persons not to programmes. In short we are not out to save the programme and sacrifice the people. This kind of thinking is immoral. This kind of sacrifice is pagan.

Whereas God cannot save a programme, a programme can be an instrument of salvation. Parables, preaching, healing

were all part of Jesus' programme which he used effectively in his ministry to persons as part of his instrument of salvation. To be totally non-programmed or unprogrammed is irresponsible, but God's primary concern is with his people and not whether they fit into a programme. So the centre of the camp setting is the individual. He is important to both God and the leaders; so important, in fact, that neither one will let go of him.

Is it becoming clear that a great burden of responsibility is falling upon the leaders?

#### Leaders as Enablers, Creators, Judges

As the nature of the Christian community at camp is further explored, let us consider the importance of leaders in this community. To be painfully brief, leaders must help the campers to experience the presence of God in their midst-- nothing more, nothing less. A leader is one who has the sense of the presence of God and then brings it out for the campers to experience. This places upon the leaders the burden to act in a God-like fashion, while still retaining the stance of fallen man. So as God comes to man in love, justice and peace, so the leader must relate to his campers in love, justice and peace. To do this the leader functions within approximate parameters to permit him to be an enabler of the possibilities of community interaction. Herein he demonstrates the basic Christian quality of love, becoming a co-creator with God to



help the campers to discover their potential for creative interchange and basic camping skills. As judge, he helps to keep the community intact by bringing the judgment of God and His peace upon those who seek to break loose and take the whole matter of justice into their own hands.

Why this demand upon the leader? To function effectively in a person centred camping experience, the leader must be sensitive to the needs of the camper and perceptive enough to realize that God is involved in the process of growth of each camper. The leader then becomes the enabler--God's right hand man, his humble servant. But what is there to enable? The leader then designs the programme understanding full well that God as a member of the community must be given room to participate. So the leader plans his programme so that God's love can be made manifest in men. God's love, arising out of the kind of answer which is evolving from the God question, is the basic stuff of the camp. It is the theological goal toward which all programming, yes even the meals, must point. For God's love which should be demonstrated in the leaders' attitude towards campers is an extremely powerful factor of presence in the camp. God takes the initiative. It remains only to the leader to help each camper to realize that God (and he) cares for that camper more than all else and he wants each camper to realize the depth and breadth of this love and to respond to it through radical change in life style. Love then

becomes the overriding purpose of the camp and the other two facets, creativity and judgment, become the tools through which love can be generated, maintained and utilized.

Campers must be challenged both to the power and to the restraint of love. God's love is not a syrupy, sentimental love which makes no demands and knows no limitations. For within his love is his righteousness and within his righteousness is his justice. Love does not make shambles out of the camp, but makes men out of boys. Love is not a noisy gong or a clanging symbol; it is the harmony of music when campers live, work and play together.

A leader must judge. He must remind the campers not only of the love but of their responsibility to that love and to each other and he must punish them when they forget. The leader has a difficult task and at times nothing short of agony will be his lot. But he must point out that to love means to be responsible and the campers are responsible for their thoughts, words and deeds to God and to each other. The leader, then, must plan programme to enable love to flourish and also to enable a responsible response to that love. If perchance a camper who is to help erect the 9 by 12 tent disappears and fails in his responsibility, he has to be punished not out of malice, but out of love. The leader sets on an extra wood patrol or potato peeling which by its very nature is a responsible act and yet comes within both the

leader's and the camper's expectations.

Wishy-washy love usually elicits a wishy-washy response. God's love is strong and pure and the response to it is enriching and satisfying. There is nothing menial about washing dishes, but to the camper who refuses, then, the punishment. But after punishment comes forgiveness and peace, and this is the peace of God. The leader must demonstrate that after the camper, who has broken step has been suitably chastized, he is forgiven and returned to the ranks. God holds no grudges. "Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth."<sup>1</sup> Here is the peace of God to which the leader must respond both in his programming and in his sensitivity towards the camper. There is no excuse for the leader who singles out and torments some particular camper during the camping period for a wrong he has done. A community which is living in harmony and experiencing the fulness of God's love is one which is at peace and the leader as an enabler must strive toward the peace of God in the midst of men.

### Principles of Community

By now it is becoming clear that certain principles and ground rules form an integral part of a Christian community at camp. We have seen that the leader is dealing with persons

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<sup>1</sup>I Corinthians 13:6.

and he is consciously striving to be a vehicle of the love of God and an enabler for the love ethic to operate. But he needs his principles. He cannot be constantly operating in a kind of all-pervasive vacuum that fails to tell him what to do in a given crisis. Thus the leader resorts to certain principles which are, to be sure, the basic rules of a Christian Community.

All people are equal before God. God does not love any one person more than another. He does not play favourites. So, in a camp setting all campers and leaders are equal. Not one person is by definition entitled to a qualitatively better experience than another. No one should be punished more than another. Forgiveness cannot be granted to one and withheld from another no matter how much the leader is antagonized or aggravated by any one camper. God has put all men on an equal footing. This is a great comfort to most leaders.

Each man must share (equally) the responsibility for the good of the camp and for each other. In like manner as equality before God is equality of response to Him, no camper is automatically exempted from work (except on medical grounds) by virtue of his relationship to God. Man responds to God according to his innate love for the Creator and his understanding of the nature of God. Whereas response, if it can be measured at all, does not have to be "equal" from all campers; there must be inherent in the response the willingness to be

responsible for the good of the camp. This is helpful to the leader. This, of course, is theological justification for punishment which is quite necessary for the running of a decent camp. This probably is most ably expressed as the keeperhood of man and is demonstrated in Cain's responsibility to his brother, Abel. Perhaps all campers cannot respond equally to God, but they are equally responsible to his absolute demand of love and loyalty.

As far as ground rules are concerned this term refers specifically to the structures of camping which are suggested by the leaders and generally approved by campers. The ground rules are necessary for the basic operation of the Christian community at camp and are therefore part of the process of the presence of God. These ground rules, which arise out of common sense, include such things as preparation of food by the campers, eating of meals at regular hours, common courtesy at the table, sleeping proper hours, adequate sanitary and toileting facilities, swimming periods, pre-arranged arrival and departure hours and a host of other things. These things are included because it is significant to point out that God is involved even in small things, the things we take for granted. It is perhaps naively simple but profound to believe that God is concerned about proper diet, health habits, sleep, and administrative technicalities. But to repudiate this is to take God out of the common events of life and put Him back in

a church building. We dare not make this mistake again. God is involved not only in selecting the best ground rules, but also in the implementation of them. A superficial reading of the New Testament may imply that Jesus was not concerned about these simple body functions of life, but a careful study of his life as recorded in scripture indicates that he retreated to catch up on his sleep; that he ate when he walked through the cornfields (on the sabbath). Surely if God is not schizophrenic, he penetrates all facets of life. He is concerned even for the mundane. He feeds the sparrows. The leader learns to trust God; to let God become involved at the table, around the campfire and on the planning committee. The overriding thrust of the establishing of ground rules is that God watches day and night. The leader then brings the rules and ground rules to bear upon the God question as the beginning of a Christian community takes shape in the wilderness.

