

ORIGINAL GRATITUDE

I picked up a word from Kierkegaard's *Fear And Trembling* yesterday. This is an absolutely coming from Kierkegaard. He says the essential task of being a human being is becoming decisive in the spirit. It occurred to me that there is not going to be any Reconstruction without Resurgence. This world is a "goner" until the Other World flows through this world, and the fact is that the Other World is flooding this world. As we become self-conscious of the spirit flood, we are on the way to becoming decisive in the spirit. But how do we go about ordering this dynamic? That is why we have the charts, and that is why we are having these lectures and treks and why we are doing the visits: to give order to the spirit so that we become more decisive in the spirit. I have to keep reminding myself that the only reason we are doing any of this is for the Reconstruction rather than for the titillation of the spirit. For the Reconstruction.

We have been shaken in our times, down to the very foundations, and as fear and trembling set in, our poetry fell apart. We had our secular revolution. Now we are putting the poetry back together. I have so much poetry swirling around down inside me, more than has ever been recorded in all the books of poetry, just swirling around. It is that type of fundamental crisis. And in the midst of that there has been a rediscovery going on, a rediscovery of the River of Consciousness, of Freedom. During the Watch the question arose of how in the world do I get free from my freedom? I find that that is where I am a great deal of the time lately. How in the world do I get free from my freedom? And I am not going to even qualify this one bit. We are rediscovering love. As Brian Stanfield says, *agape*. The Mountain of Care is this 'world we have been given to love. And we are rediscovering happiness. Someone said this month, and I do not know who I took it down from, "Now I'm a dead man and will never be caught dead being anything but a dead man." Who said that? I wish I had said that. It has something to do with the Sea of Tranquility.

Today we zero in on the Mountain of Care. My image of the other two areas, the Land and River, was just going down. And now it is like we have gone down and done our flip under water and are coming out, going for shore and walking up on the land and starting to climb the mountain. We are beginning the outward journey. This is the transitional lecture between the inward and the outward march of becoming decisive in the spirit. Gogarten's terms of "responsible to God for this world" comes to me. That "for this world" is the arena of the Mountain of Care. We are all clear that if we are hung up on this world we are not going to serve it authentically. If Abraham is hung up on Isaac, he cannot be Isaac's father. The question is, how do I become free from this world so that I can engage in loving this world? We are talking this week about universal concern or compassion. We are talking about singular mission, again about responsibility "for." We are talking about transparent power, motivity. None of these is possible without Original Gratitude. That is the transition between the inward and the outward. There is no service, there is no happiness, except on the other side of Original Gratitude. Is not that a great phrase, Original Gratitude? The watershed. What does it think like, feel like, resolve like, will like to be like? Original Gratitude - to really be in love with this world?

Well, enough theoretical framework....It was about a zillion-to-one odds that I showed up, and even more, that I showed up conscious. I could have shown up unconscious. I could have shown up a pig. I could have shown up a nova star. But I showed up conscious. Now, that is amazing. I showed up, conscious in the 20th Century -- that is amazing! To give you a sense after what that feels like, the marvel, the amazement of just showing up and showing up conscious....I was coming back from Milwaukee a couple of years ago in my little VW, a red '64 two-

door. I hated that drive, my God, I hated it, back and forth from the North Shore House to Milwaukee just day in and day out. And that West wind coming across that interstate, and you are just always wrenching into that wind with that little VW. It sometimes got so bad I would just drive down the auxiliary road about 30 miles an hour just quivering. But one night I did not have time to drive down the auxiliary road, so we went lickity-split, 6065 miles an hour, about all that little thing would make, Bob and I. We came over a hill and here came one of those gusts. The car went that way and I pulled it back. It just so happened that there was a new layer of ice on the road, and when I pulled it back, that rear end just came around. We flipped over on our side and slid awhile and somehow the thing just started to rise into the air and begin this slow swirl. A couple of big Mack trucks were behind us. And there we were, and everything began to be dazzling white and in slow motion, you know. Just the magnificent turning that was going on there. And all I could think about was that Mack truck. Where is that Mack truck? That was the time in my life that I was a dead man. I mean, I was waiting on the Mack to hit me, and I was never more composed in my whole life, just waiting on that final splat--this is it. Well, anyway, we rolled over into the middle and landed on our wheels with our headlights burning and motor running -- the thing a total wreck. We somehow managed to get our doors open and both stumbled out of the car and walked around to the front and grinned at each other. I mean, it was a deep grin. And then we reached out and just sort of spontaneously touched each other...and smiled some more. Before long, we were levitating up and down that gully. I mean we became Florence Nightingale in the gully; there were seven wrecks there that night. Nobody else knew that ice slick was there either. We were running up and down and trying to keep from getting hit and helping everybody. You get a sense of just utter amazement, like no time in my existence. I was alive! I was alive! My God!

