

**THE YEAR OF THE TURN: TWO IMAGES**

It was not until we studied St. John of the Cross this spring that I understood what had been going on all year long. Last summer we talked about entering the year of the Turn so the past year was expected to be rather different. We said that so often I was prepared to have things be different. I was prepared to say to the Movement of the last twenty years was gone and something different was beginning. What I was not prepared for was the fact that the new journey would start by reliving the whole of the last twenty years all over again. This time, however, it was as the Second Night is to the First. What you thought was night before was broad daylight. What you thought was trouble before was calm. Where you thought you were a great, big spirit man before, you discovered you were a little boy. I was not prepared for that. It was like the Peace of God revisited.

I discovered that some of those stories and images that freighted me early in the movement began to burn and become transparent again. Two of those old images, in particular, hold my experience of this last quarter and this last year. They were from my first course, in which I was a participant trying to be an observer.

The very first movement illustration I ever heard was about two amoeba. Remember? These amoeba were living in a drop of water which began to get cold. They had no way of knowing the water was getting cold because the ice age was beginning. One amoeba says, "I can't live in water this cold." And he curls up and dies. The other amoeba says, "I guess what I'll have to do is grow hair." And so he became a paramecium. Now I always thought that was a great way to start a PLC. The point of that illustration is literally burning the hell out of people these days. It deals with the stylistic struggle which is eating people up, because everybody knows that the demand is to grow hair where you never had hair before. The demand is to be a mutation in humanness. Everybody knows that!

Being the first amoeba on your block to have hair, however, is humiliating, it is just awful. You talk to a clergyman about the PLC and say something like, "I believe, in this decade, we are inventing the local form of the church for the next 400 to 500 years." And they say "hmmmmmm;" they just say "yes." Then you talk some more saying, "Several years ago I decided it was futile to do one thing this year and something else the next year or run five programs like a cafeteria to keep people involved. I decided I was going to find a serious, disciplined, Christian life style and live it for the next ten to twenty years if need be, so that the new church may emerge." And their eyes get beady. They do not dare say "yes" but they know that stance is right. They know it is needed, but they will not say "yes." The humiliation comes when you realize you do not have a way to put that final decision in a new context.

I am convinced it is going to take a recovery of heaven and hell as authentic categories to allow people to make that kind of decision and to know its final significance. How do you tell a man that if you know a more intense way to live your life, you are committing suicide if you do not live it? Or, on the other, in the words of "Some Enchanted Evening," "Once you have found her, never let her go."

People are beginning to grow hair. For example, the Local Church Experiment: really works. The only problem is getting people to do it the way it is written. I used to wonder why it took us so long to do all the tactics until I discovered it takes longer to water them down than it takes to do them. That is the only problem with the Experiment. When a group of people decide to do it properly, things really begin to bubble. At Sodality the other night we were studying the Exploratory Papers of the Other World, and one was talking about heaven and hell. We were grounding it when this fellow who had been on the fringe all year says, "I have been sitting here thinking about the night before the Battle of the Bulge. They came to our company and asked for hand volunteers. All my friends went and were killed to a man. I have been in hell ever since." Then he says, "Maybe that is why I can't stay away from these meetings. Sometimes I go out in the woods decided on a snowy day and I begin to tremble, not because it is cold but because I remember that day back before the Battle of the Bulge. And remember that I not to go." That man has not made his decision yet but he is clear that the demand is to grow hair.

The other metaphor that has been burning has been the Exodus. When we used to lay out the revolution of the church, we talked about how there were forty years in the desert, followed by a ten year transition period and, now, we are on the edge of the promised land. Only that description is not the way I experience our journey anymore. In my opinion, we crossed the Red Sea for the first time last summer. We thought we were in the desert but it was the flesh pots of Egypt all the time. I mean it was comfortable.

Now, I know this is true because of the "manna." This quarter has been a series of incredible spirit events where deep healing has occurred. At collegium in the morning, you look around the table all you see are burnt out, hollow faces. You know this one was out last night trying to get people out of their houses to come to the Odyssey, that one was out trying to get someone out of their house to the Summer Assembly. They are all there and you know what they are hungry for; they need to feed on the Word, on the Spirit. And you have not had a scintillating insight in three weeks. You reach down in the well and there is nothing there. And then, somehow things begin to bubble. Something is said and the awe enters the room. Lives are healed. People have been patched up. The color comes back into their cheeks and they leave ready to go again. I look back over the last quarter and I say that not once has the spirit failed. I find that a remarkable testimony.

But the blasted manna is only good for one day! The way the Lord fixes his people is he says you cannot keep it overnight. You have a fantastic House Church where people are gloriously filled full. The next morning they cannot get out of bed. People have their lives transformed and the next day they are struggling with pet care again. It is incredible! My problem is that I still do not trust the Lord. I do not trust that manna to be there tomorrow. But when you try to live out of yesterday's manna, it turns sour. If you see some sour colleagues around here you know that is what is going on; they are trying to live out of yesterday's manna.

You have heard it said and, if you are like me, you have only begun to get a glimmer of what it means to say the Lord's judgment is his mercy. Now, there is a new and harder saying: "The Lord's humiliation is His exaltation." I've always secretly wanted to be exalted. I never knew it would be like this.

-Ron Clutz