WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING'S RECONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING'S THEORY
OF
THE RECONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1992)
(Religious Studies)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: William Ernest Hocking's Theory of the Reconception of Christianity

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SUPERVISOR: Professor Gérard Vallée

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 279.

ABSTRACT

In 1940, William Ernest Hocking (1873-1966), professor of the history and philosophy of religion at Harvard University, proposed a model for the reconception of Christianity which would make of it a vehicle for the creation of world community. Hocking was convinced that the attempts at the "radical displacement" of other religions by Christianity which was the usual Christian mission effort, was a disservice to the universal religions and the living religions of indigenous peoples as well as to Christianity because it did not demand that Christian thinking continue to grow. A simple synthesis of other living religions was too "romantic" for Hocking. He opted for a "sharing process" which would result not only in an authentic conservation and reconception of Christianity, but of the other living religions as well.

The question which guides this dissertation is whether or not Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity is a workable model which does make of it a harbinger of world community. Because experience plays such a major role in Hocking's theory the dissertation begins with key experiences of his life which contributed to his theory of reconception. It then moves to an explanation of his philosophy of religion, variously described as idealistic-mysticism, or philosophical mysticism, because for Hocking the mystic is key to his reconception theory. The essence of Christianity which must be retained in any reconception of it is explained in the terms chosen by Hocking, and the need he saw for a de-westernization of Christianity is explored. Hocking's model of reconception is then described. The concluding chapter demonstrates the applicability of Hocking's model not only for Christianity but for the other living religions.

This dissertation does not propose a new model for the reconception of Christianity but has the far more modest aim of elaborating on one that is already available, and that is consistent, realistic, and, with a few corrections, might be of great utility in an era which increasingly needs to deal with personal, national, and religious individualisms which often hamper rather than effect world community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many persons to be thanked for helping to make this dissertation possible. But some must be mentioned by named.

The first is my husband, the late Bent Stidsen, Ph.D., until his death in 1981, a member of the Faculty of Business of McMaster University. He once told me that I did not have the patience for doctoral work. He also knew me well enough to know that he had only to tell me that there was something that I could not do to launch me on the doing of it. This, and his act of faith in me made just a few months before his death that in that eventuality I would "pick up the pieces and go on" have encouraged me to persist in this effort.

Dr. Graeme MacQueen, of the Peace Studies Centre at McMaster University, and my professor of Indian Buddhism, encouraged me in many ways but I am most thankful to him for his treating me personally as a truly adult learner, in every good sense of those words, as did Dr. Eugene Coombs of the Faculty of Religious Studies, and Dr. Hans Mol, now of Canberra University.

Dr. Gérard Vallée, of the Department of Religious Studies, McMaster University, has given new meaning to the word "mentor". In 1985-86, he encouraged me to apply to the Department of Religious Studies, despite my having reached the half-century mark of my birth. I have many things for which to thank him but none more than the day I was at my lowest ebb in this enterprise and he said, "Catherine, it beats staying at home collecting a pension check." He was right.

Dr. Richard Hocking and his wife Kay and their family were especially helpful to me during research I did at Ernest Hocking's library in Madison, N.H. Dr. Hocking made available, in particular, still unpublished materials of his father's last thoughts on contemporary Christianity, and arranged for me to see filmed interviews of Ernest Hocking in which he discussed both these thoughts and his unfinished metaphysics. This was extremely helpful.

Leobard D'Souza, D.D., Roman Catholic Archbishop of Nagpur, India, has been friend, colleague, and laugh-mate since first we met in 1965 in Rome during the last session of Vatican Council II. He has always and all ways applauded and encouraged my academic and pastoral interests in my own religious tradition and in the religions and ideologies of my world neighbours, but never moreso than these past five years. Without his support, encouragement, and hospitality, this work simply would not have come to completion. In his person, Archbishop D'Souza lives the new kind of vibrant Christianity that Dr. Hocking predicted would emerge from Asia when Christianity there combines with the best that western civilization has to offer. That His Grace calls me "friend" gives my life a special worth.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates William Ernest Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity in the body of literature he has produced, with special attention to the role that the mystical element plays in the theory. I have undertaken this investigation because it is my conviction that while liberation theology and political theology offer valuable proposals for a reconceived Christianity, Hocking's theory speaks more globally to universal needs. Sixty years ago Hocking saw clearly that authentic universal human development required a world faith, not to be confused with a world religion. He advocated a consociation of the living religions for work and worship so that this world faith might eventually evolve. When any one of the living religions contains within itself the best of all others, and more, a world faith will be born.

This process would not result in a homogenization of things religious because religion-in-general (a world faith), must always exist as religion-in-particular. The living religions are religion-in-particular. As late as 1966, the year of his death, Hocking continued to propose that western Christianity had the "edge" in becoming this world faith because in his understanding of it, Christianity, unlike Asian religions, had dealt successfully with evolutionism, biblical criticism, and technology. But it would be a de-westernized and reconceived Christianity that would become the world faith, and would likely not even retain its name in the process. The world faith would contain within it all that is true about the human condition and still know itself as unfinished and unfinishable, and therefore open to better and better reconception. The agents of reconception of their own religions, and the harbingers of a world faith through these reconceptions, are the mystics.

This dissertation, therefore, does not propose a new model of the reconception of Christianity, but has the far more modest aim of unpacking one that is already there. The methodology, therefore, is genetic and critical. This work traces the process through which Hocking arrived at his theory, outlines some major objections raised concerning it, and then evaluates the theory for its consistency, continuing influence, practicability, and relevance.

A brief overview of works relevant to Dr. Hocking's theory will assist the reader in a preliminary understanding of the genesis of his thought. The foundations of Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity can be found in his 1912 work, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion* . Here Hocking proposes that the mystic is the harbinger of world religious unity. The mystic, for Hocking, is anyone who experiences the Ultimate Reality as One and All-Loving. This mystic, however, is not removed from attachment to the this-worldly order of things but is deeply involved in improving it. The mystical experience is accessible to all, particularly through experiences of loving and of being loved, and in encountering beauty. The mystic's life stance is that of prophetic consciousness. This means that the mystic knows the value of action in this present moment and undertakes action seriously, creatively, lovingly, and intelligently. In later works, mysticism as the harbinger of world religious unity, the prophetic consciousness of the mystic, and the deep attachment of the mystic to improving this order of things, become key concepts in Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity.

In 1918, in *Human Nature and Its Remaking* , Hocking describes Christianity's potential role in this remaking at the world level. He was deeply distressed at the war of 1914-1918 and saw in it the demise of any kind of moral supremacy of the West in the eyes of its world religious neighbours. The most important chapters of this book for this dissertation are, "Christianity and Ambition," "The Crux of Christianity," and "The Theory of Participation." In these chapters, Hocking first offers his vision of what Christianity

essentially is, viz., an experience of Ultimate Reality as All-Loving, a power of association with this Reality which makes for a meaningful life, and a commitment to make this power universally available. Secondly, he identifies Christian missions in their traditional sense as the ultimate expression of the human will to power. The aim of this power correctly understood is not to "destroy human happiness" but to make it accessible to all. Authentic Christian mission is "power for, not power over" others. Here Hocking again argues for the authentic "this-worldliness" of Christianity.

But the major impetus for the development of Hocking's theory came in 1930-32 in the course of the preparation of *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years*. Hocking was chair of a fifteen-member board of inquiry of Protestant missions emanating from the United States. The committee studied and appraised missions in India, Ceylon, Burma, China, and Japan. They became acquainted with major interpreters of the living religions of Asia. They also experienced Asian "domestic religion not found in the books." It was then that Hocking evolved his idea of a "living religion," a religion composed of believing participants. According to Hocking's philosophy of religion, in any estimation of a religion's worth, the lives of its believers and not merely its sacred books must be taken into account.

Hocking is the author of the first four chapters of *Re-Thinking Missions*. Here he recommends, in the name of the committee, that Christian missions ought to be continued but in greatly revised ways. Christians ought to study and learn from their world religious neighbours concerning their understandings of the true nature of God, of the created order, of humanity, of religion. Christians ought especially to learn from other believers how to meditate. All living religions ought to be approached by Christians with reverence for what the religions revere, in Hocking's words, with "reverence for reverence," and their mystical traditions ought to be especially valued. Christians are to take creative initiative in enhancing the material and spiritual welfare of all indigenous peoples without any regard

for their race or religion or conversion to Christianity. Jesus' message of the "Fatherhood of God" is here presented as the essence of Christianity. Just as this "Father" disinterestedly "nurtures to perfection" all of humankind, so should all who act in Jesus' name. Eventually, Hocking came to see this disinterested loving present in the heart of every living religion -- it is, for him, the foundation for a world faith.

Hocking and his commission also placed much emphasis on being Christian witnesses rather than on verbal proclamations of Christianity. And if there were to be verbal proclamations they ought to be in the idiom of the people, not of western Christian thought. The recommendations dismayed not only the U.S. but the world Protestant missionary effort. They were viewed as caving into syncretism and indifferentism, among other charges. An entire meeting of the International Missionary Council was held in 1938 in Tambaram, Madras, to oppose the views. In 1940, Hocking went beyond this position and stated that only the combination of the religious genius of East and West could provide a religion for any modern thinking person who requires a religion of global or cosmic proportions.

Hocking defended his view of the reconception process in his own name in 1940 in *Living Religions and a World Faith.* He explained in the preface to this work that he had intended this to be the final chapter of his 1912 publication but felt unready then "to speak of the particular living religions." A 1928 visit to Palestine to study the accommodation of all religions within that area rather than the establishment of a Jewish state, and his experience on the Laymen's Commission in 1932, now left him less reluctant to do so. In this book he says that contemporary Christianity is offered the opportunity now in terms of the living religions of Asia that it was once offered in the time of Justin Martyr in terms of a gentile world. He thinks Justin's Logos theology of Christianity is most applicable in the Asian setting and he reflects on an "unbound and unlimited Christ" and the implications of this concept for a world faith.

This book contains Hocking's model for a reconception of Christianity, indeed of any living religion. He describes the ineffectiveness of the "radical displacement" of any religion by any other, best seen in classical Christian missionary thought. The major difficulty is that radical displacement inhibits the growth of the religion employing it. If a religion believes it is "the only way" to God, a process of calcification necessarily occurs within it. It becomes increasingly irrelevant to its time and place. In addition to denying validity to the attempt by any religion to radically displace all others, Hocking also maintains that the process of "synthesis" of one religion by another is inadequate. Any attempt to incorporate the best of another religion into one's own can be "too romantic" and is usually, in any event, more a matter of serendipity than policy. Hocking opts for the reconception model. He wants it to be the norm for Christianity and other living religions to continually reconceive themselves, as they reach out to their world religious neighbours, to learn from them, absorbing into themselves the best that is in the other traditions, and in doing so, constantly deepening their self-understanding, and becoming more than any one of the traditions can be on their own.

In the concluding chapter of his 1940 work Hocking explains how Christianity is not yet a universal religion and what it would need to become that. In an appendix he explains that Jesus has a will "perfectly united" to God's and this comprises his divinity. This appendix also posits the unalterable content of Christianity which must be part of any reconception of it. The Sermon on the Mount, the dangers of "passionate impulse," the primary importance of seeking first the reign of God and its righteousness, and "the moral value of an abundant life, implying the full development of human nature," are among Christianity's "unlosable essences."

Hocking's reconsideration of his reconception of Christianity appears in *The Coming World Civilization* written in 1956. In this work, Hocking adds some insights to what he considers now the unlosable essence of Christianity. He writes that there is a

stark simplicity in Christianity which the demise of Christendom is making clear. At the heart of Christianity is "initiative good will," which is rooted in a precept for feeling with others. Christianity is a "war of persuasion" undertaken with "forceless good will" toward all. Because the human experiences God as All-Loving, especially in the human experience of loving and being loved, the neighbour is experienced "as having something of the divine in him." Each human is worthy of reverence because each "participates in the life of God."

Christianity is not a religion of "acquiescence" like Hinduism or even Buddhism. (Hocking takes issue with both here because they have not been involved except in very few instances, e.g. the Ramakrishna-Vivekenanda Mission and Ambedkarian Buddhism, in a frontal attack on poverty.) Christianity is a religion of "sternly decisive opposition" especially to "lechery, vindictive rancor, cowardice in serving truth, ease in moral mediocrity." Thus, Christianity is not just the "will to create" as he stated in 1940, but the "will to create through suffering." Still, Christianity for Hocking "is not primarily sacrifice but power through sacrifice."

Hocking again stresses that this Christian effort is very much a this-worldly reality. Any detachment in Christianity is only for a greater attachment. And for the Christian to give up the world as "lost" is "to give God up and to reject the validity of his vision." Hocking is genuinely convinced that there are things which God cannot get done without humankind. Humans are to "make history" which cannot happen without us. Leroy S. Rouner whose article on Hocking appears in the 1987 *Encyclopedia of Religion* reports that Hocking was fond of saying "God does not know what I am going to do this afternoon" to reinforce this need for creative involvement on the part of Christians in the this-worldly reality.

In 1956, Hocking also adds to the unalterable essence of Christianity: responsible self-care, responsible ambition, responsible foresight, responsible enterprise, and responsible competition. The competition is to end the lechery and greed mentioned earlier.

Hocking identifies The Religious Society of Friends and "the churches called Catholic," especially those in dialogue with the living religions of Asia, as most likely to reconceive Christianity in the direction of the simplicity of its essence because both denominations are, for him, involved in "...aggressive *caritas* both material and spiritual."

Hocking emphasizes in this study that one of the specific marks of the interaction of Christianity in a reconceived form with the universal religions will be that there will be no negation by Christians of the other traditions. The nature of affirmation is not exclusion. The truth of Christianity is not there to falsify the other religions. In an authentically reconceived Christianity, Christians will value and appreciate the mystical element described briefly above. And they will look to mystics, any mystics, for a "revitalized participation in the work and knowledge of God." But because mystics have no accurate words to describe their mystical experience, the "state" of the mystic must be observed. The "state" of the mystic, for Hocking, refers to how the mystic lives, relates to others, and especially how the mystic works to effect a better world. If the observer of the mystic sees "idleness, sensuality, disorder," the mysticism is not authentic but fraudulent. Hocking's position here follows the pragmatic test recommended by William James, Hocking's mentor at Harvard, that the authentic mystic is known "by his fruits, not by his roots."

As Christians open themselves to the religions of others, particularly in their mystical dimensions, there may initially be a tentative syncretism which is true of the beginning of any thinking process. Eventually Christians will either adopt these new insights or reconceive them to include the new elements in Christianity. But it will not be displacement of living religions that will result from these encounters, but "reverence for reverence." It is in his 1956 work that Hocking advocates a "consociation" of the living religions for work and worship, so that this world faith may evolve. Here he predicts that that universal living religion which, through the process of reconception, eventually

contains within it the truth of all others, and more, will become the world faith without which world unity or world community is not possible.

In 1957, Hocking returned to a theme he first treated in 1928, viz., *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience*. It is significant for this dissertation in that Hocking emphasizes again his conviction that it is only the "lovers of life" who will go on beyond it, those who have "made history". This life is an "apprenticeship in creativity." It will find its fulfillment in eternal life which will be "anything but eternal rest." Hocking again makes clear that his mysticism and the reconception model are oriented toward social action.

In collaboration with his son Richard Hocking, a revision of Hocking's 1929 work *Types of Philosophy*, appeared in 1959. Especially significant for this dissertation is his explanation of mysticism as a philosophy and his "Confessio Fidei" which concludes the work. The last paragraph of *Types of Philosophy* returns to a constant theme of Hocking's that the human being is both creature and creator in the authentic Christian (which is for him also the authentic human) understanding of things.

> Human life as we find it *is* not free, sacred, immortal. It must be made free; its sacredness must be conferred upon it; its immortality must be won. In these respects we are the creators of our own destinies: even beyond the humanistic limit, the world of our destiny shall be what we believe and make it.[1]

I have sketched very broadly the works of Hocking most relevant to my dissertation. Hocking admits in the conclusion to *The Coming World Civilization* that the human community to be built "is still in its architecture out of sight," but he provides key insights for a process to get all of humanity moving in the direction of a world faith at the heart of a world community.

The method of this dissertation is genetic and critical. I describe how Hocking's reconception theory came to be, discuss the limitations affecting it, and then evaluate the

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[1]William Ernest Hocking with Richard Boyle O'Reilly Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, Third Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 320.

model for contemporary worth. Because experience is so important in the thought of Hocking, the dissertation opens with a brief biography of him, emphasizing those experiences in his life which affected and effected his theory of the reconception of Christianity. Because the mystic is so vital to his reconception theory, Chapter II explains Hocking's philosophy of religion, rooted in intellectual activity, human experience, and deep feeling. It has been variously called "idea-istic" mysticism (Hocking's preferred term), mystic-idealism (Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan), and philosophical mysticism (Margaret Lewis Furse).

Although it is the role of the mystics to reconceive religions, Hocking maintains that there is an unlosable essence of a religion which must be honoured in any reconception of it. Therefore, Hocking's position on the unalterable essence of Christianity forms the subject matter of Chapter III. Since it is a world faith that Hocking envisions, Chapter IV explains the need for the de-westernization of Christianity in order that it might become a truly universal religion, and describes the process of reconception, underlining why Hocking chooses it over radical displacement of one religion by another, or the way of synthesis.

Chapter V contains a critical evaluation. This is done in terms of the consistency and practicability of the Hocking model. It presents the positive and negative aspects of Hocking's philosophical mysticism, his understanding of the essence of Christianity, and his reconception theory, indicating in each instance what improvements are required to make the theory "workable" at this point in time.

Although there have been prior studies of Hocking's mysticism,[2] and of his idealism and his understanding of the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian

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[2]Cf. Roland P. Rice, "Mysticism in the Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University Graduate School, 1954); Richard John Woods, O.P., "The Social Dimension of Mysticism: A Study of the Meaning and Structure of Religious Experience in the Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1978); Margaret Lewis Furse, *Experience and Certainty: William Ernest Hocking and Philosophical*

religions,[3] I am unaware of any other work which deals as extensively as does this dissertation with the function of the mystical element within Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity, and the potential of that function for the evolution of a world faith.

Mysticism (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). Woods, in particular, is concerned to make clear that Hocking himself was a mystic, and in the process of writing out of that lived experience, revitalized western mysticism for U.S. Protestantism in particular, but also, with Rufus Jones, launched the renewed interest in mysticism in North America. Furse posits that Hocking's philosophical mysticism is a vital alternative to contemporary nihilism.

[3]Cf. Leroy Stephens Rouner, "Idealism, Christianity, and a World Faith: William Ernest Hocking's View of Christianity and Its Relation to Non-Christian Religions" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1961). In this work Rouner does not question Hocking's description of mysticism nor its role in the reconception model. He appears not to know that the mysticism Hocking describes is classic creation spirituality usually attributed to Eckhart and Ruysbroek. In an overview of Hocking's complete philosophy, *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969), Rouner maintains that mysticism is an "illustration" of Hocking's points about authentic religion, but not the substance of it. With this position I do not concur. Nor do I agree with Rouner that Hocking has not produced an adequate description of the essence of Christianity. Cf. *Within Human Experience*, pp. 241-246.

CHAPTER I

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING

To understand William Ernest Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity and the function of the mystical element within it, it is necessary to understand his mystic-idealist philosophy of religion. To understand his philosophy of religion, one must appreciate how much it is rooted in human experience. This dissertation, therefore, begins with an analysis of key experiences in Hocking's life which influenced his philosophy, and in particular, his philosophy of religion. Hocking produced philosophies of education, politics, and law as well as a philosophy of religion, but it is primarily the latter for which he is best remembered. It is important to mention at the outset that Hocking did not live to complete his metaphysics. Originally presented in 1938 as the Gifford Lectures, "Fact and Destiny," Hocking was still working on his metaphysics at the time of his death in 1966. Hocking's prime expositor, Leroy Stephens Rouner, writes of the absence of this metaphysics that:

> Had Hocking written the book in metaphysics which he planned and promised to the sponsors of the Gifford Lectures, he would rank with James, Dewey and Whitehead as one of the seminal minds of American philosophy's golden age. He chose, rather, to do something else. He offered wisdom for our time. He did important work on a greater variety of topics than any serious thinker in recent memory.[1]

This "greater variety of topics" that commanded Hocking's attention, makes of him anything but a dilettante. It is part of his entire approach to philosophy and the philosophy

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[1]Leroy S. Rouner, "Insight", *The Wisdom of William Ernest Hocking*, edited by J. Howie, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1978), pp. 12-26.

of religion in particular. For example, in Hocking's *magnum opus*, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, published in 1912, he wrote:

> I venture to say that unless God does operate within experience in an identifiable manner, speculation will not find him, and may be abandoned. The need for metaphysical thought arises (I venture the paradox) *just because* God is a matter of experience, because he works there and is known there in his works.[2]

Hocking repeated his conviction concerning God's presence in human experience forty-five years later in *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience*, thus framing his life-work with this deep-seated vision.[3] What may come as a surprise is the "stuff" of these experiences in which Hocking comes to know Nature, the Self, the Other Mind, the Co-Observor, the Idea, the Field, which are some of his names for God. While this knowledge can surely occur in worship and more traditional religious practices, experiences of God, of the Divine, can also happen for Hocking while painting numbers on a rail-road track, while loving and being loved, encountering a Buddhist woman worshipping a bodhisattva, watching a Harvard rowing crew at sunset, sitting by the bed of his dying wife. These are just some of the experiences in his own life in which Hocking was convinced that God had operated for him in a clearly identifiable manner.

Hocking's Early Life

William Ernest Hocking was born August 10, 1873, in Cleveland, Ohio, into a devoutly religious Methodist family, the eldest of five children and the only boy. His father was William Francis Hocking, a Canadian-born homeopathic physician of Cornish

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[2]William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), p.216.

[3]William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience* (New York:Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. ix.

ancestry. His mother's family had arrived on the Mayflower. She was Julia Carpenter Pratt Hocking.[4]

There was prayer in the Hocking family each morning before Dr. Hocking went to his office. And the children were required to learn a verse from the bible each day. Religious experience plays a large role in the Methodist tradition and Hocking often attended the Methodist "Special Meeting" on Sunday evenings at his home church in Joliet, Illinois, where the family had moved. One Sunday evening Hocking had the religious experience of conversion hoped for in the Methodist tradition. He was twelve years old at the time. He explained later that he could never remember the sermon but in the "call to come down and be saved," Hocking

> saw "the real," in a way which "combined a new resolve with a new insight." He saw himself as part of a "great procession of humanity in which each man had an immortal soul." He had a vision, as he puts it, of "men like souls walking." He had been "seized almost violently with a sense of the uniqueness of human life." The effects of this experience -- probably his most important "mystical" experience -- lasted two or three days.[5]

In the reading of Hocking's 1956 work, *The Coming World Civilization,* this image of "men like souls walking" immediately comes to mind as part of Hocking's vision of a world faith.

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[4]Leroy Stephens Rouner, "The Formative Years", *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 1. In this work which has been prepared as an introduction to Hocking, Dr. Rouner uses experiences of Hocking's life throughout the text demonstrating just how much Hocking worked out of lived experiences in the developments of his philosophies of law, education, politics, etc. It should be noted that the bulk of the information on Dr. Hocking's life also appears in two other works by Professor Rouner, viz., "Idealism, Christianity, and a World Faith: William Ernest Hocking's View of Christianity and Its Relation to Non-Christian Religions " (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1961), pp. 6-32, and in "The Making of a Philosopher: Ernest Hocking's Early Years", *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization: Essays in Honor of William Ernest Hocking* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), pp. 5-22. *Within Human Experience* is the most complete and concise compendium of Hocking's thought presently available.

[5]Rouner, *Within Human Experience,* p.4.

It was a custom in the Hocking family to read on Sunday afternoons. Hocking often took books from his father's shelves and in one of them uncovered several references to a Herbert Spencer. He became intrigued with Spencer and took out his *First Principles* from the local library for Sunday reading. His father saw what Ernest was reading and immediately demanded that he return the book to the library. Hocking did so but took it out again the next day and read it surreptitiously. He later reported, "Father was right. Spencer finished me off."[6] That in particular which had finished off the young Hocking was Spencer's position that dissolution and annihilation lay at the end of human life. Try as he might, Ernest could not find reasons to disagree with Spencer and this condition left him almost continually desolate until he was twenty-one years of age. Hocking had experienced human life as unique and immortal in the Methodist conversion experience. Now he was learning from Spencer that human life was no different than animal existence. The erudition of Spencer intrigued Hocking but he sought a validation of his personal religious experience of the vitality and meaningfulness of human life. It was not until many years later that William James' *Principles of Psychology* would break Spencer's hold on Hocking precisely because James' thinking included the kind of experiences which Hocking himself had had.

Hocking was graduated from high school at the age of 15. He had hoped to attend the University of Illinois or the newly established University of Chicago but his father felt that he was too young. And the family finances at that moment did not permit for tuition. So Ernest became a railroad surveyor and determined to save money for college. It was Hocking's first job and Rouner says that Hocking often delighted in telling people especially at Harvard, who thought Hocking a Boston Brahmin, that not only was he from

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[6]Quoted by Whit Burnett in "Philosopher of a Single Civilization", *This is My Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 287.

the Mid-West, but "I'm a surveyor by trade, you know."[7] It was this surveying work, in fact, that finally provided a crack in the hold that Herbert Spencer's philosophy had on Hocking. He explains the experience and its effect on him as follows:

> The time is 1892, more or less. The scene is the right-of-way of a single-track railroad, between Aurora, Illinois, and Waukegan -- the Elgin, Joliet, and Eastern Railroad, then a new belt line around Chicago. It is a summer day. A lone figure carrying a pot of white paint and a brush, stoops every 100 feet to cover a chalk mark on the inside of the rail with a vertical line of paint, and every 500 feet to paint a number. The crew of the civil engineering department are measuring the track of the railway for inventory purposes. The chalk markers, with the steel tape, have moved ahead of the painter, who doesn't mind being alone. He has become interested in the numbers.
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> He is, at this moment, in a cut. The banks rise on either side of him above his eye level; the breeze is shut off; the heat is oppressive. The only sounds are the humming of insects and the occasional nervous flutter of a disturbed grasshopper's wings. The painter is painting the number 1800. He is amused to note the possibility of putting this number series into one-to-one correspondence with the years of the century. He begins to supply the numbers with events, at first bits of history -- Civil War and family background. This imaginary-living-through-past-time becomes as real an experience as the railpainting, and far more exciting! 1865, 1870 -- suddenly 1873, my birth year: "Hello! Hocking is here." Every mark, from now on, numbered or not, is entangled with personal history. But very soon, 1892, *the present*; the painter's story and the actual story coincide: I paint the Now! From this point, memory is dismissed; it gives place to anticipation, dream, conjecture -- there is something relentless in the onmoving of these numbers, to be filled with something -- but with what? 1893 -- will it be the new Chicago University? 1900 -- where shall I be? 1950, fairly old, very likely gone. 1973, a hundred years from birth -- surely gone: "Goodbye, Hocking!" I see myself as dead, the nothingness of non-being sweeps over me. I have been for four years an ardent disciple of Herbert Spencer, unhappily but helplessly convinced that man is as the animals; the race moves on, the individual perishes, the living something has become - nothing; "And not the pillow at your cheek so slumbereth." For the first time I realize, beyond the mere clack of words, the blankness of annihilation. And no doubt, just because of this swift sense of no sense, the shock was intense as I realized, with the same swiftness, *that it was I, as surviving, who looked upon myself as dead*, that it had to be so, and that, because of this, annihilation can be spoken of, *but never truly imagined.* This was not enough to

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[7]Rouner, *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization*, p. 12.

> free me from the spell of Spencer, but it cracked that spell; the rest of the day was spent in lightness of heart, as if I had come upon a truth that was not to leave me.[8]

This experience did crack Spencer's hold on Hocking but not completely so. In the process of experiencing himself as surviving, he concluded that while one could speak of annihilation it could not really be imagined. Subsequently, he came to feel the same way about solipsism, that it could be spoken of, but never really imagined. This came from an experience in his wife's company, which I relate below.

Hocking Discovers William James

In addition to his work as a surveyor, Hocking worked as a printer's devil and compositor. Hocking enjoyed drawing as well and eventually the work as a surveyor led to his being used by the surveying crew as a cartographer. Unfortunately, the Panic of 1893 destroyed Hocking's savings and interrupted his plans for university. He went instead to Newton, Iowa, to join his family who had moved there. He taught Latin in a normal school, and then enrolled in Iowa State College at Ames as an engineering student. Sunday afternoon reading was still practiced in the Hocking household and in 1894, on a rainy Sunday afternoon, his life was once again changed dramatically by something he read. Hocking inquired of the librarian at Iowa State College if there were anything new that she might recommend. She replied that there was a new book which she herself had not read but it had been well reviewed. It was *Principles of Psychology* by William James. Rouner comments:

> James wrote of a world which Hocking recognized as his own, and of the kind of experience which Hocking shared. James' view of the world was experimental and lively, not mechanical and dead as Spencer's was. Hocking determined to go to Harvard and study with James and he left Iowa State College at the end of his second year in order to earn money for this new venture.[9]

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[8]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 213-214.

[9]Rouner, *Within Human Experience*, p. 7.

We have in Hocking's own words an explanation of what the experience of reading William James meant to him.

> I began to regain confidence that the mystic's sense of the universe is in substance a true sense, quite apart from his theological symbols. I was sure that the real world is more like the world of James' imagination than like that of Spencer's, and from that time it became my first business to define the difference and to capture some rational account of it.[10]

Eighteen years later, Hocking's rational account of mysticism appeared in the concluding chapters of *The Meaning of God in Human Experience.* In its most succinct form, this rational account is also found in the final chapters of the completely revised version of his *Types of Philosophy*, published in 1959.

To earn money for Harvard, Hocking once again turned to work as an educator. He became an instructor in a business college and then principal of a public school in Davenport, Iowa. For relaxation and entertainment, Hocking rowed along the Mississippi. At the age of 26 he had saved enough money to go to Harvard. It is important to keep in mind that Hocking did not go to Harvard to become a philosopher but to secure a philosophy for himself. Hocking had thoroughly enjoyed his work as a surveyor and cartographer and anticipated a career in engineering and/or architecture. He expected to get on with that once he had studied with James. He arrived at Harvard to discover that James was not there but in Scotland delivering the Gifford Lectures. However, Josiah Royce was at Harvard and Hocking enrolled in his class.

Hocking at Harvard

Josiah Royce was very much concerned at that time with the relationship between philosophy and mathematics. This would have appealed to Hocking whose first publication

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[10]George Plimpton Adams and William Pepperell Montague, "Some Second Principles", *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 388.

was "What is Number?", a criticism of traditional ways of teaching arithmetic to children.[11] Royce was trying to find a logical basis for his concept of the Absolute. In association with his friend and colleague Charles Pierce, Royce looked to mathematics for his model. Rouner summarizes Royce's thinking as follows:

> The infinite series of fractions between any two integers keeps the integers an infinite distance apart, so that they have no direct relationship with one another. At the same time, however, the fraction series does provide a middle term between the two integers. Each integer is related to its neighbor in the same terms that it is related to the series as a whole, i.e., in terms of the infinite. The different parts of the series are thus representative of the whole series.
>
> Royce applied this idea of the infinite to his metaphysics of the absolute, emphasizing that the infinite system constitutes a "community," and the means by which different members of the community are related is a process of "interpretation." Here he departs from traditional logic. Philosophy, in his view, is concerned with the antitheses of appearance and reality, the public and the private, the false and the true, etc. But the traditional categories of identity, noncontradiction, and excluded middle, while sound in themselves, do not help us to evolve one truth from another. The process of inferring one truth from another depends rather on another category, that of "relation." And the process of relating two things involves something more than the two things to be related; it involves the thought which relates them. A simple process such as the comparison of two objects is therefore not a "dyadic" relation, as had been traditionally assumed, but a "triadic" relation.[12]

Hocking was intrigued with this idea of relation as triadic rather than dyadic. Eventually he used this idea of a triadic relationship in the development of his dialectic and also used it in a diagrammatic way in his theory of the reconception of Christianity, indeed of all living faiths, but not exactly as Royce had. Hocking's difficulty with Royce's position is expressed as follows by Rouner:

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[11]William Ernest Hocking, "What is Number?", *Intelligence: A Journal of Education*, Vol 18, May 15, 1896, pp. 360-362.

[12]Rouner, *Within Human Experience*, p. 17.

> Individuals in Royce's community are like discrete numbers in an infinite series. They have no *direct* contact with their neighbors. Each discrete number reaches out to its neighbor only to find that there is an infinity (the infinite series of fractions) between them. The basis for the relationship between the discrete numbers is the participation of each in the infinity of the absolute, the overarching structure of the communal whole. When applied to the community of persons, this theory produces two important doctrines. One is that we have no intuitive knowledge of ourselves; the other is that we can have no direct knowledge of our neighbors. As to the first, Hocking argued, contra Royce that before the knowing self can know anything, it must assume a self that knows. One must therefore have a knowledge of oneself before knowledge of any other kind is possible. On the more crucial issue concerning our knowledge of other selves, Hocking notes: "We have, he [Royce] maintained, no direct empirical knowledge of ourselves nor of other minds, and hence, in substance, of our entire social environment on which his later philosophy so essentially turned."[13]

Hocking concluded during his studies with Royce that common sense disproves solipsism and common sense and experience ought to be taken seriously. Here he will join forces with James about the value of experience. Hocking gives as a major argument against the solipsistic position that anyone who chooses to publish at all is assuming the possibility of knowing other minds and of other minds knowing theirs. But more than philosophical reasoning, it was his marriage, as we shall see, that gave Hocking the experience that convinced him once and for all that solipsism was not a viable philosophy.

In addition to his interest in mathematical models, Royce also had an interest in mysticism. In 1894, Royce studied Meister Eckhart, the medieval German mystic.[14] It was a study undertaken primarily for the purpose of refuting the world-denying dimensions of classical mysticism as Royce perceived them. Royce did see in Eckhart a mystic who actually did not deny the world but considered him an exception to a general rule. While

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[13]*Ibid.*, p. 21, and William Ernest Hocking, "On Royce's Empiricism," *Journal of Philosophy*, LIII (February 2, 1956), p. 61 ff.

[14]Margaret Lewis Furse, *Experience and Certainty: William Ernest Hocking and Philosophical Mysticism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 35-40.

Hocking appreciated Royce's study of and interest in Eckhart, eventually he took the position that Royce had not studied sufficiently the entire stream of mystics, especially those like the Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammed, who were, in Hocking's perception of them, very much committed to improving their worlds and who preached anything but flight from social action.[15]

When James returned to Harvard at the conclusion of his Gifford Lectures, Hocking enrolled in his class. Richard Woods, a Dominican priest and scholar of Hocking's concept of religious experience, writes as follows of what this meant for Hocking:

> [It] provided the occasion for Hocking to pass beyond the critique of theoretical mysticism inspired by Royce. Having begun to realize that the active non-ego of our experience must also be a self, he recognized in it "the Absolute of Royce's teaching. But I also recognized it as the object of that mystic experience whose significance James had begun to do justice to."[16]

During his study with James, Hocking was initially concerned with what he felt was James' lack of method. He was used to the rigorous thought of Royce and had benefitted from it. James lectured from the manuscript of his *Varieties of Religious Experience* which had been his Gifford Lectures. Unlike Royce's audience in Scotland which had dwindled to about a dozen participants by the last of his Gifford Lectures, more than three hundred persons had crowded the lecture hall to hear James.

Hocking was intrigued with the assortment of mystical experiences which go to make up so much of James' book. What struck Hocking most forcefully was James' conviction that the mystics were the originators of religious experience and most of what

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[15]Cf. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 351-52.

[16]Richard Woods, O.P., "Mysticism, Protestantism, and Ecumenism: The Spiritual Theology of William Ernest Hocking", *Western Spirituality*, edited by Matthew Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides, 1979), p. 420.

was conventional religion was merely a poor imitation of their original experiences. Rouner explains that for Hocking, then:

> The religious experience of the mystics is therefore not to be regarded as an aberration, radically distinguished from the religion of Everyman. It is rather the "original source" of ordinary, conventional religion.
>
> Hocking did not accept all of James' material as illustrating this continuity, but he did accept his general thesis and used it in *The Meaning of God* to argue that the "true mystic" is the one most acutely aware of the "original sources" of Everyman's knowledge of God.[17]

As we shall see, Hocking will draw upon this position of James' about the acute awareness of the mystic and come to identify the mystic as "true worshipper" and "true prophet" of universal faith. Hocking refuses to accept that mysticism and prophecy are diametrically opposed to each other. For both James and Hocking, the mystics are doers. A coming world civilization needs such visionaries, according to Hocking, because the basic powers in the universe are spiritual, not material. And the mystic vision must be put to work, if it is authentic. In those approaches to mysticism both James and Hocking differ much from more traditional approaches to mysticism which suggest that the mystic is engaged in a "negative path" to God and in that process avoids engagement in the present historical moment for the greater good of experiencing the Divine.

In many ways both James and Hocking differ in their understandings of mysticism, not only from the negative metaphysics of traditional mysticism, but also from some Oriental scholars of mysticism. Rouner offers a succinct account of this disagreement, when he writes,

> No Indian would find William James a typical mystic, and yet James, as a Westerner, was able to make room for the kind of insight which is peculiarly characteristic of the East. He influenced Hocking profoundly with his religious

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[17]Rouner, *Within Human Experience*, p. 23.

> sensitivity and the manner in which he expanded his "worldliness" to include it. This same capacity for relating transcendentalism and humanism forms the bond between Hocking's special regard for Radhakrishnan. The "true mystic" who is also the "true prophet," as Hocking sees it, is a man characterized by a new universality in spiritual matters. He is neither solely Western nor solely Eastern in his response to the world. He is a man ready to effect a synthesis out of an age-old antithesis. It was from James that Hocking got one of his first inklings as to what manner of man this might be.[18]

By 1932, in his evaluation of contemporary Christian missions emanating from the United States, Hocking would call on Christians to learn meditation in particular from the Asians whom they were attempting to evangelize. From 1940 on, he urged that men and women of all living faiths, East and West, mystics in particular, work and worship together, and in the process, reconceive their own traditions to effect a world faith.

Hocking Meets Husserl

Hocking received his B.A. in 1901. In addition to his academic pursuits, as an undergraduate he had rowed for the Harvard Crew, boxed, played the organ and sung in the choir as well. He received his M.A. in 1902, and then spent a year travelling in Germany as a Walker Fellow in Philosophy. Hocking went to Berlin and Heidelberg but perhaps the most significant part of his German experience was the two months which he spent in Göttingen in the company of Edmund Husserl. Hocking eventually identified creative suffering as one of the unlosable essences of Christianity. It is likely that this idea began to take form first in Husserl's company. In Husserl's person, Hocking experienced creative suffering, according to Rouner, "not as personal tragedy, but as an intense personal involvement in the tragic aspects of universal human experience."[19]

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[18]*Ibid.*, p. 25.

[19]Rouner, *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization*, p. 18.

For the self-reliant U.S. Mid-Westerner, the experience of the possible failure of Western culture as perceived by Husserl began to shake the "American Dream" which was so much Hocking's personal inspiration. Husserl made a deep but not immediate impression on Hocking according to Rouner.

> Hocking's contact with Husserl did not work any great or immediate change in his own character. But it did put him into continuing contact with an experience which was very different from his own, and which he was to draw on in later years. At the end of the Second World War he was to return to Germany and later record his reactions in *Experiment in Education.* Then the association with Husserl reached a kind of fulfillment, for Hocking's own characteristically American emphasis on man's "will to create" here specifically becomes the "will to create *through suffering.*" And this new element, introduced into his philosophy of history in *The Coming World Civilization* was to make possible an appreciation of the insights of Existentialism and a profounder sense of those qualities which the growing world community was already requiring of the American character.[20]

Hocking concluded eventually that the prime requirement of the world community for the U.S. scene was that it lead the way in the reconception of religions making of them, Christianity in particular, generating principles of cosmic significance.

Hocking's Marriage

Hocking plunged into his doctoral dissertation in 1903 on his return from Germany. This was also the year that he met Agnes Boyle O'Reilly, whom he was to marry two years later, and who became for him "an unfailing source of insight," as the dedication page of *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* identifies her. Agnes Boyle O'Reilly was Boston Irish Catholic, daughter of the editor of the Archdiocesan Catholic paper, *The Pilot.* Ernest and Agnes met one Sunday morning at a seminar organized to discuss "Friendship." Both arrived early and when Agnes found that Ernest was a philosopher she asked him to

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[20]*Ibid.*, p. 19.

tutor her in the subject. Hocking agreed and proposed that they begin with Descartes. The prospect bored her but, as Rouner comments, "her teacher did not."[21] Agnes O'Reilly was a school teacher. After their marriage, they founded the Shady Hill School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the belief that interest in anything was caught by a student from a teacher in love with his or her academic discipline. Ernest and Agnes were married without the blessing of the Roman Catholic Church. The archbishop of Boston decided that her Catholicism was too minimal to allow for a church blessing. In speaking to Professor Rouner of his marriage, many years later, Hocking said he and Agnes had discussed their situation long and hard. Their backgrounds seemed so very different in many ways. Then Ernest said to Agnes, as reported by Rouner:

> "If you are a Catholic, so am I: but I do not believe you are a Catholic." When the actual test showed that this judgment was valid, and accepted by both, he added: "We belong to the Catholic Church of the future," -- a statement which modern Christian ecumenicity makes more plausible than it must have seemed in the Boston of 1905![22]

Hocking credited to the experience of his marriage, among many other things: his overcoming of solipsism; his understanding of loving and being loved as the most accessible of mystical experiences; his position on prayer and worship in Christianity and the other living religions; his belief that Christians ought not to fear the present moment because it is Christianity itself that has given birth to modernity; and his convictions about the immortability of humanity. As Rouner writes:

> Who knows what effect his successful marriage to Agnes Hocking had on his growing conviction first expressed in *The Meaning of God*, that a marriage of true minds was possible -- at least at one level -- for men of differing religious faiths?[23]

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[23] *Ibid.*

Early University Teaching Experiences

Hocking completed his doctorate in 1904.[24] For the next two years he divided his time between Harvard where he taught a course in the history of modern philosophy and Andover Theological Seminary where he taught a course in the history and philosophy of religion, and comparative religions. In 1906, he was invited to teach at the University of California at Berkeley and Agnes urged his acceptance of the opportunity. Two years later he was invited to join the faculty of philosophy at Yale where he taught for six years. It was here in 1912 that his *magnum opus, The Meaning of God in Human Experience,* was published. Hocking was 39 years of age at the time. Rouner writes of this book that:

> It had not sprung full grown from a furrowed brow, meditating in some secluded place. It was an "out of doors" metaphysics, fashioned from the stuff of prayer meetings and railroad labor, one-room-school teaching, foreign travel, and his love for the Irish Agnes.[25]

Hocking continued his "out of doors" approach in his reconception of Christianity. He asked Christians to come to know personally the believers not just the sacred texts and beliefs of their world religious neighbours. In an interview in 1961 for *Wisdom for Our Time* edited by James Nelson (Norton), Hocking said: "Philosophy is the common man's business, and until it reaches the common man and answers his questions it is not doing its duty."

In 1914, Hocking was invited to return to Harvard as a member of the philosophy department. He accepted. His colleagues became Alfred North Whitehead and George

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[24]"The Elementary Experience of Other Conscious Being in Its Relation to the Elementary Experience of Physical and Reflexive Objects: A Philosophy of Communication, Part I," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge, Mass.: Typescript, 1904). This work appears again as Chapters XVIII-XX of *The Meaning of God in Human Experience.*

[25]Rouner, *Philosophy, Religion and the Coming World Civilization,* p. 22.

Santayana among others. But that year, of course, was the beginning of the First World War and Hocking saw duty in it as a military engineer. He taught in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Harvard in 1916-17 and spent the summer of 1917 at the request of the British government studying the morale of troops on the British and French fronts in France. Out of these experiences he produced *Morale and Its Enemies* and *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, both in 1918. Part VII of the latter book is entitled "Christianity".

Hocking's position here is that an authentic Christianity has within it the makings of a universal ethic which can deal intelligently with the combative and pugnacious tendencies in human beings by directing them properly. In Christianity, the human will to power finds its outlet in Christian missions. And properly conceived, this is a power for others, not a power over them. This thinking will appear again in Hocking's view in *The Coming World Civilization*, viz., that the Christian must take creative initiative in improving the world order, by using power for others, not lording power over them. Christianity ought not to be seeking for a radical displacement of other living religions, but rather be committed to enhancing the best that is in them. In this much Christians are to stand in the place of God. They must desire the good that God desires and make that reality come about now in this order of things. Hocking made this point forcefully when he wrote that: "To the Greeks the sin of arrogance, 'ubris,' (sic) consisted in forgetting to think as mortals.... To us, sin consists equally in forgetting to think as gods."[26]

The Commission of Appraisal of U.S. Protestant Missions

Hocking continued to teach and publish voluminously and in 1928 travelled to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey, and then on to Geneva. The primary purpose of the tour was to suggest how the religions of Jews, Arabs, and Christians in Palestine might all

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[26]William Ernest Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918. Reprinted 1923, 1929, and in abridged version 1940), p. 427.

best be served. While in Jerusalem, Hocking attended some sessions of the meeting of the International Missionary Council in which some accommodation to the living religions on the part of Christian missionaries was being discussed. Rufus Jones, professor of philosophy at Haverford College in Philadelphia, was a key figure at this meeting. Jones had been involved in the preparation of the discussion papers. When later Hocking predicted that the two religious traditions most likely to effect an authentic reconception of Christianity were the "churches called Catholic" and the Religious Society of Friends, we might trace back that idea to the influence of Jones. Jones was a Quaker and would eventually work with Hocking in a project in 1930-32 to be described below.[27]

As mentioned, Hocking went to the Near East to study the emerging Palestinian situation and on his return published "Palestine: An Impasse?", which appeared in July, 1930, in the *Atlantic Monthly*. The article promoted the accommodation of all religious groups in the area. This publication brought Hocking to the attention of a group of Baptist laymen who had met initially on January 17, 1930, with John R. Mott, a pioneer of the ecumenical movement, in the home of John D. Rockefeller, to discuss the falling off of financial support at the popular level for U.S. Protestant overseas missions. The falling off had occurred several years before the 1929 Depression and the laymen wanted to know why. They determined to establish a Commission of Appraisal of these missions. Eventually seven Protestant denominations in the U.S. decided to support the inquiry.[28]

Late in 1930, the Commission of Appraisal hired the Institute of Social and Religious Studies to send researchers to India, Burma, China, and Japan to secure first-hand

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[27] Dr. Paul Dekar (McMaster University Divinity College) suggested to me that this association with Rufus Jones undoubtedly was of special importance to Hocking. The Quaker motto is "We don't evangelize; we serve." This became very much Hocking's own conviction concerning the purpose of Christian missions, especially from 1932 onwards. Cf. also, *Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24th -April 8th, 1928* (London, 1928), 8 Volumes, *passim*. Margaret Furse, in *Experience and Certainty*, p. 11, calls Rufus Jones "...a bit of a mystic himself."

[28] William Ernest Hocking, Chairman, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1932), pp. ix-x.

information on Protestant missions there. The Commission wanted to know exactly what Protestant missionaries in these countries were doing and precisely how they were doing it. They wanted complete data on educational, medical, and agricultural missions, and on theological schools and training centres. The Commission also approached Ernest Hocking and asked him to be chairman of the inquiry.

Hocking was on sabbatical from Harvard at the time of the Commission's offer to him and joked that that was not the best of times to ask for a second sabbatical year. But the laymen involved were adamant that they wanted Hocking for the chairmanship. The Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Harvard at that time was James Woods. He was reluctant to grant the additional leave. Woods feared that Hocking might be going too far afield of what ought to be his philosophical priorities. But Hocking saw the proposed work as intimately related to his overall interests, an applied metaphysics using missions for the topic. Woods reluctantly granted the second year sabbatical.

With reports in hand from the Institute of Social and Religious Studies, the Commission members sailed to Bombay in September, 1931. As mentioned previously, Rufus Jones was a member of this Commission as was Agnes Boyle O'Reilly Hocking. By July 1, 1932, the Commission's preliminary report was ready. Ernest Hocking wrote the Foreword and the first four chapters of the report. In the Foreword, Hocking reflects that one of the chief advantages of the Commission itself is that it "includes contrasting views in the interpretation of Christianity...."[29] It is likely that this experience enhanced in a special way Hocking's thought about what are the unlosable essences of Christianity and his desire for a re-unification of Christianity around those essences, especially as he proposes this in *The Coming World Civilization.*

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[29]*Ibid.*, p. xiv.

Considerable portions of *Re-Thinking Missions* will be discussed in subsequent chapters. But the significance of the experience of the Commission merits one further mention here. Hocking explains the impact on him personally of this Commission in his 1940 book, *Living Religions and a World Faith.* In the introduction to this book, Hocking explains that in 1912 he struggled unsuccessfully to produce a final chapter to *The Meaning of God* on "the actual religions in their plural and historical character."[30]

> I am somewhat less unready than I then was to speak of the particular living religions. The circumstances of my life have kindly allowed me to visit the Near East and the Far East, to meet some of the great interpreters of religion there and here, and to see something of domestic religion in various parts of the world -- the religion of villagers, farmers, artisans -- *not always in evidence in the books.* It would require many lives to be sufficiently informed in this vast field. But one learns little by little two things: to sift out what is relevant to one's question, and to give conjecture its proper name and degree. With these two arts, one's inescapable ignorance loses part of its sting, and most of its power to mislead.[31]

The Commission recommended that Christian missions should be continued but dramatically altered. In contemporary language, missionaries should be concerned with the integral human development of all peoples whom they encounter. They should be prepared not only to serve them in this way but to learn from them. Hocking and his Commission recommended that the position of Christian missionaries toward the other living religions should be "reverence for reverence." The report, in general, was not well received. It was seen as encouraging syncretism at best and indifferentism at worst.

Hocking and members of the Commission made a considerable number of appearances throughout the United States to clarify and discuss the Report. In a December 1932 discussion of the report, Hocking related an incident during his travels which is likely

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[30]William Ernest Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1940), p.7.

[31]*Ibid.*, p. 8, [emphasis mine].

at the heart of his position on Jesus as the "human face of God" and his theory of an "unbound Christ", which we shall deal with in Chapter III. He wanted his listeners to understand how religious traditions can learn from each other without distorting or diluting their own positions. He explained:

> Let me tell you a little incident.... We went into a Buddhist temple seven miles out of Colombo. A number of us were there together. A few of us went into a room in the temple where there was a statue of Buddha, a long statue of sleeping Buddha. And at his feet there was another statue and we were told that that was a statue of Bodhisattva. And we said to the attendant priest, a simple person with a rather finely chiseled face, "Do you worship, do you pray to Buddha?" And he said, "No, we don't pray to Buddha. Buddha has entered Nirvana. He does not hear prayer. But we pray to the Bodhisattva." And we said, "Who is this Bodhisattva?" And he said, "The Bodhisattva is the Buddha of the future. He is now somewhere in the universe. Perhaps he will be taking human form and when he comes then all things will be at peace on earth and men will love one another." My companion said, "And does this coming of the Bodhisattva fill you with joy and peace?" He said: "I look for that coming, I hope for that coming." My friend said, "I join in that hope." And there was a little touch of sympathy that went between that simple priest of the Bodhisattva and this Christian, and I wondered at the time if Christ had been there would he say,"My dear friend, you are worshipping the wrong person. You are on the wrong track." Or would he say: "Friend, I am He for whom you are waiting."[32]

It would seem that Hocking in this episode sees Christianity as the fulfillment of other religious traditions. But that is definitely not the case. Hocking became committed to being for and with persons of other religious traditions in order to understand them and to reconceive Christianity. His further hope was that in the understanding of Christians, believers in other traditions would reconceive their own religions. Hocking's position could be called the "sharing process" model.[33] For Hocking, sharing always implies a mutual training and equipping. As early as 1932 he makes this clear when he writes:

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[32]Leroy Rouner, *Within Human Experience*, pp. 272-73.

[33]Gérard Vallée, *Mouvement Oecuménique et Religions Non Chrétiennes* (Tournai: Desclée & Cie/Montreal:Bellarmin, 1975), p. 33. Page 78 of this book contains a helpful diagram to situate Hocking's thought and that of the Commission of Appraisal among his Protestant contemporaries.

