

Global Centrum
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ENGAGEMENT AS CARE

Last summer after the summer program was over, I had a deep yearning, an overpowering one. At the end of a month and a half of having all kinds of possibility dumped on me, I had a deep yearning to go back down home to a bayou, and just fish. Now I am not that interested in fishing, any more, and it was not just any bayou that I wanted to go to. It was a particular one that is still very clear in my mind. In those bayous, with the overhanging trees and moss, the sunshine comes through the trees and hits the water and turns it into a mirror. If you stare in it very long, you get hypnotized. I remember that summer the Korean War had been going on and a lot of my buddies had been in the Marine Reserves. They had been called up and given two weeks of training in California--one week of taking shots, and one week of shooting guns--and they went into Inchon and were wiped out. We had not had the news about that very long. That had marked me. There had been other things. I was turning my attention to the future and wondering about it. We were just getting out of school and rummaging around, trying to get the summer lined up, and the opportunity came to go fishing that day. There was not really anything better to do though we did not particularly care to go fishing. I got left alone; they got in the boat and went down the way. I was looking at the bayou, and thinking about many things, then the whole place got charged. A strange, strange happening occurred in my life because I knew then that I would never again be satisfied. Somehow without being able to explain it I had gotten marked, and my life was never going to be the same. I had a peculiar sense that my life had something to do with history, and I would never be satisfied with anything less than that. Well, I took off from there, went to seminary, and lots of other places trying to find out things and get the right labels on them. It never worked.

This summer, with the pentagon, it struck again. And I really wanted to go back to that bayou to check and see if it were true. Yet, I knew it was true, so I really did not have to go back. I suspect for most of us that there is something like that in our life. I used to think I was different; then I began talking with people and listening. I discovered that kind of experience is human experience. That mark is present in humans' lives. The strange thing is that that happened to me all over again this weekend. We sometimes refer to that as the experience of Mystery, though labels never help very much for me. But life is marked.

It comes in a very mundane way. It comes in hearing those Town Meeting reports last night on the telephone for example, or having looked into the face of some of the people in those social demonstrations. Having seen the mass of people touched rather than just two or three, you begin to see the implications of that trail out into the future like a kite going up in the wind. All of that has begun to jar me again in terms of having Mystery crush my life. It is interesting too, that things like RSI and LENS and all that work that we did in community reformulation that nobody remembers anymore is all there. There is not anything that we have done that is not used. I realize that I have a chance to do something

with my life that I never expected that I would have the chance to do. Something has occurred that has made that chance not a dream or reflection in a bayou pool, but a very hard realistic possibility.

To say that in another way, I have been profoundly waked up to the world, in some ways for the first time, and to the possibility of living life as I have never been awakened in my whole life. I understand they are bringing back Thornton Wilder's play "Our Town." Do you remember the story of Becky, the wife of George? She died and she wanted to come back because she was lonely up there, so she asked permission to come back. They said, "You can go back and live one day out of your life." She picked her 12th birthday. She did not know until then that the condition was she could not get inside her skin. She had to be a third party watching everything that was going on. As she watched, she began screaming hysterically. She wanted to get out of there. "Take me back to the grave on the hill," was one of the lines, and they granted her permission. Then as she was bidding Grovers Corners goodby, she said something like this, "Oh world, world, world, you are so wonderful. Does anybody ever, ever realize you every minute they are alive?" What I am trying to communicate is that waking up to the world, to the chance of a lifetime, the possibility of living life every, every minute, has been dumped on me as a radical thing, very difficult to talk about.

The other strange part of this is that this waking up is a painful waking up. You wake up in a new world but you wake up in the dark night in a new world. I do not know if you remember when you were adolescent. You got out of bed one morning, you put your trousers on and they were too short and it was embarrassing, and your shoes were too tight, and you stumbled over things that you used to glide over gracefully. You felt gangly and kind of stupid that nothing fit, that everything was out of whack. Well, it is that sense, that I wake up in a world I do not fit anymore and the world does not seem to fit me. Besides that, it is like the experience of waking up having been a dinosaur in the ice age and the thing melted and you woke up! You are a dinosaur in a brand new world, struggling to be something else; yet it is not struggling to be something else, you knew that a long time ago this was what you got marked for. These days I find my life awful in being wakened.

