

THE RECOVERY OF THE OTHER WORLD

The most astonishing thing that has resulted from the body of awakened people who more than half a century ago made the great resolve to renew the Church in this century was that they stumbled upon the Other World that is right in the midst of this world. I never dreamed even ten years ago that such a thing could happen in my lifetime. I suspect to the day I die there will always be a vapor of awe surrounding my existence just because of this happening in history.

I want to try, child as I am, to talk a bit about the Other World in the midst of this world, I suggested that it has been a hidden world for centuries, a lost world. I am reminded of a motion picture about the dinosaurs I saw years ago called *The Lost World*. The lostness of the Other world in the midst of this world seems to me to be a much greater lostness. To have it disclose itself afresh forces one, regardless of his years, to experience himself all over again as a stumbling child first learning to walk.

This Other World was not discovered by church people or religious people; it was discovered by ordinary people in the twentieth, Century. It was discovered a long time before it was recognized as the Other World in the midst of this world and before it was acknowledged as the Other World.

There is nothing, "super" about this Other World. It is as ordinary, once one has beheld it, as any mundane activity that you and I engage in. It has to do with the explosion of consciousness that has taken place in our day, in and through which the radicality of humanness became clear as never before in history. Therefore, I would anticipate that what happens from the disclosure of this Other World to man in our century may be more colossal than those other great moments in history, when this same Other World made its presence powerfully known to man. But you must be clear when you talk about the Other World, that you are dealing with the ordinary secular world and secular consciousness of man.

The Ontology of the Other World

One way to comprehend the broad picture is to grasp that the Other World involves an understanding of the ontological dimension of life beyond the moral. But when I say "understanding," that is not quite right. To experience the being that the Other World is in to understand that Other World. That is the way that world is. It may help those of you who know Nietzsche to think of his "beyond good and evil." This is the realm of the Other World. It is the realm of wild self-consciousness beyond the superimposition of man's rational capacities upon it. That is a rather difficult statement to make, because to even talk about the Other World is to get your rational faculties engaged in it. But one of the remarkable things about reason is that it points beyond itself. The Other World is the world beyond reason that reason itself points to. As reason attempts to understand and talk about that world, what is being said is not that Other World itself, but is only indicative of that Other World. The Other World is radical being or raw self-consciousness, and to make any interpretation of it is to take one step backwards into this world which is the world of reason that reason invents.

Another way in which you could talk about this philosophically is to say that in our time we have succeeded in a rather

admirable way in destroying the two-story universe. We understand that we live and die in one world, and when we are dead, we are really dead. That means the two story universe has been smashed. A more direct way of saying this is that we have gotten rid of metaphysics. That needs qualification, because man never lives without metaphysics. The trouble is with the term "metaphysics." It was related to the second-story universe, or the understanding, that finally reason was the king of the universe.

In our day we are building a new metaphysics. Man grasps himself as living on one plane, but he has experienced the transparency of that plane itself. I like to think of it as holding a match underneath a paper, and first seeing little streaks come out. Then it turns brown, and then it breaks through and pops into flame. That goes through my mind when I think of transparency. Or perhaps it is more like sticking your fist through life itself.

Maybe I can illustrate it this way you and I have lived in a time in which the uniqueness of the person was emphasized, and this had to be so. This is what happens, I suspect, whenever a culture collapses in telling man as an entity what it is to be man. Then you have a new birth of existentialistic reflection. (I am not talking about abstract philosophy, but something has happened even to that in recent years.) An illustration of this principle is that the black man in our day, in order to be a human being, had to embrace his blackness to the hilt. It so happens that in doing so, he enabled some white folk, for the first time in their lives, to embrace their whiteness. But when they embraced their uniqueness to the hilt, black or white, they experienced transparency. It is as though their fist went through their uniqueness. Right now we are discovering all over again what it means to be man beyond our uniqueness -- not by going around our uniqueness but by going through our uniqueness. That is the experience of transparency.

