

Ecumenical Institute
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THE ROLE OF AN ORDER IN HISTORY

We are the people of the Spirit, because all men are people of the Spirit. Our early fathers wanted to make it very clear which Spirit we are of, and therefore, they invented poetry that has warmed the heart of the Church through the centuries.

We are the people of the Holy Spirit. We are the people of the Spirit, that are set aside, that finally have no resting place. We are the people of the Spirit of the Mystery. We are the people of the Holy Spirit, the awe-filling Spirit, that no one has ever seen. We see only the trembling of the leaves as he passes by. His way of operating in the world is beyond our ken, but we can see patterns in the trembling of the leaves. They look something like this to me: that He begins in the midst of history and, I am persuaded, always outside the self-conscious Church. If it happens within the self-conscious Church, that's coincidental, at the most. For the Church does not occasion the revolutions in history; it but enables them.

The Holy Spirit begins in history by bleeding humanness in the deep recesses of this man and that man--out of which bleeding, erupts great upheavals in the historical process. What black man began to bleed his humanness--that finally issued in the mighty black revolution of our time? What young one experienced the bleeding of humanness within himself--that erupted in the world-wide youth revolt that defines our age? In what female soul did the blood of humanness begin to seep up to the surface--that issued in the unbelievable feminine revolution in our time? Where was that non-Western man who first began to feel, like spring water oozing from the ground, the blood of humanness--that issued in the world-wide revolt of the non-Western world against the West in our time? These are the trembling of the leaves that enables one who has eyes to see to grasp afresh the presence of the Holy Spirit.

But you aren't through. For there's another tremble of the leaf. And that's when self-conscious people begin to be aware of the seeping forth of new humanness that is way down underneath the cataclysmic upheaval in the historical hour. These are the ones who represent the breach in the proud flesh that man has put over his humanness, and begin to see, shall I say, directly into the deeps of what it means to be consciousness of consciousness, or a human being.

This is the beginning of what I like to call the Spirit Movement. When this happens, then I think that the Holy Spirit wills but one thing, and that is to find form for the spirit that is released. We've often said, all of us, that no matter where you go in the world today, the presence of the Spirit is there before you in manifest form in this life, and in that life, and in still another life. Across the world today, I want to insist, the Spirit that is loose, the awe-filled Spirit that is loose, the dread-filling, the fascinating Spirit that is loose, is seeking only for form.

The Spirit Movement, I suppose it's obvious to us all, has two basic phases. One is to break the armor of society at large so that men at large, both as individuals and in any institutionalized form, may begin to experience the movement of the Spirit. This is difficult, for it seems always to me like you go around with an ax in your hand, chopping through twelve-foot walls. That's the first stage of the Spirit Movement. But that's past. You see the black revolution has

been won. Now there are a lot of battles after a war has been won. I buried a lot of men after the Pacific War was already decided. I do not mean you have easy times ahead. But the black man has won, and we pinkies had better understand that. The youth revolt is victorious, and there's no going back ever. And for you effeminate males, mark you well, the feminine revolution is set in history forever.

This brings the second phase that many times we've talked about. No longer are you chopping down. That job is done. Now you have to build. And it's here that I want to confess that my detachment, which a man of the Spirit must have, has not been adequate. For I believed until recently that the trauma of the negations of life was more traumatic than the trauma of the affirmations of life. I believed with a passion that the sufferings of the breaking-something-loose were far more severe than the sufferings of having to build. In Bultmann's "God" paper, he runs through those negations rather thoroughly; and it's not until that last paragraph that he does the flip and talks about the affirmations without which you do not have the negations. But he does that casually in just three sentences. That was because when Bultmann wrote, though he had the detachment to see both poles, what was called for was the negative pole, and he hit it. If we were to write it today, I would like to suggest, for pedagogical reasons, we spend most of those paragraphs dealing with the overwhelming affirmation in the negations of life. And then the last paragraph, flip it, and talk about the negations of the affirmations in the midst of life.

What I'm trying to get said is that, at this moment in the life of the Movement, when now we have to create the trauma that we're going to experience, it's going to be almost, but not quite, more than we can bear. I have been aware in the last two or three months that I can hardly speak. My hands shake. Now not long ago that shaking wasn't there for me. Something's happened. It's the burden that is on your souls and mine of now having to create, to bring forth, not tear down.

Now when this stage comes to any group of people, the black man, the youth, the feminine, there's a kind of wildness present. In Hong Kong unbelievable winds come up overnight and go through those city streets with hard, driving rain. One day I got caught in one of those, and it was one of the most amazing experiences of my whole life. Everybody on the street sort of went wild. They would run when they didn't have to run; and they would talk to you out loud. There was real new noise that was created, and you felt in yourself a kind of wildness. As a matter of fact, that old hymn came to my mind, "There's a Wildness in God's Mercy."

