

Plenary Session  
Order Base  
March 15, 1970

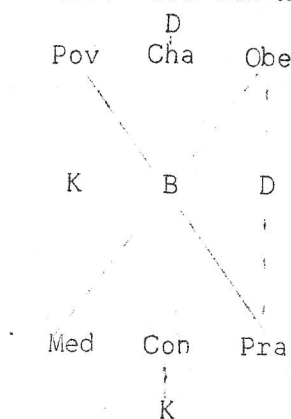
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## OBEDIENCE

Our pattern of moving on these weekends from the hard, concrete, tactical thinking and winding up with the spirit reflection is somewhat symbolic of the pattern between obedience or engagement and prayer, somewhat symbolic of the pattern between the corporates and the solitaires. This chart shows the relationship of our subject this morning to prayer, which we considered last week.

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Hard, concrete | Spirit reflection |
| Obedience      | Prayer            |
| Corporates     | Solitaries        |

This diagram might also help. Meditation, contemplation, and prayer represent the radical solitary reality of humanness, and poverty, chastity, and obedience represent the corporateness of humanness. You can know the corporate dimension, and



you can know the solitary dimension, and you can do the corporate dimension, and you can do the solitary dimension. It's almost like the whole thing is being. You have to give style to the being of the corporate dimension and the solitary dimension--the being of your knowing and the being of your doing.

We're working these three weeks on the right hand side of the New Religious Mode charts--prayer, obedience, and transparent doing. If you think of the corporates as in one sense doing, chastity and the intensification of doing have a certain mysteriously deep relationship; and contemplation and the intensification of knowing also have a deep and mysterious relationship. That makes meditation the knowing of the knowing and obedience the doing of the doing. Doing, then, is the intensification of the electricity between prayer and obedience. It's also electricity that flips around and blows through the category of chastity as well.

I think our spirit struggle right now as a movement and an order is turning toward the category of doing. What we've done in building the New Religious Mode charts is develop great meditative resources permitting us to see afresh or know afresh the religious dimension. Now after a great exercise in meditation, we're taking these great meditative resources and slamming them out into the doing, or into obedience. Having thought these charts through, the move into the local church is one great motion of obedience.

Life just begins with doing. It begins with dirtying diapers, sucking on a bottle, and struggling to walk and to talk. But unselfconscious doing is not obedience. Obedience comes on the other side of the march out to radical consciousness. Until that march is completed there is no such thing as the engagement we're talking about with the category of obedience. Engagement is on the other side of having utterly transcended

that which you're engaged in. It's somewhat like the story of the buddha who said he did not need to do anything in the world. He was ready to be taken up into pure nirvana. But for the sake of other men, he would stay around and help them. That is engagement. As long as you have some personal need to be engaged, it's not yet engagement. It's lack of poverty. It's probably lack of prayer also. It's just simply lack of spirit. Unselfconscious doing is not what we're point to on these charts. This is doing which carries the full atomic action chamber of having shoved into the deeps of the religious again.

One more thing as introduction. Last Thursday at Ecclesiola meeting, Ann Ensinger said that the New Religious Mode charts had saved her life. She told her story about being yanked out of the doing dimension into the deeps of the interior religious. I said to myself, "That's my story." That is, these charts saved my life. To think back three years ago--it's hard to remember three years ago, so many things have happened; it feels like three hundred thousand--out of the deep subterranean past of three years ago I remembered the frenzy of doing. That's what I would call it, the frenzy of doing--recruiting, letter-writing and traveling. One morning I woke up to the horror of that frenzy, that what I was becoming and continuing to become more was something like an empty shell, a machine that was running effieiently but whose soul was fragile, like a terrified proud thing that was hanging onto the doing in order to feel its significance. There was no time even to listen to the scripture at breakfast. There was no time to get apart and brood. Thevery thought of prayer was sheer nausea. I remember we used to read a little bit in St. John of the Cross. To bring yourself even to open the book was like an act of cosmic terror.

In this kind of situation there's a desperation going on. If you begin to do something desparate, life becomes tired and dry in this sort of way. If you look into the deeps of what collagues of yours and mine are doing around the country, giving up the local church, going into executive positions, taking up sensitivity training as their life work, you see those are desparate deeds.