What other criteria are important here? God expects campers to respond to his love. In the process of acting responsibly, the campers must learn to live in a community and accept and abide by the decisions of the group. This is truly give and take. There is very little room for the loner, the undisciplined, the troublemaker; very little, indeed. This is so because at camp where certain issues and events are decided by the democratic process, group decision must be binding upon all campers. It means that a reluctant camper must abide by a decision he himself does not like; a decision

he voted against. This is what it means to live responsibly, constrained by the love of God. This is a good yardstick of growth and maturity. From the Old and the New Testaments we read about a people who found it difficult to live continually within the will of God. Sometimes they were very immature and revolted and rebuffed God. When they did so they invariably got themselves into trouble. Maturity came when and if they accepted the love of God and responded to it unconditionally. Some of God's will is revealed in the group process wherein a group makes a decision which will edify the group, but one person does not like the decision and he balks at it. But he is called upon to live responsibly and so he fights against this necessity. But the group applies pressure and finally he learns that the group thinks that this is best for him. They demonstrate their care for him by helping him to abide by a decision which he himself would not have made. In the end he may even enjoy himself so that in a sense he is reconciled to the decision which went against him. But he has learned about give and take from the decision-making process.

Another criterion is the basic unity of the group. There should be a homogeneity of the group as far as interests or outlook are concerned. It is almost impossible to build a community, even a Christian community, without a uniting force or factor to be operative. The basic factor for unity of the

camping group is the desire to live together and have a good time--a desire to which God himself is committed. He wants the best for his children. The happy face of a boy digging into his second helping of beef stew is a sign that a basic unity is being established and the Christian community is being shaped. Unanimous decisions seem to corroborate the oneness of the camping group. But these must be worked at, and striven after and they don't always come easily. Sometimes when a unanimous decision is made too easily, God's judgment comes in the form of the leader's veto. But still the spirit of unity among the group is a strong criterion of community.

#### The Presence of Christ

Is Jesus present in the midst of the campers? The question must be asked because we are given the promise that where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, there He is in the midst. This seems to imply that Jesus, or at least his spirit, is present with the two or three or more gathered in the wilderness. Another reference which bears mentioning is the great commission of Matthew 28:20 where Jesus promises that he is with us (i.e. present in our Christian community) until the end of the age. This question is important only insofar as we wish to make a distinction between an ordinary community and a Christian community. A Christian community implies not only the presence of Christians, but also the presence of attitude, goals and concerns which



are true to the New Testament teaching about Jesus. Thus in a Christian community (i.e. in a wilderness camp) is it merely the presence of Christian leaders or the presence of Jesus himself which gives impetus to the interaction between God and man? Or to state the question yet another way--are we motivated by the actual presence of Jesus giving us strength of character and witness or are we motivated by the desire to create an ethical community based on Christian lines as interpreted and understood through the New Testament?

Let me be so bold as to suggest that Jesus is actually present with his people at camp. Thus he guides and directs us to be the people of His father demonstrating what it means to sacrifice, to teach, to heal, to lay down one's life for one's friends. The leaders, then, no longer find themselves in the untenable position of having to interpret and understand all crises so accurately as to be able to respond not so much according to Christian teaching, but according to the very nature of Jesus himself. Why? Because Jesus is present and it is he who responds in crisis. It is he who continues his ministry through his servants mediating the love of God in a variety of ways so unique and so marvelous that they remain always far beyond the comprehension of men. This is to say that leaders do not go off to camp alone nor do they need to feel that they are alone with the awful task of redeeming the lost. The Son of Man came to seek and to save and His ministry continues under the will of God made manifest

through his servants. One of the real strengths of the Christian faith is that God has not abandoned his people but sends His son to mediate and to search for the lost one as well as ninety and nine. This is perhaps the only describable technical difference between a Christian camp and a non-articulated non-Christian camp. Jesus is present. He is the director, the van driver, the enabler, the wood cutter, the chief cook and bottle washer. He is the master and the servant of all, the one who sleeps in the unseen bedroll. Apart from this difference, Christian camps are probably identical in kind, item for item, activity for activity, with their non-Christian counterparts.

What a gross assumption on the part of the leader-- Jesus is present. But a small statement like this can make a vast difference for the camp and this small shift in emphasis requires a large, a magnificent leap of faith by the leader. Yet the comfort which this affords the leader is always to be reckoned with. When Jesus said, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>2</sup>, he meant just exactly that and the person who bears the heavy yoke of responsibility in the middle of the wilderness, can take great comfort in knowing that he does not have to and never did have to bear it alone.

So Jesus comes to lead the campers into the fulness

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<sup>2</sup>Matthew 11:28.

of God and to continue his ministry in the midst of sinful men. His ministry, so delightful at times, so terribly demanding at times, becomes the fulcrum of the Christian life and the hinge to let the door swing open to the one who stands outside and knocks. The leader's (only) responsibility is to take up his cross and follow the Leader.

### The Place of the Holy Spirit

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will bear witness for me in Jerusalem and all over Judea and Samaria and away to the ends of the earth."<sup>3</sup> When we look at this scripture we see that Jesus' promise is that his followers will receive the Holy Spirit and as a result of this will bear witness to Jesus to the ends of the earth, to the shores of provincial parks, to the forest glades of wilderness camps.

Behold the Holy Spirit is also involved in wilderness camping to fulfil a roll which is very clearly and very unclearly defined. The Holy Spirit goes to camp and leaders who have become sensitive to the presences of God, and who have responded to the Lordship of Jesus Christ will also receive the Holy Spirit in power to enable the leaders to be the kind of leaders and to do the kind of things that the leader would otherwise find impossible. The Holy Spirit is the true enabler in the camp setting. It is the Holy Spirit

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<sup>3</sup>Acts 1:8.

in the leader which gives him the creativity of thought and personality. It is the Holy Spirit which gives him the ability to endure the constant pressure of a dynamic which is capable of integrating lives or disintegrating camping ventures. It is the Holy Spirit which gives to the leaders and the campers the ability to respond in love in that tall way that so characterizes God's boundless love. So we are presented with a curious combination. We are confronted with God who breaks into our history and into our campsite to offer his great love. We have Jesus as our fellow camper who strives to be one of us and show us what the love of God is and what it can do in the daily experiences of leaders and campers alike. We have the Holy Spirit who grips us tightly and raises us above the level of despondency and despair and gives us power that we may attain the measure of love which is the legacy of those who choose to become the sons of God. We have in fact, a rather different camping experience.

There is a place in wilderness camping for the Holy Spirit. The Spirit effects quite radical changes in the boys. To see a boy who has known frequently the feeling of failure and defeat, the estrangement of a broken home, the alienation of the ghetto, turned upside down and raised to the high plateau of self worth and human dignity has been one of the most satisfying experiences of my camping career.

