

The Other World
Trek XIII
Summer '72

THE RADICAL ILLUMINATION

When I was in high school, we used to wander around the hills of southwest Texas near my home. We were great hunters and explorers. In that part of the world the hills are quite rocky. There are crags and crevices that are very difficult to get across; so you find yourself climbing, climbing, climbing, climbing, and climbing till you climb over a ridge. Some of them are rather high and you can see out across vast areas. In places you can see for hundreds of miles. It seems to me that is pretty much where we are as we leave the Mountain of Care and move into the Sea of Tranquility. We are standing on the edge of one of those great ridges and seeing for a thousand miles. Or is it a thousand years?

Some of us were talking about this last week. We started thinking about how difficult it had been to climb up the mountain of the last twenty years and how many times we've fallen and skinned our knees, fought our way through brush, and surmounted all those obstacles that seemed to be hindering us from moving ahead. Then someone talked about what happens after you go over a ridge. You start down the other side and it really is not any easier. I recall those hunting trips when we got to the other side of a ridge. In that country it is solid limestone rock for miles. Going downhill is often more dangerous than going uphill, especially if it is in a fog. If it is really slick and misty, you can fall for hundreds of feet down hill. Whereas when you are going uphill, you can only fall on your face. This is where we are as we look over the crest into the next twenty years.

When a man enters the Sea of Tranquility he might expect to find something new, but actually the sea is nothing new at all. We are not dealing with anything we haven't dealt with already. In the Sea of Tranquility we are going back and rehearsing everything we've said, but with high intensity. This is the fourth stage of the Other World and is simultaneously all the other areas in the Other World. After you have been through three areas of the Other World nothing really surprises you anymore.

For me it is helpful to clarify the imagery I use. I am convinced anyone must have vivid images of what it means to be in the Other World or they get lost. The paper by Campbell on schizophrenia scared the hell out of me about how you swim or drown in the Other World.

For the Sea the image of islands is helpful. I call these the four isles, that is, the four groups of islands within which there are four islands each. There are the isles of Certitude, the isles of Problemlessness, the isles of Contentment and the isles of Everlastingness. Everyone seems to be looking forward to the last one. What in the world is that going to be? The one I am going to deal with is the isle of Certitude within which there are four islands. The first island is called: the Island of I Believe. The second one is: I Know. The third one is: I Stand. And the fourth one is: I Rely.

People are the strangest kind of creatures. They are always trusting in the strangest kinds of things. You would think that sooner or later some human being would arrive on the face of the globe and decide that he is not going to trust the same things people back through history have trusted. But they always seem to trust the same strange things. To trust something as a human being is what we have to do. You have to put your trust somewhere. Your anchors have to be on something. But we trust the strangest things. For example, we usually find ourselves trusting our strength. We trust our physical strength to help us to endure a fast. Or we trust our intellectual strength to get us through a research workshop. Actually when we look at our lives, we discover that our physical being does not finally support us. You only have to live through a few workshops to know that your intellect is not adequate to guarantee your life. We are strange beings. Some of us even trust our habits or someone else's habits to secure our lives. You feel that

you must maintain a trained pattern of life in order to have a bit of security in life. Yet I am always trusting these strange things.

I suppose it became clear to me that I can only find certitude in life in the state of being that I call I Believe when I was traveling in the Pacific about a year ago. I went to the Marianna Islands which include Guam. I finally was able to go to the first set of islands north of Guam which includes Saipan. Saipan is the capital of Micronesia and so I was very interested in going there. I was also fascinated with Saipan out of my memory of the war. You may recall various events that happened there in World War II. On Saipan we fought one of the bloodiest battles of the war. Adjacent to Saipan, in fact within sight of Saipan, is Tinian. Tinian was entirely air strip. From there they flew to Japan to drop the atom bomb. Saipan was at the apex of World War II. On Saipan I was traveling around trying to be incognito disguised as a tourist while I was being very intentional about spreading the movement. I visited a minister who took me out to some great cliffs that hang over the Pacific Ocean. Along the way he had pointed out the site where the Japanese high command had made their last stand before the surrender. Their battlements still stand. At this cliff they were finally driven to the edge and jumped some 200 feet into the water. They hoped to swim out to the Japanese fleet which was waiting nearby. This was not a suicide jump as it was in some places, as you may remember. Many of them died in the jump and many more never made the ships. We stood there on that cliff looking down into those deep, surging waters. Also there is a monument on the cliff to commemorate the event. I went up to the monument not knowing what to expect in the writing there. In the first place it was Japanese writing, and that did not help too much; but underneath it had been translated into English. It was startling. "Let us go forth and build a new Pacific global era." Now I thought the Japanese had been defeated in that was, and that the vision, "Asia for Asians," was dead. I was mistaken on both counts I think. The date was there March 16, 1970 only one year before. Hell, my understanding, my being and how I had grasped my whole life up to that point was called into question. Where I find my certitude about the future was also questioned. Several things had been eating at me while I had been in that part of the world, such as the fact that nationalism is preventing the whole globe from solving many of its basic problems. Micronesia is a good illustration. There is no way Micronesia will ever be economically self-supporting until they farm the ocean or something. But under the ocean there the crust of the earth has no vegetation whatsoever. They have even forgotten how to fish for the most part. Yet they and the whole world still insist they become a Nation. All of that had been going through my mind, and here was this sign that pointed to a vision of a global Pacific era. The Japanese live under a horrible nationalism also. By the way, the sign was placed there by some group like the Tokyo Lions Club. The global Pacific era is a mere glimmer of man's future.

