

Table Talk

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I want to use about half of our time and make some audacious statements, then leave some time for us to discuss together. I just want to say that I have known of your movement for some time. I was very fortunate a few years ago to meet Nan Grow and to get updated on what you've been doing and the transformation that has occurred in your movement, and to learn of what you're doing around the globe. You know, one of my problems tonight is that a lot of what I will have to say is sort of "old hat" to you because of who you are. One of the things that I can bring to you I think is perspective because I am not part of your movement.

I am a minister and a professor, I am a practising psycho-analyst and the director of the Doctor of Ministry programme at CTS. I do a lot of thinking with my students and other people, e.g. Association of Theological Schools, about what is required in ministry today, and what is required in theological education today.

Now, my ideas are very radical. They won't sound radical to you because of who you are. A lot of the things that I will say to you in these moments are things that you assume and that you live out of every day. So let me just apologise to you from the outset, but I hope that you will be able to learn a few little things which will encourage you in what you are doing.

I have come to believe that your movement and what you are doing is tremendously significant globally and that you are one of the few groups, and I would be hard pressed to find another group, which I believe is addressing the contemporary world situation as directly, with as much energy and as much creativity as you are as a movement. In these moments I will try to give you some ideas about how I have come to this from a theoretical and an interpretive basis by just sharing a few things about my work and what I write on and what I think about.

One of the things that I am involved with is trying to understand the nature and dynamics of human evil, that is, what are the fundamental structures underlying the nature and dynamics of human evil. I teach courses which try to get students to think in systematic ways what they really understand the nature and dynamics of evil to be. You cannot look at this globe honestly without understanding that the problem is much worse than any pre-Titanic liberals believe. Most of the people today even in liberation theology do not understand the severity of the problem. That is why there has to be a deepening of theological reflection in order to understand the global task today.

Now, I say this is "old hat" to you because you address this in ways everyday in your work around the globe. I feel so much of a "soul brother" with you as I listen to your songs and to the word that is spoken through you in your ritual and your witness. This huge Earthrise wall poster is the essence of the global consciousness you represent by your lives. In fact, I would argue that you are a pro-leptic community.

They talk about the coming of the Kingdom in the New Testament, and they talk about the announcement of the Kingdom being proleptic, that is to say, that it is anticipated. When one becomes a member of the church the Kingdom is not fully realized, but one is already a citizen of this Kingdom. What you in your movement have been doing is attempting to generate a consciousness throughout the globe which makes possible citizenship in a global community. There are some people who talk of a global community, but I don't know of any other community like yours that has really been putting the practical energy into manifesting what it means to be a global community, living the true. This Earthrise is true.

In my studies of the phenomenology, psychology and theology of evil, I ask the question that very few people ask, What's wrong that there aren't more people that can see that what is true is true? There are many ways to talk about the nature of sin and evil. One of the things that I think is most important to understand the situation comes from folklore and fairy tales. It's an image behind, it's a sort of archetypal image which is behind some of your prayers and some of your liturgies, what John was saying in his charge a moment ago -- enchantment. "Some enchanted evening, you may see a stranger" is not what I mean by the word enchantment. It is what is happening when people are asleep and don't know it, when they live in terms of an illusion. When you speak in terms of an illusion, you mean a denial of the truth. You're talking about what others in history have talked about in terms of enchantment. This enchantment reigns in the globe. The world suffers under enchantment. And you know that.

What is the enchantment? Enchantment is tribal consciousness. It is a consciousness that cannot face up to the global reality. It is an enchantment which leads well-meaning, liberal-Protestant-Christians to use the term "People of God" as if it referred to members of the Christian Church. So we even find amongst people who ought to know better a tribal approach to reality that is totally evil.

Now, you see what I mean about your movement. You've been aware of this for some time, and you've been realizing that there's something terribly wrong when spiritual traditions have been allowed to divide the People of God. The People of God are the People of the Globe, and the radical rethinking of ministry and religious leadership for a global community is the capacity to start with that and to formulate an approach to faith, religious leadership, ritual leadership in a community which starts with the truth. We cannot get there long-distance but must start with the truth of what is true and then work back from that. If I understand this movement, this is precisely what you've been trying to do, trying to enact around the globe, what you have been trying to work on in your rituals, what you've been trying to work on in your organization. Therefore, what I want to say to you as somebody who is outside your movement is that you are doing what the reality of this time and this globe is calling all of us toward.

Here I am in theological education and looking at scholarship and the task of ritual and religious leadership around the world. I do not see many people trying to do what you are doing. That's why I say you are a proleptic community. You are engaged in working on a realistic, truthful response to the truth of this one world, one People of God,

and trying to encourage an awareness from the bottom up around the world. Your task is the breaking of this enchantment. You are seeking to serve as ritual elders in this world. There are many titles for the ritual elder: mystagogue, magician, shaman, priest. There is an archetypal basis for it. I am, among other things, a psychoanalyst and am studying extensively at the Jungian Institute. Not because I am a true believer in Jung, for I'm not a true believer in anything, but because I have realized that there are archetypal patterns that underly global culture. We've got to become familiar with them. We have to study these resources so that we will know what is archetypally human so we can let this emerge in our work as ritual leaders for the globe.