But the very best part is that the boy knew that he was different. He could neither understand what had happened to him nor explain the kind of change which took place, but it was very real to him and he rejoiced in his new freedom. This is not the universal experience in all boys to be sure; perhaps this is really just an exceptional case, but for the duration of these experiences as the Spirit moves where it wills, the whole camp is different, transformed by the presence of God in the life of a young lad.

But we do not live on the mountaintop all the time. In like manner, neither do we demand that the Holy Spirit fill us with exceptional powers and radically transform us all the time. The truly exciting thing about wilderness camping with Inner City boys is the profound belief in the presence in power of the Holy Spirit and the many and varied ways in which this power is experienced. Whereas God created the camp in the wilderness and Jesus draws together the people who are to live in community, it is the Holy Spirit which validates the experiences and completes that which Jesus has begun. The Spirit keeps the leaders humble when they should be humble, but affirms their leadership when they are discouraged. Without the Holy Spirit there would be no hope that the boys could survive any transforming experiences longer than the duration of the camp. They would come back home just as they left without lasting or permanent side effects

of their encounter with God. This then is how God becomes and remains involved with his campers, through the challenge of Jesus Christ and the responding of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has an important place in a wilderness camp and should not be excluded from the best inputs in the programming. For the Spirit works through hard work, fear, drama, learning experiences and bed time devotions and should not be excluded from being given room to raise the dust.

The Holy Spirit is an untapped source of power. It is untapped because we do not know how to release it. But God does, and a leader who is sensitive to the power and the movement of the Holy Spirit is continually thankful to God for his infinite concern for campers. And a camper who is sensitive to the power and the movement of the Holy Spirit is, though he cannot explain why, a happy camper.

#### The Overall Relation of God

God relates to the wilderness camp. Every aspect, from the campsite to the firewood and even the many multi-faceted campers are part of his creation. We all belong to him. It is now abundantly clear that to think of wilderness camping without the presence of God simply cannot be done. God is involved by the very nature of his concern for men. If the witness of the New Testament tells us anything about

God, it is that He is involved from beginning to end in all processes of life, the profane as well as the sacred. Thus we plan and relate our purpose of camping around God's involvement with us. In camp, through Christ as Lord and the Spirit of God as enabler, an abundant life is experienced; one which exemplifies the life which Jesus came to bring and God as the giver of all life holds out to us. Campers are learning to live with each other, giving and taking for the good of each other, living in peace and harmony together, resolving differences and having fun, experiencing the best that God can possibly create. "And God saw what he had done and behold it was very good."

### The Integration Process

We have up to now taken some specific examples of life in the wilderness and, in this chapter, set out a broad base for the experience of God in and among the campers. It is perhaps too easy to suggest that the campers will be able to realize that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is their God, too. It is too trite to assume that all or any campers sense the presence of Jesus as a co-camper or co-leader or the Lord of their life, nor can they easily attribute their spectacular successes and failures to the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we have presented the experience and posed the God question. In our attempt to provide some answer to this question we have raised others about the learning

process by which the campers come to realize the nature of God and their relationship to Him. It is to this rather necessary task we now turn in order to examine the camp setting, structures, activities and goals in order to provide the tools for an adequate philosophy of wilderness camping for Canadian Inner City youth.



### III

#### THE LEARNING PROCESS

Some people conceive of education as the accumulation of facts and ideas; the learning through experiences which have been distilled into concepts. Education is the transmission of these "distilled experiences" in order that they may be taken into the life of the learner to affect and enrich that life.

For others education is a series of experiences in which persons relate to other persons or things, and within these relationships, learning . . . takes place.<sup>1</sup>

With these two views in mind let us consider the elements of a theory of learning which will be helpful to us in our wilderness camping as we attempt to provide an exciting time for campers, an engaging experience of God in Christ and an environment which leads to new life for all men.

#### A Theory of Learning

Richard S. Doty discusses the dimensions of camping:

The summer camp may be thought of as three-dimensional. Two dimensions correspond to height and breadth. One is the camp itself: the setting, the equipment, the personnel--what we have at camp. The second is the camp programme--what we do. Most important of all is the third or depth dimension--what happens to the camper.<sup>2</sup>

In this section we are interested in the learning

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<sup>1</sup>Bud Harper, Growing Inside, Outside (Toronto, 1969) p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Richard S. Doty, The Character Dimension of Camping (New York, 1960) p. 24.

process. What Doty considers the first two dimensions, I would call inputs and what he calls the third dimension, "what happens to the camper," I would call the output. My theory of learning in its simplest form involves a certain number of inputs or factors which when applied to a camper through the process of grasping and assimilation produce a specific result--the output--which is the result of the internalization of the inputs. For example, when a camper is learning how to build a fire the inputs are the location in the woods, the wood, the instructor, the demonstration of piling the wood, the practice by the camper of piling the wood, the striking of the match, the resultant conflagration, and the vested interest of God as enabler. These inputs are grasped and assimilated by the camper. The specific result is that the camper has learned how to and is now capable of lighting a fire anyplace and anytime. He can do this because he has internalized the inputs and they become part of his experience. When he wants to light a fire he draws on the internalized inputs of past experience, follows the remembered procedure and produces the fire. He has learned to build a fire. The output is his ability to build a fire anyplace, anytime.

What is the importance of this theory of learning for boys at a wilderness camp? It is important because the inputs can, to a certain extent, be controlled to produce specific outputs from the learned experiences. Like Doty we, too, have

the first dimension--that of the camp itself. In this controlled situation, a wilderness or isolated setting is selected to reduce the number of extraneous or mitigating factors. The input here is to get completely away from all things normal, from all people; to be alone with just our little group. Our equipment, too, is quite simple, basic and quite inexpensive. There is no expensive investment in complicated, highly mechanized equipment. Because of its simplicity, the use of the equipment can be quickly demonstrated and used by all campers. Theoretically our personnel are competent, well trained, sensitive people whose skill and knowledge is passed on to the campers through discussion and demonstration. With the leader to camper ratio of one to two, there is sufficient opportunity for each leader to spend as much time with each camper as is necessary to make the input thorough and comprehensible. Valid inputs arise then from the campsite, the use of equipment and the capability of the leaders.

We also subscribe to Doty's second dimension. Important as input is the program. Thus programming is flexible and allows for optimum exposure at a level of encounter which attempts to maximize the learning potential. If we have to take longer in order for the campers to grasp the inputs of program, then we do. There is no demand for uniformity among campers. Programming is used as the basis

of experimentation so that the camper may investigate his own method of grasping and assimilation. Some campers may only want to discuss how to build a fire. Others may want to practise and experiment with it. Whatever their preference, maximum exposure by the leaders is provided where ever possible. In the experience, a valuable input is grasped by the camper. Programming is therefore carefully planned. The input is maximized in order to maximize the output and achieve the goals of the program.