I feel frustrated and I am deeply angry. When I get angry I always mess up bad. It takes days, and months sometimes to recover from those little splashes of anger. You get a little afraid of it, but you are daily frustrated, angry, bitter; I'll even go so far as to say I am bitter, deeply bitter about life. It has really been hard when you are that way and your wife sits you down and says "Now Honey, what's the matter?" You really get angry, because you do not know how to tell her, you are just frustrated, bitter angry. I have noticed that she is like that too, and when I try to sit her down and straighten things out she gets mad and I figure she does not know how to say it either. Somebody around here not so long ago said that "Life these days is just resentment," and that rang a bell for me. I am filled with a deep resentment, and I have noticed that that is not something exclusive. I resent life, resent everything, every assignment, every intrusion. I am filled with a kind of resentment, and in the midst of resentment, a kind of humiliation comes.

So often when we talk about humiliation, somebody tells some little story about how their wife or husband got off a good one on them, and how it embarrassed

them. I find these days, I am beyond embarrassment. Hardly anything that can happen or can be said about me or any situation that comes along, embarrasses me. I am hard to embarrass, even when I have done something dumb and somebody comes up and beats the hell out of me. It is hard for me to sense much embarrassment. I have such rationalistic techniques to take that and funnel it through 300 million things, that it is like water off a duck's back. I am not talking about embarrassment--in some ways I am beyond that. That may not be good, I grant you, but I am beyond that, at least now. But humiliation--when we got to Australia, we were told as we were getting ready to go to the Oombulgurri consult that 50 percent of all the Aboriginal children in all of Australia suffer permanent brain damage because they do not have enough protein in their diet. I do not cry very much, but that night I cried, and did not have a real good way to know how to say to myself why I did, except that little thing. Humiliation is very sociological, it seems to me.

You remember when you were in high school that they used to bring speakers out to graduation. It seemed that every chapel speaker we ever had used to say "You are the hope of the world." We have been trained, been prepared, society has sunk a lot into us. And then you read those articles about India and you want to hide--a deep sense of humiliation. It is not psychological, it is profoundly sociological. It is tied to history. Out of that, I sense that my life is left with nothing but weakness. How do you move on that? You go and you sink sweat, blood and tears in a place like Oombulgurri, and you realize that you are touching 200 people. Now you see on the other side of that, if you are revolutionary, you have what nobody else has at this moment in the possibility of impacting all the Aboriginal people, the spin off of which has already begun to take place. But you sense your life as ineffective. How are you going to move on that?

You sense a weakness. I talked with some doctors in a very similar kind of conversation. Waking up in a brand new world in the dark night is a different kind of waking up than waking up in the new world that is a new toy. It is a profound waking up. In that kind of waking up I find myself pursued by an unknown destiny. I mean that two ways. It is like that business back in the bayou. I can not explain it, it is unknown. Beyond that, when I look into the future, it looks even blearier. Right in the middle of this dark night, strange as it seems, it comes again and again that I have a sense of my life being marked with destiny; I never thought that was going to take place in my life except as a bayou experience, but it is profound and real.

The other side of it is that this sense of destiny is not tied up with how well I do anything, with whether I really come off or not, or with whether I do well or poorly. There are ramifications within that; there is a deep sense of ineffectiveness, and weakness that is always there, but that sense of destiny is not contradictory to it. I have a hard time explaining that to myself; those seemingly incompatible experiences could lie side by side in my life, and neither one go away. Someone helped me there when they said that this has to do with my belonging to Being. That does not make any sense, I suppose, at first. Destiny has marked me in being, and turned my being into the unknown. I do not know where it is leading. You touch Being, and Being uses being. I used to think that I wanted to be my own man. My discovery is that I am not, my life gets used up sometimes out of a wholly different set of demands than the set of demands I would want to lay on my life. Although it is a lot of fun, I do not think that anybody

finally enjoys going to one of these social demonstration consults. There was deep anxiety and uncomfortableness when the water didn't arrive and we wanted to take our showers. We were covered with sand and had to sleep in sand. We were not very comfortable, but Being uses being. Your destiny is marked in the sense that whatever we are about, my being is being used by Being.

Maybe I should say a little more about that. Being has to do with re-creation, I am convinced. You never fool around with Being in the dimension of being except that you are fooling around with raw creation. We usually forget the first part of the story of Abraham. He was called away from the gods of his fathers and the implication in the Old Testament was that he had a hard time making up his mind to go out where he had never been before to lead a bunch of people and try to do something. He was not sure that he was going to find any water out there. He had a lot of hesitation about it. If you read the story closely, I don't think he did very well, and I don't think he thought he did very well. He kept having these conversations that he did not think he was going to make it. Being has to do with creation, and it comes to me right now that what is happening with us is probably the last adventure that our time knows.

