

Collegium
Order Base
April 16, 1970

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ON BECOMING AN HISTORICAL ORDER

In the name of the Father,
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER,
And of the Son,
AND OF THE SON,
And of the Holy Ghost,
AND OF THE HOLY GHOST,
Amen.
AMEN.

I suppose most of us at different times in our lives have experienced a radical alteration in our reflective context or in our theology. I was thinking of the space men who made that little 7 mile alteration in their acceleration last night around 10:45 our time, which meant that instead of just coming and skipping across the earth's atmosphere and back into space forever, they would enter into it. But when they took that little tiny turn--why it had a destinal result. It was a radical alteration in terms of the broad sweep of the course of the rocket, although it seemed less than minute itself.

I think that for years I have been treating an area of humanness quite quite wrong. In reflecting upon it, I both reach out to justify myself, and then somewhat objectively, I believe, find, not justification, but an understanding of why it would take place. Simply put, I've always felt and believed that the experience of the abyss in life was far more dramatic in the negation of existence, in the passing of the old world, than in the affirmation of existence, in the emerging of the new world. A Roman Catholic theologian Michael Novak, that I've read a little of recently, has been of help to me here in his book Theology for Radical Politics. But for a long time I've sensed, as I'm sure you have, that in the moment in history when obviously a new world is groaning and striving after form, a kind of wildness has been present, which I did not anticipate at all when Sputnik, a sign for me of the emergence of the struggle, went up to heaven. I suppose that a part of this, the part that's understandable, is that in the passing of the old world, if you were to live in the present and not in the future or the past, all of your sensitivities had to be focused there. If you use the wringing out of the wash rag illustration--to the very last drop--, you had to participate in that at the very bottom. People like you and myself are called upon to be the pioneer, both out in front and out in depth, in experiencing the times in which we live. So for us the trauma of the passing of the old world was in principle far more insense than it was for most people. I suppose, in a way, down deep within your psyche there were whisperings, "My God, my God, nothing could be more traumatic than the experience of the abyss, when things are going out from under you." You and I are quite well aware of the theoretical description of this experience in the Bultmann paper where he shows one negation after another, and you experience the trauma. And then you get to the last paragraph, where he flips the thing back over again, in terms of the givenness. And Bultmann does not take time, because he did not live in that time, to spell out the trauma of the other side of that--just the showed-up-ness, the creative process as over against the destructive process, that is in humanness or in the civilizing adventure itself.

Now you and I live in the time in which the flipped over part of Bultmann is the immediate kind of experience. This is another little bit of justification (we can use that in a positive sense here). Life obviously is polar at this point. This is at the heart of Hinduism: the passing away and the coming to be, and the coming to be in the passing away, and the coming yet to be again. And if you are to be authentic, you are not detached from that process. You live within the heartbeat of the particular pole that is present and in the present situation that you are in.

The transition that we experience is the transition to the other pole. We are not living in the passing of the old at all, but in the emergence of the new. For the first time in my life, and for the first time in your life--I want to repeat that: for the first time in our lives, we are experiencing the downbeat of history upon the pole of emergence, or coming to be, or creativity. Where I am a bit disgusted with myself is that I didn't see this more clearly in the midst of being consumed with the immediacies in the passing away. For the man of faith always has to have a detachment. But mark you, it isn't half detached and half engaged. It's an utter detachment in the midst of utter engagement, where he is always in remembrance of the pole that is not the primary pole within the given situation. I want to repeat that again. The problem I'm attempting to get out is that I suspected, I knew, that to stand before God was trauma, but that some way or another the trauma in the emergence was a little less traumatic than the trauma in the passing awayness.

To put this in a broader theological context, I'm a Protestant to the bottom of my core. Only on the other side of that can you say --and if you knew me, you're going to say this about me--I'm a Roman Catholic to the bottom of my core. But I am neither one of those. I am the principles which those stand upon. For when you're dealing with the passing away, by golly, you become Protestant, or you haven't got anything to stand upon. You hear what I say? And when you come into the emergence side, you become Roman Catholic--I mean, what they stand for, the principles of humanness they stand for--or you haven't got anything whatsoever to stand upon. So in the time when the pole comes on the left hand of God, so to speak, the Protestant principle of humanness must emerge. And when the hammer is on the right hand pole of humanness, then the Catholic principle is there to emerge.