It is in the midst of this kind of startling experience in which I begin to live on the isle of I Believe. There is a hymn we sing called, "Blessed Assurance." "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine. Oh what a foretaste of glory Divine." Belief in Jesus, is not to base my certitude upon some temporal understanding of life. I wish my early training had remembered that it is but a foretaste of the Divine. This is not some intellectual concept I possess in my hip pocket. The only certitude there is in life comes out of a foretaste through some small glimmer men have of the future, like an emerging globality. Or, to me when I say that my certitude comes out of the fact that I believe, I am saying that I rest my existence finally and only on these glimmers. "I know whom I have Believed" is another hymn that makes this bold assertion. What I mean is, God is going to win! The global society is the future of mankind. You can see why those transitory glimmers are not enough for most men. You cannot finally get your gizzard around such a posture. I Believe. And yet that is the only way to live your life or to die your death.

The second island alongside the isle of Certitude is a happening that occurs to you relative to knowing your certitude. Or, how do you form your consciousness so that you know! And therefore you can say, "I believe." Go back in your imagination again to the era of World War II. Actually World War II was not an event in which I directly participated in one sense. I recall December 7, 1941, vividly, however. I was eight years old. It was a Sunday morning. We went to church, came back and I was lying on the floor reading the Sunday funny papers. Then came an announcement, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I interrupt this program to make an emergency announcement. Today the United States Senate has declared war on Japan." I can even recall the feeling kind of rocking, tingling,

stunned feeling that runs through your being when you hear something you have never heard before in your life. God, that was traumatic! The next event I remember from that era was in 1945. You can see why that war shaped my consciousness. I was playing tennis on a Sunday afternoon, it could not have been Sunday afternoon -- I am Baptist and this was in Texas. I was playing tennis one afternoon with a friend of mine when his father rode by on a horse and said only one thing: "President Roosevelt died this afternoon." I was born in January, 1933, which was the same month FDR took office. There had never been another president. There was not supposed to be another president since we were also democrats. To have that happen, the only universe I knew caved in.

My unique consciousness was formed only in those events, however. The '40's as a whole are my consciousness. As a youngster, I knew the men of the war, the "boys" that came home from the war, and the families that were there. It was as though those men had been to a place where they had seen, and seen, and seen all that you can see in a war -- the horrors and tragedies of bloody, senseless war. They had seen human life as well as death when it is lived in the raw. It was a look into the depth of reality itself. That is where men can say, I Know. That is where certitude finally comes. It is not something you can read in a book no matter how an author is able to describe a war. You know it because you have lived it. I know being by what I participated in during the war. And I know being just as much as anyone else. What I know I just know! It has nothing to do with any intellectual acumen. Is it not irritating when someone my age gets irritated by young ones these days who seem to assume all of this! I mean, they know! They often go home to an adult who insists that they do not know when they know. And they know that they know. Most conflicts in families take place because of this irritation.

What encourages me in terms of knowing these states of being is the elders, the old folks. It seems that they know in spite of themselves. They are always people who know. I lived with a family in the Philippines. In fact, the family had much more family than I ever thought a family included. There was one particular grandmother on one side who visited us occasionally. She had grown up during the war and was in the Philippines when the Japanese came through. She had seen all the killing and brutality. In fact her husband was killed in a prison camp. She had that kind of memory behind her and it had warped her tragically. She was an untrained woman, yet she knew. I always had the feeling every time I was talking with her that she was looking through me. I would look at her, and she would say something like, "David, you are full of...most of the time." And she would use that kind of language if she had said it out loud. "You are just full of it," she seemed to be saying. But it was not only the fact that she knew, that she was on to me. She also knew that she was nothing, or that she was, most of the time, a nothing in life. From most people's view point there is nothing much interesting about her really. And she certainly will never be recognized for her accomplishments. But she has a kind of steel that hardens year after year after year, tragedy after tragedy after tragedy. The elders know.