I want to digress a second. It has been interesting to me in Social Demonstration. What we have to do is very hard for people who are properly trained. A colleague said to me that he was shocked how the Korean people took those methods and just moved. He said they did not have thirty LENS courses behind them or pedagogues, or anything like that. He said they did better than we did in terms of picking that stuff up and moving with it.

I have noticed that the same thing is true in a place like Oombulgurri, that properly trained people think that they have to do things a certain way. When we got to Oombulgurri those people did not have water up there, except for an old pipe and an old pump that trickled a little water through it. We called in an expert who said that it would cost millions and millions of dollars to put in a proper water system, like they had down in cities. Thank God for the Guardians, for those who got touched with the adventure. The hydrologist was a very proper man, but he saw that you could do it for nothing by inventive technology. Taking technological know-how and twisting it in a brand new way, you could use it for nothing. You have to wake up to the fact that when you do these things, nobody is going to put the money down. Government is ready to fund anything that is a sure winner. But this is adventure. They said they want to spend \$150-160 thousand to put in a radio transmitter so we could talk to Wyndham twice a day. We asked why they do not get a telephone. They said it would cost almost a million dollars for the Australian government to do it the right way. One of the Guardians was at the airport and a helicopter landed, and he went out there and began to talk with the pilot. He dropped that on him and they began to figure. For \$4200 dollars they can drop a line all the way from Wyndham by helicopter, in about four hours of work, all the way to Oombulgurri for a phone that they can connect 24 hours a day. I suspect if somebody had just read those reports, that would never have happened but...this is adventure, a kind of risk, and that is not just true about social demonstration.

You understand that when you deal with the people in the fourth world in those social demonstrations, you are dealing with people who literally have no hope. These people had been waiting all their life for the consult, because those people do not see any hope for getting out of the hole they are in. Not only that, but those fathers and mothers do not see any hope that their kids will

ever get out of it either. That has come to me in a fresh new way. I figure my son is going to make it. In fact it seems to me he makes it better when I don't interfere with things than when I do. Those kids are not. You can understand why those ladies and gentlemen were glued in their chairs and worked like dogs, like people said they could not work. This was not only hope for themselves but, for the first time in their lives, hope for their children. A new kind of adventure is there.

The same thing is true about Town Meeting. The other day I met a guy in Academy and he told me I taught him RSI. When he told me the place, I died, because as I recall in my list that was the worst RSI I was ever a part of and I am still ashamed of it. I thought it was a big zero, and you know, it is embarrassing for him to be up there, really. I know how Jonah must have felt when he preached that sermon and then told God to go ahead and destroy them all because he did not do a good job preaching; then he was mad at the Lord because He decided that the whole place had repented.

I did a Town Meeting, and that was fun. I was scared to death. It was fun, though. It was out in Clarksburg, West Virginia. Isn't it funny how you get attached to those songs? We sang that song the other day and I had to nudge the person next to me because that song was from my Town Meeting. We had a lady who came into this meeting. She had already decided to stay for a few hours and check it out. She stayed the whole day, and got on the phone and got here friends there, and just came alive. The guy up in front kept trying to lead the workshop, but she was very clear that she had decided to be the leader of the workshop, and she did a splendiferous job. At the end of the day, she said "You know I've never had this happen to me in my life, except one time" and she started talking about one of those things that had addressed her life, and she had come alive. It was hard for me to deal with her because there was a workshop going on, but her life had gotten transformed in such a fantastic way that it transformed my life sitting there.

About the intra-global Movement--the Guardians are already there in Australia, they are coming up in India, and they are going to be something different when we get together. In some ways you do not need to get together; it is already there.

If we were going to pass accolades we really ought to do something for Rod Wilson. His little cocktail tent in Oombulgurri was not just a way to get your thirst quenched at the end of the day. The Guardians sat there hours on end, and they pulled every bit of data out of him about you Guardians. That is what they were interested in.