One would like to talk about the youth in our age exactly the same way; and one would like to talk about the women in our age in precisely the same way. As a matter of fact, the same thing is happening in the relating between the West and the non-West. The last time that I went to other cultures, I experienced something I never had before, and talked to a great many people in the non-Western world about it. After World War II, when the intensification of the collapse of our society was experienced across the globe, there was an emphasis upon the particular and the unique, especially regarding parts of the world and nations. The outburst of nationalism, in my opinion, was precisely that. But I discovered in the East that some of your colleagues had stuck their fist through their uniqueness and were discovering again humanness itself.

In this transparency, in which there is one world, or one plane, the transparency of that plane- is the new metaphysics. But what I suspect history is going to call this, in one way or another, is phenomenology, or phenomenological thinking. The metaphysical question of "the real" as an abstraction apart from my consciousness is bracketed. You bracket that, and then concentrate on states of consciousness. And the state consciousness is the Other World. Rather, it is your experience of the Other World. I think you will soon discover that a state of being, a state of awareness, a state of consciousness, is the most objective reality that you have ever experienced. I want to warn you not to let the epistemology you were trained in, in which subjectivity and objectivity are divided, get in your way.

Now let me come at this through theology. Tillich is a good example there. Those of you who know his systematic theology know that he begins with the ontological situation and then moves to the interpretation of Christ, which is the existential for Tillich. Tillich himself made the case that when you talk about the essence of man being the kind of essence that creates its own essence, the first use of the word "essence" in that sentence is dealing with the ontological.

There is more to that than it sounds, for man could not even make the decision that determines his selfhood if he did not already have a montage in his being through which he looked at reality. (That is the ontological for Tillich.) Therefore, those of us who have come down hard on the existential pole, on freedom and decision, were always taking for granted an understanding of humanness in the midst of which that decision was made. The discovery of the Other World in terms of this transparency is the forging of a new montage. In this case, because the revolution is global, it is going to be a global montage that finally defines man. That is the Other World. The movie "The Gospel According to St. Matthew" showed a man who lived his existence from beginning to end in the Other World, and in the midst of that made decisions that defined the concretions of his life.

Now I want to speak a little more about a state of being. A state of being is made up of an image, an accompanying affection, and a pre-decisional resolve. I do not know how many of you have read Golding's *Inheritors*, but it was about primitive man breaking into consciousness. One of the figures that he used over and over again was the primitive man coming into a new situation--at least it was new from the outside. The way he experienced it was as though chaos had suddenly taken over. That is, the images in his mind were not capable of giving meaning to the overagainstness that was impinging upon him. So he would have to seek for a new image, he would have to invent a new image that would give this external situation meaning. In the book he is pictured as pushing on his head to produce a new image. I like that. I have seen people who were not so primitive sometimes push on their heads to get that new image. Now I call what was going on in him a big Think. Grasping the Other World involves a Think---I do not want to say an image, I do not want to say an idea, I do not want to say a construct, I do not want to say a concept. It is almost down underneath all those. When you are dealing with a state of being, you are after the Think.

The second thing in a state of being I call a great Feel. I have a colleague that calls the Think impressionistic and the Feel expressionistic, and that is not too bad. For me, the impressionist painters were starting with what could be seen and pushed it until it bent into the Other World. Then the expressionists went clear through it. Do you grasp that?

If you call that Think a primordial Think, then you have to call the Feel a primordial Feel. That Think and that Feel cannot be separated.

When you boil them down, to the bottom, what the great Think fundamentally is composed of is mystery--not the kind of mystery that may be solved tomorrow, but the mystery that never goes away. This is what they mean when they talk about No-thing-ed-ness, when they talk about "Nothingness" --The big Think of nothingness, I mean absolute nothingness. That is the mystery which in that big Think, becomes the final overagainstness of your total existence, not because you say it is, but because you have the big Think in which it is for you. Now that is the primordial big Think.

It has many faces and many forms.

