

Base Centrum

THE NEW STYLE OF THE TURN

Spring Quarter

Area Prior Spin

June 19, 1973

I bring you greetings from all the churches of Area New York and from your colleagues, who will not be here, but who have embraced their situation and will be here in spirit; and from those who wish they were anywhere else but where they are, and yet they are still there. Amen.

I want to reflect on three particular areas of thought and experience which have come to me over this past quarter, usually in the form of something that has happened or something that has been said.

You remember how we used to speak about greatness. We used to mimic Cassius Clay and say "You're the greatest," and would greet one another many times by saying, "You look great!" Recently, one of our colleagues greeted us by saying, "You look great--expended!" That is the only way you can compliment a colleague now.

It seems to me that in the whole arena still going on with Justification there is a particular stance being taken. Two colleagues who have just started to recently intern claimed promises: one that he would stand open to the openness of the future; the other that she would be the Word of God. She said she did not know what that would mean, but would still claim that promise. It seems to me this all has something to do with living a life of unqualified cruciformity or being on a journey. No matter where you go you are conscious of the fact that everyone you run into is on a journey, and that there are some on the journey of unqualified cruciformity.

In thinking about that greeting, Joe Mathews mentioned how all the women are looking so great these days. Jim Bell and I were recently reflecting that there is a kind of new beauty about this place. I do not know whether you have looked around or not, but there is in fact a new beauty. I do not know how else to talk about it. It is here in the midst of this body. You walk in the door of this place, or you meet colleagues on the street; you walk into this room, and it is clear that we do not look the same way we did three months ago. There is some kind of a transformation taking place.

When one of the Order youth of our House was assigned to the Academy this quarter, she came back no longer a youth. It was not just the natural process of maturation. She was transformed. She was a woman. Her waist was discernible again. She had taken on a new style of wearing skirts which was a radical transformation. But way beyond and deeper than that there was a kind of a discipline, an interior stance she was taking, and it radiated.

Now, this should not surprise us. If we have been fooling around with Sanctification we ought to expect a little "numinous," or that sort of aura, like halos. I do not think we are walking around with halos, but it might be something like that. There is a new radiance, a new beauty which comes out of the disciplined, which comes out of the life grounded in the interior. It seems to me that this has to do with total expenditure--disciplined total expenditure.

There is a third arena, and I am not comfortable with the kind of word my rationality tells me belongs here. It has to do with the whole style of "fastidiousness." Then came "graciousness," and then "sophistication." The word "poise" has been around a bit. It seems to me that all of those point to something you and I can take on.

As you and I act out various roles, as we take on certain tactically necessary styles, it seems that what is welling up is "dignity"--I have no other word for it. Dignity is not something you take on, dignity is something that comes from your deeps. It wells up and controls and spells out your style of action. We have often said that we have now in The Turn taken the stance of honoring the establishment, and in honoring the establishment we are going to have to play many different roles. Some of the time we will have to be engaged in "posterior osculation," and we are clear that when we are in that humiliating position of honoring the establishment someone is going to come along and knock the hell out of us. I guess what I am searching for is how it is we get hold of a style of infinite patience, infinite patience, infinite patience; in which we do not respond with arrogance out of our defensiveness, nor do we respond with a kind of resentment when we get the hell knocked out of us while engaged in that osculation activity. We take the stance of infinite, infinite, infinite patience; and sometimes, if we are patient, the honor is going to be returned.

At a certain meeting with a group of men--churchmen, statesmen, men of the establishment--honorable men of dignity (You might say they were men of class; they had a style about them.) one in their midst who represented the National Council of Churches indicated he had questioned a group of all executive heads of agencies of the National Council of Churches as to whether there should be continuing negotiations with the Ecumenical Institute to settle on our place of residence in New York City. He asked those there how many were in favor of this, and before they could answer that question, how many would stand opposed. To a man, every one of them affirmed the continuing of negotiations. Not one stood in opposition. I do not know how that comes to you, but it comes to me as a deep address. How do you receive that? In the midst of honoring, we should not be surprised when there is affirmation returned and it is out of a deep kind of dignity. I want to call it a gentile dignity--not some kind of softness, but a kind of inner quiet strength that allows you to receive that kind of affirmation.

When that meeting was closed, this man spoke not just out of his personal encounter with me, but I think on behalf of the whole church when he said, "Thank you--and I think I can put it this way--thank you for the blessing of your presence." Now he was not speaking of me. He was speaking about us, the Spirit Movement. He was speaking as the established church to the movemental church. It seemed to have called forth some nurturing of some kind of quiet strength. It does not mean getting embarrassed by something like that, going all to pieces, or getting arrogant and saying, "It's about time you did this; you've been taking a long time to do it!" It is that kind of quiet strength whereby you receive honor without being overwhelmed by it, out of a new kind of dignity. This is not called for out of any kind of moralism, or principle, but at this moment in history it is called for as the crucial tactic--not for our own sakes but for the sake of the church and for the sake of the world. It seems to me that has to do with radical transparency.

I even hesitate to say this, but if it seems to you that in talking about the journey of unqualified cruciformity, disciplined total expenditure, and radical transparent engagement I have hit upon anything that had to do with Justification or Sanctification and possibly even a little hint of Glorification, or if they all seem to be about the same dynamics, then that is all right. I think they are.

--Joe Crocker