You talk about vocation. Well, that has come back in a brand new way. I know an architect who was thinking about doing something else. Now this guy sees that by being an architect he can do something for the world that he never thought he could do. He is now an architect in a brand new sense and he is something more than an architect. I know a doctor that that is true about as well, and several other people. Vocation has come in a brand new way. I do not have any idea where this is taking us because I imagine two years down the line, there won't be Town Meeting up on the board, there will be something else. Once you get those 24 social

demonstrations in place, there is going to be something else. Like Abraham walking out on the desert, once you have those wells line up, you have something else to find out about.

I do now know where this is taking me. One thing that I do know at this moment, though, is that I have to have very special care. I do not like that "taking care of yourself," but that is the only phrase we have right now. There is a kind of fragility here in our lives which I have never before experienced, like being a bomb and somebody comes around and touches you and you go off. There is a fragility about my life. We talked about becoming zombies. Destiny has been using your being. When you take one step back from that fire and you know what it is like, it would take more than a mule team to pull you back into it. You know you come across that. It is interesting how it comes these days. It is not that somebody becomes a zombie and turns to cynicism. Cynics are a little scared these days. A cynic will drop a remark out of the side of his mouth as he is running out of the room because people will take on a cynic these days. People are just not going to put up with that. They have played that game out. You become a Sunday revolutionary; we can get this much in and then we get our red badge or whatever shows that we gave. Or "I care a little." Dangerous! Cement walls begin to fall into place there.

You guys have structures; I am surprised at the grapevine. It used to be we would have meetings in the panchayat room and before you got out, priors would be calling you up, telling you about your decision and whether or not they agreed with it. And you could not figure out how the news got out of that room that fast. It is not just priors in Houses any more, the Guardians have this...and it is structured. People call each other and find out about things. There are assignments. They may not be up on our board like some of our names, but deep assignments and a deep set of structures. I want to say those structures won't help at this moment, nor will huddling together or having some kind of corporateness help you at this moment.

I remember in school that there were always characters who either avoided the structures altogether and made great grades--they never showed up in class, they turned their papers in late, etc. but they were always up at the top. I believe that the reason for that is that they had just one thing on their minds which was getting their mission of education done. Then there were guys who stayed at every structure, but they did not rely on the structure. They were always there in the class at the right time, turned in their papers at the right time, but they were not dependent upon the structures to get anything in. They were their own motivity, they were their own watchspring. They were out after whatever education could do for them at that time. Well, it is something like that. Nobody can help you and no structures are going to help you at this moment.

The one clue I have is that you have to find a way to experience your own experience; my wife comes in and I fly at her, and we can have some donnybrooks. I am clear that has not got anything to do with why I am angry, yet it is almost pleasing. I can deal with my anger if I can have that donnybrook and let go, but my anger does not have anything to do with my wife. It has something to do with that bayou pool, it has something to do with whatever it was that got dumped on me. That takes a lot of digging to get down, to have to say that to yourself. The

other thing to say is a little piece of advice: you can not take care of yourself by taking care of yourself. Somebody said the way you take care of yourself is to get enough sleep, have enough time, have something special when you get down, go buy a new set of clothes or something like that. No. You do not take care of yourself by taking care of yourself. The only possibility of taking care of yourself is to take care of the world. It is Rod saying that the lady saw something in his eyes that was different out of that grueling experience, or out of having gone to one of these Town Meetings--taking care of yourself by taking care of the world.

The last thing I have to say is that there is a new kind of fellowship at hand, and it is a strange one. I do not think it has quite arrived yet, but you sense that it is there. You could sense it a little bit last night when they talked about the Guardians in Australia and other places. I began to see heads pop a little bit. You always have a kind of hope or feel that one day around this world the invisible college of people would just sort of pop up, and there is a deep sense that that fellowship is almost through the surface. I do not believe that it is going to be fellowship where we all get together and hold hands.

The way that fellowship gets marked to me is when I am someplace working like a dog, pouring out being, and suddenly, I am in fellowship with somebody that is in Bombay and Sydney. It does not have anything to do with proximity. Some people try to get their marriages together, but she is down in Port Arthur and you are up north of Seattle and in the midst of that afternoon of sweat you have a marriage. There would not be any way in the world of sitting down in a room and talking, that would let you have a marriage. A new kind of fellowship is coming and I do not want to miss it.

We have a greeting around here, and the greeting--it is also a sort of farewell--goes like this, "Take care of yourself." It seems to me that the greeting and the farewell right now, is "Take care of yourself."

--George Holcombe