To put this in the broad picture, the Protestant picture has to do with history and creating the future. The Catholic principle has to do with nature, the utter givenness of what is before man and his God damned consciousness begins to fool around with it. I want to put it in that kind of strong language, for one has to see both of these poles as legitimate poles.

Obviously, down underneath our lack of articulate awareness about this, you and I for a long time have been moving toward this other pole. You don't even begin with the religious mode of life, you don't even begin with the journeys and the solitaries and the corporates, save you already intuit that the pole has moved toward the natural, if you please--toward the emerging. You and I can point to many other aspects of our own interior existence that mean that long before consciousness came of what was really happening, we were already being propelled. This is one way to talk about the gracious activity of God, that there's a going-on-ness in you and in myself that has nothing to do with our radical intentionality. Another way of putting this is to reverse the whole thing and to say that consciousness of consciousness is as much nature as it is dis-nature, if you please, or nature is as much history as history is nature.

Let's look at some of the empirical manifestations of this. I suppose all of us are aware of what I call a kind of wildness in our time. You look at the youth revolt. Here is a body of people attempting to find form to this new world. But in the midst of it there's a wildness. It reminds me not of a cyclone but of a hurricant at sea. You look at the feminine revolution. I hope you women who for 4 or 5 years have been working in depth in this area are properly aware that in the last 3 or 4 or 5 months something has happened in this area. It has become radically a part of the popular mentality of the female in this country. You cannot pick up a periodical of any kind without feeling this kind of thing spelled out.

But there's a wildness in both of these. Add in the wildness in both of these cases, there are perversions. I have said for some time that somebody has got to kick the shit out of the youth movement, and I mean it's got to be kicked out of it. For in this wildness, either you penetrate to the core of that hurricane and grasp the divine activity--I don't care what language you use here--or in that wildness you are caught up in the perversion of the hurricane itself, taking off on all kinds of wild tangents.

In the female revolution, the lesbians are taking over. Do you smell that in those articles? The perverted woman, that is the masculine woman, these professional ones, have taken hold of the perversion that created the feminine revolution in the first place, that is the awareness of the problem of a woman, the awareness that woman in order to gain her freedom, had to become un-woman: man; and now there is a kind of wildness you wouldn't believe. I think it's happening across the scene.

Shall I mention the Black revolution, and the kind of wildness that's gotten loose there in which perversions are rampant.

And it's a funny thing. These people understand that these are youth revolts. They understand that they are caught up in just wild perversions, but it's a hurricane and they don't know what to do about it. And so with the feminine revolution, and so with the Black revolution. Shall we talk about the revolution of the non-western world and the kind of wildness that you sense there?

If you begin to feel after this, you get a feel after what I'm trying to articulate: . . . In the moment of the emphasis upon the pole of emergence, the trauma, I'm beginning to think, if I am not making the same mistake I made before in reverse, is more traumatic than the trauma of the experience of the passing away of all.

This has to do with the death urge. Do you understand that wildness itself, the wildness in the wildness, is the death urge? But mark, and mark well. This hurricane that I speak of is creativity itself. And how I get that said to myself so that I can understand in a way, not much, but a little.... You know how you and I yearn to do our own little own thing. You know how you and I yearn to really express ourselves in history. You and I know how we rebel about not getting a chance to vote on this item and that, that some way or another we think that if we can just get our creativity out, it's going to be great. I would like to insist that it's exactly the opposite.

Creativity is like a ball of white hot fire. It's always been the primary symbol in my existence that's spoken of the trauma of being burnt by the mystery itself. Creativity is encounter with God. I don't mean creativity. I mean CREATIVITY!!! is encounter with God. And that is trauma. It shakes the very bottom of your being. I think this is the pole in which we're living, that this whirlwind itself, with all of its horror, is creativity. This is the price you pay. But in every--I don't know how to say--seeping out of the nothingness that creativity is, is the possibility and the increase in the potentiality of the demonic itself. That's where perversion comes in.

Then I look at the scene in terms of what men of the spirit do. And by God, it's not as if men of the spirit had some kind of answer up their sleeve. It's not that way. Men of the spirit never had the answer up their sleeve. Men of the spirit participate in the holy cloth. Other people participate in the holy cloth. It's that men of the spirit are under orders.