There are many kinds of desparate deeds. I remember in the midst of facing such desperation--living in the midst of desperation is a very spiritual thing, mind you--St. John of the Cross addressed rather important words to me. That was the first bit of frssh water that came from the direction of the religious. That word went something like this. "The desperation you're feeling is not hell; it's purgatory." That was a phenomenal word, because it said that being yanked out of the past, however painful that might be, was for your salvation. It was the love of God operating. You were not, as it seems, being damned.

On the other side of that, I began to see that the only problem in life was a spirit problem. There never was and never has been any other problem but a spirit problem; and there never would be any other problem. Whether it was drirking a cup of cold cffee or digging a muddy ditch, the real issue in the midst of that was how you related to the fact that you were relating the way you were relating to that cup of cold coffee and that particular ditch. Or maybe something more important, like all of human history was hating you, or something like that. The only problem in human life was the spirit problem.

The return to the local congregation is as radical a turn, I believe, as the turn we made into the rdigious, which was another critical turn. The turn we're anticipating is the turn of a religious people into religious action. You don't get to drift off.

I sort of had hopes maybe we could drift off into that Trappist monastery and spend the rest of our lives there perfecting these charts. Do you know I actually thought of doing that at one particular time with great seriousness? I didn't know what the world would think of me, but I had read about St. Anthony--you remember Saint Anthony in Warriors of God? He left everything and went out to the edge of the city and wrestled with the devil. When the population moved out to where he was, he moved out further

into the very heart of the desert. When the population came out there, he moved clear out into the tombs and lived out there; and finally when civilization came out that far, he became a teacher. I was actually envious of Anthony, because he had time to wrestle with the devil. I seemed to be too busy.

But now we're not going to get to do that, it seems! We're going to have to do that on the run. What we're being called to is religious action. Our problem is to keep our action religious. Or, to get back to my subject, our problem is to keep our action Obedience.

The first thing obedience is is the decision to enter a concrete covenant. In the Academy table talks and the Odyssey we always had a great lot of fun with the chart on obedience. It's always a very hot chart after you begin to get over this one hurdle.

Let me try to illustrate that. You start on the left hand column with the category of Missional Engagement and over on the right hand side of the chart is the category of Ethical Existence. Everybody always liked the category of Ethical Existence

| O B E D I E N C E   |                         |                            |                               |  |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
|                     | PEACE<br>Enabling Order | EQUITY<br>Human Justice    | CHARITY<br>Social Concern     | SERVICE<br>Spiritual Care<br>of Others |
| COVENANT            | Missional Engagement    | Individual Rights          | Passionate<br>Concern         | Ethical Existence                      |
| SUBMISSION          | Submissive Obedience    | Corporate Duty             | Personal Obligation           | Global Grotherhood                     |
| RESPONSI-<br>BILITY | Radical Incarnation     | Loyal Opposition           | Disinterested<br>Collegiality | Eternal Identificat.                   |
| FREEDOM             | Universal Prior         | Perpetual<br>Revolutionary | Sacrificial<br>Friendship     | Communion of Saints                    |

and was delighted to be assigned to do his lecturette on that category. It was like you could say, "All right, or course. I'm going to have an ethical existence." Even the category just under that was delightful. It was called Global Brotherhood. You said to that, "OK, OK." But on the left hand side the category of Missional Engagement raised serious questions. And the one underneath it was called Submissive Obedience. Everybody was sure that was a mistake on the chart. When you went down one more level on the right hand side you came to Eternal Identification. We usually got that interpreted as meaning, "one with God." That was pretty radical, but that was all right. It's on the left hand side where it says Radical Incarnation.... Being one with God is all right but not in Olathe, Kansas. Being one with God is all right but not in Jerusalem.

If finally began to dawn on us that the categories on the right were utterly vacuous romantic sentimentality until the ones on the left lit up. What concrete covenant were you thinking of when you made up your little speech about obedience in your chart? When that question was asked of people they would come up with very general kinds of answers. "Well, I was thinking of the covenant with all the youth of the world." When you started with such a covenant and then started to look at obedience, you escaped what obedience was all about. But when you started off with thinking of the covenant of the family, and then went through all these categories, you didn't get out of there alive. Or if you started out talking about the category of the United States of America even, or Jefferson High School where you worked, then something else began to happen. When you were engaged somewhere concretely in a concrete covenant, then Ethical Existence--or transcending that situation and relating to it also--lit up. And Global Brotherhood set over against some concrete particularity of participation began to be a horrifying tension.