The big Feel that always accompanies that big Think is awe. I mean awe. And awe too has many faces, but it is awe. Awe, as Otto pointed out so clearly in his book *The Idea of the Holy*, is always dread and fascination at the same time. When you deal with that big Think, you are splitting reason, you are breaking through reason, dealing always with that which is just beyond reason. And in the awareness of your overagainstness to that mystery, you are shattered with terror. I like to think that mankind came into existence through awe, that many stabs toward consciousness of consciousness that could have produced the human race failed because that un-man was rocked by the terror he experiences, of the sheer mystery

which consciousness about consciousness is, and pulled out. (You want to use the word "God" here? you do not need to use the word "God," but when you talk about God, the God who is God, you are not talking about the moral delineation of some metaphysical principles. You are talking about One who sends cyclones and the gentle rain to grow the wheat; who rocks the ocean with mighty storms, and simmers there like a mirror itself. You are talking about the One who pulls you from a woman's womb and stamps you, like a cow, back into the earth. You are talking about the one who makes you sixty years old, and you do not have any choice about it.) And yet, with this terror is fascination. Oh, that is harder to describe than terror. It is a compulsion over which you grasp you have no control whatsoever, which pulls you on, in the midst of and through the terror. And these two are there at one and the same time. I remember not so long ago, I thought I was caught; I thought people were on to me. Yes, that is what I mean. And before I knew it, I ended up over a toilet with my hands on each side, vomiting. But in the midst of that terror, I perceived a fascination. Oh, at this time you do not say this is the leading of Providence. When you are finally able to get back up on your feet, you know this was the hand of the One who, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to call your God and your Father. He does not look like your God and your Father when he beats you, but he is. I am a proud man to have lived in the twentieth century, in which this has become clearer than it ever was, I believe, in all of history. But its roots are back there from the foundation and the dawn of consciousness itself. Ohhh, in our time, how this Other World has broken in upon us.

Perhaps you have thought of the area of psychology. In a recent book, Joseph Campbell deals with schizophrenia. I am not sure he says it, but if he did not he ought to, that the difference between a spirit man in the Other World and the schizophrenic is that the spirit man is swimming and the schizophrenic is drowning. Here I make a prophecy. Before twenty years are up, you are going to see the psychiatric profession turned upon its ear. It has to meet the times in which it is in, for the times which bore it are gone. And new times have come.

Or, I mention to you mythology. You have been taught to believe that mythology is kind of a fairy story that mankind has outgrown. No, not by any Means. Mythology is the frame whereby man has held his experience of the Other World. The mythologies of the past are gone. They no longer communicate to us. You could not call them fairy stories. Therefore, probably the biggest contradiction in our time is the absence of an adequate mythology whereby a man has a roadmap over and through the terrain, the topography, of the Other World. And perhaps, if you seriously intend to renew society, one of the major jobs that is going to rest upon your shoulder is to create the mythology which feeds into the top triangle of the social Process, Inclusive Myths, the top of the whole system built in Summer '71.

Maybe this is the little capsule that will flow out through the whole society.

The Poetic Topography of the Other World

In our time the world has become slowly conscious of the Other World in four areas. I have mentioned one. To use a little poetry, we have called it The Land of Mystery. In our lifetime, man has rediscovered this mystery. As a matter of fact, the natural sciences have discovered it; the psychological sciences have discovered it; the biological sciences have discovered it; the mathematical sciences have discovered it. And I need not reiterate that the whole existentialistic thrust in the twentieth century unveiled for man his overagainstness of that which is No Thing or nothing. This is the first breakthrough of a fantastic arena in the Other World.

The second breakthrough has been the area of freedom. We call it "The River of Consciousness." This is Jean Paul Sartre's poetry of the en soi and the pour soi or Kierkegaard's understanding of the self as a relationship which relates itself to itself, and when it goes about its proper business of being a relationship which relates itself to itself, it grounds itself transparently in the power that constituted it. But these are only two of the hundreds of people who have broken through in this area. I need not mention again the area of psychology.