But we have added a dimension which may unwittingly become the fourth dimension. It is called the investment of God. God's concern becomes an input for the camper. God's vested interest is partly an enabling process, partly revelatory in its nature. It is expressed in the beam of joy in the camper's face when he shouts, "I did it," attaining what, for him, must be a level of achievement far beyond his wildest dream. To look at it yet another way, there is nothing inherent in the inputs to produce the outputs.

When learning takes place, it takes place in a miraculous way and this is the investment of God coming to fruition. With learning experiences, or in Doty's words, "what happens to the camper," comes joy and deep satisfaction which is attributable to God and his infinite love of man. God becomes the catalyst of the learning process. He converts inputs into outputs. God, then, is the fourth dimension and is as elusive as the term suggests.

The results of the first, second and fourth dimensions is the third--the happeningness of the camper. His world is expanded, his horizons are stretched. He senses the miracle of rebirth in his mind. He has a better chance of and a greater capacity for becoming a whole person and his outputs become available as inputs for others. He never "arrives" but is always in the process of becoming. Because his capacity always exceeds his present level, there is always something more to be learned. So we have it--inputs from a multiplicity of sources plus the catalytic miracle of God equals output or learned experience.

#### Programming: Routines and Activities

Some elements of the program are laid down and are in effect really substructures of a program.

Program is family living in the out-of-doors, filled with all the richness that the campers, the counselors, and the natural world can give to it. The group can be small enough that program is as near family life as can be approximated. Here is a potential for infinite carry over possibilities.<sup>3</sup>

When we go to live in the wilderness, we go as a type of family and we learn to share in the privileges and accept the responsibilities for close communal living which finds its primary form in the family.

Camping removes persons from their normal situations and patterns of living. By providing a completely

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<sup>3</sup>Lois Goodrich, Decentralized Camping: A Handbook (New York, 1959) p. 183.

different setting for living, it offers release from usual life pressures and at the same time offers new challenges and adventures.<sup>4</sup>

There are two elements of the program which offer the challenges of new living and are removed from normal patterns of living. These two elements together make up the whole of programming but are separated out because they arise out of different needs and are handled in different ways. One is called the "routines" of camping; the other the "activities."

Let us deal with the routines first. By routines I mean such program elements as meals, setting up and maintenance of tents, caretaking routines, and gathering and cutting firewood. These routines, while being part of the program, are really necessities of any campsite. They are not the kind of program items which must be decided each day. They are laid down items. They arise out of common sense. There is no real decision to make regarding whether we will have meals or not. They become pre-planned program items set down from above, as it were. The campers are not consulted as to whether they want to keep the campsite clean or not. It can probably be assumed that they do not care whether the campsite is clean or not so it becomes necessary to lay down program events which presuppose that certain normal daily functions will take place. Each camper is expected to gather wood. This is his duty to the community. He is expected to share

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<sup>4</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 7.

equally, if necessary, in all the program items which are considered routines.

There will be no real problem about program motivation if everything in the total program contributes to rather than takes away from a rich small camp life.<sup>5</sup>

There is, strangely enough, a motivation to participate in these routines. It is typical of boys in this age group to respond by complaining and grumbling, but they always do their share of the work. They seem to realize that there are, in the routines of camp, a kind of demand upon them which they find very comforting. Perhaps because some necessary routines are absent from their home life, they take to the meal preparation and wood gathering. They respond because they find it exciting; because it is something for them to do; because it is expected of them. It makes them feel significant to do it. They feel like persons. Consequently, the motivation seems to come from within. It is important for them to do these tasks and they can do them well. Thus few problems ever arise with respect to the programming of the routines of camp life except to have to mediate quarrels when everyone wants to use the saw at the same time.

The second element of programming is the activities. By activities, I mean the events such as swimming, fishing, canoe tripping, campfires in which the campers participate that

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<sup>5</sup>Goodrich, op. cit., p. 196.

are optional. These activities generally fill in the time between the routines. It is in the activities that the campers share more in the decision-making and leadership.

In these small groups, it is the responsibility of the group to make decisions concerning program. The leaders act as guides, resource, and enablers.<sup>6</sup>

In the activities the campers are given much more responsibility in the decision making process. The leader's role becomes one of presenting the alternatives for any given day or hour. He also cites the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives in order to help the campers to make informed decisions. The leaders, in their own planning must compile a number of alternatives for activities at camp. They must be activities for which the leaders have the basic skills to carry out. The leaders must make sure that all necessary equipment is available in the event the campers decide upon any one specific activity.

In this type of camping mature and trained persons are needed; persons who understand the necessity of preparing themselves and not just preparing a set of materials.<sup>7</sup>

The leaders then become resource people for the possibilities and enablers of the events which the campers elect. In wilderness camping

all the campers are engaged in decision-making and in building the program. This is likely to result in a greater degree of involvement and participation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 10.



But not necessarily. Owing to the family background of some Inner City children, informed decisions, even decisions at all, are extremely difficult to make. Consequently the leader is and must be a strong influence in the decision-making process. If the campers make a bad activity program decision, the leader must be prepared to overrule it and impose a completely different activity upon the campers. This type of leadership decision can have both bad and good effects upon the campers. The immediate bad effect is that the campers are angry and rebellious because they are not being allowed to do the thing they want to do. Sometimes they will refuse to accept the leaders decision and an impasse is reached. The good effect on the other hand is that by imposing a different activity, the leader is really building up the camp rather than allowing disintegrating features (with which all campers are far too familiar) to set in. Programming in its widest context is really designed to allow the campers to have a good time and to provide inputs for the boys in their learning experiences.

#### Curriculum is Living Together

What about our curriculum? This word has been concisely defined as "a specified fixed course of study as in a school or college." But in a camp setting is it legitimate to consider a curriculum? Can a camp situation be so designed as to function along a fixed course of study? If the answer to

these questions is "no", then we have no reason to assume that there can be any basis for learning in camp. This we cannot accept. We are committed to the high probability of learning as our theory posits. We are forced now to discover what is our course of study in our camping "school" and does it stand up legitimately to be counted as a curriculum?

Let me suggest that quite simply, curriculum is living together. Our specified course of study is the art of living together in community, to experience the course of daily encounters one with another. There are three "text-books" for this curriculum: our camp setting; the experiences in camp; and the investment of God. The course of study begins at the first light of dawn and continues unabated until the fires have been extinguished and sleep has taken its heavy toll. During this interval we attend many "classes". With our "textbooks" set before us, we seek to follow our curriculum and to experience what it means to learn and live and lean and love together.

Curriculum has its moments of spontaneity as well as its highly planned classes because living together must involve crises as well as disciplined friendly encounters. All campers invariably accept the curriculum because they are part of it. They help to shape it. They are, in effect, the pages of the books used to expedite the curriculum. Other books such as the Bible, Camping Skills, Astronomy, First Aid

are secondary resources for the curriculum and can be used to good advantage as the course proceeds.