When you moved into thinking of yourself in the public school under the category of Submissive Obedience, suddenly the whole chart began to ignite. What does submissive

Obedience mean when your principal is a dumb ox and all the other teachers are sentimental Miss Millers or bitter hags? You've got to be able to say back to that other person out of your own bowels that it means that you made a covenant with that grizzly group of people for the sake of educating that neighborhood. And that group is your General. And you must obey every neurotic quiver without complaining. Until that is seen, the whole chart is nonsense. That group is given to you by God, and God did not goof.

Shall we talk about the order? Anyone who comes new into the order always finds a few things wrong. Several things, in fact, need to be changed. In fact, after one has been around here long enough to doubt the wisdom of having come, one can begin to see that a general revolution is really ready and needed. A wise old prior around here checks out the new arrival to see if he or she or they are capable of Submissive Obedience, for one knows that a real revolutionary is one who is capable of being submissive. Then after that one can be a submissively obedient agent of change perhaps. No serious corporate group--this is not just an order somewhere--no serious corporate group gets thrills over romantic crybabies who are saying, "If my opinions are not going to be honored, and if my plans are not going to be carried out, and if my unfair treatment is not corrected, I'm going to go somewhere else." It's like every corporate group says, "All right. Fine. Go somewhere else."

The problem is where else should you go? Should you to to the local congregation? The issue of Submissive Obedience won't be absent when we got out into the local congregation. It'll probably be more complex than it is here. Where you get seriously engaged with real life you must submit yourself to the situation. And that situation is a situation of decay. That situation is a situation of sin. That situation is a situation of injustice. That situation is a situation of spiritlessness of all sorts--of hostilities and hatred and defensiveness and stupidity. What's your favorite word? It's there, in every situation that you're going to be in.

Most of us still live out of the myth that settled America 400 years ago. You leave a nasty old civilized corruption back in Europe and you come over to a fresh, innocent land and start over. When the East coast gets too established you move out to the frontier. When that gets corrupted with civilization, you move clear out to California. When even the West coast becomes organized, you try the Pacific islands, where there are wonderful natural people. Then when that also is obviously utterly civilized and corrupted with sin, etc., you watch them take off for the moon with a sort of hope down in the bottom of your being that it will be inhabitable out there so you can go and get away from this demonic, collapsing, vicious earth.

What would a covenant with the planed mean? It would mean Submissive Obedience. That's what it would mean. And you have to begin there. It would mean taking this bloody mass of misery and corruption and glory to be your own. It means being the United States of America. It means being Canada. That's where it starts, with some decision to get married, whether to woman or nation or mankind as a whole.

I'm not talking here about just getting involved. Everybody's involved. Pigs are involved. I'm talking about making a decision to be involved. Obedience is not getting involved. Obedience is to be the radically transcendent person who sticks himself as a transcending person into some concrete self-decided covenant. You're not in a covenant with your public school until you decide that that's your covenant. You're not in a covenant with the United sStates of America until you decide to be in the United States of America. This very first step of obedience is serious without limit. It's sober spirit reality that dreads and fascinates.

The second thing I want to talk about is the quality of obedience. The word "quality" is not right. I want to put: the affirmation of the way life is. Even that doesn't get it said. Obedience is something ontological and not moral. It's the affirmation of the way life is. Morality is ontologically necessary, I think. You don't have human life without forms of morality. Obedience in that sense includes morality. But it's not moral; it's ontological. The whole chart on Obedience helps me get a hold of that. There are four categories across the top. The first two have to do with the given, the given moral and sociological condition. The other half of the chart has to do with possibility. I mean by "possibility" also something that's given. Possibility is

| GIVEN                      |                         | POSSIBLE                   |                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| GIVEN                      | POSSIBLE                | GIVEN                      | POSSIBLE                            |
| Peace<br>Enabling Order    | Equity<br>Human Justice | Charity<br>Social Concern  | Service<br>Spiritual Care of Others |
| Missional Engagemt<br>etc. | Individual Rts.<br>etc. | Passionate Concern<br>etc. | Ethical Existence<br>etc.           |

an external reality that comes to you, that's given to you. But it's not the given; it's the given possible. Missional Engagement is the given given.