And the next morning I shot into the deepest despair that I ever knew. It took me months to crawl back out of that one. Because you see, when you become that aware that your life is given to you and that you are here, that you made it, then the question comes, what are you going to do with it, Cock? What are you going to do with what you have been given? The previous 30 years came back at me, but mostly the future. What are you going to do with it in relationship to the whole comprehensive neighborhood of the 3 billion, huh? What are you going to do with it in relationship to the whole past? to the whole future? There you are, and the deeps are coming at you, and it is like all that stuff goes out to the last orbit and starts coming back in on you. There you are, getting it from all sides. And I mean the "Bultmann arrows" are never like those orbits. Your whole existence.

It is a shame what we do to our children. My four year old son has had RS1 about a hundred times now. Someone started teaching them some of this hand language, They do the RS-1 symbols on their hands. So one day I was moaning and groaning around the house about how life was unfair to me and had dealt me that last dirty blow, and Johnny in great compassion without saying a word, caught my eye from the other room and put his fingers together to represent the "arrows" You don't have to be thirty-three to know.

There you are in your great predestination box, I mean just for you, yours. Your whole life mission and destiny being called for, being trapped by that question you begin to go wild. You are beginning to run. And you are just banging off every wall of that box trying to find out who is in charge so you can go tell them, "No." It happened that Charles Moore was in charge of my box at that time, so I grabbed Charles about a month later. I was almost to the point of not functioning in the House after that. You have heard of The Gunfight at the OK Corral. Charles and I had the fight at the Lake Forest Inn. Neither one of us is too good with chit-chat, so we got quickly to the point. I told Charles that I had had enough and that I was leaving. Charles' response was "You'll go to Hell!" "Go to Hell!" and I said, "Go to Hell!" and he said, "You'll go to Hell!" "Go to Hell!" And we did that until we saw that that wasn't going to accomplish anything. I mean it was a weird trip back, going out after all that and getting into the car and riding back in silence.

You do wild things, not wanting to be your predestination. It does not let up. Going to get out of Kansas City for a couple of weeks, thank God. Going to Chicago to rest during the December Priors' meeting. Remember that one? Ah, yes. There you are, relaxing and resting, going to meetings, having everybody cater to you. You get up every morning with the troops and you go out into the court yard where everybody does his ritualistic bow to the 400,000 ton "Rock," called the established church. I mean you left Virginia because you heard that there were some gallant people up there in Chicago having a go at the Rock. After making sure your golf clubs were safely stored, you came on to Chicago, and you get there with that gallant troop of people. You all bow to the Rock and then take your First World War rifles with bayonets on them and you all prance around the Rock going jabbity-jab. You see a spark fly, and now and then someone gets a good one in, and a chip falls off from that 400,000 ton Rock. You run around jabbity-jab, day after day, jabbity-jab, take that. And I mean we would do it with passion, heroically. But knowing, knowing deeply that it was just impossible to split the Rock with a First World War bayonet. Well, I went to bed on Tuesday night that December, got up the next morning, grabbed for my rifle to go down to the yard to have at Mother Rock again. But horror of horrors! I dropped my rifle in painfilling, stunned awe.... The Rock had split. My God! You are going to be doing the Local Church Experiment for the rest of your life, Cock. You might as well sell your golf clubs, Cock. This outfit is in history, Cock. And despair, despair, despair. My whole life! And that tune that you are left with, that predestinal tune. You stand there with Paul and you understand finally what Paul meant by, "Who will deliver me from this wretched state?"

Six months later you have a stupid Watch that does the same thing. I hated that Watch. The same stuff going on, "What are you going to do with your life, Cock?" It won't let up. "Cock, are you going to be the Son of Man or not?" That's profound when it gets articulated finally that that's the only question you have. That's the arena of the only temptation you have. There is none other. There's no way out of your little black box. . . except one, and that's being it. I've just decided I'm never going to say "become anything" again, because that lets people off the hook. Psychologists pick up on all that 'becoming language' that Kierkegaard used and they turn it into some sort of moral progress and some futuristic something-or-other and take the urgency out of it. Just go ahead and be your predestination. Be one with it. Sometimes that happens. And sometimes when that happens you can understand why it is that a man says, "I and the Father are one." All of us experience it.

Some of us have to eat out for a month-long vacation called the Global Odyssey, so we won't be here during Summer '70. We take the \$3,000.00 we made selling the house and go have ourselves and Wing-ding. We get off the plane in Hong Kong and we look at that mountain a little bit. And some of your gallant colleagues go up that little mountain of inhuman shacks, but not you, for you can't stand to look at that mountain. And then you fly into "beautiful Katmandu", as those pamphlets talk about Katmandu. And you fly, I mean the flight itself is enough to get you, but you come over 20,000 feet mountains and you come through the clouds and say, "My God, it is beautiful. I've never seen anything so beautiful in my life, those beautiful green mountain terraces. Oh, this is going to be a great holiday." And then you drive into town and you're dodging cows and people and the car gets stuck right down in the center of town. You finally get to some two-bit hotel. Scenic downtown Katmandu. Let's go out and go around the block. But you see more than you can bear to see. A man, sitting there looking at you with sores bleeding and his eye hanging down past his nose, so you pick up your pace, run into the hotel and crawl under the bed, and pray for a way to erase the horror.

