

OUT FROM THE TOMB

I grew up in one of those families where the mother belonged to one church and the father to another. I will always be grateful for that possibility of comparison. My father went to the Southern Baptist Church in our town. There was a picture up front which I want to talk about today. That picture always fascinated me. I did not know why, then, but I do now, I assure you. Jesus was in the tomb. I do not know who the painter was, but he was Western, I am sure, because inside the tomb he had painted a marble coffin where Jesus had been. In the picture, Jesus is sitting on the edge of his coffin, inside the tomb, looking like The Thinker. I always thought that he must be saying, "Now, what in the world am I supposed to do?"

I submit that that position is exactly where I have been, and I suspect where all of us have been, for about 3 years now. But in order to say a little more about that, you have to say a little more about Jesus.

I was at a Roman Catholic seminary on the outskirts of Bombay for several days with nothing to do, so I did a lot of walking around and thinking. There were a large number of crucifixes in that place. Everywhere you looked, there was Jesus on the cross. In that seminary, with those crucifixes, I discovered some information about Jesus that has been unknown, heretofore. I did not discover anything in books, but inside myself I discovered some things.

You remember the time when Jesus went to the Temple? I think he was 12 years old. He astounded all those people with the questions that he asked. Well, the new information is that that is not all that he did. He slipped off and went out and watched a crucifixion. He never got over that. As a matter of fact, when he got back home, one day he was looking at the animals eating out of the manger, and he saw the shape of the cross in the wood. The legs of mangers look like crosses, I guess. That scared him, although he did not know why. It scared him. And from that moment on he experienced an unbelievable life urge. He decided that he did not want to be humiliated. He wanted to be strong, he was sure. And he wanted to have a good attitude toward life. He did not want to be destroyed by his own negativism and resentment. And he did not want to suffer. The time came when he was out in the desert one day, and he had a fierce struggle about whether he was going to be strong or weak.

All along the way to the cross and to Jerusalem he seemed to have an incredible urge to live and not to be destroyed. Right up to the last minute he did not want to go through with it. But finally he said, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I submit to you that that was the moment of faith, sheer faith. "My God, why has thou forsaken me and my ambitions?" It seemed to him as if at the same moment that he cried, "Why has thou forsaken me?" he woke up in that tomb. When you have seen the truth, the way people sing, "Called To Walk in the Way", is really amusing. You know the way we sing the line, "Look, the stone's been rolled away", with all that excitement? I believe that Jesus thought, "God, they have rolled that stone away! What am I going to do now? I thought I was dead! I smell the world coming into my tomb. And I hear something down inside of me saying: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature!'" He did not have any doubt about the condition he was in. He looked down at his hands, and there were nail holes in them. He knew he was not the same Jesus who had gone to the cross in the first place. He thought: "But how do I go in this condition?" After three days or so of struggling with it, he decided to go and appear. He did not really go, I guess; he just decided to appear. They say that that is what happened.

People did not know him for sure. This time he seemed to be unconfined by time and space. He would show up here, he would show up over there, he would walk through a door. He was everywhere at once saying, "You go into all the world." He knew the Dark Night before the cross. Before the crucifixion, the cross was always out there in front of him, outside of him to be internalized. He had looked at it, known about it and feared it. And he had gone around trying to live. Then, after the crucifixion, it was a Long March and he wanted to die. He woke up and said "I want a place. This tomb will be all right. I want to rest. They say you can rest in peace, you know. I want to be fulfilled right here and now. I don't want to stretch myself out across the universe going out into all the world to preach the gospel." What was revealed to me in my walks at that seminary on the outskirts of Bombay is that our fathers did not cook up a story that they thought would help us along and then say, "Now you try to do that." They simply found a way of talking about how things are.

Look at us as an Order, for example. I could talk about myself as an individual, but everybody would be bored with that; I have talked about myself so often in the past. You probably thought that I would talk about India. What was the name of that fellow who was eating strawberries when the Battle of Waterloo took place? They say he did not like to talk about it much afterwards. So you do not have to worry about my talking about India. I will talk about us as a group. Back in the years of 1968 to 1972 we were in the Dark Night. It was a very individual, very personal sort of thing. You could see the life urge all around. We had great, incredible priors who emerged during those years. They were strong individuals who had had a sniff of the cross, and they wanted to live. That is necessary; I am not saying it was not a good thing. Then we decided to "go for broke" with the Local Church. If that was not crucifixion, I do not know what to call it. As a matter of fact, "broke" is a good word. We went and we got broke. Of course, we knew that we would before we did it; anybody would have told you that if you "go for broke" with a thing like the Local Church you are just going to get dead. And we did. And we said, "It is finished." And it is. The Local Church in our time has died; it is finished. Some of us, of course, thought that we were personally finished along with it. I suppose we were. But I am sure that you noticed that, just at the moment that we went for broke with the Local Church and got ourselves crucified, the world opened up in a way that nobody could have believed. It happened at the same moment. I want to emphasize that if we had not decided to go for broke, there would not have been any openness to the world. That is the way it happened.

The way I experience life now is that for three years, ever since 1972, we have been sitting on the edge of that coffin saying, "What do we do now? Do we have to do anything, now or ever?" Now, with the emergence of Social Demonstration projects around the world every 3 hours: that is like the canonical hours. There is no longer any time to ask that question. We have been asking for three years, we have been in the tomb for three years, and there is no time to stay in it anymore. We either really die, and I mean we either become zombies and lie down in the tomb, or we go. That is the way it comes to me.

We are prepared for this going to all the world because we have already gone local. We did not go global until we flung the centurms out across the world. It is true that we went global with the Religious Houses, but we went local globally. Now we are going global locally. I have experienced it as an incredible stretching of my being. But now it is done, and now we are local in a radical sense and we are global in a radical sense. Therefore, the world belongs to us. I do not mean that you have to go out and search. I do not mean that you need an overseas assignment, as we say in North America. Those who go searching for globality only make manifest their own parochialism.

I did not know that the assignments were going to be after House Church. I think that that is great because I was going to talk about assignments. If you are seeking status in the assignments, that is great. I assure you, out of my own experience, that seeking status in an assignment will plunge you into the Dark Night of the Soul. That is where you will hear, "You are my son." On the other hand, if you feel reluctant to go into all the world, if you try to escape engagement, that is also great. That is the Long March, and that is where God will say to you, "You are my son.."

One more thing and then I will stop. What I want to say is that if you take that Congolese cross and put it on the world grid, if you put one tip of it by Chicago, one arm will run down to Brussels, Nairobi, Bombay and Singapore. The other arm of it, on its way, will run through Moscow and Beirut and Lagos and will reach down to Rio. I suppose that that is silly; the centurms have nothing to do with geography. You will find that if there are three of those in the East and three of them in the West and three of them in the South, the third one is at Peking. That will probably not be possible for a long time anyway. But that is exactly what I mean about the resurrection.

If I take my individual assignment in this Order seriously, and that cross is my symbol, and that cross covers the earth, I am absolutely global. That comes as a shocking revelation to me. When you personally lay down your life in an Order which has decided to be global, you are as global as you can possibly get. Therefore, it does not make any difference where you happen to show up in the world. Wherever there is a blue shirt, I am there. How ever he is act acting, good or bad, I am there.

When you say yes to participating in the Dark Night and the Long March, it means very concretely, Endless Living. It means doing the Religious House and doing the Centurms all at once. It means being the whole Order for the whole world, all at once. And that is how God takes care of you.

-----Charles Moore