You always start with the given. You always start by submitting yourself obediently to a concrete situation. The second category is more the given possible. We put the word Equity here -- the problem of justice in this given structure. The given on the possible side of the chart is called Charity. The possible of the possible is called Service.

What this chart helps me to grasp is that the whole of obedience is a radical tension between the given and the possible. It's a radical tension between Missional Engagement in a concrete moral environment and ethical existence that transcends every concrete situation. It's the tension between being -- how could you ever believe this? -- one with God himself on the one side of the chart and one with man himself on the other. Obedience is a tension, and that tension is the way life is, and so obedience could also be spoken of as affirming life the way life is.

You've got to say a "No" to that dumb school principal in tension with submissive obedience to that dumb school principal, for the possibility is a part of that to which you are obedient. You are obedient to the possibility as well as obedient to the situation which you showed up in -- which situation includes the possibility that you are obedient to. And that's not the possibility of your dreams. It's the real possibility. When you and I want something, we always think it's more possible than it is, and when we don't want something, we always think it's less possible than it is. You have to transcend what you want and then look concretely at what actually is possible in that situation, and then be obedient.

All of us, I think, long for an obedience that is something sharp and clear. If I'm going to give myself, at least I want to be certain that my obedience is really obedience. No, obedience is not measurable. Obedience is spirit. Obedience is invisible. Anything measurable is moralism. When you want to organize everything down to a ration-

ally simple formula, assign it out, and then I do my part well, that's not obedience. That's moralism. Obedience is not doing your one thing well. It is the affirmation of all being. It is the affirmation of all that is given, and it is the affirmation of all that is possible.

I mean by the given the very very concrete given. I'm man and not woman; I'm 38 and not 21; I'm a westerner and not an Asian. I must be obedient to that. I've made the decisions I've made unfortunately and fortunately, and not some others.

And then the possible -- if it's possible to become 21 again, I'm open to it. If scaling Mount Everest is what needs to be done, that's one of the possibilities I need to be open to. The hard work of building a local congregation is really possible; and so on. There's a wildness of being able to go out and do what by any criteria you've ever heard of is impossible, and that wildness is given as well as the solid rock of situation is given.

One possibility is always to perpetuate what is given. There's nothing finally wrong necessarily with what is given. You've got to decide if the possibility of keeping the given going the way it is is the thing to do. Sometimes a disastrous given is preventing an even more disastrous possibility. And therefore to hang on to the disastrous situation you have and to preserve that is a very creative decision. Very shrewd conservatism is a stance we need to honor more. You'll win the war when the war becomes possible to be won. You love Nixon, perhaps, not for what he stands for but for what he prevents from happening. There are even worse possibilities. And that naive, integrity-hungry romantic, whose only concern is his noble stance can never seem to grasp that. He's not concerned with whether future generations will live but with whether or not he comes off as noble in the next encounter.

A real revolutionary is able to live without nobility. He's able to live without any integrity except the integrity that's demanded in that particular moment. If this is the integrity that's needed, then that's the integrity you'll be. If the Lord says, "Love Nixon," then you love Nixon and you fight and kill for him. And when the Lord says, "Hate Nixon," you hate Nixon and replace him with something better. The naive romantic disestablishment has to fight evil and be righteous; and their action always gives permission to the established romantics to fight evil and be righteous. So you get the ridiculous comedy of two self-righteous realities -- each of them fighting evil, and being righteous.

The obedient man is not righteous. He's a sinner by all measurable criteria. He looks like disestablishment to the establishment and establishment to the disestablishment. With any other criteria you bring up, he comes off wanting. What makes him who he is is that he does what God tells him to do. That's always something beyond the moral, always something beyond anything you'd call good and evil.