How do we apply the curriculum to the program? What does living together have to say about the kind of program which emerges?

Let us look first at the program routines and how they relate to the curriculum. Routines of camp are not usually part of the life of an Inner City boy at home. Not only is he exempt from cooking his meals, cutting wood or sweeping out the tent at home, he does not have to cook over a fire and gather wood deep in the forest at all. There is no demand for him to respond to the routines at home. There are very few. At camp, it is a different story. He cannot run from these routines or they do not get done. The camp is his world, his entire world, and it does not take him long to realize it. He learns rather quickly that to leave the dishes one meal means to eat on dirty dishes at the next; something which his community will not let him get away with. So the camp becomes his prison and he becomes the prisoner of the camp. He realizes, too, that brooms do not sweep by themselves, pancakes will not cook by themselves and wood does not break in even lengths. He learns to hold the wood while someone else cuts, to set the table while someone else mixes batter--and he sees that it works. Things get done. If he runs from the camp, he must come back and when he does it is just as he left it. Routines must be done and the camper

learns soon to accept his responsibility and do his fair share.

Learning takes place best as persons are free to learn and to share together and when the resources of the gospel, either as written resource, or incarnated in others, are made available to the experiences of persons and groups in order that meaning for living may be derived.<sup>9</sup>

So the camper must struggle trying to subordinate his rebellious will to the good of others in order to maintain his campsite. He sees that dishes must be washed and the campsite kept clean or else the whole camping experience will collapse before his very eyes. Perhaps back home in the hot, dirty city the same kind of situation will be found and he may be empowered to respond differently to it. The curriculum thus teaches him to locate and accept his responsibility and to give and take of the joys of living. God's investment in this camper as well as this camper's investment in God is growing. Routines are built out of the necessity of maintaining an acceptable campsite and curriculum is built out of the necessity of maintaining acceptable routines.

But curriculum is more than routines. It is living together all day, every day. It encompasses the daily program activities, too, and weaves them into the very fibre of the learning process.

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<sup>9</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 6.

The wise counsellor finds time for the creative; he guides the youngsters' programs so that they have time at the best moments, and an atmosphere which promotes creativeness. And the wise counsellor finds time for the harvest from such moments; he encourages the sharing and he also shares.<sup>10</sup>

The key word for curriculum is creativity and we are optimizing the activities program and curriculum when the boys are being creative.

We turn to chapter I and find a key example of this creativity. The boys decided that they would like to go on a day trip in canoes. In order to facilitate this trip they not only paid part of the cost of renting the canoes but they also went through their routines as if they were demon-possessed. When they were finished the wood pile was larger than it had ever been and all his had been accomplished in record-breaking time. They seem to sense the importance of this event and were doubly cautious that nothing should go wrong. During the course of the trip they worked exceptionally hard and when one boy tired from paddling and was ready to sit and do nothing, it was the boys and not the leaders, who got him paddling again.

Curriculum found its dynamic in the tremendously creative way in which these boys contrived, prepared for and executed the canoe trip. There was no thought that any one person should do more or less work than another, just the

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<sup>10</sup>Goodrich, op. cit., p. 201.

exciting prospect of a day on the water together with all the necessary preparations.

We also cite the instance of a group deciding to build two rafts in order to be able to sail out to an island to explore it. The campers were quite creative in the way they all went looking for logs to build the raft and in finding rope to lash the logs together. All boys worked together with a single objective in mind. This could well be the first time these boys had a common goal towards which to work and the desire to work towards it. The rafts they made were excellent and a credit to their creativity and industry. This event was not a planned activity. The leaders were not prepared with the necessary equipment. This was not a deterrent for the boys.

It is legitimate to conclude that all program activities are part of the curriculum because each activity (even the tree chopping incident which we will discuss shortly) has the potential of strengthening or weakening relationships among campers and leaders and is involved with the dynamic of living together. Campers learn that the campsite by its very nature has a lot to offer to curriculum and that the experience of planning and working together amply demonstrates that they can get things done if each camper realizes that he has an important part to play in the total process. Thus the inputs are there--

the availability of natural resources, the pooling of ideas and energies. God takes hold of the group teaching the young ruffians how to paddle canoes mile after mile or to build a raft. Living together takes on new meaning as each boy learns that, contrary to his life in the city, it is important to help and to care for each other. Boys working together get things done.

Working together, which is really the dynamic interaction of living together, is important. It is the integrating feature; that which validates curriculum. Working apart or separately, being a very destructive force, is likewise important in the study of curriculum. When we look at the tree-chopping incident, we notice many things about life together. It is apparent that Don and Joe were not interested in the program activities of the whole group and felt no responsibility to participate. Their cutting of the tree was in open defiance of the leader's wishes and of the best interests of the entire camp. However, learning took place. These two boys discovered how to fell a large tree quickly. They also learned that they had to answer to the rest of the camp for their conduct. The rest of the camp learned that each person has a vested interest in the activities of the others. When people can not pull together, they have to discover why and work at it. The overwhelming

fact that shines forth is all living, whether together or apart, is curriculum. In a camp setting, curriculum is absolutely necessary because, whether one likes it or not, one cannot live apart from others and still remain as a part of community.

The only kinds of variation from program which are acceptable (i.e. which serve to build up rather than destroy the community) are variations which the whole group plans and carries out. "Every man for himself" does not work and if a camper is not prepared to accept this conclusion then, as in the case of the tree-cutting incident, the camp collapses. The innocent campers were afraid of the wood cutters and when asked to pass judgment on them they refused, stating: "It's none of our business." At precisely that moment the camp was over. Our curriculum had failed because, out of fear of reprisal, campers were unable to live and work together responsible to each other and to God.

"Discussions concerning the things of life and of the Christian faith will rise naturally out of immediate situations, and in the fellowship around the evening campfire."<sup>11</sup> When we were in the midst of the discussions concerning the fallen birch tree, the whole basis of the Christian faith was virtually laid at the feet of the campers. But love was not able to cast out fear, and concern for fellow campers was not

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<sup>11</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 10.



able to overcome cold indifference. The two boys were unable to cope with the tremendous demands of communal living. Instead of confessing their wrongs and asking for and finding forgiveness, they held out for a ruthless individualism which completely undermined the basis of the camping experience and rendered the curriculum useless. Each camper sensed this and could only look on in dismay as he realized that they were all powerless to stop the disintegration. God as the catalyst had been the judge, and each boy reluctantly, but honourably, accepted the punishment--except the two boys who, to this day have never confessed to the felling of the birch. When variations from program are made unilaterally in such a way as to render the curriculum useless, then it fails and with it the whole camping experience.

If curriculum is living together and living together is working together, then the art of decision making is an important part of the curriculum. From backgrounds in which few decisions are ever elicited or made, come boys who, when they are together, must make many decisions each day. Whereas individual decisions may not be extremely difficult, group decisions quite often are and it can be a very difficult and costly learning process which brings about this high and precious ideal. Anti-social behavior tends to militate against consistent and informed decisions so that the leader must be very sensitive and firm when decisions are being made. To live responsibly means to make decisions.