You look at any of these revolutions and you see the wildness. Take the youth revolt. The wildness comes the moment that you get over the brink, and you've won it. You've won it even though you don't know you've won it. Or, if you allow yourself to believe you've won it, that wildness comes. There's a wildness, too, now in the black man. And in the feminine revolution. You know that in the last three or four months, something has happened in that revolution. As a matter of fact, one sign of this wildness is that the lesbians have taken over. The very neuroses that demanded that a woman had to become a man in order to become a woman (that's the neuroses that was behind the feminine revolution) has now occasioned a kind of wildness in the midst of it. And God bless the woman who is able to bring a calm and a peace in the midst of that wildness, that she may indeed become the feminine which is the sign of what must be.

This wildness is the manifestation of raw creativity. No, it's a step beneath that; it's the first awareness that you've got to produce creativity. No, it's that you've got to be creativity. That's where the wildness comes up. That's the trauma, that trembles you to the bottom of your being. And what that wildness requires, objectively, is a little order injected into it. Just a little order. On the subjective side what is needed is just a little peace. Now this peace is not a peace you feel. No, it's a peace you invent down inside of you. If you want to call it the grace of God, that'll be all right with me. But the way it comes to me is that I'm uptight up to here--and I'm constantly having to invent a peace down inside. That is the subjective flip of the external order that has to be injected in this. Now you've got to be clear about this peace. It isn't this assinine peace all of us want. It's invented peace where there is no peace.

This order isn't trying to turn the clock back and bring the establishment back into control. No, it's order within the revolution. And it's got to be the kind of order that defends the revolution, that releases the revolution to focus its forces. It picks up that creativity and invents the constructs in society which, for a period of time in history, will maintain the spirit that was let loose in the beginning of the revolution itself.

What I mean by the Spirit Movement, at this second phase of the Movement's existence, is that we become the order instillers, the peace inventors, the calm inventers right at the very heart of the whirlwind. That's our job.

This is why I think that the hour has come in history for an historical order, which is the ordering of ourselves for the sake of instilling order. For every revolution in history the time has come when that ordering for the sake of ordering had to take place. What we've been doing here at this research assembly on the local congregation is ordering for the sake of ordering--in sheer chaos inventing the peace that enables you to just stand there. And as we move forth from here, through your efforts and the efforts of many across the globe who are not here, to occasion metamorphosis in the local congregation, you'll be ordering for the sake of ordering.

For a long time I have found myself saying something like this: the reason why you have to use the structures of the establishment to change the establishment, to revolutionize the establishment, is first of all that the effort has to be nothing less than global. If you don't take existing structures, then you have to create global structures to do the revolution. And everyone in this room, in this complex world, would be dead and buried a hundred years before you could even hope to have anything remotely related to a global construct. Now when I speak this way I look upon myself as a hard-headed revolutionary tactician. For I insist that, if you do not take the existing structures of the Church, then you have got to capture the International Kiwanis Club or the Worldwide Volunteer Fire Department. There is no other way.

But I've always added that also I have theological reasons, and I think the time has come for us to hit that angle. There never has been in the whole history-long life of the League, of the People of the Spirit, of the People of God, a cessation and a beginning. Never. It has always been mutation. It has always been resurrection. It has always been revolution. Christianity wasn't a stopping of Judaism and then beginning something new. Judaism wasn't a stopping of Hebrewism and

then having something new. Buddhism wasn't a stopping of Hinduism and then having something new. Confucianism wasn't a stopping of ancient scientism and beginning something new. It has always been radical revolution from within. The Church is going to be renewed for the sake of occasioning the New Social Vehicle through radical revolution from within.

Now there's a funny thing about the Church today, the established Church. It is experiencing this wildness like the other revolutionary movements. You only see this on the grass roots level, in distinct form in this place and that place. But if you have eyes to see, you even behold it where you cannot behold it on the local level. It takes many forms, such as in hanging on to what you've got, with a new kind of fervor.

Where you can discern it most clearly is in those bureaucratic structures at the "Protestant Vatican," 475 Riverside Drive in New York. At Upsala two years ago, I ran into three top, top leaders of the Presbyterian Church, at different times. When I pressed them as to what their task was at this moment in history, all three of them, in one way or another, said it was to preside over the dissolution of the Presbyterian denomination. That's wildness. When we've gone to various mission boards to get help with funding the International Training Institutes, I've had the sneaky feeling that if you could guarantee them that you were going to fail in what you were going to do overseas, they would have funded you immediately. That's wildness. I do not think that's an exaggerated statement. That's the wildness.

Well, you and I, as the Holy Spirit people, have come to the moment when we have to inject an order that doesn't destroy that wildness, but enables it to move within the Church, that the Church can once again begin to become the Church. This means something like an historical order. And I don't know what an historical order is like, in any external manifestation, but through the years, I suspect all of us have come to see some things about it. The first thing we've seen is that to begin to talk about it, you have to move into the deeps underneath the deeps, underneath the deeps of humanness itself. To begin any place else is ridiculous.

I want to say three things about it rather quickly. When you think of an historical order under the rubric of the ontological, then an historical order is absolute nothingness. And this nothingness can be concretized. I like to concretize it in terms of being, doing, and knowing.