The third way in which men in our time have broken into the Other World is with the concept of engagement. It seems to me that the next two areas have been broken loose more by social upheavals than by any intellectual schools head on, although the intellectual schools have dealt with it. I think of the youth culture in our time. This was a sociological manifestation, it seems to me, of a search for a dimension of existence that this present world was not capable of providing. One of the crucial insights they saw and held before the world was authentic engagement in life itself. They are the ones who, however sickly, began to recover the word "love" in any serious meaning whatsoever. In the midst of their lostness--and no one could blame them for it--they began to grasp what it meant to be genuinely concerned with that which was unsynonymous with oneself. Their revolt against vocations, and their revolt against money for the sake of money itself, were indicative of this kind of awareness of another realm, in which love--if you please, agape--was giving yourself to the journey of mankind and not giving yourself to yourself. This area we call "The Mountain of Care." The Other World, which is the realm of the awful mystery and the realm of radical consciousness, is also the world of taking upon your back responsibility for the whole journey of man, for the whole globe.

Before I go on to the last one, I pause a moment to remind you that because the Other World is beyond the realm of good and evil, it is in the ontological and not in the moral--that whatever you say about the Other World, if you are talking about the Other World, is always in the indicative and never in the imperative. The Other World knows nothing whatsoever about imperatives. That is in this world, and a crucial part of this world, and without it, you would not have this world. In the Other World there is only the indicative. When you talk about the Mountain of Care, or picking up the burden of all mankind, you are not talking about something that says you ought to do it. The indicative is that the man who lives in the Other World has the world on his shoulders. When you live before the mystery, the world is yours.

The last arena we call "The Sea of Tranquillity." I rather like that. It dawned on me when the astronauts were walking on the moon, that when you stand on the moon the earth is "up there." I always knew "heaven" was "up there." But when you are on the moon, "up there" points exactly to this life here, where the Other World is. I want to go there one of these days and see, just to be sure, that the Other World is right here.

The Sea of Tranquillity is the recovery of that weird kind of peace right where there is no peace. There is no sentiment here, for the Other World is right in the midst of this world, and there was never been any peace in this world for a man who has the world on his shoulders. I just heard a few moments ago on the television a conversation in which they used the words "peace" and "tranquillity." I pricked up my ears, and as they began to spin it, they were suggesting that they see signs of a new, fresh concern, however warped it may be. They said that they were remaking, that old movie, "Lost Horizon." Remember the kind of romanticism it had? It came back in 1937 or so--some of you were not even alive then. I would like to see if you could detect in that movie why they remade it right now--whether it is just another escapist attempt, or whether they are sensing after some kind of present reality.

I never dreamed that this awareness would break loose in my lifetime. We who worked for the renewal of the church had to fight with a broadsword every second any nonsense about peace or joy in this world. Do you understand that? You would never have had the renewed church if you had not slain that sentimental misunderstanding of what authentic peace and joy are. I never dreamed that in my lifetime there would be a possibility that we could use those words authentically. I have understandings inside myself in this arena that I never dreamed could be. Yes, and it came out of our time.

I have never been kindly disposed towards the hippies, but I have known for a long time they were pointing to something. And I have hated sensitivity training like Satan itself. My, what that has done to scar men and women in the spirit dimension for the rest of their lives you could not begin to articulate if you had a thousand years. And yet, many of the most weird warpings that you find in history are trying to point to something, and I will give them that credit.

Actually, in the Other World there is only one state of being, not four. For where consciousness is, there is the mystery, there is the world on your back, and there is the peace that passes reason's capacity to grasp it as peace. There is no sentiment here I tell you, this world, in which the Other World is, is a tragic world. Unamuno is quite right when he talks about the tragedy of the world, in the sense that existence is itself tragic. If the whole journey of man is not your specific vocation, you would never have the slightest idea what you mean when you talk about the joy unspeakable and full of glory. They are woven together. When you dare to live your life before the mystery, there is peace and joy. If you have authentic peace and joy, you can be sure you are living your life before the mystery. The charts which we have developed on the Other World are the superimposition of the rational capacity of man upon that which is beyond the rational capacity of man.