I'm getting to be a little more irritated with romantics that moan at the news. One morning someone in our group just finally said out loud that Governor Reagan -- we'd been moaning about Governor Reagan -- had been appointed by God to hold things in check for the revolution. Faces dropped clear down to the table. It wasn't possible in any way to affirm Governor Reagan.

A real revolutionary lives in the whip-lash between the given and the possible and chooses his course very carefully as the Lord commands.

The whip-lash or the tension could be talked about a great deal more. We all know about it. Everything we've said about justing love and evangelical love is rooted in the struggle to affirm life the way life is. When you try to affirm one human being in the context of affirming all being, you come over against having to care for a human being who's refusing to be human, and you come over against the task of calling that human being to be human. When you blow that out to all human beings, affirming them in the context of all being, you run into the complexity of complexity of complexity of having to choose a particular historical role whereby that actually is done through the building of the kinds of structures, and I'd almost like to say -- the kind of evangelical power that it takes to call all human beings.

I've been impressed recently that we're not only in a justice power struggle; we're also in an evangelism power struggle, because every bit of power in civilization is calling people to some idea of what it means to be human. We who are to affirm all being must capture the power necessary to call human beings to be those who are obedient or who are affirming all being.

The third depth of this I want to call total identification. Obedience is total identification. Obedience is something deeper than making a decision to engage myself in this public school, or this local congregation, or this family, or this order. It's deeper than participation in the tension that transcends the moral in that concrete situation. The obedient man as he goes to the public school says, "I am this public school. Anything that is wrong with this public school is wrong with me. Anything that is right or good about this public school is my glory, because I am this public school." Or, "I am this Order, in all of its glory and all of its shame and all of its agony, in all of its Divisions, in all of its Ecclesiolas, in all of its Religious Houses. If any member of the Order is disobedient to God, I am disobedient to God." All of this is what it means to be obedient to the Order and to God.

On my first trip to Latin America I got one of my first deep glimpses into what it means to be an obedient citizen of the United States of America. From Mexico to Chile those Latin Americans asked me something like this, "why are you doing what you are doing in the Dominican Republic? why are you doing what you are doing in the Dominican Republic?" I wasn't even clear what we were doing. And I was pretty clear that I wasn't in favor of it whatever it was. As a matter of fact, I was angry at President Johnson. But I didn't have any defense against these characters. "What are you doing in the Dominican Republic?" I wanted to say -- but I didn't say it out loud -- "President Johnson is doing it, not me." I didn't say it out loud because I knew that those Latin Americans were clear where I wasn't that I am the United States of America. If this nation does wrong, I do wrong. If this nation does right, I do right. I've never gotten over that experience. It is the source of all my angry passion to get this nation to do right.

Let me give you another illustration of the total identification which obedience is. I had a wife and four children before I decided to be the husband and the father that I was. Before my third anniversary I was presented with two perfectly beautiful baby boys, both of whom I hated with every fibre of my being. Of course, I was unable to acknowledge that. It was clouded by the pride and delight that I took in the boys. Only on rare occasions, like one of them crying at 3 a.m., did I self-consciously permit visions of dashing their little heads against the bedpost. I was not ready or willing to be engaged in fatherhood -- I had no way to tell myself why I was engaged

in fatherhood. When my fourth child was conceived, I was at first in favor of an abortion. It was ridiculous to have three children. Every rational world citizen knows that. Besides I already had burdens on my life that were near psychotic. Ruth didn't have time--I didn't have time now with three. What were we going to do with another child? In that decision to go ahead and have the child, I had to decide to be the father of the three children I already had, and to face the hatred and the rage and the lies that were tangled up with that refusal to identify with the family that was in fact me. When we called the child Teresa to symbolize that something rather radical had happened, it was like a whole new possibility emerged out of finally making a decision to be the family that I had to be. In the years that followed, I learned to grasp with increasing clarity that I am the father of those four children forever and forever and forever and forever. That is my being. I have no possibilities whatsoever to be the creativity, to be the freedom, and to be the being that I am until I come to terms at the very bottom with what that means.

This was a window for me into a problem that's true throughout our entire society. We who are white men who went to Africa destroyed African civilizations and brought slaves over here. Now we are those who have done that forever as white men. And we are those who have had that done to us forever as black men, forever and forever and forever.