> The relation between religions must take increasingly hereafter the form of a common search for truth.
>
> ...sharing becomes real only as it becomes mutual, running in both directions, each teaching, each learning, each with the other meeting the unsolved problems of both.[34]

The controversy over Hocking's position on missions continued. He spent much time between the publication of the report and 1937 when the Commission was disbanded, explaining his and the Commission's position . The report was made the subject of the meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1938 at Tambaram, Madras. Hendrik Kraemer was Hocking's fiercest antagonist at that time. In preparation for the Tambaram meeting, Kraemer published *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World.* Kraemer sought to apply Karl Barth's theological perspective, allied to that of Emil Brunner, to the subject of Christian mission in response to the position taken by Hocking and his committee. Christianity for Kraemer had to stand firmly against any watering down of Christian tenets and the rising tide of Hitlerism. Hocking's approach appeared far too risky and liberal in the tide of the onslaught of Nazism.

The Second World War

In 1938, Hocking turned 65 and was due to retire from Harvard. He was asked to stay on, however, for another five years. The impending war in Europe was among the reasons. Hocking was especially interested in teaching thinking processes to Harvard freshmen during those unsettled times.

As was mentioned, Hocking's interests had long included things political, social, and legal, as well as religious.[35] The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 increased

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[34]Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, pp. 46-47.

[35]Rouner, *Within Human Experience*, p. 122.

Hocking's conviction that world unity was essential for the survival of humanity. He had first expressed this in detail in *Human Nature and Its Remaking.* World unity for Hocking required a world faith, not to be confused with a world religion, or a world state. In 1940, his *Living Religions and a World Faith,* was published.

In this important book, Hocking continues his reflections on Christian missions and on the role of Christianity in the unification of humanity. He calls again for an end to the attempts of Christians to displace completely the other living religions, denies that his position in relation to other living religions has to be called syncretistic from a Christian perspective, and describes a process for the reconception of Christianity which will help it and the other living religions to grow together in healthy ways. This book is also important because in it Hocking makes clear his own personal position as to what constitutes the divinity of Jesus. As will be explained later, the availability of this kind of divinity is not limited in Hocking's thought to the historical Jesus of Nazareth.

In 1941, Hocking had another deeply personal experience which affected and in a real sense completed his philosophical position as an mystic-idealist. The afternoon of the experience, Hocking's Harvard seminar had discussed issues relating to space and time. After the class he walked along the Charles River, watching a Harvard rowing crew practicing. The sun was fading and

> It was as though for a moment Nature were holding still -- caught in a spell of quiet and tense glory, unwilling to fade... Here was quiescence -- no seminar, no discussion, no labor of categories, also no war. Time had stopped, and the world was now drenched in unmoving space. Space was endless; it was *my* space, running out far beyond the solitary evening star; running also through the earth, and out the other side. There were armies at night, minds full of battle-plans for tomorrow's action. Was it truly the same space? Could that space, crowded with fighters' strategies, be the same as my space, spellbound in peace?
>
> Yes, it must be the identical space; it is the same world for all of us. Yet it cannot be the same. For no one else saw the world I saw; if I had not happened along, that marvel of a

> sky-moment might have passed by unknown. It was certainly not known to itself, was it? Those colors, lights, shadows, shapes, could exist only for a creature with eyes, stationed at or near where I was standing.
>
> Our various spaces, all infinite, must be and cannot be identical. The answer? *Space is not single, but plural.* There is a world-space, identical for all included persons. But for each one, there is also a private space, perhaps spaces, holding private responses to qualities, holding also futurities, not yet existent -- plans, battle-plans perhaps, plans that can be detained, modified, canceled, as events in the identical world-space cannot be.
>
> Space must have a plural -- this we were saying in the seminar. And more than this, each person envisages plural spaces. Then, *the position of the person*, the self, toward this his plurality, how shall we describe it? Each space can be called a "field," a continuum on which infinite positions, potentials, etc., can be distinguished and held together. Could the self, as envisaging plural fields, be a *field of fields*?[36]

As we shall see, this experience confirmed Hocking's conviction that human beings are free, free especially to make history, that the possibility of immortality is real -- he will eventually call it immortability -- and that God is the Field at the heart of what he calls the "nuclear experience" of "I, It, Thou." It should be noted that this is the kind of experience that for Hocking is mystical. It is rooted in every day events, it confirms convictions, enhances thought and faith and is not opposed to the intellectual pursuits necessary for genuine humanity. In the sharing of such experiences mystics are able to recognize each other across religious boundaries. This recognition makes the reconception of Christianity and the other living religions possible and desirable, because there is no diminution of any tradition, only enormous potential for continued growth.

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[36]William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience,* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. xiv-iv.

"Retirement"

Hocking retired from Harvard in 1943, but continued an active life of writing and lecturing. He tried living in New York City but found that too distracting and moved permanently to his six-hundred acre farm in Madison, New Hampshire. One of his lecturing assignments took him to the University of Leiden in 1948. While he was there Hocking was asked by the U.S. government to leave Holland briefly and tour post-war Germany. He was asked to study and comment on U.S. attempts at the re-education of the German people to prevent anything like Nazism among them in the future. Hocking's experiences were eventually published in 1954 as *Experiment in Education: What We Can Learn from Teaching Germany.* Professor Rouner calls this book "the most passionate, personal, prophetic essay Hocking ever wrote."[37]

In the book Hocking relates that while he was in Germany he was also asked to give some lectures. At the end of one of them he gave his address to a group of German students, inviting them to be in touch with him at his home in Madison, New Hampshire. A month after his return to the United States, Hocking received a letter from one of the students, a twenty-six year old ex-Nazi soldier, the youngest son of a farmer in the Rhineland. The student was in his third year of the study of law. Hocking was so very much impressed with the young man's insights about what Hocking translated from the German as a "load-lifting idea" or a "load-sustaining idea", -- *die tragende Idee* -- that Hocking quoted the young man again in the 1959 revision of his *Types of Philosophy*, when Hocking talked about the need for a personal philosophy of life. The young man had written:

> We shall shiver through the third winter in unheated rooms. But why? ...Many are saying, 'Let come what will, it cannot be worse.' Many become Nihilists, because with fair professions all remains phrases, and no one shows the substance. The word

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[37]Rouner, *Within Human Experience*, p. 172.

> 'Democracy,' offered (by the Military Occupation) as the trump card, is daily so abused in practice that it becomes its own dirge.... For myself, I believe in spite of everything in the triumph of Christianity, in the unchanging mission of a man and of a people, in a future Freedom, in a Peace, and in an understanding among the peoples. (But) perhaps I am wrong. Who knows?[38]

Hocking is convinced that young people are becoming Nihilists because there is no "relevance" to their lives in what they are being taught and no moral "grit". He is also concerned that their teachers are by and large not happy human beings and for Hocking this is the qualification for a teacher at any level. He quotes the young German student about what education is for. "I do not doubt the capabilities of America. But in all the western lands does there not seem to fail *die tragende Idee* -- the Load Lifting Idea?" [39]

In 1956, in his book *The Coming World Civilization*, Hocking used these ideas of relevance, moral grit, and happiness as things that are observable in the religious believer and the result of authentic mysticism. These are the things which believers across traditions ought to seek out and share. The authentic believer has a commitment to the present moment through a vision of what it can be. That constitutes relevance. The believer persists where many others do not. And the believer is joyful in the relevance and persistence. Christianity, properly understood, provides a load-lifting idea because relevance, moral grit, and happiness are of its essence.

"The Coming World Civilization"

Agnes Hocking died in 1955 after a long illness that confined her to her room at the Hocking home in Madison. It was the following year that Ernest Hocking published *The Coming World Civilization.* He opens the book with the following words:

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[38]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 302. The whole account of the student's impact on Hocking's thought is found in *Experiment in Education*, pp. 147ff.

[39]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 303.

> In the ripeness of years I am inclined to a moment of prophecy. I wish to discern what character our civilizations, now unsteadily merging into a single world civilization, are destined to take in the foreseeable future, assuming we have a foreseeable future. And what can be deciphered of the roles to be carried by state and church, our two institutional interpreters of total human nature. Are two needed, the one national, the other world-wide? Are they to be independent? Is there at the core of our present era of wrath and insecurity an impulse toward a humane order, measurably free from want and fear, in which church or state or both might wither away?[40]

This book is the key text for his mature thought on the reconception of Christianity and its relationship to the living religions. It was the winner of the Lecomte duNouy Award for 1957. It will be described in detail later.

Hocking's Death

Hocking lived until 1966 at his home in the White Mountains in New Hampshire. At his death he was still revising his 1938 Gifford Lectures, "Fact and Destiny", which were to have been his metaphysics. As mentioned previously, it was not finished. But for Hocking this would not really have presented a problem. The nature of humanity and therefore of the philosophical enterprise is "unfinishedness." In 1912 he wrote, that "The world is infinitely unfinished and this is the reason for our existence."[41]

Before his death, Hocking worked with Leroy Rouner on essays published in Hocking's honor in 1966, in *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization.* We find among the contributors, Hendrik Kraemer, Charles Malik, Gabriel Marcel, Charles Moore, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and Huston Smith. The essays are abundant testimony to the evaluation of Hocking by Leroy Rouner that:

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[40]William Ernest Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. xi.

[41]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience,* p. xxvi.

> Hocking left no school but instead a host of strikingly diverse individuals who have been helped to a solution of their own philosophical problems by his leading... It is possible to be helped by Hocking without becoming a Hockingian in the process.[42]

Ernest Hocking once said to Rouner, who was asking him about his life, "I could sum up my life in four words. I have enjoyed living. I have found it a wonderful and holy thing."[43] Christianity was also for Hocking a holy and wonderful thing, as we shall see, in its simplicity, if not in its western cultural accretions.

Summary

In this chapter I have selected experiences from Dr. Hocking's long and colourful life which are most germane to his philosophy of religion and his theory of the reconception of Christianity.

His conversion at a Methodist Special Meeting at the age of 12 gave him the conviction of the possibility of knowing God and the experience of "men like souls walking." The railroad incident is an experience of "immortability" as he will later call it and broke Spencer's hold on him. It gave him the opportunity to appreciate James in a way that he might not have otherwise. His work experiences gave him the conviction that work and worship are both essential for a balanced human life. It will in many ways eventually be reflected in what he calls his "principle of alternation."

Josiah Royce, in his quest for the Absolute, and his interest in mysticism, gave Hocking the foundation of his idealistic philosophy and his conviction that human relations are triadic. From him, too, Hocking became convinced of the need of an Absolute that transcends the human and is its Self, Other Mind, Field. William James confirmed Hocking's position on the mystic as the true worshipper and the true prophet. The time

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[42]Rouner, *Within Human Experience*, p. 311.

[43]Rouner, *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization*, p. 7.

with Husserl gave Hocking the initial experience of what he would eventually see as the essential Christian commitment to "create through suffering." The comradeship of his marriage convinced him of the possibility and desirability of knowing other minds and that loving and being loved provides the most accessible mystical experience. His conviction that he and his wife were "the Catholic Church of the future," is likely at the heart of his inter-religious and inter-ideological concerns.

The travels to the Near and Far East, especially in 1928 and 1931-32, resulted in Hocking's formulation of "The Sharing Process" in which a reconceived Christianity would relate reverentially to its world religious neighbours. Service in the First World War and time in Germany after the Second World War promoted Hocking's concerns for a load-lifting idea for all of humanity. The experience of a "field-of-fields" influenced his thinking about God as the Field of the nuclear experience, a triadic relationship of "I, It, Thou."

These experiences contributed to Hocking's philosophical position of mystic-idealist, which is at the heart of his reconception of Christianity. It is to that philosophical underpinning that I now turn.

CHAPTER II

HOCKING'S PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

In Hocking's theory of the reconceptions of living religions, it is the mystics who will effect these re-castings of self-understanding. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to explain what Hocking means by mysticism. It does so primarily by providing a summary of Hocking's *magnum opus, The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion*, emphasizing those chapters which deal with objective idealism and prophetic mysticism, and by relating Hocking's last writings on mysticism as they appear in his *Types of Philosophy*.

It needs to be mentioned at the outset that Hocking's style is ruminative and meandering. He takes the reader along with him in his reflections, and then invites the reader to join him in his conclusions. Hocking constantly asks the reader to take time to contemplate examples he offers and look to his or her own experiences for examples of points he is making. Both books are exceedingly meditative in their approaches and attempts to reconstruct his thought necessarily bear marks of his contemplative mode. Also, because Hocking's interests were so many and so varied and because of his voluminous publications, one who seeks to reconstruct his thought fears simultaneously complicating his simplicity and/or simplifying his complexities.

Hocking as Mystic-Idealist

In his "Confessio Fidei" at the conclusion of *Types of Philosophy*, Ernest Hocking writes:

> It is only the mystic-idealist who is justified in exploring all the "hard facts" and facing all the risks of a naturalistic system of experience, neither defying them nor running away.[1]

Here Hocking takes his personal philosophical stance as a mystic-idealist. As we shall see, his position concerning the reconception of Christianity and of the other living religions, is that mystics are the harbingers of world religious unity and most able to reconceive their particular religious traditions to make a world faith possible. This is so because the mystic-idealist does not run from nor deny reality. Therefore, it is not just any kind of mysticism that Hocking chooses, but the mysticism that results in a "prophetic consciousness" which makes world unity possible. Prophetic consciousness for Hocking has nothing to do with knowledge of a future happening but is rather the mystic's conviction that any individual act, done at this moment of one's particular history, has a permanent historical meaning.[2]

Hocking's idealism is of the objective variety. Hocking never denies the physical substance of the world. It is for him the necessary counterpart of mind. He does not see the physical world as metaphysically insubstantial as would the subjective idealist. In his own words, Hocking is an idealist because

> Philosophy is the effort to interpret experience as a whole, that is, to find the meaning of things. If things have no meaning, philosophy is ideally futile....since meanings are

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[1]William Ernest Hocking with Richard Boyle O'Reilly Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, Third Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 320.

[2]Leroy Rouner maintains that "Hocking is a Methodist, not a mystic." He believes that Hocking's religious experiences are like those called "mountaintop" in the Methodist tradition. Cf. Leroy Stephens Rouner, *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 242. Both Richard Woods and Margaret Furse argue otherwise. Woods believes that the contemporary interest in mysticism, especially in North America, is directly attributable to Hocking and to the work of the Quaker, Rufus Jones, at the beginning of this century. Using his own definition of the mystic, Hocking for me qualifies as one, a mystic of the classical western creation spirituality variety. I develop why in this chapter and subsequently. Cf. Richard Woods, O.P., "Mysticism, Protestantism, and Ecumenism: The Spiritual Theology of William Ernest Hocking", *Western Spirituality* edited by Matthew Fox (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides, 1979), *passim.*; Margaret Lewis Furse, *Experience and Certainty: William Ernest Hocking and Philosophical Mysticism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), *passim.*

> abstractions unless they are somehow known or felt or appreciated, the existence of an objective meaning in the world implies some kind of mental life at the core of reality. To this extent I believe that idealism is not so much a separate type of philosophy as the essence of all philosophy, an assumption whether recognized or unrecognized of the philosophic enterprise itself. I take idealism, then, so far as this argument carries us, as the centre of my metaphysics. And I take this as a point of certainty, established by the dialectical method.... One who should say "The world has no objective meaning" would as I see it, contradict himself.[3]

Hocking's position of objective idealism is more complex, of course, than this statement would suggest, but it is rooted here. After explaining why idealism is the centre of his metaphysics, Hocking continues:

> This amount of idealism we may regard as a sort of philosophic minimum. The mystic, I believe, is much more adequate in his judgement that the world is an almost untouched reservoir of significance and value, whose quality we sense in passing perceptions of beauty in nature; or in love, which always comes as a surprise strangely reflecting on our previous inability to see, so that we say of ourselves, "Atheists are as dull Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight", or still more continuously in that vague but inescapable sense of impending possible good for which we continue to hope while we live. What is living? Striving? Yes, incessant striving, but not "dumb striving." Living is reaching out to the reality of things as a region in which the discovery of value need never end. In philosophy, this conviction counts as the mystic's; but in this respect, I believe, again, that every man is an avowed or unavowed mystic, -- even the Schopenhauers.[4]

Hocking, therefore, is an idealist because idealism is in fact the essence of the philosophical enterprise correctly understood. He is a mystic because of the unlimited value and hopefulness which that world view offers. Mysticism offers meaning and purpose about this present reality, and beyond it. Now we must see how Hocking reached his position as mystic-idealist.

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[3]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, pp. 313-314.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 314.

Hocking preferred that idealism be called "idea-ism". He had two reasons for this position. First, when the tradition is called idealism it seems to appear as though it has a monopoly of ideals. Few remember that the "l" has been added simply for the sake of euphony. Second, because John Locke and Berkeley thought that experience was made up of ideas, it came to be called idealism. But the position is misnamed. "Mentalism or spiritualism would be more accurate names, but they have been drafted to other use."[5]

So Hocking agrees to use the term idealism asking the reader always to keep in mind that it is really idea-ism that he discusses. For Hocking, the idealist's.philosophy is expressed best in one negative and one positive position: l) negatively speaking, for the idealist, although nature appears to be self-sufficient, to go its own course, it does depend on something outside of itself; 2) positively, that upon which nature depends is Mind, Spirit, Idea.[6] The intuition of idealism is that the substance of things is mental, like the thinker and his thought, the will to act and the action, the self and the expression of the self. Hocking says that in its history idealism was an attempt to bring reason to bear on the spiritual insights of humanity but idealism has now achieved an independence of things religious in particular because of Descartes, Leibniz, Malebranche, Berkeley, and their successors.[7] In its modern form, idealism proposes that "The mind is a little thing, a mere item in an infinite universe; the mind is itself an infinite thing, the whole universe is mirrored within it "[8]

But if the "stuff" of substance is mental, and if the created order of things is not independent, on what then does it depend? In idealism, the technical name for this

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[5]*Ibid.*, p. 150.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 149.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 152.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 157.

unlimited being on which all else depends is The Absolute. This Absolute includes all time and all place. There has been nothing before it or after it. Hocking describes this Absolute of idealism as follows:

> It could not be supposed subject to emotion, an inner agitation in view of external happening; it could neither be angry, nor pleased with prayer and praise, nor be moved by any sentiment of love for finite creatures -- it would certainly not be identical with the God of historical religion.[9]

This Absolute, in other words, is the Absolute of Josiah Royce as has been discussed in Chapter I. Hocking grants that there is something in the assurance of an absolute truth, but this Absolute of Royce's does not seem to really reflect the human condition in which there is so much that is unsettled and in conflict. How can the reality of every day experience depend on this kind of imperturbable Absolute? The Absolute's world is safe and it would seem so safe that in fact there is no freedom in it. Hocking believed in the need for an Absolute, but the view of that Absolute as Royce had formulated it needed to be attacked. It took a man of the calibre of William James to attack it and Hocking was pleased that James had done so, although he had certain difficulties with James' position.

The Pragmatic Value of an Absolute

In 1963 in the preface to the fourteenth edition of *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Hocking explained that he wrote the book originally to demonstrate the pragmatic value of an Absolute. He respected the position of his teacher William James who was asking what difference if any the idea of an Absolute could make. James' famous, "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots,"[10] appealed to Hocking.

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[9]*Ibid.*, p. 219.

[10]William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier, 1961), p. 34.

Hocking accepted the need for relevance and pragmatism's value "in awakening the philosophic conscience to the simple need of fruitfulness and moral effect as a voucher of truth."[11] Hocking also writes of James' need to confront Royce's position on the Absolute that:

> James's intuitive objection to the Absolute lay in its tendency to devour the independence and freedom of the finite, particular beings of the world. He doubts whether every fact is so connected with every other that its being leads to the Absolute. The connectedness of the world is loose: no strand leads through to the end. There is causality, determination, systematic interdependence in the world, -- which is only to say that it is not a chaos: but it is not *all caused*, all determined; it is not a "block-universe"; there is room for novelty, freedom, absolute beginning. Of all our systematizations we have to say "Ever not quite!"[12]

So Hocking approved of James' pragmatic concerns about the Absolute. But he saw James' over-all pragmatic position as "That which works is true." Hocking describes his own pragmatism as a "negative" one, viz., "That which does not work is not true." For Hocking, the obverse is "neither valid nor useful." Negative pragmatism is an invaluable guide because

> ...if a theory has no consequences, or bad ones, if it makes no difference to men, or else undesirable differences; if it lowers the capacity of men to meet the stress of existence, or diminishes the worth to them of what existence they have; such a theory is somehow false and we have no peace until it is remedied.[13]

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[11]William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion* (New Haven. Yale University Press, 1963), p. xxlii.

[12]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 221.

[13]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. xxiii.

Hocking is also of the opinion that if a theory is dull it is not true. He admitted that idealism with its conception of the Absolute was not adequate. It is not concrete or particular enough. Worse than that, it is dull! No religion for Hocking is

> ...a true religion which is not able to make men tingle, yes, even to their physical nerve tips, with the sense of an infinite hazard, a wrath to come, a heavenly city to be gained or lost in the process of time and by the use of our freedom.[14]

This is perhaps Hocking's Methodist mountaintop conversion experience speaking. He is proposing that at the heart of the general disaffection with religion and in particular "with the religion of reason...and its philosophical framework, absolute idealism" is that human beings do not find "the Absolute of idealism identical with the God of religion; they cannot worship the Absolute."[15]

Worship is essential for Hocking. There is simply no authentic religion without it. Worship is part of his "principle of alternation" which makes for a whole and holy existence. When one pays attention only to the whole of existence, the Absolute, the particular drops out of sight. When one is absorbed in particulars the whole idea of things is lost. One, therefore, needs to alternate attention between the whole of things and historical particulars. For Hocking the mystic is the expert at alternating attention in this way, and this ability is at the heart of the mystic's inductions about his or her religion which effect revitalizations of the tradition. The ability to alternate between work and worship also makes the mystic committed to social action, because the mystic has the vision of what the world might be, not only of what it is.[16]

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[14]*Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

[15]*Ibid.*, p. xvi.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 392.

This principle of alternation is fundamental to worship. Momentarily one sets aside "worldly" affairs and contemplates the whole of things. It is a natural alternation which echoes the pulse of life if one considers that we also move from sleeping to waking and waking to sleeping, from work to recreation and recreation to work, from hunger to satisfying hunger to hunger again. In Hocking's understanding of the mystic, he or she possesses the ability to alternate between work and worship in a more psychically involved and deeper way than do most persons, but Hocking always insists that the mystical alternation is simply a heightened encounter of a relationship open to anyone.[17]

The mystic, therefore, can teach us something quite practical in this principle of alternating between the whole of things and deep involvement in our particular moment of history. So, Hocking admits that pragmatism is right in challenging idealism, because its Absolute cannot be worshipped, and the imperturbability of its Absolute does not encourage involvement in history. But Hocking deplores that, unlike mysticism, pragmatism does not offer a positive program for life. For Hocking, pragmatism

> ...as positive builder has little to recommend it. Founding truth ultimately on our human value . . . is an idealism become more subjective, freedom less bound by authority. It is the function of the pragmatic test . . . to point out something wrong; the work of discovering what is right must be done by other means.[18]

So, although Hocking was pleased that James had decided to challenge the Absolute of idealism, and Josiah Royce's Absolute in particular, and was eminently pleased with James' emphasis on the "fruits" of religious experience, Hocking did not find pragmatism a satisfactory answer to knowing what to do with one's life. Hocking was adamant that just because something works or succeeds, that does not make it right. He

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[17] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

continued to feel that way. Writing about James in 1959, Hocking calls him a "genial innovator", but suggests that more mature reflection makes him see James as really opposing monism not idealism. For Hocking, James continually misses the point that to tilt against the Absolute is as useless "as to tilt against the most real." Hocking continues as follows:

> "The Absolute" is simply the name for the unattained solution of an inescapable problem: -- if you have any dependent beings -- and you have -- then there is that on which each dependent depends, i.e., the independent being. If the word "absolute" is offensive, call the unknown quantity "X." It is well enough to remind the absolutist that his term is not an answer to the metaphysical problem, but merely the place for an answer. But the conception "X" can be abolished only by abolishing the metaphysical enquiry itself. It is perhaps through a very obscure inkling of this truth that the latest school of fact-and-form worshippers, "logical positivism," tries to banish the metaphysical enquiry by so defining meaning that the enquiry becomes meaningless! It is a simple device, but it deludes many an unwary soul, especially such as on other grounds are disaffected to metaphysics (or metaphysicians).[19]

We have seen, then, how Hocking departed from his mentors Royce and James, and why. Hocking readily admits how much he owes to them but sees both of their positions as incomplete. Hocking is seeking for "other means" than theirs and for Hocking, the other means is mysticism. Hocking wants an Absolute that makes a difference for humanity, that ends any spiritual fatigue or meaninglessness, that provides the will to create, even through suffering. He is convinced that mysticism alone can do this and argues that point as follows:

> Whatever may be the deficiencies of idealism, pragmatism, if we are right, cannot supply them. How may it be with mysticism? Mysticism may have its absolute; but mysticism finds its metaphysics in experience; and mysticism is no stranger to worship. I believe, in fact, that the requirements both of reason and of beyond-reason may be met in what mysticism, rightly understood, may contribute to idealism.

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[19]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 223.

> Not every mysticism will do. It is not the "speculative mysticism" of the text-books that we want; it is a mysticism as a practice of union with God, together with the theory of that practice. Mysticism may introduce idealism to the religious *deed*, ultimately thereby to the particular and authoritative in religion.[20]

This mention of "beyond-reason" requires some comment. A condition of "beyond reason" occurs for Hocking when one has exhausted all rational thought in a given situation or about a particular person, and one still "knows" that one's insight about the situation or person is accurate, valuable, and worth enacting. Hocking suggests that the induction of the mystic which effects the reconception of his or her religious tradition often takes place in this "beyond reason" condition. The mystic knows when, where, and how to act although the rationale for acting may be out of his or her ken.

Hocking is well aware of the bad press that mysticism has had and continues to have, especially among his Protestant co-religionists, when he first writes of it in detail in 1912. So he carefully lists the kind of mysticism which he does *not* choose for his philosophy. He writes as follows in *The Meaning of God*:

> There are mysticisms in which none of us believe. There is the mysticism of mantic and theurgy -- mysticism of supernatural exploit, seeking short-cut to personal goods. There is another mysticism equally remote from our affections: world-avoiding, illusion-casting, zero-worshipping mysticism; living (in self-contradiction) upon the fruits of a rejected life. This mysticism has given the name its current color: making it necessary, perhaps, to ask that we be understood and agreed together in rejecting it. From the standpoint of just this sound disparagement of these types of mysticism, I have become persuaded that there is another, even a necessary mysticism. A mysticism as important as dangerous; whose historical aberrations are but tokens of its power. It is this mysticism which lends to life that value which is beyond reach of fact, and that creativity which is beyond the docility of reason; which neither denies nor is denied by the results of idealism or the practical works of life, but supplements both, and constitutes the essential standpoint of religion.[21]

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. xxix.

The mysticism which Hocking espouses is, therefore, a dynamic, life-giving force, essential to authentic religious life, which is in no way committed to escaping the present social order but includes the commitment to change it for the better. It can be seen operating in the lives of mystics like Lao Tze, Confucius, the Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammed. Hocking then proceeds to explain exactly what it is that religion does and what the authentic mystic does in terms of religion. We move now to an exposition of his thought in that regard.

What Religion Does

Hocking begins the body of his work, *The Meaning of God* by asking what it is that religion actually does. Religion for Hocking is primarily "mother of the Arts."[22] There is nothing in any culture which for Hocking has not begun in it as a divine manifestation. Music, drama, painting have emerged from religious impulses. So has science, and in 1912, Hocking included the then emerging social sciences as offsprings of religion. However, religion and the arts are not co-terminous. Religion's work, in fact, is a "*perpetual* parentage" of the arts.[23] Without this perpetual parentage, there could be no arts. Precisely because religion and the arts are not the same thing, and because religion stands "outside the arts" religion provides the individual with a format for "a fearless and original valuation of things."[24] Because the religious person knows of this parentage of the arts by religion, and of religion's role in evaluating these arts, there is a freedom evident in the religious person, a security, a living with certainty that others still seek. The religious person knows what he or she is for, viz., the on-going fearless evaluation of all

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

that is supposed to enhance human life. The religious person also knows that all that he or she does has eternal meaning and is life-giving. In that much religion is "anticipated attainment."[25] It provides the believer with the peace and security and meaning for which all seek. But this peace and certainty does not permit the religious person to slack off from the hard work of the world. Hocking writes: "If being in the world it is not of the world, it is nevertheless with the world and for it -- in brief, *in for it*, and with no loss of power."[26]

Hocking admits that there are many who no longer see religion in this way, as parent of the arts. Even some who pay lip service to the concept would see the parent as senile and yearn for its immediate, happy death. Many who are religious are weary of the perpetual parentage because the offspring have not lived up to parental expectations. But Hocking goes on to point out that in addition to its parentage of the arts, and the subsequent security this provides the religious person, religion is also a feeling. He warns that there are those who would make of religion nothing but feeling. Usually, these are persons who are in reaction to the haggling of religious persons about untestable positions in creeds. With James, Hocking takes the position that religions began in deep-felt experiences. Lao Tze, Confucius, the Buddha, Jesus, Muhammed, felt something deeply wrong with their times and their places, and the religious principles offered to deal with those ills, or how those religious principles were being ignored. It must be remembered that Hocking is looking for commonalities across all religions, so it is a godsend for him that people are rediscovering the place of feeling in religion as demonstrated by the comparative study of religion. He writes that "Man's religions, we cannot help seeing, are much more alike than the explanations and expressions they give for them. Diverse as are myths, prophecies,

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[25]*Ibid.*, p. 31.

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 32.

eschatologies, angelogies, and the rest, religious feeling is much the same the world over."[27]

Furthermore, feeling in religion is important because feeling is not only at the heart of the original experience that begins a religion, but religion renews its life through the felt experiences of passionate personalities. Hocking mentions to his readers that it is not only William James who holds this position in relation to feeling, upon whom Hocking has built much of his own thought, but so do other theologians, philosophers, and psychologists like Schleiermacher, Sabatier, H. Höffding, and J.B. Pratt [28] Hocking admits that the position he takes has been acquired only by long and thorough research and he wishes not to be seen as demeaning intellectual pursuits, but he observes that in things religious: "As passion cools, theology spreads; and as theology spreads, passion cools still more."[29] It should be eminently clear from the history of religions and the comparative study of them that religion is in fact, an affair of the heart and of the head, for without the heart [feeling] there is no spirit or vitality in the tradition, nor potential renewing of it. Another special gift of feeling in a religious person is that there is "something unspoiled and original about human feeling: it lies beyond the reach of dispute, refutation, and change."[30] Hocking suggests that it is perhaps this dimension of feeling that led persons like Jesus to place such a high value on childlikeness. Children are immediate in the display of their feelings -- until they are taught not to be. For Hocking, religion loses its power when feelings are subverted. It is very difficult to understand what Hocking means by "change" in this context, because he says that mystics who have this feeling reconceive or change their

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[27]*Ibid.*, p. 40.

[28]Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 38, n. 1, for specific quotes from the authors Hocking mentions who support his position about feeling

[29]*Ibid.*, p. 41.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 50.

traditions. It would appear that he means once the mystic has a sense, a deep feeling for where the tradition needs to go to continue to be a living religion, that conviction of the mystic's is not able to be changed or thwarted.

Hocking sees this kind of unspoiled feeling at the heart of religious action. Those who feel the deepest, for Hocking the prophets of various traditions, are seldom far from the "brewing-place of action."[31] Because these prophets feel deeply about the injustices and inadequacies in their world, and in their religions, they seek to change them. But it does not require tremendous mental acumen to see that "*...religion has never as yet been able to take itself as a matter of feeling.*"[32] No matter how essential unspoiled feeling is to religion, there is also an intellectual content to a religious tradition upon which its action is based. The same prophets who felt the deepest also preached very specifically about what constitutes a moral life. This means that intellectual content, the idea, is vital to religion. Hocking makes clear that this does not discount what he has said previously about theological subtleties and their deleterious effect on religion, but for him, authentic religion has nothing to fear from the use of one's brain power. He writes:

> Clever and intricate theology does usually mean trivial religion, but mighty religion and mighty strokes of speculation have always gone together.... Deficit of mind must always, I venture to think, be a weakness in religion, and must rob that religion at last of all mordant power.[33]

Interestingly, Hocking is actually convinced that there is no such thing as feeling apart from an idea. The idea is the articulation of the feeling and also its basic solution. He uses some very practical experiences to make this point. If one feels hungry, the feeling

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

ends in the idea of food, and the securing of the food and the eating of it. The feeling, as it were, precedes the idea and finds its completion, its satisfaction in the idea. This, too, must surely be the case with religious feeling.

> It seems probable that in religion ideas and feeling are inseparable; and that whatever valid ideas religion may have are to be found in that region of human nature where the cleavage between idea and feeling, never more than a tendency to diverge, no longer exists.[34]

The authentically religious person thus has a vision or an experience, a passionate encounter, involving deep feeling, which, when it is articulated finds its fulfillment in work and worship, and results in a life of "unshrinking objectivity." Feeling and idea have come together and are inseparable in this authentic religious person who is the mystic. Out of deep feeling and passion, the mystic becomes engaged in correcting the injustices and inequities of his or her social order articulating what is needed to correct that order. This for Hocking means that "we will have no religion without a theory; we will have no religion without a creed."[35] It is clear that Hocking does not minimize the need for an intellectual content in a living religion but feeling in religion is so important to Hocking that he continues the discussion of it at considerable length, and we shall now highlight that discussion.

Chapters VI through XII of *The Meaning of God* continue the discussion of feeling and idea. Religious truth, as we have seen, is founded upon experience, a passionate experience. Very often these experiences occur during times of great grief or pain when there develops in the individual an atmosphere of resentment as though one would expect better of the order of things. The believer senses that the world ought to be good, or at least better than it is at that moment. In this much, according to Hocking, we are sensing a

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[35] *Ibid.*

Will independent of our own will. We are calling It to account. This is a metaphysical experience and it is also an act of faith that things can be better. This sensation of an independent Will becomes an important element in Hocking's mysticism. He reasons that the mind that is thinking in resentment about the order of things, since it is a dependent mind, depends for that thinking on a Mind. The self that is experiencing the pain, because it is dependent, becomes aware of a Self which it is not, and to which it refers the sensation, and of which it makes demands. Because the human being is dependent, the idea that he or she articulates as a result of the experience of pain, or sometimes of pleasure, must rest on the spiritual stuff of the Idea. For Hocking, this Self, Mind, Idea, is in fact, God.[36] This is why for Hocking, the work of the mystic is not presumptuous, a point which will be developed in Chapter III. The mystic's articulation of an improved human condition is based on and rooted in the Mind of God. This appears to be a considerable departure from traditional ideas of mysticism in which the recipient of mystical gifts is understood as far more passive than Hocking describes them to be.

Hocking elaborates on the Self, Mind, Idea as God as he moves into the third part of his book which he terms "The Need of God: A Series of Free Meditations."[37] In these pages Hocking continues his reflections that the religious feeling, the sense that goodness is or ought to be at the heart of things, the desire for a better reality, finds its fulfillment in the Absolute, the Idea, just as the feeling of hunger finds its fulfillment in the idea of food. In other words, God is the Idea that fulfills all our needs. That is the pragmatic function of the Absolute, of God. But what real function does this Absolute serve? Hocking wrestles to answer James' objection that one may have an Absolute but the Absolute is of no

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[36]*Ibid.*, Chapters VII-XII, *passim*.

[37]These meditations appear on pp. 163-226.

practical value. For Hocking the Absolute, the Idea, provides hope and optimism. And human beings need optimism if they are to continue to function. Hocking's position is:

> ...no optimism is possible without some kind of monism. For in order to think well of your world, and expect good from it, your world must at least have *a character*. It must afford a basis for expectations or probabilities.[38]

What Hocking means by monism is that reality is one unitary, organic whole, with no independent parts. For Hocking that reality is Mind, not Matter.[39] There are good and bad monisms for Hocking and conceiving of reality as Matter is the worst possible monism. There must be some kind of single substance of the created order of things or there can be no reason to hope. If reality is pure chance and randomness, there is nothing to build upon, no prospect of a purposeful life, nothing that will carry over for future generations, and that results in hopelessness. Also, at the heart or the bottom of reality the character of the world must be experienced as ultimately good, on the side of humanity, or there also can be no hope. There must be a Self, Mind, Idea which is the Good, or ultimate reality, or life is futile, in Hocking's understanding of it. This is why monism is essential for hope in Hocking's thought.

Hocking is convinced that many persons who question the value of an Absolute are not asking the right questions about the Absolute. The question that one asks determines the answer that one gets. Hocking maintains that this is the case in particular in the religious and moral spheres. Believe a person is evil and the person becomes that in your eyes. Believe a person is good and the person has a way of living up to those expectations.

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[38]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 167.

[39]It is intriguing the way scientists like Shimon Bakon and Edward Fredkin are talking today about a "mind" or God in and behind the cosmos. Much of their language, in fact, borders on the "mystical" when they talk about reality. An account of how contemporary physicists in particular appear to be "finding God" as Mind is the cover story of the April 1988 issue of *The Atlantic*. While the article is difficult going for the non-scientist like myself, it appears that Fredkin in particular is saying that the best contemporary physics is metaphysics. He posits a "mind," a Great Computer, at the heart of reality, working out a problem.

If you look for evil, you will probably find it. If you look for good, you will probably find it. If you begin presuming that the Absolute has no meaning, you will find that It has none. If you begin presuming that It has a real meaning, you will find that meaning. For Hocking, this is the exegesis of "Seek and ye shall find." Earlier in the *Meaning of God* he has written:

> ...in meeting my world divinely it shows itself divine.
> It supports my postulate. And without such an act of will,
> no discovery of divinity could take place. Men cannot *be*
> worthy of reverence, until I meet them with reverence....
> God cannot live as divine and beneficent, except in the
> opportunity created by our good-will, but given the good-will,
> reality is such as will become divine.[40]

For Hocking, what you seek for is what you get. If the inquirer comes with good-will to the quest for the Absolute, the world and all that is in it can be experienced as divine and as beneficent. This is the pragmatic value of the Absolute, the purpose of It, the meaningfulness of It. All that is becomes worthy of reverence because its source is Good. All effort is worthwhile. Nothing that is done that is good is ever lost. This Absolute provides the hope for humanity especially during the ennui and meaninglessness that can afflict even the most sane among us, given the experiences of evil which at times overwhelm. The mystic, in Hocking's thought, is the one most able consistently to uncover that which is divine and beneficient and to make it available to others, no matter the dark nights of the soul, nor the other negative experiences of the mystic.

In Chapters III and IV we shall see that Hocking uses this idea of reverence for all that is as the most worthy human posture. It becomes a major factor in his reconception theory. The Christian cannot see what is worthwhile in other living religions unless this reverence for reverence is the prior attitude of the Christian. In seeking for reverence, the Christian will find it in the persons and beliefs of his/her world religious neighbours. In

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[40]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 146-47.

his later thought he proposed that in addition to reverence for all that is good, a Christian pugilism is also required, viz., a determination on the part of the authentic mystic to fight against that which is demeaning to human nature. It is fair to call this attitude of reverence for reverence a creative undertaking on the part of the believer because she or he will need to put meaning into both the pleasures and the pain of human existence. Hocking's Absolute is no narcotic for the human condition, but It does enhance creativity. Because this creativity plays a major role in Hocking's thought, it is necessary to explain what what he means by it.

Creativity

Hocking constantly emphasizes the need to be creative in authentic religious life. It is part of his idealism that "whatever is ultimately real in the universe is such stuff as ideas are made of rather than such stuff as stones and metals are made of."[41] Ideas for Hocking are the "stuff" of creativity. Ideas are so powerful that what the human being thinks makes or unmakes the individual, and the world order. We have seen already that for Hocking, when a human being feels a resentment toward the divine, for example, she or he experiences an idea of a better world, an Idea of a better possibility. This feeling, idea, experience are creative, if properly understood. The creative attitudes -- or lack thereof -- that we bring to experiences are what we become. He writes of it in this way:

> A person who wills to have a good will, already has a good will -- in its rudiments. There is a solid satisfaction in knowing that the mere desire to get out of an old habit is a material advance upon the condition of submergence in that habit. When one is dirty the longest step is made when one gains nothing but dissatisfaction with dirt. Surely the work is not finished -- but the obstacles that remain are material only....
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> There is, then, in these matters, some absolute finding in the seeking: salvation is, to seek salvation, for in seeking

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[41]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 152.

> it one has already abandoned his mortality and his sin. In religion or in morals, the question can never be How much is empirically finished? but rather, What beginning is made? for any beginning is the birth of an idea, and the *anticipation of attainment*.[42]

This is creativity for Hocking. The human encounters that which is not right and conceives what would make it right. It then remains to carry out the idea. It is part of Hocking's conviction, as mentioned in the first chapter, that one of the unlosable features of Christianity is to take responsibility for one's world. And the most creative taking of responsibility is encountered when one wills to create through the suffering which one experiences. One is left with the feeling that if Hocking could remove all evil and suffering from the world he would not do so because evil is essential for the human to function creatively, therefore humanly.

Hocking is convinced that it is the Absolute as Mind, which makes for creativity in the face of the evil which we experience. But what is often presented to us as the actual works of God leaves the thoughtful person feeling more often than not that this God is some sort of Divine Bungler.[43] Many feel that they could do a better job if they were in charge of the world. Hocking does not deny this evidence but insists: "...religion shall at all points be built on metaphysical knowledge and nothing else. God can be of any worth to man only in so far as he is a *known* God."[44] Hocking is pleased that metaphysical knowledge is the most common knowledge available to humanity and says that metaphysical knowledge is also empirical. For Hocking, babies are born thinking metaphysically! He writes: "...the infant's first thoughts are metaphysical, that is to say, thoughts of Reality -- though not by name and title."[45] The greatest evidence for the

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[42]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 197-198.

[43]*Ibid.*, pp. 198-210 *passim*.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 215

[45]*Ibid.*

goodness of God is not only that persons are able to look forward with hope but that they are able to "look backwards without a shudder."[46] They can do this precisely because they know that pain and suffering is not an end in itself but called to account and transformed by a good God. And the transformation occurs primarily through association. No matter how evil the life of another might appear to be, Hocking is convinced there is always some good evident in that life, for the individual who consistently seeks for that good. Another sees the worth of what an individual is doing, no matter how minimal that good might be, and comments favourably on it. The human assent or nod "conveys the assent from an Other." But as much as the human association offers the comfort of God, the assent from God, the potential for dealing creatively with suffering, it offers its own kind of pain because it can end, and therefore:

> the closest association may cause the bitterest pang, because its loss removes also *that by which* any loss is made less grievous. Far, indeed, must we be from perfect openness to experience, if there is not some power over these evils also.[47]

This is the point for Hocking at which God becomes necessary. Given all that humanity can provide by way of support, assent for each other, ultimately there comes the need for a God who is not so much a God of power, or a vindicator, or a righteous judge overcoming inequities, but a God who is an intimate, infallible associate. He writes of this kind of God in this way:

> It is God in this personal relation (not exclusive of the others) that alone is capable of establishing human peace of mind, and thereby human happiness. Something paradoxical about the Supreme Power there is; something in this non-competitive character which thinkers early seized upon: -- a Lao Tse glorifies the Tao that never asserts itself, as Christianity presents for adoration its God in the

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[46]*Ibid.*, p. 216.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 223.

> guise of an infant, and infant of the humblest. The authentic voice of God, if it is to come to man with a wholly irresistible might of meaning, must be a still, small voice.[48]

Hocking is convinced that this non-competitive, quiet companionship of God, experienced, understood, and lived with most effectively by the mystics, is, in fact, open to all. He warns that this relationship with God, however, will in no way diminish human attachments but will in fact enhance them. In fact, if human relationships are not enhanced by this companionship with God, for Hocking the experiences are not of God. Admitting the difficulties involved in knowing God, Hocking says that the knowledge is possible and proceeds to explain precisely how it can be obtained.[49]

How God Can Be Known

Hocking explains in Chapters XVI to XXII of *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, how God can be known and how others can therefore be known. This part of Hocking's work contains his most substantial exposition of objective idealism.[50]

For Hocking, the history of religion makes clear that the Idea of God followed the feeling, the sensation of God. People did not at first posit a God and then reflect on God's powers. It was, in fact, the reverse. There were very specific events occurring in the lives of primal peoples and eventually they interpreted the events as attributable to supernatural powers, ultimately to a supernatural Supreme Power. Thus they developed a metaphysics. Primal peoples, no less than contemporary persons, were seeking meaning, happiness, and certainty. They needed a known God. They needed immediate experience of that God.

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[48]*Ibid.*, p. 224.

[49]*Ibid.*, pp. 225-229.

[50]In *Types of Philosophy*, p. 329, Hocking refers readers to Chapters XVII to XX in *The Meaning of God* to understand in depth his position on idealism but for me Chapters XXI and XXII are also significant.

This they achieved in ascribing supernatural purposes to all that their lives involved. Eventually they ascribed these purposes to a Supreme Supernatural Being.

Contemporary persons need the same, immediate certainty about God if they are to have any kind of optimism about their place in the created order of things. This certainty depends on present experience. This certainty cannot be an inference based on past experience, that is on tradition, or revelation, because inference is one step removed from experience. Tradition is to be valued as an intellectual inheritance but first-hand experience is essential for the believer. Hocking writes: "No type of inference, however direct, and simple, can quite meet our requirement; for that which we must *infer* is one step away from human experience."[51]

As mentioned previously, Hocking does not mean to belittle tradition or religious authorities for if we do this, Hocking says, we shall have to chuck the whole of organized religion in the West and he is not prepared to do that. He faults John Dewey for this approach. Hocking is well aware of the greed and corruption of some of those who manage these institutions and of how often the churches and other religious associations have been anything but the liberating forces their founders intended them to be. But Hocking continues to maintain that in things religious we need institutions. However, we can accept these institutions and authorities only when their positions match our own experiences. If, for example, a Buddhist were to attempt to preach the release from suffering which is part of that tradition to one who has no experience of suffering, the preaching would be unintelligible. Because of this match with experience, all authentic religion for Hocking is autobiographical. The autobiographical occurs in the revelatory moments when one "gets it" or when one can say "I know that for certain to be true."[52]

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[51]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 249-250.

[52]*Ibid.*, pp. 229-265 *passim.*

But what is the nature of these experiences in which the Idea of God becomes a reality? Hocking maintains that there are several but the original experience is

> ...an experience which might be described as an experience of *not being alone in knowing the world*, and especially the world of Nature. In such an experience, if there be such, would be contained all the possibilities for harm and for good which religion has exhibited.[53]

What are the possibilities for harm in such an experience? If the unknown, if Nature, is experienced only as mystery, then the individual's worship will become "a perpetual celebration of his own inferiority." But if out of such an experience of Nature, the individual is convinced that "*I know not, but He knows*", this for Hocking opens up the whole dimension of human investigation called Science. Science in fact becomes the pursuit of the knowledge of God and in no way conflicts with the religious enterprise. We see here again Royce's influence on Hocking and their common conviction that the philosophy of religion and of science must have a meeting point. Further when the experience results in the conviction that "*I cannot, but He can*," the experience "sets him on his feet as man," and provides the certainty and optimism which the human condition requires if there is to be hope at its foundation.[54]

But there are experiences other than experiences of Nature which make certainty and optimism possible. In knowing even one other mind, the possibility of knowing Other Mind occurs. Here Hocking uses the experience of knowing a "comrade" and the astounding implications of that. (It is important to remember that Hocking's dissertation which sought to refute solipsism is contained in large measure in these particular chapters.) In this example Hocking believes that he brings solipsism which has never really been believed to its final philosophical resting place.

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

[54] *Ibid.*

> I have sometimes sat looking at a comrade, speculating on this mysterious isolation of self from self. Why are we so made that I gaze and see of thee only thy Wall, and never Thee? This Wall of thee is but a movable part of the Wall of my world; and I also am a Wall to these; we look out at one another from behind masks. How would it seem if my mind could but once be *within* thine; and we could meet and without barrier be with each other? And then it has fallen upon me like a shock -- as when one thinking himself alone has felt a presence -- But I *am* in thy soul. These things around me are in thy experience. They are thy own; when I touch them and move them I change *thee*. When I look on them I see what thou seest; when I listen, I hear what thou hearest. I am in the great Room of thy soul; and I experience thy very experience. For *where art thou*? Not there, behind those eyes, within that head, in darkness, fraternizing with chemical processes. Of these, in my own case, I know nothing, and will know nothing; for my existence is spent not behind my Wall, but in front of it. I am there, where I have treasures. And there art thou, also. This world in which I live is the world of thy soul; and being within that, I am within thee. I can imagine no contact more real and thrilling than this; that we should meet and share identity, not through ineffable inner depths (alone), but here through the foregrounds of common experience; and that thou shouldn't be -- not behind that mask -- but *here,* pressing with all thy consciousness upon me, *containing* me, and these things of mine. This is reality: and having seen it thus, I can never again be frightened into monadism by reflections which have strayed from their guiding insight.[55]

(It may not be without significance that this "comrade" is his wife, Agnes. His loving her may have effected this special kind of knowing.) As the individual can know the mind of another, so too, the individual can know Other Mind. Nature becomes the common ground, the Great Room, eventually Hocking will call it a Loom. In the experiencing of Nature, the Other Mind is experienced. Hocking suggests that Nature is indeed a mediator of Other Mind but one should be clear about what a mediator does. Often one thinks of a mediator as separating something or someone from something or someone else. But, in fact, the mediator connects as well as separates. The sea for

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[55]*Ibid.*, pp. 265-66. This passage is possibly the most quoted of all of Hocking's works. It appears several times in the Festschrift published in 1966 in his honour. Cf. *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization, passim.* Richard Woods, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-21, ranks it as *the* mystical experience for Hocking and "the paradigm" for love as the basis for mystical experience.in Hocking's thought.

example both separates dry land and connects it. So, too, is the function of Nature's mediation of Other Mind, it separates but also connects us with It.[56] Hocking maintains that connected with any experience, there is a substance. The substance can be of nature, or of other persons. So too, is the case with God, or Other Mind. There is a Substance involved. This Substance is, in fact the basis of all our consciousness, and so integral to our consciousness that we sometimes miss It. Hocking suggests:

> It [the Absolute, Substance, Other Mind] will be present for us for the most part in no other form than as the abiding sense of what stability and certainty we have, as we move about among men and things; it will be present for the most part just as our own force of self-assertion and *self-confidence* is present, that force by which we individually will "to maintain ourselves in being" in a world known, by what assurance we do not ordinarily enquire, to be no hostile, nor ultimately alien, thing. It will be present chiefly in my persistent sense of reality in that with which I am dealing, and in those fellow minds with whom I converse.[57]

The mystic is the one who becomes intimately aware of this Absolute, Substance, Other Mind, and experiences It as All-Loving. The mystic has "enquired" while the mystic *in via* has not yet done so. This is a clear example of Hocking's conviction that the mystical potential is inherent in all of humanity.

Hocking continues that God is experienced also in the individual's being open to all that is in the world, to any scientific accomplishments, to living courageously. Courage for him is taking life "breast-forwardly." When the very fact of my existence leaves me with the feeling that that existence must be used responsibly, I experience God, although perhaps very indistinctly. God is, in fact, that with which we think. For Hocking, ideas are that *with* which we think, not that *of* which we think. Similarly, God is the Idea

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[56]*Ibid.*, p. 266.

[57]*Ibid.*, pp. 295-96.

which makes all thought possible. But Hocking does admit that all of these experiences result more in a certainty "*that* God is, than *what* he is."[58]

Hocking thus posits that it is really because we know God that we know other minds, not the opposite. He seems here to be dismissing traditional proofs for the existence of God in favour of some form of the ontological argument or of some "ontologism." He suggests that we begin life as a social product. Our life and our heredity are given to us. We experience ourselves as part of the Whole of reality not distinct from it. It is only eventually that we learn solitude, to separate ourselves from others, to see ourselves as individuals. This Whole which we experience at the beginning of our human existence is Other Mind, which is thinking Nature, and thinking me. We thus move from God [the Whole] to the world, not the opposite. This means that:

> God then is immediately known, and permanently known, as the Other Mind which in creating Nature is also creating me. Of this knowledge nothing can despoil us; this knowledge has never been wanting to the self-knowing mind of man.[59]

For Hocking, the ontological argument is in reality a "report of experience." This experience consists in the realization that:

> It is because neither my world nor myself can serve as a foundation for thought and action that I must grope for a deeper foundation. And what I learn in this groping is, that my consciousness of those defects will reveal, though in the faintest degree, the positive object which is free therefrom.[60]

It is possible in experience, then, to know *that* God is. But Hocking has proposed that humans need God as Intimate Infallible Associate. How can the "what" of God be known? How can this kind of intimacy be experienced? Hocking proposes to pursue the

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[58] *Ibid.*, p. 296.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 312-313.