I see both a sociological and a psychological requirement. The sociological is something like this. The men of the spirit, while utterly engaged, are transcendent of the situation. They must inject into that hurricane order, order. Not that it does anything to the hurricane. No, no. If it does, you're not talking about what I'm talking about.

Thinking about that when I was gone, I could hardly wait to get back to walk over to our preschool. I was a little frightened to walk there for fear that I wouldn't see what I thought had to be there, or the preschool would not be participating in the spirit edge of history. So yesterday I walked to the preschool. And you know something? In the midst of the wildness---

Ah, I tell you 5th City has been caught up in this wildness. I mean it's been caught up in this wildness. You only have to go to the suburbs for two or three weeks to find that out. You wonder what's so different about the suburbs, and it takes you ten days to find out that the trouble is that there is silence. Then it takes you ten days to find out what's strange when twice a day you can walk twenty blocks up town and back without looking around this way or looking around that way. It takes you ten days to find out what's the trouble with those walks. Shall I go on? It takes you ten days of staying in a house by yourself to find out why you were consumed with fear when darkness came. Then you discover after ten days why that is.

And yet, let me make no bones here. The wildness I talk about is in the suburbs. You know where the wildness is? It's in the family. Not every other family. Every single family in the suburbs is just being torn to pieces in one way or another. That means the women are being torn to pieces. That means the husbands are being torn to pieces. That means the kids are being torn to pieces. And that means the institutions in which the family in one way or another is a unity--the church, the political structures, the educational structures--all of these are being torn to pieces. And it's sort of like it's invisible. But they're all up in the air spinning like a whirlwind.

When I got back, I came to the preschool, and I see that what was going on there was just a little bit of order, just a little bit of order. You almost don't care what kind of order it is, just order--except it's got to be within the whirlwind and not trying to clamp it down. It's got to be revolutionary order. But it's got to be order.

My mind has been trying to go back to the revolutions in history again and again. Of course, one of the most dramatic is the French revolution. Here it broke loose. As they were beginning to build a new kind of construct, just wildness ripped loose over France. What was needed as people of the spirit stood in that situation--I don't know enough about it to know exactly what was done--was just order, sociological order. What was needed was just order.

Then psychologically what needs to be there is just a little peace. Just a little injected peace. Not to try to smother the volcano that's in you. This hurricane is the human doubt. It's not a god, it's not the edge of history, it's not humanness itself. Just inject a little peace within yourself. Disciplining it is in a new and for me richer and deeper sense. Inject an order without and, artificially, if you please, inject peace within.

I've been aware as I've been talking this morning that a good bit of what I've done is in that tone and that mode and that mood that was appropriate yesterday. For when you stand up against the mystery in the guise of the negation of existence itself, then is the time when you tense your muscles, clench your fist, and you shout. But when the trauma is in terms of the given, the emerging of new form,

what is injected in the midst of devouring death urge that brings out irrationality you never thought possible is calm. It's manufactured calm. This does not say that it's artificially artificial. No, it's the stuff of being itself.

What I really wanted to talk about was becoming a historical order. What I wish we had was about 4 hours in which to talk together. I say again what I've said before. I think that two years ago, one year ago in more specificity, we had to decide as a renewal group within the church either to go out of existence and say that our job was done, or become "X," which we always held by the poetic phrase, "Historical Order."

I think that a year ago or two years ago--a year ago more particularly--it would have been fairly easy for me to make the decision along with you to go out of existence. Our job was done in the sense that the church, meaning the established church, was as aware of the problem--no matter what she did about it--as we were. And I think--I don't ask you to agree--I think I could go on to my grave.