The only place I know where this takes place is what we are calling the Sea of Tranquility. Men back through the centuries have known how to say, "I know! -- I just know." It is this knowing that enables a man to stand in the midst of any vicissitude. This knowing is a weird kind of experience. When you become conscious of the fact that you know. it seems to go against everything you have previously known. Therefore, it is always tragic. It is also weird because you have known all along. When these kinds of occurrences happen in which you know that you know, it is as though you look down and, "My God! My God! I'm known. My God! I'm transparent!" Have you noticed that when you know you look through yourself and you see yourself? You put your hand up and you can see right through.

This happens to me every time I call home. I stand before all that guilt and nostalgia and I can see right through myself. It is a state of being in which you know that you know. That is a weird experience. It is an enlivening experience. You read a newspaper -- it's alive! It bubbles. Everything in it makes great, significant sense. Or, when you are aware of this state of being, I think you can read telephone directories and they sound like exciting stories about each name. It is a fantastic experience when you know that you know. The most amazing thing is that every human being can enter into that state. There is no prerequisite, only that you have lived. Of course, this is where Moses and Elijah and all those people start talking. They lead men. They prophesy. Because they know.

The third island in the isles of Certitude is I Stand. If you hear anything in I Believe, or I Know, that sounds like pretentiousness, then you haven't heard, or I have not been able to say what I am trying to say. There is no pretentiousness here at all. You are simply dealing with life. You are dealing with the given of who you are. No arrogance here. Behind I Know, I just know, I Believe is humiliation before life itself. This is what makes it possible to say, I Stand. In fact there is no other place to stand. You have looked into the very heart of reality. What you have seen is what reality is. There is no other reality. I have many doubts about many things. I doubt my own intellect. I doubt my own set of beliefs. I certainly doubt my neighbor's set. I doubt what he is after. I don't really trust him. But, beyond all my doubts there is knowing, there is belief, there is a stance before all reality. It is as though you (are) doubt itself. You doubt that there is any call to doubt. Finally there is just nothingness itself and you are alone over against that nothingness. It is not that I doubt this or that or the other about life. But that there is no security in the world, no certitude, first of all in life. Then there is no doubt finally - no final security from which you can doubt. There are no standards by which you can measure this human event or that. human event. In this dimension of the Other World there are no standards - there is no way of happening upon some form of collegial approval that will give certitude. What difference would it make when I Know and I Believe, whether someone approves of what I know and what I believe? If I Know and I Believe, then I stand there.

I guess this came home to me the most while I was attending university. One summer three of us went to California both to be missionaries for the Lord and for our own pocketbooks. We went on north of San Francisco and worked in a logging camp. Without telling the whole story, we came to a point in our work in which we made a decision to take a huge stack of planks and store them over at one side of the logging mill. The supervisor of the logging mill returned from a trip threw a tirade. He could not figure out why in the world we put such a huge stack of raw lumber where the loading trucks could not get near it. My first response was, "Our foreman told us to do it. He is the one who made the decision." During the meeting there was one battle after another because of one stack of lumber that could be easily moved. Finally the supervisor decided to take it to court so to speak, the court being the owner. The accuser and the defendant were the supervisor and our foreman. All of us were around the table and we discussed the whole thing all over again. But the foreman who had made the decision had been sent to San Francisco and was not there. So here we were. We workers were just there for the summer. And we were defending the foreman before the supervisor, and the owner. And the owner started by asking us just one question; "All right, what is your decision about this? Was this where the lumber should be stacked or not?" The decision, you see was whether or not we kept our jobs. It was already obvious that the foreman was going to be fired. So we are all sitting there on our own integrity. We started by taking sides. Some of them were saying, "It is not fair to fire the foreman while he is gone." Bla, Bla, Bla. Others were saying, "Well, it is right that we did that, therefore we will stand on that." You could see where they were headed. They would not be around too long. There I was sitting as usual in my cautious manner playing the odds. Finally, I said, "Hell, I was quitting anyway." You see, I thought I could avoid the humiliation of taking a stance. But that did not solve it for the owner. He said, "David, what was your opinion about that? Should that lumber have been put where it is or not?" At that point, I became totally clear on my situation. It was not a matter of keeping a job or not. I had already quit. So there I was, as though I had no content whatsoever as to what was right or what was wrong. I just had to decide my stance. I could fall back on how righteous I was because I knew it was stupid to put the lumber there. I just had to decide my stance. Curiously enough, I sided with the stupid foreman! That illustrates for me how you are finally pressed to a point where you have to stand, and there are no justifying values for your decision. That was where I discovered authenticity. Authenticity is found at the bottom of it all when you are pressed to the wall and you can not just say something is wrong.