"what" of God and says that the "what" is best known by the mystics, in particular Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed.[61] In the mystics we have those

> ...whose experience of God and its cognitive content becomes authoritative for others... Our understanding of the higher stages of the knowledge of God, so far as man has yet progressed in this knowledge, will best be pursued in a closer study of mysticism and worship.[62]

But before we pursue that study of mysticism, we must turn to Hocking's later thoughts on idealism, some already quoted from *Types of Philosophy*. This is his most mature thought and contains a code of idealist ethics which we now explain.

Idealist Ethics

In was in 1959 that Hocking added an idealist code of ethics to his earlier considerations of idealism. When Hocking writes of ethics he means "beliefs about what is better and worse, right and wrong." In many ways this is, for Hocking, at the heart of the philosophical enterprise. Philosophy is studied in order to acquire a philosophy, a knowledge of how to live wisely. This position is made clear when we speak of the ability of someone "to take a thing philosophically" and mean that an individual has achieved a balance of life, and lives "without too much depression, if it is a misfortune, or without too much elation in the opposite case."[63]

Beliefs about life, philosophies, are generally divided into two kinds, pessimistic and optimistic. Pessimists are "those who regard the conditions of human life as intrinsically bad." Hocking puts most of the Orient, the religions of India, Schopenhauer, and von Hartmann in this field. Optimists are those who believe "that the world and man

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[61] *Ibid.*, Chapter XXII, *passim*.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 337.

[63] Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 8.

are so adjusted that the attainment of happiness is the normal order of things." Hocking is an optimist.[64] He believes that happiness is possible and that the order of things is so structured that it is attainable. But human beings must bring about that happiness through lives of "diligent service" within the created order of things.[65] This diligent service is very similar to what Hocking identifies as the "fruits" of mysticism.

This diligent service has three stages: they are alliance, criticism, and re-creation. Hocking identifies alliance as "Hegel's insight" that "I gain and keep a common footing with the rational life around me through regard for the truth."[66] The second stage is criticism

> of what is there , but from within, not as detached outsider. The discovery of defect is usually easy enough, yet taken seriously it is an indispensable moral function. Anyone can complain; but to see precisely what is wrong is a gift: accurate diagnosis comes from a unique power of vision and indicates the likelihood of an equally unique capacity to remedy the fault.[67]

But for Hocking, acceptance of life through a commitment to truth, and criticism of life when needed are not sufficient. What is still needed is "the remaking of ideas and therefore of institutional life." Hocking credits John Dewey in particular in his *Reconstruction in Philosophy* with establishing this principle of remaking.[68] If one becomes committed to this re-making process as an idealist, what would one's life look like? The person would: 1) love life itself; 2) believe in herself; 3) be truthful; 4) be just; 5)

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[64]*Ibid.*, p. 9.

[65]This statement and much of what follows is in fact a summary of three of Hocking's previous works. Cf. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Chapters XXXI and XXXII; *Man and the State*, Chapter XXI, and *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, Chapters XI and XXIV.

[66]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, pp. 212-213.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 213.

[68]*Ibid.*

believe in the fullness of living; 6) understand the uses of friendliness and of combat; and 7) believe in the significance of particular circumstance.[69] I suggest we have here Hocking's mature description of the fruits of authentic mysticism. Alliance, criticism, and re-creation are the components of his reconception theory.

Furthermore, the idealist-mystic is objective. This means that truth is essential to the idealist because otherwise people cannot trust each other and language then becomes worthless. The idealist is just and Hocking recommends to the idealist the Kantian model for justice because Kant has expressed for Hocking "one of the most impressive formulations of our moral common sense that has ever been made," when he said, " So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only."[70]

The idealist will never envy, never covet, and will also "hate the swinish use of fortune whether in high or low." Commitment to the fullness of living means that one should be able to use one's native capacities including the biological ones. But this does not necessarily mean that "everyone should enjoy everything." It is imperative to remember that "No joy that is bought at the cost of mental unity is contributory to life; and a joy bought at the cost of another's welfare or at the cost of duplicity of living is destructive of mental unity." Hocking for these reasons condemns prostitution, fornication and adultery as the "using of another human being as a means to one's personal gratification" and ranks them as occasions " of the greatest human self-befuddlement and divorce from the realities of value."[71]

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[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 214-216.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 206. Cf. n. 7 for the Kant reference.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

The idealist is honest. Hocking is extremely concerned with those who "pretend peace when there is no peace." For Hocking it is wrong to conceal love, but it is equally wrong to conceal anger or hostility. It is not possible to dismiss evil from the world by "wishing it absent." Evil can only be overcome by love when the enemy is

> listening to you, and in personal relation to you; this method is therefore inapplicable to cases in which the self-satisfied aggressor is listening to no one -- such evil must be overcome by combat. Failure to define the ethical uses of a just pugnacity is one of the rotting weaknesses of our civilization.... [72]

Hocking is decidedly a proponent of the just war, in the traditionally understood sense, and in other ways. He asks the same of idealist-mystics. Just three years earlier (than this writing) Hocking had called on Christians to become increasingly pugnacious and competitive about the right things in terms of their world religious neighbours. The right things for religious persons to go to "war" for are morality and justice and the bringing to an end of any and all kinds of poverty. As early as 1930, Hocking was calling for a frontal attack on poverty by members of all religious traditions. His concern about integral human development of all peoples is even more urgent almost thirty years later. He asks for religions to vie with each other in making this development a reality.

Hocking's conclusion to the idealist-mystic code of ethics as he envisions it, deserves to be quoted in full.

> Do not demand to be like any other human being in situation, wealth, range of action. The uniqueness of your duty is sufficient reason for a like uniqueness in your personal history. Your duty is not to be like others, nor yet to be unlike: it is to utilize your circumstance for finding yourself and your own way to universalize yourself.
>
> Hence, never complain of circumstance, never recriminate, never demand the satisfactions which do not honestly come your way -- they are not necessary for you. Above all never offer

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[72] *Ibid.*

> excuses for failure: in your duty as a *human being* (not necessarily as artisan, lawyer, artist), -- in *this* duty it is always possible to succeed.[73]

In addition to proposing his idealist ethic in 1959, Hocking explained that he was also an idealist because he was convinced that the world was a self, in fact a Self. A word should be said about this before turning to the discussion of mysticism.

The World as Self

We saw at the beginning of this chapter that Hocking identified himself as an idealist because for him idealism is the essence of all philosophy. He is also an idealist because the world for him is a Self. His reasoning about the world as a Self is again taken from human experience. When Hocking uses "self" he means that in which all "the meanings of things cohere in a single will." Hocking can see nothing in the world which is higher than "selfhood" and also nothing which is more profound than selfhood. When he examines the human self he experiences "an imperfect image of the whole cosmos," which is not only "a thing of nature" but something more than that. The self is not just an empirical fact, but has the ability to know facts and place values on these facts. The fact is something in the present moment, but in placing a value on facts, the self spans past, present and future. In determining the value of facts, the self experiences itself as free. This makes of the self a "union of opposites," the same kinds of opposites which are discernible in the larger cosmos, facts, and valuing of those facts. In those "larger moments" when we experience Reality as a Whole, we experience it also as a "Self," a mental life which has a unity, a life in which "all the meaning of things cohere in a single will." Just as when we experience the whole of the reality of a human being, we experience that being as a self, so too we experience the Whole of the cosmos as a Self. Hocking admits that his position on the world as a Self cannot really be argued but must be

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[73] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

experienced. He invites reflection on the "somehow" within us which provides us with the experience of the whole of ourselves or of another as a self, a mental unity with purpose. We can transfer that "somehow" to an experience of the cosmos, and then know it as a Whole, a Self.[74] Mystics are especially adept at this transference. This position on the Whole as a Self is reminiscent of classic western creation spirituality, of the Whole as an All-Loving One, an experience of which resolves all apparent separateness. The question is of what value this position can be to one whose experience of self is fragmented and anything but a coherent unity.

Hocking understands the belief that the world is a self to be a certainty of philosophy. One need only experience the nature of things to perceive the basic connaturality of things and self. There is at the heart of the world a principle of changelessness just as there is at the heart of the human being a principle of changelessness. If this is not so then the "mental world has become an insane place not worth living in."[75] There must be a principle of changelessness in the centre of the person, for how else could the individual even apprehend change or much less enjoy it! There must also be a principle of changelessness at the heart of the world, for how else could humans identify change within the world order.

We have now completed our investigation of Hocking's idealism. He is an idealist because it is for him the essence of philosophy, providing a powerful code of ethics, and a place from which personal and world change can be interpreted and effected. In his bibliography to his article on Idealism in the 1987 *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Leroy Rouner identifies Josiah Royce's *The Problem of Christianity* and Ernest Hocking's *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* as the best known systematic statements of Idealism in the

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[74] *Ibid.*, p. 316.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

American philosophical tradition. Unlike Continental idealism which is more concerned with the rationality of the real and with the subject, in American philosophy, idealism comes close to an attitude of trust and optimism in the pursuit of high "ideals". Rouner also states:

> Various forms of idealism were influential during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when there was confidence in reason and hope for the future. The prevailing spirit of the late twentieth century has become skeptical of rationalization and pessimistic about the future, so idealistic philosophy is less influential. However, when religious thinkers look for a rational and universal language of experience in which to articulate the dramatic, poetic, and mythological convictions of the great religions with their message of a divine *logos* that assures the ultimate fulfillment of a divine purpose, that language is inescapably some form of idealism.[76]

As we shall see, Hocking was exceedingly concerned with articulating the message of a divine *logos* whom he called the "unlimited and unbound Christ." This is likely his prime reason for embracing a form of idealistic philosophy.

We turn now to the mysticism which Hocking credited with being "nearer the truth than much current idealism" especially in relation to the "Selfhood of substance" within which "there is room for all the unfathomed majesty of reality."[77]

Mysticism

For Hocking mysticism is an authentic philosophical position, not to be confused with the occult, or with anything that is involved with superstition. It is not identical with extra-sensory perception, nor with mysticism of the mantic and theurgical varieties.[78]

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[76]Leroy S. Rouner, "Idealism," *The Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade, (New York: Macmillan) 1987, Volume X, p. 72.

[77]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, pp. 315-316.

[78]*Ibid.*, p. 254. Hocking's detailed discussion of mysticism is found in *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Parts V and VI. Especially important is Chapter XXIV on "Thought and Worship" which contains his definition of true and false mysticism. Chapter XXVI explains the "negative path" of

Hocking explains that the mystic is one who experiences that despite the best of our intellectual efforts, "there remains an element of mystery in reality." The mystic is "the *initiate,* one who has attained a direct vision of reality, a vision which he is unable to describe."[79] This way of the mystic's knowing Hocking likens to that of the philosophical intuitionist. Perfection is somehow intuitively known and known to be real, but "Mysticism is, of course not the same as intuitionism, because it is more than a way of knowing: it is a definite metaphysical doctrine, and an ethics or way of life."[80]

Perhaps with tongue in cheek, Hocking then muses that no one seems more determined to rush into print to express the inexpressible than the mystic! They pour their thoughts into print. Hocking mentions Lao Tze, Plotinus, Dionysius the Areopagite, Jacob Boehme, and William Blake as ranking high among the mystics and says that he does not believe them wrong in having made these efforts in writing because

> ...there no doubt *is* an element of paradox in experience; and the paradoxical statement about the experience means something to the person who has himself had it: the mystic can understand the mystic, -- and, if I am right, there is an element of mysticism in all of us.[81]

We have here a clear statement of Hocking's conviction that each person is a mystic. Hocking's summary formulation of mysticism as a philosophy is as follows:

> a. That reality is One, an absolute unity, as against all atomistic or pluralistic metaphysical doctrines;
>
> b. That reality is ineffable (indescribable); whence, all the predicates or descriptives which we apply to it are

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the mystic. Chapter XXXII explains "The Prophetic Consciousness" in depth. Chapter XXXIII is the conclusion of the book and contains insights as to how the mystic is best qualified to bring about "The Unifying of History."

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

[80] *Ibid.*, n. 2.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

> somehow in need of correction, -- including the predicates which now follow;
>
> c. That reality (as we seek it in the world outside of ourselves) is identical with the equally indescribable essence of the human self, -- we may find reality, therefore, either by looking without or by looking within, and what we find in either case is the same, not merely alike in kind, but identically the same thing: the extremes coincide;
>
> d. That it is possible (and vitally important) to reach an intuitive knowledge of, or union with, this absolute One;
>
> e. That the way to achieve this is by an effort which is primarily moral rather than theoretical.[82]

Interestingly, Hocking suggests that in each of these points, mysticism is precisely the counterpart of realism. Where the realist affirms a thesis, the mystic affirms what is for Hocking the "corresponding and completing antithesis."[83] Hocking values realism because it has "broken up the indolent habit of solving philosophical problems by a uniform method," and because it has encouraged thinkers to take each problem individually. But he suggests that realists have in fact fought idealism with idealistic weapons by their insistence that the world is "alive with the stuff that thought is made of."[84] This stuff for Hocking is the Mind of idealism. The weakness of the realistic way of knowing is this:

> . . . in his preferential trust in analysis, the realist forgets that the human organ of knowledge is bi-focal, as befits a world in which the complex may be also simple. He has the right focus for the one, but not for the other. If there are characters of the universe which are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes, the realist will not find them.[85]

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[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 251-2.

[85] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

The mystic is able to resolve the chief danger of realistic analysis which is that "simplicity is to be found in *one direction only*, the direction of the microscope." Hocking's experience is that the simplicities of the world are "bipolar, microscopic and telescopic." In that much the approach to reality through the miscroscope is inadequate.[86] The mystic's approach to reality is bi-polar, microscopic, and telescopic, in Hocking's understanding of mysticism. However, it seems that in his final point about mysticism, viz., that the mystic experience is achieved primarily through moral effort, Hocking departs radically from traditional understandings of mysticism in which the mystical experience is given and cannot in any way be earned.

Philosophical mysticism then, for Hocking, is the conviction that ultimate reality is One. The One can be, and in fact, must be known for a truly human life, although It can never be known fully nor described adequately. The One outside of the human self and within the human self is identical, therefore, union with the One can be achieved by looking either within oneself, or outside of oneself, especially to Nature. Intellect has a role to play in this union with the One, but it does not have the primary role. The achieving of union with the One, the experiencing of the One, depends primarily on moral effort.

In the history of philosophy up to its present moment (this is being written in 1959), Hocking identifies the philosopher who adopts mysticism as one who is discontented with the "mere rationality" of the discipline. Hocking posits further that mysticism is likewise embraced by the intensely religious person "discontented with the dogmatic systems of theology" found in any creed. Mysticism "is inspired by the insatiable ambition of individual spirits to know reality by direct acquaintance, rather than by rumor or description."[87]

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[86] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

But because mysticism depends on direct experience and relies heavily on its own "inner light" rather than on tradition, the mystic is usually bordering on heterodoxy. Joan of Arc, Bruno, Spinoza were perceived by their co-religionists as heretics not mystics. The Religious Society of Friends, Pietists, and Anabaptists emerged, at least in part, from mysticism and they were surely considered in their beginnings as on the fringes of orthodox Christianity, if not heretics.

The special gift of mysticism for Hocking is that it has produced great and independent persons like Buddha and Jesus and Mohammed and Francis of Assisi, and this happens because of the "mystic's confidence that the divine principle is identical with himself, and that he may for himself gain direct access to ultimate truth."[88] The mystic operates then, from a tremendous sense of security. Although it is clear from its history that mysticism has produced and does produce its quotient of parasitical types, Hocking believes that the encounter with one single authentic mystic would make the investigation into mysticism a worthy enterprise.

Having completed his historical look at mysticism Hocking moves on to an explanation of theoretical mysticism.

Theoretical Mysticism

Mysticism has both a theory and a practice. Its theory is threefold: 1) the nature of the One is closer to "good" than to "evil"; 2) it is more important to believe *that* the One exists than to know *what* the One is like; 3) the One cannot be adequately described but can be experienced.[89]

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[88] *Ibid.*

[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 260-264.

For the mystic "Good" comes closer to the truth about the One than does "Evil". Plotinus for example, always used the "Good" and the One interchangeably. Also, a careful study of mystical writings will demonstrate that the One is not only the "Good" but is also more "Spirit" than "Matter." This "Good" and "Spirit" are the "Real" which the mystic experiences. These experiences of this Real have often meant that "mystics have commonly been in trouble with an orthodox tradition which insists on the literal personality of God," but despite what could be interpreted as heterodoxy on their part, the mystics "have commonly referred to their Real as 'God.'"[90]

The mystic is more sure that God is than what God is. The mystic does not propose to describe the content of God because such a description would be a limitation. The mystic actually takes a position somewhere between theism and atheism. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the mystic takes a both/and position rather than an either/or position. Therefore, the mystic confirms that the atheist is right in saying that the God of the general theistic imagination does not exist. God is more than the theist can say or imagine of God. But in affirming that God *is*, albeit not in the traditional theistic conception of God, the mystic affirms theism. The mystic also makes room for the atheistic or agnostic position, because the mystic says that the God of the traditional theistic imagination which usually provides such difficulties for the atheist or agnostic, *does not* exist. Still, the mystic has a decided advantage over the atheist or agnostic because in the mystic's firm conviction that God *is*, she or he has an edge that makes it possible to keep on going. Life for the mystic is not a meaningless endurance contest as Hocking presumes it must be for the atheist or agnostic. Hocking suggests that the approach of the mystic to life is analogous to a chess game in which the players do not know the solution to winning the game but know that there is a solution.

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[90]*Ibid.*, p. 261.

> ...the person who cannot accept the theistic deity, and yet cannot believe the negation of atheism may find a secure, if tentative position in the mystic's "that." The importance of the position is that, as in the chess problem, one can keep on going.[91]

Usually, the atheist stops thinking about supernature or making any attempts to adjust his or her life to that supernature. To the atheist the mystic says that traditional theological formulae about God are inaccurate and thus gives the atheist room for further inquiry. To the theist who is having difficulties with these same theological formulae but experiences in atheism too negative an approach to Reality, the mystic says that God is and that the theological formulae *are* inaccurate. The "that" of God's existence, as known by the mystic, operates for Hocking as a regulative idea, in Kant's understanding of those terms, viz., "[an idea] whose meaning was not in any picture we could form, but in what it led us to do." The mystic helps to keep the religious quest alive for both the theist and the atheist through this regulative idea of God's "that."[92]

The mystic believes that the One, the Real, can be experienced directly. And this experience is far more satisfactory than a conceptual knowledge of God. Hocking suggests that personal acquaintance with an individual is far better than any description of the individual no matter how good that description is. This is the same situation with a knowledge of God. The mystical experience as reported by those who have enjoyed it, satisfies "both the intellect and the will, dissolves the problem of evil," and "establishes in the mind not merely a reconciliation to the difficulties of ordinary experience, but, as it were, a certain appetite for them."[93]

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[91] *Ibid.*, p. 261-62.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

[93] *Ibid.*, p. 262-63.

In summarizing his description of theoretical mysticism, Hocking says that the literature of mysticism is the record of a

> corroboration of a surmise which must have come to every one at some time or other, -- that the inherent value of the world is unlimited. That we can dally between optimism and pessimism, is a result of our dulness (sic) of sight rather than of the nature of things.[94]

It is in worship primarily that the mystic's optimism is kept alive, and then becomes operative in action. In concluding his discussion of theoretical mysticism, Hocking once again reminds readers that the privileged insight into the nature of things as ultimately good, which is the mystical experience, "cannot come from purely thoughtful exertion. It is the result of an effort primarily moral."[95] This position seems to differ radically from the traditional understanding of the mystical experience in the classical thought, viz., that is cannot be earned in any way, but is given. This work now turns to an exposition of that moral effort which Hocking calls "Practical Mysticism."

Practical Mysticism

Hocking suggests that beauty in Nature, and our appreciation of it, is closely allied to the mystic's experience of the One. An experience of beauty may, in fact, be the easiest and most accessible way to experience "that there is within Nature a reality akin to ourselves and as it were an invitation to realize our union with that inner reality."[96] Hocking cites Rabindranath Tagore as a prime example of a mystic for whom beauty is the chief way to be initiated into metaphysical truth. But aesthetic experience does not seem to most mystics to be an adequate equivalent of mystical experience. Mystics "with singular

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[94]*Ibid.*, p. 264.

[95]*Ibid.*

[96]*Ibid.*, p. 265.

agreement have held that some kind of moral preparation, or discipline of the will, is needed."[97]

Initiation into mystical experience usually requires such a moral preparation in the form of some kind of flight from the world called the Negative Path. The flight is a physical, intellectual, and moral effort. Physically, the flight might mean abstinence from certain foods. Orphism in the ancient world, for example, prohibited the use of meat, some fish, and certain kinds of beans. The physical flight can also mean a rejection of ambition, of pleasure, of goods, even of habitual patterns of thoughts and action. The Negative Path is a commitment to live life in a concentrated way. Usually this commitment is what happens in any worship or prayer, in which

> ...there seems to be an instinctive turning-away from the ordinary currents of sense-experience, -- the modification of light and sound in the interior of the mosques, the incense, the checkage of physical activity, the postures which still further close the organs of sense. The mystics have developed this sort of procedure into a technique for concentration, or "recollection and quiet."[98]

So the mystic, in Hocking's understanding, is able to do for himself or herself in terms of a physical flight what others need to accomplish through organized worship.

In addition to a physical flight , there is an intellectual flight involved in the mystical experience. The intellectual flight of the mystic consists in understanding and accepting that no language about the Real, the One, is adequate.

> It, the Real, is not Nature; it is not matter; it is not energy; it is not power; it is not space, nor anything in space; it is not society nor the state. This process is called by some of the mystics "laying aside the creatures" -- i.e., the secondary realities.[99]

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[97] *Ibid.*

[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 266-67.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

Hocking cites Meister Eckhart as the prime example of a mystic able to accomplish the intellectual flight. It is at this point that Hocking makes an important statement explaining how it is that the mystic is the harbinger of world religious unity especially through this intellectual flight, for it is the mystic who continues to remind us that

> ...the *distinctions and divisions* which our concepts make in the world of objects are misleading, since in reality all things are one. We must deny the boundaries which separate thing from thing, person from person, level from level, race from race, nation from nation. Wherein it appears that the mystic, by way of his negations, is reaching for a sense of the uniting element in things, a realization of the fraternal and equalitarian groundwork of the cosmos.[100]

It appears that in this seeking for unity and equality, the mystic, in his or her search, is the individual most likely to find it. It is an interesting application of Hocking's conviction that we find that for which we seek.

In addition to the physical flight, and the intellectual flight, the mystic must be involved in a moral flight. For Hocking this means that the mystic, or the one who would be a mystic, is called upon to reject desires and ambitions, in particular the "invidious" desires. The mystic is called upon to be suspicious of even his or her virtues. Lao Tze is for Hocking a prime example of the mystic who suspects his virtues. John of the Cross was also especially adept at this poverty of spirit which calls for a "practice of dis-attachment from all emotional bonds and pride."[101] The moral flight can also mean choosing to be financially poor, but poverty of spirit is primarily the moral flight of the mystic.

Hocking wants us to be clear that this negative path of the mystic, these physical, intellectual, and moral flights, are what might be called "negative chiefly in form." The

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[100] *Ibid.*

[101] *Ibid.*

mystic uses a negative method for the purpose of reaching a positive goal. The mystic puts away anything that is subordinate to the Good for the precise purpose of achieving the Good. The mystic puts away that which is "partial" for the purpose of achieving the Whole. The mystic is aiming at becoming "directly conscious of what is complete."[102]

Still, for all of this preparation on the part of the mystic, and all of the flights involved, Hocking maintains eventually, mirroring traditional thought about mystical experience, that the mystical vision is a gift, or a "realization" as the Hindu would call it. He mentions that some mystics say that one must renounce even the desire for the mystical experience in order to obtain it. Hocking uses two homey examples to illustrate the gift of the mystical vision. He suggests that the gift is similar to the experience in which one has been addressing another as "you" and then in some gracious moment feels entitled to speak of "we". There is no change in the objective fact of the two persons but there is a realization of a different kind of identity. This different kind of identity happens and cannot be forced. In like manner the mystical experience is a gift which happens and which cannot be forced. Hocking suggests that the same thing happens in the realization of the beauty of a symphony. No matter the musical training of a person, or her musical competence, which would be analogous to the preparation of the mystic through the three flights, it is not conceivable for Hocking that anyone could by some stroke of the will resolve to experience the beauty of a symphony. The beauty of the music happens and this too is gift. The gift of mystic initiation is in this kind of category of a ""happening", a realization.

It should be mentioned that in 1944 Hocking took part in a symposium on Protestantism in which he was invited to answer opponents who said that his approach to mysticism and prophetic consciousness violated the Protestant Principle because it did not depend on God's free gift of grace. Hocking, in a not too subtle response, argued that the

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[102]*Ibid.*, p. 268.

free gift of the vision of God to the mystic is precisely the essence of Protestantism and completely true to the Protestant Principle [103]

But what real good in terms of humanity can come from this physical, intellectual, and moral flight from the world? Suppose the mystic achieves the experience of Absolute Good? What is left? Hocking believes the typical mystic is not "neutralized" as it might seem to appear. The traditional understanding of the mystic is that he or she cares about nothing or no one any more, cannot feel pain, is lost in some kind of bliss which nothing can touch, in other words is neutral and even sometimes neuter. The mystic would seem completely without passion. In reality, the mystic

> ...is one to whom action in the world has become more rather than less engaging. What he has gained from his discipline is not disaffection, but inner certainty, originality with stability of character, courage, a moral invulnerability which appears to be superior to ordinary fears but not at all superior to the positive objects in behalf of which he is courageous. Joan of Arc may serve, in this respect as the typical mystic.[104]

Here is the foundation for Hocking's position that mysticism is life-affirming, not life-denying. The mystics, the harbingers of world religious unity, will be able to be discerned, and to find each other, by their radical commitments to leave this world the better for their having been part of it. It is, of course, questionable that it is only the mystics who are committed to the making of a better world, or that they are the group most committed to the effecting of a better world. However, Hocking suggests that in the making of this better world mystics operate with very specific codes of ethics and proceeds to explain them.

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[103]Cf.William Ernest Hocking, "The Mystical Spirit," *Protestantism: A Symposium*, edited by William K. Anderson (Nashville, Tenn.: Commission on Courses of Study, The Methodist Church), pp. 185-95.

[104]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 270.

Mystical Codes of Ethics

Hocking begins his explanation of the mystical codes of ethics with a suggestion about any and all kinds of behaviour. He writes:

> There are two kinds of temper not likely to succeed and not deserving to succeed in any important undertaking: the temper which cares nothing about it, and the temper which cares everything.[105]

Hocking suggests that this is precisely what the mystic does not do, viz., care nothing at all for a better world, or care too much for it. The mystic has achieved a balance between caring nothing at all and making a total investment in one's activities. Hocking believes that most if not all the moral codes of the world have been propounded by mystics because of the balance that can be found in these codes. Hocking continues to make his point by suggesting that even an irreligious person, if there be any, would agree that successful action requires a "*union of attachment and detachment.*"[106] This is precisely the mystic's way of acting, alternating between work and worship. It is through that alternation that the mystic acquires an "inner immunity to success or failure because he is greater than any of his particular aims."[107]

All the mystical codes of ethics may be simply stated as: "Be what you are." You are Brahman, then be Brahman. Live with the confidence and security of divinity. You are Tao, then be Tao. Live in harmony with all that exists.[108] In 1940 and in 1956, Hocking suggested that Jesus needs to be taken as literally by Christians in this matter of being what

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[105]*Ibid.*, p. 271.

[106]*Ibid.*, p. 270.

[107]*Ibid.*, p. 271.

[108]*Ibid.*

it is they are, as Hindus do their rishis, and Taoists their Master Lao Tze. Hocking understands Jesus' command to "be perfect" as a call to be God for others, to act *in loco Dei,* in other words, to live with the dis-interestedness of God. In this much, Hocking sees Jesus' code of ethics as a mystical one.

It is precisely this attitude of unlimited attachment and unlimited detachment of the mystics that makes visionaries and reformers of them. But how do the mystics know "where customary morality, benevolence, justice, need revision?" Hocking says the source of such knowledge is the mystic's conscience which is not "an hereditary relic of ancient punishments" (Freud) as naturalists believe, but an "inner standard" which "we may suppose, is simply the persistent mystical sense of unity with the Real; and conscience is the intuitive recognition that a proposed course of action is, or is not, consistent with that unity."[109]

Therefore, the mystics' negative path continually sensitizes and re-sensitizes their consciences and focuses their attention on the Whole. How does one who has this direct vision of the Real return to the more mundane tasks of ordinary life or wish to become involved in them at all? Hocking says the answer is found in what he calls "the law of alternation" which we have met earlier. This law is

> ...a practical principle, perhaps the chief of practical principles. It declares that we cannot make out a good life either by exclusive contemplation of the One or by intelligent management of the Many: but that we must have both, in the form of a rhythm, like the rhythm of work and play or of sleep and waking.[110]

People must pay attention to the ordinary business of living. But prolong this kind of attention and the mind becomes weary of it. One can no longer feel the value of what

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[109]*Ibid.*, p. 272.

[110]*Ibid.*, p. 273.

one is doing or see the facts at hand. He comments: "Life requires, then, a periodic re-charging in order to win even its most material successes."[111] Humans also need to reverse the intense concentration on the separate strands of daily life and focus on the unity at the heart of existence. This is precisely what the mystics' physical, spiritual, moral flight makes possible. But

> ...since the contemplation of the unity of things itself *runs down* when it becomes perfect and prolonged, the mystic must turn again to the world and discover it as having regained its lost fascinations, and himself his lost powers.[112]

The fruits of this contemplation of the Real are very specific. The mystic is able to "face the facts," and does this in several ways. The mystic becomes: l) a scientific observer; 2) capable of exceptional imagination; 3) able to appreciate beauty; 4) capable of great friendship; and therefore, 5) a completely successful realist, one who is able to face facts and not flinch in the process.

The mystic achieves the power of plain scientific observation through the recording of details and minute observations which becomes essential for one who develops a profound reverence for Nature. Giordano Bruno is Hocking's model here. But the mystic does more than record. Imagination is put to work by the successful mystic because the mystic's attitude is distinguished by

> ...*simplicity and open-mindedness*, -- freedom from pretence and personal vanity, showing itself in cravings to be different or ingenious or in the haste to gain startling results, -- and in the second place a kind of sixth sense about the way Nature works, which can only come from *a love of the thing*. Both of these are moral qualities as the mystic's discipline is particularly fitted to develop.[113]

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[111] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

[112] *Ibid.*

[113] *Ibid.*, pp. 274-75.

The mystic also recovers the appreciation of flowers, sounds, colours, "felt as if for the first time." Hocking suggests that this opens the way for much "new exploration" of nature and the human's relatedness to the animal kingdom "which man in his realistic march has surrendered." Hocking appears here to be a very early proponent of ecology. In scientific observation, imagination, and the recovered appreciation of nature, the mystic also acquires or enhances social skills in particular by facing the facts of social intercourse, and thus is able to increase her capacity for friendships.

> Friendship among other objects of appreciation, has its own way of running down; largely because, as it develops, there come occasions for saying truths we judge to be unwelcome, and we cannot command the act to say them without offense. We are not able wholly to eliminate the self-interest from our criticisms. One needs something like the mystic detachment from self in order to find that common ground with his neighbor which will enable him to denounce him, say to him "Thou art the man," in such wise as to leave the friendship strengthened rather than destroyed.[114]

In this ability to see the strengths and weaknesses of another, and to deal with the weaknesses without maiming the individual, Hocking sees the mystic at his or her most realistic, most able to "face the facts" of existence and do something creative about them.

Hocking maintains that to be a completely successful mystic, one must be a realist; to be a completely successful realist, one must be a mystic. We have described earlier how Hocking sees mysticism as providing an essential corrective for the lack of bi-polar vision on the part of the realist. Bi-polar vision is the goal of the principle of alternation. It is this alternation which will help human beings with the "increasing burdens of an intricate civilization." It is this principle of alternation that will make possible "friendly personal and national relationship."[115]

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[114]*Ibid.*, p. 275.

[115]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 275.

This logically means that the Real cannot therefore be either the "One of the mystic or the absolute Many revealed by realistic analysis." The mystic and the realist each have half of the truth. The mystic is right in declaring the "unity of the world, and the infinite worth of that unity." The realist is right in asserting "the reality of the many."

> If God is, his life must run into the multiple facts of a differentiated world-order: if he is anywhere, he must be also in those facts. A unity which runs away from diversity, and has no explanation of how that diversity has come to be, cannot be the final truth about the universe. The One we can believe in must be a One which needs and is able to produce the Many.[116]

The word "needs" is a vital term in this passage. For Hocking, the making of a better world will not happen despite humanity, but because of human efforts. The human enterprise is not some kind of puppetry. We should remember that Hocking explained that objective idealism does not deny the reality of the world. It takes it seriously. The "idea-istic" position is that the stuff of the world is more like spirit or mind than stones or metal, in other words, the significance of human thought about the world can not be underestimated. So Hocking concludes:

> Both realism and mysticism thus appear as aspects of the world-view of objective idealism, which explains and places them both; while they in turn, make clearer the practical necessity of rhythm or alternation. An element of supernaturalism, asceticism and world-flight, must be taken together with an element of humanism to make up a working program of the good life.[117]

We began this chapter with Hocking's statement that it is only the mystic-idealist who, for him, deals with all that is in and of the natural order of things, and all that is beyond the natural order. He sees the mystic as taking naturalism seriously. The mystic also takes humanism seriously. Hocking describes humanism as dependent on a

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[116]*Ibid.*, p. 276.

[117]*Ibid.*

"transfigured naturalism which is idealism." He is convinced that humanism can be fulfilled "only in a world that sustains the zest of doing one's human job as a religious observance." Hocking is further convinced that the mystic-idealist position does justice to the pragmatic outlook. Humanity is not free but must be made free through human effort. This position concludes his *Types of Philosophy.*

This is Hocking's last word on what the mystic-idealist is for. It is the culmination of his lifetime of philosophical inquiry. The mystic-idealist in Hocking's vision, has a passion for righteousness, a commitment to integral human development at a global level. As early as 1912, Hocking spelled out in considerable detail the fruits for humanity of the mystic-idealist. He does not do so in such depth in the 1959 *Types of Philosophy*, so I wish now to explain that earlier analysis.

The Fruits of Religion

It is in Part VI of the *Meaning of God* that we find Hocking's major beliefs as to what humanity can expect from the objective idealist or mystic-idealist. These are the "fruits" of religion. The fruits of religion as Hocking understands them are: 1) an on-going revelation; 2) an enhancement of creativity; 3) and the making possible of the fullest human happiness. When mystics in all living religions effect these fruits, an international spirit can evolve which will make world unity a genuine possibility. Therefore, for Hocking, the only way to world unity is through the genuine religious impulse of the mystic.

How does the mystic provide the on-going revelation? The mystic supplements religious knowledge brought by revelation. It is not that the mystic provides anything radically new in terms of knowledge of God but she makes that knowledge personal. In that, the mystic is "an original knower of old truth."[118] This is in fact why so much of

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[118]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 448.

the literature of mysticism appears repetitious. But the main on-going revelation of the mystic is that the mystical experience is possible now, in one's own time. This emphasis may seem repetitious, worn-out, an abomination to those who hate repetition, but it makes sense especially to the lover who never tires of repeating the gifts of the beloved. The mystic is absolutely certain that God is and that God can be experienced. And this is of utmost importance for the vitality of religion because:

> There is a moment in religion at which any God is a good God; any absolute is a good absolute; any certainty at all is a matter of supreme importance. This moment cannot last, either in experience or in reason; but it is enough to give color to the primarily religious attitude. Any certainty is better than no certainty; it is good both for the mystic and for his hearers to have touched absolute assurance, on no matter what subject.[119]

The value of the mystic's certainty, as we have discussed previously, is that it leads to action. Hocking takes a strong position here in favour of any church that declares itself to be infallible. For a church to say that it is fallible would be for Hocking like a mystic to say she is not certain about the existence of God. From the conviction of infallibility, comes a church's need to act and its confidence in acting. However, Hocking is also cognizant that infallibility can go out of control. He writes: "It is among the infallible churches that all true churches will be found. What the church chiefly has to learn is not to be infallible in regard to *too much.*"[120]

Hocking says that the infallibility of religious institutions rests in fact primarily on the certainty of their mystics. The mystic's gift to his or her religious community does not stop with certainty about older knowledge. The mystic becomes the bearer of new knowledge. Everything is seen by the mystic in a different light, in heightened ways, and

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[119]*Ibid.*, p. 454.

[120]*Ibid.*, p. 455.

all things reflect God to the mystic. In that much the mystic experiences anew the divine origins of the world, and constantly reminds co-religionists of that divinity "and in time these same reminders will take shape as a doctrine of the divine Word or Logos."[121]

Precisely because the mystic is so sensitive to the divine origins of things, she is also the most sensitive to the obstructions that are put in the path of divine purposes and that frustrate the divinity at the heart of things. In the condemnation of those obstructions, the mystic becomes the prophet and the reformulator of dogma. The mystic therefore, adds to revelation. It cannot be denied that mystics have made their share of blunders in this enterprise but ultimately they make clear that revelation has a two-fold dimension. There is a past and a present revelation. Hocking's position on revelation is very similar to that taken by contemporary Roman Catholic theologians such as Gregory Baum, Rosemary Radford Reuther, and Gabriel Moran, and that of the Jewish Reconstructionist Movement, and its founder Mordecai Kaplan.[122] All maintain that revelation is better understood as a reveal*ing* of God, not something completed in the past. Although these theologians do not refer specifically to the mystic as the particular author of present revelation, they do often refer to what Hocking would designate as the present revelation contained in the ordinary human experience of loving and being loved. Hocking summarizes the on-going revelation of the mystic as follows:

> The mystic gives us the *thing* which is to be modified. There are many who can supply the modification; but who else could have pulled down from heaven that substance? In the positive dogmas of the mystic we find absolute truth getting its *first relations to facts.* Its second and third and subsequent relations will be found in time; but meanwhile

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[121]*Ibid.*, p. 457.

[122]Cf., Gregory Baum, *Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971); Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Seabury, 1974); Gabriel Moran, *The Present Revelation* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972); Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American Jewish Life* (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1934, reprint 1957).

> we have the thing, and men can live by it. . . . Of the mystic's knowledge then in summary survey we have to say this. That the contents of 'revelation' are twofold. There is first the certainty and praise of God, and of the mystic's relation to God; this knowledge moves within its own circle, and has no apparent fruit nor progress, being to an external view self-absorbed and empty, not much else than certainty of certainty. But secondly, there is the positive contribution of the mystic and prophet to the concrete spiritual wealth of mankind, a creativity to which we can discern no limit.[123]

The first fruit of religion for Hocking then is this on-going revelation with its unlimited possibility for continual growth of the living faith. The second fruit of the mystic is creativity. Creativity is an "unparented" idea, a realization that something ought not to be and must be replaced with something else. Hocking cites Tolstoy as a mystic who is a prime example of this kind of religious creativity. He quotes extensively from Tolstoy's diary when the count relates that he grasped something with his "whole being" about social or educational reformations.[124] This is the kind of very practical creativity that the mystic brings to the human enterprise. Hocking sees this creativity as a fruit of the mystic's prayer. Hocking's definition of prayer is an interesting one.

> The practice of prayer is a means, we might think, of selecting from one's stock of ideas certain ideas to which we wish to give a special potency and control; and through some process of auto-suggestion, fixing these ideas in the seat of power.[125]

In the fixing of the ideas and the constant reference to them through the principle of alternation, the mystic has the measuring rod for what humanity requires. With this in mind the new steps to be taken emerge. They are a gift from the Self at the heart of the

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[123]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 460.

[124]*Ibid.*, pp. 461-67 *passim*.

[125]*Ibid.*, p. 479.

world but the preparedness of the mystic unleashes the power of discernment. In this much, the mystic provides humanity with continuing creativity.

Hocking is perturbed by persons who fear creativity in religion, or in life in general, who are satisfied with what is easily attainable and who refuse to move beyond that to creatively constructive thought and action. He calls satisfaction with the *status quo* a "bowing-down which is the modern form of devil worship."[126] Creativity is truly needed in human undertakings because "in this voluntary business of life, we are not merely pursuing a good which is already made; we are constructing our good, we are *making* good."[127]

In addition to on-going revelation and creativity, the mystic-idealist provides the model for full human happiness. This is the third fruit of religion for Hocking. He suggests that early on human beings discover that there is nothing or no one that is bound up with an individual's happiness "unless he himself freely binds it thereto." Moreover, "No particular thing or definable object is necessary to my happiness. And, alas, no particular thing or definable object is sufficient thereto."[128]

Hocking takes the position, as we have seen earlier, that happiness is possible and that the world is so structured that we can be happy. He summarizes the traditional religious approach to happiness as something like the following. It is "the idea of the Whole in unhindered operation upon experience. He who knows God knows how to be happy in this world, having in himself both the source of positive value and that by which all pain can be transmuted."[129]

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[126]*Ibid.*, p. 504.

[127]*Ibid.*, p. 413.

[128]*Ibid.*, p. 486.

[129]*Ibid.*, p. 488.

Hocking suggests that most of us are really not comfortable with this approach. It is too much that of the Stoic, too much a thing of the mind. Evil is real. Suffering occurs. Life is not fair. What does the mystic have to contribute to deal with this common human experience? Hocking says that unhappiness is really "dividedness of mind." He posits that the proof of this dividedness as source of unhappiness "is corroborated by the fact that whatever wipes out our fragmentation and induces in us a wholeness of attack gives back the happiness which is continually slipping from our grasp."[130]

If unhappiness is dividedness of mind, then happiness must be an undivided mind, the complete consent of myself to the experience or activity in which I am involved. For Hocking:

> the empirical mark of happiness is concentration, or enthusiasm of action. To the happy man, things and deeds appear worth-while; his actions meet the mark, and rebound to enhance his energy for the next stroke; whereas those of the unhappy man strike, if at all, like spent bullets, or shatter, and contribute nothing to his self-continuance. Whatever restores wholeness in action restores happiness.[131]

Again, a traditional answer to unhappiness would be that one ought to live altruistically. This provides the necessary wholeness to end unhappiness. Hocking accepts that altruism has its place in the human enterprise but it is insufficient for personal happiness because

> no man can be happy, nor ought to be without a conscious control of his own fortune; without a fundamental and necessary success of his own in dealing with the world of objects beyond him. This is a hard saying: for it demands what both altruism and stoicism have assumed to be impossible, a power of facts even in the midst of fine circumstances. Nevertheless, I believe that we must either make this requirement, or abandon the attempt to find happiness in the world.[132]

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[130]*Ibid.*, p. 491.

[131]*Ibid.*, p. 492.

[132]*Ibid.*, p. 501. This thinking of Hocking's is amazingly similar to that of the psychiatrist William Glasser. Cf. in particular, his *Control Theory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), and *Control*

Hocking comments somewhat sadly that the latter course is what most persons decide to do, abandon the attempt to be happy, but at the cost of losing the precise gift of religion to human history. Then in language that is reminiscent of much of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote many years after him, Hocking concludes that we must do the work of God and in that is our happiness. This is the constant reminder of the mystics of every age and of every living religion, and their formula for happiness, which as we have seen previously, is "Be what you are." He writes:

> ...in whatever sense God is to triumph in history, in that same sense must I triumph also. In some degree...every soul of us knows the whole, and feels in his own limbs the thud and the impulse of the engines of reality: it must be possible, then, for our wills, to the same degree, to contain the will of the universe. We must be able to reach a kind of maturity in respect to God himself, in which we are ready to assume the burden not only of omniscience -- as we continually do -- but also of omnipotence, with regard to some fragment, however minute, of the historical work of the universe. In such a moment the act which we should utter would be known as a completely real act; and since we cannot separate our own reality from the reality either of our objects, or of our deeds -- we too become for the first time completely real.[133]

This is the third fruit of authentic religion, the knowledge of what constitutes human happiness, the decision to take responsibility for some dimension of our historical moment and act with the omnipotence of God within it.

In addition to its being the third fruit of religion which provides for full human happiness, this way of living is what Hocking means concretely by "prophetic consciousness." Prophetic consciousness is rooted in the human love for power, for control, the will to power, the will to be in control. He believes it is instinctive. And it is

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Theory in the Classroom, (New York: Harper & Row, 1986). Dr. Glasser's approach to human well-being was originally called Reality Therapy.

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 503.

precisely this love for power and for control which "needs only to be raised to the dignity of prophecy to lose both its cruelty and its incredibility."[134]

Hocking admits readily that there have been numbers of false prophets. The true prophet is easily identified, however. The overall effect of the true prophet is that "things grow in its presence. But this, if we have not been mistaken, is what chiefly happens in the presence of God."[135] When we grow, and when others grow in our presence, including the animal world and the entire created order, we are what we are called to be, participating fully in the life of God. This is what Hocking identified in 1959 as the mystical code or ethic, "Be what you are." The mystic is called to this prophetic consciousness. Since all humans are in some sense mystics, and therefore called by the mystical element within them to prophetic consciousness, to reject personal growth and to hamper the growth of others is to lose one's soul. The lost soul is the one who sees the world as some kind of "callous machinery", a given, over which she has no control.[136] In the "making good" there is not only fullness in this life, but the only hope that there can be for any kind of immortality. Hocking writes:

> For if there be any immortality beyond this present scheme of things, it is not in abstraction therefrom; the destiny of our own deeds, great and small, is an integral part of whatever future there may be for us. To deserve to endure is the only guarantee of enduring. I have no faith in an intrinsic indestructibility of the substance of consciousness. One life is given us; another may be acquired. Immortality, I venture to think, may be the chief and total object of the prophetic consciousness.[137]

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[134]*Ibid.*, p. 506.

[135]*Ibid.*, p. 508.

[136]William Ernest Hocking, "What is a Lost Soul?" *Chicago Theological Seminary Register*, XXIII (March 1933), pp. 9-10.

[137]Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, pp. 513-514. This position of Hocking's is developed at length in *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

In summary, the fruits of religion for Hocking are an on-going revelation, creativity, and prophetic consciousness. These make for human happiness which is a combination of Stoic calm, altruism, and a will to the right kind of power. The right kind of power is commitment to personal growth and development and the growth and development of the entire created order. This on-going revelation, creativity, and making good will result in a unifying of history because "as laughter begets laughter, energy, passing from mind to mind and crystallizing a social group or a social world upon its own principle, so does the world-conquering temper of religion beget its like."[138] It remains to be seen what Hocking means by the unifying potential of religion in history.

The Unifying of History

Hocking says that every prophetic will provides an environment for every other. This group of persons widens and has their effect in pervading the social order. As increasing numbers of persons adopt the prophetic position and live the moral code connected with it, a principle of life evolves. When a group makes that principle its own it becomes, in fact, a religious institution. And this is the "essential purpose" of the religious institution, viz., it "brings religion to earth in the form not simply of a system of truth, not simply as a type of personal experience, but in the form which religion everywhere takes, that of the positive historic body with work to perform."[139]

Hocking is quick to remark that religion does for the "deeper and wider prophetic purposes of men" what the state does for the political and economic scene. It "lends to my deeds its own permanence." And it gives hope to the political efforts of humankind because: "Religion from primitive times the protector of the stranger, the market-place, the

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[138]*Ibid.*, p. 518.

[139]*Ibid.*, p. 519.

truce, is the forerunner of international law; because it alone can create the international spirit, the international obligation; it alone can permanently sustain and ensure that spirit."[140]

On the basis of this view of the function of religion, Hocking is convinced that the religious institution has the possibility for bringing singleness of mind and purpose to persons everywhere. However, he is aware of how little modern people sense the need and value of the religious institution because "the sense of sin grows foreign in us." The kind of salvation traditionally spoken of within religious institutions strikes a "note of unreality."[141] The careful observer, however, is aware that there are things from which humanity still needs to be saved, and which humanity needs to be saved for. Hocking concludes *The Meaning of God* in this way.

> The work of positive religion is largely silent; like the work of positive law, it is as great in what it prevents as in what it noisily accomplishes -- perhaps greater. But the work is there, and if we are just, we shall acknowledge it. Our confidences with regard to history must be built in history as well as in universal thought, -- in both of these, welded together. Unless we can discern at its silent work in human affairs this power, self-consciously eternal, actively communicating its own scope to the feeble deeds, the painful acquirements, the values, the loves and hopes of men, we have no right to such faith as we habitually assume. And without such faith there is for us no valid religion.[142]

Convinced personally that the work of religion is continuing, as is that of the Other, he thinks that this work remains to be discerned more effectively in times to come. He will do precisely that forty-four years later in *The Coming World Civilization.*

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[140]*Ibid.*, p. 521.

[141]*Ibid.*, p. 524.

[142]*Ibid.*

Summary

This chapter has presented William Ernest Hocking's philosophy of religion as that of a mystic-idealist. It might be fairer to him to call this his "single principle", viz., how truth for him hangs together, for that was what he viewed as the fruit of the philosophical enterprise. He urged students of philosophy to "seek relentlessly for it " because "Your philosophy is not your collection; it is your principle."[143] We have observed that the task of defining his position remained unfinished, but for Hocking this is of the very nature of the human enterprise, so at the time of his death in 1966 he was still working on completing his metaphysics.

For Hocking mysticism is the heart of religion. It provides for an immediate experience of the Real, the Absolute Other, the Mind, the Spirit. It is open to everyone and is the basis for worship. It is an impulse that can be found within every religious organization. Theoretically, mysticism is on a par with idealistic monism. Monism is the doctrine that there is only one kind of substance or ultimate reality. Hocking maintains that some kind of monism is necessary for humans to hope. If the world is random, then any kind of permanence is not possible, and thus hope is lost. For Hocking, human beings are born monists, into an experience of the Whole, and all else depends on this initial social experience. Solitude and separateness are learned. We come to know others because we have first known the Whole. Solitude and separateness can be frightening, but mysticism, and anyone has the potential to be a mystic, is the redemption of solitude, because it provides the experience of the One at the heart of all reality. Mysticism provides humanity with on-going religious revelation, creativity, and the prophetic consciousness which prescribes solutions to the ills of any era.

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[143]Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 284.

Practical mysticism provides an essential alternation between work and worship, something increasingly necessary in a civilization daily growing more complicated and requiring times for reflection so that action undertaken is worthwhile. Mystics have learned how to engage in this alternation and are equipped to teach others to do so. Mystics usually undertake a "flight" from things that distract them from the Absolute Other or would appear to replace It. But their life is not a world-denying one. They are among the outstanding social reformers because they take time for this reflection and thus become visionaries. This gives the mystic a prophetic consciousness, a view of what the world needs and a conviction that whatever she does is of eternal significance. So what the mystics do, they do well. And in this is their happiness, a concentrated, enthusiastic living.

The mystic and the realist need each other. The realist gives the mystic the overriding concern with the here and now. The mystic gives the realist the overriding concern with the Absolute Other. They are in a sense two sides of one coin and that coin is really objective idealism. In that sense Hocking is an objective idealist.

The mystical spirit is contagious. Mystical spirits find each other and when that occurs the principles for which they stand become permanently established in a religious institutional setting. The members of the institution live out the code of ethics of the mystic. The prime purpose of the living religions is to provide permanence for these insights of their mystics. But the religion will die if it does not allow the new mystic to emerge and provide the corrective to any calcification to the original revelation of the religious tradition. The mystic, through keen observation and sensitivity to the present moment, and aware of the original revelation, makes on-going revelation possible and serves humanity creatively as visionary and reformer. The mystic is focussed and undivided in mind and therefore truly happy. By taking the present moment seriously, and working in a disinterested manner to improve it, the mystic is a model of ultimate happiness.

Modern persons seem to have little regard for the religious institution, and what appear to be its outmoded notions of salvation, but there is much from which and for which humanity needs to be redeemed. It needs a world civilization. A world civilization can only happen through a world faith, not to be confused with a world religion. The mystic, across religious traditions, is the harbinger of this world faith.