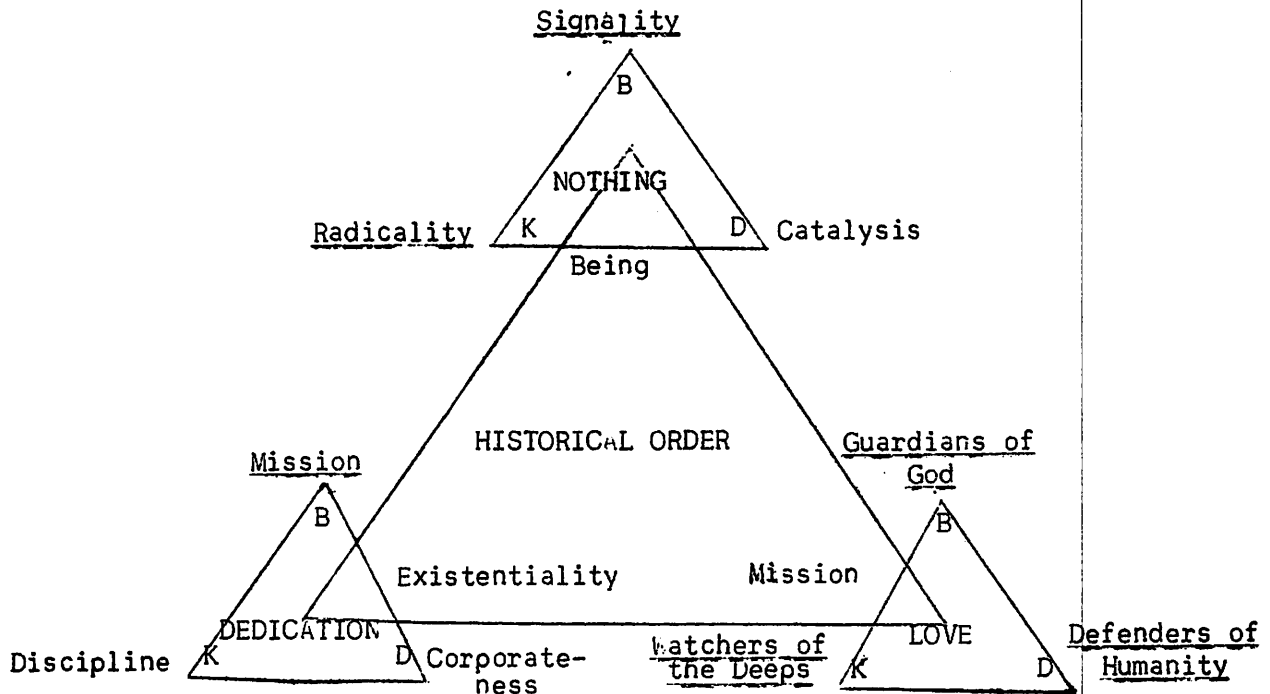
I asked Lois and several other people yesterday if they had some sense of satisfaction about their life. I don't mean happiness, I don't mean justification, and I don't mean in terms of this moment. But when you think of this in the context of your 92 years, I wonder if there is some sense of satisfaction, that you had given, you had intended to give, some account for the glorious, glorious opportunity you had to live. It was interesting to talk a bit. I suppose all of those people were smart enough to know I was talking about myself. You can't face those kind of issues head on. You have to have somebody else to do it for you.

But now, I'm not so sure that a decision to go out of existence would be so easy. In the last 8 to 12 months something just pitiful has happened to the church. Oh my. Oh my. The church is in need in a new way, in a way that 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago you could not dream that it would be. I've even raised the question as to whether the people who had attempted to minister to the church at large had one phase and because of the time in which we live, would just turn the corner to minister unto the new, or whether they had to go out of existence and let new forces emerge. Then I decided that that was sheer romanticism. For one of the perversions of youth is their attitude toward age. And it's sort of becoming an increasing joke with me, because I'm aware that I have no being save there are youth. And then, youth have no being, save there is age. And whatever comes up in the form of young manifestations of renewal at this moment, they're going to be in dire need of age. Those of you who are 20 in our midst, you're old in the renewal of the church. I mean you're old. It has nothing to do with years.

The church is in trouble. And I think what it will increasingly need is order, just order--sociologically; order, just order, just order; psychologically--and these two cannot be separated--peace. In the midst of it raining cats and dogs, in the midst of the heavens falling upon you, just peace. Not some kind of romantic peace, but what I mean by artificial peace, intentional peace.

The preschool is that in 5th City. You could build up one illustration after another. I don't mean this is needed to stop the revolution. It's needed to accomplish the revolution--the building part of the revolution, that is. I don't mean that this is to be understood psychologically, either the sociological or the psychological aspect that I mentioned. It's to be understood ontologically, or spiritually. There's no doubt in my mind that the Lord made the revolution of today a manifestation of the spirituality of man. To spiritually order, order, and peace, peace. Where everyone is tearing to pieces, order, order emerges. While everybody is exploding this way and that from within, peace emerges.