Next stop, Calcutta. And you get scalded. Dylan Thomas, "Let him scald me and drown me in this world's wounds." That's some prayer, isn't it? And then you come back eventually to the White West having experienced that which you can't talk about for nine months. You're met with open arms by your colleagues and their little yellow school bus with the floor falling out. "Welcome back!" So you try to miss all the holes in the floorboard.

Someone faintly starts out a little tune, "Be it Ever so Humble." And someone in the midst of that sings, "Be it ever so humble. . . there's no place called home." And there is a great hush on the bus. "No place called home." And you drive into what they call the West Side and you don't feel like you're home. No place. And then it happens to you, "Any place is home, Cock." Any place is home. No place is home which means any place is home. You can go anywhere, live anywhere, do anything. And it is that weird type of oneness you experience, of being one with all creation. But, it's an awe-full oneness. It's like all creation is mine. And I don't want to be yoked to it. . . but it's mine. And in a weird way you are squatting there in your tomb with its black walls, and it happens. There's resurrection that takes place in the tomb. Yet you've got the same box in your hands. It's not glamorous. Yet you've got a different box in your hand!

In your same-yet-different box, the little things start invading. Little things start telling you that the Mystery is in love with you. The Mystery begins to just leak through every place and every situation and every moment. The Mystery starts leaking through and you walk around the pyramids while you are in Egypt. And you are climbing all over them with your colleagues. Everyone is taking pictures of you standing near the top of the pyramid. One of them says, "You can go into the pyramids." All right, let's go up into the pyramid. So we talk up into the pyramid, You climb and climb and climb, and thirty of you get up into the pyramid in one of those little tomb rooms. It's dank and dark and awesome just to walk into, and then some fool starts the Daily Office. You all pick it up. It happens, you are in a time machine. All of a sudden you are 5,000 years old, so old you can hardly walk back down the ladder.

Or, you are riding on a bus to recruit in Wichita and the man sitting in front of you has a half moon ear. I mean, somehow a dog bit off his ear. There is just a perfect half moon ear. Half of it is gone. You begin looking around the bus. Everybody on this bus has ears. It's not human to have ears. It's like an animal. I'm riding on a bus to Wichita with animals. It was an animal bus. You start heehawing. Everybody looks at you. The Mystery just leaks. I'm reminded of Joseph's calling back from his global trip. He said that one day they stopped and counted up seven miracles for that day. Then the double reflection: seven, is that all? All the moments of the day, every moment is a miracle, miracle, miracle.

I think of that square with a circle in it. Sometimes you look at it hard and that circle is going boom, boom, boom, boom against the sides of the square, pulsating with the spirit of the Other World. And the greatest collision of them all in the midst of that, the Other World and This World collide - the sacred and secular collide - and you get born. Your two worlds become one. The whole universe becomes sacred. You realize God is winning: God has always been winning. God is winning! God will always be winning. You are just so glad that God is winning that you can't stand it. When that happens you are into the arena of Original Gratitude.

You begin to understand again that you can use a bad word like resignation, that you can participate in that "infinite resignation," being glad that God is winning. And all of a sudden, being infinitely resigned, you are alive in the finite, you are alive in your box. You even accept your fate. You begin to make love to your box. You even begin to make love to the world. When you and I are seized with divine love for our fate, divine love for just being grated to our world, the wonder begins to ooze in. You begin to see in that moment that that situation you are in is worth dying over, for. And you begin to smell what it's all about to be a servant.

I contend this was what was going on with Jesus in Gethsemane. He'd been going to Jerusalem for some time now, and he was really deciding to go to Jerusalem. Yet he was saying "No!" to his predestinal box. "I do not want to go!" Marching up and down the garden, looking for a little help from his friends. But there was a happening there that allowed that situation to become an "If-it's-your-will" situation. Then he charges out of there

toward Jerusalem. He had decided to be the Son of God, the Son of Man, on the other side of being glad that God was winning. And of course that's what this silly Cross is about, isn't it: that one man decided to serve the Mountain.

Oh, this Other World is strange. I get "antsy" over there in my ecclesiola. I get "antsy" anywhere if the group I'm in is "antsy," so I just hit it head-on and try to get at it. That particular night in the Watch I looked at Ralph. The whole group was "zonked." I was trying to bring them out so that they could go on and do something. And there was Ralph. I said, "Ralph, are you in the right state of being?" "I think so." "Ralph, have you ever been in the wrong state of being?" "I guess I am quite often." "Ralph," I said, "it is impossible to be in the wrong state of being." Isn't that wild. There's nothing you can do to get into the wrong state of being. When that happens to you, you quit spending your best energy worrying about whether you are in the right state of being or not. You have time to care for the Mountain, don't you? "Ralph, something else. God can get at you in whatever one of those sixty-four states of being you are in. It is not sequential, Ralph. You don't go through the whole Area A, Area B, Area C. He can get you, Ralph, in any one of them." And, it is good. Just stop worrying. God will take care of you. I think we will probably have to bring that old hymn back. Whatever state of being you are in, God will take care of you. And when you know that and are original gratitude, you care for the Mountain. You are decisive in spirit. You know you are so Human you can hardly keep it from spilling all over everything you touch.

John Cock