Conclusion

This analysis of Hocking's philosophical mysticism or mystic-idealism, raises many questions, which will be dealt with in detail in the final chapter of this dissertation. I wish merely to pose them here. Is the mystical experience as ordinary and as accessible as Hocking proposes it to be? Is Hocking's understanding of the nature of mysticism an accurate one? Is mysticism truly as life-giving and this-worldly oriented as he maintains? Is the universality of religious experience which is at the heart of his vision of the mystic as a harbinger of world religious unity really possible? Does his concept of God as the Whole of which all else is a vital part really solve the objections he raises to Royce's Absolute? Does the concept of God as One, Whole, Self, Other, Infallible Intimate Associate, really answer James' pragmatic question about the cash value of God? Does religious worship provide an alternation which results in a re-sensitization of the worshipper to human needs? Does mysticism make the contribution to institutional religion that Hocking maintains? Can mysticism, and Christian mysticism in particular, effect a world faith which will be the basis for a world civilization?

In this chapter I have not dealt specifically with Christian mysticism except for brief references. Hocking's conviction is that the authentic essence of Christianity, properly understood, gives the Christian mystic the "edge" in bringing about this world faith. To understand why that would be the case, we turn now to an exposition of Hocking's understanding of the essence of Christianity.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIANITY: ITS ESSENCE AND MISSION ACCORDING TO ERNEST HOCKING

The mystic, Christian or other, does not arise within, nor operate within a vacuum. There is a religious tradition or ideology in place which the mystic comes to know has lost its impact or departed from the vision of its founder or sages. The mystic renews the tradition, eventually. Since this work focusses on the reconception of Christianity which the mystics are to effect, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the essence and mission of Christianity in the thought of Ernest Hocking. It is this essence and this mission which Hocking proposes must be reconceived by its mystics if Christianity is to be a living religion, and/or the world faith.

Hocking uses the term "essence" constantly. There is for him an unlosable essence of Christianity which must be maintained in any reconception of that religion. An understanding of that essence would also make possible a "de-westernization" of Christianity which he believes is required in the modern era if the Christian religion is in any way to be genuinely universal. An understanding of Hocking's vision of contemporary Christian mission as a quest for truth, will also provide background for the development of his theory of reconception.

At the conclusion to *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Hocking argues that the mystical experience is eventually established permanently within a religious institution and the role of the religious institution at least in terms of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, is to effect world unity. This is the reason for mission. For Hocking there can be no world unity without a world faith. A world faith will come when one of the living, positive religions will contain within it all that is best of other living

religions, and more. That world faith will then be the concrete expression of universality. This final religion will function as a world faith for it will provide the ethos through which the integral development of peoples, spiritually and materially will take place. We examine now what is for Hocking the essence of Christianity, and its potential for being a world faith. The second part of this chapter deals with Christian mission as Hocking envisioned it.

A. The Essence of Christianity

Hocking's most succinct statement of the essence of Christianity is found in his 1956 book, *The Coming World Civilization.* He writes that the essence of Christianity is

> threefold, creed, code, and deed -- a code and a deed, rooted in a faith, which in turn springs from a personal experience, a perception of the nature of things.
>
> The faith: That the nature of things is divine love for the created world, a love that suffers;
>
> The code: That desire must be reborn as active love, a will to create through suffering;
>
> The deed: The movement initiated by such a will, as creating the conditions for the nonfutility of all such wills. Thus the kingdom is being actualized, a slow leaven in human history, or in another figure, a war of persuasion in a world of free wills.[1]

This is Hocking's mature thought, viz., that the ultimate nature of things is Good, human desires are good when properly directed, and nothing good that is done is ultimately lost. We have seen how in his youth Hocking had an experience of the nature of things as Good, his subsequent bout with Spencer, and his studies with Josiah Royce and William James to secure his own personal philosophy of religion. It was not until 1909, at the age

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[1]William Ernest Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 108.

of 36, that Hocking published his first paper on Christianity. This article was originally a talk at Yale Divinity College and then printed in the College's Quarterly. It is entitled "How Can Christianity Be the Final Religion?" He proposes that it is because Jesus makes the religious idea a religious deed that Christianity can be called the final religion. We have already encountered his conviction that the only "true" religion is one that claims infallibility or finality for itself. We have seen his position that if God is to be encountered at all that encounter must occur within human experience. Therefore, it is a logical necessity for him that one human being demonstrate completely, with finality, in the human order, the forgiveness of God, the power of God, the love of God, in effect to assume the office of God in human history. This is precisely what Jesus did, although Hocking admits that this can only be believed not proven.[2] He is at pains in this article to make clear that Jesus does this not as Jesus of Nazareth but as the Christ of God, the human face of God. Jesus incarnates God's active, loving concern for humanity. He writes:

> By his own assumption of a positive relation to God, he [Jesus] made the supreme sanction for human life and suffering active, not contemplative or passive; and experiential, not merely ideal. He is final because in these things he legitimately intended to be final; because he self-consciously assumed the office of God in human history, and thereby established the fact that through such assumption that entire certitude of action can come to men which alone can make their situation ultimately endurable. He is thus the first of the prophets; the typical prophet, whose prophecy was none other than this, that through his deed the prophetic power may be the conscious possession of every human being however situated.[3]

We have here the seminal thinking of Hocking's position on "prophetic consciousness," an awareness that what one does is of ultimate value, and the experience that any good

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[2]William Ernest Hocking, "How Can Christianity Be the Final Religion?" *Yale Divinity Quarterly*, V (March 1909), 1-23.

[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

accomplished is an anticipated attainment of the Good. This is for Hocking a special gift of Christianity which can end meaninglessness and hopelessness. Three years later, in the *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, although this work was intended to deal with universal matters relating to religion, Hocking again addresses the question of the essence of Christianity. Jesus is a mystic and therefore a visionary and reformer. He also credits Jesus with providing "the first great inburst of the Orient into consciousness of the literal world, with its literal human problem and world sorrow, the first worship of the literal God of that world."[4] Hocking was writing about what he sees as the differences between Eastern and Western religions. He maintains that Eastern religious thought depends greatly on myth. Western religious thought also uses myth but it also takes religion literally and fixedly and therefore values an empirical approach to religion. Hocking sees the western approach as a benefit to all religious inquiry, an advantage over making all of religion poetry and myth. Hocking wants religion to be both prose and poetry.

Taking God seriously or literally has been made possible in the West because it was revealed by Jesus that God is a God of absolute justice. This God makes rain to fall on the good and the evil alike, and sun to rise on the just and unjust. This is the "perfection" of God, and since humans are made in the image and likeness of God, Jesus announced that humans were to live this perfection as well.

> Jesus summoned men to the same perfection, the same absolute bearing [as God]. Thereby he defined an attitude of mind which was indeed new in that world, an attitude of equal treatment toward friend and enemy, toward good and bad -- an attitude much garbled and misunderstood, but an attitude wholly intelligible in the light of that unmistakable description of the Absolute God.[5]

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[4]William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), pp. 151-52.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 205.

Through this revelation concerning God's perfection, Jesus reconceived and reinterpreted Judaism and is, for Hocking, the first Jew who ever really understood Judaism and its God of Absolute Justice, i.e., who took Judaism literally. Absolute justice involves impartial treatment of good and bad alike. In insisting on this impartial treatment Jesus gave the world the "only radically creative attitude yet known to humanity, an attitude of absolute justice, a thing quite alien to the proportionate justice of the Greeks..."[6] In committing oneself to secure absolute justice, the Christian acts *in loco dei,* that is, with God's own perfection and power. In Hocking's thought, Jesus the mystic, has authentically reconceived Judaism through his revelation of God's absolute justice. Others like Jesus can and must continue such reconceptions of Jesus' own mystic vision.

Another major contribution of Christianity is that it presents God

> ...as intimate, infallible associate, present in all experience as That by Which I too may firmly conceive that experience from the outside. It is God in this personal relation...that alone is capable of establishing human peace of mind, and thereby happiness.
>
> ...Christianity presents for adoration its God in the guise of an infant, and infant of the humblest. The authentic voice of God, if it is to come to man with a wholly irresistible might of meaning, must be a still, small voice.[7]

Hocking admits the strengths that can be found in concepts of God as vindicator, or miracle worker, or All Mighty, but believes that it is God as permanent friend and perpetual associate that is most needed by human beings especially at that moment when one's dearest *human* friend and associate is no more. As the human friendship has likely provided "in association a sufficient mastery of evil," so too does the Divine Friendship.[8]

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 224.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

In sum, this Divine Friendship gives permanent value and significance to each individual Christian life and vocation and in that provides an end to meaninglessness.

After these brief references to Christianity, in the Yale address and in *The Meaning of God*, Hocking's first extensive treatment of Christianity appears in *Human Nature and Its Remaking* published in 1918, almost immediately after his return from touring the French and English trenches of World War I. In this book, Hocking's approach shifts from seeing Christianity as providing meaning and purpose for the individual vocation, to understanding Christianity as a passion for righteousness, both material and spiritual, and a commitment to the spread of that passion. The mystics are those most committed to seeking this righteousness.

Human Nature and Its Remaking originated, as did most of Hocking's publications, as a series of lectures.given in 1916. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Hocking's last substantial statement on Christianity and its mission appeared in *The Coming World Civilization*, some forty years later. There appears to be no major difference between these two works in the way Hocking understands the essence and mission of the Christianity. I therefore use the headings of the earlier work and update accordingly where Hocking's thinking appears to me to have changed or to have been clarified in some measure.[9]

What Christianity Requires

For Hocking, the major requirement of Christianity is to get one's feelings and affections in order, therefore, any authentic reconception of it must take feelings into

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[9]For Hocking's view of the essence and mission of Christianity, many look to Chapter III of his book *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years*, entitled "Christianity: Its Message for the Orient." Although Hocking wrote this chapter in close collaboration with Rufus Jones, it is a consensus position of all members of the Commission of Appraisal of Protestant Missions of which Hocking was Chairman. For that reason, I have chosen to place more emphasis on Hocking's own thought, as found in his 1916-18, 1940, 1956, and (very briefly) 1957 works.

account. If one looks carefully at the codes of religious traditions other than Christianity, one discovers in all of them an emphasis on behaviour, but Christianity includes a command to *love* God and neighbour, a command to *feel.* Hocking writes:

> As I understand Christianity, it needs little interpretation, for it means as nearly as possible what it says. It intends to state its requirement in terms of a complete transformation of the instincts; it is on this account that it has for us an extreme theoretical interest.[10]

Christianity, is quite literally and deliberately addressed to the affections and instincts, not just because benevolence without any heart in it is soulless, but because the person whose affections are not in order will use people as means to their own ends, which is not a life of absolute justice. The requirement to love God and neighbour is, of course, not new, being already given in Judaism. It is in the Deuteronomic Code. What is new in Christianity is that the requirement to love is transferred by Jesus from the outward appearance

> to the heart. Adultery is defined not in terms of conduct, but in terms of wish; murder is defined in terms of anger. And by way of hedging off the instinctive tendency to evade self-examination by relying on social approval, it is particularly enjoined that all supposed righteousness be kept hidden from the admiring eyes of men, -- including oneself.[11]

In Hocking's view, then, religious behaviour becomes distinctively interiorized in authentic Christianity.

How can one be commanded to "feel" in a certain way? It is generally conceded that feelings cannot be demanded or commanded. Many Christians have interpreted this injunction of Jesus to love as a command to act "as if" one loved one's neighbour, which,

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[10]William Ernest Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918), p. 343.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 340.

Hocking states, "smacks rather of Kant than of the sage of Nazareth." Hocking is convinced that the command to love is "intentionally and literally addressed to the affections," so that persons will continually question their motives and activities. To be commanded to love is also to present persons with something that is "unattainable." The work of loving is on-going and never finished. In loving, the Christian is also asked to be like a child, to constantly hope for that which to others seems impossible. Hocking suggests that if one looks carefully at a child one will see that

> the child is certainly not a pragmatic servant: what can be said of him is that he has not crossed the Rubicon of that analytic and utilitarian intelligence which can think of persons as means and means only, -- with all his puny self-assertion, his original sympathy with his enveloping personal world has not been broken.[12]

Consequently, the essence of Christianity requires a transformation of the affections and instincts, a return to a childlikeness which does not permit persons to be used as things, and which is hopeful. We have seen how important feeling is to Hocking's philosophy of religion. Feeling is a spur for actions. It is feeling which ends in ideas. Feeling and idea are, as it were, two sides of one coin. Authentic religion needs both feeling and idea. It is feeling which is at the root of all creativity, but in particular of religious creativity. Hocking writes: "*...there is no creativity in the universe without feeling* -- or more specifically, without a subjective factor, an inner urge, whose nature is akin to what we call 'love.'"[13] Jesus's command to love is therefore at the heart of creative religion. The mystics who will authentically reconceive Christianity, re-create it, will feel deeply for their given time and place as Jesus did for his.

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[12]*Ibid.*, p. 342.

[13]William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 246.

Equally important for Hocking is that Jesus' emphasis on controlling one's feelings and making them a proper object of a religious requirement demonstrates that one is "free to 'set his affections' where they ought to be set!" The individual is therefore free to use those feelings to do good. Hocking credits Jesus with knowing in his time and his place what is only now dawning on many politicians and industrialists, that to do anything well, it is "not enough to *do* what you have to do -- you must do it *and like it!* "[14] If you do not like what you are doing, Hocking believes that you have not truly done it. What Hocking means by the absence of not liking, believing in or valuing what one is doing is this:

> Absence of belief that the world as a whole has an active individual concern for the creatures it has produced need neither destroy happiness nor the morality of compassion. Life would always be worth living and worth living well, so long as free from the major torments. Instinct has its satisfactions in an uninterpreted or partly interpreted condition: it will reach some accommodation to the world that is. Nothing would necessarily be destroyed or lost from the good life which some at least of the human race now know and many hope for, -- nothing except the higher reaches of curiosity and sympathy, and the wisdom of developing them. It is only the enthusiasts for a far-off good, for an endlessly progressive humanity, for a profound and logical love of life, that would be cut off; it is only the martyrs that have played the fool; only to saints and sages the world has lied.[15]

In this respect, Hocking says that Jesus' view of the human psyche was far ahead of his time. The insight of Jesus' to set one's affections in order for the purpose of valuing what one is doing is an "induction" of the highest order, which generates a single principle of extreme simplicity, not to be confused with ease of performance of the principle. An induction for Hocking is a generating principle from which other items of a tradition can be deduced. An induction results not from following rules, or reading textbooks. It is not a

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[14]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 89 and note. [Emphasis Hocking's]

[15]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 415.

logical development but "a stroke of insight, after long thoughtful mulling over the data, which -- under new light from God knows where, probably an intimation of necessity -- reconceives those data."[16] Jesus, in his induction to love *all* others, reconceives the Hebrew tradition because his induction is one which makes it possible to

> integrate the tradition and extend it, not hesitating to correct points of tradition that deviate from the discerned principle, nor to rebuke a blind literalism in following the letter of the law; and doing this confidently "as one having authority," because the grasp of essence admits for the first time an entrance into what the tradition really means.[17]

This statement, in fact, represents a succinct definition of what Hocking understands as the reconception of any living religion. Induction plays a major role in any reconception and the mystics are most capable of these inductions. Mystics have grasped the essence of the tradition. Their reconceptions are intended to conserve what is best while simultaneously allowing the tradition to continue to grow. In reconceiving Judaism by insisting that one set one's affections properly, Hocking maintains that Jesus invites us to an experience of God because the demand upon feeling

> calls for a transformation of desire, and desire, formed in us by nature, can be transformed only by a vision of unsuspected beauty and meaning in the heart of things. If man can somehow fall in love with the Real, as source of life, he may fall out of love with his self-absorbed self; and in this way he can be "reborn" in the orientation of his affections.[18]

One cannot "re-birth" oneself. Any experience of rebirth comes as a gift and is usually connected with some discovery involving one's friends or one's environment. We saw in the last chapter Hocking's illustration of the new sense of allegiance and meaningfulness

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[16]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 87.

[17]*Ibid.*

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 92.

elicited when two individuals begin to speak as a "we." In commanding humans to love, Jesus invites the human to think of himself or herself and God as an "Us" and thus to an experience of God and to a renewed allegiance with the will of God. This is an invitation to the mystical experience.

There are two more gifts included in this induction of Jesus to set one's feelings in order. They are 1) simplicity, and 2) a call to action. The simplicity of Jesus' requirements goes to the essence of religious tenets.

> The essence of the law he [Jesus] states in the two great commandments; the essence of right conduct in the Golden Rule; the essence of prayer in the Lord's Prayer; the essence of theology in the picture of God as Father; the essence of the social ideal in the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven among men.
>
> Christianity is not an easy teaching; but the qualifications for grasping it, the ear to hear and the will to obey, are primarily moral and were first achieved by untutored fishermen; whereas its difficulties are said to be chiefly for those who, ruled by their possessions or entangled in affairs or befogged by seeming wisdom, find it hard to return to the direct intuitions of childhood.[19]

Unlike the complex behavioural codes of Eastern religious thought, based on their poetic and mythical interpretations of life, Hocking sees this simplicity of Christianity as giving it an edge in terms of its possibilities for becoming a world faith. He is aware that Christian scriptures contain their own poetry and myths, and looks forward to the day when the rank and file of Christians will be aware of the assorted literary forms in their scriptures. But Jesus' induction and the applications of it reported in these same scriptures weds the emphasis on interiority of Indian religious thought, the concern for right behaviour of classical Chinese religion, and the Jewish emphasis on an improved social order. In this much, the induction of Jesus is universal.

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[19]William Ernest Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1940), p. 278.

In terms of action, Jesus's Golden Rule adds to "Ulpian's principles to live honorably, harm no one, render everyone his due . . . the ethical addition of initiative good will." We have seen previously Hocking's insistence that the mystic is never far from wherever action is brewing and his conviction that Jesus makes clear that the way of God among humanity is activity, not passivity. Hocking calls this commitment to action on the part of the Christian, "initiative good will."[20] The Christian must take responsibility for his or her present time and place and must take the initiative in making a better world happen. The Christian does not wait to be asked to do good. Quietism is not a valid Christian response for Hocking.

While Hocking sees Christianity as having an edge on the religions of India and of the Far East in terms of filling the total needs of contemporary humanity, it is vital to him that we understand that Jesus' teaching

> ...joins direction with much of the moral aspiration of mankind in and beyond the Jewish tradition. [It is] an interpretation not only of the essence toward which Judaism was striving, but of a universal striving of mankind. This universal striving we might call a striving beyond sole-selfhood and its nature-defined desires, an inescapable awareness that the assertive will fastens upon the asserter something less than the wholeness of being to which he is called.[21]

Hocking posits a call to love at the heart of all the living religions. It is precisely this call which is at the heart of a world faith, as Hocking envisions it. The universal appeal of Jesus' call to love all, including oneself, thus gives Christianity an "edge" in becoming the evolving world faith. So, too, does Jesus' induction about being perfect. As mentioned, Hocking takes literally what it is that Jesus has said about loving and not living "as if" one were loving. He takes equally literally Jesus' call to perfection primarily because "to have

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[20]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 88.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 91.

any standard, and to have a standard of perfection in that field are not two things but one." God wants humanity to live with God's own compassion, justice, and disinterestedness. Hocking maintains that not to take Jesus literally about a life of perfection is to betray his induction in this regard.[22]

For Hocking, what God wants of humanity, is made eminently clear by Jesus. Jesus' teachings are luminous and not opaque. This clarity is vital for Hocking because "To make the will of God a mystery of transcendental history to be submitted to in blind obedience, that is to make a merit of pure submission. It is to revel in the abasement of the human."[23] We have encountered previously Hocking's conviction that authentic religion encourages, in fact, demands intellectual inquiry, not blind obedience.

The essence of Christianity then requires setting one's feelings in order, and acting *in loco Dei* by living a life of initiative good will based on a passion for the spread of material and spiritual righteousness. Having explained what it is that Christianity requires, Hocking then makes some specific applications of Jesus' induction to love all perfectly to pugnacity, sex-love, and ambition. For Hocking, these three areas must be dealt with because they contain within themselves the problems and possibilities inherent in the human condition, East or West, Oriental or Occidental. Therefore, they must be addressed by any living religion concerned with world unity and involved in a universal mission. They must be addressed especially by Christianity with its concern for righteousness and its passion to spread that concern.

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[22]*Ibid.*, p. 90.

[23]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 168.

Christianity and Pugnacity

Hocking says that there is no better test of any ethic than to see how it treats pugnacity. Pugnacity is at the root of all human readjustment. "If human nature were so far transformed that there were no more readjustments to be made, within or without, pugnacity would of necessity disappear."[24] When Christianity preaches that one must "resist not evil, love your enemy, judge not, recompense evil with good," it calls for perfection. This is precisely what Jesus means by being perfect, to be disinterested, which is not to be confused with being uninterested. Being disinterested means to do the right thing for people whether they appear to be worth it or not, whether one gets the desired results or not. Initially this attitude appears as a "total moral indifference." In fact, it is anything but that. Hocking reflects on how often a smile is returned by a smile, or enmity by enmity. In being called upon to turn the other cheek, the Christian is called to precisely the opposite of what might seem to be a mechanical attitude, and precisely to the opposite of moral indifference. "The attacker expects your resistance; if you do not resist, your rejection of his challenge may enter the situation with the force of a new idea."[25] It is true, of course, that the attitude can be read as apathy. The Christian approach is in reality an appeal to the better self of the attacker because "it wants the evil will to hate and destroy its own evil." This attitude is not apathy but "metaphy."[26] Hocking appears to have coined his own word for the attitude that is determined to supersede all kinds of evil wherever it is found. It is the attitude of authentic forgiveness. He writes:

> Christian forgiveness is definable as a will to be unjust in order, by eliciting a new temper in the case, to achieve a deeper justice. Here the Teacher deliberately enters the

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[24]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 345.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 350.

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 351.

> field of moral paradox, a field which had remained closed to all but the greater mystics.[27]

It appears that the mystic is most able to deal effectively with pugnacity and transform it. In wanting to "make over" the evil will into a good will the mystic becomes involved in a "creative impulse" which is the final transformation of pugnacity. Hocking warns that the approach of not resisting works, however, only for one who is "disposed to listen." He is aware that many Christians interpret non-resistance to mean that one becomes a doormat. He is very clear that this is not what Jesus calls for because "letting myself be cheated or abused through lethargy or lack of time or courage to make an issue cannot be claimed as an exhibition of divine perfection."[28] For those who are not disposed to listen and to be changed through the non-resistance of the Christian, other means must be taken to "get their attention." Hocking sees the rationale for a "just war" as an attention-getting device. There is such a thing for Hocking as "determined bad will" and therefore the just war "is an attempt to create the conditions under which the opponent is disposed to listen to the language of the still small voice."[29]

This non-resistant creative attitude toward others which Jesus required, and which the mystics best appropriate, is not meant to displace but to subordinate critical attitudes and competition. Hocking does not want to see contest and competition abandoned but is looking for the right kind of competition in the proper settings. Christians are called to be fighters but for the right things.

> The ethic of Christianity is not altruism nor mere pacifism nor drifting-in -idleness. It is superiority to the efficiently trivial, the reputably prudent, and the timorously pious . . . .

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[27]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 90.

[28]Hocking, *Human Nature and its Remaking*, p. 353.

[29]*Ibid.* This "just war" theory was proposed in 1916-18. It should be noted that throughout *The Coming World Civilization*, written in 1956, Hocking is less sanguine about war, except when he considers the "war of persuasion."

> To Jesus of Nazareth, his Way was one, not of acquiescence, but of sternly decisive opposition to the hypocrites and the money changers: it was a *will to create through suffering.* That will is the essence of the Christian ethic.[30]

Hocking is not seeking an end to pugnacity, but an intelligent use of it, precisely so that there may be "an intensity-equivalent of combat" in the Christian disciple.[31] The purpose of the combat for Hocking is eminently clear.

> We must be realists in action, definite, analytical, responsible, critical, separating good and evil, refusing to palliate or be reconciled to the violence, cruelty and callousness of the world, concentrated on the task at hand and its object as if they were all important, as if experience were to have just such value as by these efforts we can extract from it and no more.[32]

Pugnacity in the Christian is not to be ended but to be transformed. The mystics are most capable of this transformation. As one might initially fight for things like wealth and power, one must transform this aggression into a concern for ending all that is evil, for becoming involved in a war of persuasion in inviting those who are functioning in ways beneath their human dignity to uncover their better selves and act on them.

Christianity and Sex-Love

Persons everywhere have a pugnacious or aggressive nature which needs to be harnessed, according to Hocking. He identifies sex-love as "less inevitable" in terms of human life than is pugnacity, but of sufficient importance to be reflected upon. He is clear that there can be no question about the preference for virginity in early Christian communities. The monastic ideal is "implicit in its [Christianity's] standards" and without

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[30] Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 95.

[31] Hocking, *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience*, p. 87.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

the injunction to "leave all" for the sake of God, early Christianity would simply not have done its work in the world. He is convinced that "it would not be untrue to the sense of Christianity to set up beside the "'Judge not,' i.e., Know not enmity or defect, a corresponding precept 'Know not sex,' i.e., Regard all persons as persons, and never as men or women."[33]

As mentioned, Hocking does not deem the "life of sex" on the same level with the inevitability of pugnacity in the social order. He does describe the craving of sex on its psychological side as a "craving for subconscious respiration," a desire to have one's personal worth confirmed by a beloved other. Along with this respiration, the individual experiences in loving a desire for "self-abandonment." That self-abandonment has as its focus "a communion with another self," to effect a process of dealing with the world as a "we." The desire is to see the world beyond one's own vision of it, viz., through the beloved. In this much, for Hocking, the horizon and stimulus of loving is metaphysical. And it is for this reason that he suggests that the most accessible mystical experience is in loving and being loved.[34]

In loving, the will to power which is pugnacity, becomes the "will to praise." The praising results eventually in a "dominant interest of mutuality." In fact loving becomes in a sense "the actual work of a god." For love "undertakes, while acting as a channel for universal life, to be an original *maker of life.*"[35] The Christian lover, celibate or married, especially the Christian mystic, creates life, makes life happen. Among the special gifts of loving is that the lover has an experience of what Christianity teaches is the ultimate power in the universe, viz.,

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[33]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, pp. 355-356.

[34]*Ibid.*, pp. 357-359.

[35]*Ibid.*, pp 359-361.

> an active love -- not a distant cosmic benevolence, but an aggressive will, seeking more than the confidence, the response of each individual soul. Most improbable!
>
> The essence of the Christian world view is this most unlikely doctrine about the nature of Being, that the most Real is the all-loving.[36]

Hocking maintains that in loving and being loved, the human experiences not only that another should be respected but in fact has something of the divine in him or her. This is at the root of the Christian ethic to love all others, because that is in fact to love God, since each person participates in the life of God. Christian mystics demonstrate this kind of love *par excellence*. e.g., Francis of Assisi's kissing of a leper in whom Francis saw God.

With all that love provides by way of experience of God, human loving always "suffers a fall" in Hocking's analysis of it. There is inevitable disappointment in some dimension of the human beloved. What is attractive in courtship, can become something deadly in a marriage relationship. Often family and friends, and time and changed social conditions exert pressures which force the lovers to look at each other again. In doing this, they often see something they did not at the beginning of the relationship. What they often find, if the lovers undertake this kind of re-examination, is that the health and meaning of love depend on "common devotion to a common divinity" and that their loving, if it is to continue or be renewed, requires a cosmic "third party" or cause. Hocking proposes that this is so because "the only being you can love is the being who has an independent object of worship and that holds you out of your self-indulgence to a worship of that same object."[37]

This realization of the need for a common divinity is a "re-birth" of the relationship and in fact, a clear indication that sex-love, completely understood, has no psychological

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[36]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, pp. 93-94.

[37]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 363.

need of physical relationship nor of marriage. What love needs is a common cause. The sequence is this: 1) the lover loves an independent soul; 2) in the loving, a clinging and dependence inevitably develop which becomes stifling; 3) the lovers examine the relationship; 4) the discovery is that the horizon of the loving has shrunken; 5) the realization that all loving needs an immortal horizon saves it and the re-birth of loving occurs. Genital intimacy is not integral to this kind of loving.[38]

Hocking readily admits that his position about loving was equally Plato's and not really uniquely Christian. While Christian love has insisted on the non-necessity of marriage for complete satisfaction of one's will, it has also insisted that sex-love can be "sublimated" only through some element of physical ministration. In this Christian love differs from Plato's thought and goes beyond it. Hocking writes:

> It is through the washing of feet, the tendance of the injured, the breaking of the box of ointment (not in any sense a useful social service), the cup of cold water, that the repressed wish finds an outlet. As a matter of history, the notable trend of Christian energies into philanthropic efforts during the first few centuries is the manifestation of a humanitarian passion sufficiently profound to drain the entire life of affection into its channel; and philanthropy is not Platonic.[39]

This kind of philanthropic effort marks the life of the Christian mystic. Moreover, Hocking is insistent that in an era in which marriage is now a matter of personal choice and the failure to marry is experienced as "a loss of selfhood," Christianity is more right than ever in holding out a choice for marriage or celibacy. Christianity can "set individuals free to choose their own destiny, celibate or not, or otherwise they would hardly be free."[40]

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[38]*Ibid.*, p. 364.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 368.

[40]*Ibid.*, p. 371.

In Christian teachings on sex-love, Hocking sees Jesus' emphasis on "setting one's affections properly" at work in a special way. It is how one regards a woman that matters most. Hocking says that the sense of Jesus' induction concerning sex-love is that "any behavior is right behavior which is consistent with looking upon her as a person having a destiny of her own to work out, a possibility of immortality which depends in part on your own attitude."[41]

Any and all human loving is right only when it has for its meaning and purpose the giving of life, and when the human directs its pugnacious self to that end. In this Hocking sees much in Christianity that joins the aspirations of all of religious humankind in its convictions about the power of purposeful devotion. Loving is the losing of one's life for the sake of another or others and in that loss "comes realization" and an understanding of who one is and what one is for. We have encountered previously Hocking's understanding of the experience of God provided by this kind of "realization." It is a mystical experience.[42]

Hocking warns that the final word on married or celibate loving has not been said by Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount correctly moves the issues of right and wrong from outward act to inward motive in particular in terms of human relationships, but "the spirit of love alone does not meet the immediate problems set by national aggression or competition.. . . . There must be a right use of sex, of pugnacity, of wealth. These right uses, for our times are problems incompletely solved."[43] The Second World War was in process when he wrote those lines. He re-emphasized this 1940 position in 1956 when he suggested that Jesus "offers no total guide to life" except in the "sweeping phrase 'Seek ye

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[41]*Ibid.*

[42]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 91.

[43]William Ernest Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1940), p. 286.

first the Kingdom of God.'" This seeking is *the* unlosable and unalterable essence of Christianity, a summary for Hocking of all that Jesus' induction about right living involves.[44] Christians must always be involved in the creative discernment of what enhances compassion and justice and with "responsible provocation" elicit those deeds which will "transform this human history into the pattern of a divine community." This is what Hocking understands by Jesus' command to seek the kingdom of God before anything else. Through the reflection that occurs in their alternations between work and worship, the Christian mystic is the prime agent of this "responsible provocation."[45]

Thus, in the Christian scheme of things, Hocking maintains that love does not require marriage. If one chooses celibacy, then sex-love should be sublimated in philanthropy. The choice of overt sex-love finds its full expression within Christian marriage, and that is a marriage of persons. All effective loving requires a "third party," a horizon connected with that which is immortal or divine. All Christian loving is directed toward the compassion, justice, and disinterestedness with which God loves. Jesus' command to love, i.e., to set one's affections in order, and to be perfect, are summed up succinctly in his command to "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." This phrase expresses completely the unlosable and unchangeable essence of Christianity, which any reconception of it must take into account. The fruits of mysticism, married or celibate, will be marked by the mystics' efforts to transform their historical moment into a divinized human community. This divinized human community is what Hocking means when he writes of the potential of the coming world civilization.

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[44]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization,* p. 91.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 184.

Christianity and Ambition

Hocking deals next with ambition. He maintains that Christian ambition, correctly understood, is the basis for Christianity's mission. In addition to a command to straighten out one's feelings and affections, to live philanthropically within marriage or celibacy, Christianity in its formulation, held in contempt "precedence, wealth, office, public power," as those things after which " the Gentiles seek." Hocking says that in early Christianity, "Ambition is recognized, and in the same breath annuled (sic)."[46] Anyone who would be first in the Christian scheme of things is to be last, servant of all. It would appear at first sight that this formulation is no real reversal of ambition but simply a postponement of reward until another life. If that is the case, what does that mean for this life and the person deeply committed to it, especially the mystic? Hocking maintains that "*ambition is the essence of religion.* . . . If religion destroys ambition, it destroys itself."[47] To be sure, ambition involves a desire for power, but Christianity transforms ambition by involving it in "*the conferring of spiritual life* " or the conferring of spiritual power. Here is the heart of Christian mission through the centuries, despite its aberrations, an ambition to confer spiritual power on others.

> Nothing is more dominant in the early history of this cult than the willingness to suffer, to be despised, to endure all things if by any means some could be persuaded to become members of the community, the kingdom of heaven in the guise of a militant church on earth.[48]

For Hocking, the willingness to suffer that others might become spiritually powerful, is the ultimate transformation of pugnacity. In their "desire to save souls" Christians achieve a passion for others and will to confer spiritual power on them, not have power over them.

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[46]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 372.

[47]*Ibid.*, p. 374.

[48]*Ibid.*, p. 375.

The desire to confer power on others becomes one's mission, and is "more or less obscurely the motive of all our more honorable efforts in education, social reform, and other expressions of parental instinct."[49] The Christian religious community in maintaining this ambition and preserving its ways of carrying it out becomes "an ambition of its own: it becomes propaganda, breaks across the provincial boundaries of its origin and aspires to universality."[50] Hocking sees no religion as a true religion which does not aspire to be a community and to be universal. He credits Catholicism with understanding this communitarian dimension and this universality of Christianity better than does Protestantism.

> . . . it is the Catholic Church, rather than the Protestant Church, which has kept to the concrete view of its undertaking: it has more consistently approached the soul through its physical and social entanglements. Protestantism has been more intellectual and abstract.[51]

Catholicism is aggressively committed to undermining any institutions that hamper or hinder human social or physical well-being. Catholicism, in proposing itself as having the infallible way to authentic living, is, in fact, by an undermining of all other efforts but its own, paving the way for "the most subtle of common understandings, the interracial and international understandings which are crystallizing in the shape of a world culture and an international law."[52] It should be noted that Hocking takes this position before his 1932 experiences with the Jesuits at St. Mary's in Darjeeling, India.

Hocking approves, as we saw earlier, of a community's identifying itself as infallible, final, providing it does not claim to be infallible about too much. He approves of

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[49]*Ibid.*, p. 376.

[50]*Ibid.*, p. 378.

[51]*Ibid.*

[52]*Ibid.*, p. 377.

the Catholic position of infallibility yet he maintains that in terms of ambition as well as sex-love, and perfection "Christian teaching in its origin asserted finality, but in a language that purposely left room for growth. Much of it wore a deliberately cryptic manner."[53] What appears to be incontestable or infallible in Catholic thought is the determination to seek first the kingdom in an aggressive this-worldliness which Hocking does not experience in Protestantism.

Hocking's later thought on ambition and Christianity differs slightly from his 1916-18 work. Earlier he believed that the precedence, offices, wealth, envisioned as important to the "Gentiles," or worldly values, were rejected in early Christianity. By 1956, he writes that a better understanding of the emphasis on rejection of the "world," especially in its Johannine form, would be the determination by Christians not to resort to physical force to make their way. And more than that:

> The early Christian *contemptus mundi*, suiting itself perhaps instinctively in a crumbling empire to a conserving role of cultural reversion-to-the-chrysalis, overweighted its message on the world-rejecting side. The Renaissance was in order not alone for a more courageous humanism, but for a truer Christianity as well.[54]

Hocking uses the metaphor of the "game" to make his point about what a "truer" Christianity would be. The Christian would never use violence to make his or her way, and, rather than to hold the "secular" in contempt, the Christian would get involved competitively with it in the business of living, convinced of the integrity of the game. Hocking has pointed out before that competition and contest must not be eliminated from Christianity because ambition is at the heart of religion, Christian and otherwise. He is even clearer in later years about what this competition, this ambition, in terms of

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[53]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 111.

[54]*Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

Christianity must be for. He still maintains that the purpose of Christian ambition is "Seek ye first" which is the "unaltered and unalterable" ethic of Christianity. The Christian, in the revised version of the Christian ambition, must compete to bring to an end what Jesus himself sought to end, viz., any and all "moral mediocrity." Hocking writes:

> And the hammer blows of the Teacher against greed, lechery, vindictive rancor, cowardice in serving truth, his radical revolt against ease in moral mediocrity -- the "adjusted" life -- retain their tonic pertinence, partly because of their linguistic intemperance, seldom seriously misunderstood.[55]

Hocking, therefore, wants Christians, in particular the Christian mystics, to compete with each other and with all other agencies to end greed, lechery, etc. His just war theory, designed to get the enemy's attention, which seemed legitimate in his 1918 work, has evolved into a war of persuasion, a competition to bring to an end, without any use of physical violence, anything that is not compassionate or just in the human condition.

The Christian ambition aims, therefore, to confer spiritual power on others rather than to lord power over them. Convinced that the nature of Being is All-Loving, and aware that this All-Loving Being makes secure the optimism that makes life endurable, the Christian seeks to share this power that this knowledge gives, with others. The Christian believes that the answer to the human condition is given "finally" in Jesus, as the Christ of God, but this does not proscribe thinking about moral issues at one's own moment in history. Sharing the power of God in and through the Christ of God, Jesus, is at the root of Christian mission. Also, the Christian must act *in loco dei*, by accepting complete responsibility for some part of his or her world.

A mission to confer spiritual power on others can appear to be presumptuous, Hocking admits, but he says it is not and moves to show why this is the case. The crux of Christianity rests in the presumption of its ability to confer spiritual power and material

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[55]*Ibid.*, p. 112.

well-being. Christian mystics know that this "presumption" is part of Christianity's unlosable essence which must be retained in any reconception of it

The Crux of Christianity

The Christian mission to confer spiritual power on others can indeed appear to be presumptuous. It was precisely this charge which was laid against the early Christians and against Jesus himself. For Hocking, this element of presumption is the crux of Christianity. The Roman State, which was noted for its hospitality to any cult, saw an arrogance in Christianity which it could not tolerate. Christianity made the

> State unnecessary and supreme devotion to the State impossible. It compelled choices, and announced a competition for allegiance, whereas other religions were content with combined loyalties. In brief, it assumed itself to be right, to possess the Way; and the pretense of divine right implied in its passion for souls was as little palatable to Rome as it is to the ethical diffidence of the present hour.[56]

Hocking sees no difficulty with Christianity's taking this firm a stance because it is demanding a complete transformation of human nature which requires a radical ethic. We have seen previously Hocking's position that if a tradition holds out any standard at all it must be a standard of perfection. It would be presumptuous for Christians to act as intransigently as they often seem to if they did not, in fact, believe that what they do is to confer power by way of a *loan*, that is, they participate in the life of God and act on God's energy, not their own. In 1956, he expands on this idea.

> The ethic of Christianity is not altruism nor mere pacifism, nor drifting-in-idleness. It is superiority to the efficiently trivial, the reputably prudent, and the timorously pious. It is the prophetic consciousness -- a command of events through hard won identity with the deeper realities, the eternal conditions of eternal good. The goal is the ineffable joy of one who has created

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[56]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 382.

> something immortal because the quality of integrity
> is in it. Its life is the spur of co-operation with the absolute,
> at whatever pain and through whatever opposition.[57]

The key words here are "identity" and "co-operation." These are the fruits of mystical experience. In 1912, Hocking devoted the whole of Chapter XXXII of *The Meaning of God* to an explanation of how the experience of the Real as All-Loving, and of oneself as loved by God, carries over to a sense of personal worth, viz., that one's life is important and one's actions are ultimately meaningful, not futile. In the experience of God as All-Loving, the human comes to share in the power of God even as in human loving, the couple share in the power and strength of each other. This does not mean that Christians in fact live up to this experience or calling. Hocking did believe, however, that Christian missions were dependent upon this presumption of being a collaborator with God. The presumption is confirmed through the alternation of work and worship which effects and renews the mystic experience of identity and co-operation with the Divine. Hocking repeated this conviction in 1918, as we shall see below, and in 1932 when he proposed that the more incomplete the missionary person might feel, the more the fitness for mission was dependent on this presumption of participating in God's energy. As we have just seen, he continued to emphasize this position in his 1956 work.

The Way of Participation

Philosophy helps one to understand what it is that Christians mean when they say that they do not act on their own but "participate" in the work of God. When I come to know any object, I literally "take it in." It becomes part of me, and I participate in its quality. It becomes very much a working part of me. Hocking argues that this same kind of participation, of taking in the goodness, strength, power of a human friend or beloved,

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[57]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 95.

or even the beauty of something non-human, is what happens in the case of the Christian mystic. The mystic experiences a Power in the world

> and such power as I must wield if I am to find out what I mean by living; but that power, even if it resides in me for a moment, is very little mine. Far from a testimony to my ability if I accomplish something with it, it is a comment on my culpable lack of faith if I fail to work miracles with it.[58]

For Hocking, out of this mystical experience there is nothing presumptuous in Christians determining to confer spiritual power on others because this is what God has done to them. Mystics know that the power is God's, not theirs. The error would be in not using the power. The realization of the power of God operative for them, and operative through them, is one more way in which Christians are called upon to be perfect, to act *in loco Dei.* Hocking admits that he still has not answered the question of how to effect this participation or how to "know God", as he maintains the ancients would pose the question. Toward the end of his life he proposes the ethics of philosophical mysticism to effect this knowledge. Now he thinks the answer to this question of how one can know God, and effect participation in God's power, is in the "Divine Aggression."

The Divine Aggression

When humans look at the world around them, it is difficult if not impossible to perceive God as wholly good, and yet this seems precisely to be what the mystic is saying. The problem of evil seems insurmountable to most of us. The actual feeling of many persons is something like; "God, if there is a God, is a blunderer, or a malicious playmaker, or finite and helpless, or callous, or blind."[59] In 1940, Hocking put it this way: "The official dogma to the effect that 'God is good' is contradicted to the eye of

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[58]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 389.

[59]*Ibid.*, p. 393.

common observation by the sufferings of the entire animated universe. . . . If life is not good, God is not good. . . . We judge life on the satisfaction of being alive."[60]

Hocking notes that religion is the first to accept this skepticism and religious persons confirm that salvation requires a divine intervention, the help of an Other who comes to humankind. This need for an Other and for help from an Other is often offensive in the contemporary setting. Some would see it as a failure of nerve. However, the history of Christianity is that of a "God forever restless, in quest of what to him is lost, who invades the earth in order to bring men to themselves."[61] This is the Divine Aggression.

The Christian soul does not have to scale the heights of heaven to find God. This God comes to earth, takes the form of servant, loves as humans love and suffers as humans suffer. God eventually determines to suffer at human hands. This is the message of Incarnation. To believe in Incarnation gives meaning to history because history then becomes the drama of "God's life, his making and re-making of men." God's love is addressed to each individual. All things exist for the individual loved by God in a way "not unlike the world of the child, who has not yet learned to doubt that all things exist for his sake; and to the end it requires something of the spirit of a child to enter the world of Christianity."[62] Incarnation is also like the world of the lover who delights in being in the physical presence of the beloved. God delights also in being physically present to those who are God's beloved, humanity. It is through the Christ of God that the Divine Aggression of God becomes both apparent and available. By knowing Jesus, and living out the ethic of Jesus' induction connected with the reconception of Judaism, any human

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[60]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 217.

[61]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p. 398. It would surely be more accurate if Hocking were to say that most religious persons hold to this intervention. Theravadan Buddhism and Zen Buddhism certainly do not do so and this may account for their currently increasingly popularity in the West. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar who is often credited with returning Buddhism to the Indian subcontinent constantly refused to believe in this kind of divine intervention or promote it among his followers.

[62]*Ibid.*, p. 401.

being can experience the address of God to himself or herself, and personally experience the Divine Aggression. We have learned previously how Hocking, in *The Meaning of God*, will not accept an inferred experience of God as legitimate and insists that the experience must be available within one's own time and place. In 1918, Hocking adds that it is not only that the human person needs God, but the divine interest "requires" the human person. He writes:

> And every human being, if these things are true, must be able to discover as the sense of his entire experience a direct address of the absolute being to him, as if the world were made for him alone. The universe becomes suddenly, not ego-centric, but multi-centric. Just as in infinite space, the center of reference must see it, the center of the universe is everywhere that the divine interest finds a person.[63]

In 1956, Hocking was even more adamant that God's address, to be authentic, must be made to individuals within their human experience. He wrote then that this power of participating in the life of God through the Christ of God "must be received by each one through his own experience. The Christian world view is willing to achieve actual universality only through the absolute particularity of its address, to each one severally. This is its point of honor."[64] It is also a description of Hocking's conviction that each Christian person is a potential mystic.

Hocking is clear that this incarnation of God into history cannot be proven but only believed. He maintains, however, that the business of any religion, and of the Christian religion in particular, is not to "prove God but to announce God." The proclamation gives each person the opportunity to recognize in the announcement what is real for him or her, what is important to him or her. We have already seen how Hocking in *The Meaning of*

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[63]*Ibid.*, p. 400.

[64]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 113.

God deals with religion's being autobiographical. In his 1918 work he reiterates the conviction that "religion calls upon every man for an individual and ultimate 'I believe,' which means, 'I recognize this to be the fact,' or, more simply, 'I see.'"[65] Hocking sees that in the history of humanity a kind of animal-like confidence had sustained human beings for a very long time, but the war had brought many to question whether or not they matter, if any thought or deed at all matters. For him it is, in fact, within the great experimental sacrifices of history that persons have attained their world views. In the giving of one's life for a cause, or a belief, values emerge, are effected. It was the same with Jesus as with other self-sacrificing persons. The sacrifice of his life effected his world view and the Christian world view "that the world as a whole has an active individual concern for the creatures it has produced."[66]

The West has, by and large, made the Christian world view its own. Hocking says that one need only look at the history of the West to see this to be the case. What kind of world have we, in the West, been living in and what can we learn from it about what is true in it? When Hocking looks at western civilization he sees there the values of "integrity, reliability, legality, practical force, love of liberty."[67] These are the very same values which Jesus espoused. Hocking sees a willingness in the West to accept the findings of natural science, of psychology, and to "stand naked" before the facts in its civilization.[68] He sees in this a reflection of Jesus who was unafraid of truth. He perceives in the history of the Allied entry into World War I a metaphysical conviction on the part of western society that the war must be fought because "there are a number of things including human

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[65]Hocking, *Human Nature and Its Remaking*, p., 403.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. 415.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 405.

[68]*Ibid.*, p. 406.

life, objectively valuable and 'sacred.'"[69] In inviting others to serve and function in the name of God, to participate in the life of God, Jesus provided a horizon beyond but deeply concerned with this order of things, thus

> Christianity is based on the affirmation that human life gets its meaning and dignity from what is beyond humanity. Without this superhuman reference, it becomes just another social agency, with no especial qualification to be such. With it, it can be no social party -- for it has a higher calling; but it can produce the men who can take sides, and reach conclusions, and also the spirit and demand in terms of which conclusions must be reached.[70]

The mystics have a special hold on this "superhuman reference." But it is not just the sacrifices of persons during the First World War but also of those throughout the history of the West since the time of Jesus that prove for Hocking how seriously the West has understood Jesus' position on the value of human life and its inestimable worth, which is God's own valuation of human life. Persons are not acting "as if" life were valuable but acting because it is valuable. The "last fact," then, is that the world is valuable, it is God's world, a world of unity and sense. The confirmation of its value is God's incarnation within it. But

> Incarnation in general is one of the bits of idle poetry unless there is incarnation in particular. Christianity has no need to deny that the will of God appears and has appeared in many deeds in many lands. Its concern is affirmative; but for the confirming of its case it has to light upon an unquestionable instance, and it requires but one.[71]

For Christians, Jesus is that one. Because of this conviction that Jesus is the Christ of God, Christianity is the only religion which "inclines to substitute its founder" for all of its

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

[70] Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 253.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

doctrine and knows that it "has gained rather than lost by so doing."[72] Christianity sees this substitution as legitimate because

> It believes that in the course of history, the insistent problems of religion came to Jesus with peculiar clarity, and that he gave answers to them which, because of their simple and essential nature, may be taken as final. Further, he exemplified in his own teaching in life and in death, and affords to all men who come to know him the most transparent and accessible example of a life lived greatly through immediate union with God.[73]

Hocking does not mean by this substitution of Jesus' person for Christian dogma and doctrine that he approves of simplistic proclamations of God's power in Jesus, such as "Our message is Christ Jesus." We have encountered several times his conviction that religion needs brain power at its disposal for it to be true religion. What he does applaud in the formulation that Jesus is Christianity's message is that it makes available to anyone who desires to carry out "the same venture" as Jesus, an intimate, infallible associate in their endeavours -- the Christ of God.[74]

Hocking is well aware of how many different Christian opinions there are about Jesus' divinity. His own position is that its probable meaning is "a profound spiritual union of the will of Jesus with the will of God."[75] This union made of Jesus a man of faith. We saw at the outset of this chapter that for Hocking, to set one's affections in the right direction is to commit oneself to act to confer spiritual power on others. We saw too, how much Hocking is convinced that we find that for which we seek. In bringing together those two trends we can say that faith and historic effort are for him directly related.

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[72] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 283.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

> Christianity is explicitly the religion of "the prophetic consciousness." -- that is to say of the affirmative relationship of faith to historic effect. To Jesus, faith ought to be a power; and if it was not, there was something wrong with the faith. His was the original "satyagraha," spirit in control of fact, calling for power over events as a duty, and as an achievement if one have faith "as a grain of mustard seed." Less than any other religion, less than Buddhism or Islam, certainly less than Hinduism, for the religion of Gandhi was half Christian, can Christianity abstract its essential truth from its historic being, the deed of its prophet, and the doer.[76]

The union of Jesus' will with the will of God, has resulted in this affirmative relationship of faith and historic effort; Christians who are true to Jesus, must keep that same dimension of faith and the power of it. Hocking states emphatically that "wills like his [Jesus']" continue to make their impact upon history.[77]

In summary, Christianity for Hocking provides for a transformation of the human instincts of pugnacity, sex-love, and ambition, which find their fulfillment in the Christian effort to confer spiritual power on others, and not have power, spiritual or otherwise, over them. It is not presumptuous of Christians to seek to confer spiritual power on others because the means for this conferring of power is in the Divine Aggression of God on behalf of humanity. Christians participate in the power of God which is on loan to them. The aggressive determination to confer power on others, to end all that is lacking in compassion or which is unjust in the world, is the essence of Christianity. The most succinct expression of this Christian mission to confer power on others is the express command of Jesus to "seek first the Kingdom of God." Any reconception of Christianity must keep the unalterable and unlosable convictions that 1) the Self at the heart of the world is a Divine Love, willing to suffer for the world's improvement; 2) the authentic Christian life, a life like Jesus', is based on a similar willingness to create through suffering, even as

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[76]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 117.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 98.

the Divine Love suffers; 3) this creative suffering has been inaugurated in history by Jesus but is unfinished, and must continue to be actualized by other wills like his.

It remains now to be seen how Christianity should work to confer this power of God on others, in other words how Christianity should be applied. For that we must look to Hocking's understanding of Christian mission. By 1918, Hocking had concluded that Christianity, in addition to giving meaning and purpose to individual existence, involved a passion for righteousness and a determination to spread this passion for righteousness. A further articulation of the Christian ambition to confer power on others, rather to have power over them, namely, Christian mission, did not appear until 1932. We turn now to that articulation.

B. Christian Missions

Hocking's understanding of Christian missions appears primarily in 1) *Re-Thinking Missions*, 2) three lectures he gave in connection with the publication of that book, 3) *Living Religions and a World Faith,* and 4) *The Coming World Civilization.*

We have already mentioned how in 1930 Hocking came to be the Chairman of the Commission of Appraisal of Protestant missions emanating from the United States during the previous one hundred years. The desire for that appraisal needs to be put into context. As early as 1910, some Protestant theologians and missionaries met in Edinburgh to discuss their international work. The rising tide of secularism was coming to be seen by many of them as the evil against which all religions needed to take arms. Some missionaries in Edinburgh questioned whether Christian attempts to completely replace other religions ought to continue to be the purpose of Christian missions given secularism's proported denigration of the religious realm. They proposed that Christians needed to align themselves with all religious persons to combat secularism.