The religious house in Boston went to see the Bloodknot when I was there last year. The Bloodknot is a play about two South Africans, one of them black and the other white, both the sons of the same white mother. In that environment they had tried to maintain some kind of brotherhood. That play with only those two characters in it went act after act after act after act into the depths of the corporate relationship that those two participated in in being a part of the society as a white and as a black. When you got to the bottom of that play you were just wrung out with the fact that the only possibility those two human beings had was to be that actuality that was their society, forever and forever and forever. Only when that actuality was pushed down and identified with to the roots by those two men was there any creativity there at all, any possibility to deal afresh with their situation.

The final point is that obedience pushed to the bottom is freedom. Or obedience pushed to the bottom is prayer. That's a kind of remarkable thing in this chart. When you take corporateness and push it clear to the bottom you run into the solitaires. Or when you take obedience and push it clear to the bottom, you run into freedom or prayer. When I first looked at it I thought it was intercessory prayer that you ran into. But now I believe it's more than intercessory prayer. You run into prayer all the way back to confession when you push obedience to the wall. Finally what obedience is is the obedience of faith. What a power that paper by Bultmann on Faith as Obedience still is in the academy construct. The decision to believe that the being to which you must be obedient is life and life eternal is the bottom of obedience.

I suppose that this whole lecture is just commentary on that one verse of scripture that goes like this: "The obligation that alone gives freedom and gives entire freedom is the obligation to God and to neighbor as they confront you in Jesus Christ." Here is the affirmation of being, the intensification of being. It's sort of like when you start out here with being, the affirmation of being, the identification with being in all of its particularity and all of its wild whirling, it's only then that you blow loose freedom down in the interior of the self in the bowels of your most particular person. Freedom in the interior life and the experience of the whirling reality of being are one and the same experience from two angles of being.

We must be clear that this is the deepest possible statement that can be made. I have seen people teach that Bonhoeffer paper like they thought the identification of obedience and freedom was some rationally simple spirit truism. No. This is the deepest most phenomenal kind of assertion that ever was made in the whole of human history.

Kazantzakis has helped me to say that when he starts off his identification process by saying, "I am mankind," and then moves on to say, "I am the earth;" "I am the brain through which the rock and the plant and the worm become conscious of themselves." He moves on to say that I am being, that I am the beginning and the end. Only after that does he talk about freedom. I want to read just a little about mankind. Just to begin with identification with man is almost more than you can take, even to think of going on to identification with earth. When you think of identifying with all the horror, all the misery and all the corruption, identifying with the damned ones and the innocent suffering and the drifting spirits, you look out at the play of history and say to yourself, "I am Adolf Hitler, and I am the Jews of the play, and I'm also the German bystanders." You look at Hiroshima and you find yourself in the airplane and you find yourself also on the ground. Or, "I am Lester Maddox, and I am Elijah Mohammed." There's a wild one for you. Or, "I am the frightened Indians in Brazil, and I am also those stupid Brazilians that go out and hunt them like animals." Or, "I am Papa Doc Duvalier and I'm also Che Guevara." Or, "I am Chiang Kai-Shek and also Mao Tse-Tung." Look at the centuries behind you. What do you see? Hairy, blood-splattered beasts rising in tumult out of the mud. Hairy, blood-splattered beasts descending in tumult from the mountain summits. Multitudes ascend like grass out of the soil and fall into the soil again, fertile manure for future offspring. And the earth grows fat from the ashes, the blood, and the brains of man. Numbers without end vanish in mid-journey; they are born, but they die barren. Huge pits suddenly gape in the darkness, multitudes tumble and fall, disorderly commands are heard in confused clamor, and the human herd stampedes and scatters. The centuries are thick, dark waves that rise and fall, steeped in blood. Every moment is a gaping abyss. Gaze on the dark sea without staggering, confront the abyss every moment without illusion or impudence or fear, and take a further step: battle to give meaning to the confused struggles of man. Train your heart to govern as spacious an arena as it can. Encompass through one century, then through two centuries, through three, through ten, through as many centuries as you can bear, the onward march of mankind. Train your eye to gaze on people moving in great stretches of time. Immerse yourself in this vision with patience, with love and high disinterestedness, until slowly the world begins to breathe within you. We are all one, we are all an imperiled essence. If at the far end of the world a spirit degenerates, it drags down our spirit into its own degradation. If one mind at the far end of the world sinks into idiocy, our own temples overbrim with darkness. For it is only One who struggles at the far end of earth and sky. One. And if He goes lost, it is we who must bear the responsibility. If He goes lost, then we go lost. This is why the salvation of the Universe is also our salvation, why solidarity among men is no longer a tenderhearted luxury but a deep necessity and self-preservation, as much a necessity as, in an army under fire, the salvation of your comrade-in-arms. We do not see, we do not hear, we do not hate, we do not love as once we did. Earth takes on a new virginity. Bread and water and women take on a new flavor. Action takes on a new, incalculable value. All acquire an unexpected holiness -- beauty, knowledge, hope, the economic struggle, daily and seemingly meaningless cares. Shuddering, we feel everywhere about us the same gigantic, enslaved Spirit striving for freedom."

