

In archaic and static societies, group members don't have occasion to reflect on community models, the socio-pictures in members' heads as to the nature and structure of the group. But in polymorphous-dynamic societies, the socio-picture surfaces in the consciousness enough to "get on the agenda"--as the barons and King John [the Magna Carta], as the tribal chieftans and Samuel, as Jesus and the religious-and-political powers in control of his people [the question, in M. 10, of authentic authority], as the early Christians vs. the Roman Imperium....

This thinksheet reflects on a visual I created for my own reflection on a question I'm proud that NYTS continues to have the courage to wrestle with: *In each particular grouping, what is the most Christian shape possible/practicable?*

COMMENTARY :

1. The horizontal is, in group-dynamics jargon, the "maintenance" dimension of the task/maintenance tension. Thus, the vertical is the task dimension. The horizontal question, which should always be present in consciousness, is: *What, at this moment in this group, is happening to persons?* Now, the question of how much weight should be given this question, in relation to other questions valid in light of contract, should be a floating-open question. In groups caught in personalistic fundamentalism, this question is given priority over all others--so that anyone obtruding this question has more than a good chance of controlling, for the time, the group. The more committed folks are to the humanistic-psychological perspective, the more carefully and firmly the group should contract its task (or the task will slide down into "personal growth," "personal fulfilment," "self-realization," etc.).

2. For the vertical, I've used some traditional terms to designate various task-communities. None of them fits NYTS--which makes it exciting to be at NYTS! And I'm not completely happy with my placements on the diamond. But here's a brief description of each, for at least my meditation on our NYTS existence and mission:

- (1) A *squad* knows its job and goes into action. Only action can justify its existence; and it serves heteronomous decisions, i.e. commands coming from outside it.
- (2) A *thinktank*, being free of action obligations, brainstorms possibilities both of seeing [i.e., paradigms] and of doing [i.e., operations]. The spread of options, and recommendations, is processed for action outside and beyond the thinktank--unless the executive is part of the thinktank.
- (3) A *school* is a learning place purporting to prepare pupils for action elsewhere, viz. in "the world." Because it does not process action-feedback into the teaching/learning processes, it's ever in danger of being relevant only to the past. NYTS is a radical break, in this regard, from traditional theological education.
- (4) A *training center* moves in the opposite direction from a "school": action first, then reflection (leading to revised action, in an endless circle). My window model in #402 pictures this: What happened? how was it understood and responded to? What's happening? how should we understand and respond to it? Bible study moves from literature to life, but theological education's basic direction should be the opposite.