In terms of being, an order is absolute nothing in its "nothing signality," if I may use such a term. This is to say that it is nothing but the sign of the depths of humanness. It is nothing but sheer transparency, relative to the Mystery that encompasses the whole of mankind. This is why people of the Spirit Movement are always outside the camp. They are always the oddballs, for their one function is to be a sign of the Presence.

Secondly, it is nothing under the rubric of doing, in that it is nothing in catalysis. Its only function is to catalyze. I repeat again, the Spirit Movement does not build the revolution, it catalyzes the revolution, both in its first phase and in its second phase. These are the people who do nothing. While other people do this and that, these do nothing. This is why the Movement people are always poor, and have to be poor.

Thirdly, an historical order is nothing in its radicality, and this is under the rubric of knowing. The Spirit People bring nothing; they bring nothing to humanness. We have to fight, I think, with more effort than we ever had, any form of a Gnosticism that suggests that Christianity or the People of the Spirit or the League in history have some kind of secret wisdom that they set on top of man's wisdom. When I use the radicality, I mean the foundations of humanness itself. All we have to contribute is the nothing of pulling back the veil and allowing people to perceive and experience their own humanness. We have not one thing to add. This is what you mean by the contentless Christ. But you've got to understand the flip of that. The contentless Christ is the most contentful happening that the universe knows anything about because it delivers a person to his own humanness. And that's the content of the content.

The second major rubric is the existential category. That is, an historical order is absolute dedication. That word dedication has offended me for years, I think because we sang songs about dedication when I was in the Methodist Youth Fellowship, and I've been sick to my stomach ever since about it. But the word is having new meaning.

In terms of being, it is dedication relative to a mission. And, you have to understand, the revolutionary, the Spirit man, is always a fanatic. That's what Kierkegaard means when he says you will one thing. To be dedicated to mission means that you literally become your mission. And I mean that sets you aside as an oddball. Other people, they have a relation there, and a relation there, and then they have some things they've got to do over here. The man of the Spirit is, minus nothing, his mission, his calling, his election within history.

Secondly, under the rubric of doing, his dedication is corporateness. At this moment in history that unfortunate return of group dynamics called sensitivity training has infiltrated a church that has failed in morale. It has given one more little crutch to hang on to. The koinonia approach has not worked, and cannot work, because it is theologically wrong, and because it goes against the grain of what it means to be consciousness of consciousness within history. This corporateness has always got to have the pole of mission utterly clear, and the gaze of the group can never be toward the navel, but only toward the suffering of mankind in the world. I don't know how to get this said. But you and I are called to suffer to the end of our days for the sake of relieving the suffering of mankind.

Finally, under absolute dedication, is what I mean by inner discipline. And I never mean by discipline getting somewhere on time. I agree with Lenin, that if you cannot get to a meeting on time, you are not a revolutionary and never will be. You can rub shoulders with revolutionaries and you can empathetically participate in their being, but you can't be a revolutionary. With his top bracket men, Lenin used to say to them, "Now supposing you were out bombing a train, and one of your guys who had the fuse didn't show up." That was his illustration. And he bounced people on their heads if they were ever late.

But for me, inner discipline is not that, though I repeat again, if you do not know how to move your carcass to the appointed place on time, you are just a cadaver that the rest of the revolutionaries have to carry. Inner discipline is to know what your situation in the context of your total mission requires of you at a given moment, and then you deliver it. That's inner discipline. That's dedication. Because nobody ever woke up naturally capable of doing this, this is dedication.

Lastly, think of an historical order under the rubric of mission.

First of all, under being, it is the love of God. The mission of the Spirit Movement is nothing more, nothing less than love. A few years ago, you and I couldn't use that term because the demons had captured it and destroyed it. But it has been retaken. We are to love, and, first of all, to love God. I haven't time to talk on that. I'd like to try, though I'm feeble. But one thing to me it means is that you serve God, and I don't mean obey Him. I mean that I am literally fulfilling a need that God has. And His need is to be ever present in the historical process. This is why I like to say that a man who loves God is a guardian of the Mystery in the historical process.

Secondly, it is the love of man. We are the defenders of humanity, and by humanity I mean two different things. One is humanness itself, that it's always over our dead body will you violate humanness. Secondly, I mean all of humanity. I mean those who have ever lived, those who ever will live, and those are our colleagues in this moment in history, all men. Do not forget for a moment that stalwart black from the shores of Guinea who was dropped overboard with his chains, whose name you and I and no one knows. My life has to be in service to him. That's what love means.

And lastly, it's love of self. And here we have to be the watchmen of the deeps, for I've had trouble with the love of self understood in this kind of a context. But it's sort of getting a little bit clear. The way I love myself is to keep watch, night and day, over the depths of humanness itself. This is what, in my opinion, it means to be a prior. If ever once I sit in a collegium and allow some young squirt to just superficially touch an issue, it's my responsibility to make a decision as to whether I take that conversation and shove the bottom out of it. And it is almost that you have to be on tiptoes every moment to be sure that in every situation the deeps are guarded. And there's no love of self, save that role is picked up.

What is our future? I don't know. But it's become clear that what we're doing at the moment is ordering for the sake of ordering.

JWM