Because we are interested in all boys living and responding to the needs of others, we must involve all of them in decision making. Some decisions are painfully slow in coming; some are so difficult that cannot be made by the campers alone. Still others come so fast that crass coercion is suspected. It seems to me that the inputs for decision making must include an explanation of the possibilities of choices; the advantages arising out of the campsite; a climate free of fear and coercion; the drawing in of past experiences; and an unshakable faith that God is truly involved with His people in decision making at camp. The kind of output which is valuable involves a decision like the one which brought about the canoe trip. This decision had a unanimity about it which was impressive. The extent of the resolve with which the campers followed through seemed to reveal that this was a rather unique learning experience for all of them. Decision making by its very nature either brings people together or separates them. It becomes and always remains integrally part of the curriculum of the camp.

How does the curriculum relate to the learning process? Curriculum is the matrix in which the learning process operates. The learning process according to our theory is an automatic, continuous process whose purpose is to effect change in in persons through learned experiences. The curriculum at its best sets up situations where the process can take place.

Because all of camp is curriculum the process goes on continually but finds its expression in two basic situations.

The teacher is key in the educative process. It is he who will determine largely the "style" of the learning. . . . The teacher needs to have clearly in mind his own goals and assumptions. He needs to be sure of himself, of who he is, and what he is doing.<sup>12</sup>

The leader then becomes the teacher and the enabler of the curriculum. It is he who is responsible for major inputs for the learning process. It is he who creates an inviting climate for experimentation wherein his campers can have the maximum benefit of their experiences. But the leader, who provides inputs, also derives outputs from the campers so that he, too, is involved in the learning process. The leader not only teaches the curriculum, but he is a pupil to it and in all experiences, he learns as well as teaches. He can learn anything from the necessity of patience to the various rock formations in the campsite. The learning process is a two way street and cannot flow always away from the leader towards the camper. The leader, then, is inside the curriculum totally immersed in the learning process, and actively committed to the beauty of living together. It is important for the leader to remember who he is. He may have a better idea than the campers of the goals which are before him but when we come back to our idea of education, we see that the theory of learning is integrally involved with persons relating to other persons and establishing relationships.

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<sup>12</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 5.

The leader must relate to the campers or he will not be able to lead. At the same time, because he is also a learner, changes will take place in his behavior during camp and his attitudes towards the campers. The leader is the key to the learning process but his perspective is from within the curriculum and not above it.

There will be creative tension within the learning process; a tension between the goals of teacher and learner, a tension between the necessity to cover a body of material and the necessity of meeting the immediate needs of the student. There will be a tension between the need for a safe supportive climate for learning in which the learner feels secure enough to step out into new modes of behavior or try new ideas, and an anxiety necessary in order that there is enough challenge for growth to take place. It is an acceptance between acceptance and challenge. Harry Stock Sullivan says that "The very worst method of teaching children is to create anxiety in them. The second worst is not to generate any anxiety in them."<sup>13</sup>

As I understand this tension it is the movement of God, the Father, Son and Spirit within the learning process. By allowing the tension, God confronts both teacher and learner with His presence. This also provides the opportunity for Jesus, as friend, to enable the campers to see what the tension really is and how it can be beneficial. The Holy Spirit correspondingly helps us to overcome the tension and at the same time to learn to live with it. People who are too secure tend to become lazy and refuse to learn. People

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<sup>13</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 6

who are not anxious are incapable of learning because their motivation is tied to their anxiety level. It is God who keeps us on our toes challenging the leaders to lead and the campers to accept the implications of their own outputs. God is active within this tension which becomes creative tension, helpful to all persons. Thus in a tense moment when God is both loving and judging His people, it is He who drives home the learned moment; it is He who pricks the consciences of sinful people. It is He who constantly demands that we consult our textbooks and stay with our curriculum. Because of this, there is no situation--even one as apparently bad as the tree cutting incident--which cannot be used by God in the learning process to point out His desire for all men to repent and become new creatures in Christ. The theological "crunch" when it comes, is painful, but is necessary and most beneficial to the learning process. It gives the process its "piquancy" and clearly indicates that even God does not stand above and beyond the curriculum. If curriculum is the living together then praise be to God that He confronts us over and over again, that He is also totally committed to the beauty of living together. Curriculum leaves nothing to chance, but is all inclusive.

#### Goals of the Curriculum

Even the best curriculum is quite incomplete unless it sets out its goals both implicitly and explicitly. We

have said that curriculum is living together and it might appear that this is quite an acceptable goal in itself. We can, however, be more specific.

Another major approach in the camping field has been seen as providing opportunity for campers to learn to live together. Relationships between director and staff members, between counsellor and camper, between camper and camper are built and focused upon. A good group experience is the major emphasis of this style of camping. The out-of-doors setting may become a tool or resource through which relationships are built. The content of the Christian faith may be used to interpret and throw light upon the relationships. The relation of the program to the out-of-doors setting and the content of the Christian message tends often to be implicit rather than explicit.

The general approach of this style of camping would appear to be that of giving the camper opportunity to experience and study human relationship and group life in an out-of-door setting.<sup>14</sup>

An important goal which is kept always before us is the building of relationships. We try to build these relationships on the basis of trust, cooperation and mutual understanding. For a camper, who comes out of an Inner City life situation which seems to have no goals, or out of a home life where goals are rather vague, or out of a school life where goals are so distant that they are virtually unapproachable, this kind of goal although very practical and beneficial, is extremely difficult. He is not used to sharing and he is reluctant to start now. He trusts no one and has survived by his wits. Now he is tempted to change his pattern and trust

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<sup>14</sup>Harper, op. cit., p. 2.

his comrades or his leaders and he balks at the idea. When he is challenged to cooperate with the others at camp, to give up his "tough guy" role, to help rather than to pummell his weaker brother, he becomes fearful of his apparent loss of power. When he is challenged to understand the other campers, to listen to what they have to say, to judge them and be judged by them, to subordinate his rebellious dictatorship to the democratic process, he becomes very suspicious of the camping experiences. Therefore our goals, though considered by some to be pitifully small, are rather almost giant steps and require a significant shift in the attitudes of the boys. They also require some mighty big risks by the leaders. But the curriculum presupposes these goals and strives toward them.

The specific goals established by the routines is that the boys will learn and appreciate the necessity of daily responsibility to personal and corporate cleanliness and the necessity of camper cooperation. He sees as he works with the leaders that they are human too. They can make mistakes, be wrong and fail. He also sees that the leaders are committed to their tasks and are kind and understanding with the campers. This elicits the trust of the camper--not at once necessarily, but over a period of time. Again he sees leaders doing the small menial tasks with him and through this comes to realize that he can let go of his tough exterior,

one which he may not even enjoy, and be himself. The dedicated leader becomes the one he want to emulate. And he does not have to be mean, or nasty, or tough to do this because the leader does not act this way. What really happens is that when two or more people live together closely, a little bit of each one rubs off on the others and vice versa. Persons who like each other become like each other. That is why we do not consciously try to eliminate or minimize these daily routines. They are too important for curriculum, and the chance of achieving these goals, utilizing daily routines, is much greater than with the more creative program activities.