This proposal for collaboration with rather than displacement of other religions was intensified in 1928 at the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council which Hocking attended in part.[78] Hocking was at that time travelling throughout the Middle East, studying what ought to be done in Palestine about the religions in that area. He was calling for an accommodation of all the major religions in Palestine rather than the establishment of an Israeli state with Judaism as its state religion. The discussions concerning the collaboration with and accommodation of other living religions on the part of Christians being suggested in Jerusalem by some members of the Missionary Council made sense to him, religiously and politically.

We saw in Chapter I that the publication of Hocking's ideas in regard to Palestine, and his proposal for the accommodation of all the living religions within a Palestinian state, brought him to the attention of the group of Baptist laymen who launched the 1930 appraisal of U.S. Protestant missions. They offered him the Chairmanship of the Commission. In his letter to James Woods, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Harvard, in which he asked for a sabbatical year to undertake this study of Protestant missions, we find a succinct statement of Hocking's sentiments about Protestant Christian missions. Hocking was already on sabbatical at the time of the writing and was now asking for a second year away from Harvard (which seemed anything but an opportune thing to do). Hocking explained to Woods, who thought that Hocking was going too far afield of his philosophical interests, that he saw the invitation to study missions as "a year of research in applied metaphysics, with the special theme of Christian missions to give it actuality." He continued:

> My own feeling is that there are few enterprises into which so much good energy has been thrown, with so much just enthusiasm in their general conception, and with so much

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[78]Gérard Vallée, *Mouvement Oecuménique et Religions Non Chrétiennes* (Tournai: Desclée et Cie/ Montreal: Bellarmin, 1975), pp. 19-62.

> misguided and be-deviled effort in their detailed execution, as Christian missions. If I can aid in giving that energy a more profitable turn in the next generation, it will be a deed worth doing.[79]

It is clear from this letter that Hocking presumed a continuation of missions but a change in their direction. This energy of Protestant Christians, to which Hocking refers, included enormous amounts of money contributed for overseas missionary endeavours, which contributions had, in fact, fallen off a few years before the Great Depression in the United States. The sponsoring members of the Commission were concerned about this dimunition of grass-roots financial support and wondering what it augured for the future of missions.

Before looking at the Laymen's Report itself and Hocking's recommendations for a revitalization of Christian missions, an additional word needs to be said about the traditional approach of Christian missionaries to their work, alluded to briefly at the beginning of this section. The typical Christian approach to non-Christians, apart from rare individuals like Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili in the 16th-17th centuries, is well illustrated by the following quote from James Dennis, a pioneer Christian social worker in India in 1896. He wrote: "The contribution of Buddhism to society is a paralyzed personality; that of Confucianism an impoverished personality; that of Hinduism a degraded personality."[80] Logically, then, authentic Christian mission, for persons like Dennis, involved the displacement of non-Christian religions by Christianity.

Hocking's own position, as we saw in Chapter I of the *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, is that religions are far more similar than dissimilar. Hocking writes there that it is thanks to the modern science of comparative religions, that this realization of

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[79]A letter to James Woods, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Yale, dated November 14, 1930. Quoted by Leroy S. Rouner, "Idealism, Christianity, and a World Faith: William Ernest Hocking's View of Christianity and Its Relation to Non-Christian Religions," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1961), pp. 196-97.

[80]Quoted by James Thayer Addison, in "The Changing Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions," *International Review of Missions*, January, 1938, p. 113.

similarities has emerged. It would be intellectual blindness not to accept the similarities. In 1932, Hocking reaffirmed that as a result of comparative studies of religions

> ...there is little disposition to believe that sincere and aspiring seekers after God in other religions are to be damned: it [Christianity] has become less concerned in any land to save men from eternal punishment than from the danger of losing the supreme good.[81]

American Fundamentalists and Europeans like Hendrik Kraemer, who was influenced by Karl Barth, did not agree with Hocking, before or after the Laymen's Report. They did not accept as theologically valid the similarities among religions which were being demonstrated by the comparative study of them, and they were not very much inclined toward collaboration with non-Christian religions, even in terms of the emergent secularism. Kraemer succeeded eventually in having the hope of Christian co-operation with other religions completely discredited at the 1938 meeting of the International Missionary Council in Tambaram, Madras. Hocking's position and that of the Commission of Appraisal was seen as too soft especially in the wake of the rise of new ideologies in Germany.[82] What then had been said in the 1932 Laymen's Report?

Hocking himself wrote the first four chapters on behalf of the commission. He was able to express in those chapters a consensus as to the essence of Christianity, and its contemporary mission.[83] He began his reflections on Christian mission with some insights on mission in general, no matter the religious tradition. At the heart of any mission ". . .though it takes the special form of promoting one's own type of thought and practice, there is always a valid impulse of love to men: one offers one's own faith simply because

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[81]William Ernest Hocking, Chairman, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1932), p. 19.

[82]Vallée, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-80.

[83]Cf. especially, Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, Chapter III.

that is the best one has to offer."[84] Hocking saw another motive in mission than the impulse of love. All giving for him is in order not only that others grow, but that the giver grow as well. "We are so made that the communication of thought and feeling not alone relieves but develops the self that communicates. Those who give most learn most definitely what they have."[85] Hocking and his committee were impressed with the ideal of Christian missions, viz., that they be endeavours connected with loving and learning, but they were frankly disturbed with most of the missionaries. The missionaries seemed to the Commission to be committed to routine performances and drone-like in the carrying out their duties. Hocking writes:

> ...we feel that the Christian view of life has a magnificence and glory of which its interpreters, for the most part, give little hint: they seem prepared to connect, but seldom to inspire; they are better able to transmit the letter of the doctrine than to understand and fulfill the religious life of the Orient.[86]

It would appear that Hocking and his Commission were moving in the direction of the fulfillment concept of mission, but actually he is far more radical as we shall see below. For the Commission, the best thing that missionaries were doing was shifiting by and large to an affirmative form of Christianity. There is a move away from hell-fire and damnation to the good news of a God who cares, loves, suffers. This affirmative seed needs to be nurtured, as does the position that all efforts at human development need a moral or religious underpinning. Missionaries must become more adept at conveying the need for religious underpinnings for activities aimed at human development because

> Whatever is valid in morals needs something of the nature of a religion to give it full effect in the human will. In many quarters one finds the idea expressed that this religious

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[84]Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, p. 4.

[85]*Ibid.*, p. 8-9.

[86]*Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

> ingredient will not be identical with any of the positive religions now offering themselves; that there is a simpler, more universal, less contentious and less expressive religion coming into human consciousness which might be called the religion of modern man, the religious aspect of the coming world culture.[87]

I suggest that here is the seminal thought of Hocking's position on a world faith evolving to effect a world civilization. Through the nurturing of this emergent religion, Christians will promote "world understanding" and they will free Christianity from much in its present structures that is hampering its mission. Hocking is particularly concerned that Christianity become de-westernized, as we will see in our next chapter. He asked Christians not to fear changes, in particular changes away from a Christianity organized around western models of management because "we need look forward to no time when the authentic spirit of Christianity, if freed from hampering organizational purposes will be an undesired visitor in any land."[88]

Later in the report Hocking expresses grave concerns that so many missionaries seem to accept the western institutional structure of the missions as a given without looking toward other ways of being church. He is especially perturbed with wholesale conversions and with procedures guaranteed to keep funds from abroad coming to shore up local missions and their often questionable undertakings. He wants people to think critically about how they are being organized and organizing themselves.

> It is always possible that the right attitude toward an ecclesiastical system, as distinguished from the religion it frames, may be one of clear hostility. There are times when the policy of implacable antagonism is the way of true friendship to the religious interest itself.[89]

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[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Hocking is adamant that one must always examine the degree of health within a religious institution. If the religious organization demeans or devalues human existence, the authentically religious person, especially the mystic, must be antagonistic toward it.

In Hocking's understanding, Christianity became western in its process of making the West! As they accept the process of indigenization, Christian missionaries will, because of their concern for human development, be "making" China, India, Burma, Japan, and in that "making," Christianity will become eastern. By "making" Hocking means enhancing the good found in the indigenous peoples and religious traditions. The Commission recommends further, that Christian missionaries must be careful not to duplicate efforts that the politicians in nations where Christians are serving can do and should be doing. Christians missionaries must urge any state of which they are members permanently or temporarily, to undertake greater and greater responsibility for the general well-being of their citizenry. Missionaries should give over control of schools, hospitals, rural development agencies to secular authorities as soon as the governments are capable of conducting them. For now, these institutions should be put as quickly as possible into the hands of indigenous Christians.[90]

U.S. Protestant missions should move toward providing religious "ambassadors" to other countries. They should be few, highly trained, well-equipped persons at the service of the local church, called to be there by the local church, and remaining only as long as they are needed by the local church. The ambassadors should be especially involved in experimental work in education, medicine, and rural life. Ambassadors from the foreign mission churches should be sent to the U.S. for the same kinds of consultations. All Christians, whether foreign or natives, in mission territories, should be prepared for special collaboration between Christian and Oriental scholars,

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[90]*Ibid.*, p. 27.

> seeking through such intercourse a deeper grasp of the meaning of Christianity; promoting world unity through the spread of the universal elements of religion; enlivening the churches at home and abroad through rapport with each other.[91]

Here we have a major component of Hocking's purpose in the reconception of any religion. Reconception is intended to provide a deeper grasp of the essence of one's own religious tradition, and to promote world unity thereby keeping religion alive and purposeful. Hocking and the Commission were convinced that this process of mutual learning and deepening would only happen when Christianity makes the effort "to know and understand the religions around it, then to recognize and associate itself with whatever kindred elements are in them."[92] The Christian must look for what is "strong and sound" in these other religions because generally speaking "to recognize the best is to strengthen the best." The Christian must accept that there is truth at the core of all religions. He writes:

> If there were not at the core of all creeds a nucleus of religious truth, neither Christianity nor any other faith would have anything to build on. Within the piety of the common people of every land, encrusted with superstition as it usually is, and weighed down with vulgar self-seeking in their bargainings with the gods, there is this germ, the inalienable religious intuition of the human soul. The God of this intuition is the true God: to this extent universal religion has not to be established; it exists.[93]

Hocking and the Commission state that they know there are ways in which a re-organization or reconstruction of Christianity in the Orient along the lines they recommend will be more difficult than were the original foundations. They regret that missionaries to

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[91] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[93] *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

Asia did not follow the lead of St. Paul and plant the seed of Christianity and then leave its growth to local inspiration. (This is one thing Paul did that Hocking likes. In another work he accuses Paul of having conveniently "invented" the idea of a divine plan.[94]) Too many Oriental Christians see being Christian as being western. They do not yet appreciate the cruelty of the pedagogy involved in having had them sever all their relationships and move into a mission compound. Granted, this severing of all former ties was understood initially as a way to protect the new converts and keep their faith strong; but removing Christians from their milieu planted suspicion of their roots in them and it planted suspicion of Christianity among non-Christians.

Missionaries who look for the best in other religious traditions may suffer at the hands of their own organizations, but they must persist in identifying good wherever they find it and in rooting out superstition of all sorts in Christianity as well as in other traditions because "superstition is not a peculiarity of any special type or traditional religion: it is a phenomenon of a low stage of general enlightenment and attends every religion in such stages."[95] The elimination of superstition from Christianity and from any religion will be best accomplished by missionaries promoting a scientific habit of mind and being "fearless" in the presence of science. Hocking is convinced that strong science and strong religion are two sides of one coin, therefore, he wants missionaries to be clear that the work of religion is to complete "the unfinished world-view of science," providing the "value and meaning" of human existence which science left on its own does not do. Prime among the superstitions to be ended are those connected with providence, prayer, and eschatology. Christians ought to work with enlightened persons of all faiths to effect "a non-

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[94]Cf. Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 169. "The idea of a divine plan, considered as a dated product of God's wisdom and goodness wholly unimaginable to man, is I fear, an ingenious invention of Saint Paul. To take it up again to-day is to place a halter around the neck of Christianity for those to tug at who are disposed to work upon the more craven fears of the human heart. It is time for a robust and honest Christianity to have done with all this rattling of ancient moral chains."

[95]Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, p. 41.

superstitious conception of providence and prayer." Hocking wants to bring to an end "any reliance on spiritual forces to do the work proper to physical forces."[96] He writes that such superstitious reliance results in

> . . . a degradation of the spiritual to the level of the mechanical; it is a gratuitous invitation of conflict between religion and science; it is an illegitmate expectation of, or belief in, miracle, a faith in occult or magical connections between circumstances (like numbers, acts, days) and human fortunes not casually related thereto. It applies to meaningless taboos, to the special potencies of material objects and places as charm or shrine, and to acts of petition designed to bring the divine power into the service of the petitioner's personal advantage.[97]

As Christians work with all religious persons of good will to end superstition a reconception of Christianity itself will begin. Thinking Christians will want to take into their own tradition the best of others. Experiences of the Divine, worship of the Real, and work for the human development of all beings, will become a continually shared reality. Christians who are nervous about this sharing, which is a mutual training and equipping, and a sharing of their knowledge of God, should relax because truth in any form is never to be feared. Mystics in every religious tradition know this in a special way. The relations between religions must, therefore, "take increasingly hereafter the form of a common search for truth" especially on the part of the mystics in living religions.[98] Hocking elaborated on this idea of Christians' not fearing truth in a lecture given in 1935 which will be examined later.

This seeking after truth will require a new kind of Christian religious institution apart from those traditionally used for education, worship, medical care, and rural development. As Hocking and his Commission envision it, this institution will need to be

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[96]*Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

[97]*Ibid.*, p. 41.

[98]*Ibid.*, pp. 44-47.

a pleasant place, with a library, some meeting rooms, a place which will provide "conversation, ample, repeated, unhurried with intervals of reflection and work."[99]

Later on Hocking was to suggest that at least some Christians needed to move out of their traditional settings and even leave these new kinds of learning centres and come to know indigenous religious individuals working with persons on the margins of economic, political, and social life, "for it is just on their growing edges, often by way of the groping of deviating groups, that living religions are likely to encounter one another in new relationships."[100] For example, one of the main things that Christians ought to learn from their world religious neighbours is to meditate. Hocking feels that Oriental peoples surpass North Americans in their prayer lives resulting in an imperturbability at the centre of their persons. Much could be learned from Asians about this kind of prayer life.[101]

The bulk of Chapter III of the Laymen's Report is a statement on the essence and content of Christianity which I have already examined in Section A of this chapter and as it

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[99]*Ibid.*, p. 48. Hocking and the Commission envisioned these learning institutions as places where "reflective observers" would meet. Hocking was especially impressed with the ashram which Rabindranath Tagore had established at Shantiniketan in India, and suggested that Christians might use this kind of facility as a model for their new kind of mission institution. Three years after *Re-Thinking Missions* in his 1935 article on Evangelism, p. 41., Hocking writes of the reflective observer in this way. "[The reflective observer is] qualified by a deep knowledge of the spiritual backgrounds of the life about him, and whose main business is not building institutions, but developing understanding. There ought to be here and there, as it were, watch-towers of thought from which the directions of change can be observed and suggestions sent out to the churches and to the workers in the field." Hocking suggest that Roman Catholics now do this "incidentally but effectively", such as their program at "St. Mary's Finishing School (sic) for Jesuits" in Darjeeling, India. I find it difficult to equate these observers with Hocking's description of mystics except that he does expect them to alternate between work and worship, which is his classic understanding of an effective mystic.

[100]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 67.

[101]Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions*, p. 45. Cf. also, Rouner, *op. cit.*, p. 198. James Woods, who was mentioned earlier, and Hocking were personal friends, despite their differences. Woods had been in India for two years and initially opposed Hocking's determination to become Chairman of the Commission of Appraisal because he would not be long enough in one place to do justice to the countries. Hocking's relationship with Woods convinced him that India had something special to offer in terms of meditation because he found in Woods a "region of imperturbability. Our many years of close association have not been without their brushes. I have approached Jim more than once in a frame of agitation; I have at times attacked him! His response has been invariably disarming, - gentle, kindly, understanding, - in the character of a true philosopher." It was this experience of Woods and of Asians at worship that suggested to Hocking that North Americans could learn from the East to work and worship better, viz., to become mystics.

was developed subsequently by Hocking in *Living Religions and a World Faith.* In Chapter IV, the report urges that the good news of Jesus, the essence of Christianity, that God loves and cares for each individual and is personally involved in ending anything that is inimical to human happiness, be conveyed in the language of the people to whom the missionary is sent, and without technical jargon. New and dramatic ways of making the love of God known are needed.because "the unchanging nature of religious truth is often taken to justify an equally invariable method of announcing it."[102] Although they themselves were active Christian laity, many Commission members admitted their own confusion at the doctrinal content of sermons they heard in their investigations, and even in their home churches. If they were having this kind of difficulty, what would the language problems be for new and prospective Christians and for non-Christians, they queried.

The Commission also wanted it clearly understood that while they were calling for considerable improvements in the philanthropic dimensions of missions, especially in terms of their better organization, and more accountability for excellence within them, they knew that this was not enough. If this is all that is done the point will be missed that "All proposals for cure through philanthropy alone, miss the point of central importance, namely, that there must be *first of all a new kind of person as the unit of society if there is to be a new social order.*" This new kind of person is not dependent but interdependent in all facets of his or her existence, in the thinking of the Commission. This missionary will give to the local culture and receive from the local culture and in that sense be interdependent. The authentic Christian missionary will work to effect that kind of interdependence among indigenous persons.[103]

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[102]*Ibid.*, p. 62.

[103]*Ibid.*, pp 63-67.

These interdependent kinds of persons will not come about through simple proclamation of the Christian message. Mere preaching of the word of God is insufficient in the estimation of the Commission for carrying out this renewed, revitalized Christian mission. What the missionary must engage in is an "evangelizing by living and by human service" because

> ...it is frequently true that preaching, or giving messages in words, is not in the first instance the right approach. The Christian way of life and its spirit is capable of transmitting itself by quiet personal contact and contagion: there are circumstances in which this is the most perfect mode of speech.[104]

This kind of mission is sometimes called the "presence" and "witness approach," but because the individual is part of a complex social structure, the Commission does not see mission as completely fulfilled in this approach. A thoroughgoing reconstruction of the whole of society is necessary, in addition to the changing of individual minds and hearts within the society. Hocking sees this effort to reconstruct the whole social order as one of the specific gifts of Christian life and an approach to life that is "peculiarly" Christian. Christianity is not a religion of "illusion" or "pessimism." It takes the world seriously and believes that people can change, and change for the better. Therefore, Christianity is concerned with "the sound welfare of the body, the economic and social order, and requires it as well as the welfare of the soul."[105] We have seen previously how in Hocking's understanding the Christian mystic in particular rushes to the brewing place of action to effect such total well-being.

The Committee then makes recommendations to effect the reconstruction of society as well as the changes in invididuals. In all of Christian education, including seminary and

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[104]*Ibid.*, p. 65.

[105]*Ibid.*, p. 69.

theological training, an attitude of concern for the total person and for the society, must be "interfused, not superadded." In Christian medical work, persons will be cared for because they need the care, whether they are baptized members of the Christian community or not, and preventive medicine should be given the priority. In rural villages, Christians must work for a change in the "spirit" of village life. Morale must be enhanced along with a sense of moral responsibility for each other in the village "without breaking the ancient sanctity of the [extended] family" and with a careful "conserving" of the traditional strengths of the village life. Also in the villages there must be "better nourishment and better health" along with "better hope."[106] Hocking and his Commission ended their overview of Christian mission theology and mission scope with an interpretation of the phrase "The Kingdom of God," that succinct statement of the essence of Christianity.

> Whatever else the Kingdom of God may mean, in the complete significance of that great phrase, it carries with it, beside the full development of individuals and the maturing of social groups, also the spiritual unity of all men and races. This means something more than agreement in the essentials of religious faith. It means that the moral sense of mankind comes to accord on the deeper principles of right and wrong. Whatever heightens imagination, or intensifies affection and joy enters directly into its province.[107]

In summary, the first four chapters of *Re-Thinking Missions*, urge the continuance of missions but in greatly revised forms. Christian missions are to enhance the individual well being of all persons in their area, work toward the reconstruction of those societies in which the individual functions, and work toward world spiritual unity through an appreciation and enhancement of the positive dimensions of other religious traditions.

The balance of the Laymen's Report is given over to specific recommendations concerning the application of the theory of missions in education, publishing, medical and

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[106]*Ibid.*, pp. 73-76.

[107]*Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

agricultural work, industry, and women's interests. The final portion deals with the reorganization, in the missions and at the home base, which Hocking and the Commissioners felt were required, especially in terms of financing the missions and avoiding duplications between the mission boards. A word remains to be said on three speeches that Hocking gave in connection with the Report after it was published, which add further elements to questions of Christian uniqueness, mission, and reconception, as Hocking personally understood them.

In November, 1932, a group of the Commissioners met with representatives of the mission boards who had sponsored the appraisal, to discuss the report. Hocking gave the main address. He was asked during the question period which followed to elaborate on his positions concerning "truth" and "finality" in religion. His secretary for the Commission, Ward Madison, made a record of the answer.

> I am glad this question came up, because it calls for a distinction between the element of truth in religion and the other elements of religion.
>
> Religion is not all composed of truth. It has feeling and it has will in it, and the feeling and the will are just as important as the truth. But what you might call the intellectual element of religion has this peculiarity: that it is always moving... We cannot say that the God of Isaiah was a different God than the God of Moses -- he was the same individual -- but the conception of Moses was incomplete, and whatever truth there was in the conception of Moses was on the wane, so that when Isaiah came, Micah came, Hosea came, then it was quite evident that the truth, this new truth, belonged to the old as supplement. It would have been entirely out of order for Hosea to say "I have a conception of God now which Moses and his followers have no right to." No, private property did not fit in respect to the intellectual elements of religion.[108]

The validity and necessity of Hocking's reconception theory, its developmental nature, and true conservatism are clarified in this statement. He goes on to explain the need for

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[108]Rouner, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223.

reconception because we do not have the last word on truth. The quest for truth is unfinished, and in fact, unfinishable, when religion is correctly understood.

> That means that we are not through seeking for truth. That bothers some people. It oughtn't to, because it seems to come into clash with finality. I would like to make clear, if I possibly could, that finality and continued search go hand in hand... You can get final answers to questions, and if these questions continue to grow on our hands, that is all right. I think there is finality in religion, finality in religious truth, permanence, eternity. That is the function of religious truth, to give us a hold on the unchanging, and because we have finality we can welcome this mutual process of growth. Who is there who knows all he wants to know about God?[109]

Finality in religion means, for example, that God is, but what God is continues to be subject to human inquiry. The revelation of God in Jesus means that human pugnacity, sex-love, and ambition, must always be concerns within Christianity. What the tradition says about these three human concerns in a given historic era must be discerned in terms of the compassion and justice of the Reign of God at that particular time. There is a final revelation in Christianity that the Real is All Loving, and of the need for anyone who acts in the place of the Real, to function in an all loving way, to be perfect. What that way of acting in a loving manner is in one era, is not necessarily what it is in the next. In this much Hocking says that there are permanent values within Christianity which require on-going interpretation in their application.

In January of 1933, Hocking lectured about the Laymen's Report at the Chicago Theological Seminary. Hocking had been questioned about his orthodoxy in terms of the divinity of Jesus and in one part of his lecture stated his conviction that "Jesus does come as a saviour to lost souls." During the question and answer period Hocking was asked to explain what he meant by a lost soul. Ward Madison was once again in attendance and took Hocking's reply in stenographic form. The answer contains a very clear statement

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[109]*Ibid.*, p. 223.

about Jesus as the "human face of God" and is a concrete example of Hocking's "unbound Christ." The third paragraph is especially significant because it makes clear that Hocking does not limit Christ to Jesus of Nazareth.

> ...in the group which we call humanity, there is something massive, something immense, something in the preoccupation of individuals and of social wholes, which makes the individual person feel that he is alone and uncared for, and that his only possible policy is one of struggling with might and main to gain for himself by snatching from the whole what he can.
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> Now in so far as a person maintains this picture of the universe, he is a lost soul: he cannot see beyond that horizon which closes his life in nothingness and means the ultimate wiping out of the race. He cannot see any meaning in his life beyond what he can enforce by dint of his own self-assertion. In so far as we feel in ourselves this absence of confidence, this absence of certainty, this fear of calamity and of death, this servitude to chance, this rebellion, this poor guesswork of questions thrown into the void and receiving no answers, we are lost.
>
> The only thing which could come to us to make it possible for us to deal in full honor and trust with the world, and with each other, is some assurance *that these appearances are not* true; some assurance that out of the silence there is a voice which speaks, and in the callous machinery of the cosmos there is a heart which cares and a purpose which plans. *Whatever brings this assurance comes as a savior.* The savior, to you, is that event, that person, that word, in which you can say, "The Universe speaks to me"; "God speaks to me."[110]

The idea of a saviour is extended far beyond traditional understandings of Jesus' uniqueness in that mediating role. We have here also a reiteration of Hocking's position that the Real, the All-Loving, is available to every human being, addressing each personally, and his conviction that this address when experienced provides an assurance and a hope that one's life is meaningful and not futile. He has regularly identified this assurance and hope as fruits of the mystical experience. Hocking goes on to explain how in Christianity this voice of God to humanity is called "Christ." He writes:

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[110]*Ibid.*, p. 63.

> I believe that Christianity has given the name of Christ to what we might call the voice of God to man; and I like to think of the word Christ as meaning what we might call *the human face of God.* The veil of reality has been broken, as though some being had come toward us out of the darkness; and we can say to the universe, not "*It* is there," but "*Thou* art there, and Thou carest for me."
>
> It is this message which Christianity, I think, brings to us, and brings with an assurance and definiteness which we find in no other religion.[111]

The lost soul for Hocking is the person who feels unloved, alone, and uncared for. The soul is saved when something or someone assists the person to know that all appearances to the contrary, she is loved and personally cared for by God, a personal God, and experiences that the Whole of the world is a loving Mind. Christians give the name of "Christ" to this address of God to the individual, which address Hocking has called in 1918 the "Divine Aggression." In 1933, the address of God to humanity is named the Christ, the "human face of God."

A final speech of major significance for this chapter was given by Hocking to the Modern Missions Movement in Rochester, New York, on May 28, 1935. Hocking was asked to speak about what for him was permanent and what was changing about Christian missions. Hocking chose instead to reflect on *Church* and Mission because at this point he was becoming increasingly concerned about what was happening to Christianity at home in the United States. It might be more accurate to say that Hocking was concerned about what was not happening in the United States. The 1935 address is entitled, "Evangelism: An Address on Permanence and Change in Church and Missions." It makes three points:

> 1. the obligation to preach is not the responsibility of any special part of the church but of the whole church;
>
> 2. the preaching is to the whole world not just to places which have not yet heard the Christian gospel;

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[111] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

3. any preaching of Christ is also a learning of Christ -- they are two sides of one coin.[112]

Hocking developed these three points by explaining that for him, the human mind is naturally religious, i.e., naturally desires the good. Because the securing of the spiritual and material good of individuals and of human organizations is the basis of Christianity, and in Hocking's understanding of other religions, is an attitude peculiar to Christianity, human beings are therefore naturally Christian, as Tertullian once suggested. The seed of natural religion finds its "full flowering" in loyalty to Christ. This seed is the permanent dimension of Christianity. Repentance, belief, love, and action are "unlosable" essences of Christianity which effect the full flowering of humanity. In terms of change, Christians must find contemporary words and examples to make clear the implications of repentance, belief, love, and action in this age, "new ways in which the spirit of Christ can be made a working factor in human life" and this must be the work of the whole church not simply of foreign missionaries.[113] Seven years later Hocking was to repeat this conviction, and add to it his language about the essence of Christianity and Christian mission as a "passion for righteousness."

In *Living Religions and a World Faith*, Hocking writes that he has come to see any religion and its missionary activity to communicate itself as a "passion for righteousness," a determination to "do one's living well" and an effort not of propagandizing for one's own tradition but the desire to uncover what in any religion makes for "world citizenship" and thus the possibility of a "world faith."[114] It is the Christian mystics who are most capable of this kind of passionate living. This position did not alter for the balance of his life.

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[112]William Ernest Hocking, "Evangelism: An Address on Permanence and Change in Church and Mission," (Privately printed, 1935, 1945; Elgin, Illinois: Church of the Brethren, Third Printing, 1952), pp. 3-4.

[113]*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

[114]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, pp. 21-26 *passim*.

Summary

In Chapter II, we explained Hocking's position that the mystic is the person most likely to be concerned with the growth of his or her religious tradition. The mystic, through personal experience of the Divine, makes old truths available in new and dynamic ways, and through induction renews and expands the original religious insights. In this manner, the mystic reconceives the tradition as Hocking proposes that Siddartha Guatama reconceived Hinduism, Jesus reconceived Judaism, and Muhammed reconceived the polytheism of the Arabs resulting in Islam.

Because the mystic does not operate in a vacuum, and because this dissertation focusses on the role of the Christian mystic in the reconception of Christianity, this chapter explains what is for Hocking the essence and mission of Christianity which must be retained in any authentic reconception of it. We encountered Hocking's conviction that the divinity of Jesus consists in the spiritual union of his will with the will of God, giving humanity, through this union, in the person of Jesus, the human face of God. It is not as Jesus of Nazareth but as the "unbound Christ of God" that Jesus, and other wills like Jesus', continue to effect the revitalization of Christianity, and potentially of all humanity, through their passion for righteousness. The application of this passion is effected through Christian mission which becomes a quest for truth involving any and all persons of good will, a determination to arrive at a world faith through this intercourse, which will bring about the spiritual and material *caritas* of all humanity. Any and all Christian mission at the present moment demands a reconstruction of its language especially about providence and prayer, and things eschatological. This quest for truth, material and spiritual, witnessed to and preached in the contemporary idiom, must be at the heart of Christian mission in all six continents. Christian mystics are those most able and likely to reconceive the direction of Christianity toward integral human development.

Conclusion

Hocking's understanding of what is essential to Christianity is not without problems and I will return to this in detail in my final chapter. At this moment I simply note here that there is is no mention of the resurrection of Jesus in the succinct summary of the essence of Christianity with which I begin this chapter, nor have I found the resurrection to be a vital ingredient in any of Hocking's thought on the essence of Christianity. Can the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus play so small a part, or no part at all, in an accurate summary of the essentials of the Christian tradition?

Hocking's conviction that Christian mission is intended to give power to people rather than to lord it over them by convincing them of their unique worth, and the worthwhileness of their efforts to effect compassion and justice, seem powerful antidotes to the meaninglessness and ennui of much of contemporary existence, at least in the West, and to much traditional fatalism of the East. But this entire position is based on the presumption of the Christian's experience of and participation in the activity of God, of the Divine Aggression, of the Christ, who is proclaimed the human face of God. How does this participation become available to the modern whose experience is far more generally that of the absence of God than of God's presence? And what does this position say to Christians whose particular denomination places less emphasis on personal experience of the Divine than would have been the case in Hocking's own mountaintop experience of the Methodist tradition?

Before these questions are dealt with in the final chapter, it remains to be seen exactly what Hocking meant by a reconception of Christianity or of any living religion. And because for Hocking, any reconception of Christianity had to go hand-in-hand with a de-westernization of it, that must also be discussed. The next chapter, therefore, describes 1) what Hocking meant by a de-westernization of Christianity and 2) exactly how his model for the reconception of a de-westernized Christianity would operate.

CHAPTER IV

THE DE-WESTERNIZATION AND RECONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

Hocking's Christian mystic is a universalist, committed to the material and spiritual progress of all humanity. If the Christian mystic is to effect a reconception of his or her tradition which could result in its becoming the world faith, the mystic must initially effect a de-westernization of Christianity so that it can be a truly universal living religion. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is: 1) to explain William Ernest Hocking's position on the need for a de-westernization of Christianity so that an authentic reconception of Christianity may take place; and 2) to explain Hocking's theory of that effective reconception of Christianity.

In Chapter I we saw the role of experience in Hocking's thought and in the genesis of his philosophical mysticism. Based primarily on his experiences in Asia in 1931-32, Hocking concluded that the modern era requires that a world faith must contain the best religious thinking of both East and West. The world faith must be of cosmic significance. Therefore, Hocking calls for the de-westernization of Christianity. His philosophy of religion, which is described as "idea-istic" mysticism in Chapter II, requires that the world faith evolve from common universal experiences of loving and being loved, of beauty, and of truth, a sharing within and across religions and ideologies. Insisting on western forms of worship and church structure in Christianity, will not effect that sharing. Sharing demands the de-westernization of the tradition.

In Chapter III we explored the creed, code, and deed, which for Hocking are the unlosable essence of Christianity, succinctly stated in the injunction to "Seek first the kingdom of God." In contemporary language this means that the Christian is committed to

work toward the integral human development of all peoples. Any authentic reconception of Christianity will conserve this core, but it must be conserved in universal thought forms, language, and actions. This will only happen if a de-westernized Christianity seeks to become revitalized through a process of reconceiving its creed, code, and deed, not through Christianity's attempting to radically displace other living religions or become involved in a serendipitous synthesis of the best that other religions have to offer.

We move now to a detailed examination of the de-westernization of Christianity as Hocking proposed it, and then to his theory of the reconception of the tradition following that de-westernization of it.

Christianity and Western Civilization

In 1940 Hocking addressed in considerable detail, the question of Christianity's relationship to the West.[1] He reiterated his view of Christianity as a parent of the arts and sciences and his understanding of secularization. Secularization offers Christianity the opportunity to enter into sound dialogue with the scientific spirit, to the mutual benefit of both religion and science. Without strong science there could be no strong religion. Without strong religion there could be no authentically human science. He writes,

> [Christianity] has lived for two millennia in company with a diverse activity in western philosophising and in letters, and for three hundred years with a group of independent sciences. Alone among the great religions, Christianity has fought out its issues with the natural sciences, has passed through the purge of the scientific study of itself as an object, its "higher criticism," its comparative science of religion, its psychology of religion. It has met outspoken criticism on the part of these free agencies; and it has gained from this ordeal a capacity not alone to defend itself but to perceive what is defensible and what not defensible. It has ceased for the most part, to identify itself with scientific absurdities; it has been disciplined, hardened, and made agile. By reducing its appanage of

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[1]William Ernest Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1940), p. 238 ff.

> cumulative fancy, science has given Christianity the fighting benefit of its inherent simplicity, and a language soberly responsible to experience.[2]

This encounter with science has been advantageous to Christianity. Christianity's other advantages are its "superior power of self expression" in the induction of its founder;[3] its "free social application" which deals with a spirit rather than the letter of a law;[4] and its development of its own "common people" which makes Christianity concerned to break away from things esoteric to be of service to standard persons.[5]

Still, it is precisely these advantages that make of Christianity a western religion. In the simplicity of its language, in its application of its ethic to social situations, in meeting the needs of its common persons, Christianity made the West and in the process became western! This was no disadvantage when Asians wanted what the West had to offer, but rising Asian nationalism now makes that anything but the case. In the great majority of cases, to be Christian in the East in Hocking's time, as well as in the present era of neo-colonialism, is to be foreign at best and subversive at worst. Hocking wanted this remedied. He writes,

> Christianity is said to be western; and yet frequently the same critics will assert that western civilisation is not Christian. In my own judgment, the case is just the reverse: Christianity is not incurably western; and yet, since it has begotten certain features of the West, western civilisation is to that extent incurably Christian![6]

Although Hocking sees the West as incurably Christian, he maintains that Christianity cannot be held responsible for western politics because it cannot inflict its ethic on

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 239.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

governments nor should it wish to do so. All of the West's structures, however, are rooted in a religious "*morale* whose vitamin has to be generated by the religious background: with every freedom from institutional attachment, there remains an actual dependence."[7] However, Christianity is not incurably western, because freedom of expression, concern for an ethical life, and commitment to common human concerns are universal needs, not only western needs. The expressions of those concerns need not be couched in western ways, and Christians, especially in eastern settings, must work to make those concerns operative in their own cultures, not by importing western theology and structures.

Before explaining further the morale of Christianity, as Hocking understands it, it is important to mention here what Hocking means by "common people." It will be remembered that as early as 1931-32, Hocking came to know the indigenous religions of persons in the countries he and the Commission of Appraisal visited. He met not only scholars of religion and religious professionals, but believers at the grass roots levels. Whenever Hocking writes of a "living" religion and what it is for "he is not using 'living' simply as a synonym for 'present day' religions, or 'world' religions. He means religion as a kind of life rather than as a static system of doctrine."[8]

Religion cannot be identified with its metaphysical substratum. The observer of a religion must take into account the lives of its adherents. Hocking's 1931-32 travels had made clear to him how much the word "organization" was a western word, especially when applied to indigenous Asian peoples and their religions.[9] In the absence of membership rosters or even instruction by religious professionals, Hocking experienced religions of the

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[7]*Ibid.*, p. 246.

[8]Leroy S. Rouner, "Idealism, Christianity, and a World Faith: William Ernest Hocking's View of Christianity and Its Relation to Non-Christian Religions" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1961), p. 274.

[9]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 81.

people which have in them"a sound kernel" of experience of the presence and activity of God. This experience of the presence and activity of God is, of course, the mystical experience. This is the "living" religion about which he is writing and the mystics within the religion.[10] Living religions need to be understood in this way if we are to grasp Hocking's positions on de-westernization and reconception.

As indicated in Chapter III, Hocking thought Christianity could become the world faith because it deals effectively with human needs for love, power, and freedom. He proposed that meeting these needs is at the heart of every living religion, and in that much, the seeds of what has come to blossom as Christianity, are inherent in every living religion. In 1956, he was most emphatic that Christianity will not become the world faith "if Christianity as a whole is distinctively western" because "its significance for world civilization is -- I will not say nullified from the start, but -- discredited."[11] Hocking explains this position by asserting that if Christianity continues to localize itself in western culture, Christianity will be useless

> ...not alone for the Orient. For western man is no more capable than eastern man of accepting a religion localized as western. What every man knows is that religion is and has to be cosmic business, not hemispherical nor otherwise limited in its competence to interpret and to address the God of all mankind.[12]

What Hocking means by "cosmic business" is that all religious insights are intended to be shared and not hugged to oneself. Even those religious traditions which claim a special divine revelation, such as the "chosenness" of Judaism, or the "deposit of faith" preached

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[10] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[11] William Ernest Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 80.

[12] *Ibid.*

in Roman Catholicism, are not for those religious traditions exclusively. These religions in fact,

> ...are chosen to cancel their own chosenness through the spread of their own insight to all men. The good faith of chosenness is thus that it banishes its own distinction: hugged to itself it becomes an ally of religious *hybris* and corruption.[13]

In addition to Hocking's negative pragmatism, viz., if something does not work, it is not true, we have here a re-statement of his position that authentic truth, therefore authentic religion, is universal in its application and authentically religious persons, the mystics in particular, seek to effect that application.

In Chapter III, we noted Hocking's grave concern that the exclusiveness connected with traditional missionary approaches in Christianity, was alienating Christian converts from their cultures and their cultures from Christians. Rather than becoming vessels of integral human development, Christian missions were often in fact, vessels of dissension in developing nations that needed anything but that ferment of division. Hocking and the Commission of Appraisal did not minimize the contributions that Christian missions had made to the East especially in terms of education, medicine, and agrarian reform. Nor does Hocking, in later life, minimize what Christianity has done for western civilization. In particular after the Dark Ages, Christianity "nursed" the West to a "renewal of life." It is not just science, but "law, education, the family, forms of property, architecture, engineering, music...[which] have borne marks of their religious parentage. . . ."[14] Now independent of their religious parentage, these western sciences and arts are reaching out to the wider human community. There is a cross fertilization of ideas occurring which is aiding western civilization in leaving behind its provincialism, but as we have just seen,

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[13]*Ibid.*, p. 81

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 82.

Christianity is at the heart of these arts and sciences and the baby must not be thrown out with the bath water. Hocking lamented that many in the West, including those exporting western civilization, are involved in "the rejection of all [Christian] standards, trying to live experimentally with none at all."[15] For him, the arts and sciences of the West are not self-sufficient. To completely sever themselves from their religious background would mean an end to their vitality. This is the case with any dimension of western civilization; he is convinced that "the belief that aspects of western civilization can be borrowed without borrowing the religion which begot them is illusory."[16]

Still, Hocking was convinced that the throwing off of their Christian parentage by the western arts and sciences was making it possible for Christianity to be a "clarified messenger of the universal desires" of humankind. Christianity's creed, code, and deed, are that universal message. At the heart of Christianity is "the will to create through suffering" and a commitment to "initiative good will." This is Hocking's "Load-lifting Idea" which the ex-Nazi law student had once asked of Hocking and the West.[17]

There is, for Hocking, a "deep naturalness" in Christianity and in its "charter for action" and "faith" in initiative good will. He sees in Christianity's description of sin simply the "shadow of uncompromising standards."[18] Hocking believes that this standard of perfection in action is a universal human value, not essentially western. It should be understood and preached as such. He sees in the Christian who is determined to draw creatively from suffering, a correction to the Cartesian, "I think, therefore I am." The

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[15]*Ibid.*, p. 84.

[16]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 246. This seems a somewhat contradictory statement but Hocking goes on to write, as we shall see, of the "ethic or morale" of the Christian religion. It is this morale or ethos that must always be kept, not the western language or structures in which it is usually framed and taught.

[17]*Ibid.*, pp. 86 ff.

[18]*Ibid.*, pp. 104-105.

Christian attitude is "I despair, therefore I love." This is the Christian "morale" at the heart of western civilization which must always be exported with any other dimension of western arts and science. In other words, the Christian morale is a disposition to hope in the face of hopelessness, and to take action. For Hocking, there is nothing especially western about this disposition. Enlightened members of other religious traditions need and want this kind of morale as they move from colonialism, and today's neo-colonialism, to becoming self-determined. Authentic Christianity whether in the West or elsewhere "can favour an honest nationalism anywhere, and an aggressive nationalism nowhere" and it must be willing to submit "to whatever discredit is involved in having an international character, an international ethic, and a super-national responsibility."[19]

Hocking has encountered many persons at home and abroad whose basic question in the face of much suffering is "Why not give up? Which is another way of asking, Why care? Because 'the pain of this striving is an inseparable part of the joy of living. . . . Purely for the love of love, we could never endure a world which allowed no occasion for suffering.'"[20] Again, Hocking credits this striving with being a universal need which authentic Christians can and should exhibit. As we saw in Chapter III, in 1940, Hocking had identified the "will to create"[21] as the morale at the heart of Christianity, and of western civilization. In 1956, he added "through suffering". He had had by this time his experiences in a Germany seeking to reconstruct itself after the Second World War. Husserl's influence on him in his days as a graduate student might account for his adding "through suffering" to his earlier formula.

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[19]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 249.

[20] Rouner, *op cit.*, p. 309, quoting Hocking's *Experiment in Education*, pp. 161-163.

[21]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 246.

In 1940, Hocking also identified other "westernisms" at the heart of Christianity which, for him, have a universal value. Christianity has found "the true dialectical balance between its universal and its local elements." It has learned that it requires a "secular" civilization for religion to "become mature," and at the same time "it asserts (and civililization discovers through its experience) that only in the presence of a free religion can a community of life be both fertile and stable."[22] A state religion of any sort is anathema to Hocking because it does not give the religion involved the distance to be critical of the state, which genuine religion must be, nor does it give the state the distance from the religion to keep the religion pondering the validity of its ethic. Both state and religion need the other. They are two sides of one coin, but their functions are separate and distinct.

In brief, Hocking is adamant that Christian church structures in the East need not be organized on western organizational lines but must contain within them the Christian morale of loving action, the will to create through suffering. Christian organizations do need to be separate and distinct from the state, whether at home or abroad, but separateness can follow indigenous organizational forms so long as these forms do not cave into any kind of fatalism. The Christian message must be delivered not only in non-fatalistic terms, but in the idiom of the people to whom it is being given, not in western theological formulations.

In *Re-Thinking Missions* Hocking and his colleagues determined that indigenous converts should practically be left to their own devices in terms of idiom and of ecclessial forms, should not be alienated from their cultures, and should quickly take over the management of Christian institutions. What cannot be forgotten in any Christian institution, West or East, however, and this is a succinct definition of what Hocking means

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[22]*Ibid.*, p. 248.

by the morale of western civilization, which is the morale of Christianity, is a "belief in obligation, in a source of things which is good, in some kind of permanence for what is real, in selfhood, and in the human aspect of deity."[23] He wishes that the West understood this Christian morale, and employed it more than it appears to. This morale is not intended for export only. As early as 1932, Hocking was promoting Christian mission to all six continents, not merely to those of the East. He sees in Christianity the possibility for its becoming a "clarified messenger" of the universal aspirations of humankind to believe that its hopes are not in vain. However, when he wrote in 1940, Hocking was not convinced that Christianity was really a world religion, and if it were not, it could not be a universal clarifier of human aspirations. That position merits exploration.

Christianity as a World Religion

In 1940, Hocking wrote that like any living human being, Christianity has a potential (ideal) and a real self. The living religion that is Christianity in its potential or ideal self, is a world religion because it contains within itself "all that any religion has." In terms of real or empirical Christianity, "it is quite too complacent to say this."[24] Christianity, therefore, is at the present moment, not a world religion, because one does not experience a Christianity as vitally concerned with its contemporary world as it should be. Issues like war, property, and the family are not being dealt with in the West according to Christian principles, much less being thought about globally by Christians. How many Christians will do the hard thinking that these issues require? Hocking had come to know Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, who eventually became the framer of independent India's constitution, and quoted him on this moral failure of Christians.

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

> When now Dr. Ambedkar of India says that Christians have lost their capacity for moral indignation, he sends an unhappy telling shaft. The supposition that the teaching of Jesus may have meant supine acquiescence before well-armed iniquity, or the emitting of friendly bleatings thoroughly unmeant, stands as a reproach less to the virility of the faith than to the virility of contemporary interpretation.[25]

Ideally, Christians should be in the forefront of those effecting universal human rights, not ignoring those needs. In Gandhi and Ambedkar, Hocking experienced religious persons deeply involved in reforming their country. Gandhi's *satyagraha*, and Ambedkar's revived Buddhism, to which numbers of India's outcastes were turning, impressed Hocking deeply. He wanted that same kind of involvement based on their religious convictions, on the part of Christians, at home and abroad. At the heart of Christian involvement, there would be two insights that must be kept in mind. He writes,

> First, that we have not solved our own problems of the bearing of Christianity on any social institution, more particularly on war, property, the family. Second, that there are still values outside of Christianity, in other religions, which we think ought not to perish.[26]

Hocking is clear that Christians are not entitled to dictate solutions to the problems of war, property, and the family, that theocracies are not a solution to the moral needs of nations; Christians however must do the hard work of moral reflection on a universal scale if they are to be truly a world religion.

> The Christian Church needs the courage to believe in its pertinence to every social situation, and its partisanship in none. It has still to define and exercise the function prescribed by its own genius, that of bringing to the questions which it has no competence to settle, the moral postulates without which there can be no settlement.[27]

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

It is these moral postulates, in cosmic settings, neither eastern nor western in their formulations, lived by its believers, that will make of Christianity a living world religion. Once formulated, Hocking believes the dissemination of the postulates is most likely to take place in the Catholic form of Christianity which "is most adequate to the idea of church."[28]

We saw earlier that Hocking thought it desirable for a church to maintain that it is infallible providing that it is not infallible about too much! The infallible church that will make these moral postulates viable, and therefore make of Christianity a living world religion, is not exactly identical with Catholicism (Anglo or Roman) whose hierarchical structures are too open to potential corruption for Hocking's tastes. He writes,

> If it [Catholicism] cannot clean the stables of priestly greeds, political venalities in high places, connivance in the ambitions of States, and the silent, suave corporate purchasing of mentality and conscience by posts and preferments, it not only surrenders much of its ascendency over the human spirit, but ripens for such days of wrath as overtook the Church of Russia or the vast and beautiful establishments of northern Europe.[29]

Hocking wants it clearly understood that he is only saying out loud and writing, what it is that any perceptive Christian is widely aware of. He is convinced that by engaging in a "profounder and humbler self-scrutiny than the modern Church has yet known," Christianity will thrive and will become a world religion, and possibly, the world faith.[30] In many ways it seems as if by 1956, Hocking felt that Christianity had in fact been de-westernized and was within a hair's breadth of being universal in fact, not just in

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[30] *Ibid.* By 1956 Hocking's position changed probably because of his growing involvement with the Laymen's Movement for a Christian World. In this association he found persons willing to do the hard work of relating Christianity effectively to the modern era. Hocking participated in seminars at the association's headquarters in Rye, New York, on such topics as "The Decline of Materialism" (1956) and "Science and the Spiritual Nature of Man" (1958). He was also tremendously pleased with the call of Pope John XXIII for Vatican Council II. He saw in the Council the potential for a universal effort to effect a reconception of Christianity. Cf. "The People and the Pope." Letter to the Editor, *Time Magazine*, January 18, 1963, p. 10.

theory. He had by then encountered an increasing number of persons who were convinced from their own personal and moral experiences that other religious traditions were not a threat to Christianity, that Christians had to produce moral postulates that spoke to global issues, and live lives that were much like the contemporary Green Party dictum to "Think globally. Act locally." In a bold statement he writes that there are many Christians who understand that

> the faith of the Christian is continuous with the nature faith by which all men live -- the light that, at least dimly, "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It is the *making fully-explicit of this universal faith.* It is present in some degree wherever religion is present.[31]

Precisely because it has understood human aspirations in general, has come to experience the religions of others, can appreciate and deal with modernity, and has in many ways moved into a post-modern phase, Christianity now

> ...is on the way to become universal, and its travail through the western passes of modernity has qualified it, and requires it, to take a certain leadership in muting the religious problems of the coming civilization.[32]

Christianity has come of age, and is far closer to its ideal form than Hocking understood it to be in both 1932 and 1940; it is now not only able to, but required to take leadership in the coming world civilization. Hocking sees this leadership as based in "humility," because Christianity also now recognizes in a special way its own unfinishedness, and is engaged in its own on-going reconception, primarily the work of its mystics, based on the increasingly intimate encounters of Christianity with "reanimated ancient religions in Asia and with the national tempers animated by those religions."[33]

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[31]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 113.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 136.

[33]*Ibid.*

Thus, in 1940 Hocking questioned whether or not Christianity was a world religion. He accused it of political incestuousness. Yet, in 1956 he believed that Christianity was close to being an authentic world religion. Its concerns for humanity had widened considerably. The export of western science and technology was making it not only desirable but essential to export western morale, that morale being in its essence Christian and authentically human. The increasing encounters with the reanimated religions of Asia and the emergence of Asian nation states and their forms of organization, were making it clear that western theological formulations and organizational forms need not dominate Christian churches, especially those of the Catholic variety. Participative kinds of organization, like the Indian *panchayat,* can be used by Christians. Incarnation can be understood as Shankara understood it, without doing violence to the unbound Christ.

If Christianity is unfinished, however, and also unfinishable, as Hocking consistently maintains, what precisely is it that other universal religions have to offer Christianity in terms of its own "unfinishedness" and its reconception? We move now to an investigation of what Hocking thought other religions can add to Christianity

What the Other Universal Religions Can Add to Christianity

In his 1940 work Hocking identified some of the positive dimensions of the universal religions which he felt Christianity had to take seriously in terms of its own growth.[34] Hocking knew that his understanding of the world religions was limited because his expertise was the history and philosophy of Christianity, not the comparative study of religions, but he offered the values of these religions as he perceived them and had experienced them, to show Christians how much growth was still needed in their own tradition. He also wanted to show how unacceptable it is for Christian believers *a priori* to

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[34]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith,* pp. 255 ff.

make statements like "Jesus Christ includes everything."[35] Hocking felt that this attitude was at the heart of the great tendency among Christians to present themselves as completions of the faiths of others, as Hocking himself appears to believe in 1932, but Hocking wonders how this can be because no "religion could present itself as the completion of other faiths until it had gone through the labour of understanding those faiths."[36] Apart from scholars of comparative religion, Hocking did not find many Christians in 1940 undertaking that kind of study of other religions or even understanding that it needed to be undertaken before Christians could present themselves as a summit of perfection of all living religions, if, indeed, they should ever do that at all. He feared leaving the reconception of living religions to scholars and professional religious personnel. He wants the mystics, the believers of the living religions, engaged in reconceiving their traditions. He is appealing to persons of good will to experience the strengths of other believers and gives examples of what they may find in them.

Hocking saw as a strength of Islam, for example, that there is in the religion a sense of the "instant majesty of God." In refusing mediators, a Muslim never forgets that "it is God with whom he has to do." The "crossing of racial bounds" in Islam is a definitive plus, as is the fact that Islam "has no proletariat." The simplicity of the Muslim Creed and the Koran as the "school book of the whole Moslem world," make for a religious unity in Islam, "not realised elsewhere."[37]

The "reflectiveness" of Hinduism and Buddhism appeals to Hocking. We have seen his position that deficit of mind means inauthentic religion. The mysticism and poetry of Indian religions, "seldom in danger of being confused with reason," result in "the

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[35]*Ibid.*, p. 262.