Raw creativity is not a proud, "Look at me." It is a humiliating surrender to the given situation. It's sort of like God commands, "Decide which way history must go." And so, in fear and trembling, awed by the responsibility, we say, "This way." Then history does not go that way but goes another way. And we're slapped down and embarrassed. And you say, "Dammit, God, you told me to decide." And God commands, "Decide again." And so you say again with your whole being, "This way." And God decides that history goes another way. And you scream out again, "I wasn't in on that collegium meeting."

God never stopped running history. He surrenders not one ounce of his sovereignty to man. It's like you've got to say to yourself that freedom itself is commanded by God. Freedom itself is a command to be obeyed. My freedom makes history, all right, but it makes the history God wants it to make. The minute I get fed up with that humiliation, I'm no longer free. I am a slave in rebellion again. This is so hard to get expressed, that at the very bottom of being free is just surrender, is just obedience.

I want to conclude by asking a little more obedient listening, this time from Herman Hesse's Demian.

We are not separated from the majority of men by a boundary but simply by another mode of vision. Our task is to represent an island in the world, a prototype perhaps, or at least a prospect of a different way of life. I, who had been isolated for so long, learned about the companionship which is possible between people who have tasted complete loneliness. I never again hankered after the tables of the fortunate and the feasts of the blessed. Never again did envy or nostalgia overcome me when I witnessed the collective pleasures of others. And gradually I was initiated into the secret of those who wear the sign in their faces.

We who wore the sign might justly be considered "odd" by the world; yes, even crazy, and dangerous. We were aware or in the process of becoming aware that our striving was directed toward achieving a more and more complete state of awareness while the striving of the others was a quest aimed at binding their opinions, ideals, duties, their lives and fortunes more and more closely to those of the herd. There, too, was striving, there, too, were power and greatness. But whereas we, who were marked, believed that we represented the will of Reality to something new, to the man of the future, the others sought to perpetuate the status quo. Humanity--which they loved as we did--was for them something complete that must be maintained and protected. For us, humanity was a distant goal toward which all men were moving, whose image no one knew, whose laws were nowhere written down.

Although we might not have been able to express it, we all felt distinctly that a new birth amid the collapse of this present world was imminent, already discernible. Demian often said to me: "What will come is beyond imagining. The soul of Europe is a beast that has lain fettered for an infinitely long time. And when it's free, its first movements won't be the gentlest. But the means are unimportant if only the real needs of the soul--which has for so long been repeatedly stunted and anesthetized--come to light. Then our day will come, then we will be needed. Not as leaders and lawgivers--we won't be there to see the new laws--but rather as those who are willing, as men who are ready to go forth and stand prepared wherever fate may need them. All men are prepared to accomplish the incredible if their ideals are threatened. But no one is ready when a new ideal, a new and perhaps dangerous and ominous impulse, makes itself felt. The few who will be ready at that time and who will go forth--will be us. All men who have had an effect on the course of human history, all of them without exception, were capable and effective only because they were ready to accept the inevitable. What particular movement one serves and what pole one is directed from are matters outside one's own choice. That is why we must be ready--and be ready to be obedient.