

Cultural Monument, Spiritual Movement

By Rev. Arthur W. Chang

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish." (Luke 14:28-30).

We must believe because God is belief; the physical universe is built out of belief-faith, belief, acceptance, conviction.-Ernest Holmes

Good morning, Founders!-William H. D. Hornaday.

Arguably, there has never been a greater exponent of Ernest Holmes' classical Science of Mind ideas, than William H. D. Hornaday. No minister, before or since, reached more common or uncommon people than "Dr. Bill," as Hornaday was affectionately called by his adoring flock. Though Dr. Holmes never named Dr. Bill his successor (and rumors of petty jealousies among colleagues abound), for his life in the ministry and as Founder's builder and first senior minister-he was "the man," the minister par excellence of the movement and Founder's was its shimmering tower, its pyramid, its sacred ziggurat, "the Mother Church," and Religious Science's youthful sense of social arrival and social acceptance.

The people who Dr. Bill visited read like a Who's Who in the world; for among the group were: Albert Schweitzer, Carl Jung, and President Richard Nixon. Then there were those who came after he built Founder's-the likes of author Louis L'Amour, and Mickey Rooney, Rhonda Fleming, Cecil B. DeMille and others of the genre of Hollywood's rich and famous of Dr. Bill's time.

And who did Dr. Holmes invite to take over his radio program, "This Thing Called Life" but the tireless, widely popular and ubiquitous Dr Bill? This ex-Methodist minister turned Religious Science flag-bearer was the St. Paul of our movement for as long as he lived. At the same time Founder's planted itself in the annals of our history as our spiritual tower, a monument to a unique spiritual movement that Dr. Holmes built. Dr. Bill's unabashed affection for his father/mentor leader, Dr. Holmes, often poured out from his inspiring messages on Sunday and Wednesday night services like water from the rock Moses struck. Love will not long remain indebted and will quickly seek its own opportunity for giving back.

The protégé, Hornaday, felt he had received so much from Holmes, he wanted to give something back that would stand way beyond the life of radio programs, sermons, and ambassadorial visits. His vision was to get his burgeoning congregation at the Wiltern Theater in Los Angeles, itself a future historical monument, to build a tower, a monument befitting the spiritual stature of Dr. Holmes work. This was the early seeding vision of Founder's Church, and although Holmes' humility would not allow him to accept the building being named after him, a resounding compromise chord was struck in naming this spiritual monument "Founder's Church of Religious Science."

But what were the costs of this "tower" that Hornaday wanted to build and did Dr. Bill weigh these costs carefully? I think he did. The costs included the money to build it and for 100% of its income, Sunday tithes and bequests, to go to the International Board of Trustees for the movement at large to support the organization which included a relatively small portion to be returned to Founder's as its operating budget. A story is told that on one occasion when Dr. Bill asked the International Board to fund something special event for Founder's that would come out of Founder's contribution, Dr. Bill was told, by a minister from a small church who was a board member, that his church didn't have what Dr. Bill was requesting and he could see no reason for supporting that request. It appears that the willingness to "eat humble pie" also was a cost to Dr. Bill.

From 1960 to 1985, 25 years, Founder's members tithed 100% to our movement, an unprecedented gesture of dedication and love for the Science of Mind not likely to be equaled by any other church of comparable in level of income at that time or otherwise. Founder's proudly served as our "Mother Church," hosting the Annual Conventions for some twenty five years.

In the Institute's building, contiguous to Founder's, the ministers of the movement were trained and graduation ceremonies were held for all ministers and practitioners at Founder's. Founder's gladly picked up the tab for most of these costs, funding the difference between what was paid and what it cost for ministerial training. I will never forget how Dr. Bill encouraged people to go to other Religious Science Churches and support them, another unique gift of Founder's.