[36]*Ibid.*

[37]*Ibid.*, p. 255.

inlighted deftness of touch of the true oriental, especially the Indian mind."[38] Hocking appreciates, too, "the naturalness of the meditative element" in Hinduism and Buddhism which even carries over to children as he witnessed at Tagore's school. He credits Indians also with being willing "to pay the price for spiritual gifts" and being more open to forsaking physical pleasures when these pleasures have an "insidious hold" on the dimensions of their "moral sanity." He observes that persons of the Occident are less likely to do this. Hocking contrasts this attitude in particular with North American Christians seduced by "'prosperity' as a sign of the favour of God, and the harvest festival of thanksgiving as the highest moment of its prayer, the prayer over a heavy meal."[39]

Hocking is especially impressed with the "serenity of spirit in many an oriental saint." We have noted his delight with James Woods of Harvard who had absorbed this serene spirit into his personal life during his two-year stay in India. During his own time in Asia, when Hocking asked Indians, in particular Gandhi and Ambedkar, if they had found peace, they answered in the affirmative. Hocking writes,

> The old Stoic ideal of the imperturbable man is more frequently realized in India, I surmise, than in any other part of the world to-day, because with the actuality of renunciation there follows at once a freedom from petty fears, from angers, and from anxiety about many things.[40]

Hocking sees in this Indian calm, as compared to the "shameful hurry-up campaigns for world-conquest by Christianity," a means by which these "quietly-great souls" may usher Christianity into a "region of its own proper meaning" if only Christians will open themselves to learning some of the meditative practices of Indians.[41]

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[38] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 257-58.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

We have learned in Chapter II, that for Hocking authentic human existence is an alternation between work and worship, worship and work. Without reflection there can be no sound action, and without sound action, there can be no reason to worship, to reflect. Hocking was concerned that the moral postulates necessary for Christian life were not being formulated because this alternation between work and worship was increasingly foreign to western Christians. Hocking saw an understanding and practice of eastern meditation as an effective way to bring about the atmosphere for the thinking he deemed necessary on the part of western Christians, i.e., to tap their mystic potential.

In Buddhism, Hocking thinks that the "enjoyment of the *impersonal element* of ultimate truth," may at first make Christians apprehensive, but impersonality belongs as it were "to the vast inner spaces of God's being" and therefore is not hostile to science. Hocking admits his own preference for the category of the personal because "a person is capable of entertaining the impersonal, whereas the impersonal has no capacity of itself for entertaining the personal."[42] Granted the later Mahayana Buddhist movement, which made of the Buddha a personal saviour, the initial thrust of the Theravadans is to recognize that the "pursuit of truth [primarily in the scientific sense] is a part of the love of God." Loyalty to abstract causes for the Theravadan Buddhist, causes such as justice or freedom, is a religious, not a "secular" activity. For Hocking, Buddhists make a special gift to Christianity in this loyalty because so much of Christianity is superstitious in terms of its assorted personal deities, primarily in the form of all sorts of saints, and "in so far as personal deities introduce an opportunist element into the relations of God and man, religion is cheapened rather than enlarged."[43]

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[42]*Ibid.*, p. 258.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 259.

Hocking applauded the "intense humanity" of Confucianism. In Hocking's time in China in 1932, he became convinced that the family in China and its relationships as proposed by Confucius were as vital to the new China as to the old and as vital to the new Occident as to the Orient. He writes that Confucius had deduced that the family tie which is so sacred in China can be enlarged and widened into familial feelings for "other recognitions, national and abstract" and leaders in the new China were doing the same, and also learning that

> The family, like the state, must prepare for its own supercession. It must produce the free individual, and in him risk the loss of its own fabric; for it is only the free individual that can preserve that fabric. China has to learn with pain the secret of the non-communist schemes of personal life.[44]

Hocking saw in the Chinese family the lived example that "human bonds are destined to give strength to the individual, not submerge him." Westerners are "skittish" about this. The Chinese position, however, is that parents and ancestors are to be reverenced "*only so far as they are worthy of reverence* ! " When this is kept in mind, "the Chinese conception of the human bonds as mediator of the divine becomes significant for all religion, not excluding Christianity."[45]

In 1956, Hocking admitted that more Christians were becoming aware of the religions of their world neighbours. He felt that the study of these traditions and encounters with their living members were even more essential than he had felt them to be between the two wars. As numbers of Asians immigrated to North America it was imperative that Christians come to understand their traditions. He continued to insist that Christians learn meditation from their world religious neighbours, and added his conviction

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[44]*Ibid.*, p. 260.

[45]*Ibid.*, p. 261.

that the post World War II era required Christianity to reconceive its eschatology in the process of relating to the other living religions. He proposed that it was precisely this eschatology which Christians were most frightened of altering but he cautioned that many persons of good will were finding

> a highly organized and pictorially specific other world,
> increasingly revolting to our intuition
> of the dignity of the ultimate mysteries of being.
> So far as this type of development is cherished and
> embedded in the corpus of required faith, universality
> is necessarily impeded. Nothing can be universal
> that offends this intuition, though the capacity of
> mankind, in presence of an indubitable jewel, to ignore
> its mounting is immense.[46]

Traditional Christian eschatology, for Hocking, is an accumulation of unnecessary details, which cries out for reconception on the basis of the simplicity of the Christian creed, code, and deed.

In summary, it is Hocking's contention that Christianity has been freed in theory from any western institution or organizational form primarily by the departure of the western arts and sciences from its parental bosom. Christianity is now free to criticize any and all institutions on the basis of the love of God and of neighbour which can or cannot be seen within them. Also, Christianity brings a creative dimension, a morale to all its undertakings, a conviction that life is intended to be good, can be improved upon, in fact, must be improved upon, and that at the heart of reality is a Mind that loves and cares, a Self working with those committed to integral human development. This means that human life is meaningful and fatalism has no place in it. This morale must be exported with anything that is western science and technology if the exportation of the best that the West has to offer is to catch on authentically in developing nations.

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[46]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 114.

Christianity must admit the good in other living religions and reconceive itself in light of these values, incorporating into itself all that is good within them and inviting them to do the same, that is, to incorporate into themselves what is good in Christianity and the other living religions. How exactly is this reconception to be effected? It would be more accurate to ask how these reconceptions are to be effected, for Hocking's theory is in fact, a plan for the reconception of every living religion, although this dissertation focusses on its application in the realm of Christianity.

We turn now to a description of how reconception is to be effected, but prior to that we explain that the radical displacement of one religion by another, or a mere synthesis of the best of one religion with the best of another, are not what is meant by reconception, nor are they adequate for the development of a world faith at the heart of any world community.

Radical Displacement/Synthesis/Reconception

We have seen that in 1932, Hocking and his Commission called for Christian missionaries to learn from and with their world religious neighbours. The Commissioners asked for a new kind of Christian mission institution where this learning could occur, and also recommended exchanges of Christian "ambassadors" between what are now increasingly being called the North and South nations. In 1940, Hocking himself contrasted both the approaches of radical displacement and synthesis of religions with his position of reconception. Hocking spelled out what exactly he believed other living religions could offer Christianity in *Living Religions and a World Faith* which he called the "final chapter" of *The Meaning of God* written in 1912. Then he had not had sufficient experience of living religions other than Christianity to propose a thesis on their worth, but by 1940 he felt competent to do so, and in some measure, felt compelled to do so.

In 1940, in addition to what has been explained above, Hocking reminded his readers that Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam are all missionary religions, committed to a

"world-wide acceptance." He sees in missionary efforts, no matter their aberrations or mistaken ideologies

> the nearest trait of disinterested good will that the world affords; and its fruits, direct and incidental, have left marks on history of which mankind will ever think with reverence as well as gratitude, and which would have been possible to no other conceivable motive [than conveying their particular gospel]. It is not quite credible that the ideology which has inspired these efforts is wholly mistaken: even if Christ were a pure myth, it is something that some men have tried to be like their idea of Christ, and something to be kept. It is also not quite credible that it [mission] is free from human defect.[47]

It is clear from this passage that eight years after the mixed results accorded the Commission of Appraisal's report, Hocking is not interested in denigrating the Christian mission effort nor the mission effort of any other living religion. He is convinced that there are better ways to make the Christian morale available to persons interested in it than he has experienced particularly in the traditional approaches to Christian mission. To understand Hocking's approach to reconception, a word needs to be said about the traditional Christian approaches to mission, and why he rejected them.

The Way of Radical Displacement

Christian missions have usually been carried out in one of three ways: 1) that of radical displacement of another religion by Christianity; 2) that of the synthesis or one or more world religions with Christianity; and 3) only latterly, by the method of reconception. The way of radical displacement of an old religion by the new, Hocking calls "elimination." This method presumes: 1) a special revelation from God; 2) a revelation of something which could not otherwise be known which usually relates to salvation; 3) a path to salvation

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[47]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 141.

which if not followed means eternal death for any who do not take this way; and 4) the making known of the path to salvation given as a mission to a particular group of persons now responsible for bringing this possibility of damnation to an end.[48]

Hocking knows that there are pedagogical and emotional advantages in this approach of radical displacement of one religion by another. Radical displacement provides a simplicity of content and action. It makes the missionary's role clear and removes the converts usually to a mission compound (or in the case of Buddhism in its early phase, to a monastery) which prevents backsliding. "Elimination" provides a clean break with all that has gone on before in the converts' lives.[49]

Hocking notes, however, that this way of radical displacement is being questioned by both enemies and friends of Christian missions. He suggests that the paucity of converts to Christianity in Asia alone, after years of investment of Christian missionary money and personnel, is surely disproportionate to those efforts. One need not look too much further for evidence that radical displacement does not work, although one could also criticize the theory of radical displacement on theological grounds. One can see here Hocking's negative pragmatism, "If it doesn't work, it isn't true." Hocking does not discount the over-all influence of Christianity in Asia nor is he really concerned with numerical church roster growth, but he does question why Christianity has not taken hold in Asia. He writes,

> If we bear in mind the extraordinary effect upon Asiatic life made during the same period by other aspects of western culture, scientific, technical, legal, the advance made by the Christian community seems far from commensurate.[50]

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[48]*Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

[49]*Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.

[50]*Ibid.*, p. 149.

Hocking saw that there was not even an arithmetical advance occurring in terms of Christianity in Asian countries.[51] He was also very much concerned about the quality of Christian converts in Asia. Without naming him, he quotes a missionary in India in 1931, as having said the following on the issue of the quality of Christian converts.

> It is a remarkable fact that the outstanding Christians in India are first generation: Sadhu Sundar Singh, Ramabhai, etc. We had thought that the third and fourth generations would be much more outstanding (but what are the facts). . . .
>
> The reason why these first generation people were wonderful was that they brought over their Hindu culture, and they were at home in their own categories. They had their roots back in their cultural past, therefore they were natural. The second generation was *taken out*, and became neither good Europeans nor good Indians. The second and third generation Christians are neither this nor that. In that period, the Indian Christian had lost his soul. A nationalist said to me: "Your Indian Christian is a man out of gear: he isn't in gear with your people, and he is out of gear with us."[52]

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[51]This is still very much the case today. In the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Nagpur in Central India, for instance, there were 15,000 Catholics in 1984. In 1989 there were 15,001, but there are several sociological factors that would need to be taken into account, especially the moving of Catholics, who are mostly members of the scheduled castes and tribes, from Nagpur to larger cities. Also, there are persons who are remaining catechumens and refusing to convert to Catholicism because of the further dissension they believe it would create in villages already rife with communalism.

[52]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 150. In 1966, the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, meeting for the first time as a body after Vatican Council II, decided that this bifurcation was accurate and needed to be brought to an end. Pioneering work had been done prior to Vatican II by Fr. Joseph Neuner, S.J , a German who has lived in India since 1925 and who organized a conference on the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions in India in 1964, during Pope Paul VI's visit to the country in that year. Cf. J. Neuner, S.J., Editor, *Christian Revelation and World Religions* (London: Harper & Row), 1967. In 1966, the Indian bishops chose Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadass to organize a movement which would work for a Roman Catholic community that would be fully Indian and authentically Christian. The work of this movement from 1967-1982, originating from its headquarters in Bangalore, India, is now effectively documented by J. A. G. Gerwin van Leeuwen, o.f.m., *Fully Indian - Authentically Christian* (Kampen: Uitgevers-maatschappij J.H. Kok), 1990. With notable exceptions, however, Roman Catholics in India are still more western in appearance and temperament than they are Indian. Those Roman Catholic Indians whose origins are in the former Portuguese colony of Goa cling tenaciously to western forms. The Catholic Ashram Movement in India is committed to indigenous forms of worship and organization and its impact is increasing. Caritas India sponsors and supports a group of priests and male religious who live among the people as *sannyasis*. Newer ways of belonging to the Roman church are being experimented with in other parts of Asia. Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Towards an Anthropologically and Culturally Founded Ecclesiology: Reflections from an Asian Perspective," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. LIV, October 1990, No. 10, pp. 501-511.

Hocking's position, and the argument presented by the Christian missionary to Hocking, are still valid arguments today. It was reported in the *Indian Express* (Madurai Edition), as recently as, January 18, 1990, that a former Deputy Prime Minister of India, Mr. Devi Lal, had stated that "Christians have no business in the country and should take off to where they belong, America, England or even Italy." It is evident from this report, that Christians in India still appear as foreigners at best, and subversives at worst, undoubtedly due to the mammoth efforts, perhaps as early as the second century C.E., to displace the religions of India by Christianity.

The personal loss to a convert in practical elimination of their first religion is high enough, but Hocking laments also the moral loss, e.g., the Korean woman who after converting to Christianity burned her ancestral tablets and was left with such guilt that she became a "dragging Christian" suffering remorse and guilt for the rest of her life.[53] Radical displacement theories also result in a "loss of cultural fertility." For Hocking's conviction is that "a valid conversion should result in a release of initiative and productivity, and a new freedom of imagination."[54] The method of radical displacement results in precisely the opposite of what mission is intended to be. Instead of providing spiritual power for converts, unleashing their creativity, it operates from a position of spiritual power over them, resulting in their isolation and insulation. Hocking writes, "It [radical displacement] must build an insulated church, holding an insulated doctrine, and building an insulated community which is more like a foreign colony than an integral member of these newly self-conscious nations."[55]

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[53]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 151.

[54]*Ibid.*, p. 152.

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 153. This is precisely the reason for his not converting to Christianity, given by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, father of the Indian Constitution, and the man who in many ways gave Buddhism back to India. Ambedkar was born an untouchable and in 1956 converted to Buddhism in a public ceremony in Nagpur, India. He had studied at Columbia University with John Dewey and was impressed by democracy and by Christianity but when he saw Christian churches organized according to caste in South India, a misjudged attempt at adaptation to the Indian way of life in Ambedkar's opinion, he determined he

As mentioned previously, Hocking continued to maintain that Christian converts are suspect in the emerging world states and will continue to be so unless they abandon the method of radical displacement. The continued use of mission compounds, for example, means that Christians usually turn in on themselves to an "economic and social simplicity." Some Christian missionaries are resisting this insulation, and "are seeking to co-operate with leaders of the other religions, and are thus recognizing the moral authority of those leaders and the reality of their faiths,"[56] but most Christian missionaries are not doing so. Hocking believed that these numerically few Christians who were, in fact, reaching out to others, were "defining another position, inconsistent with that of Radical Displacement; and what is admitted in practice must be admitted also in theory."[57] The theory of this

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could not join that community. He also accused Christians of precisely this same kind of isolation and insulation, i.e., being turned in on themselves and concerned only with their own progress. Hocking notes this fact about Ambedkar on p. 225 of *Living Religions*. Cf. also D. C. Ahir, *Buddhism and Ambedkar* (New Delhi: Vikas Press), 1968, and T. S. Wilkinson and M.M. Thomas *Ambedkar and the Neo-Buddhist Movement* (Madras: Christian Literature Society), 1972. Hocking was especially impressed with Ambedkar's attack on poverty. Ambedkar translated the Buddha's *dukkha* as "poverty" not the more traditional "suffering." And Ambedkar refused to continue the practice of sacrificing one generation for the next. He was fond of saying "It does no good to tell a dead man that his body will make a feast for maggots." Cf. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. *The Buddha and His Dhamma.* (Bombay: People's Education Society, 1957, 1974, 1984), *passim.*

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 155.

[57]*Ibid.* Cf. also p. 157 of *Living Religions and a World Faith*, where Hocking writes: "There is genuine effort going on [to abandon radical displacement] within Central India." In a telephone interview October 25, 1990, in Madison, N.H. with Ward Madison, Hocking's secretary for the Commission of Appraisal, Madison suggested that it was very likely Irene Mott Bhose, daughter of John R. Mott, one of the founders of the Protestant ecumenical movement, who was foremost among these kinds of Christians in Hocking's experiences in India in 1932. Because of his friendship with her father, Hocking decided to visit Bhose in Nagpur, India, where she had established a school, and dispensary, and had married a Hindu, Vivien Bhose, who was eventually a member of the Supreme Court of India. Madison remembered that Bhose Bai, as she was called locally, refused to call herself a "missionary" and told Hocking and Madison during dinner one evening, "If I am to serve India, I must be Indian." In the late 1920's she learned Hindi and Marathi and determined to be of service to any and all members of the Nagpur community. Madison thinks Hocking's reconception theory emerged primarily from Hocking's experiences with Irene Bhose.

Madison said that Hocking was also very much impressed with the training of members of the Society of Jesus in India who had volunteered their services in the country, and who were from abroad. Jesuits in training were required as early as the 1920s, after language study, and a study of Indian culture and religion, to travel on their own through India for a minimum of one year, preferably for three, with only a back pack. They were to spend the bulk of the time in Indian villages. Richard Hocking, Ernest's son, and professor emeritus of philosophy at Emory University, Atlanta, believes that these two experiences, that of Irene Mott Bhose, and of the Indian Jesuits at St. Mary's, Kurseong,are at the heart of Hocking's reconception theory.

reaching out is at the heart of Hocking's method of reconception. Hocking also faults the proponents of radical displacement for requiring "no contributions from the surrounding world of ideas"[58] and for not answering the real questions in the minds of indigenous persons,[59] but above all, Hocking is concerned with the psychological damage done to converts by this method of radical displacement. He writes,

> It is true that man has an incredible capacity to change, and not infrequently an appetite for changing: the artificial man is the rule, rather than the exception, in the sense of the man who has constructed his own moral physiognomy; cultural conversion is always possible. But if, in these conversions, there is a *turning away from an ancient good* as well as from an ancient evil, there will remain in the individual, and still more in the group, a residual strain.[60]

We noted previously the case of the Korean convert to Christianity who had burned the tablets of her ancestors, a major offense in her culture, who was after that always a "dragging Christian." She had turned away from an ancient good and paid for it during her entire lifetime. In thoughts similar to those of the Jesuits Matteo Ricci in China, and Roberto de Nobili in India, who in the sixteenth century promoted inculturation of Christianity in those cultures through Chinese and Indian life styles and rites, Hocking insists that inculturation is demanded for the mental health and religious well being of converts. He writes,

> The subconscious self cannot accept the radical otherness which the conscious self has adopted. There will be a harking-back, *a cultural homesickness,* asserting itself in moments of reversion. There is a need of emotional rootedness which the intellect never does full justice to. There is need for a living base in a consciousness which is not self-consciously effortful, even while the dramatised part is being perfectly played. The

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[58]*Ibid.*, p. 158.

[59]*Ibid.*, p. 159.

[60]*Ibid.*, p. 160.

> only conversion not subject to regression is conversion to a mode of being which can interpret *all* the valuable elements of the old mode.[61]

This interpretation of the valuable elements of another religious tradition, can happen, of course, only when the missionary knows the tradition, and the living members of it, and believes that it has valuable elements. We previously encountered Hocking's position that Christians are foolish to present Christianity as the completion, fulfillment, or enhancement of religious traditions which Christians have not studied, much less experienced at work in the lives of their members. I would suggest further that it is the Christian mystic missionary who is most likely to uncover these valuable elements of other traditions because they have experienced the Oneness of the Real and in Hocking's understanding, are most able to discern what is good in their own tradition and that of others.

At the beginning of this discussion of the radical displacement approach of traditional Christian mission, we saw the need for a special revelation demanded by this method. Hocking is adamant that the concept of a special revelation which is at the heart of the theory of radical displacement is no longer tenable. (He dealt with this idea in his 1912 work as well.) The idea of the damnation of those who do not accept the special revelation, and therefore, do not follow the "only way" to salvation which the special revelation demands, results in ". . . a God whose justice is on a much lower level than one's own."[62] Moreover, a religion based on fear, as this mission approach of radical displacement would have to be, is "obnoxious to the ultimate sense of truth in the hearts of those who try to believe it."[63]

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 161. There is an interesting footnote to this position. Hocking mentions favourably Pope Gregory's instruction to Augustine of Canterbury to destroy the idols in temples which Augustine might find in England but to keep the temples intact so that the converts may continue to feel at home within them.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 171.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

It is therefore evident that Hocking rejects completely the radical displacement or "elimination" of one religion by another. He does so on the basis of the untenability of the idea of a special revelation, and on the basis of the psychological damage to a non-western convert who is asked to be a foreigner, an alien to his or her own culture, if he or she accepts a Christianity which rejects that culture. Hocking fears, too, the lack of growth on the part of any living religion which seeks completely to displace others because of the unwillingness to be open to truth and goodness in the cultures on the part of that kind of missionary religion. Hocking is vitally concerned about the minority status of many Christians in Asia and wants them to have the freedom to propagate Christianity but not at the expense of any of the religious rights and faiths enshrined in national constitutions and international conventions. Still, with his typical concern for freedom and for dialogue (inter-religious, inter-Christian, as well as intra-Christian), Hocking even extends this freedom to those who would practice radical displacement methods of mission! He writes,

> As a part of this freedom, the several churches
> must be free to maintain each one its own conceptions
> of the faith, including those who continue mistakenly
> to believe that they have the Only Way.[64]

Hocking is convinced that he has made his case against radical displacement. It has not worked to the advantage of converts in Asia in particular, nor of their countries, and therefore, on the basis of his negative pragmatism, radical displacement cannot be true. It appears not to have worked for the missionary religion because he sees little or no growth in those Christians who practice that method and where there is no growth, for Hocking God is not present. Hocking admits, however, that the evidence is not all available, or that the possibility exists that the way he is interpreting the evidence is wrong. He is open to "conversion" on this point if his detractors can make a better case than he has.

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[64]*Ibid.*, p. 176.

In addition to the method of radical displacement of one religion by another, Hocking knows from Christian history, the history of other religions, and personal experience, situations in which persons are attempting a synthesis of one religion with another. He finds this approach slightly less objectionable than radical displacement, but still unacceptable.

The Way of Synthesis

Hocking would prefer to use the word "Syncretism" for this method, but he maintains that unfortunately it now carries the "flavour of theological promiscuity." (He is writing two years after the 1938 meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras, which condemned mission approaches and theologies that could lead to syncretism and/or indifferentism. Hocking's "Sharing Model" was seen in this category.) Hocking explains that the process of syncretism was used consistently and repeatedly in the early history of the Christian Church, but he leaves the word to "its destiny" rather than create more problems with the use of this "entirely respectable name." Hocking also makes clear that he is not involved in what he calls "Eclecticism," which is for him the process of "starting a new religion composed of a medley of ingredients from several others."[65]

Synthesis is often the way of the religious liberal and Hocking has no problem with this since he sees Liberalism in general as an offshoot of Christianity. He writes,

> it [Liberalism] is an extension of the love for one's neighbour, since a concern for the individual implies a regard for his attachments and his reverence. It is an aspect of "loyalty to loyalty"; it fears the wounds made by unnecessary abandonment of old ties as it fears the lesions of divorce. It is not an accident that the comparative study of religions has grown and flourished chiefly in Christian lands.[66]

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[65]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 177, n. *.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. 178.

As valuable as Hocking sees the liberal approach, he warns that the liberal approach and mentality has its dangers. Synthesis can often mean a "danger of compromise through over-accommodation," and a "purely romantic appreciation" of other religions which does not face what is evil in them. It can mean especially, for the liberal mind, the "danger of moral and mental idleness."[67] We have already encountered Hocking's aversion to deficit of mind of any sort and to the religious mediocrity that may result from it.

Hocking is also conscious that liberalism can result in a toleration which has its own peculiar "malaise". He writes,

> All toleration has its malaise, that in being kind to what is not one's own, one is subtly disloyal to one's own. To consider hospitably what an opponent believes is to loosen attachment to what one has already professed to believe; it is to depress into the region of controversy and hypothesis what was once in the region of certainty and conviction. All the gods are jealous; and some are legitimately jealous, namely those that deserve an unqualified, unclouded, unwavering assent. He who surrenders the absoluteness and finality of his primary loyalty is like the broad-minded traveller who has surrendered his patriotism and has no country, or like the broadminded thinker whose brain is a sieve into which everything may run though nothing can be retained and owned.[68]

What must be given "unqualified, unclouded, unwavering assent" by any Christian is to "seek first the kingdom," i.e., to be unreservedly committed to the integral human development of all peoples, and to be an undiscouraged lover of humanity. If the liberal engaged in the process of synthesis or reconception is willing to water down this unlosable essence of Christianity, the danger is evident. This will mean a genuine indifferentism.

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[67]*Ibid.*, p. 179.

[68]*Ibid.*, p. 180. Hocking faults Theosophy, Baha'ism, and Unity for being false syntheses and for having fallen into this trap of "toleration."

Hocking also faults what he calls the "Parliament of Religions attitude,"[69] which is open to calling anything a religion which presents itself as one without any investigation of its intrinsic worth. We have at work here the influence of James on Hocking; the fruits of the religion must be sound if it is to be an authentic religion. He has encountered attempts at synthesis which for him are ludicrous and which help him to understand the fear of "syncretism" widespread in his era. He writes that these attempts

> are well enough symbolised by the mantleshelf of an Indian reconciler of faiths on which were brought together for adoration figures of Siva and Buddha, a crucifix, a portrait scroll of Confucius and a bust of W. E. Gladstone! A religion must *be* something before it can take on anything as part of itself.[70]

Having clearly identified what for him are the dangers of synthesis, Hocking then goes on to describe what is a legitimate process of synthesis. Legitimate synthesis requires individuality, organic unity, and consistency. A religion must continue to be able to be recognized as such. He suggests that one of the chief difficulties with Hinduism's wide hospitality to other religions is that at times Hinduism is morally and logically at war with itself so that it is difficult to recognize what precisely is Hinduism's character. The "borrowed elements must not efface or neutralise that character." Whatever is added must become a part of it and not be like an "ornament or a piece of baggage," something extraneous to it. Whatever is added to it must be consistent with what is there already, in other words must be "true". Truth is of one piece.[71] Hocking writes,

> If a religion has aimed at truth, and if truth is of its own nature self-consistent and organic, then any new region of truth will be consistent and organic with the truth already there. And if inconsistency appears, it may be the older

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 180

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 181

[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

> version that needs to be changed. If it can be changed within the limits of the same selfhood, the new may safely be incorporated with the old.[72]

Untruthful syntheses for Hocking are those which attempt "to unite truth and error, right and wrong, God and mammon; these are the choices which call for the stern Either-Or of decision." But he is also weary of the calls to us "of every little man" to make Either-Or decisions, to choose between "Genesis and Evolution, between the Bible and Modern Science. . . between all that Christianity stands for and all that Buddhism stands for." The calls for these kinds of choices confuse our judgment and are a loss to religion.[73] Are synthesis and intolerance mutually exclusive? No, says Hocking. He maintains that early Christianity was "vigorously syncretistic" in its approach. He cites for example the use of language and thought-forms adopted by Christianity from the philosophies and mystery religions of the Graeco-Roman world. He ranks as of "minor importance" the adoption of Christmas and Easter from the calendar of Roman feasts, but rates these "appropriations" as successful because they have become "organic parts of the Christian totality." No one is left with feeling that "This is an accretion."[74]

Who can deny the intolerance of the earliest Christians alongside their willingness to adopt thought forms like the Logos? Hocking notes that the earliest Christians, along with Jews, refused to worship the emperor and died rather than back down on this conviction. This refusal to worship the emperor is intolerance on the part of these Jews and Christians which indicates "that syncretism and a sound intolerance are not incompatible with each other. We need not deprive ourselves of a new glimpse of truth in order to retain the virtue of a virile intolerance."[75]

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[72]*Ibid.*, p. 184.

[73]*Ibid.*

[74]*Ibid.*, footnote to pp. 183-184.

[75]*Ibid.*, p. 185.

Hocking concludes that some synthesis to effect a world faith is not only desirable but necessary. There is a spiritual life in all religions which "has not alone to be conserved but learned from."[76] The only condition in which synthesis of two religions would not be required, is when one of the religions already contains all that is in the other, and something that is over and above the other. Hocking continues that this is

> certainly not the case in any Asiatic contact. Hence I venture to propose that no *religion can become a religion for Asia which does not fuse the spiritual genius of Asia with that of Western Christianity*; and not alone the genius of Asia, but that of each of its major great religions.[77]

Earlier in this chapter, we identified what Hocking considered special components of that spiritual genius of Asia, viz.: the introspection in Hinduism; the impersonal truth in Buddhism; the majesty and immanence of God in Islam; and the understanding of effective family life in Confucianism. We also learned his conviction that the modern era requires this kind of fusion, because it needs a world faith of cosmic significance. At this point in his reflections on synthesis, Hocking urges Christians to be open to the kinds of double-belonging which he had encountered in Asia. He cites Buddhism in particular, which has made this double-belonging possible in China, Japan, and India, and sees in this the Buddhist wisdom of keeping the best that is in the local religions. Buddhism sought to preserve "in its own body" what it could have, but had not, attacked in the popular beliefs of the cultures it encountered. Hocking sees this as a difficult but "not impossible" task for Christians to do as well. The history of Christianity makes clear that Christians have been unfair to other traditions in this regard and have instead pounced on their weaknesses,

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[76] *Ibid.*

[77] *Ibid.*

especially in terms of their superstitions, while ignoring the universal aspects of truth within them.[78]

Hocking calls fear of syncretism or synthesis on the part of Christians, a "timorous attitude," showing a "smallness of faith in what one has." If Christians in Asia, in particular, will accept those truths of the living religions in their cultures, which will make of Christianity a more adequate vessel of truth, Hocking says,

> I believe that we shall see in the Orient the rise of a Christianity far outpassing that which we of the West have conceived, simply because it can recover there so many lost fragments of what is its own. Our western religion has gone literal, through much struggle with a literal-minded race: religion advances out of the poetic and imaginative toward the literal, and where there is still poetry, the springs of religion are still young. And in those springs we may well meet in their original freshness some of the ancient, eternal sources of our faith.[79]

Some of that freshness for Hocking consists in particular in returning poetry to Christian theology and philosophy. He laments that western Christianity, in dealing with the literal-mindedness of science, has itself become so literal-minded that there is very little poetry left in it. This is not the case with the East where poetic thought is still vital in religious life. Christians in the East have this kind of poetry all around them in their cultures and thus Hocking prophesies that a renewal of Christian theology and life will come from them.

As positive as he is about the need for synthesis as something preliminary to the reconception of a living religion, Hocking expresses misgivings concerning the way of synthesis. In addition to insisting that a religion can only opt for synthesis if it can be sure to keep its own identity and individuality he has three comments to make about why synthesis is not enough for what he is seeking by way of the evolution of a world faith;

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[78]*Ibid.*, p. 186.

[79]*Ibid.*, p. 187.

1) synthesis is not a policy; 2) synthesis is not a deliberate activity; 3) and synthesis is not a real solution to the disagreements among religions.

First, synthesis is not a policy. Synthesis is something which *happens* to an individual, or to individuals who are open to the world around them, and who are unafraid and willing to learn. Hocking wants it to become a matter of policy, not serendipity, for Christians to learn from and with their world religious neighbours. Secondly, synthesis is not a deliberate, reflective and competitive activity. Christianity involves initiative good will to end greed, lechery, and whatever else oppresses humanity. Authentic Christianity is involved in a competition to make a better world a reality. Therefore, Hocking faults synthesis because "it is far less a deliberate activity of competitive imitation than a spontaneous adoption."[80] He suggests, too, that non-Christians have been much more adept at borrowing from Christianity than Christianity has been to do the reverse. Hocking wants a method of evolution of a world faith that includes competition. Third, in addition to a policy, and determined, active competition, Hocking is looking for an approach to world religions which will resolve the differences among religions; for him, synthesis does not do that. He writes,

> Clearly it [synthesis] is one of those processes which leads to the convergence of different religions, without solving the issues between them. Further, it is not a complete operation; it is but the assembling stage preliminary to a further process of thought.[81]

Convergence is not sufficient for Hocking. There must be a resolution of differences. As we shall see momentarily, that further process of thought after the assembling which synthesis provides, is Hocking's theory of reconception.

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[80] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Thus, the radical displacement of one religion by another is rejected by Hocking as mean-spirited and as preventing the authentic growth of Christianity itself and of individual Christians. Synthesis is a necessary but only a preliminary stage to a world faith. Early Christian history is replete with instances of syntheses which in no way altered its unlosable essence to provide for the integral human development of all peoples. However, because of the three shortcomings just reviewed: viz., (1) the method of synthesis is more a "happening" than a policy; 2) the method of synthesis does not encourage determined, intelligent competition; 3) and the method of synthesis does not really resolve the differences between and among religions), a process of thought which goes beyond synthesis is required. That process never involves the radical displacement of any other living religion by Christianity. It begins with a temporary synthesis and ends in the way of reconception of all living religions.

The Way of Reconception

For Hocking, the only adequate way to a world faith is the way of reconception of all living religions. What is his argument in favour of that way? Hocking maintains that human beings, in the accumulation of experiences, go through a "broadening" process in their development. In the course of incorporating these experiences into their lives, a "deepening" of the human being occurs. This is the rhythm of human maturity, and is never finished if life is correctly understood.[82] The same process is inherent in the living religions, that is, in religions that want to grow. Just as a broadening of experiences makes clear to an individual that one's "conceptions have been inadequate," the same thing happens to a living religion. A re-conception takes place. In a living religion, contact with others results in a deepened inquiry into the other believer's religious tradition to see if

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

these newer "vistas and motives" are in it. If they are not in the religious tradition, wise persons seek to incorporate the new vision into their own tradition, thus reconceiving the tradition. Hocking says that this broadening is happening in all religions, especially at this time "when the several great systems of faith are brought, as now, into intimate contact."[83] Writing in 1940, Hocking was convinced that humanity was at the dawn of this new religious deepening which would result from the religious broadening.

Given the profusion of religious expressions abroad, Hocking is convinced that increasing numbers of persons are beginning to look for what is the best in these expressions, rather than to reject them outright. Thinking persons want to incorporate the new insights into their lives, and into the guiding principles of their lives, their religions. This is the process of reconception. The reconception of a religion, or of any enterprise for that matter, first requires that one be sure of the religion's essence.[84] For authentic reconception to take place, however, Hocking is convinced that one needs to know not only the essence of one's own religion, but also the essence of the other religion or religions one is experiencing.

The essence of a religion for Hocking is the "generating principle of religious life and of each particular form of it."[85] Hocking concurs that it is particularly difficult to know, and even to understand, the essence of a religion, as early councils in both Buddhism and Christianity make abundantly clear. The unfinished and unfinishable state

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[83]*Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

[84]For an understanding of how Hocking's theory of reconception can be used in the reconstruction of things political see Robert Byron Thigpen, *Liberty and Community: The Political Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972) and John R. Stacer, S.J., "The Hope of a World Citizen: Beyond National Individualism", *Beyond Individualism* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 188-218. The implications of Hocking's thought for social reconstruction are explored in A. R. Luther, *Existence as Dialectical Tension* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968).

[85]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 191.

of a living religion makes identifying its generating principle especially difficult. Nevertheless, reconception requires that one know the essence of a religion, because,

> In proportion as we grasp it, we can distinguish what is indispensable from what is relatively accidental and variable. To possess the essence would be to have sureness, and therefore freedom and courage, in recognizing truth, as well as in rejecting encumbrances, retained antiquities, excess, pretence, accretion. It would be to give our impulsive sympathy the discriminating power of unerring instinct.[86]

For a solution to the difficulties between and among the world's religions, one must, therefore, know the essence of one's own religion, and the essence of those of one's world religious neighbours. At first sight, this need to know the generating principles of all living religions appears to involve the work of several lifetimes, but Hocking is sanguine about the possibility of knowing these essences.

How *does* one find the essence of a religion? Hocking says that this will not happen by comparison of religions, nor analysis of them, although these will help, but by "what the logician calls 'induction,' namely a *perception of the reason* why a given group of facts or experiences do belong together." The induction is very often the work of genius and no rules can be given to obtain it. "It often comes as a discovery, an illumination."[87] Hocking's description of the discovery of the essence of a religion is very much like his description of the discoveries and illuminations connected with mystical experience and in fact, as was described in Chapter II, in his understanding it is the mystics who reconceive their traditions and keep them alive, through their inductions.

An example of induction is that of the mystic Jesus to extend love of neighbour beyond his Jewish community to the whole human community, viz., to "seek first the

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[86]*Ibid.*, p. 191.

[87]*Ibid.*, p. 192.

kingdom of God," and to be willing to lay down one's life in the process of doing so. This is the uniqueness of Christianity, and that on which all else in the tradition hangs and exists, therefore Christianity's essence. Jesus' induction and those of other religious mystics like Siddartha and Muhammed unveil the essence of their religions. Hocking writes,

> "Induction" is but a word which covers the uncommandable insight; induction is the discovery of essence.
>
> But the broadening of the base of experience aids in discerning the essence. For it is just these anticipatory warmings of the mind toward what is felt to be kindred in other faiths which begin to release us from bondage to the accidental in our own.[88]

To know the induction on which a religion depends is, for Hocking, to know its essence and therefore to be able to reconceive one's own living religion, and to aid in the reconception of other living religions through the process of sharing.

Hocking uses diagrams to illustrate Radical Displacement, Synthesis, and Reconception. (Cf. p. 195a.) They appear on pages 194-195 of *Living Religions and a World Faith*. The great advantage of reconception for Hocking is that it does not distort the unlosable essence of the religious tradition. It adds to the religion engaging in the reconception process, and develops its self-understanding, without distorting it. The religion is itself and more. In grasping its own essence, the religion open to reconception grasps the essence of all religions, which Hocking suggests is some kind of loving good will.[89]

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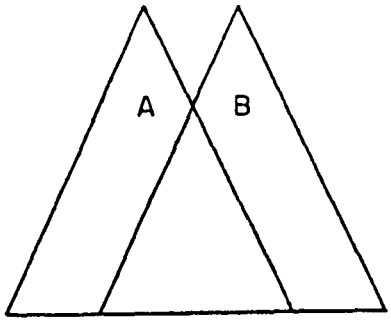
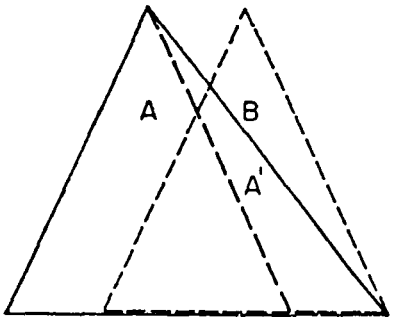
[88]*Ibid.* Hocking does not deal with Siddartha's antagonism toward the Hindu caste system, Jesus' reputed intolerance toward the tolerant religion of the Roman colonizers of his day, nor with Muhammed's intolerance of the polytheism of his Meccan contemporaries. The case could probably be made that Muhammed "warmed to" what was opposed to polytheism in Judaism and Christianity as he understood them, but it is difficult to imagine Jesus' warming to the Roman religion or Siddartha's warming to Hinduism.

[89]*Ibid.*, pp. 273-76. This is an appendix in which Hocking describes an effort in 1931 of Rev. C. Burnell Olds in Okayama, Japan, which has effected a revitalization of Olds' Christian mission through his coming to understand his Japanese religious neighbours and his incorporating their thought into his own.



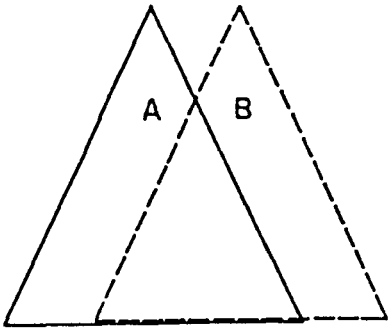
1. Two religions, A and B, are represented as being partly coincident or overlapping in their present teaching and character. The subsequent diagrams will represent the three ways to a world faith which we have now discussed, as practised by A—religion B being assumed for simplicity's sake to remain passive.

The Way of Synthesis



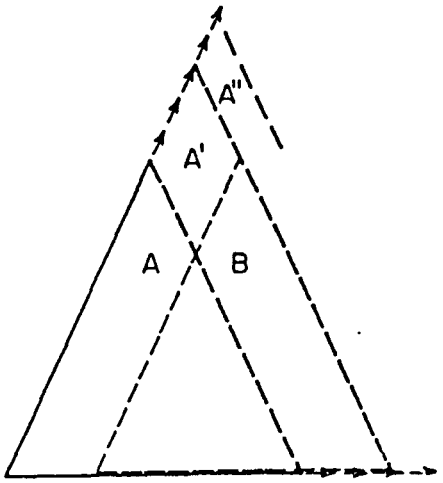
3. A reaches over to include what it finds valid in B, but with some distortion in its own shape.

The Way of Radical Displacement



2. A hardens its own outline, excluding all of B except what is now included in A.

The Way of Reconception



4. The apex of the cone A, its conceived essence, moves upward, until without distortion the cone A includes what is valid of B, and indefinitely more, as self-understanding deepens.

In 1956, Hocking suggested that in addition to some kind of loving good will, there is within every living religion, "the universal symbol of renunciation . . . sometimes taking the physical form of austerity as a preparation for worship." Renunciation is a vital ingredient of religion because it involves "some spontaneous curbing of natural impulse" which results in the "life-saving subordination of instinct."[90] This is a vital conviction of Hocking's to which I return in Chapter V.

Hocking goes on to give a concrete example of how Christianity and Confucianism, even in modern China, might become involved in a mutually beneficient reconception of their living religions around their sharing of what renunciation involves in each religion. Hocking had thought that Confucianism had no principle of self-sacrifice within it. With the insight of the Chinese scholar Wing-tsit Chan, he has now come to believe that the Chinese concept of *Su ming lun*, "Waiting for the Heavenly Mandate," is precisely a principle of renunciation. It is a call to "accept without complaint whatever fortune may attend the carrying out of one's Heaven appointed task."[91] In the Christian's process of understanding this Chinese form of renunciation, similar to the Christian mandate to be willing to lose life, the effort made

> will provide for the Christian dictum a reconception in terms of breadth: the Christian will know better what his own precept means as he sees its identity under wisely different conceptual auspices, such as those of the Chinese *Ming*, the Mandate of Heaven.[92]

Olds' experience is that loving good will of some kind is at the heart of the living religions of all the religious persons with whom he has been in dialogue. Olds' loyalty to Jesus Christ has in no way been diminished but has been revitalized.

[90]Hocking, *The ComingWorld Civilization*, p. 144.

[91]*Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

[92]*Ibid.*, p. 145. With his son Richard, Ernest Hocking reviewed Wing-tsit Chan's book *Religious Trends in Modern China*, in *Philosophy East and West*, IV, 2 (July, 1954), pp. 179-81. Ernest's insight concerning renunciation came in that process as he reports on pp. 144-45 of *The Coming World Civilization.*

This process of reconception would obviously not be a simple synthesis of the inductions involved but a discerning use of the inductions. Hocking admits that not all incompatibilities "will be thus disposed of" but they will be reduced to "their residual dimensions." This is for him essential because that will mean that religion will gain in credibility in the modern era when this happens. He writes,

> The age before us will be to just that extent relieved of unreal contentions or estrangements. And few things discredit the position of organized religion in the mind of modern man so much as artificial or verbal antagonisms on the part of the one association devoted to the moral unity of mankind.[93]

Hocking is not so sanguine about the ability to know the essence of a living religion and its subsequent utility for the reconception or sharing model, that he sees no danger in seeking to know a religion's essence. The danger is that knowing the essence of a religion is not sufficient because one could misconstrue this as an attempt to find the "bare bones" of a religious tradition and miss the actual living members of it. We mentioned previously the impact on Hocking of believers and religions "not found in books" during his visit to Asia. To miss the function of believers in a tradition is an abuse of the tradition.

> This [ignoring all but the essence] is an obvious misuse of the method. To find the life which runs to the various members is not to cancel the members. To find the law which describes the growth of a tree is not to cancel the tree. To discover the premiss from which conclusions follow is not to escape the conclusions; on the contrary, it is to keep those conclusions, to possess them more perfectly. To perceive in any measure the essence of a religion is to be more rather than less live to all of its functions, and to all its implications.[94]

We have seen in Chapter II that Hocking's philosophy of religion, or his philosophical mysticism, requires that persons across religious traditions work and worship together to

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[93] *Ibid.*

[94] Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, pp. 194-95.

effect world community. These are the mystics, who, primarily through experiences of loving good will, and of renunciation, experience Ultimate Goodness, and share that experience through these exchanges of work and worship. In 1956 Hocking adds to Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammed, who have figured previously as key in his thought about mystics, the names of Gandhi, Francis of Assisi, Savonarola, Spinoza, Augustine, Confucius, Mencius, and Socrates, as persons across religious traditions who have understood the role of renunciation. In all of them he finds some kind of renunciation, the principle of losing life in order to save it, viz., a "danger-defying dedication" to their assorted missions of human enlightenment.[95]

The process of reconception is simple, but not easy, Hocking submits. And it is clearly not identical with any form of reduction. In *Living Religions and a World Faith*, Hocking is at pains to explain that reconception has nothing to do with stripping the entity to its bare bones. He writes,

> ...the way of Reconception is peculiarly fitted to meet the groping of an age which, with a certain prevalent dullness, doubts whether it can have any religion at all; and supposing that it can set up its own conditions for accepting religion, requires it not alone to be useful and intelligible, but above all to be brief! It is not in a position to perform an Induction, but it calls for Reduction, and inclines to assume that the two are one.[96]

Hocking sees the modern call for simplification, in fact, as a plea for what he calls the uncovering of the essence of a religion, viz., the seeking for its induction. He applauds moderns for being honest in demanding to know this essence because he sees in this call a plea for the recovery of vitality in religion.

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[95]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 144.

[96]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, p. 196.

Hocking goes on to remind readers that the process of reconception, however, never ends. There is always a better reconception to be had. This is for Hocking, as natural a process for a living religion as it is the natural process of human growth. Much as the vital human being seeks to be a better and better person, so, too, the vital religion seeks to become a better and better vehicle of truth. This growth, human or religious always occurs

> *within sameness*; each new discernment of the "essence" is but a better sense of what has all along been seen and taught; it is a new grasp of the eternal identity of the faith.
>
> It thus escapes the fallacy of that Modernism which insisted on the relativity of all stages of religious teaching, and failed to see that religion in its nature must unite men with the everlasting and changeless.[97]

Hocking faults the Modernists for not having understood the dialectic of religious insight. A Christian operates with an element of certainty concerning Christianity, and also an element of uncertainty. This makes for a hypothesis about the tradition. This requires the "broadening" which is preliminary to the "deepening" which, when accomplished, constitutes the "dialectic" which "may be defined as consecutive induction." This dialectic constitutes a series of consecutive arguments, and therefore is an authentic conserving of the best that a tradition has to offer. Hocking suggests that his reconception theory is therefore authentic conservatism.[98]

In an interesting footnote to this passage, Hocking returns to a theme we have dealt with previously, how something can be true (final) and yet unfinished. This was, in fact, the theme of his major publication before *The Meaning of God* appeared. Now he makes a specific reference to how this need for reconception, for progressive revelation is, in fact,

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[97]*Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

[98]*Ibid.*, p. 198.

found in one of the earliest Christian doctrines, that of the Holy Spirit. Just as a person is a given human being, with a genetic inheritance which is final, but which inheritance the individual continues to use until his or her death, and in that much is an unfinished person until that demise, so, too, is Christianity a final but unfinished truth. Moreover,

> It is peculiar to Christianity that in its view revelation is progressive and unfinished: this is one of the meanings of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the perpetual contemporaneousness, personalness and novelty of the unfolding of the meaning of its truth. No one who declines to admit that form of change which means the arrival of new light -- "He shall guide you into all truth" -- has understood this doctrine.[99]

This "guiding" of the Spirit is, for Hocking, the admission that the truth of Christianity is final, but unfinished. The final truth for Christianity is its creed, code, and deed, as explicated in Chapter III. The implementation of that truth in a given time and place is the unfinished dimension of Christianity and constitutes the need for the dialectic to effect this implementation. In the present era this dialectic must involve consociations for work and worship with believers of other living religions, or there can be no effective implementation of the Christian mission and no reconception of it to insure that it is a living religion.

Hocking is convinced that in the grasping of its own essence, a religion becomes more able to interpret the essence of all religion. This is so because at the heart of every living religion there is truth, truth which meets some basic human need for a purposeful and meaningful existence, a generating principle of life. The religion would not be a living one if it did not in some way provide this principle. This kind of interpretation "is the best gift which one religion can bring to another." He writes,

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[99]*Ibid.*, p. 197. Hocking is actually incorrect in this statement that the idea of a progressive revelation is unique to Christianity. A contemporary of Hocking's, Mordecai M. Kaplan, took an identical position concerning a progressive revelation in Judaism in his 1934 book *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American Jewish Life* (New York: The Reconstructionist Press 1934, reprint 1957). Ira Eisenstein, Kaplan's successor in the Reconstructionist Movement, provided a popular explanation of Kaplan's theory of on-going revelation in *Judaism Under Freedom* (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1956), pp. 26-38. This book appeared the same year as Hocking's *The Coming World Civilization.*

> ...to interpret is to give a voice to what is relatively inarticulate and defenceless. It is indeed to some extent to improve and alter, in so far as it separates the chaff from the wheat; but it does keep the wheat and bring it to market.[100]

In addition to the gift of interpretation which the model of reconception enhances when correctly utilized, Hocking presents reconception as the way of a "true conservatism" for

> it conserves as much as possible of what is worth conserving in other faiths; it provides a permanent frame for all those scattered "accents of the Holy Ghost" which, treasured in local traditions here and there, are robbed by their separateness of their due force.[101]

Hocking maintains that it is a matter of chivalry to be engaged in this kind of conservative interpretation of other religions on the part of Christians. They have the science of comparative religion at their disposal, and while we have seen that Hocking is convinced that comparison and analysis are not enough, they help. Chivalrous Christians owe it to their world religious neighbours to point out the best that they see in those traditions and ought to prefer this approach to refutation of them, because "the joy of refutation is a poor and cheap-bought joy in comparison with the joy of lifting a struggling thought to a new level of self-understanding."[102]

In his emphasis on reconception as a true conservatism, and the superiority of appreciation for an idea over refutation of it, Hocking is undoubtedly trying to make his case against those who were hostile to the findings of the Commission of Appraisal, accusing them, as we have seen, of indifferentism at best and syncretism at worst.[103]

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[100]*Ibid.*, p. 198.

[101]*Ibid.*, p. 199.

[102]*Ibid.*

[103]For a detailed, insightful explanation of Hocking's position versus that of Hendrik Kraemer especially in Kraemer's *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* see Rouner, *op. cit.*, pp. 254 ff.

Living religions are, for Hocking, like every living entity, real and potential, usually at least partially in error if for no other reason than that they are unfinished. Hocking urges on Christians an approach to living religions which requires a severe labor of thought, made not solely on the basis of doctrine, but on unceasing observation of one's own religion and that of others.

We are left with the question of how the process of reconception can make for a world faith. Hocking answers simply that if and when any one living religion can absorb into its own essence all that is good in the essence of all others, it would logically be a world faith. This does not mean that this world faith would replace the local religions because religion-in-general must always be religion-in-particular. He writes,

> Evidently, if one and only one religion could succeed in absorbing into its own essence the meaning of all the others, that religion would attract the free suffrage of mankind to itself. Any such result would necessarily be remote, since the essence cannot be taken by storm; light upon its nature will appear only gradually, and through the slow intimations of meaning as intuitive understanding of the expressions of other faiths is increased. The specific social and historical functions of the local religions could in their nature never be completely replaced by the essence of a universal religion; a truly universal religion would provide a place for such local functions.[104]

Hocking poses that just as the method of synthesis, which is the precursor to the method of reconception, is mutual, so too, reconception is mutual. And for him this means that "all religions in contact with one another will be spurred to this kind of deepened self-understanding."[105] His travels in Asia, in India in particular, have put him in touch with

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and Leroy S. Rouner, *Within Human Experience: The Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 276 ff.