These goals are not unrealistic. They are absolutely necessary for maintaining a neat, well-stocked campsite. When we have this, our goals are automatically reached. And as these goals are attained relationships are built and strengthened and the campers can perhaps catch glimpses of the meaning of the Christian life, life together. When this plateau is reached, then God's involvement begins to show and his love begins to shine through. Perhaps we can even talk about Him.

The goals for program activities are somewhat different. They can be briefly elucidated as follows: to have a person desire to reach outside himself; to make the long jump into creativity; to make himself vulnerable for growth of body, mind and spirit; to open himself to give God yet another chance to break in. These goals can also be seen



as opportunities for campers to permit themselves to become involved in others. As they establish relationships with each other, they are perhaps able to establish a commitment to and a relationship with Jesus Christ as he is seen and understood in the camp setting.

The camp setting is really all the world in miniature. Every worldly activity has its counterpart in the camp. A very real goal is to let Jesus and all that he says, does, and has done, live in the camp setting. Program activities are nothing less than a restatement of the issues which confront these boys in real life. If Christ confronts these boys in real life and they cannot see because of eyes which have grown heavy from dust and despair of their life in the city, or ears that cannot hear because they have not been tuned, perhaps, at camp, the blind can be made to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, and the light which shines forever may shine anew in the hearts of boys. Our goal is conversion from the old disintegrated, disinterested, despicable self to a new creature in Jesus. Surely we are not expecting too much of the camper.

We have some vague goals and some which are somewhat more specific. There is the goal of democratic procedure wherein we strive as much as practicably possible, to abide by the decisions of the group no matter how uninformed they may be. This was the key problem with the tree-cutting

incident. The leaders were stymied because they could not make this process work right up to the time of departure. All the decisions up to that point were made by small groups of about two or three boys who then went their separate ways and there was no cohesion in their attitude towards program activities. The ideal goal of inputs leading to majority or unanimous decisions was striven after but never attained. There were frequent adjustments in programming. Practically all the preplanned activities were scrapped in order to find the level of involvement of the six campers. The leaders seemed unable to find any activities which would unite the campers, while the campers seemed unable to articulate their dilemma and the entire camp grew frustrated and despondent. Only a very great miracle could save us.

Another goal is expanded knowledge and understanding of the woods. It is intrinsically good that an Inner City boy be able to find his forest legs and feel comfortable in the midst of nature. It is good for his self worth and sense of pride if an Inner City boy who can probably burn down his neighbour's garage or burn up some stranger's car, can also build a fire properly in the woods, prepare and cook his food properly in primitive surroundings, and sit down, eat and enjoy it. There is knowledge of trees, plants, flora and fauna, animals, fish and rocks which simply make a person a more rounded, more mature, more creative, more adjusted and

more enjoyable person. There is something about this kind of growth, although it is very personal, which is intrinsically good as a camping goal. It strikes right at the heart of ignorance, prejudice, bigotry, stupidity and fear and cuts it down.

Such basic skills as paddling, knot-tying, wood-cutting, cooking, working with wood, swimming, mechanics are very often tried and perfected at camp. These become useful goals because, for some of these boys, whose days at school may be pitifully brief, future jobs and occupations may well involve these basic skills, somewhat modified to the world of business and commerce, of course. If, in our camp setting, we lay down the framework for the aptitude for future jobs and are sensitive to add to this the fundamentals of vocation, then a very worthy goal has been achieved for any one of these boys.

All three of these more specific goals find their setting in the program activities where the boys work out frustrations and hostilities through the creative tension of the learning situation, striving to achieve what is impossible, to learn what is unknowable and to have a jolly good time in the learning process.

These three specific goals can be instrumental in leading yet another goal--that of relationships both temporal and eternal. This goal in the camp, even in all of life, is

never fully achieved. It is not for us, the leaders, to know that these goals are achieved for this is known fully only in the heart and mind of God.

We are by now beginning to see that the process of integration of Inner City boys into a community of persons in a wilderness camp can actually take place. Our goals, which are fundamental to our philosophy, become the archetype for the goals of these boys in all of life. They can be achieved because God wills that it be so. He so structures our camp that the learning process with its unknown factor, the miracle, takes each and every experience and makes it a step by which the goals--namely greater understanding of self, God, and one's neighbour--comes within the reach of each boy. In the experiences of every day which is our curriculum, the learning process takes place. God's concern makes it so. Jesus comes to be present and to encourage each camper to step beyond himself and into a new world of grace and truth where he can understand his relationship with the other campers and with God. The Holy Spirit empowers these boys to carry through with the process, to sort out all the inputs, and come up with the output, the learned experience. This, in turn, can become a further input as the process goes on.

The few remaining questions are: Can the boy make the jump from his relational world at camp to life back in the city? How strong and secure is the experience and the

learning process? If it is valid in camp, does it work in real life back home? What does salvation as is demonstrated and experienced at camp mean to an Inner City boy? For a look at these questions and some formulation of a valid philosophy, we turn to the next chapter.

## IV

### IN QUEST OF THE PHILOSOPHY

#### Salvation

The church-sponsored camp for boys and girls provides opportunities for Christian learning and guidance that cannot be achieved elsewhere in the church's program of Christian education. A camping experience capitalizes on the natural interest of Junior Highs in doing things together in the out-of-doors. It puts them in small groups in a rustic setting where through their simple outdoor living they can actually have an experience in a Christian community living close to the realities of God's world. In camping, Christian principles are not just discussed--they are also lived and evaluated. Here Christian stewardship is not merely studied--it becomes a way of life. Campers grow in purpose and ability through such cumulative spiritual experiences.<sup>1</sup>

The church through its understanding of the scriptures has taught that salvation is available to all men regardless of race, colour, creed and social background. We believe a wilderness camp setting is one kind of life situation with its call for repentance, its necessity of loving one's neighbour as oneself, to which the church is called to speak. Salvation is available to all campers--salvation from the old sinful self into a new awareness of self, a commitment to Jesus Christ, and a desire to live according to his teaching. This is why God comes into the campsite. He is there for two reasons: that the campers may come into relationship with Him;

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<sup>1</sup>John and Ruth Ensign, Camping Together as Christians (Richmond, 1958) p. 7.

and that He may when the occasion demands, break into the lives of the campers, even into the lives of Inner City boys, to demonstrate to them His great love for them.

