

Summer '73

Research Assembly

Opening Plenary

July 1, 1973

THE TWO FACES OF THE MOVEMENT

I have been concerned in recent months with the First Epistle of John, with Peter's First Epistle, with Colossians and with Ephesians. This is from Ephesians. In the third chapter Paul says,

I kneel in prayer to the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name, that out of the treasures of His glory He may grant you strength and power through His Spirit in your inner being that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love. With deep roots and firm foundations may you be strong to grasp with all of God's people what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ and to know it though it is beyond knowledge. So you may finally attain unto the fullness of being that is the fullness of God himself. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or even conceive of, by the power which is at work in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus from generation to generation evermore. Amen.

It has slowly dawned on me that in this time of the Great Turn church renewal can no longer be. In the beginning, there were centers of renewal; there were projects of renewal; there were experiments of renewal. Now there are none. From time to time somebody opens up a new center. I am extremely clear that if I go by that center in a year or two it will not even be there. This is no longer the hour of church renewal, in the sense that centers or even institutes conceive of themselves.

I remember in Austin in 1953 (speaking symbolically) that James McCord, who has been for some time the president of Princeton Theological Seminary, was on our board. He had been in existence for a short time, and at a board meeting he suggested, "You have been experimenting long enough; let us stop experimenting." I did not have much courage in those days so I did not say anything, but I died inside. I did not have the foggiest idea of what was ahead, or how you would go about getting to that about which you did not have the foggiest. I knew he was absolutely wrong. But now if James McCord were to rise in the room and say that the day of experimenting is over, in the sense of centers and projects and institutes, I would have to say, "yea, verily." There is a long way to go before the church, which is renewed, is renewed. But centers and projects and institutes, as they were formulated in the past, are not going to help.

What has actually happened is movements have begun, within the renewed church, which will carry out that renewal. I find it very difficult to point to lo' this and lo' that. So I go to Lord McLeod, the founder of the Iona Community and the grandfather of the renewal institutes and centers and experiments, Lord McLeod has been a friend and colleague of ours from the very early days. He came to see US in Austin and in Chicago. Whenever we are in his part of the world we make every effort to bestow upon ourselves the honor of sitting in his presence. I saw him on this last trip. He had been to Australia and visited the Sydney House. Lord McLeod was extremely pleased and somewhat overwhelmed at what he discovered in that House. It was in Australia that he first made the statement which more recently he put in a signal document which he presented before the Synod of the Church of Scotland. His statement was that he felt at this time in history there were just two possibilities for the church. One was the Charismatic Movement and the other was The Ecumenical Institute.

Now that rocked me because you had a movement and then you had an institute. What he was pointing to is not the Ecumenical Institute. He was pointing to a movement. I remembered we had called ourselves the Spirit Movement. What we meant by that came out of knowing that the human spirit was being released in our time, and it had nothing to do with us. We were clear that this was God's Spirit Movement and not some kind of a movement we were doing. We pointed concretely to the profound activity of the Holy Spirit in the Twentieth Century, both within and outside the Church. What we meant by the term Spirit Movement was the Holy Spirit Movement.

I put two and two together and realized that this is what the charismatic people are doing. Then I became aware that there is a GREAT chasm between this spirit movement and that spirit movement. I believe with all of my heart that if a movement comes within the church, charismatic or otherwise, it is God's movement. I believe that what people mean by the Charismatic Movement is not the Pentecostal Movement in the world, though there is a relationship. The Charismatic Movement is a

short term fad. This does not mean that God is not making use of it, nor that it is not attempting to get something out in the open which is deeply experienced by mass man. But in its current form it shall not last long. It is as faddish as sensitivity training, though it is widespread. It may be, however, that you have not heard the end of the Pentecostal outbreak, particularly as it has occurred in Latin America. Something could happen in other places, and in established churches, that in the future might be pointed to as a Pentecostal Movement. I believe that what is now called the Charismatic Movement is not that in any way whatsoever. To criticize this is not my intent. I am after clarity on who we are as the Spirit Movement, by looking at what we do not stand for and at what we are unavoidably.

Lord McLeod must have seen a kind of astonishment on my face. Also he must have grasped a rational dichotomy between the terms Charismatic Movement and Ecumenical Institute. So he hastened on to try to solve that problem by saying, "Now let's see. What is it you emphasize? It is the liturgical, isn't it?" Then I was astonished. After I recovered I said, "Yes." But if that is the first thing someone says then I say, "No, that is not adequate." So I came up with four qualities of this movement that we are, and yet are a part of, for it is way beyond us and anybody we know. I fooled with names like "the charismatic movement." That is real neat. I tried on for size, but the word is ruined, "the missionary movement", or "the mission movement", if you are talking about movements within the Church. There is another great word: Deaconia. What a word! We are a deaconate movement. That means humble service. It means the church in service. Yet that doesn't get hold of it all. One time I thought the best you could say it is that we are "The Profound Movement", but they would not understand profound the way I mean it. Your colleague from England used the term radical movement. In England there are two movements: there is the Charismatic Movement and there is the Radical Movement. That word radical points to radical humanness. You couldn't just say that. Anyway, here are four qualities, if you can call them that. Maybe you can come up with some name. If Lord McLeod were here I would say to George, we are fourthings.