[104]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, pp. 200-01.

[105]*Ibid.*

individuals who are searching for the essence of their own religious traditions, men like Gandhi and Ambedkar, much as thoughtful Christians are seeking for the essence of theirs.

Yet, Hocking admits, eventually reconception "*does tend toward a decision* ". As a religion works to reconceive itself, to become a "better vehicle of truth", it is likely that persons will gravitate toward it. This force of attraction will not be due to some mission campaign to be the dominant religion but will rest upon the "unforced persuasiveness of relative success" in terms of its vision and way of life.[106]

We know from his position on radical displacement that Hocking finds competition among religions distasteful except for that kind of qualified competition which seeks to "save most of the religious treasury of the race." He can see no way in which this kind of competition would result in antagonism of any sort. He writes, on the contrary:

> Nor could it be a misfortune for the race if several living religions should find themselves spurred in one another's presence to such a rivalry. When all religions are losing their holds on multitudes, no one can say that any of them is doing too well, through its human representatives, what a religion has to do for the soul of man! They are all wretched vessels. They are all wrapped in sanctimony, dusty-eyed with self-satisfaction, stiff-jointed with the rheum-rust of their creedal conceits, so timorous under the whips of conformity that only a few dare the perilous task of *thinking*, and the complacency-disturbing task of trying the spirit of other faiths. They wear the aspect of senility, while the world is crying to them to be young; they can no longer take a true creed in their lips, and have it carry the meaning of truth, since the blood, life, passion are gone out of it, and it has become a festoon of dried husks. Men are not unready for faith, even for concrete and particular faith, if they can find life in it.[107]

Hocking is not generally given to passionate outbursts of this sort in his writing. This was written just two years after the meeting at Tambaram at which the fear of National

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[106] *Ibid.*

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

Socialism and its implications for the European continent resulted in the further condemnation of the approach to Christian mission of Hocking and his Commission colleagues. Hocking continues for six more scathing paragraphs to pose questions which living religions must answer if they are going to have anything to offer contemporary humanity.[108]

In the direction of some answers to the numbers of questions he asks, Hocking maintains that the world faith will emerge from the living religion which most truly diagnoses the "root of the malady" of suffering and meaninglessness, without relying on "tinselled and sugared otherworldliness" or by speaking of "timeless values." It will emerge from the religion which will save people from greed, lust, hatred, hypocrisy, duplicity and pretence, without "destroying their virility (sic) and effectiveness" in the social order. It will emerge from the religion which is most "fertile" in enhancing the life of the arts. He writes,

> When the religions realise that these are the questions which they must eventually meet, and that no charter from the Most High God will excuse them from meeting them, nor give them any dominion on the earth if they do not, the search for their own essence may become, as it is due to be, a grave and anxious search rather than any mere exercise of scholarly speculation.[109]

The reconception process requires a new kind of Christian mission institution. Hocking admits that reconception goes on informally "anywhere that religious self-consciousness is alive," but he wants a new kind of institution to make reconception a policy among Christians. He does not seek to supplant traditional mission institutions but to supplement them. As early as 1932, Hocking and his colleagues proposed that an openness to the

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[108]*Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

[109]*Ibid.*, pp. 202-205.

world's religions required a different kind of institution than Christianity had yet produced. He describes this institution's philosophy and structure in detail in 1940 when he writes,

> This process needs a new institution. Though Reconception is always going on, wherever religious self-consciousness is alive, it requires in the present world-period for its favourable pursuit an institution widely different from the usual type of Protestant mission -- not to supplant that mission but to supplement it.[110]

We have here a clear statement of Hocking's conviction that synthesis involves serendipidity and that the essence of living traditions will not be understood effectively in that way. It must be a matter of policy for these encounters of religious persons to take place and so he proposes a new kind of mission institution to make those encounters happen. He is clear that these are to be mutual encounters. Insisting on the difference between this kind of new institution he envisions and what is the traditional mission institution, he writes,

> The mission is set for teaching; the required institution must be set for learning as well. The mission is set for the announcement of doctrine; this institution must be set as well for conversation and conference. The mission is set for activity; this institution must be set also for leisure, contemplation, study. The mission is set for address to its own region; this institution must be set for give and take with the thought and feeling of a nation and a world.[111]

Members of living religions are to learn from and with each other in these institutions and true to his conviction that the life of the believers is of equal importance with the doctrine of the living religion, the members of the institute are to encounter each other in all facets of their living, in relaxation and in work pursuits. Again, true to his conviction that it is the evolution of a world faith that is required, it is not just national concerns, but global issues that must be at the heart of the living inquiry in these new kinds of mission institutions.

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[110] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

[111] *Ibid.*

The intellectual inquiry, and even the moments of leisure are not enough for the process that Hocking wants to effect. We have seen his concern for believers to worship with each other, and his desire that Christians in particular, learn to meditate from their Eastern religious neighbours. He wants facilities for worship. Also, his conviction that a universal faith will never replace the need for local religions means, for him, that the religious leadership of the area in which the institutions will be located, will apppreciate what they are trying to do. He describes this worship and benevolent attitude as follows:

> The essential parts of such an institution are, beside the quarters for living and hospitality, the library, the facilities for conference, meditation, worship, the good will of the religious leadership of all groups in the region, access to natural solitude and to the life of city and country.[112]

The outdoorsman and perhaps the mystic in Hocking is speaking when he writes about "natural solitude" so important to him in his own experience as surveyor, philosopher, author.

Hocking knows from his 1930-32 experiences how difficult it is for an outsider to comprehend the religion and culture of another tradition. We saw his approval of the one-to-three year training program of young Jesuits in India who were required after several years of study of the language and culture of a given part of that country to live in it on their own. Realizing the need for this kind of understanding, and perhaps taking into account the ages and physical stamina of inquirers in this new kind of institution, he suggests, "and prior to all this, or perhaps connected with it as a training place, a school for the higher study of the thought, art and literature of the surrounding culture."[113]

Hocking is eminently clear about the end result of this kind of institution, that which will most effectively promote the reconception of Christianity and of any living

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[112] *Ibid.*

[113] *Ibid.*

religion that will use this kind of institution for the purpose of reconceiving its own essence. He writes,

> What is required is a watch-tower of thought and understanding, in which the chief activity is not the building of the church but the activity of the reflective observer, qualified by a deep knowledge of the spiritual backgrounds of the life around him, prepared to meet its best thought on its own ground, and sensitive to the movements of change always present in that life.[114]

The words "reflective observer" are important here. Hocking always maintained that it was not only scholars and professional religionists who would effect the reconception of Christianity and of other living religions. Reconception must involve persons who have an experience Ultimate Reality, the mystics. These mystics have a vital place in Hocking's new kind of mission institution, and can be assumed to be among the "reflective observers."

Hocking admitted that he had seen many good attempts at meeting places of believers in the living religions but nothing of the "aim and amplitude" which he envisioned. He was much impressed with Rabindranath Tagore's ashram which he had seen at Shantiniketan, "where Hindu, Christian, Moslem, Buddhist find themselves at home," but he wished for centres more specifically aimed at effecting reconception than was Tagore's. He foresaw,

> a chain of centres set around the world, hospitable to qualified enquirers, and contributing -- as centres of art contribute to the life of art -- to sustain the continuing enterprise of reconceiving religion through world culture, and world culture through religion.[115]

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[114] *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.

[115] *Ibid.*, pp. 205-207.

Hocking's vision was not completely inaccurate. By 1970, there were Christian centres set around the world, in collaboration with the World Council of Churches, seeking to understand better the religions of their world neighbours, but not with the specific purpose of effecting the reconception of Christianity as advanced by Hocking.[116] Semblances of what Hocking hoped for can be found today in the Catholic Ashram Movement in India, based on Gandhi's ashram in Severagram, and Tagore's in Shantiniketan. Of these Catholic ashrams it is more accurate to say that they are being forced to re-think their modes of work and worship through contact with their religious neighbours, than that they are involved in a policy of doing so.[117] Also, for thirty years the Temple of Understanding located at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, has been in business to "promote understanding between the World's Religions, to recognize the Oneness of the Human Family, to achieve 'a spiritual United Nations.'"[118]

In summary, in his writings from 1932-40, Hocking proposed a method for Christians to approach other religious traditions which would be for them, a matter of determined policy resulting in a broadening and deepening of Christianity, a reconception of it, based on a resolution of the difficulties between and among the religions Christianity encountered. Indeed, Hocking hoped for this for every living religion. He was convinced that this reconception of Christianity could occur only when all religions understood their own essences and were working toward a continuing growth of the religion around those

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[116]Cf., Vallée, *op cit.*, pp. 284-86.

[117] For further information on the Indian Catholic Ashram Movement see van Leeuwen, *op. cit.*, "The Ashram Fellowship," pp. 182-189, also Vandana Mataji's "Ashramites' Satsangh," *Indian Theological Studies*, December 1978, pp. 359 ff. Cf., also, Sara Grant, R.S.C.J., on "reverence for reverence" in the worship connected with the ashram, in "Shared Prayer and Sharing Scriptures," *Sharing Worship (Communicatio in Sacris)*, (Bangalore: St. Mary's Press, 1988).

[118]Mission Statement of the Temple of Understanding, 1047 Amsterdam Avenue at 1 Street, New York, N. Y. 10025. This association is planning a major conference in 1993 in Bangalore, India, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Chicago Parliament of Religions. We have already seen Hocking's lack of appreciation of this approach to religions. Hocking envisioned his centres as specifically under Christian mission auspices, to ensure the reconception of Christianity. Interestingly, the Bangalore meeting will be "modest in scope" and emphasize "worship experiences."

essences. Hocking was convinced that the reconception of Christianity and of the living religions was demanded if religion had anything to offer contemporary humanity apart from platitudes. He saw this method of reconception as needing a new kind of Christian mission institution, not one to replace traditional mission institutions, but as a supplement to them. These centres would be places of work, worship, leisurely inquiry, and available to reflective observers across religious denominations. These reflective observers would include mystics. From the centres would come the reconceived living religions of Christianity, and of other living religions, one of which, in time, containing all the best and more that the others have to offer, would emerge as the world faith.

His 1932-1940 work was not his final word on his theory of reconception. He returned to the topic fifteen years later.

Reconception Reconsidered

In an article written in 1955, entitled "Reconception Revisted" which has become a key chapter in his 1956 book, *The Coming World Civilization,* Hocking reviewed his theory of reconception.[119] The major addition to his thought in this article, and in the subsequent book, is his questioning of how it could be possible to speak of reconceiving the essence of Christianity in its present "embarrassing" multiform expressions. He admits the need for reforms in the history of Christianity but laments that these reforms had ended in schism. The reader will remember that in 1932, as proposed in the Foreward to *Re-Thinking Missions*, Hocking thought that the varieties of Christianity helped in understanding its expressions, but now he believes that

> To call for reconception in the direction of simplification, by identifying Christianity with its essence, raises the insistent problem of the pluralism and diversity of the

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[119]William Ernest Hocking, "Reconception Reconsidered", *Christian Century*, 72 (March 2, 1955), pp. 268-269.

> Christian movement. It is especially during the modern period that Christianity has become multiform to an extent embarassing to any discussion of its character which proceeds as if it *has* a single character. These internal differences, though in the end they may actually contribute to its clarity, do for the present tend to obscure it. . . . I am of the opinion that the variety is far in excess of what is necessary, inasmuch as very few variants of Christianity today would reject the simple essences here defined, and which are to this extent sufficient to unite them.[120]

The "simple essences here defined" in this quotation are the creed, code, and deed of Christianity as have been described in Chapter III.

Another new position emerges in 1956, when Hocking identifies the churches "called Catholic" and the Religious Society of Friends, as those traditions, in his thought, most useful for the modern era in terms of their understanding of the essence of Christianity, and most likely to effect its reconception. We have seen previously Hocking's position on Catholicism, the strength he saw in its position of infallibility, so long as it is not infallible about too much, and the value of its world-wide structure. We saw, too, that Hocking was well-aware of the possibilities of corruption within this structure. Now he adds to the "churches called Catholic," the Religious Society of Friends, as most likely to effect reconception in the modern era. He writes,

> Quakerism is today giving powerful evidence of its universality, not only within but outside the Christian organizations, by exploring and finding common ground with mystical tendencies of Buddhism in Japan and of Hinduism in India.[121]

Quakers are, therefore, already engaged in the process of reconception as Hocking had previously described it.

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[120]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, pp. 134-35.

[121]*Ibid.*, p. 135. Richard Hocking suggests that this position of his father's is really that of Alfred North Whitehead. "I myself often heard Whitehead say that the Catholics and the Quakers together have it. Father respected Whitehead so much that he would have taken that idea very seriously." Telephone interview, October 25, 1990.

It is possibly the method of achieving consensus by the Religious Society of Friends, which has resulted in Hocking's 1956 inclusion of them. Friends will not accept majority rule but must have total accord before acting, which could be construed as the dialectical thought involved in reconception. Hocking writes that minimal organization and creedal content clearly facilitates the Quaker tradition in its universality. This Quaker procedure for consensus would solve a major difficulty with the Hocking model about who ultimately decides what is an authentic reconception of Christianity. In the Religious Society of Friends, all believers present at a meeting effect the community's direction.[122] This would overcome the difficulties of hierarchs imposing a reconceived Christianity. Hocking was above all concerned with simplicity. He writes, "the search for essence may still go far in the direction of simplicity without losing the substance of the matter. And in my view simplicity is still the great desideratum."[123]

The simplicity of the Quaker motto, "We don't evangelize; we serve." would appeal to Hocking, and is in fact, a succinct statement of Hocking's own approach to Christian mission. However, in 1956, Hocking continued to be positive about the possibility of the reconception of Christianity that could be effected by the churches called Catholic. Hocking reflected that

> There is also a sense in which the conception of the church in its historic continuity, in its involvement with all the arts -- an involvement not canceled by their liberation -- and in its wide-flung responsibility for the souls of men, is best realized in the churches called Catholic.[124]

Hocking was, of course, married to a Roman Catholic but it is significant that he does not limit his position to them. The synodal approach of Anglo-Catholics to the

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[122]Cf., Michael J. Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule: Voteless Decisions in the Religious Society of Friends* (Philadephia, Pa.: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1983).

[123]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 135.

[124]*Ibid.*

formation of church policy, fits well with Hocking's method of reconception.[125] In diocesan, national, and international synods, a majority of bishops, clerics, and laity, must concur in their decisions for them to become binding in the Anglican Communion. Of Quaker and Catholic positions, Hocking writes,

> Quaker and Catholic together bear their partials of a total truth, which includes the truth of a continuing historical community of aggressive *caritas* at once material and spiritual. The Christian movement as a whole contains them both and much between them, without, as yet, a visible or conceptual synthesis. But not without a bond of meaning that can already be felt. In their coexistence, they constitute an enduring necessity for internal advance in self-understanding. And by that same sign, they exclude exclusiveness.[126]

Hocking was heartened in 1962 by the opening of Vatican Council II, of the Roman Catholic Church, and the action of Pope John XXIII in convening it. The "aggiornamento" intended by the pope in terms of the Roman community, for Hocking, was a step in the direction of its authentic reconception and held much hope for all of contemporary Christianity.[127]

Thus we notice that Hocking has moved from his approval of the many varieties of Christianity to a position that there are too many varieties to be able to speak about an

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[125]Richard Hocking reports that during their residences in Madison, Ernest and Agnes Hocking and the entire family were active members of the Episcopal (Anglican) Church in that New Hampshire village. Richard still is.

[126]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, pp. 135-136. In both Canada and the United States there are no official Catholic/Quaker dialogue groups as of this writing according to the Offices for Ecumenism and Dialogue of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the United States Catholic Conference. There are in India under the auspices of Fr. Albert Nambiaparambil, S.J., secretary of the Dialogue Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, Ashok Place, New Delhi 110 001. There are two varieties of Friends in India, one highly structured with ministers, and the other more in the original tradition of George Fox. Dialogue with Friends and other religious traditions in India, on the part of Roman and Anglican Catholics (Anglicans are now members of the Church of North India) is increasingly taking the form of "Live-Togethers" for work and worship giving some credence to Hocking's on-going conviction that a reconceived Christianity would most likely evolve in Asia, particularly India. Cf. Marcus Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 229 ff.

[127]William Ernest Hocking, "The People and the Pope." Letter to the Editor, *Time Magazine*, January 18, 1963, p. 10.

effective reconception of the tradition. He sees in the wedding of the Religious Society of Friends and of Catholics, the possibility for arriving intra-denominationally at a Christianity that can be reconceived in dialogue with its world religious neighbours. He believes that this wedding is possible, and desirable.

Hocking went on in 1956 to explain in greater detail than previously what the postulates for the relations among world religions must be if a world faith is to evolve. Since these postulates are germane to Hocking's reconception theory, they have to be considered here.

Guides for Interaction Among Universal Religions

Hocking proposes three postulates which should guide the relations among all religions. They are similar to positions he has taken since his *magnum opus* in 1912. He writes,

> (a) The true mystic will recognize the true mystic across all boundaries, and will learn from him;
>
> (b) Every man's religion must be "a" religion, having its own simplicity of essence, its organic integrity, and its historic identity;
>
> (c) To every man belongs the full truth of religion -- the unlosable essences in whatever context they appear, and also their interpretation through history.[128]

The relations involve anyone who has had the experience of the Mind, Self, Heart of the world as Good. The comings together involve a mutual training and equipping of each other. Observers need to know the essence of their religion, the past and present interpretations of the essence, and the essences of the world religions to whose believers

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[128]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, pp. 141-142.

they are relating. The observers must want truth in its fullness, no matter where it is to be found.

Hocking is adamant that to affirm one's own religion does not logically require the exclusion of another, because the "several universal religions are already fused together, so to speak, at the top."[129] Mystics in particular understand this fusion. As we have seen previously, Hocking admits the difficulty in knowing the true mystic, but he now suggests that the mystic is anyone who is at peace, citing Gandhi as a classic example of what he means by a mystic who is at peace.[130] Hocking again repeats his conviction that "reverence for reverence" must be at the root of the reconception of every religion, but now he calls in addition for a "consociation" for work and worship, among the living religions, at least periodically.[131] Hocking no longer sees this consociation as something which is to take place primarily in the centres he has envisioned, but he sees it as necessary, at least at times, for all religious persons. He cites examples of what he means, viz., Count Hermann von Keyserling who tried for a time to believe in Krishnamurti as a contemporary incarnation of God, the Jesuit missionaries mentioned earlier, but most importantly, and germane to his point is the attitude of a Jesuit missionary he met in Benares who had studied India's sacred scriptures, mediated at its sacred places, visited the ancient monasteries of Buddhist monks, but in India's illiterates and children was able to "feel the value of their superstitions." He continues to elaborate on this mentality as

> the attitude I met in Professor Adhikari, of the Hindu University of Benares, who finding the doctrine of this same Jesuit missionary as to transubstantiation difficult, said to him, "We must go together to your Mary-chapel and pray there; and perhaps the understanding will come to me." Without losing grip on the firm identity of his own Way,

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[129] *Ibid.*, p. 149. Cf. note to see p. 138.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

> each can grow in his understanding of that Way through the added experience of worship with another in whom the reality of religion is perceived. Each will thereby reconceive his own faith in breadth. And with the breaking down of the surface shells of insulation, the natural reasons for preference and decision will assert themselves.[132]

These efforts at consociation seem to have replaced in some measure the need for meeting centres as envisaged by Hocking sixteen and more years earlier.

Moreover, Hocking is convinced that the decisive factor in the relating of religions to each other will be maturity. His definition of maturity is of importance. Maturity is "*the adoption of the natural, without the surrender of what is more than nature.*"[133] For Hocking, Christianity is the most mature living religion because Christianity has been forced to deal with science in a way that other traditions have not. Science has freed humanity from ancient fears and superstititions but it has left it with a new kind of fear, that of meaninglessness and purposelessness. Christianity gives humanity the conviction that there is an Other Mind at the heart of all that is, a Self that cares. It does for humanity what science cannot do. It posits a world which is yours, mine, and God's. To be more faithful to Hocking, it would be God's, therefore, yours and mine. So, for Hocking, whatever its name, the world faith of the future will in substance be Christian, a world faith that knows what science can and cannot do, and what religion can and cannot do.

Hocking concludes his re-thinking on the reconception of Christianity with the thought that the tradition may be faced with the major sacrifice to be made in its history, that of losing its name, in the process of its becoming the world faith. He sees this as not unlike Jesus's injunction to be willing to lose one's life in order to truly find it. In this case it is a corporate life, or at least a corporate name, that may need to be lost, in order to find its real life. Hocking says again, as we have seen throughout a study of his writings, that

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[132] *Ibid.*

[133] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

the work of religion, and therefore the work of religious growth which is reconception, is unfinished and unfinishable but vital and creative. This creativity is religion's special gift to the human enterprise. He is tremendously concerned that in the modern era, however, many Christians are involved in "damping down the will to create through suffering" into "the will to have a costless comfort." This for him is anathema. This is especially where he believes Christianity must learn from the East. He writes,

> We have been too easily satisfied to say that Christianity is the religion of love, without noting that the love of God toward man can be no regime of moral ease. . . . Let me put it thus: our Christianity is in need of reconception through a deeper and humbler intercourse with the soul of the East, in its agelong acceptance of a searching self-discipline.[134]

This self-discipline will enhance in Christians their capacity for "creative fanaticism" which has been eroded by the movement from idealism to relativism.

Hocking concludes *The Coming World Civilization* with the words, "*Opus hic terminatum sed non consummatum dico.*"[135] In classic Hocking style, he leaves the ball in his reader's court.

Hocking's Proposal

His readers may find Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity vague, but he is clear about the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a reconception of Christianity. The agents of reconception are the Christian mystics, primarily those mystics who are Quakers and Catholics. Through their mystical experiences they know that the Divine is conspiring for the spiritual and material development of humanity, not against it, and that they are called to participate in this integral human development. These mystical experiences are many and varied, as many and varied as there are human beings, for in

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[134]*Ibid.*, pp. 164-65.

[135]*Ibid.*, p. 187.

Hocking's thought every person is a mystic, albeit in various stages of discernment of his or her mysticism.

What is to be reconceived is the essence of Christianity, its creed, code, and deed. Christians must always be committed to "seeking first the kingdom of God," i.e., to the integral human development of all humanity. They must be willing to give their lives for this effort, actually, or through a constant willingness to create through suffering, especially by engaging in unceasing wars of persuasion which invite persons to be their ideal selves. Christianity's creed, code, and deed are, therefore, timeless, but witness to and proclamation of its essence must be timely. The timeless (final) essence of Christianity must constantly be reconceived in the idiom of each historical moment in order to make it a viable ethos.

Whenever the Christian mystic encounters the enhancement of spiritual and material development, the Christian must seek for this goodness in his or her own Christian tradition. If it is not there, that goodness should be incorporated into Christianity's creed, code, and deed, which will effect a recasting of Christianity's self-understanding. Christians must make it a matter of policy to look for and applaud and reverence goodness in other living religions. Ideally, there would be centres throughout the world established under Christian auspices in which the sole purpose of the institution would be to effect the reconception of Christianity, and of other living religions, thereby providing a world faith for a world civilization. In the absence of such centres, there must be periodic consociations of members of living religions where reconceptions can be effected.

Why is reconception needed? Primarily because despite all that science has done which is beneficial for humanity, modern science has left humanity spiritually desolate. Religions can and must speak to modern hopelessness, meaninglessness, and ennui. Traditional religious formulations, especially of providence, prayer, and things

eschatological are not doing that, and must be reconceived in cosmic formulations if hope is to be restored to humankind.

How will a reconception of Christianity effect a world faith? If and when Christianity, or any other living religion, contains within it all the best of other religions and more, because the sum of the whole is greater than any of its parts, it will be the world faith, no matter its name. Neither attempts at the radical displacement of one religion by another, nor romantic syntheses of religions, will effect the evolution of the world faith. Only the reconception of religions will bring it about. Christianity, if it will incorporate into itself, the self-discipline of the religions of the East, and effect a de-westernization of itself, has the edge in becoming this world faith, although it may need to lose its name in the process of finding its real life as the world faith.

Conclusion

Despite his convictions that the reconception of Christianity would be effected by its mystics, Hocking's emphasis on knowing the essence of one's own religion, and that of the religious believers with whom one is in dialogue, seems to make of reconception primarily an academic and scholarly undertaking, and Hocking wanted reconception to be a grass-roots activity. Is it necessary to know the essence of other religions if believers within them must be consulted and approve incorporations into Christianity? It would seem not. Is it possible to know the essence of a religion, any religion, as clearly as Hocking maintains it to be? Is Hocking's bias toward Christianity as the coming world faith, really not another kind of Christian imperialism, much like Karl Rahner's "anonymous Christianity" which proved so offensive to so many religious Asians and also to Roman Catholic foreign missionaries? Hocking constantly presumes that a broadening of thought results in a deepening of thought on the part of the inquirer. Has he taken sufficiently into account the contemporary phenomenon of persons abandoning almost all

religious inquiry and turning to churches and synagogues primarily for rites of passage with sociological but almost no moral significance? These issues will be dealt with in the critical assessment of Hocking's theory to which this work now turns.

CHAPTER V

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE THEORY OF THE RECONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE THOUGHT OF WILLIAM ERNEST HOCKING

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical appraisal of William Ernest Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity and the role of the mystic within it. Hocking believed that as living religions, Christianity in particular, became involved in internal recastings of their content and mission, a world faith would evolve. This process of revision requires a policy of consociations among all the living religions. In the process of taking into themselves and making their own the best of other traditions, one of the living religions will eventually evolve as a world faith. A world faith will make possible a world community or world civilization. This would not necessarily mean an end to the living religions, however, because religion-in-general must always become religion-in-particular for the religious reality to be effective. Religion-in-general is the world faith; religion-in-particular is the application of the world faith in indigenous settings.

The world faith Hocking envisioned was a universal ethos which would be an inspiration for world community and world civilization. Hocking did believe that Christianity had the edge in providing the emergence of this world faith because, unlike the other living religions, it has identified what religion can and cannot do and what science can and cannot do. Science can do much for humanity's material well-being but not enough for its spiritual well-being. Religion's role is to provide the "grit" for human existence and endeavour, viz., the meaning and purpose for human existence which is an unflagging dedication to the spiritual and material improvement of all humanity. Further, religion must provide this hope without recourse to "a tinselled, sugared other-worldliness."

My exposition of Hocking's theory has proceeded as follows. In Chapter I, I provided a brief biography of Dr. Hocking emphasizing those experiences of his which generated his idea-istic mystic philosophy of religion, his position on the content of Christianity and its mission, and his reconception theory. I did so because for Hocking feelings or experiences find their fulfillment or completion in the idea. Therefore I proposed what are for me, the experiences which generated his theory. I wished also to explain the role that personal experience plays in Hocking's understanding of authentic religion. For him, a living religion is not built on vicarious or second-hand experiences. The experiences of the founder or founders of a religion, or of the benefits promised to adherents of a religious tradition, must be repeatable and verifiable in the life of each believer. Therefore, Hocking calls all authentic religion "autobiographical."

The persons who experience the thrust of the religion or of the religious founder most effectively are the mystics, thus, in Chapter II, I presented the content and rationale for Hocking's philosophical mysticism, and explained his conviction that mystics across religious traditions are the harbingers of world religious unity since their ultimate realization is the universality of the Goodness which is the Ultimate Reality. I explained in some detail Hocking's conviction that Siddartha Guatama, Jesus, and Muhammed, qualify as mystics, who through inductions of their traditions, reconceived the unlosable essences of their religious traditions, and became social reformers out of their experiences. Each in his own way, concluded that the universe was not conspiring against them, but conspiring for their good and the good of the many.

Because the mystic is credited with the reconception of the essence of his or her tradition, and because this dissertation focuses on Hocking's theory as it pertains to Christianity, I then explored, in Chapter III, what is for Hocking the essence of Christianity and why, and how the correct understanding of that essence results in a Christian mission to empower others spiritually and materially, rather than to have power

over them. I described that toward the end of his life, Hocking proposed that Christianity has a creed, code, and deed, which promotes this integral human development of all peoples, spiritually and materially, and for that reason Hocking believes that Christianity is the authentic essence of every living religion, and no matter its name, ultimately has the edge in becoming the source of a world faith. The demise of Christendom helps to unveil the simplicity of Christianity, providing a concise approach to religious life, much more helpful than complex organizational religious dogmas and structures usually provide.[1] This demise is also making clear the need for a de-westernized Christianity, if it is to become a truly cosmic religion promoting universalism.

In Chapter IV, we encountered Hocking's grave concern that the export of western technology without the concomitant Christian morale underpinning it, despite the present imperfections of those in the West living the Christian life, will result in a world-wide blurring of what constitutes meaningful existence. He feared that this confusion would have repercussions in all six continents, and hoped for a reconceived Christianity that would be cosmic and in that provide the morale for the emergent global technology. He desired, too, that the West return to greater self-discipline and "grit," in association with the East. He hoped especially that Christian interaction with the East would restore to the West the value of meditation, a major part of the mystical tradition, and provide the West with specific techniques for the alternation between work and worship which, in Hocking's understanding, makes for a whole life.

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[1]This conviction of Hocking's about the gift of the demise of Christendom is similar to that of the philosopher/theologian Raimundo Panikkar. Panikkar identifies the process as "Christianity, Christendom, Christianness," and sees much hope for Christianness in this present era. Panikkar is quoted about this process and its implications throughout the entire work, but especially in Chapter 2 of David J. Krieger's, *The New Universalism: Foundations for a Global Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991). Chapter 2 is an excellent, succinct reconstruction of Panikkar's fifty years of intrareligious, interreligious and interideological scholarship and dialogue. Interestingly, Krieger shares Hocking's enthusiasm for Gandhi's *satyagraha*, and proposes it as *the* way to provide a "new myth" of "deep common accord," which opens up the possibility of "a truly universal community." *Op. cit.*, p. 161. The discussion of the possibility for world community in Gandhi's peace movement appears on pages 150-162.

In Chapter IV, I also explained how Hocking viewed the actual process of the reconception of Christianity. Neither the radical displacement of one religion by another, nor a romantic synthesis of the best of other religions which would minimize the differences among religions, could effect the world faith for which Hocking hoped. He promoted a slow evolution in which through consociation for work and worship, believers would come to understand other traditions, and incorporate the positive dimensions of other traditions into their own living religion if they were not there already. Shortly before his death, he concluded that these incorporations would have to have the approval of the believers from whom they were being obtained.[2]

Throughout the exposition of the genesis of Hocking's positions on mysticism, the unlosable content and mission of Christianity, and the model for the reconception of living religions, my agreement with Hocking's positions was obviously substantial. I concur that personal experience, feelings, intellectual content, and ethical living, have vital roles to play in religions that wish to be living ones, especially those religions involved in the integral material and spiritual developments of all peoples. I agree that religions cannot depend on feelings alone and must provide creeds in the idiom of a given era, and also that creeds, viz., cognitive formulations are not sufficient for a religion to be alive. I accept that a reconception of all the living religions, and of Christianity in particular, is demanded at this point in history, and that there are persons cross-culturally who desire to effect these reconceptions by apprehending the religions and ideologies of their world neighbours. Still, I have raised some major concerns about Hocking's thinking in the course of my exposition; those concerns may be subsumed under the three following questions: 1) Is the

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[2]This information came in personal conversation with Dr. Richard C. Hocking, professor emeritus of philosophy, Emory University, July 6, 1992, at West Wind, Madison, N.H. Ernest Hocking had the opportunity to read and comment on most of the articles being prepared for his Festschrift and as part of that experience concluded that one religion was not entitled to incorporate within itself the insights of another unless the other believer approved the interpretation as accurate. Until his death Hocking believed that authentic Christianity was the "essence of all religions."

mystical experience as accessible as Hocking maintains, and is its content as universal as he suggests? 2) Is Hocking's position on the essence of Christianity accurate, and where does it fit in the whole debate about whether or not the identification of the essence of any religion is possible? 3) Is the reconception model truly viable for the effecting of internal revisions of living religions, Christianity in particular, or is it one more subtle expression of Christian triumphalism, cleverly disguised? However, before I proceed to deal with those questions, I must reiterate a difficulty with Hocking's thought which I mentioned at the outset of this work.

Hocking's style is meandering, reflective, ruminative. Especially in his *Types of Philosophy,* Hocking makes the case so effectively for the positions he proposes, that it is extremely difficult at times to know where *he* stands. The reader of this book in particular, sometimes feels manipulated. Also, one who approaches his work must become deeply involved in the reconstruction of Hocking's thought in the personal area of scholarly interest. In the reconstruction, one fears simultaneously an oversimplification of his thought and complicating unnecessarily the simplicity of his thought.

It also must be mentioned that Hocking was not so naive as to presume that only a reconception of the living religions would effect world unity. He provided, among others, a reconception of education in *Experiment in Education* and in his privately published Volumes I and II of *Varieties of Educational Experience.* A reconception of science appears in *Science and the Idea of God.* His reconception of politics appears in *Man and the State* and *Strength of Men and Nations.* But because Hocking thought of life as a whole, his positions on these and many other topics, including religion appear throughout all his publications and recur constantly also in the almost 100,000 pages of unpublished materials, diaries, correspondence at the Houghton Library of Harvard University,

Cambridge, and at West Wind, Hocking's personal library at Madison, N.H.[3] It is fair to say, however, that no reconception was more important to Hocking than that of the living religions. In March of 1955, he wrote that the coming world civilization could occur more effectively through the process of reconception of the living religions than any other way. He writes that the reconception of religion can

> bring about a "meeting of East and West" on the only ground on which such a meeting would be significant; namely, on the ground of religion. For religion contains the generating factors of any civilization, to meet in religion is to meet at the root. Philosophical synthesis, always active, are relatively superficial.[4]

Hocking appears to have badly underestimated the modern movements of economic interdependence and the potential of their unifying powers which are nothing if not significant, yet he maintained throughout his life that without hope rooted in religion alone, the human enterprise is doomed to failure. With hope comes the prophetic consciousness, the commitment to take one's own time and place seriously and to make it better.

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[3]A researcher at Hocking's library could be overwhelmed with the sheer volume of the materials there but for the cataloguing efforts of Barbara Bacon, O.S.B., and John Regis Stacer, S.J., who in the summer of 1969, three years after Hocking's death, in researching their respective dissertations on Hocking's "nuclear experience" and his "widening empiricism" spent three months at West Wind putting some order into the papers in the process of their research. A key to the unpublished materials appears in Bacon's 1970 unpublished dissertation, "Nuclear Experience in the Thought of William Ernest Hocking," unfortunately not available through University Microfilms International, but a copy of which is on file at West Wind. Unfortunately, the cataloguing is no longer completely accurate since beginning in 1970 portions of the unpublished materials and correspondence in particular began to be donated to Houghton Library and promised copies of the Houghton acquisitions have not been returned to West Wind because of budget cuts. For the same reason some of the cataloguing at Houghton is not complete. It is hoped that it will be by the end of 1993.

[4]"Reconception Reconsidered," *The Christian Century*, Volume LXXII, No. 9 March 2, 1955, p. 269. It is necessary to add that in *Asian* countries, Hocking may be more accurate about the present effectiveness of religion over economic interdependence than I give him credit for in general. In the mid-1980s, Joanna Rogers Macy, a Buddhologist from Syracuse University, was asked by the World Bank to visit Sri Lanka and research why their development projects had failed while those of the Sarvodaya Movement, based on a renewed Theravadan Buddhism were succeeding in that country. Macy demonstrated convincingly that without a philosophy of religion, such as that provided by Sarvodya and its Buddhist underpinnings, development projects in Sri Lanka could not succeed. Her position is very similar to Hocking's about the value of hope which religion provides. Cf. Joanna Rodgers Macy, *Dharma and Development* (Philadelphia, Pa.: New Society Press, 1985).

Again, as was mentioned at the beginning of this work, Hocking did not complete his metaphysics which makes a systematic study of any of his thought very difficult.[5] Having registered my concern about Hocking's style, and about the limitations of a reconstruction of Hocking's thought, I proceed now to discuss his positions on mysticism, the essence of Christianity, and his reconception model.

A. Hocking's Position on Mysticism

It is my contention that Hocking has muddied the waters of his reconception model by referring to the mystics as the harbingers of world religious unity. Apart from whether or not one would desire a world religious unity, and I return to this point later, the word "mystic" and "mysticism" do not have a single working definition in the relevant literature. Hocking's own position is that the mystic is the one who experiences Ultimate Reality as "Good," in any encounter with Nature, Truth, Beauty, and especially in the experience of loving and of being loved. This thinking is clearly in the tradition of Jan van Ruysbroek, who built on the work of Johannes Eckhart, whose position was that mystical union was the inheritance due all and not reserved to a privileged few. Ruysbroek, a parish priest in Brussels, agreed with Eckhart about the common vocation of mysticism, but also promoted a mysticism of creation, which involved a rhythmical alternation between moments of meditation and charitable living.[6] I suggest that Hocking's definition of mysticism is

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[5]In 1952, Richard C. Gilman, who produced the annotated bibliography of Hocking's publications that appears in *Philosophy, Religion and the Coming World Civilization*, produced a doctoral dissertation at Boston University entitled, "The General Metaphysics of William Ernest Hocking." In 1956, James Snedden wrote "A Critical Examination of the Systematic Philosophy of William E. Hocking." The latter is available from U.M.I., # AADOO-18754. These are reconstructions of Hocking's philosophical thought and were each approved in substance by the philosopher then in retirement in New Hampshire. Leroy S. Rouner, whose work has been cited throughout this thesis, had the opportunity to work personally with Hocking from 1959-61, and Hocking substantially approved the reconstruction of his thought as effected by Rouner in his 1961 dissertation and subsequently in *Within Human Experience*.

[6]For interpretations of Eckhart, I have relied primarily on the work of the philosopher/theologian Matthew Fox, O.P., especially his *Original Blessing* (Sante Fe, N.M.: Bear & Co., 1983); *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*,(San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988); *Creation Spirituality*, (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). I have also used the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Fox's colleague, Richard John Woods,

really a definition of the mysticism of the divine image proposed by Eckhart which evolved into the mysticism of creation (Ruysbrock). It is not the universal mysticism which Hocking believed it to be.

Hocking was also profoundly influenced by James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* in which ineffability, a noetic quality of experience, transiency, and integration are presented as characteristics of mystical experience. Hocking's mysticism can be subsumed under James's description of mysticism. Hocking's mystics have an experience that is extremely difficult to put into words although persons who have had it almost always rush into print to do so. The experience is persuasive and determinative, providing a spiritual power. It is something that passes but may be remembered and sometimes reactivated in worship. It provides the mystics with an Archimedean point which yields hopefulness and purpose. Like James, Hocking was very clear about the outcome of the authentic mystical experience, viz., that the mystic could be known by his or her "fruits." There was no disorder, greed, or sexual excesses or perversion in the life of the mystic, and there was an element of renunciation in the life, a will to create through suffering. Using Hocking's own categories, surely, one must agree there are persons who live lives that are orderly, generous, and without sexual deviation, but who have not had what amounts to mystical experiences as Hocking describes them. It is not enough to propose that they are mystics but simply do not know it, although this would be Eckhart's position

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O.P., "The Social Dimension of Mysticism: A Study of the Meaning and Structure of Religious Experience in the Philosophy of William Ernest Hocking," (Chicago: Loyola University, 1978), for an interpretation of Hocking's understanding of mysticism. In the dissertation, Woods argues that Hocking's categories of experience can be used for contemporary classification of religious experience and he has, in fact, done this at the Religious Experience Research Unit of the University of Cambridge, with Sir Alister Hardy. In his dissertation, and in Wood's *Mysterion* (Chicago: The Thomas More Association, 1981), a popular version of the dissertation, Woods presents Hocking, and to a lesser extent Rufus Jones, as *the* North American mystics, whose thinking needs to be better known to counterbalance a rising Christian fundamentalism in the West. Woods sees Hocking's "social mysticism" as more necessary now than in the Barth-Brunner-Kraemer era's promotion of Christian exclusivism. For Woods, the present moment demands "dialectic, multiperspective" approaches to reality, which Hocking offers. (Cf., the Abstract to his 1978 dissertation.)

as well as Hocking's. This position seems to me to be analogous to telling someone they are in love but simply don't know it.

Toward the end of his life, Hocking began to identify as a mark of mysticism an element of renunciation in the life of the mystic "nowhere else so radically and compactly expressed [as in Christianity]." In all religions, Hocking now finds some form of renunciation as "a sign of spiritual power," and on that basis he adds Augustine, Spinoza, and Gandhi to his list of mystics. They qualify as mystics on the principle of the power of renunciation in their lives and the evident peace, viz., the detached attachment and attached detachment relative to the success of their work which that renunciation effects.[7] Hocking is, for me, on far surer ground about renunciation as a hallmark of the religious adept than he is about the mystical experience. There are religious ascetics because of mystical experiences, or experiences of enlightenment. There are ascetics who hope that their renunciation will lead to mystical union or realization of Ultimate Reality or of peace. There is another kind of renunciation, however, which I envision at the present moment as likely to lead to a world religious unity, and other kinds of unity, viz., the renunciation of religious security, of economic security, of political security, in other words, a willingness to learn from others, an openness to change. I return to this discussion below.

My concern with the word mystic is that contemporary research indicates that all mystical experiences are simply not identical. Steven Katz argues effectively that experiences like "nirvana," "moksha," "the Christian *unio mystica*," and the Jewish "devekuth," much less Zen "sartori," simply cannot be subsumed under the same label.[8] Any cursory acquaintance with Hindu mysticism makes clear that there are mystics in that tradition who are monistic, others who are pantheistic, others who are theistic. Christianity

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[7]William Ernest Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 143-144.

[8]Steven Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 22-74.

itself has a history of absorptive and non-absorptive mysticisms, among others, and scholars of Jewish mysticism identify at least three strains of mysticism, Talmudic, Zoharic, and Lurianic.[9] There is no way that these experiences can be lumped together logically as having the same content, much less Content. In a strong blow to Hocking-like enterprises, Katz proposes that

> It should also be noticed that classical mystics do not talk about the abstract 'mysticism'; they talk about their traditions, their 'way', their 'goal': they do not recognize the legitimacy of any other. The ecumenical overtones associated with mysticism have come primarily from non-mystics of recent vintage for their own purposes.[10]

Hocking's purpose was to assist in the evolution of a world faith which would be the heart of world civilization, and from his own pen we have the assurance that he is not a mystic. Unfortunately, although many, especially Woods, would like Hocking to be a mystic, Hocking writes,

> I would *not* describe myself as a *mystic* in philosophy; because when the mystic experience is interpreted by reason it becomes *idealism.* What I say is that the mystic is right in his assertion that God is present at the heart of the object of all knowledge, and that the religious soul will discern him there.[11]

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[9]*Ibid.*, p. 27. The article "Mysticism" in the 1987 *Encyclopedia of Religion* by Louis Dupré also identifies various forms of mysticism. In addition to absorptive and non-absorptive kinds of Christian mysticism, Dupré also names Christian mystics of the "image" and of the "word." Dupré makes a good case on page 354 of this article that the mysticism of Jan Ruusbroec [Dupré's spelling, more frequently spelled "Ruysbroek"], not Eckhart, contains a creation mysticism, requiring an alternation between work and worship. Dupré charts the influence of the Ruusbroec school on Karl Rahner, S.J., among others and particularly on Thomas Merton who influenced Matthew Fox to study creation mysticism with the late Fr. M. Chenu,O.P. Dupré credits Merton with the contemporary revival of interest in mysticism. Woods credits Hocking and Jones.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 46.

[11]Letter to G. H. Howison, January 1, 1913, on file at West Wind Library. Richard Woods appears to be unaware of this letter, arguing among other points in his Chapter on "Hocking and His Critics" in his 1978 dissertation, that Hocking never denied that he was a mystic. In the letter I quote, Hocking was writing to the head of his department while he was at Berkeley, after the publication of Hocking's *The Meaning of God.* In Part II of *Varieties of Educational Experience*, Hocking mentions, when describing his teaching experience at Berkeley, that philosophy there, unlike Harvard, was "much more like a religion to

Still, the "God" discerned at the heart of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, is simply not one and the same reality, at least not to a western thinker.[12] If one does not discern "God" at the heart of the object of all knowledge, does this mean the person is areligious, or irreligious or opposed to an international ethos? Theravadan Buddhists are uncomfortable with connecting enlightenment with a personal deity, and they are uncomfortable with meditation on a "God." This appears in no way to have hampered Theravadan Buddhist efforts in the direction of international peace, which Hocking would agree, is a hallmark of authentic religion, especially as he experienced it in Gandhi's person and his *satyagraha* movement.

It is my position that in his great desire to find agents cross-culturally who would provide the reconception of the living religions which he so ardently desired, Hocking has identified the mystics as these agents because he had no other group at hand to choose. What he described as universal mysticism is in fact his democratization of *a* classical western mystical tradition, creation spirituality, represented in particular by Eckhart and Ruysbroek, and at the present by Thomas Merton and Matthew Fox. In his analysis of mysticism Hocking has given the West much, but, for me, he has not provided the universal agents for reconception. Hocking constantly maintains that his world faith will be a religion-in-general. If there is no mysticism-in-general, and it appears that there is not, but only Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, etc., mystical systems, and

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be battled for." Hocking was far happier with Harvard's "openness to question, the life-blood of philosophy." Cf. pp. 21-23 Hocking may have wanted to have put Howison at ease about having employed him at Berkeley. However, when one works with Hocking's careful articulations, one cannot presume that because he says he is not a mystic in philosophy, that it *necessarily* follows that he is not a mystic in his personal religious life. Would Hocking have said so if he were a mystic? In the chapter of Woods' work which I have cited, Woods denies that Hocking is trying to use mysticism to shore up a flagging interest in idealism, but this correspondence might give some validity to that argument. Also, in the concluding chapter of his 1959 *Types of Philosophy*, Hocking says his philosophy is philosophical mysticism.

[12] The eminent scholar S. N. Dasgupta writes of Hindu mysticism as follows: "An acquaintance with Indian religious experience shows that there are types of religious and mystical experience other than that of an intimate communion with God." S. N. Dasgupta, *Hindu Mysticism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1927, 1959, 1967), p. ix.

individuals within those systems who receive the mystical gifts of their tradition, how can these mystics effect a religion-in-general? However, I believe, that his *intuition* that agents of reconception exist, is correct, as I shall subsequently explain.

Further, it seems to me that what Hocking experienced in believers in other religions, which I submit is western creation spirituality, but which he identified as a universal mysticism, is in fact, a considerable borrowing on the part of eastern religionists from their western religious neighbours. Gandhi, Ambedkar, Vivekenanda, and Radhakrishnan, who figure prominently in Hocking's thought about the East, knew Christianity well. Gandhi, for example, had a special friend and colleague in the Christian missionary, C.F. Andrews. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar studied at Columbia, in particular with John Dewey, and was so caught up in the possibilities of western democracy and the Judaeo-Christian religious thought underlying it, that he wanted the Indian Constitution to be headed "The Constitution of the United States of India." Ambedkar would have converted to Christianity instead of Buddhism if the caste system had not continued to prevail in Christianity as Ambedkar experienced it in South India. The Ramakrishna Math and Mission which so favourably influenced Hocking in his visit to Calcutta is, in fact, based, for its celibate male and female members, on the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). Swami Vivekenanda, Ramakrishna's disciple, lived in North America for three years after his trip in 1893 to the Chicago World Parliament of Religions. He was so very much impressed with the Christian Christmas and its commemoration of Incarnation that it is celebrated yearly by the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.[13] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was a graduate of Madras Christian College. Is it possible that what Hocking experienced, especially in India in 1931-32, was made of elements borrowed *from* Christianity in their revitalizations of their own traditions on the part of Gandhi,

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[13]Personal discussion with Joseph Neuner, S.J., while visiting the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Bangalore, India, January 1988.

Ambedkar, Radhakrishnan, and Ramakrishna's disciples, and others whom he met in China, Ceylon, Burma, Japan? Is it possible that he confused those "borrowings" with the mystics and essences of the religions involved and could thus come to conceive the Christian creation mysticism and Christianity as the "essence" of all authentic religion? I think that this might well be the case. Hocking has sometimes been called naive and romantic in his approaches to non-Christian religions, and while that is not my position, and any cursory examination of his personal library makes clear that he knew the world religions well, he does seem to have been in contact with many "Christianized" non-Christians.[14]

But I do want to argue that Hocking's intuition about humanity's movement toward global unity is correct, although I do not see the mystics, even in the broad terms that Hocking uses to define them, as the agents of such a unity. If Katz is correct in his analysis of mysticism as an "only way" mentality, as I have quoted him above, then mystics cannot be the agents of reconception of their traditions. They would be agents of radical displacement. Proponents of an only way do not appear to believe that there is anything to be reconceived through consultation with others. There is no dialogue. They have the truth. Hocking himself argued that the only way mentality leads to the mission of radical displacement of any one religion by the "true" religion and not to reconception. Some kind of infallibility is a requisite for Hocking, if a religion is to be universal, but the religion may not be infallible about too much. I suggest that Katz' study of mysticism

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[14]Some critics of Hocking's, e.g., Robert E. Speer in his *"Re-Thinking Missions" Examined* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933), fault Hocking for too romantic an approach to Eastern religions and for lack of scholarly understanding of them. In fact, as early as 1905, Hocking began studying and teaching world religions at Andover Theological Seminary, replacing George Herbert Moore, the scholar of comparative religions who went to teach at Harvard that year. Hocking taught from Moore's manuscripts and consulted frequently with him. The manuscripts became books in 1913. An entire section of the West Wind Library, perhaps some 750 volumes of the 5,000, deal with the world's religions. The library possesses, for example, a complete set of the translations by Max Müller of eastern religious classics . Hocking did not write of the religions in any detail until 1940 after he felt he had had sufficient *experience* of believers in them to do so, but in theory he knew them well, long before 1931-32.

makes clear that the mystics are infallible about too much and in Hocking's own terms do not qualify as the agents of reconception because of their "only way" mentality.

Hocking's concept of mysticism presents one more deficiency for me. I think that Hocking misses the discontent and dissatisfaction with the *status quo* that can be found in the lives of the Buddha, Jesus, Muhammed, and certainly in the lives of Gandhi, Spinoza, and Ambedkar. In many cases, it is those who know their religious traditions well, who have lived them deeply, and who in that very process have exhausted what their religious traditions have to offer them, that move beyond the present situation of the religion and seek to renew it or sometimes abandon it altogether. Hocking appears to me to have missed this dimension of the religious quest, unless this is in some way what he means by "renunciation." Buddha, Jesus, Muhammed, Gandhi, Ambedkar, Spinoza, all denounced dimensions of their inherited religious traditions and therefore renounced their religious security within them; out of this protest they effected reconceptions, reconstructions, revitalizations of their traditions. Furthermore, what happens to Hocking's emphasis on the "unfinishedness" of the religious quest? Does a person who is at peace, who believes that he or she has God for an Intimate Infallible Associate, who has experienced that Ultimate Reality is conspiring for humanity, not against it, exist in a state of feeling unfinished, or in a state of completion? Admittedly, Hocking says this individual exists in a state of anticipated attainment. But is it not far more logical that the man or woman who is *not* at peace, whose religious tradition is failing him or her, who feels adrift in meaningless or hopelessness, will be the agents of reconception, the seekers after an authentically universal religion, with or without some kind of mystical experience?

I maintain, however, that Hocking was right in his intuition which first appeared in the early 1900s, and was expressed most forcefully by him near the middle of this century, that there is a religious feeling abroad that is seeking for a cosmic religion, a new universalism, to effect a better world. I suggest it is not necessarily the mystic who is

involved in the seeking. I mentioned earlier that I felt Hocking was on surer ground when he spoke of renunciation as a common denominator for effecting a world faith, rather than on mystics as the agents of reconception. I suggest that on the part of Christians, those who in this era are willing to renounce the present institutional preoccupation of the Christian Church with itself will be, in fact are, the agents of this reconception of Christianity. In other words, those Christians willing to renounce ("lose") institutional religious security will "find" a new life for the tradition. For them Hocking's model of reconception is a valuable tool. For example, the movement coming to be known as "World Wide Ecumenism" (promoted among others by George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Konrad Raiser, newly elected General Secretary of the World Council of Churches) already contains such agents of reconception and promotes their increase.