As Ensign and Ensign say: "Christian principles are not just discussed--they are lived and evaluated." In Wilderness Camping for Inner City Youth Christian principles are probably not often discussed, but they are most certainly lived and evaluated. Salvation for struggling Inner City boys means to come to a realization of elements in their past life which have not been healthy, happy, good or legal which can be eliminated. With earnest desire they can move on into the future knowing that these past elements can be overcome and life will not be the same. Salvation is stopping these boys in their tracks, turning them around and sending them on their way realizing that they are no longer alone.

Wilderness camping becomes a vehicle for salvation. It becomes a medium in which the gospel is proclaimed. For some boys it may be their only chance to hear it and experience it, their only opportunity to live in a community where the good of each person becomes the primary motive for all activities. Salvation for these boys liberates them from their past and gives them a hope for the future, letting them know that for any man who has come face to face with Jesus, life cannot be the same any more. The camp then seizes a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take a boy out of his situation and demonstrate

that the church, through its commitment to Jesus, is really alive, and to welcome each boy into the fellowship if he desires. Whereas the Sunday School is effective for one segment of the population, Vacation Church School for perhaps another, wilderness camping with unpolished boys provides an exciting opportunity for the church to minister in the world.

But salvation is a process and the signs of the saving process are made manifest in the dynamic interaction which the group experiences. It finds its spirit in community, that is the interaction between individuals. This is more than just interaction between disparate individuals. It is a commitment to the unity or oneness of a group which has experienced the presence of Christ in the midst. Salvation gives the person a new sense of direction. Group dynamics is the process of finding the meaning of this new direction in the "nitty-gritty" of everyday life. This happens in camp where the dynamics of the group indicates what is the level of the saving process, where it seems to be going, and whether the group has become a group and is learning how to live together, committed to one another and to Jesus.

But how do they know about Jesus? How can they hear the old story which is always new, the story of this man who changes men and gives them, not only a new sense of direction, but a saving faith to show them the way and help them on it? Salvation is life in Jesus Christ. This life is qualitatively



different and it finds its best expression in the camp when Inner City boys are living and learning together, sharing their experiences and concerns for each other.

When a boy asks me, "Why do you do all these things for us?", I tell him simply, "Jesus loves me. I want to share that love and that friendship with you to let you know that Jesus loves you, too, yes, even you." I spend a lot of time with the boys at the club and at camp because Jesus loves me and them and has given me the chance to be with these boys. So at camp we try to learn together what the love of Jesus means for us now, today. Together, if we want, we explore the Bible, which gives us a good indication of what Jesus did and what he said. We can see in His life and ministry that He was really talking to us in our situation offering us an alternative to all the things in life we do not like and cannot seem to get away from. When I am asked, then, I tell them about new life in Jesus Christ, that His name does not have to be dropped in anger and frustration from their lips, but can be a name that will knock them off the old treadmill and pull them into a brand new world. And I will be close by to help them to see and understand the best of that world. Take it or leave it.

#### Philosophy Stated

The purpose of this thesis has been to establish a philosophy of wilderness camping for Canadian Inner City youth.

We are now prepared to make an attempt to articulate this philosophy.

Wilderness camping is valuable for Inner City youth because it takes them out of a relational world whose pressures tend to disintegrate, disorient and destroy and places them in a relational world which is designed to integrate their experiences, making their life into a unity and a wholeness which they are more capable of understanding. Whereas God is present and deeply concerned in all relational worlds, in the world of the Wilderness Camp He may be more nearly felt and more deeply understood. We are in effect changing the environment of the Inner City boy so that he may experience through his leaders, through his routines, through the creativity of his activities, the presence and the love of God.

It would be grossly unfair and dishonest to manipulate the boy, to trick him into making a commitment to Jesus. It is fair and even desirable to manipulate the environment of the boy in order to allow him to discover who he is and to discover

the God who freely made man and who frees man to be in relationship to the world and to others in it, and to accept and live in the consequences of that liberty.<sup>2</sup>

The Inner City boy comes out of a background of family unconcern and educational restrictions. In the wilderness with sensitive

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<sup>2</sup>Bud Harper, Growing Inside, Outside (Toronto, 1969) p. 5.

leaders and a reasonable program he gets a new beginning. "Behold in Christ we are a new creation."<sup>3</sup> Each boy is given opportunities to grow physically, mentally and spiritually where the air is bright and clear, the food delicious, and the exercise vigorous. Our philosophy, based on our understanding of the interaction between God, the learning process, and the experience of the campers, aims at the church at its very best working in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. We can desire nothing greater; we expect nothing less.

#### Validity of the Philosophy

Does it work? This can be both a very easy and an extremely difficult question to answer. There is within this philosophy all the ingredients of a valid philosophy, yet this is no guarantee of its workability. There is in fact nothing within the philosophy which can guarantee its eventual success. Like all other ventures in which the church has shown leadership, the only reason for taking the risk is our faith in God's presence and in His abiding love, that somehow, though we be weak and though we falter, He cannot fail. This faith leads us to make our commitment to wilderness camping. And the results, if they can be measured at all, are commensurate with the changes in the lives of the young campers both in the short term and in the long term. If, by the grace of God, one boy is changed, one new insight gained and understood, one

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<sup>3</sup>2 Corinthians 5:17 (N.E.B.)

life finds its footing, then the philosophy is affirmed and God has in truth validated the faith of His people.

If we can affirm that God is present and active in the camp setting, then we can affirm that each camper, as he becomes integrated will acquire a greater understanding of himself and the world. This greater self-awareness of both strengths and weaknesses, enables a boy to grasp new meanings in life--including that very important new relationship with Jesus and the ensuing commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. This can and does have far-reaching effects on a shattered life even for a youth in the Inner City. With new life in Jesus comes a new style of life--a life in a Christian community where each boy works for the good of the camp and therefore, by implication, for the good of every other camper.

These things we can affirm not because they have been proven but because they have been amply demonstrated in the experiences of the writer. For this reason, and this one alone, this philosophy of wilderness camping for Inner City youth is worth considering. This philosophy calls for the best that man can offer to encounter the best that God is, to reap the best which man can harvest. The proof of the pancakes is in the eating. But we cannot stop there. Years from now when the writer is old and gray, the philosophy must still be challenged, its bases questioned, its presuppositions tested. But by that time there will perhaps be many new men who have

come through the camping experience and will attest to its validity and worth. Alas, too, there will be its failures, the people it could not rescue, the ones it could not touch. Only God, who knows more than I ever can and loves far more than my limited capacity, will really know--but that is sufficient.

### Conclusion

We related some experiences--one bad, one good. They were experiences in which God was very much involved. This was our starting point, but we have seen that as man learns from his surroundings, so too these campers learn from all their experiences. Certain things, certain wonderful things, can happen at camp even ones arising out of a very bad scene. Thus as life goes on and the hand of the Almighty guides his children, we proceed towards an integrated man--one who experiences God, has Jesus as his friend and lives through the power of the Spirit. "I come that men may have life and may have it in all its fullness."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>John 10:10.

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