First of all we are a SPIRIT MOVEMENT. In the sense that we are concerned about profound humanness, we are concerned about the radical relations to the divine activity in history. We wish to push the very bottom out of spirituality. Here we merge with the Charismatic Movement in its conscious or unconscious authentic concern about the deeps of man, which rational and structural frozenness has denied to men in our moment in history. We are interested in the deeps of the spirit. I tried to say to myself which one of these we are more interested in. I don't see how I could be more interested in anything other than this breaking loose of the deeps of humanness in our time. Now, let us skip over to my fourth one. These are the extremes.

We are a RATIONAL MOVEMENT. Sometimes I am astounded at our concern for the rational. We go slowly and sometimes it irritates me. It seems like we ought to have been where we are now four years ago. Last summer I thought we had it. Yet we have required of ourselves, as we have moved every step, that everything we do is grounded in the deeps of humanness itself. We ground it in history, inside and outside the Church. And we ground it in the temporal domain of the time in which we live. Then we require of ourselves internal consistency in that grounding. Here is where we part company with the charismatic people and with those who do not grasp themselves as a vital part of the establishment, both the civil and the ecclesiastical establishment. We are revolutionaries, and we must die revolutionaries. But we are structural revolutionaries.

Another way we stress the rational is that every new inch of understanding we gain into the unfathomable interior deeps of man, we attempt to articulate in every manifestation of humanness. This sets us apart. We are interested in how this break loose manifests itself in what it means to be a woman and a man, in understanding the family, in understanding the nation, in understanding community and in understanding the methodologies whereby you alter history itself. To us there is no part of life that is not related to the interior deeps of what it means to be a human being. We intend, within the limits of our ability, to manifest that on behalf of all of mankind. That sets us apart. I would want Lord McLeod to believe that though we may not have the mind of a Thomas Aquinas, we are deeply related, with every part of our being, to the vision which he articulated for his time, relative to the whole world of humanity.

Now I would tell George the means as well as the extremes. When I come to the means I start with the liturgy. These extremes are something deep within although they have outer manifestations. The means have to do with the thrust itself, out there with the action. Here we begin with the fact that we are concerned with liturgy.

We are a LITURGICAL MOVEMENT. The efforts toward renewal in the Eastern Orthodox Church basically have been concerned with the liturgy. Our group would stand shoulder to shoulder with them. We believe that the one great drama of history, that the curtain of time has never been rung down on, is some form of that drama with which we begin every day, the liturgy. I am convinced with a passion that, if I did nothing all the rest of my life but see to it with my being that that liturgy went on in my lifetime, in my moment in history, that would have been a mission. I mean a MISSION, a mission for the well-being of mankind. Without that there is not any eschatological revolution at any time in history.

I need not point out to a group like this the relationship of these insights to our almost fanatical concern for the local church. For the first task of any local church is the keeping in being of that drama. Generation after generation that liturgy has been kept in history. That liturgy brought the good news to this old man who once was young and heard it. Father Schott said to me not long ago that the thing he appreciated in the Movement, more than anything else, is that instead of pastoral counseling in a parish, instead of going out to psychologize a moment, what he saw us doing was picking up the altar and carrying it to people. Does that communicate? We pick up the altar and carry it to the last person in the parish. This is the liturgy. I would like to see Lord McLeod here now. I would look him in the eye and say that he can be sure that we are concerned with the liturgy.

The last thing I would say to Lord McLeod is that we are a MISSION MOVEMENT. In this context what I mean by mission is taking that altar to all of civilization, which means catalyzing, leavening a new social vehicle. This is our task. Here are perpetual revolutionaries working within the structures of society to keep them always moving toward the future. That is carrying the altar, if you please, in history. For I believe that any radical revolution in history has happened only when there was a recovery, regardless of what poetry you use, of that relationship to the unfathomable mystery that the altar symbolizes and that the liturgy holds before history, whether history likes it or wants it or not.

George, that is who we are. We still do not have a name. Certain things have come clear, clearer than they used to be, about who I am, about who you are. Two pictures do it for me. For some time I have been aware that any man who assumes responsibility, the horrible burning, consuming responsibility for mankind, is elected to be the religious in history. I am a religious, George. You are the religious. The Christ figure is the figure of that. Next to him is the old king. I decided he is a guildsman. I understand now, I am not only a religious, I am a guildsman. I am not sure what a guildsman is, but I have two pictures. We saw a movie last week: "The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao". I read the book a long time ago, but I looked at it with a new set of eyes. When I read the book I was that woman having her fortune told by the one who was doomed to tell the truth - no more love, no more money. This time I was Dr. Lao, the circus man, the magician.

The only difference between us is that Dr. Lao had seven faces, I have only two. One is the face of the religious, and that is before God. The other is the face of the guildsman, and that is before the world. I have another figure. I like that wedge blade. I am going to wear that. As I grasp myself, the rest of my life I am going to wear the sign of the religious. For me it is going to be the cross. Then I am going to wear the sign of my other face, the face of the guildsman. It is going to be that wedgeblade. The circle represents space, and I intend to stand in the midst of unlimited space with my life, for the rest of my life. The wedge blade represents time, and I intend to be on the edge of time and the center of space.

At the end of this research assembly, in the year of the guild, you are going to tell me what a guildsman is. But I know that the guildsman is the man who stands with his being at the center of space forever, and forever on the edge of time. I intend to wear this symbol so that hopefully I will never be lost again. I will have that which tells me of my face before God and that which tells me of my face before man. When you end this assembly, I believe that answering Lord McLeod's question is going to be an imperative we can no longer avoid. And I believe, that for the first time in our history, you will be prepared to tell Lord McLeod who we are. If that is all we accomplish, that would be worth our having come together.

-- Joseph W. Mathews