I suggest that the results of a recent study of World Wide Ecumenism conducted by the United Church of Canada, moves specifically in the direction of the reconception of Christianity which Hocking recommended. Professor Paul W. Newman, Inter-Church Inter-Faith Officer of the United Church of Canada provides a succint understanding of this kind of contemporary Christian mission and the agents thereof. He writes,

> The mission of God is larger than the church, but the church has its part to play, its work to do. Our role is to bear witness to God's reign, to seek understanding of and the well-being of others who claim or claim not Jesus' Spirit. It is to gather allies in the Spirit of God to work at healing the Earth and its creatures. This healing work of God calls Christians to respect diversity and to recognize the rich gifts of the Spirit in people of different races, creeds and genders. At the same time, our unity in Christ calls us to move beyond the pain and hurt of our Christian divisions, to get on with the work of God in the world.[15]

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[15]Paul A. Newman, "Toward a Renewed Understanding of Ecumenism: Life and Work in the the Wilderness of the World," The United Church of Canada, privately published, October 19, 1992, p. 8. Newman's paper builds on proposals emanating from the World Council of Churches especially in 1961 at New Delhi, India. The thought can actually also be traced to the 1910 and 1928 meetings of the International Missionary Council. Cf. Vallée, *op cit,* pp. 265-302. In addition to the thought from 1910-1975 cited by Vallée, three later works from the World Council of Churches promote consociations for work and worship as recommended previously by Hocking, but without any emphasis on mystical experience as a prerequisite for these collaborations. They are *Faith in the Midst of Faiths: Reflections on Dialogue in Community* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977); *Mission and Evangelism: An*

The similarities to Hocking's thought about the nature and purpose of Christianity and its contemporary mission are evident. So, too, is Hocking's concern that the diversity of Christian denominations and sects makes the tradition's reconception very difficult. Later in this same document Newman suggests that one of the major challenges facing persons engaging in world-wide ecumenism, is that of "deciding who is really working at God's true purposes in the world." I suggest that the process for this discernment is available in Hocking's model of reconception.[16]

In summary, I conclude that Hocking was right, in his intuition that there are persons abroad ready to move in the direction of the material and spiritual development of the world. He was wrong in limiting the agents of this integral human development to the mystics. Even with as broad a definition of mysticism as he offers, the term is too "loaded" to be truly useful in the effort he proposes. It ignores for example, the large portion of Christianity which places no emphasis on the mystical experience as essential for membership in the Christian community. The reality of the fruits of authentic mysticism which Hocking proposed, namely, a will to create through suffering, a detached attachment and attached detachment to the improvement of this world order, can, however, be identified in those who are working in numbers of ways for a community of communities

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Ecumenical Affirmation (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983); *My Neighbour's Faith -- and Mine: Theological Discoveries Through Interfaith Dialogue* (Geneva:World Council of Churches, 1986). This last document, prepared by Wesley Ariarajah, defines as the purpose of the work "to promote an awareness of our neighbours as people of living faiths, whose beliefs and practices should become integral elements in our theological thinking about the world and the human community." Cf. p. viii. I suggest that the Hocking model offers the "how to" for this integration. Ariarajah has recently produced his own history of the relationship of Protestant Christians to other religions from 1910-1983 in *Hindus and Christians: A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). Further, the entire thrust of the 1990 Canberra Meeting of the World Council of Churches, "Alive in the Spirit," promotes the consociations for work and worship which were so vital in Hocking's thought. Stanley Samartha, who organized the meeting in Chang Mai, Thailand, from which the 1983 WCC position paper emerged has warned me against placing too high a value on the WCC documents. "Only the Catholics seem to be reading them now, or listening to me now." Samartha's work for the past ten years has been focussing on "one Jesus, many Christs," in the direction of Hocking's "unbound and unlimited Christ." (Personal interview, Bangalore, India, February 5, 1992.)

[16]Newman, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

based on a new universalism. I suggest that a close look at the lives of persons like the Buddha, Jesus, Muhammed, Spinoza, Gandhi, Ambedkar, makes clear that each in their own way, moved beyond preoccupation with the institutional dimensions of their particular religious traditions, and in that assisted in the reconception and revitalization of them. I suggest that Christians and others who also move beyond institutional religious preoccupations will be the contemporary agents of reconception of the living religions to effect a world faith.[17]

Although I do not accept the mystics as the primary agents of the reconception of Christianity, I accept the need for the tradition's reconception. Therefore, I move now to an analysis of Hocking's thinking on the essence of Christianity, viz., that which needs to be retained in any revitalization of the Christian religion.

B. The Essence of Christianity in Hocking's Thought

I suggest that Hocking was right to wish to identify the unlosable essence of Christianity for anyone attempting a reconception of it. Persons involved in such

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[17] Beginning in 1966, the year of Hocking's death, considerable evidence has been being gathered which, if it is to be believed, proves that there are persons at post-conventional stages of moral and faith development seeking for cosmic guiding principles of life. It appears that thirty-three percent of persons past mid-life are involved in this kind of searching. This is not just the case in North America but internationally. There is a correlation between higher education and the desire for a cosmic religion. The story and results of this research are found in James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981) and more recently in his *Weaving the New Creation* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). The research builds on the works of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson as interpreted by Lawrence Kohlberg of Harvard University, and Kohlberg's associate, Carol Gilligan. The theological dimensions of Fowler's work come from the historian of religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, whose hope for a "community of communities," in terms of the world's religions, is found especially in his 1981 *Toward a World Theology*. Fowler was Smith's student at Harvard. Smith is often likened to Hocking in his common core approach to faith and his emphasis on including believers in one's research on religions. Smith is not conscious of any direct influence of Hocking on him but he did read *The Coming World Civilization* when he was a graduate student at Princeton and met Hocking there. (Personal conversation, October, 1990.) There are seven stages of development in the Fowler model and I suggest that the last three provide the world-wide potential agents for effecting a world faith, without recourse to mystical experience. The stages are primal faith, intuitive-projective faith, mythic-literal faith, synthetic-conventional faith, individuative-reflective faith, conjunctive faith, universalizing faith. It is at the stage of individuative-reflective faith that the person moves beyond preoccupation with his or her own religious institution. Persons like Buddha, Jesus, and Gandhi, whom Hocking calls mystics, Fowler calls universalists.

revitalizations want to know their religion's "bottom line" which is precisely its essence or true nature.[18]

Stephen Sykes in his book *The Identity of Christianity* provides an excellent history of the positions taken on the "essence of Christianity" from Schleiermacher to Barth.[19] It is Sykes' conviction, and I concur, that within Christianity, any attempt at identifying its essence, is intimately connected with a need to demonstrate God's "undeviating" love for humanity, and the explication of that love in the Christ of God through the Holy Spirit. The effort is made periodically because without this understanding, applicable to a given moment in time, Christianity ceases to exist. Intellectual content alone is of course not sufficient for the tradition to persist; dramatic enactments of the intellectual content of the tradition (liturgy), and lives lived out of the intellectual position (ethics) are also necessary. Christianity cannot escape an alternation between effective worship and authentic work for the Reign of God.

Like Hocking who in 1932 said that Christianity must be preached in the "idiom of the people" and not alone in antiquated western religious thought forms, Sykes holds that unless the intellectual content of Christianity is expressed in an intelligible language, it cannot be enacted in ritual, much less lived. Despite the current unpopularity of seeking the

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[18]I am aware of the position taken by Peter Berger that the only persons who can profitably enter into dialogue with their world religious neighbours are those "not grounded in any tradition" and who are "unsure of their position." Cf. Peter Berger, "The Pluralistic Situation and the Coming Dialogue Between the World Religions," *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 1 (1981), pp. 39 and 36. I do not think this contradicts my position because it seems logical to me that persons who feel they are moving beyond what their traditions have to offer them want to have their own tradition straight, in case the more they seek is already there now within their own tradition.

[19]Stephen Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity: Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). In an earlier work, *Christian Theology Today* (London & Oxford: Mowbray, 1973, reprint 1981), Chapter 2, Sykes presents his own description of the essence of Christianity. In his final chapter of this work Sykes proposes that the essence of Christianity can be discovered in an analysis of "The Character of Christ." Sykes offer this analysis because of his conviction (p. 53) that "Christianity far from being a single religious group, is a family of religions with a common focus." The common focus is the "character of Christ." While Sykes' analysis of what is essential for any group in the Christian family is far more elaborate than is Hocking's faith (creed), code, and deed, Sykes does propose an intellectual content, which results in an ethical code, to be lived and not only believed.

essence of any religion, Sykes maintains that it is essential to do so at the present moment for both internal and external Christian relationships.[20]

To identify the core content of any religion, in particular the core of Christianity, is difficult, but not impossible. Hocking himself admitted the difficulty when he explained that early councils of both Buddhism and Christianity were convened precisely to undertake this difficult task of identifying what those traditions were about when Buddhists and Christians began to function outside the milieus in which they had emerged. The difficulties of achieving consensus in those councils is matter of historical record. It is also true that the diversity of believers in any given tradition makes consensus about the essence of a religion very difficult. Today, there are in Roman Catholicism alone, liberal Roman Catholics, conservative Roman Catholics, centrists, liberationists, to name just a few. Since Vatican Council II, it is possible, to paraphrase Ben Gurion's suggestion about how to define a Jew at the time of the formation of the State of Israel, to say that a Catholic "is a Catholic who feels like he or she is a Catholic." Despite this diversity, Roman Catholic systematic theologians, still seek to make a convincing case that there is an essence of Catholicism.[21] I submit that taking into account all the divergent thought within and among Christians, Hocking makes a convincing case about the essence of Christianity, in his description of its creed (faith), code, and deed. Although for Hocking, this essence springs from personal experience, and I have registered my concern about this, I suggest that his description of Christianity's content and mission meets the self-perception of all within the family of Christianity.

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[20]This is precisely the position of Richard McBrien which resulted in his *Catholicism*, Volumes I and II (Minneapolis, Minn.: Winston Press, 1980). Cf. the Preface to Volume I.

[21]Richard McBrien, *What is Catholicism?*, VHS Tapes, 1-3 (Allen, Tx.: Argus, 1984). In these tapes McBrien maintains that "sacramentality, mediation, and community," are the essence of Catholicism. Also see McBrien's comments on the work of identifying Catholicism's essence by theologians like David Tracy and Richard McCormick, S.J., in *Report on the Church: Catholicism After Vatican II* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), pp. 60-63.

(Before I proceed with that argument, however, I wish parenthetically to reflect briefly on Hocking's emphasis on personal experience. I have at times pondered that especially in *The Coming World Civilization* he seems to extend the idea of a personal mystical experience to include that experience connected with any individual's being loved, served, edified *by* a Christian, i.e., not a *direct* experience of God, but a *mediated* experience of God through another human being. If what underlies the love or service of the Christian toward any other human being, is the enactment of what Hocking identifies as the lived essence of Christianity, viz., a passion for the material and spiritual development of persons, then the individual *has* experienced incarnated divine love. Is it possible that Hocking's method of induction is really the Catholic emphasis on sacramentality and mediation? This would explain further his conviction that "Catholics and Quakers together have it." To my knowledge, Hocking's last definition of mysticism or the mystic experience is "the ontological empiricism of feeling."[22] Feeling loved *by* a Christian could constitute a mediated mystical experience, it would seem. My difficulties with mystics as the agents of reconception remain, but it appears that precisely what Hocking means by this "ontological empiricism of feeling" needs further exploration.)

In his description of the essence of Christianity, Hocking writes that it consists of the knowledge of a "divine love for the created world," a love "that suffers," and which desires to "create through suffering," a desire which must be "reborn as active love." The "divine love for the created world," of which Hocking writes can surely be the "Father" or Creator; the "love that suffers" is the Christ of God or the Son of God, partaking in God's own life; the desire to "create through suffering" which "must be reborn as active love," is the work of the Holy Spirit in more classical Christian pneumatological language; the "movement" [the Church?] of the Christ "creating the nonfutility of all such wills" is the actualization of the Kingdom [reign] of God, in more conventional language. I suggest that

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[22]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 179.

mystic or not, Hocking provides contemporary Christianity with a successful contemporary induction of this tradition, an intellectual reconception of its principal tenets, an invitation to worship, and to work with its world religious neighbours. This is not the opinion of Leroy Rouner, and in this portion of my appraisal of Hocking's work, I wish to suggest an answer to the objection that Rouner raised to Hocking's position on the essence of Christianity.[23]

Rouner questions what happens in Hocking's description of the essence of Christianity to "sin," and to the "death and resurrection" of Jesus which makes the revelation of God in Jesus "finally normative for our knowledge of God." Perhaps the simplest, although too flippant, answer to this objection is to suggest that Hocking never said he was doing dogmatic theology. Another answer could be that if Paul were for it, Hocking would likely be against it! If Hocking could credit Paul with having invented the idea of Providence, which Hocking described as an albatross around humanity's neck, he could also likely claim that Paul's conviction that without Jesus' resurrection Christian faith was in vain was deleterious hyperbole. Nevertheless, I argue that at this point of human history, dogmatic theology or Paul notwithstanding, it was right for Hocking to omit Jesus' resurrection as "normative."

Hocking knew the history of Christianity and of Christian missions, and actually experienced in his trip to the Orient, Christian efforts at radical displacement of other living religions.[24] Jesus may *yet* emerge as normative, for Christianity, and for other living

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[23]Leroy Stephens Rouner, "Idealism, Christianity, and a World Faith: William Ernest Hocking's View of Christianity and Its Relation to Non-Christian Religions" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1961), pp. 344-346.

[24]An educator in her own right, and co-founder with Ernest Hocking of The Shady Hill School, Agnes Hocking was a member of the fact-finding committee of the Commission of Appraisal of the Laymen's Inquiry with responsibility for elementary education. Her findings were so devastating, especially those concerning India, that they were refused publication by Oliver Perry who claimed they were useless because they were "too anecdotal." Both Hockings fought the decision saying that "too truthful" was closer to the reason they were not published. Agnes' notes and the correspondence with Perry are on the second floor of West Wind Library, Madison, New Hampshire. The indoctrination masquerading as Christian education is her chief concern.

religions, but given Hocking's position on Christianity in its ideal and real forms, he was consistent in not presenting Jesus as normative now. For Hocking, the "unbound Christ," viz., the Spirit of God, is normative. And what else can this "unbound Christ" be but the "active love" of which Hocking writes as essential to Christianity? He does present Jesus' mysticism and his idea of justice as central to Christianity. But he constantly insists that whoever, or whatever saves from hopelessness, meaninglessness, whoever or whatever leads to wholeness, is that person's unbound Christ, the Spirit of God, leading to all truth, no matter where it is to be found. We saw this insight in Hocking's response to the question, "What is a lost soul?" referred to in the discussion of the essence of Christianity, but there is one more forceful reference to the unbound Christ among Hocking's unpublished papers.

Toward the end of his life, Hocking appears to have gone further in his thinking about the role of the unbound Christ than he did in his published works. Although the position is similar to his thinking in "What is a lost soul?" which occurred immediately after the publication of *Re-Thinking Missions*, in this later work Hocking moves beyond his earlier explanation of one's saviour as whoever or whatever ends meaningless and provides purpose, to a specific mention of how the unbound Christ functions *outside* of Christianity. He writes,

> [the unbound Christ] is not confined to the church, nor to the Christian cult. Jesus has become the symbol of the Christ function *everywhere*, that of the human aspect of God.... Whatever breaks through the opacity, the numbness, the impersonal distance of the self of the world, that is one's Christ.[25]

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[25]This statement [emphasis mine] is found on p. 71, in Box C-11-f, at West Wind Library, Madison, N.H. It is part of an untitled 96 page manuscript in two parts: I: The Teaching of Jesus, II: The Teaching of the Church. There are three drafts of the monograph, the first rough draft marked "Dubrovnik, 1938." The third version is a professionally typed manuscript, with a few minor corrections in Ernest Hocking's unmistakable handwriting. It is typed on a machine that was used by Hocking from 1954 to his death. The box containing the manuscript and a 1932 letter from Etienne Gilson, in which Gilson is exceedingly anti-semitic, was found in the 1969 cataloguing. It was unknown to Leroy Rouner and Hocking appears not to have shared this conviction with him in 1959-1961. Richard Hocking maintains

Given his conviction that Christianity at the present moment does not exist in its ideal form, and his conviction that the "unbound Christ" is "not confined to the church, nor to the Christian cult," how could Hocking logically identify Jesus of Nazareth as "normative" for the knowledge of God? "Normative" is Rouner's word, not Hocking's. Not knowing if Jesus is unique or inclusive for all others does not prevent Christians from living lives like his. I suggest that Hocking's study and travels left him with the conviction that Christians had not yet learned from nor worked with other believers sufficiently to know with certainty that Jesus' reconception of Judaism surpasses any and all other religious revelations, much less is the fulfillment of those living religions.

It is not that Jesus is insignificant for Hocking. I have described at length how important Jesus' reconception of Judaism is in Hocking's understanding. Earlier in his still unpublished manuscript which I have just quoted, Hocking writes that "the essence of religion, seen for what it is, and then taken in a burning spirit of sincerity, becomes a purging fire." The pursuit of identifying the essence of a tradition, providing an induction of it, especially of the nature of that effort as undertaken by someone like Jesus is, Hocking says, "to sift out all inconsistent stuff, and so to stir old fabrics to the roots, as it has occassionally (sic) stirred the ankylosing Christian fabric itself."[26] I suggest that in refusing to identify Jesus as unique, universal, "normative" now, Hocking is doing his own stirring of the present ankylosing Christian fabric.

But what of the absence of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the description of the essence of Christianity? I argue that Hocking in omitting those historical dimensions of Jesus of Nazareth is consistent with his insistence that the Christ is not

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that in addition to completing his metaphysics, his father was concerned until the end of his life with "identifying Christianity as the essence of religion" and believes this manuscript was his final attempt to do so. As I have suggested earlier, I believe Hocking was trying to describe what Panikkar calls "Christianness," what I call compassion, as the essence of all authentic religion, no matter the religion's name.

[26]*Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

limited to Christianity, not even to Jesus of Nazareth. I want further to make the case that refusing to identify Jesus as "normative" is also consistent with Hocking's idea that the tenets of a religion must be verifiable in the life of a believer within it. He would not accept inferred or vicarious experiences. There must be passions, deaths, and resurrections in the lives of all Christians, not alone in the life of Jesus, if the tradition is to have validity. Hocking's firm position was that all authentic religion is autobiographical. It may be that Hocking was an early proponent of what has come to be understood as the subjective school of thought concerning the resurrection, viz., that the resurrection took place in and through the faith of the believers in Jesus. Paul Tillich and Hocking were friends, and Tillich is often identified as a subjectivist on the question of resurrection.[27] I suggest that in Hocking's view resurrections must be apparent now in the lives of Christians or the category of resurrection is not useful. While it is usually considered unsound to argue from silence, is it possible that Hocking's concerns were so obviously soteriocentric that he moved early on from Christocentrism and Theocentrism to soteriocentrism? By soteriocentrism, I mean Hocking's constant emphasis on activities which save. Human beings were intended by God to be "perfect," to be God for each other, and all others, in their own time and their own place. It was by their "fruits" that one would know an authentic religion, including Christianity. Authentic religion "saved" people from greed, lust, hatred, hypocrisy, duplicity, pretence, without "destroying their virility (sic) and effectiveness" in the social order. Moreover, authentic religion did not do this by relying on promises of rewards through a "tinselled and sugared otherworldliness." Authentic

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[27]This subjective view of the resurrection is often attributed to Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, and Willi Marxsen. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume II (University of Chicago Press, 1957), especially pp. 183-90; Rudolf Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 35-43; Willi Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical and Theological Problem," *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, C.F.D. Moule, Editor. (London, SCM Press, 1968), pp. 15-50.

religion enhances the arts and the sciences.[28] The universe might be God's (Theocentrism), and Jesus might be the (a?) human face of God (Christocentrism), but if there were no clear concern for total human welfare here and now (Soteriocentrism), Christianity would not be no matter Jesus' passion, death, resurrection. In Hocking's scheme, it would appear that Christians in each historical era, are to be God for each other and for their world religious neighbours, even as Jesus was the human face of God in his own time and his own place. I suggest that this is what Hocking proposes by his constant insistence that Jesus meant what he said when he called persons to "perfection " viz., to be God for each other.

Like Tillich and John Hick, I see Hocking in the vanguard of contemporary thinkers who maintain that whatever resurrection was it is a statement about the action of God on behalf of humanity. Hick reminds us that Jesus was raised by the power of God, not by his own power. For Hick, it is conceivable that God could do the same for others even before some final judgement. Hick also argues that a physical resurrection of Jesus would not necessarily imply his divinity nor his absolute uniqueness.[29] I am of the opinion that Hocking's thought was in this vein, and that resurrection was simply not an issue for him apart from what it might say about the power of God. The divinity of Jesus for Hocking, as he clearly stated in his appendix to *Living Religions and a World Faith*, and which I have described previously at length, consisted in the spiritual or mystical union of Jesus' will with the will of God. That kind of union is possible for any believer, in Hocking's understanding, not just for Jesus, and that possible union is precisely the message of Jesus' incarnation. The Christian, intimately united to God, and in some way knowing God as one's Intimate, Infallible Associate, is convinced that physical death will

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[28]Hocking, *Living Religions and a World Faith*, pp. 195-205.

[29]John Hick, *The Center of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 30.

no more have the final word about his or her life than it had in the life of Jesus. This is Hocking's "non-futility of all such wills."[30]

Incarnation was important for Hocking because of his position that the Christian "participates" in the life and mission of *God*, and for that participation to be confirmed, and not presumptuous, there needed to be at least one historical enfleshment of one whose will was so spiritually united to the will of God, that to see him was to see the human face of God. For human participation in the mission of God to be realized, God-in-general had to become God-in-particular [Incarnation]. This way of thinking runs parallel to Hocking's argument that religion-in-general, to be effective, must always be religion-in-particular. I suggest Incarnation was also vital because of Hocking's soteriocentrism. In Hocking's analysis of divinity, an unincarnated deity simply does not take the world so seriously as does an incarnated one.[31]

In summary, I suggest that Hocking's position, or I should say, lack of position on the resurrection is consistent with his conviction that each Christian believer is called upon to be God in his or her own place and time, in other words "to be perfect" through spiritual union with the Divine. I submit that Hocking's delineation of the essence of Christianity as a creed, code, and deed committed to the integral material and spiritual development of all peoples is valid despite its apparent lack of reference to the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Hocking wished to make clear that made in the image of God, humanity has the

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[30]The entire thrust of Hocking's 1958 work, *The Meaning of Immortality in Human Experience*, is a study of the "excursive" and "incursive" selves. The "excursive" self is the body and the "incursive" self is the human mind and spirit. Hocking posits that an "incursive" self which loves God and therefore loves and "re-deems" God's creation, can go on, and in Hocking's theory does go on. An "incursive" self which hates God and therefore hates the created order and does nothing for its improvement does not go on. In denying "Life" and life, a hating incursive self denies itself eternal life.

[31]When discussing the importance of the Incarnation for his father, Richard Hocking (July 9, 1992, Madison, N.H.) related the following. It was Ernest Hocking's custom to assemble the family on Christmas Eve and read the story of the birth of Jesus. Richard remembers one Christmas when he was in his early thirties, probably 1935-36, when his father began reading the nativity and was so overwhelmed with the story that Ernest began to weep and could not go on. He passed the book to Richard to finish reading the story of the nativity for the family.

potential for making the reign of God or the chaos of hell a reality here and now. This is at the heart of his "God does not know what I am going to do this afternoon." Hocking's description of the essence of Christianity is personally enabling, psychologically supportive and enriching, and vitally concerned with the well-being of the created order. His over-riding conviction that God needs humanity to make history, offers individuals enormous value, purpose and freedom, possibly even more than it did a half century ago when Hocking proposed his model. I suggest, in closing this portion of my analysis of Hocking's work, that Hocking's understanding of the essence of Christianity also meets Sykes' criteria for an effective description of the essence of the Christian tradition, viz., that the timeless message of Jesus must be proclaimed in a timely idiom and that the search for essence is an effort to demonstrate the undeviating love of God for humanity. I suggest that Hocking's creed proclaims this undeviating love of the Creator; the code is a succinct statement of Jesus' beatitudes; the deed of living the beatitudes is effected by the life of "active love," which is the Holy Spirit. Hocking keeps a trinitarian formula, basic to most of Christianity, without demanding arithmetic slight of hand, viz., one plus one plus one equalling one, or entering into the sticky persons/subsistence debate of dogmatic theologians. The formulation he offers is a dynamic one. He gives contemporary Christians a searching version of trinitarian modalism in "the idiom of the people."[32]

Therefore, I credit Hocking with having produced a succinct and valid reinterpretation of the essence of Christianity, and say that he is consistent in his position of not including the resurrection of Jesus within it. Hocking was justified in proposing such a reinterpretation of the core content of Christianity because Christians, especially those moving toward a new universalism through a world wide ecumenism, require this

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[32]A complete discussion of this argument would take me too far afield of my appraisal of Hocking's work. The need for such a "model of orthodox trinitarian modalism" for Christians in inter-faith and inter-ideological consociations, especially with Jews and Muslims, is described in detail in Gerard S. Sloyan, "The Three Who Are God," *Jesus in Focus: A Life in Its Setting* (Mystic, Ct.: John XXIII Press, 1983), pp. 151-187.

understanding. This core content of Christianity needs continual renewal in Hocking's thought if Christianity is to be a living religion and possibly the world faith so I move now to an assessment of the model of that reconception proposed by Hocking.

C. The Reconception Theory

At the beginning of this chapter I raised the question of whether or not one would want a world faith, a new universalism, a community of communities, a new myth, as the enterprise is sometimes currently called, toward which Hocking envisioned that his reconception model would contribute. Persons like the philosopher and theologian Raimundo Panikkar suggest that this call for "a" faith, or "a" world myth is rooted in a peculiarly western mentality which presumes that if something is true it must be universally true. Panikkar feels that this approach does not sufficiently take into account the eastern religious mind which is capable of accepting a multiplicity of truths as one would experience in reflecting on the six schools of Indian philosophy all considered orthodox. I suggest that this is also the early position of Wilfred Cantwell Smith in his efforts to have persons involved in religious studies in the West change their "conceptual windows," and to cease thinking of religions as "package items."[33] Despite Panikkar's present position and Smith's earlier position, I suggest that the present moment requires a universal faith even more than Hocking deemed necessary at mid-century. Our historical moment is one of worldwide liberation movements, geopolitical changes, ecological crises, interdependent economic models, literacy, migrations of peoples, to name just a few situations, all of which require resolution. Global telecommunications media bring these needs daily not only into western living rooms, but to the entire world. Resolutions of *global* needs and

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[33]For Panikkar's position, cf. Krieger, *The New Universalism*, Chapter 2. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 143. From 1981 on, however, Smith has begun to talk about the need for a "community of communities," of world religions.

wants require *global* generating principles of action and these generating principles are precisely what Hocking has called a world faith required to provide the underpinning for a world civilization. I concur with Hocking that there is such a need. The strength of Hocking's position for me is that he always envisioned this world faith, what he originally called religion-in-general, as requiring religion-in-particular. Hocking believed that the creed, code, and deed which he offered as the essence of Christianity, was the essence of *all* valid generating principles of human life. This is his religion-in-general. Being God for each other which is what he promotes as the world faith, must be enacted within diverse cultures. This is his religion-in-particular. Hocking did not envision some homogeneous blob of a world religion. He was promoting a religious underpinning for every diverse culture. In fact, I suggest that Hocking is one of the earliest proponents of thinking globally, and acting locally.

I have also raised the question about the possibility that Hocking's reconception theory may be no more than another subtle Christian triumphalism, another kind of "anonymous Christianity" which brought such concern to thoughtful non-Christians when this concept first began to be discussed publicly in the mid-1960s.[34] It is my position that because Hocking has written so extensively *for* Christians and about Christianity's reconception it could appear to be the case that he is promoting Christianity as the world faith. In the example I have quoted of Hocking's suggestion of the similarity between the Confucian's "Waiting for the Heavenly Mandate," and the Christian's losing life in order to find it, it does seem that he is telling the Confucians how similar to Christians they are, rather than telling Christians how Confucian they are! But Hocking was constantly seeking

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[34]I am thinking in particular of Raimundo Panikkar's *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., 1964, reprints 1968, 1977) and the unfavorable response of non-Christians to it. Panikkar's "completely revised and enlarged edition" of this book (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981) has taken into account the criticisms of his first attempt. The term "anonymous Christians" was first used by Karl Rahner, S.J., in his article "Christianity and the non-Christian Religions," *Theological Investigations*, Volume V. Translated by K.H.Kruger, 1966. The speech involved from which the article was generated and in which the terms "anonymous Christianity" appear was given April 28, 1961.

the evolution of a world faith through a consociation of religions and I do not see this as Christian triumphalism. On the contrary, I suggest he was inviting Christians to a stance of true humility and anything but triumphalism in promoting "reverence for reverence" on the part of Christians in relation to other religions. Hocking was hoping for "a recovery of proportion and *vitality* " within all the world's religions.

I think Hocking hopes that the religion which will evolve as a world faith will be Christianity because he is so convinced of that religion's commitment, especially in its Catholic and Quaker forms, to an "aggressive spiritual and material *caritas*." Hocking clearly expects Christianity to lead the way in terms of reconception of all living religions, because he thought Christianity has dealt successfully with modernity, in particular with western technology and technocracy, the onslaughts of biblical criticism, and not least of all with evolutionism. With the export of western technology, Hocking is convinced that the other living religions will be forced to deal with the same kinds of issues on the part of their core content, as has Christianity. For me, Hocking clearly seeks a maturity in *all* living religions, a discernment within each of them of what is unlosable and essential, through consociations with their world religious neighbours. I believe that Hocking thinks Christianity has the edge in becoming this world faith, but he does not guarantee or even propose that it will do so. In Hocking's own words, "the architecture [faith?] of the city to be built is still out of sight."

It is, of course, questionable today whether Christianity still has the edge in dealing with modernity, to say nothing of post-modernity. It is interesting, for example, to note that so eminent a scientist as Fritzof Capra has chosen to use the Tao to illustrate contemporary quantum physics, and has not used a western religious symbol or concept. Hocking's own definition of Christianity's parentage of modernity was that it had given the West that period of time in which science had learned what it could and could not do, and religion had learned what it could and could not do. If a western physicist chooses to use

an eastern religious symbol to illustrate his approach to physics, is that position of Hocking's concerning Christianity and modernity still valid? I suggest that inasmuch as Hocking understood that Christianity was built on "the nature faith by which all men live," and that Christianity "is the making-fully-explicit" of this universal nature faith, he can be understood as prejudiced in favour of Christianity, in particular in its ideal form, as the emerging world faith.[35]

I conclude that present global concerns, in particular in areas connected with liberation, literacy, and economics, require an international generating principle or motivation for their resolution, and this is a description of Hocking's world faith. Further, I conclude that Hocking believed that Christianity had an edge in becoming the world faith inasmuch as Hocking saw Christianity as making explicit universal convictions about righteous ways of living, but that this was not a subtle triumphalism on Hocking's part. It was a conviction born out of the great worth for Hocking of a tradition which could effect and was in considerable effect already enabling both the spiritual and material well-being of all of humanity.

Given the need that Hocking proposes for a world faith and given the potential of an aggressive spiritual and material *caritas*, I suggest now three ways in which I see the Hocking model of particular use at this juncture of world history: 1) by religious seekers in their own personal quests for meaning; 2) intra-religiously and intra-ideologically; 3) inter-religiously and inter-ideologically. Before I explain these positions in detail, I wish to provide some background to this suggestion.

I see as the major strength of the Hocking model that it identifies a situation already in place. It appears that at this moment, only religious fundamentalists believe in the radical displacement of one religion by another. Also, most religious thinkers, theologians,

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[35]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 113.

academics, and persons in leadership positions in the living religions, reject relativism, which is often understood by them as rooted in syncretism and indifferentism. Hocking also rejected this kind of relativism. The Hocking model does not ignore differences but uses them to provide a dialectic for growth of all believers involved in the consociations. The model fits and in fact precedes many contemporary models of collaborative management, research, social and political life. It values divergent thought and thinkers, and is not punitive in its estimation of them. It takes seriously the person at the grass roots, the worker on the line, the "believers" in the tradition and does not limit the effectiveness of a living religion to its leaders. The model understands that development is rooted in opposition, in differences, and not in simple correlations. It seeks the longer, more effective route of consensus.[36]

I suggest that Hocking's model of reconception is an accurate image of what has happened throughout the history of religions, and of what is currently happening within religions and ideologies if we except those who still identify themselves as "the Only Way." I suggest that what has happened in the history of religion and what is happening is nowhere else so clearly explicated as it was when Hocking took his friend Whitehead's suggestion in 1940 to put the reality of that history of radical displacement, synthesis, and Hocking's hopes for reconception, into diagrammatic form.

I move now to an explanation of how I see the model of reconception capable of being used personally, intra-religiously, and inter-religiously. I do not see this as a linear progression, but rather like the spokes of a wheel, happening simultaneously for greatest benefit to the living religions and for the evolution of a world faith.

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[36]Hocking's model is remarkably similar to the participative or quality management method of W. Edwards Deming, first proposed in 1943–44. Rejected in the United States, particularly by the U.S. automobile industry, Deming went to Japan after the Second World War and revitalized that country's economy. At the age of 93 he has now returned to North America and is functioning there as a management consultant. Cf. W. Edwards Deming, *Out of the Crisis* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Center for Advanced Engineering Study, 1982) and Mary Walton, *The Deming Management Method* (New York: Perigree Books, 1986).

In terms of the personal religious quest, the reconception model can help end what James Fowler calls "the tyranny of the they." Often, but not always, and the individual always has the freedom to ignore the call to a more independent life, persons who experience the paradoxical nature of truth, come to depend less and less on external sources of authority. They experience the need to form a new identity and to do this, they increasingly seek out other views, opinions, insights. These persons are, in fact, involved in a "demythologizing process" which results in their constantly questioning what things mean. This can be a time of tremendous upheaval, so much so that some persons choose not to deal with it.[37] I suggest that knowing the Hocking model would invite more persons to deal positively with this very critical time in their lives, and encourage them to religious maturity. In the process of learning the religious and moral systems of another, or of others, the individual can incorporate the good that the other position has to offer into his or her own life, and grow accordingly, and not feel guilty in the process. The individual's search for Truth becomes a participation in the what Hocking called the Holy Spirit's activity of leading into "all truth" which truth is "reborn into active love." For individuals in hierarchical religions in particular, I suggest that the Hocking model offers a valuable tool to end the "tyranny of the they."

As valuable as I see the Hocking model to be for the individual, I propose that the greatest utility for the model of reconception at the moment is for intra-religious reconception. This is the second value I see in the model. I suggest that Hocking does not

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[37]Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, pp. 179-183. It is essential to remember that Fowler's research indicates clearly that there is no guarantee that persons will accept the challenges offered at any particular stage of faith, and deal with those challenges. There is no guarantee that persons who accept the challenges will deal with them successfully. About the challenges connected with the conjunctive stage of faith, for example, Fowler writes that the danger "lies in the direction of a paralyzing passivity or inaction, giving rise to complacency or cynical withdrawal, due to its paradoxical understanding of truth." *Ibid.*, p. 198. Even the universalists, who in Fowler's thought "have become incarnators and actualizers of the spirit of an inclusive and fulfilled human community" are not perfect. Fowler uses Gandhi's imperfections as an example of what he means, although he identifies Gandhi as a universalist. Gandhi himself refused to remove toilet wastes of Untouchables from his ashram but insisted that his wife Kasturbai perform that onerous task. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

emphasize this use of the model to the extent that he might. Toward the end of his life he was concerned with the numbers of Christian cults and denominations and wondered how any reconception of the total Christian religion could occur with so many variations on the Christian theme. As valid as I see Hocking's description of the entity which is Christianity, I suggest that the internal diversity within many present Christian congregations, to say nothing of the variety among them, requires the Christian community itself to reach a consensus of what Christianity is for. I suggest that Hocking may have missed this valuable use of his model because he himself was so clear about the core content and mission of Christianity. Is it not possible that Christian individuals and communities, must have the same experience as Hocking did of identifying the essence of the religion, without having it given to them, and in that much take "ownership" of Christianity's content and mission? I would suggest that at this moment in world history, it is essential that that happen if Christianity is to emerge as a living and universal religion, the ideal Christianity which Hocking envisioned.

In family, work, and social lives, participation in decision-making is increasingly the norm, especially in North America and Europe. If this is not the case in Christian religious life, will Christian communities "live" or become agents for the integral development of all peoples? James Fowler and his colleagues at Emory University have just begun some interesting research in this area which appears to me to substantiate my position that with participation in identifying the core content and mission of contemporary Christianity, using the Hocking model, Christians can become these agents of world renewal for which Hocking hoped.[38]

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[38]This is, of course, also precisely what is happening in the Liberation Theology movement. It is a theology from below achieving a consensus of understanding of Christianity's content and mission on the part of ministers and laity alike. It is very threatening to religious autocrats. For an account of the current difficulty on these points between the Vatican and the Latin American bishops, cf. Laurie Hansen, "'No Backsliding', Bishops Claim," *The Prairie Messenger*, November 16, 1992, p. 2. Also, in May of 1992, the staff of the Indian Catholic Bishops' National, Biblical, Liturgical, Catechetical Centre, Bangalore, committed itself to promote a "theology by the laity, not for the laity, a truly people's theology." In June of that same year Joseph Cardinal Tomko of the Vatican spoke out against such efforts and asked the Indian

In the mid-1980s, Fowler and his colleagues noted that three of the Christian churches in the Atlanta area, one Methodist, one Baptist, and one Protestant Episcopal, had become "magnet" churches and "public" churches, that is they were drawing members from other than their own geographical areas and Christian denominations and they were concerned about the public weal, locally, nationally and internationally, and acting to improve it. They determined to study these churches and see why and how they differed from other Christian denominations in Atlanta who were experiencing loss of membership or confronted with persons in the congregations hanging on "with one heart and one lung hoping for the improvement of them." I wish to describe just one facet of how I see the Hocking reconception model functioning in the production of "public" churches. Fowler writes:

> [These churches] are committed to civility. Civility involves effective commitment to the kind of dialogue and engagement in public that allows persons to express deep convictions, to address controversial concerns, and to differ with others deeply, yet without having either to decimate the opponent, control the arena, or withdraw from the encounter. Such civility requires confidence in the possibility of finding common ground underlying a multiplicity of discourses. They [public churches] also recognize that other folk than Christians experience and recognize the presence of God in creation and history.[39]

I submit that here we have a classic example of the Hocking model at work, first intra-religiously, and then in the direction of inter-religious consociation. "Civility" can be understood as Hocking's "reverence for reverence," first in terms of other Christians, and then in terms of world religious neighbours. In these public churches, Christians, across religious denominations are achieving a consensus of what they are for, enacting it, and

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Catholic bishops in particular to cease to support them. (Personal correspondence, Gerwin van Leeuwen, O.F.M., July 1992).

[39]Fowler, *Weaving the New Creation*, p. 157.

moving in the direction of a religious universalism. I suggest this is a vital intra-religious use of the Hocking model, without the users even knowing of the model. One can only begin to imagine the model's greater utility if it were available.

Interestingly also, Fowler's preliminary research indicates that the percentage of persons in these public churches who have abandoned the traditional Christian preoccupation with its institutional self is triple that of other churches, mosques, and synagogues he and his colleagues have studied in North America. The greater number of these congregants are members of the "Only Way" approach to religion, exceedingly dependent on external authorities for their moral and values systems.[40]

I suggest that the number of persons active in these public churches, using consensus to discern how to promote the spiritual and material well being of all, illustrates Hocking's conviction that reconceptions of Christianity would take place through its mystics whom I have proposed are better understood as those Christians willing to renounce the Church's institutional preoccupation with itself. There is, for me, clear evidence in the Fowler research that a consensual Hocking-like approach intra-religiously, not only inter-religiously, can revive and revitalize the tradition involved. I ponder historically the difference it might have made if Augustine and Pelagius or Luther and Tetzel had talked to each other around the Hocking model. In my understanding personal and intra-religious reconceptions are required if Christianity it to be a truly living religion, but inter-religious and inter-ideological consociations are essential for the fullest

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[40]*Ibid.*, pp. 169 ff. I think it important to mention at this point that Fowler's first full-time work was at Interpreters' House in western North Carolina. It was founded by Fowler's mentor Carlyle Marney, to be "a place of conversation--a meeting place where interreligious, interracial, interpersonal engagements of real depth and honesty could occur.... In intense, intimate conversations one never knew who the interpreter might be: it could be one of the 'hired hands' on the residential staff; just as likely it would be one of the other pilgrims." A pilgrim was one who stopped at the house for a while to "receive things to help them on their journey." Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, p. 36. The similarity of Interpreters' House to Hocking's description of a new kind of Christian mission, one dedicated to the reconception of living religions, is for me, startling. Is it possible that the broadening and deepening of Fowler's understanding of faith in this setting at Interpreters' House is precisely what Hocking was hoping for as his new kind of Christian mission?

reconception of Christianity so I move now to a discussion of the third way in which I see the utility of the Hocking model, viz., for inter-religious consociations.

I suggest that the Hocking model can play a vital role in achieving consensus at the grass-roots level among the world's religions and ideologies about how to effect resolutions to contemporary global challenges. However, so eminent a person as Robert Lawson Slater, Hocking's friend and colleague, would not agree with me. He has called the Hocking model for the reconception of religions a model for "religious aristocrats," which is, of course, precisely what Hocking did not want.[41] What is highly significant for me throughout the course of Slater's first discussion of the model is that Slater never seems to understand Hocking's vital distinction between a world faith and a world religion. Slater refers constantly to the fact that Hocking was seeking to produce a new world religion, which I have explained that he was not. Hocking was concerned with the evolution of a universal faith. In fact, Slater more often than not speaks of other "faiths" where Hocking speaks of "living religions." Slater suggests that what Hocking is really calling for is a "reapprehension" of other religions, and of Christianity, given Hocking's insistence on the poetic as well as conceptual dimensions of religious utterances. Reconception has a "cerebral" connotation to it which "reapprehension" does not. But Hocking wanted persons to use what they learned from their world religious neighbours, not merely to "apprehend" what the other religions are about. I suggest, too, that Hocking himself gave the death blow to the idea that his model was for religious aristocrats when he began to insist that Christians were not entitled to incorporate anything into their religious tradition from another without the specific approval of that interpretation on the part of the other believer. This kind of broadening and deepening is therefore open to standard persons as well as to scholars and religious professionals. I think the point could even be

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[41]Robert Lawson Slater, *World Religions and World Community* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 212-228. The reference to religious aristocrats appears on p. 218.

made than in Hocking's mature vision an honest inquirer into another religion would not really need to know anything about its essence. The inquirer would depend on the honest interpretation of the other tradition by the believer in it. Each needs to know the essence of their own tradition but in consociations with other believers they need to trust in the faith and good will of other believers more than to grasp the intellectual content of the living religion beforehand, at least in initial contacts. This method would not depend on a religious aristocracy.[42]

Slater also faults Hocking for not paying sufficient attention to what is particular within living religions. Again, I would suggest that this is not the case as I have made abundantly clear in my explanation of religion-in-general and religion-in-particular in Hocking's thought. A world faith is religion-in-general. It must live in inculturated forms which are religion-in-particular.

Slater dismisses radical displacement, synthesis, and reconception as improbable efforts for world religious unity primarily because he refuses to credit all religious leadership with "the disposition to return to the depths which Professor Hocking implies."[43] I suggest that Slater minimizes the desires and potential of standard persons, viz., persons at the grass roots of living religions, in this criticism of Hocking's model. Contemporary revolutions of any sort depend as much, if not more, on persons at the grass roots, as they do on persons in leadership positions, as studies of organizational behaviour like those of W. Edwards Deming cited earlier make clear.

Again, Slater has great difficulty with Hocking's position on an underlying unity among the world religions, and prefers a seeking for a "co-identity" which is more

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[42]A striking example of what I have in mind occurred during the Gulf War when a Muslim development agency approached the Canadian Council of Churches to enquire if they might join efforts with Christians to provide food and medicine for children in Iraq. Others wished to join this effort including the Steel Workers Union. Newman, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

[43]Slater, *World Religions and World Community*, p. 221.

desirable given the obviously pluralistic world. I suggest that if one looks carefully at the diagram of the model of reconception, there is no closure depicted there. There is a radical openness represented by the broken lines. I suggest that what Slater calls co-identity is what Hocking calls religion-in-general.

Three years after he put forward the above objections to the Hocking model, Slater contributed an article to the Hocking Festschrift entitled, "Religious Diversity and Religious Reconception." By then, Slater had seen the Hocking call for a world faith and uses that language throughout the article. This article, in my understanding of it, is far more amenable to Hocking than the earlier analysis and while Slater does not reach all the conclusions that I suggest above, he does make much of Hocking's use of the word faith and identifies Hocking himself as a man of faith, and of contagious faith. In this later article Slater continues to suggest that the word re-apprehension might be a better one for the Hocking enterprise quoting Hocking himself on p. 197 of *Living Religions and a World Faith,* as having defined the reconception effort as promoting the change "in our apprehension" of that which is "everlasting and changeless." I suggest that Slater has not taken into account sufficiently Hocking's later thought, especially in *The Coming World Civilization*, about Christianity's creed, code, and deed, which demands that the timeless message of the "everlasting and changeless" be lived and proclaimed in dynamic timely ways. Hocking clearly wants more than a change in appreciation of other religions. While I do not agree with Slater that reapprehension is a better word for what Hocking envisions than is reconception, there is one difficulty raised by Slater with which I do agree.

In his 1963 work, Slater raises a further objection to the Hocking model of inter-religious reconceptions, which expresses also my own concern. It has to do with the unresolved question whether direct attempts at reconceiving religions, be they personal, intra-religious, or inter-religious, are the most appropriate route to go? Slater phrases that concern pointedly as he writes:

> It is arguable that some of the very efforts being made today to achieve religious cooperation may, if they are narrowly associated with the conception of one universal religion, constitute an obstacle in the way of such cooperation. Those who make a conception of religious unity the prior condition for world unity may defeat their own purpose. Fascinated by the thought of one world, one religion, they may ignore other more probable and conceivably even better ways of realizing their goals.[44]

While I continue to argue that it was a world faith not a world religion that Hocking was seeking in the spirit of the new universalism, new myth, new ethos, I think the objection that Slater raises is valid. Hocking himself, as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, provided reconceptions of the political order, educational enterprise, and the social order, among others. He was primarily concerned with the reconception of religions because he saw them as the generating principles of world civilization, providing the motivations for that civilization which the state cannot. But will seeking these reconceptions of religions so directly as Hocking proposes effect what Hocking desired? I think that it will not.

My view is that pragmatic consociations between and among religious persons, and any and all persons of good will, for work, and at times for worship, will result indirectly in the emergence of a world faith. Work between and among religions and ideologies to effect resolutions to the present world crises, some of which I identified at the beginning of this section, seem to me to have far greater potential for the emergence of a world faith than do direct attempts at achieving one. I suggest that the Hocking model can play a vital role in achieving consensus among the world's religions and ideologies about how to effect resolutions to these global challenges because the Hocking model is ultimately a consensual one. It does not ignore nor minimize differences but seeks a resolution of them.

I suggest this indirect approach to a world faith was what Hocking was groping for as well toward the end of his life. It is significant for me that Hocking moved from his

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[44] *Ibid.*

much desired "new kind of Christian mission," which he described in 1940 as necessary to effect reconception of all living religions, and of Christianity itself, to a description of consociations for work and worship in his 1956 *Coming World Civilization.* Out of those pragmatic consociations, it is possible that a series of reputable inter-religious moral statements for the resolutions of contemporary global challenges could emerge. I suggest that such statements would constitute Hocking's religion-in-general, a world faith, ethos, universalism, which would be enacted through religion-in-particular, the living religions.

The World Council of Churches appears to be attempting precisely these kinds of moral statements on world issues in terms of Christian churches although Roman Catholics still have no official representation in this body. Is it possible that the Hocking model could be used for something like a "United Religions and Ideologies" paralleling the United Nations, which would make specific statements of reputable moral responses to regional, national, and international human concerns? I suggest that at this time, the Hocking model could find its most vital inter-religious and/or inter-ideological utility in this kind of indirect reconception of generating principles. And I suggest further that Hocking's insights about the inevitability of pugnacity in terms of the human condition could be the starting point for these reputable moral statements on the part of religious persons.[45]

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[45]The simplicity and potential of the Hocking model is most evident when one compares it to other models of interreligious associations. Cf. Raimundo Pannikar's model of diatopical hermeneutics and communication, Krieger, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-76; Hans Küng's "interreligious dialogue in the post-modern era," in *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (Crossroad: New York, 1991), pp. 135 ff.; and Leonard Swidler's explanation of the purpose of dialogue and rules for it in *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 42-68. Swidler promotes an "ecumenical esperanto" which would be required of anyone interested in such associations. Küng and Swidler have prepared an article which will appear in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, in which they seriously recommend that representatives of the major living religions be taken together into a NASA spacecraft and from that vantage point prepare a declaration of human religious rights to which their living religions must be committed. The pope and the Dalai Lama are among the recommended participants. (Personal conversation, Nancy Krody, managing director, *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, December 11, 1992.)

Conclusion

In this appraisal of Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity, I have concluded that the corps of persons whom Hocking identified as mystics do exist but are better described as persons at post-conventional stages of moral and/or faith development. These persons exist in all cultures and appear to be quite numerous. In terms of Christian agents of reconception, I have suggested that these are the persons who are willing to renounce the Christian Church's preoccupation with its institutional self. These Christians and members of other living religions who will reconceive their traditions are searching for generating principles for their lives which are cosmic in scope. Some persons, like Mahatma Gandhi, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, John Woolman, Sojourner Truth, Dorothy Day, and Martin Luther King, Jr. in his later years, appear to have found such generating principles and are "universalists," the modern mystics.

I have argued further that Hocking provides for Christians at post-conventional stages of faith and/or moral development a vital and adequate description of the essence of Christianity despite omissions of traditional concerns about the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These omissions are for me consistent with Hocking's determination that the fruits of a religion must be verifiable in the life of each believer within it, and may not consist of inferred experiences. I have taken the position that Hocking's personal reconception of the core content of Christianity, is clear, concise, accurate, and, most importantly, in the idiom of the people.

I have argued that a world generating principle is necessary and that Hocking was truly seeking for such a world principle, and not involved in a subtle Christianization of other religious traditions. I have concluded that at the present, the Hocking model of reconception can be effective at a personal level, intra-religiously, and inter-religiously. In the case of inter-religious uses of the model, I have proposed that the model is likely more effective at this point in achieving consensus among the world's religions in the production

of reputable moral responses to human needs at regional, national and international levels, and in that, the model can indirectly achieve a world faith.

The precise "how to's" of effecting this world faith, even indirectly, apart from something like a "United Religions and Ideologies," remain at the moment as out of sight for me in their construction as Hocking once felt about his effort in promoting a world faith as essential for any world community. I can imagine something like a universal declaration to parallel the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. It would seem logical that any reputable moral statement would immediately outlaw any and all war. I could hope for such a reputable moral statement from those persons who gathered in Assisi in 1986 to pray for peace. But will it ever be possible for even a "United Religions" to speak for all Christians, all Hindus, all Jews, all Muslims, etc.? And could it speak in terms which are reputable rather than so vague as to be ineffectual? With these nagging questions I must end this work about Hocking's theory of the reconception of Christianity, and of all the living religions, with words that he once used in his own right about his work in *The Coming World Civilization*, viz.,

> *Opus hic terminatum*
> *sed non consummatum*
> *dico.*[46]

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[46]Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization*, p. 187.

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A complete and annotated bibliography of the 294 publications of William Ernest Hocking has been prepared by Dr. Richard C. Gilman. It appears on pages 467-504 of *Philosophy, Religion, and the Coming World Civilization: Essays in Honor of William Ernest Hocking*, edited by Leroy Stephens Rouner (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966). This present bibliography mentions only those works of Hocking's most pertinent to this dissertation. They are presented in chronological order. In the complete Hocking bibliography, there are approximately 56 publications which concern political issues, 71 relating to religion and the philosophy of religion, 131 which relate to other aspects of philosophy, law, and mathematics, and 36 others dealing with science, education, architecture, farming, and similar interests. Three drafts of an unpublished 96-page book explaining Hocking's Christology are at Hocking's personal library, West Wind, Madison, New Hampshire.

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