Ann Harrison seldom leaves my mind these days. What is a historical order? Oh, I don't know; but you've got to start so deep, so deep, so deep in humanness, that it's pitch black. Then you emerge out into the practical observable aspects of it. I don't know what an historical order is. But when you see that you're under the rubric of Being, then an historical order has to be seen as NOTHING. It's nothing in its Signality, if I may term it that. It is never anything but the sign of the mystery that all men are over against when life is coming apart and when life is coming together. It's simply the sign. How it's a sign you don't even care, first of all. It could have a billion faces. And one time it may be wildness itself. Another time it may be exactly the opposite. But it's nothing; it is only a sign. It's sheer transparency.



It is nothingness in the sense of the fact of its Radicality. By this I always mean that the church, the word, the man of the spirit, the man of order is never adding any single thing to humanness. I tell you we have got in our day to blast Roman Catholic scholasticism and Protestant scholasticism—and I almost think in our day that's been more vicious, or sometimes we call this gnosticism. We've got to blast that as it's never been done before. As if Christianity is some kind of a truth that's added to humanness. NO! Life itself is nothing but human life. The power of the word is to disclose this, to release this, to raise this from the dead, to mend it in its crippledness. It neither adds nor takes away. Order is nothingness under the rubric of Being.

Under the rubric of the Doing, historical order in the category of Being is nothingness in its Catalysis. An order is never for its own sake. It takes me back early in our history, and I've already put this before you. Our function was to enable the established church to fulfill its function in the civilizing process. An order's job is to enable the established people of God to do their leavening task in the civilizing process. In these last days it's become clear to me as we've been fooling with the local church, that the problem in the last several years is that the cadres have not had troops; and if you don't have troops, you are not going to impact the civilizing process. So with an order. But if an order takes itself seriously, which is to say it's out to be the People of God, well, you might as well not get up in the morning. Or to put it in more realistic terms, anybody who is a part of an order who is attempting to save their own shriveled up

little souls better get out. An order is but a catalytic force to awaken God's people that are already throughout the world to be God's people. There are lots of cliches that have made me sick in the renewal movement. "Let the church be the church." That used to make me sick, because as a slogan nobody knew what it meant. I think you and I have got to begin to understand that that's our task: to enable the church to be the church. Those of you who are after some kind of significance in your life through discernible rewards, then you leave the ranks now. Not only am I going to be dead before this job is done. Everyone in this room is going to be rotting in our graves before even that part of this never ending job which you and I could possibly discern now is done. Here, Mr. Lloyd and you other young ones, you and I come into one. Under the rubric of Being, an order is Nothing. That's its being: no thing.

Under the rubric of Existentiality, an order is DEDICATION. That word was in my mind when I was in high school in the church. As I bumped up against the church, it was almost ruined for me. I wish I had a stronger term. I mean by this, utterly throwing away your life upon. That's what I mean by Dedication. I don't know how you were impressed by George West's talk on Transparent Doing. I just read it yesterday. In the reading of it, I just think it was fantastic. He illuminated this area for me in an amazing fashion. Sometimes you're just shocked at the kind of colleagues you live with. Dedication under the rubric of being is Mission. I am my doing. I haven't got any place to stand outside of it where I quarrel with this one or that one or the other one. I haven't any place where I stand outside of it where I look for rewards. Do you understand that if you're after any kind of rewards here, you are not your mission? The Stoics said, "Virtue is its own reward." You and I became uneasy with that the way our 19th century bourgeois moralism dealt with it. But there was an element of reality within that. Your mission is your own reward. Your being is your own reward for being.

Under the rubric of doing, under the category of Dedication, is Corporateness. No sentimentality about this. I think that I'm clearer than ever before that the so-called Koinireia movement had to be just stomped on with both feet, even when in yourself you felt almost sacrilegious in doing it. This is a dedication of utterly giving yourself to corporateness for the sake of being your mission. I want to say that the doing pole can never be separated from the being pole. But if you ever have priority, it's the being pole which is the radicalization of both the knowing and doing poles in both triangles.