People who irritate me the most are people who go around saying this is wrong, this is wrong, this is wrong. Well, what is right!? If you say this is wrong, where is your stance? This presses me up against this state of being. It is like you know all of history conspires around you. It seems now that everything that brought us to this moment in history is demanding a stance of us. Mankind is about to make a momentous decision. And everyone of us has to ask, "Where do I stand in the midst of it all?"

It is like life itself depends upon this state of being where men take their stand. I guess it is like the first time I told my wife to go to hell, a rocking experience both for her and for me. But I found out that until you tell your wife to go to hell, you do not have any marriage. In fact you need to do it effectively! Where is it where you decide: "This is where things stop. This is where I stand." When you do that you can stand before your wife, your husband, your children, or your church, or your job saying this is the way it is "This is the way it is and I AM! To hell with anything anyone says." This is the place in which you can say 'no' to Satan. That is the only way to get rid of him. You have to say, "I AM." Then he disappears to try again later.

In this state of being you are cut from yourself, from all those things you depend upon. In this state you believe, you know, you stand before the raw being of life itself. This finally means you are simply relying -- relying upon Being itself. The fourth island of Certitude is I Rely. There is no other way to participate in Radical Illumination. This reliance becomes the motivating power of your life. And it comes as a white hot heat. It's not the heat that moves you on some surface issues, it is the kind of heat that exists within your own being. Have you ever noticed when you are having a conversation with someone there are the thought flashes across your mind, no matter who you are talking with, "He is really just an SOB." Then when you think a little more, you say, "And so am I: just an SOB. I am sitting here talking like this. And I do not know what the hell I am doing." It is like that old song, "Not your brother, not your sister, but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer." You cannot depend upon any criteria for justifying your own existence or anyone else. I rely in a final trust of being itself. It is not relying upon the neighbor but upon Being. When this is done you can drink like to the last dreg. You can fight boldly.

Only out of this reliance can a man give himself to any reliance. One of the things I have noticed about people who have not grown up in this area. They seem to think fighting is detrimental to corporateness. Several colleagues I know have had that illusion shattered in our group. We have some horrific fights. But they are human fights I maintain. In the midst of a fight which is simply a part of the give and take of life the very meaning of I rely comes home. It is in the midst of my being over against other human beings that the state of being is realized in which I see that whatever else is going on, whatever kind of standards you want to apply from any situation or any person, I AM THE MAN. I AM THE ONE!

It is not that suddenly I want to be somebody in history. That has nothing to do with it. It has to do with knowing whether you are going to do the only do that you can do. Nobody can do your do but you. When has it happened to you, that you discover that if no one does it, it does not get done? It just is not going to get done unless you do it. It is the same with every human being. The kind of do I can do in history no one else can do. Therefore, I rely upon the very being that is mine. We experience that every week when we are teaching RSI courses. We talk about a turning point in a course--where you begin to sense what is happening to a person. When you do you really have a course after that. When you know what a person needs, you are the only one who can drive a point home.

Thus says the Lord to Cyrus his anointed,
Cyrus whom he has taken by the hand
to subdue nations before him
and undo the might of kings;

before whom gates shall be opened
and no doors be shut:

I will go before you
and level the swelling hills;
I will break down gates of bronze
and hack through iron bars.
I will give you treasures from dark vaults,
hoarded in secret places,
that you may know that I am the Lord,
Israel's God who calls you by name.

For the sake of Jacob my servant and Israel my chosen
I have called you by name and given you your title,
though you have not known me.
I am the Lord, there is no other;
there is no god beside me.

I will strengthen you though you have not known me,
so that men from the rising and the setting sun
may know that there is none but I:
I am the Lord, there is no other;

I make the light, I create darkness,
author alike of propriety and trouble.
I, the Lord, do all these things.
Rain righteousness, you heavens,
let the skies above pour down;

let the earth open to receive it,
that it may bear the fruit of salvation
with righteousness in blossom at its side.
All this I, the Lord, have created.

Will the pot contend with the potter,
or the earthenware with the hand that shapes it?
Will the clay ask the potter what he is making?
or his handiwork say to him, 'You have no skill'?
Will the babe say to his father, 'What are you begetting?',
or to his mother, 'What are you bringing to birth?'

Thus says the Lord, Israel's Holy one, his maker:

Would you dare question me concerning my children,
or instruct me in my handiwork?
I alone have roused this man in righteousness,
and I will smooth his path before him;
he shall rebuild my city
and let my exiles go free-
not for a price nor for a bribe,
says the Lord of Hosts.

Thus says the Lord, the creator of the heavens,
he who is God,
who made the earth and fashioned it
and himself fixed it fast,
who created it not empty void,
but made it for a place to dwell in:

I am the Lord, there is no other.
(Isaiah 45: 1-25, or -18)