Founder's was the hub of the wheel, the Temple of Jerusalem, the St. Peter's Basilica, the Macho Pichu of Peru to all Religious Science. Founder's was sacred ground for Religious Science because it was not the business office that the Institute represented, it was the sanctuary of God formed round in its wholeness and unity; sculpted commodious and comfortable in its theatrical setting where innovations such as Christmas and Easter pageants backed up by the best choir in the movement played out before throngs of awed people on Sunday and Wednesday services. There were also cutting-edge scientific seminars fulfilling Holmes' dream that science and religion should walk hand in hand; that people would not be swayed by dogma and superstition but rise to

higher levels of knowing, Everests of understanding, that knowledge is one as a mountain peak is one, converging from a duality at its base to the singularity of its summit.

Today, this thought of Founder's as the sacred ground, the axis mundi of Religious Science may well be an anomaly for anyone outside of Founder's; for this is a spiritual organization with a weak history for accommodating paradoxes such as, how can one thing be holy if all things are holy? And though this question readily reveals its contradictory nature, spiritually speaking it is not that simple. At a deeper level we can hold that two contradictory things can be equally right. That is precisely how it is that Founder's is our immovable spot, or sacred soil. In sacred talk, this is a perfectly valid position to take. Further, we seem to be living in an era where "living in the present" gets such a strong play that it may regard, with utter disdain, values of the past and without such monuments we may find we have arrived at a totally meaningless present and a pointless future.

We, at Founder's, are holders of this sacred trust, this tower to the faith of our people of the past. Dr. Bill liked to tell the story of the little girl, who, one Sunday, after he expressed to his congregation his vision of building Founder's, sought him out, and gave him three pennies and said, "Here, go build your church," and he did.

The City of Los Angeles has looked at the marvelous design of Founder's by the great African-American architect, Paul Williams, and declared it a fitting historical monument. What remains as our challenge is that Founder's members and friends continue to understand that we must continue to play a vital role in the energy that drives the Religious Science movement onward letting good and good alone go from us and return to us.

At the end of May 2003 I will be completing my tenth year as Founder's senior minister. In the tradition of Drs. Holmes and Hornaday, I too have done the radio program "This Thing Called Life," and spoken at the Sunday and Wednesday service. I have further done a cable TV program, "Life's Journey" with Kelley Johnson. In furthering the pageant concept, I have created four Heritage Days (African- European- Asian- and Hispanic-American) and a created a fuller celebration of Thanksgiving. I have written articles for Science of Mind magazine, Creative Life and the INTA Journal, New Thought. I have spoken all over the country for our movement for the International New Thought Alliance.

I have been developing the next leap forward of Science of Mind thinking, which I refer to as Process Science of Mind, and so has Founder's practitioner Rod Carter. I have composed songs. We have created the Founder's Forum a non-profit that is making a mark in cultural, political and social involvements which is headed by Helen McNeil and a marvelous group of board members. We have the most accomplished musical director and organist/arranger anywhere

in the world in Dr. Albert McNeil and Bob Ralston. Our members have been co-creating this Founder's ministry and many new and wonderful groups have been formed showing great local initiative and support of our Founder's ministry. Together we are continuing to make a difference in the world. The Founder's boards have been great and the last two presidents, Deloise Maddox and Leslie Hinman have been outstanding leaders in their own rights.

Marilyn Oliver has been the main force behind our historical designation status and she was ably assisted by Norma Guillotte, practitioner and board vice-president, Deloise Maddox, practitioner and former board president, Leslie Hinman, then board president, and myself.

Our work in the world is ongoing. Jesus speaks of the value of giving our all to service when he tells of the widow giving her mite which was all she had. Dr. Bill tells of the little girl who gave her three pennies to the cause. We, the members, can do no less than give our all to a worthy effort of continuing to make Founder's a great center for good in the world.

We first must support it financially as our past members have done. We next must dedicate ourselves to spiritual service to our church and community which we will continue to vision together to reveal God's greatest thought for us, and we must continue to celebrate our sense of unity, love and enjoy the refreshment of spiritual renewal each Wednesday and Sunday where, like Dr. Bill, when I say, "Good morning, Founder's!" you know that the rest of the day is going to be great!

In these ways we will continue to be worthy of our Founder's tradition, and be a vital part in the new thrust of our movement that is named "The Global Heart." These are the costs of the tower we have been building; now let us finish it together!