The third Dedication is to inner Discipline. I don't like that word. I mean inside myself I don't like it, because I have to constantly shake myself loose from the word "discipline." It's emotionally woven into my being that discipline is getting some place on time. No, mark you, if you can't get some place on time, God loves you just as much as someone else, but you will never be a revolutionary, period. If you don't understand what Lenin said to his people, you'll never be a revolutionary. You may think you are. You may try to rub shoulders with those who are. But you never will. But discipline is not getting somewhere on time. Discipline is a million miles underneath that. Discipline is the ability--ah, West was good on this, wasn't he?--the ability to require of yourself what the situation, in the context of your mission, demands and deliver it. That's what I mean by internal discipline, where you become in your own unique, unrepeatable way the sustaining force of others. This has to do with your being in history. It doesn't have to do with your trying to yank yourself up by your bootstraps a little higher every day. This is dedication. I said to the priors who went out, "The time has come when you no longer think of somebody else being a Martin Luther, a Thomas Aquinas, a Paul of Tarsus, a Gautama of Nepal, or a Jesus of Nazareth. Each one of you have got to decide to be Gautama, and to be Paul, and to be Thomas, and to be Jesus." You see what I mean by discipline.

The third area in the deeps that discloses what maybe a historical order would be is making manifest LOVE. This is under the rubric of Mission. An order makes manifest in history nothingness. An order makes manifest in history style, discipline, dedication. An order makes manifest love. I need not repeat. This is not sentimentality. It has its objective and it has its subjective sides. That I am well aware of.

First of all, under the category of Being, it's the Love of God. As the love of God is made manifest here--not that this is even close to it--we are the Guardians of Godin history. No man, for me, finally loves until he loves God, until his life is consumed in the mission of guarding the divine mystery. That's the man of love. At times you see on TV or read in the newsmagazines about the apostles to the hippies. Sometimes I'd like to be an apostle to the hippies. Wouldn't you? But to be an apostle.

The Defenders of Humanity. I'm getting a little bit clearer on something that I've been clear on for a long time. When I use the word "humanity," I have two things in mind. I mean this unrepeatable hunk of flesh that peers out at me through those holes in his head. And I mean all men who are living, who ever have lived and who ever will live. And I mean both of those things at the same time. That's what I mean by "humanity."

Then I want to use the word Deeps. Watchers of the Deeps, or Guardians of the Deeps. To love the self. You and I must love the self. But to love the self is guarding the deeps of consciousness of consciousness. Yes, man, including the consciousness of consciousness that transcends nature, is nature. I wonder if you understand that in this we're going to be able to solve, I believe, the problem of a universal within man in the midst of the unrepeatable particularity. But the consciousness of consciousness which is dis-nature is within nature itself. That's the universality. But these are the deeps. The order are those who love themselves, who love the consciousness of consciousness, and therefore are guardians of the deeps. Over against the liberal, over against the reactionary, over against the conservative, over against the revolutionary, it's always the deeps, the deeps, the deeps, the deeps, the deeps. The Deeps. A man of spirit finally elights nowhere. He elights nowhere in temporality, for he is the defender of the deeps and calls every man to go beyond himself, above himself, below himself, before himself--yes, behind himself--into the deeps of life itself.

I wanted to do two other things. One was to begin to draw together some of our wisdom. Do you remember when you wrote sentences on this? Those were tremendous to me, to begin to build a kind of a 4 x 4 in the practicality. What are the objective principles that a group like this would stand on? What are the unique characteristics in this order over against other orders? And mark you, mankind was never without an historical order and never will be. Illustration: obviously we are a family order, a family unit order. Obviously we are a radical ecumenical order. I don't think that you or I have even begun to smell the radicality in this area that we're really committed to implicitly at the moment. We are a secular order. We are a comprehensive order in the sense that we are service, we are teaching, ^{and} we are contemplation--all brought together. And you could go on and on. We've got to talk about how we are sociologically grounded within history, concretely. We've got to talk about our internal polity. We've got to talk about our relationship to the League, to the historical church, to the movement, to the local cadres. I'm wondering if this summer isn't the time in which we've got to get permission from the movement to move in this kind of direction. And I'm wondering if between now and then we don't have to find a way to begin to sort out these things now with a kind of seriousness that comes as events and time begin to press upon us, to sort out what we know, what we think, what we are ready for. I'm wondering if almost the first week before we get started on the summer, the last of May, the first of June, we won't have to put our attention there.