Ritual leadership for global community is the task you have taken for yourselves, I believe as I observe. You have taken ritual more seriously than most other groups that I know. It's because you have some sense that ritual itself is not mere ceremony, as Victor Turner talks about the distinction between ritual and ceremony. Ceremony simply celebrates the status quo, the people with clout and prestige, etc. Ritual is transforming, ritual allows the breaking down of old ego consciousness, the breaking down of old ways of understanding things, the death of something whose time to die has come. Further, ceremony does not let the shadows out as Jung would say, does not let the dark side out. Celebration is a state that remains co-active. Ritual creates sacred space, and sacred space is created by the destruction of ordinary space. So there's your death that you people talk about all the time. The point is, you have to kill something to have something new. Ritual is a tearing of the fabric of the ordinary, profane consciousness and a recognition of the reality that the old ego or cultural consciousness has to die. The situation globally discloses that the predominant modes of consciousness are already zombies, walking dead, sleepwalkers because they are standing in the way of life for the peoples of this world. You are not liberal, for liberals try to clean things up; they don't want to talk about death. They are against spiritual violence which is necessary for new life. Spiritual violence is when you tear up that which wants and needs to die so there can be a womb of the tomb or tomb of the womb so that something can be born to take the place of the old. This is what is happening when you have any ritual of passage; the old status dies and there is no more of that world, for the new one is born.

Ritual leaders do this kind of work. I keep telling people this and they look at me as though I were crazy. Maybe I am. I say, there is no religious leadership for this world unless it is this kind of ritual leadership. To the extent that it works and transforms this world in this authentic ritual dimension it is ritual leadership. The world needs ritual leadership like you are providing because the world does not get transformed by information in even an information age. It's important, but we need people to understand that you have to speak to the old human being which contains a dragon and doesn't speak English or any other language, only ritual language or ritual drama. Martin Luther King understood this, and understood it well. He understood everything that he addressed as a ritual problem. He got beneath to the dragon with images: narrative, color, sound, smell. He used images the old brain understood. It understands dance, for animals danced their messages long before there was speech. This is getting at the archetypal patterns I was talking about earlier. We are not going to change the world through enlightenment means, such as education. I'm not against

education. Remember, I have five degrees. But we are talking about what it takes to bring about human transformation. Ritual leadership is the key.

Now, cultural hermeneutics is something else you are doing a lot of, just a fancy phrase for it. You stand before this Earthrise and embody it. Most theological educators act as if there were no pluriform culture. They may talk a little about the globe, but they do not face up to the task of developing a sophisticated approach to interpreting global culture, which I talk about in terms of cultural hermeneutics, which is simply a word which means the theory and practice of interpretation. This is what you have been doing as a movement. You have been involved in working on ways to try to instill in everyone affiliated with you this consciousness which starts with the globe, this consciousness which starts with pluriform culture and a consciousness of the reality and responsibility of developing human beings with consciousness who cannot be put off and frightened by this plurality. One of the reasons I like to come and visit you people is that I don't feel crazy. I walked around here before dinner and read your posters and looked at your maps, and I look at this (Earthrise) and I think, "My, God, maybe I'm not crazy after all." Eventhough the seminaries are not doing this job, you are. You are doing it; you might not be doing it well. People ask me what I think about my work, and I say I'm probably the best there is. I pause, "That's not saying much, for the competition isn't much." Maybe that's also true for you. I'm serious, you're probably the best, and I know alot about this movement. I know alot about different religious movements. I'm probably one of the religious scholars who knows more about various movements than anyone else in the country, along with my colleague who helped with our last book. I can say I'm the best, but that doesn't amount to much. It's even critical, actually. I know from listening to some of you talk that you are very frustrated these days with it all. I get a sense how hard it is and what you are struggling with. You ask, How are we going to keep things together, how are we going to find ways to do liturgies, how are going to find ways to be ritual leaders if we can't find a common language? It's hard, isn't it?

People come to me for counselling and I listen. I give them strange good news. They lay out how hard life is and are asking if I think they are going crazy. I just tell them, "Yes, life is really hard. It's really this way. You aren't crazy."

One other thing before I quit. I think you keep yourselves very secret, and you ought to talk about this in your Council this summer. I understand there's been no book written about you. I may have to write it if you won't. The way the Freudians got the market was by publishing. Adler and the others weren't publishing. You've got to get your message out. Theological students have to know about you, and not from your pamphlets. There needs to be much more concern about challenging others to join you. When I talk to my students as I did here tonight, they humor me by saying it's good stuff, only not practical. You people are doing it all over the world from the grassroots up, and I can't think of anything more practical than what you are doing. I want you to even think about coming to terms with the media. You people are strong advocates of the truth, but you keep your mouth shut too much.

And don't forget to read Charles Winquist's book, Practical Hermeneutics.