You could have drawn the road map a million other different ways with different poetry. We have delineated four areas which we think broke loose in our century, and then we divided each one of those into four of what we call treks, which makes a total of sixteen treks. When we divided those treks into four states of being. That means that on the charts sixty-four states of being are delineated. But remember they are all one. - would like to read you an illustration of some poetry in the language of a state of being. What I will do is weave together four states of being into one state of being in a paragraph that represents a trek.

You understand there is nothing new at all in what we are doing. What is actually going on is a translation from one language to another. When you deal with the Other World, you are translating from the language of the intellectual dimension of life into the language of the state-of-being dimension of life. It is a poetic language.

"One day a man is driven by whatsoever vicissitudes of life into the consciousness that he himself must die. It is like being in a state of shock. A strange force intrudes. Suddenly he is submerged in awe, he feels it hovering all about him; he feels its penetration into the deepest corners of his innermost being. In quiet terror, and with an inexplicable fascination, he knows the fragility of his total existence; he feels his contingency, and beholds the passingness of all things. It is like unto a mortal wound from which he knows he will never recover. As the absurdity, the irrationality of it all seeps deep within, a burning, objectless anger rises and rages until futility itself turns into

a heavy numbness and everything becomes disoriented; all is nothingness; there is no place any more to stand, Just terrifying mystery. And hanging helplessly, swirling in emptiness, engulfed in awe, it dawns at long last, like the rising

of a black sun, that exactly here is the finally real before which he is fated and invited to live and die his life. This is the great encounter with the awful mystery."

The Basic Significance of the Other World

In conclusion, the fact that in dealing with the Other World which is right in the midst of this world, you are dealing with what it means to be a human being. Thirty years ago our whole world was hanging on with its fingernails on a cliff, as its world was going to pieces, raising the question, "What is life all about?" Now we have come out of the trough and are moving on the crest of the wave. Once again in history, man has found the answer, his answer. This does not mean that there will not be many crests in the future. But in our time, it is here. Now when someone begins to ask you what life is all about, you have something to bear witness to.

Outside of the fact that that is humanness, I have said one thing. The Other World may be the most crucial key there is for actually turning on the processes that will snowball the arrival of a new web of relationships that define society. Very likely also, within the poetry of the Other World chart--or if not that poetry, the poetry that you build--

--is the secret to the new mythology that will enable mankind to find his way to swim, if you please, in the rivers of radical consciousness and become man. It has been a long time since man with any sense of genuineness could speak of what fulfillment meant, of what happiness meant. I mean Happiness.

And then, you know as well as I know, that moralities rise out of new definitions of man, of new experiences of what it is to be human. As you delineate the topography of the Other World, you are building the basis for the new morality that every sensitive person is screaming

for--not only the youth, but old men and old women. It has been long time since within the church we have known what we meant when we talked about a "Christian Man," or a "Christian Woman." You beginning to define again what you mean when you talk about a man of faith, a man of spirit in the world.

In working on the Other World, you are also building, the tool for the new evangelism. I do not mean by "Evangelism" anything that you have been previously programmed to mean by that word. I mean the means whereby you can elicit out of other people the decision that renders it possible for them to decide to live an authentic life. Years ago when I was teaching in seminary, one of the problems people screamed about is that they had no way for the new theology to really get down into the pews. It was not that the clergy could not articulate it. They could. But lives are not changed by intellectual ideas. The work on the Other World is the beginning of the creation of an instrument that will enable people to have self-consciousness about the states of being, that define them.

We have talked frequently about popular preaching. You are going, to see that in the world. It is the kind of spin you do with somebody sitting next to you on a commuter train and they do not know until ten years later because you do not use any language that sounds religious or anything like that, that new possibilities and new life flooded into their veins. I suspect that if you had 200,000 people located according to a rational grid across the world, you could design a popular preaching curriculum, so that on April 28, in 1982, 200,000 people would be spinning on "Box 36." If the church is going, to build a-new society, this kind of tactical work will have to go on.